

What doesn't kill us makes us stronger: Identity change in a social enterprise facing place-oriented disruption

by

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Abstract

In this research, I explore how place-oriented environmental disruptions shape the flow of organizational identity. I studied a social enterprise, Better World (a pseudonym), that faced a place-oriented disruption and fought hard to keep its place. In doing so, the organization emerged as a stronger, louder, larger, and more professional entity. Better World is located in the heart of Edmonton, a Western Canadian city. It was disrupted when the municipal government decided to construct a massive national sports arena across the street from Better World. They feared being pushed out due to the changing social milieu of downtown – from a place for the homeless to an entertainment district for the rich people in the city. However, Better World asserted its place in downtown Edmonton through a variety of tactics.

I designed an ethnographic study to understand how responding to place-oriented disruption influenced the flow of identity at Better World. Rich data was collected by means of ethnographic observations spanning over 19 months, including 42 interviews and over 1500 pages in documents. An inductive analysis combining ethnographic procedures, grounded theory techniques, and prescriptions for analyzing process data revealed that the organization engaged in three interrelated processes of territorial work, identity work, and image work, three times over a period of 8 years. It is through a combination of these processes over time that Better World not only secured its territory but also started becoming different from who it had been.

My study bears important implications for the organizational identity literature. First, I point out that the flow of organizational identity is shaped by environmental disruptions. Second, I develop the notion of organizational territoriality and portray place as an important referent for organizational identity processes. Third, I explicate the importance of power dynamics in the study of organizational identity and propose a future-looking research agenda integrating power

and organizational identity. Finally, I present a nuanced perspective on organizational identity work by situating identity work within a broader societal context. I end the study with a discussion on the transferability of findings and outline implications for practice.

Keywords: organizational identity work, organizational identity, identity-as-a-flow, place, territoriality, disruption, qualitative data, organizational ethnography

Dedication

To Husn Aara Begum (literally translated as ‘a lady who adorns beauty’)— my grandmother who was a visionary and a very progressive woman for her times. I miss you, deeply.

And

To Sarah – the greatest joy I have ever known in my life. You inspire me every day and every moment of the day. I hope you always continue to be your curious self.

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Glossary of Terms

Term	Definition/Description	Source
Community Member	This is an emic term and was used by the study's informants to refer to the clients of Better World. The term is a reflection of the organization's relational culture.	Informants at Better World
Environmental Disruption	Events in an actor's environment that interject or distort existing understandings, practices, or social order.	(Gioia, Schultz, & Corley, 2000a).
Harm Reduction	Harm Reduction' is one of the guiding philosophies that shape the work in the field of addictions services. The idea is to 'meet people where they are at' and instead of prescribing an approach toward treatment, agencies following a harm reduction approach allow the affected person to determine the path that they might think is best for them. It also means that agencies adopting this approach will define success in novel ways. For example, having someone drink beer to satiate their addiction would be described as a success, rather than them relying on Listerine for the same purpose. Supervised injection sites in Vancouver and Edmonton are an example of a harm-reduction approach as well.	Emic term by informants at Better World. Also used commonly in the field of addictions services
Image	Organizational members' understanding of how they are seen in the outside world	(Dutton & Dukerich, 1991)
Image Work	Actions aimed at the management, creation, assertion, or change of an organization's image.	Researcher's usage derived from the notions of identity work and image
Member	Member(s), when used on its own, refers to Better World's employees. Also written as 'organizational members' or employees.	Researcher's usage
Organizational Identity Work	Discursive, cognitive, and behavioral processes that help individuals and collectives create, sustain, share, and/or change organizational identity.	(Kreiner & Murphy, 2016)
Place	Given by the amalgam of location, locale, and meanings associated with materiality.	Creswell (2014)
Place-oriented disruption	A shift or change in an actor's place that might upset the natural social order or usual work practices.	Researcher's usage
Relational Culture	Better World's guiding philosophy is to work with clients how they (clients) feel it is best. For this to happen, members pay special attention to fostering lasting relationships with clients.	Emic term used by informants at Better World

Outward focus	An approach to doing work resulting in Better World becoming more aware of its environment and forming partnerships and collaborations with other organizations. Can be understood by juxtaposing it against ‘inward-looking’ approach, which indicates that an actor might be ‘working in a silo’ so to speak and is not interested in paying attention to the world outside or to collaborating with others.	Emic term used by informants at Better World
Territoriality	An actor’s sense of connection or affiliation with their place	Drawing from Sack (1983; 1986)
Territorial Work	Actions prompted by territoriality and aimed at management, safeguarding, or defense of a place	Drawn from Sack (1983; 1986)
Territory	A geographical area with which an organization develops a sense of affiliation. Can be thought of as a specific type of place.	Drawing from Sack (1983; 1986)

Chapter 1: Introduction

Organizational Identity has been described as a central tenet of organizational life (Albert, Ashforth, & Dutton, 2000; Pratt, Schultz, Ashforth, & Ravasi, 2016). The concept was first introduced to organizational studies by Albert and Whetten (1985) and has a rich heritage in the literatures on social psychology (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), and sociology (Goffman, 1959; Mead, 1934). Organizational identity, broadly understood as the answer to ‘who we are’, has been noted for its profound influence on several aspects of organizational life. Many scholars have argued that organizational identity forms the basis of decision-making, guides strategy and informs everyday work practices (Corley, 2004), drives innovation (Anthony & Tripsas, 2016), and directs action in response to external events (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Ravasi & Schultz, 2006). From an institutional perspective, identity also serves to differentiate an organization from its counterparts (Zuckerman, 2016) and creates legitimacy advantages (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001). Thus, the importance of organizational identity in organizational processes cannot be underscored enough.

Extant literature has primarily favored an entitative view of organizational identity, that is identity has been mainly studied as an entity or thing possessed by organizations (Gioia & Hamilton, 2016). However, more recently identity scholars have adopted a more processual view of identity, conceptualizing identity as a flow, as always in flux (Gioia & Hamilton, 2016; Gioia & Patvardhan, 2012; Schultz, 2016; Schultz & Hernes, 2013). These scholars have argued that identity is better conceptualized as continuously flowing and evolving through time (Pratt, 2012). This view of ‘identity-as-process’ emphasizes the question of *how* the dynamics of identity emerge and evolve over time, rather than focusing on *what* entails identity. Further, viewing

identity-as-process also foregrounds the actors whose work is focal in shaping the flow of identity (Gioia & Patvardhan, 2012; Kreiner & Murphy, 2016).

Relatedly, environmental disruptions have been known to interrupt members' understanding of who they are as an organization (Corley & Gioia, 2004; Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Ravasi & Schultz, 2006). Environmental disruptions are conceptualized here as those external events that distort the existing understandings, practices, or social order (Gioia et al., 2000a). For example, in the case of a merger between two healthcare organizations, organizational members debated who they were becoming (Clark, Gioia, Ketchen, & Thomas, 2010). Therefore, I argue that such disruptions must also be central to understanding the flow of organizational identity over time. That is, environmental disruptions provide an impetus for members to revisit the answer to who they are as an organization (Piening, Salge, Antons, & Kreiner, In Press). Thus, while responding to environmental disruptions, members may come to form a different understanding of 'who they are' and who they are becoming. Therefore, environmental disruptions may reshape the flow of organizational identity.

Given the present high-velocity environments within which organizations operate (Piening et al., In Press; Tsoukas & Chia, 2002), the need for understanding processes of organizational identity evolution, transformation, or even stability is greater than ever (Schultz, 2016). This need has been reinforced by scholars of organizational identity who have lamented that not enough attention has been dedicated to understanding the processes or flow of identity over time (Gioia & Patvardhan, 2012). They have simultaneously invited students of organizational identity to prioritize the becoming of organizational identity over its being (Gioia & Patvardhan, 2012; Kreiner & Murphy, 2016; Schultz & Hernes, 2013; Schultz, Maguire,

Langley, & Tsoukas, 2012). Heeding these calls, I aim to explore how environmental disruptions influence the flow of organizational identity over time.

Broadly, the impact of environmental disruptions on organizational identity has attracted a great deal of attention (Corley & Gioia, 2004; Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Gioia, Patvardhan, Hamilton, & Corley, 2013; Gioia et al., 2000a; Gioia & Thomas, 1996; Ravasi & Schultz, 2006). Examples of environmental disruptions present in the identity literature include distorted organizational image (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Elsbach & Kramer, 1996), and changing economic conditions (Ravasi & Schultz, 2006). While this stream of literature, in general, establishes that environmental disruptions influence organizational identity, how the flow of identity might be shaped in response to such disruptions, is yet to be investigated.

Further, Pratt (2012) notes that in understanding processes related to organizational identity, we have predominantly focused on an organization's "social environment," implying that we do not understand enough about identity processes vis-a-vis an organization's physical environment. Interestingly, some identity scholars have argued that an organization's location might be central to identity processes (Watkiss & Glynn, 2016). Building on this lead, I understand 'place', given by the amalgam of location, locale, and sets of meanings associated with material elements (Cresswell, 2014; Lawrence & Dover, 2015; Tuan, 1977), as relevant to organizational identity. Based on this definition, I conceptualize place as an organization's material environment.

The organizational identity literature suggests that members make sense of their organization's identity by keeping a close eye on the organization's environment (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Ravasi & Schultz, 2006). In other words, an organization's environment serves as a critical identity referent for the members of that organization, and place is the most

immediate form of organizational environment. Therefore, any shifts or disruptions to place may threaten members' collective understanding of "who we are", and trigger sensemaking and management efforts around organizational identity (Kreiner & Murphy, 2016; Piening et al., In Press).

Existing research at the intersection of organizational identity and place, though scant, is suggestive of this connection between place and organizational identity. For example, Brown and Humphreys (2006) show that place informed members' understanding of self and organizational identity. Similarly, although place is not their primary focus, Dutton and Dukerich (1991) remind us through their Port Authority study that place-oriented disruptions can shift the very foundation on which organizational members base their understanding of organizational identity.

Specifically, the increasing presence of homeless people on the facilities of the Port Authority triggered a series of debates about who the organization really was.

Similar hints about the influence of place on identity-related processes are found in neighboring disciplines where place is a central tenet. For example, environmental psychology scholars have established the notion of 'place identity' – the idea that a social actor's identity forms, in part, as a result of the actor's socialization with a particular place (e.g. Londoner or Silicon Valley company) (Devine-Wright & Howes, 2010; Larson & Pearson, 2012; Twigger-Ross & Uzzell, 1996). Thus, existing organizational scholarship, as well as literatures outside the bounds of organizational studies, offer strong motivation to further explicate the role of place in identity-related processes. Building on these streams of research, I ask, *how do place-oriented environmental disruptions influence the flow of organizational identity?* I explore answers to this question by posing two interrelated questions: how do place-oriented environmental disruptions

inform actors sense of place? and how does actors' sense of place shape the flow of organizational identity?'

The study of organizational responses to place-oriented environmental disruptions is particularly relevant and timely in the context of agencies located in the urban cores of cities undergoing redevelopment. Most of such social service agencies can be grouped under the umbrella construct of social enterprises, broadly defined as any entities working for a social mission (Battilana & Lee, 2014; Dacin, Dacin, & Matear, 2010). Since social mission takes precedence, regular business activities such as scaling up or strategizing are only seen as means to serving their social purpose better. Thus, social enterprises may be conceptualized as relatively smaller and less resourceful organizations. Consequently, they may always be subjected to societal changes, including changes to place.

Downtowns all over the world are undergoing such place-oriented changes (Gendron & Domhoff, 2009; Zukin, 1991). Large-scale gentrification projects are being undertaken in an attempt to 'revitalize' downtown areas. Consequently, businesses, entertainment arenas, and fancy eateries are encroaching onto convenient hideouts for many people served by such social enterprises, including homeless people, those addicted to drugs, new immigrants, or other impoverished members of society. Therefore, such projects demand action from the agencies that cater to these people. These shifts are intriguing also in that they represent society's deep-seated power differentials between social elites and not-for-profit organizations that serve some of the neediest people in a society. The urban geography literature informs us that the outcome of such power differentials is usually one-way, that is, growth coalitions and social elites get to have their way, and social enterprises are wiped out to make space for shiner, newer buildings that give the whole area a facelift (Knox & Pinch, 2013). The literature also notes exceptions; for

example, in the case of Santa Cruz, local coalitions successfully reverted development plans that would negatively impact them (Gendron & Domhoff, 2009). However, very little is known about how less powerful social enterprises might defend themselves in the face of grand developmental shifts proposed by more powerful growth coalitions.

A more personal reason for pursuing this research is the contrast that I felt around me when I came to Edmonton to start my doctoral program and settled in the middle of an evolving downtown. On the one hand, I could not escape the noise and sheer expanse of city's tallest skyscrapers being constructed, new office spaces being developed, existing buildings (including the one that I lived in) being remodeled to make them gel in with the newly "revitalized" downtown. And on the other hand, the undeniable presence of homeless people, who collectively exuded a sense of irritation and annoyance at those developments was equally visible. The dynamic in the area was mind-boggling.

I delved deeper into it by reading broadly on the topic of urban development. My initial points of engagement were texts produced by Knox and Pinch (2013), Zukin (1991), and Gendron and Domhoff (2009). This initial reading suggested that the dynamic that I saw in my surroundings was not a one-off phenomenon. Instead, my reading indicated that the move toward services and away from manufacturing in the postindustrial society and the development of suburban communities around manufacturing facilities in the suburbs was resulting in hollow downtown cores, turning them into places where the issue of homelessness could be concealed. However, in order to optimally utilize space in the face of growth, many cities were turning to these left-out downtowns in hopes to turn them into vibrant areas known for entertainment, work, and leisure. This move was driving city centers toward gentrification where redevelopment projects and businesses were clashing with the homeless, who had been taking shelter in

downtown areas for the past several decades. San Diego's Ballpark District is a prominent example, and Toronto, Montreal, San Francisco, Chicago, New York, and Seattle are only some of the cities in North America that have undergone such transformations (Best et al., 2008). As a student of organizations, I became interested in understanding the implications of these material, place-oriented environmental shifts for organizations and organizational responses to such disruptions. Such a dynamic is at the core of this thesis, and the question that I brought to the field 'how do organizations deal with place-oriented disruptions' guides this research. I reveal insights from an ethnographic study of 'Better World' (a pseudonym), a social enterprise located in the inner-core of Edmonton, a Western Canadian city. The organization faced a threat of dislocation, as its immediate physical environment shifted vastly. However, as the title of this study suggests, the organization became stronger in the process of defending its place.

Better World has been serving the homeless and operating since 1971 in the downtown core of the City of Edmonton. The organization's environment was severely disrupted when a powerful developer and the city government jointly constructed a large national sports arena right across the street (less than 100 yards away) from Better World. The broader underlying intent of this construction project was even more disruptive. The arena was meant to radically change the 'downtown' area, converting it from a shabby place for the homeless to a 'happening place' for the well-to-do urban population in the city. The project was the most lavish piece in a series of developments meant to revitalize downtown. Not surprisingly, the arena owners and others wanted Better World to move to a different location, forcing them to respond to this place-oriented disruption.

When faced with this disruption, Better World, a small social enterprise that had previously been an informal, relationally-operated, and quietly tucked-away organization, took

concrete actions to avoid becoming homeless themselves. Specifically, the organization not only purchased its existing land and building but also spearheaded a collaboration with 14 other agencies to prepare its own building redevelopment plan in the downtown area. Following this very symbolic move, the organization stepped toward transforming themselves into a more formal, professional, visibly vocal, and stronger organization. Understanding these changes as identity change, I use the case of Better World's defense of its place to explore the identity processes that ensue as an organization's place is disrupted.

Better World's defense of its place is well suited to study place and identity dynamics for the following reasons: *first*, Better World is a relatively smaller actor and is defending its physical location while facing several hegemonic pressures, against much more powerful players such as political and growth coalitions. Therefore, I expected that during the process of defending their place, Better World would need to rely on other cultural resources, for example, organizational identity (Lounsbury & Glynn, 2001) to compensate for the relative lack of material resources. Further, during the process of defending their territory, the organization has considerably repositioned themselves by adding a host of programs and services and by fundamentally shifting some practices embedded in their core. Hence, the organization's response to the threat of displacement seems to highlight interesting organizational identity dynamics. *Second*, Better World is highly dependent on its inner-city location. Because the majority of the homeless people in the city spend their days and nights within the inner core, Better World's relocation would cause a huge gap in service delivery and even endanger the organization's survival. Given this, a strong association between the organization's identity and its place is expected. *Finally*, the organization's response to the encroachment of its place is unusual – it is surprising for a non-profit organization to adopt such an aggressive stance to keep

its geographical location secure in the face of a displacement threat. Social geographers maintain that control over place, i.e. territorial behavior is confined to influential players, such as governments and growth coalitions, for example, developers (Knox & Pinch, 2013).

I engaged in an immersive ethnographic study of the organization. I collected rich ethnographic data over a period of 19 months through participant and non-participant observations, 42 interviews, and 1560 pages of documents. I followed the protocols proposed by ethnographers during data collection and analysis (Agar, 1986; Devereux & Hoddinott, 1993; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019; Van Maanen, 2011). I combined grounded theory techniques especially proposed for ethnographic studies (Charmaz, 1996, 2006; Charmaz & Virginia, 1997) with prescriptions for analyzing process data (Langley, 1999; Langley & Abdallah, 2011) and engaged in an inductive analysis.

My findings reveal that when Better World faced the place-oriented environmental disruption in the form of the new arena, it engaged in three inter-related processes of territorial work, identity work, and image work. These processes interacted multiple times, and over time reshaped the flow of Better World's identity. I conceptualize these forms of work as a triumvirate, or to use an analogy, as a team of hikers who have set out to reach a certain summit. Just as a team of three hikers on their hiking expedition to Meru summit are highly dependent on each other, with one's moves influencing others, territorial work, identity work, and image work can also be conceptualized as three interdependent hikers, influencing one another.

First, the organization understood the development of the arena as a threat and consequently faced a heightened sense of connection with their place (i.e., organizational territoriality). This sense of connection with their place was supported by the organization's identity and image work. Following a heightened sense of connection with their place, the

organization purchased legal rights to their place. This form of territorial work amplified members' understanding of Better World's strength, resulting in an expansion of the organization's programs and services. Finally, Better World engaged in territorial work to fortify its territory; that is, the organization decided to develop a bigger and better building for itself. Better World mobilized a group of 14 other agencies and led them on a building redevelopment plan. This, in turn, provided the impetus for engaging in more assertive forms of image and identity work. Overall, my findings show that the flow of Better World's identity was reshaped as the organization responded to the arena over time. I present these findings in three phases: feeling connected with the territory, publicly claiming territory, and fortifying territory.

Through these findings, I offer the following contributions to the literature on organizational identity. First, I suggest that the flow of organizational identity is shaped by an organization's response to environmental disruption through a recursive cycle between issue interpretation and organizational response to disruptions. Second, I develop the notion of organizational territoriality and suggest that place is a fundamental referent for organizational identity processes. Third, I propose power and politics as an important agenda for identity research. Finally, I furnish a nuanced perspective on organizational identity work by situating identity work within the realm of an organization's response to environmental disruptions.

The rest of the study is organized as follows: I engage in the review of relevant literature, explain methods, layout the findings of the study, and end with a discussion on the contributions of this study.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Background

In this section, I build on two relevant literatures – organizational identity, and place. This dissertation is structured in line with the conventions of the field, and therefore, this section precedes my analysis. However, I chose the contents presented herein after several iterations between data and theory. Further, since my data analysis revealed concepts and connections not explained by existing or well-established phenomena in organizational research, I looked in neighboring disciplines. Drawing from the literatures on organizational identity and place, I identify the following two gaps in the existing literature on organizational identity. First, despite a longstanding interest in organizational identity processes in general (Tsoukas & Chia, 2002), and an emergent interest in ‘organizational identity-as-process’ (Gioia & Patvardhan, 2012; Pratt, 2012; Schultz, 2016; Schultz & Hernes, 2013; Schultz et al., 2012), we do not know enough about how the flow of organizational identity is shaped over time. And second, despite several hints about the importance of place for organizational identity, we have not paid enough attention to understanding how an organization’s place might influence the flow of organizational identity.

I argue that these gaps are worth exploring as pursuing these will possibly lead to novel insights about organizational identity. I first map out the “debates” around organizational identity (Gioia & Hamilton, 2016, pg. 21) to trace the development of the literature overall. Then, I explain what the extant literature tells us about the evolution of organizational identity. Using these scholarly works as a springboard, I point to what might be missing concerning identity processes.

Following this, I engage in a discussion about place, which I understand as an organization’s material or physical environment and a potential referent for organizational

identity. I explicate what have thus far been ‘hints’ about the importance of place for the processes relevant to organizational identity and develop the notion of organizational territoriality. I end the section by reiterating my research questions.

Organizational identity

The concept of identity “resonates” at many levels, including the individual level, the organizational level, and even the level of the nation state (Gioia et al., 2013, p. 125). Identity has its underpinnings in psychology (Erikson, 1968), social psychology, and sociology (Goffman, 1959; Mead, 1934), and has become a central construct in organizational scholarship (Gioia & Hamilton, 2016; Gioia et al., 2013). While historical texts treated identity in abstract terms such as sets of ideas, ways of thinking, and one’s point of view (e.g., Erikson, 1968; Mead, 1934), Albert and Whetten (1985) first defined the concept in more concrete terms by providing a three-pronged definition of identity. More importantly, the authors extended the individual level conceptualizations of identity to the level of social collectives and coined the term “organizational identity”(Albert & Whetten, 1985, p. 264). Their definition of organizational identity as central, enduring, and distinctive characteristics of an organization (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013; Gioia & Hamilton, 2016) resulted in a host of studies concerning organizational identity. Since Albert and Whetten’s (1985) seminal work, the concept of organizational identity has broadly come to be understood as organizational members’ understanding of ‘who are we as an organization’ (Gioia & Hamilton, 2016; Gioia, Schultz, & Corley, 2000b; Whetten, 2006). Despite some concerns that the interest in organizational identity may fade away (Gioia et al., 2000b), the concept remains fascinating, and identity scholars continue to propose and explore novel domains within the realm of organizational identity (Pratt et al., 2016).

Scholarship on organizational identity can be seen as guided by many epistemological and ontological debates, which mirror the progression of the organizational literature itself (Gioia & Hamilton, 2016). Three primary epistemological perspectives that dominate scholarly discussions on organizational identity are ‘the social actor perspective’, ‘the social construction perspective’, and ‘the institutional perspective’. Likewise, two ontological viewpoints that have guided research on organizational identity are, ‘the content view of identity’ and ‘the process view of identity’ (Gioia & Hamilton, 2016). These epistemological and ontological differences among scholars have resulted in a rich body of literature on organizational identity.

From a social actor perspective, organizational identity can be understood as residing within a set of overt claims about who the organization is (Gioia & Hamilton, 2016). These claims serve the purpose of classification and sensegiving to external and internal audiences (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Whetten, 2006). There are two important implications for identity research from a social actor perspective: first, identity is seen as existing or given (that is, *‘residing in claims’*) and second, the content of identity takes precedence over the processes of identity. Since the focus is primarily on understanding ‘what’ instead of ‘how’, the social actor perspective is more concerned with conditions under which identity becomes salient and with the content of identity claims. Further, developing a nuanced understanding of identity change, especially the negotiation of change, remains less important for scholars who have approached identity research from this perspective. Put differently, scholars adopting this view of identity do not concern themselves much with how members of an organization come to understand ‘who they are’. For example, in Elsbach and Kramer’s (1996) study of university rankings, the authors show how schools position themselves in the face of changing rankings (that is, the content of identity shifting under identity threatening conditions).

Closer to the social actor perspective on organizational identity is the institutional perspective, which also sees identity as a set of claims issued by the organization about who they are and what they do (Gioia & Hamilton, 2016). However, this view sees these claims as a product of organizational as well as institutional drivers. Scholars interested in the intersection of institutions and identity have explored how institutions enable identity (Glynn & Abzug, 2002; Rindova, Dalpiaz, & Ravasi, 2011) and how organizational identity serves as a filter for the management of institutional complexity (Glynn, 2008a; Greenwood, Raynard, Kodeih, Micelotta, & Lounsbury, 2011). Thus, organizational identity is seen as serving two objectives: classification and acquisition of legitimacy.

In contradistinction to these perspectives to the study of organizational identity, the social construction perspective views organizational identity as members' collective understandings of who they are (Gioia et al., 2000a). 'Collective understandings' is the crucial phrase here as it implies that identity is not something given; instead, scholars approaching identity research through this perspective concern themselves with exploring *how* members come to form these collective understandings. Thus, compared to the social actor view, the social construction perspective puts a far greater emphasis on the relational and interpretive understandings of organizational identity. While Ravasi and Schultz (2006) have shown that the social actor and social construction views of organizational identity are not entirely orthogonal to each other and one may even build on the other, the primary focus of social constructionists on the processes relevant to identity (as opposed to the content of identity) is what distinguishes the two perspectives. Thus, there is greater emphasis on understanding the processes through which members of an organization understand and re-negotiate their understandings of who they are, as an organization. For example, Dutton and Dukerich's (1991) classic study reveals *how*

organizational members engaged in the process of renegotiating their understandings of who the Port Authority is when they encountered the issue of a deteriorating organizational image due to the presence of homeless people on the Port Authority's premises.

Staying true to the relational roots of identity (Erikson, 1968; Mead, 1934), the social construction perspective especially takes as its foundation an inherent connection between organizational environment and organizational identity. Specifically, the proponents of the social construction perspective emphasize the relational nature of organizational identity; they argue that the sense of who we are develops *in relation to* particular objects, events, or interactions (Gioia & Hamilton, 2016; Gioia et al., 2013; Gioia et al., 2000a; Nag, Corley, & Gioia, 2007; Ravasi & Schultz, 2006). Clearly then, shifting environmental conditions or disruptions may provide an impetus for re-evaluation and management of 'who we are'. Viewing identity formation or change as a relational process, in turn, implies 'continuity' of organizational identity (Gioia et al., 2013). That is, rather than viewing identity as fixed or 'enduring', the proponents of the social construction view of organizational identity also argue in favor of identity evolution (Gioia et al., 2000a), which, in turn, renders identity change and the management of organizational identity as a possibility.

The social construction view of organizational identity has also by extension, given rise to 'the process view of identity' – scholars have argued that identity is better seen as a process (e.g., Pratt, 2012), constantly in flux and always evolving. They maintain that identity is constructed as a result of everyday interactions, and since social actors continuously engage in interactions and 'doing of practices', identity should also be seen as continually evolving. Since I am interested in understanding the processes relevant to organizational identity, I adopt the social construction view of organizational identity and view organizational identity as flowing through

time. This view goes beyond the punctuated equilibrium model of change and considers change as a norm rather than as an exception (Schultz, 2016).

Next, I further explain the notion of organizational identity as a process or flow and explicate two gaps in the extant literature: a predominant focus on the punctuated-equilibrium model of organizational identity change, and the omission of physical environment from the study of organizational identity.

Management of organizational identity and disruptions

Management of organizational identity, that is formation, change, or sustenance of identity has been studied in two broad ways, traditionally under the label of ‘organizational identity change’(Gioia et al., 2013), and more recently as ‘organizational identity work’ – the purposeful “discursive, cognitive, and behavioral, processes that help individuals and collectives create, sustain, share, and/or change organizational identity” (Kreiner, Hollensbe, Sheep, Smith, & Kataria, 2015; Kreiner & Murphy, 2016, p. 279). Both views adopt a ‘dynamic identity proposition’. That is, identity is seen as malleable and becomes salient in response to external events that challenge members’ existing understandings of who they are. In response, organizational members engage in renegotiating organizational identity. Put differently, organizational identity is deemed as having continuity; mostly remaining stable and primarily subjected to change when punctuated by external events. However, in comparison to the stream of research that broadly falls under ‘organizational identity change’, the notion of organizational identity work emphasizes members’ agency in shaping organizational identity to a greater extent and therefore, implies that identity may be a continuous process (Kreiner & Murphy, 2016).

For example, in a recent study, Tracey and Phillips (2016) demonstrate that when “Keystone” (pg. 748), a community support organization, experienced an image and identity

crisis as a result of the organization's support of the immigrant population, the organization's members actively engaged in two distinct forms of identity work: advocacy and valorization. Another example is Clegg and colleagues' study of firms in the emerging industry of business coaching in Australia. The authors show that in order to gain legitimacy in an emerging industry, organizational members conducted "work to construct a legitimate identity" (Clegg, Rhodes, & Kornberger, 2007, p. 496).

Besides these, some classic studies also reinforce that members engage in the efforts to manage organizational identity in the face of environmental disruptions. For example in their study of the New York/New Jersey Port Authority, Dutton and Dukerich (1991) demonstrated that the regional Port Authority experienced an unfavorable image following from the organization's initial stance on the presence of homeless people on its premises. Members' conscious efforts to see their organization in a different light (as a social services entity), eventually aligned the organization's image and its identity and remedied the issue of a deteriorating organizational image. Along the same lines, Gioia and Thomas (1996) showed that in the face of a shifting higher education industry, the deliberate focus of top management teams on "desired future image" (pg. 394) became the impetus for identity change. Further, Ravasi and Schultz's (2006) study of a Danish producer of audio-video systems, Bang & Olufsen is also an excellent example of members' efforts to mitigate the unwanted effects of environmental disruptions on organizational identity. In the case of Bang & Olufsen, changing market conditions such as competition and consumer preferences posed a challenge for the organization's survival and therefore indirectly threatened the organization's identity. The authors show that organizational members' reinterpretations of their organization's identity were,

in turn, an outcome of their active engagement in interpreting stakeholders' perceptions of the organization's image and organizational culture.

All the studies discussed above suggest that environmental disruptions trigger identity processes aimed at the management of a previously stable organizational identity. As a result of these studies, we have developed a deep understanding of how organizational members engage in the management, reconfiguration, or sustenance of organizational identity in response to environmental disruption. However, since the point of departure for these studies remains a stable identity, we do not know enough about how environmental perturbations influence the flow of organizational identity. In other words, what processes ensue in response to environmental disruptions when identity is already in the 'process of becoming'. More recently, identity scholars have become interested in the flow of organizational identity. As Schultz (2016, p. 99) has put it, the fundamental question concerning identity change ought to shift from "what generates identity change to questioning how identity changes" over time. Kreiner and Murphy (2016) mirror these thoughts and question whether organizational identity work is always a set of purposeful actions in response to an event, or is it possible for identity work to flow through time. In this study, I build on these works to better explore how identity flows through time.

Further, studies discussed above also highlight that organizational image, defined as organizational members' understandings of how they are perceived in the outside world, is central to the notion of organizational identity (Gioia et al., 2000a). Existing studies have shown that processes pertaining to organizational identity are shaped by members' understandings of how the organization is seen by external audiences or stakeholders (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Hatch & Schultz, 2002; Rindova et al., 2011). Similarly, Pratt (2012) notes that if identity is 'figure', then the 'ground' in understanding processes relevant to identity has mainly been an

organization's "social environment" (Pratt, 2012, p. 6). This brings to light another surprising gap in the existing literature – a predominant focus on non-material environmental disruptions.

Thus, overall, the studies on organizational identity discussed above suggest that we have paid limited attention to understanding organizational identity as a process, and have overlooked an organization's physical environment in understanding the processes of organizational identity. In this study, I argue that an organization's physical environment is relevant and important for the processes of organizational identity. In what follows, I turn to an essential area of organizational life – place, which (and disruption to which) bears tremendous significance for organizational action yet has been surprisingly missing from the studies of organizational identity.

Place and Territoriality

The concept of place is decades old and has been studied extensively by social geographers (Tuan, 1977). However, it has only recently started capturing the attention of organizational scholars (Dacin, Munir, & Tracey, 2010; Glynn, 2008b; Lawrence & Dover, 2015). Building on Cresswell's (2014) definition of place, organizational scholars have conceptualized place as comprising of location, locale, and sets of meanings associated with the material aspects (Lawrence & Dover, 2015). Cresswell (2014) notes that while location refers to the geographical coordinates, locale refers to the immediate physical environment of an entity. This may include other entities, and infrastructural elements around the focal entity including, roads, streets, parking spaces, and so forth. Finally, the third component of place, as outlined by Cresswell (2014), refers to the shared sets of meanings and values that the other two material aspects of place invoke. Clearly then, in the context of organizational studies, place constitutes

what can be conceptualized as a meaningful and immediate material or physical environment of an organization.

Although in the current day and age of advanced communication technologies, quick and reliable means of transportation, and the advent of the world wide web, place may seem as less critical. However, geographers argue that place is more important than ever in these times of apparent ‘placelessness’ (Knox & Pinch, 2013). Scholars have suggested that all social phenomena are *emplaced*. Gieryn (2000) asserts that “place is not merely a backdrop, but an agentic player in the game – a force with detectable and independent effects on social life”. That is, besides offering an arena for action to happen, place renders social action meaningful (Cresswell, 2014; Gieryn, 2000; Molotch, Freudenburg, & Paulsen, 2000). The most straightforward implication is that place is important and relevant for social phenomena and can offer rich insights about it.

Just as identity scholars have debated the entity versus process view of identity, geographers have also argued whether place *is* or does it *come to be*. Two competing perspectives are especially interesting in this regard: on the one hand, Malpas (2006) gives primacy to place and argues that actors cannot construct any meanings or reality without first being in a place. Put differently, for Malpas place *exists and* defines the nature of relationships and human interactions. On the contrary, Price (2004) and Harvey (1996) contend that both the meaning as well as the materiality of a place come to be defined as a result of social processes that actors take part in. In this paper, I adopt Giddens’ (1986) view on structuration and walk the middle ground between these two perspectives. That is, I see the relationship between place and social interactions as mutually constitutive. Put differently, I see place in a recursive relationship with social action; while a place helps shape social action, the performance of action also gives

rise to interpretations and understanding of the place. An implication is that I do not conceive of place as given or boundary-defined, but one which is evolving. This view of place also bears implications for the scale of an organization's place; that is, the scale of place may range from a single building to any larger area that organizational members come to associate with. Further, given this view of the place, it is quite likely that any shifts or disruptions to place might encourage 'placemaking', that is actors efforts aimed at making sense of place (Dovey, 2010).

Drawing from the literature on environmental psychology (Devine-Wright & Howes, 2010; Gustafson, 2001), I define place-oriented disruptions as those impactful events, shifts, or changes to a place that interrupt existing social order or relationships. In other words, I conceptualize place-oriented disruptions as changes to a place that upset the regular flow of processes central to that place. In this sense, such disturbances may not always bear negative consequences for social action. Instead, whether a disruption to place is deemed as a threat or as an opportunity will be a matter of social actors' interpretations. Place-oriented disruptions can arise due to several reasons including changes to physical milieu due to natural events or human activity (e.g. earthquakes, or extensive construction projects), shifts in the social make-up of a place (e.g. rise of immigrant population), changes to the material or symbolic designation of a place (e.g. gentrification projects aimed at changing the meanings associated with 'inner-cities'). As such, place-oriented disruptions invite social actors to reinterpret what a place means to them by interrupting the flow of social processes (Devine-Wright & Howes, 2010).

Disruptions to place are notably distinct from more symbolic forms of disruptions as they are comparatively more visible. Thus, such disruptions are likely to have a more significant and longer-lasting impact on actors who face them. For example, the tragic incident of 9/11 or the 'occupy wall street' movement are both localized incidents – concentrated within limited

physical geography. However, they have had far-reaching global implications. The former led to the participation of the United States in wars world-over, and the latter created global awareness about the power of place in bringing social change (e.g., Tahrir square revolution in Egypt).

Several streams of literature studying place have implied that place-oriented disruptions may evoke social actors' sense of connection with their place. Specifically, the scholarship on place is diverse and researchers entrenched in various traditions, including, urban social geography (Gieryn, 2000; Molotch, 2002; Tuan, 1977), environmental psychology (Devine-Wright & Howes, 2010; Gustafson, 2001; Seamon, 2014), and human territoriality (Sack, 1983, 1986) have brought their unique perspectives to the study of place. Although these literatures seldom converge, one common string that runs through all of these streams of research concerns actors' sense of connection with a place. To explicate, Molotch and colleagues (Molotch, 2002; Molotch et al., 2000) have argued that specific places are imbued with particular *character* – how defining attributes of a place come together in a specific way, and *tradition* – how these different attributes are carried through time (Glynn, 2008b). The authors reason further that products, services, or even entities emanating from or belonging to specific places are imbued with the character and tradition of their place, thereby suggesting that place and social actors are deeply connected.

Similarly, Seamon (2014) maintains that from a phenomenological point of view, place is an “environmental locus” through which experiences and actions of individuals and collectives are drawn together. Consequently, residents of a place (individuals and organizations) develop attachment or association with that particular place (Devine-Wright & Howes, 2010; Seamon, 2014). Further, Sack (1983, 1986) from human geography tradition introduced the concept of ‘human territoriality’ and argued that individual, as well as collective actors, assert control over

places (which he called territories) in order to control actions of other parties. Therefore, shifts in place that disrupt the social order, traditions, or character of a place may invite social actors to reinterpret their sense of attachment or connection with their place. I term this sense of connection with place, territoriality.

Further, extrapolating these insights to organizational context, I argue that organizational actors may come to understand their place as their territory as a result of place-related experiences over time. That is, organizations may come to associate with and develop a sense of ownership over a unique combination of location, locale, and sets of meanings related to these material dimensions. Drawing from Sack's (1983, 1986) conceptualization of human territoriality, I term this 'sense of association or connection with place', *organizational territoriality*. I posit that as organizations congregate in geographical areas, (for example, social services in downtowns, technology companies in Silicon Valley, or manufacturers in designated industrial areas), similarities among neighboring organizations may advance the character and traditions belonging to a place. In turn, organizations may become deeply entrenched in those traditions due to place-specific experiences over time (Tuan, 1977). Therefore, organizations are also likely to develop a sense of attachment or association with their place. As such, an organization's place becomes its territory over time. Therefore, in the face of place-oriented disruptions, organizational members' sense of connection with their place may intensify, thereby affecting other relevant organizational processes.

Finally, while explaining what place is not, Gieryn (2000) notes that place is not space, which may be conceived of as more abstract geometries detached from the material form and cultural interpretation (e.g., size, shape, distance, direction, volume). He argues that place is specific and is formed by unique combinations of people, objects, and meanings, and that place

becomes space when this uniqueness is ‘sucked out’ of place. Distinguishing between place and space, Cresswell argues that space becomes a place once it is ‘lived in’, that is when meaning becomes associated with materiality (Cresswell, 2014). Thus, as presently defined, space refers to physical structures and associated dimensions such as accessibility, acoustics, and aesthetics, whereas, place is an overarching component comprising of location, locale and meanings that it holds (Cresswell, 2014; Gieryn, 2000). Thus, I understand space as a subset or a form of place.

Having defined and described place, developing the notion of organizational territoriality, establishing that place is crucial for social life, and outlining how I conceptualize place-oriented disruptions, I now turn to a discussion on place in the context of organizational identity.

Place, territoriality, and organizational identity

Besides their abundance in social geography literature, hints of dynamics between place, territory, and identity are also found in the organizational literature. Goffman’s (1959) ideas of front and backstage speak to the presentation of identity in relation to place. That is, one lets one’s true self show or not depending upon whether it suits a given place. Further, in Dutton and Dukerich’s (1991) paper, deterioration of organizational image started as a result of shifts seen in the Port Authority’s territory, i.e., presence of homeless people on the authority’s premises and the organization’s initial response to this disruption. Similarly, Brown and Humphreys (2006) found that their study informants strongly associated with their place of work and engaged in nostalgia and fantasized about their place of work. In turn, members’ understandings of place informed their interpretations of their self and organizational identity. Together these literatures suggest that organizational members feel a sense of connection with their place, and this sense plays out in organizational identity dynamics.

Importantly, identity scholars have also emphasized the need to understand the role of place and territory in organizational identity dynamics. For example, Watkiss and Glynn (2016), argue that members' collective understanding of 'who we are' also draws attention to questions of what we do and "how we deliver our products and services to our customers." (pg. 320). For a majority of organizations, but especially for service organizations, an organization's place is an access point for customers or service-users who want to utilize the organization's services. Therefore, place must also shape the collective understanding of who the organization is. Interestingly, Watkiss and Glynn (2016) have built onto the insights provided by Albert and Whetten's classic (1985) chapter on organizational identity, where the authors have suggested that location of an organization is an instantiation of its identity.

Recently, institutional scholars have also appreciated the importance of place in shaping organizational phenomena. For example, Reay, Goodrick, Waldorff, and Casebeer (2017) have argued that (public or private) place shaped interactions among actors, which eventually led to shifts in collective professional role identity. Lawrence and Dover (2015) have argued that place shapes institutional work, and Smets and colleagues have shown that the place where underwriters were located was important in balancing co-existing logics (Smets, Jarzabkowski, Burke, & Spee, 2015). Also, Lounsbury (2007) highlighted that the variation of mutual fund investment practices between Boston and New York was rooted in geographical differences.

Finally, micro-level organizational literature directly points to the importance of territoriality for organizational identity. For example, (Brown, Crossley, & Robinson, 2014; Brown, Lawrence, & Robinson, 2005) suggest that members of an organization experience a sense of affiliation with their place of work, e.g., work desks, carrels, and offices etc. They term this sense of affiliation 'territoriality within organizations' and argue that territoriality not only

helps satiate the innate need for self-identity but also enables individuals to portray their unique identities. Elsbach (2003) bolsters these ideas in her work on hoteling offices, where she shows that being subjected to non-territorial offices threatened members' workplace identities (also, Elsbach & Pratt, 2007).

To sum up, place represents an essential facet of organizational life, has enormous implications for organizational phenomena in general, and is especially and evidently relevant for understanding organizational identity dynamics. Notably, the notion of territoriality helps connect place with identity – an organization's sense of connection with their place may play out in other organizational processes, including organizational identity. I further highlight these connections and draw parallels between organizational identity, image, and territoriality in Table 1.

Table 1- Organizational Identity, Image, and Territoriality

	Organizational Identity	Organizational Image	Organizational Territoriality
Definition	Organizational members' collective understanding of who we are and what we do (Gioia et al., 2013)	Members' understanding of how others outside the organization see their organization (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991)	Organizational members' sense of connection with their place (author's definition, building on Sack, 1983)
Observed through	Understandings of who we are, work practices	interactions, actions, claims	Geographical control over place; symbolic grounding in a place (resulting in influence over phenomena, and relationships)
State	continually keeps evolving and operates in the background; invoked under environmental disruptions or when change is initiated internally	Operates in the background and is foregrounded by issues and events that disrupt the alignment of image and identity	Consistently operates in the background and is invoked by place-oriented disruptions
Source	founder's imprint, history, memory, culture, organizational image, industry identity, and institutional environment	interactions and interpretations	place-related experiences over time; place attachment
Outcomes	informs actions pertaining to the mission, vision, and strategy of an organization; guides issue interpretation, shapes emotions, supports image work	drives actions aimed at aligning internal and external understandings of who the organization is, informs understandings of self-concept and organizational identity	guides actions aimed at management, expansion, defense of a place, which is deemed to be the actor's territory (territorial work)
From Extant Literature	(Gioia & Hamilton, 2016; Gioia & Patvardhan, 2012; Gioia et al., 2013)	(Corley, 2004; Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Gioia et al., 2000a)	Hints found in Lawrence and Dover (2015), (G. Brown et al., 2005; Elsbach, 2003), but not explicitly discussed in the literature

Despite the obvious relevance of place and territory for organizational identity, the role of place in the management of organizational identity has not yet been explicitly studied. In fact, some scholars have implied that place and territory may not even be relevant for organizational identity, “there can be nothing *tangible* about identity, ... *not buildings*,... not even practices per se” (Gioia & Hamilton, 2016, p. 28, emphasis added). In this paper, I argue otherwise; a deeper dive into the relevant literature suggests that, although place has been used only tangentially in the study of organizational identity, the concept yields substantial implications for organizational identity and identity work. Accordingly, I ask, “how do place-oriented disruptions influence the flow of organizational identity?”

In this section, I have argued that organizational identity can be seen as a continuous flow through time. While we have developed a rich understanding of how environmental disruptions trigger identity change taking identity as stable as a starting point, we do not know enough about how the flow of identity might shift as a consequence of environmental disruptions. I have also asserted that place is an important factor in an organization’s environment and therefore, shifts in an organization’s place can offer important insights about the flow of organizational identity. As such, I argue that we need to pay attention to the literal ground as well if we are to uncover novel insights about organizational identity. Specifically, I ask, how do place-oriented environmental disruptions influence the flow of organizational identity? I pose this as a set of two interrelated questions:

- i. *How do place-oriented environmental disruptions inform actors’ sense of place?*
- ii. *How does actors’ sense of place shape the flow of organizational identity?*

Chapter 3: Methods

In this section, I introduce Better World and contextualize the developmental history of the city that the organization existed in. This history situates Better World, a small organization, in a context imbued with hegemonic pressures. This contextual background also highlights that the disruption that Better World faced in the form of the national sports arena was not a random incident, but an embodiment of these hegemonic pressures surrounding Better World. After sketching the context within which Better World has been historically operating, I demonstrate fundamental changes in the core aspects of Better World, which I understand as identity change. This account of Better World's identity change precedes my explanation of data collection and analysis.

Better World – a story of identity change, territorial defense, and resistance to hegemony

Better World is a social enterprise located in the urban core of a large metropolitan city, Edmonton, located in the Western Canadian province of Alberta. The organization serves homeless people in Edmonton, especially those who are located in the downtown core of the city. Better World largely depends on external funding to carry out its operations. In fact, government funding forms about 95% of these external funds (Better World Annual Report, 2018). Most of this funding is restrictive in nature; that is, the funders dictate how to allocate provided funds. In 2009, Better World's donors provided the organization with a timeline of one year to revamp the organization's operations using a 'carrots and sticks' approach. The Executive Director of the organization recalled during an interview with me:

“Some programs there were some parts of the organization where funders were about to pull the plug, it was actually quite serious, a lot more serious than I knew when I took the job. So we had to make some really significant changes.”
[Executive Director Interview, March 2017]”

At stake was 95% of the organization's external funding. Their funders wanted greater accountability from the organization as well as improved outcomes for the users of Better World's services. They threatened to withdraw funding entirely should Better World fail to improve (ED in an interview, March 2017 and a Director in an interview May 2018). Thus, Better World was facing pressure to change.

However, this was hardly the only pressure that the organization was facing. A more potent political narrative questioned the very existence of Better World and other similar organizations. Particularly, in 2008, the City of Edmonton initiated what it called a "10-year plan to end homeless". Through this plan, the government sent a clear message that *managing* homelessness through social service agencies was counter to its objectives and proposed a radically different approach for tackling homelessness. "*A Place to Call Home* calls for fundamental change: we must transition from managing homelessness, with short-term solutions, to *ending it*, with housing and support.", notes the detailed plan report (Hughes & Newell, 2009, emphasis added). According to this plan to end homelessness, the first step in getting someone out of the cycle of poverty was to get her housed, instead of serving her a hot cup of soup and a temporary place to relax, which agencies such as Better World did. The plan portrayed homeless people as a burden on the economy and suggested that shelters and drop-in centers were letting the homeless stay homeless by making the state of homelessness too comfortable. For example, the first iteration of the plan published in 2009 states that, "Shelters and drop-in centers and other emergency supports, do not solve the problem of homelessness, they simply manage the crisis." (Hughes & Newell, 2009, p. 8). The report states further:

"The financial costs are less obvious, but chronically homeless citizens consume enormous public resources with frequent emergency room visits and ambulance trips, longer hospital stays, police and court costs, as well as the costs of shelters and other emergency services. One estimate suggests homelessness costs

Canadian taxpayers \$4.5 to \$6 billion every year for 150,000 homeless Canadians.” (Hughes & Newell, 2009, pg. 8)

Inherent to the debate about the role of enterprises serving the homeless in managing versus ending homelessness is a more profound societal disdain for the homeless themselves. These people lie at the very bottom of social order and are often seen as a burden on the hardworking taxpayers’ contributions to the economy. Due to this perspective on the homeless, the agencies serving them can be seen as engaging in “dirty work” (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999), and may, therefore, be stigmatized for their work. City of Edmonton’s plan to end homelessness also stigmatized social enterprises helping the homeless as a ‘trap’.

“They’re (the homeless) caught in the homelessness TRAP, finding themselves up against multiple barriers, including:... Getting ‘lost in the system’: navigating all municipal, provincial and non-profit services for help becomes overwhelming, if not impossible” (Hughes & Newell, 2009)

As such, besides improving on its internal operations to appease its funders, Better World faced pressure to prove the importance and relevance of its work among political circles. Since the initial publication of its plan to end homelessness, the city has updated the plan. While the initial plan published in 2009 aimed at achieving an ‘absolute zero’ level of homelessness in the city, the subsequent iterations of the plan introduced an alternate definition of ending homelessness, termed ‘a functional-zero definition’. By this definition, ending homelessness meant that, “homelessness is prevented whenever possible, and that experiences of homelessness are rare, brief, and non-recurring” (*Updated plan*, 2018). Clearly, this is a more relaxed definition of the objective. Besides moving the target closer, the city government also portrayed social service agencies as partners central to achieving a functional end to homelessness, in the iterations of the plan issued in 2014 and 2018. For example, the 2018 report notes:

“Across the city, (social service) agencies work to help people experiencing homelessness find housing quickly, keeping people from ever becoming chronically homeless or needing an intensive intervention such as a Housing First program” (*Updated plan*, 2018, p. 41)

Although the negative narrative surrounding agencies like Better World has considerably subsided in 2019, it has not been eradicated. Better World remains under scrutiny and pressure as the organization still primarily depends upon government funding to run almost all of its programs. In the words of one of my informants, “it is a love-hate relationship (between Better World and the *agency leading the city’s plan to end homelessness*).”

Finally, the most prominent and recent representation of these hegemonic pressures that Better World has been experiencing was through the city’s decision to construct a national sports arena right across the street from Better World. Construction of the arena was backed by two compelling arguments by the city government and growth coalitions; one argument promising cultural enrichment of the city, and other one addressing the position of the city of Edmonton on national and international fronts. Both these arguments are intertwined and historically grounded. Scherer (2016) provides an excellent summary of events preceding the development of the arena in downtown.

In the 1970s civic elites attempted to position the city of Edmonton as a major city in Canada so as to attract ambitious workforce from across the country. As part of this effort, the city was promoted as a culturally rich city also. These efforts included housing a major hockey league franchise (the Oilers), development of an ice rink in 1974 (known as Rexall Place as of 2016), and the city’s bid for 1978 Commonwealth Games. However, the economic depression of the early 1980s brought along an economic slump, and neither Alberta’s oil boom, nor these new developments did anything for Edmonton (“New Economic Realities,” 2001). Further, developments in the suburbs of the city (e.g., West Edmonton Mall in 1981), drove residents to

the more desirable suburban communities, turning the downtown core mainly into a place of work, devoid of any opportunities for entertainment. These developments were coupled with an increase in the homeless population in the area. Thus, the downtown core of Edmonton came to be perceived as an unsafe place and as a less desirable neighborhood.

This perception continued well into the new millennium, when in 2009 the City of Edmonton, inspired by some major cities in North America, decided to ‘revitalize’ Edmonton’s downtown. This was meant to be the second phase of downtown redevelopment, with early downtown redevelopment starting in 1997. By this time, Alberta’s resource-led economy was strengthening once again, and many developments were approved for the downtown of the provincial capital. These included 4.5 million dollar investment in housing, relocation of university campuses to the downtown core, establishment of a farmer’s market, ‘retrofitting’ a major mall in downtown, inauguration of coffee shops, display of several public art pieces throughout downtown, improved transit and roads infrastructure, and visual enhancement of several public spaces in the area. Due to these developments, the downtown area started gaining popularity as an attractive place to live and work. A report titled “Capital City Downtown Plan,” published by the City of Edmonton in 2010 notes:

“In the past 12 years, Edmonton’s Downtown has undergone dramatic growth and has matured significantly. Led by the development of a variety of new residential and mixed-use projects throughout the Downtown, the Downtown population has doubled. The retail and office sectors have grown, and with the relocation of post-secondary institutions Downtown, the burgeoning student population is helping Downtown become more and more vibrant and livable. This change was supported by a concurrent period of economic growth in the Province of Alberta. Much of the revitalization of Downtown was guided and supported by the award-winning 1997 Downtown Plan.” (*Capital City Downtown Plan*, 2010)

However, the perception of the downtown as a high-crime zone persisted, and homeless people continued to be perceived as the source of criminal activity. For instance, “high crime

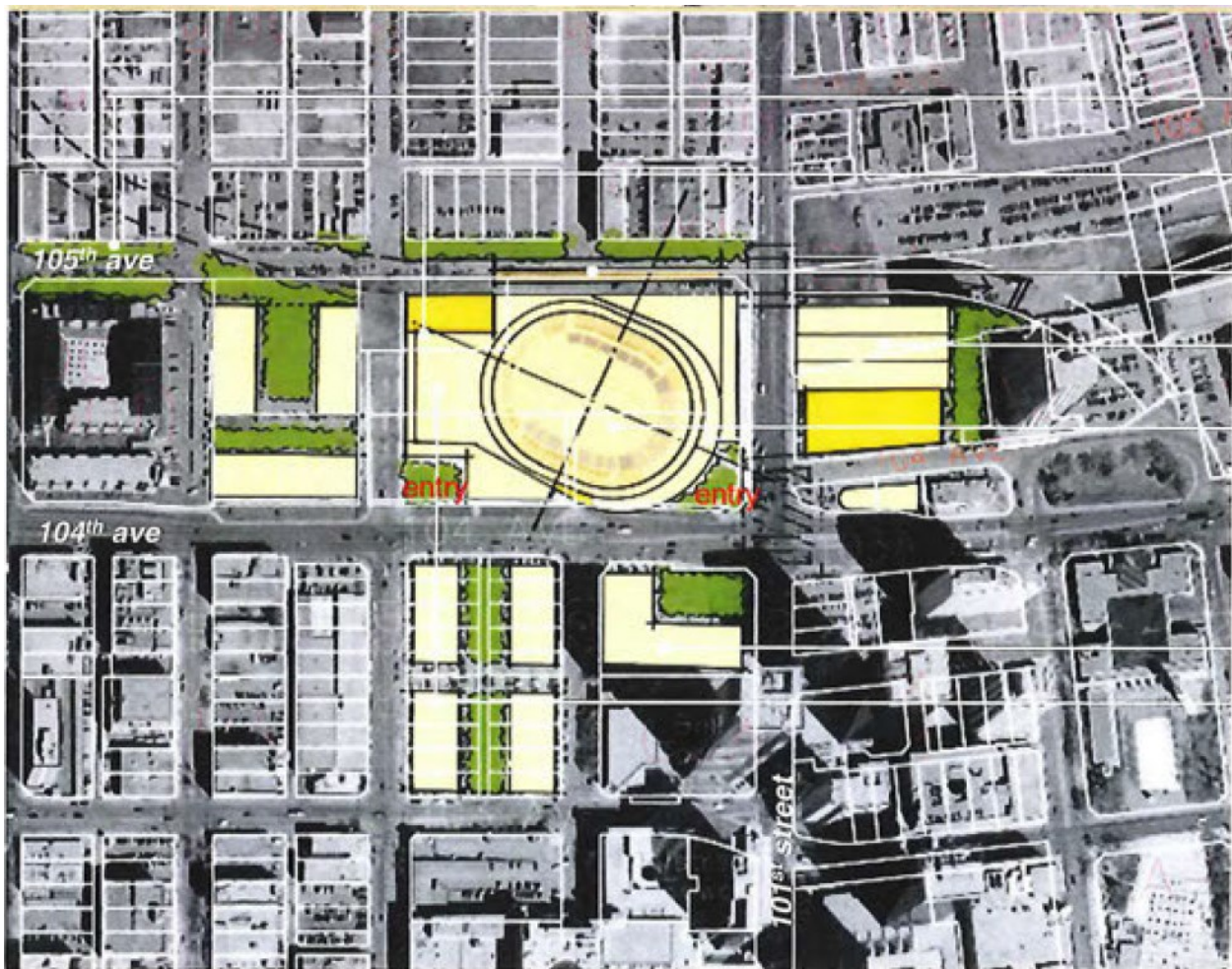
rate” is listed as one of the challenges facing Edmonton downtown in the ‘Capital City Downtown Plan’ report. At this point, the best outcome that Better World hoped to achieve was to be able to stay away from any possible attention from the broader community as it was believed that any attention would certainly be negative attention. In the words of one of my informants:

“... 10 years ago?... when people wanted to scare their kids by showing them negative outcomes they would bring them to Better World and go, ‘look at these people... this is what will happen to you if you don’t study or whatever they wanted their kids to do.’ So we had to put a stop to it and say, hey you can’t come in to do this.” [Interview with Director of Group Homes Program, 2018]

In 2008, Edmonton’s city council decided to conduct a second iteration of downtown redevelopment and prepared a ten-year strategic plan to transform Edmonton (*City of Edmonton strategic plan: The way ahead*, 2009), intending to promote Edmonton as a big league city in Canada. In this plan city council envisioned Edmonton as a city of urban design, art, culture, and recreation. Two outcomes of this plan had direct implications for Better World. First, as a consequence of this plan, extensive construction projects in the downtown core were either approved or made to the pipeline of soon-to-be-constructed projects. Second, the then mayor of the city established a committee and tasked it with proposing a state-of-the-art sports facility as a new home for the city’s hockey team, who had by then become a symbol of the city’s love for hockey (Scherer, 2016). Overall, due to this plan, Better World experienced a massive shift in its immediate physical environment. In Appendix A, I provide two snapshots from Google Earth, comparing Edmonton downtown from 2011 and 2018. The pictures show the transition that Better World’s neighborhood has experienced over the past 10 or so years.

Although all the development projects resulting from the city’s plan to revitalize Edmonton downtown have contributed in giving the downtown area a facelift, it is the sports

arena that has been pivotal in pushing the city's center toward regeneration. The committee that the Mayor had tasked with the preparation of a proposal for the arena, in turn, hired an architecture, design, and planning firm to prepare a detailed report that reviewed two critical aspects of arena development, 1) a viable downtown location and 2) essential components of the future facility. This report, titled 'HOK Sport Study', listed 6 location alternatives for the arena. The following location proposed by the planning firm, though controversial (Scherer, 2016), was finally selected for the arena development.



Source: HOK Sport Study Edmonton, Alberta (2008)

Selection of this location was also a controversial matter as constructing the arena at this location would mean spreading the building of the arena over two blocks and going over a busy

avenue, thereby bumping up the cost of construction. Nonetheless, the decision was made to construct the arena at this location. Scholars have noted political reasons for this decision. For example, one of the professors at the University of Alberta who has extensively studied the arena, notes that the City of Edmonton entered into an agreement with the arena developer in 2013 under duress from the developer (Scherer, 2016). This developer, who is one of the wealthiest men in Canada, also owns the city's National Hockey League (NHL) franchise, the Oilers. According to the agreement, the City of Edmonton was to debt-finance the construction of the new arena in addition to ceding all revenue proceedings generated from the arena to the developer. In return, the owner of the Oilers who had earlier threatened to move the team to Seattle agreed to locate the Oilers in Edmonton for the next 35 years. Since city officials wanted to keep the culture of hockey alive and deemed it necessary for Edmonton to compete on national and internal stages, they conceded the demands of the developer.

Several public interest groups including a privately formed coalition called 'Voices For Democracy', students of the University of Alberta, and members of the Occupy movement resisted the use of public funds for the arena. However, they failed to stop the arena deal despite their intense efforts. The city's weak political opportunity structure did not help either (Scherer, 2016). Consequently, this resistance faded away gradually. One newspaper article reported:

"Dear Occupy Edmonton protesters: The longer you camp out downtown, the more community sympathy will melt away. It's time to pack up and get on with your lives... Occupy Edmonton protesters: if you truly want to make a difference in your lives and the lives of others, decamp from that downtown park."
[Newspaper Archives, November 2011].

In summary, powerful elites backed Better World's new neighbor (at that time potential new neighbor), and systemic forms of domination permeated the context within which the organization operated. Therefore, construction of this sports arena in Better World's immediate

physical environment presented itself as a challenge to the organization and Better World feared being overshadowed literally and metaphorically by the physical structure, civic elites, and influential developers. Interestingly, Better World responded to the arena very forcefully and emerged as a stronger organization itself. I now recount my initial impressions of the organization and explain how I saw and heard it evolve.

Better World 'in the process of becoming'

My interaction with the organization started in summer of 2016 when the then Director of Programs and Development at Better World reached out to my doctoral supervisor and asked her if she knew someone who might be interested in documenting what Better World was doing. He said they were going through exciting times, a lot was happening, and they would like an outside perspective on what they were doing. At that time, I was finishing the second year of my doctoral program and was beginning to be interested in the issue of homelessness in downtown. As part of my program requirements, I had written a preliminary draft of a paper whereby I aimed to understand how the public library in downtown Edmonton was balancing the needs of its homeless clients along with its other patrons.

Also, having completed my coursework recently, with special attention to organizational theory and topics in institutional theory, I was keen to contribute to the theories of hybrid organizing and institutional complexity on the ground. When my advisor told me that Better World is mainly a homeless-serving organization and are doing very interesting things including opening a bank, I instantaneously became wide-eyed at the possibility of studying how institutional complexity works on the ground. Based on my reading of the literature on hybrid organizing, I expected to see some tensions and hoped to follow the process to see how Better World resolved those tensions. Subsequently, my advisor introduced me to Better World's

Director of Programs and Development, whom I shall address as Jo (a pseudonym) and left it up to us to connect further.

I first met with Jo at a café in downtown. He was quite keen on the idea of having me around at Better World as a researcher and welcomed me to study the organization, “we have never had someone come in and study us, we’re growing a lot... it would be great if someone could come in and take stock of what we’re doing”. Since at that time, I was more interested in studying Better World’s soon to be opened bank, I asked if he could set me up at the bank. He told me he needed to ask Better World’s partner bank as he wasn’t sure if the regulations would allow that and asked me to send him some paperwork including the purpose of my study, and a statement of proposed methods. In the same meeting, I also set up an appointment for a facility tour.

My first visit to Better World was exciting, though it filled me with mixed emotions. In my first journal entry after this visit, I wrote about how much bigger the organization is on the inside than it appears to be from outside, and about being excited at the thought of knowing more about the organization. During the tour, I candidly admitted to Jo that even though I had looked at their website before coming to visit, I wasn’t able to accurately estimate the expanse of their programming “... yeah, it is a whole different world once you come in... we do a lot in here and in fact, we’re thinking of developing a better building, which would be more reflective of everything that we do..” he replied. (I did not make much of this vital statement until much later). At the same time, I remember experiencing pungent odors in the drop-in center and feeling overwhelmed at the thought of spending considerable time there.

During this tour, Jo quickly stopped someone and mentioned something about an email that he had sent to them earlier. Once done talking to them, he turned to me and said, “when you

find someone here just tell them whatever you want to say... it can be hard to find them afterward, and we don't work very well with email here..." Thus, when he suggested that I serve as a volunteer for some time at Better World's drop-in center, if I wanted to know who the organization really is, I took his suggestion seriously and registered with the volunteer program at Better World. Jo introduced me to their in-charge of volunteers through an email, and we set up a time for me to see the in-charge of volunteers, JK soon afterward. During a subsequent visit to Better World, JK gave me an overview of the drop-in center and registered me as a volunteer. The following excerpt from my field notes captures my first impressions of the organization in detail:

I was excited, I was nervous, I was a bit anxious. It was my first day in the field! I had been living in the vicinity of the organization for the past two years, I had 'googled' about the organization and had also been given an inside tour, but this was different! I was going to be 'in the thick of it' for the very first time. I was supposed to meet with the in-charge of volunteers to sign a formal volunteering contract. I was also hoping to find out the details of my duties, and maybe even find a desk and to know where to hang my coat and bag when I come to work. As I hurriedly made my way to the organization, wanting to be on, or ideally a bit before time, I noticed another man walking in the same general direction as I was. It seemed that he was in no rush to get anywhere. There were so many other men and women around me, but there was something peculiar about him. He was tall and a bit bulky, was vaping, was wearing loose clothing, his oversized plaid shirt was worn over a grey t-shirt and had not been buttoned up, and he was carrying a cross-body laptop bag as if he worked at an office. 'how peculiar', I thought, 'His office environment must not be very formal'.

He was walking a bit slow for my liking, and I felt a little uneasy by his relaxed pace and at his apparent lack of wanting to reach anywhere quickly, but I didn't want to be rude, so I kept walking behind him, maintaining my distance. When I reached the intersection where I was supposed to cross the road to get to the organization, I could see the shiny new arena and Better World, *the* organization that I had been walking toward, standing in stark contrast with each other.

Now feeling rushed time-wise, I walked a bit faster, passing by him and reached Better World, shirking the thoughts of that man. At the reception, I informed the concierge that I had come to visit JK the in-charge of volunteers. He pointed to the person right behind me, 'that's the man', he replied, looking at someone right behind me. I turned around to find out that my boss-to-be and the in-charge of

volunteers was the same person whom I had been noticing on my way to Better World.

I introduced myself to JK, and he led me to his office located in the drop-in center for the homeless people. As he made his way to the office, cutting through groups of people standing in the hallways, people nodded at him, came to chat with him quickly and even before he had made his way inside his office, a couple of people told him that they had been waiting for him. It seemed that he had been missed while gone for a break.

His office was nothing like the offices that I had seen so far in my life. It was a small (perhaps 6' x 6' or smaller) and dark room located in the corner of the drop-in center, with no windows. He didn't turn on the light and it surprised me a bit; he told me later one day that he didn't like to work under the modern office lights. JK told me that he is ok with me starting as a volunteer. We mutually decided that I will begin in the Drop-in area and the new bank that the organization had started. We signed a formal contract, which was not longer than a few lines and fit well within a single page. I obtained a hardcopy of the agreement. The following conversation exchange happened:

Me: So, what would my responsibilities be?

JK: Yeah, you can help around in the kitchen, or clean the tables, or just see where you're needed. We're going through winter emergency response right now, and it gets really busy at meal times and in the mornings... by the way, you won't have insurance here...

Me: I have Provincial health, and I am also covered under...

JK: No, I mean if something, like an incident happens here we won't be able to cover you because you're coming in as a volunteer... you know, you never know.

Me: Oh, ok! that's fine.

JK: So, all I expect is that you respect our community members, whenever you can, address them by their names... in many cases, that's all that they have. And don't just come and go, trust is really important with our community members. He then gave me a tour of the drop-in center. There were other offices beside his office, there was a kitchen area and an open hall with a round-table seating arrangement for 'community members' (clients) to come in and be seated. "And whenever you come in, you can record your work hours; we use an honor system. I'll show you the binder when we walk there.", JK said, walking me to the kitchen.

JK also showed me the red binder that volunteers used to record their timings. He then walked me over to the bank. On our way to the bank I asked him, "is there space for volunteers to keep their stuff as they are working on the floor and he responded, "you could leave it my office, but that is also a high traffic area..."

people come in and go all the time, plus you won't be able to access your things if I am away. Don't bring anything of value to you; 5 thefts reported, just this morning. Yeah, it is not safe to bring your stuff to the drop-in area. That's the reality". He told me again that my position as a volunteer would be kind of flexible and that I could write my own job description. [Adapted from field notes, October 2016]

In retrospect, this first interaction with Better World told me a whole lot about who the organization was – it was a grassroots organization, where people worked “in the trenches,” to use an emic term. It was also an organization that cared about building strong relationships with its clients, more than it cared about policies and procedures. One of the managers who had been with Better World for over a decade fondly recalled the historical work practices in an interview with me. See the excerpt below from an initial exploratory interview with her. I had started by asking, ‘what has changed inside and outside the organization?’

B-Jo: It used to be more smaller, grassroots organization, a lot different than what we are now, which is significantly larger.

Me: when you say significantly different, does it mean in terms of connecting with people you're serving, or does it mean formally?

B-Jo: a lot more policies/procedures, more of a bureaucrat now.

Me: so formal organization?

B-Jo: probably more than before. Before it was a lot more unprofessional if that's a word someone might use, maybe not quite as polished, very similar to what can be expected from any grassroots community type place. Everybody has more say, more connected and know each other, so it makes for different practice or work. Now, we're larger, more employees, programs, funding, so that makes a big difference too. I think that's kind of what I see.

Me: What I'm hearing is a lot of change in terms of the organization focusing more on writing things, writing reports. How has it influenced your work with the users of the service?

B-Jo: There's a lot more printing, reporting, computer time, note taking, policies/procedures in how things are done. It's more professional, so the difference in practice that I can see in my practice, there's less community engagement, the way I knew it to be. I don't know if we're more busy or if

people are zoned into the specific funding areas or the jobs that they do. Before, there was more time spent going for coffee, playing cards in the drop-in. There was a different feel. It also has to do with the difference in the direction of the ED (executive director), she (the former ED) was a social worker, so she maybe had more of a social work lens that she looked through and would prioritize. The present ED comes more from a business perspective, so he prioritizes getting more money, securing finances so different views and perspectives of where the organization should have been and gone.

During my time at Better World, I observed that members frequently spoke about two issues: a changing Better World and Better World's own building redevelopment plan. Both of these processes unfolded in parallel, and over the course of my data collection, Better World started emerging as a different version of itself in terms of size, formalization of modus operandi, internal practices, and the authority with which it spoke on behalf of the homeless people.

Further, members' understanding of Better World also changed such that they started seeing Better World as a more powerful organization. In response to my interview questions about the evolution of members' understanding of who Better World is, almost all of the informants described the change along four dimensions: growth of the organization, greater formalization and professionalization, an outward-looking focus of the organization, and a greater sense of powerfulness of the organization. Table 2 portrays Better World's identity change, as described by its members.

Table 2- Portraying Organizational Identity Change

Change Dimension	Representative Quotes
Exponential Growth	<p>“This year we've seen a significant increase in our revenues- just over 30% to over \$15m a year - and a growth in the staff group to nearly 300.” [Annual report, 2016 – Note from the Executive Director]</p> <p>“This was a year of continued and considerable growth. We saw an 11.4% increase in revenues taking us over annual revenues of nearly \$20 million; the highest revenue in our history. The staff group also grew, reaching 343. And our fund development work really hit its stride and increased by 19.1% from the previous year.” [Annual report, 2018 – Note from the Executive Director]</p>
Formalization and Professionalization	<p>Researcher: In the context of ‘day force’ (the new electronic payroll system). I guess the broader question is whether the organization is moving toward more formal mechanisms of doing work?</p> <p>Informant: “... When I was... 20, 30 years ago when I started as a mental health therapist in the inner city, Better World had maybe 70 or 80 employees, and now we’re over 300. And so you can't do things the same way for 300 you did for 80. 80 is quite small, 300 still small in the big scheme of things, but it's still (larger). You better have more formal systems in order to survive...” [Interview, Manager youth and family unit, 2017 Nov]</p> <p>“...when you come to work for Better World, you have to understand who we are and what our organizational culture is. And we pushed that a lot... our staff group is changing as well. So, we're hiring a lot more people who are university educated, who are middle class, who are young. (Who are coming from places where) there's an expectation of certain policies being in place and certain practices being followed, and so we've kind of had to adapt, and I think grow to that because some of our old school folks that have been around longer are more used to that nonprescriptive (ways of doing things).” [Interview, Director of Operations, 2017 Nov].</p>
Outward-looking Organization	<p>“Another thing which is important in this day and age is a strong presence on social media. To this end, we hired a social media specialist this year to guide us in that work and that world, and as a consequence, we have a stronger more articulate more present presence on social media.” [Annual Report, 2017]</p> <p>“(speaking of changes seen lately) I think there's been more emphasis... one of the things, so from the prior ED, the public face of Better World was not so important. We didn't have a media person...; she didn't avoid the news; certainly, she would go on the news, but it wasn't with the perspective of highlighting Better World for donations, for example. Whereas now that is certainly a part of what we do.” [Interview, Manager Street Works program, 2018 Jun]</p>
Feeling Powerful	<p>Researcher: maybe one last question. So, these are two photos showing Better World and the arena (Appendix B). I am thinking of using this in my dissertation. Do they generate any thoughts for you?</p> <p>Manager: Umm...Not really. I mean just like, when I think about it and how much I thought, what I saw when they were building this and that it would swallow us up almost alive. It really doesn't. I think that we, it's almost like that David and Goliath idea, right, like I really look at this image, and it's like despite that being open, like we still stand strong, we're still who we are, and as much as people thought that we wouldn't be able to cohabitate, we have been and successfully. [manager operations, 2018]</p>

Manager (speaking of recent changes that he has seen, especially in the context of building redevelopment): as thought leaders, people know what's going on with us. Like I think that that was a real, that's really important. It's set off, and you know, it's coupled with a growing organization and new programming and all of that stuff has been a real boon from that as well. And I think that that's all really positive.
[Communications Lead, 2018]

Further, responding to the arena led to other positive outcomes for the organization as well. In Appendix E, I have compiled evidence that elucidates that Better World's response to the arena transformed it into a stronger organization. Specifically, using a set of 350 newspapers articles retrieved from the Factiva database using the keyword "Better World", I conducted a preliminary textual analysis to situate the term 'Better World' in a context of words (Key Words In Context, KWIC, Hannigan et al., 2018)). This technique revealed that Better World was being used increasingly in conjunction with the terms including, 'mayor', 'minister', 'arena(name)', and 'downtown', indicating that Better World indeed rose to prominence while responding to the arena in its neighborhood.

Better World is one of the most prominent social enterprises in the city serving the homeless since 1971 in the downtown core of Edmonton. The organization started very small when a good-hearted social worker organized a few of her colleagues to help the homeless people in the city, especially those congregating in the downtown core. In the words of one of my informants, the organization 'started as a store-front location in a banana ripening facility' [Interview, Executive Director, March 2017]. The social work roots of the organization are reflected in the organization's practices even to this day. After changing three different locations in downtown and operating several separate units due to lack of a proper site, the organization finally found a place to call home in its current location in 1995; since then the current location of the organization has become its headquarters. The organization runs some operations from

seven other sites as well. However, the hub of organizational activity is its primary downtown location.

Better World runs over forty different programs and services for the neediest in the city. Out of these, the longest running services include a drop-in center for its clients (addressed as *community members* at the organization), outreach services that help meet immediate needs such as food, warm clothing, and first aid, youth and family support program to help first-time parents or young mothers who live in poverty, employment readiness program that prepares people for jobs, housing assistance service that helps place the most needy individuals and families in affordable accommodations, mental health services that enable community members develop positive coping skills in order to deal with the challenges of street life and their personal tragedies, and a group-home program where youth aged 2 to 18 are housed in a safe, home-like environment.

The organization operated quietly from its downtown location until the city government decided to construct an arena in the organization's neighborhood, that too right across the street in front of Better World. In turn, the organization felt a threat to its location; "they [the new arena] don't want us here", was a common theme that surfaced in the discussions regarding the arena. The arena was finally constructed and started operating in September 2016. With the new arena looming large over Better World, the organization was at the heart of the action and felt threatened about their future in the same location due to all the attention that their new shiny next-door neighbor attracted. This unwanted attention caused the threat of displacement as the issue of homelessness in the city that had been previously managed in the inner core, was now prominent and turned into a 'not-in-my-backyard' situation. Not only did the creation of the new arena made the presence of Better World questionable, but also it raised questions about the

historical connotations associated with the term, ‘inner city’, challenging the presence of the homeless in the area.

Better World responded to this disruption assertively. Instead of finding another quiet location to operate from, the organization chose to stay in the area and in the process of safeguarding its place in downtown, emerged as a strong and vocal advocate of the homeless – a considerable change from their previous selves where they were a quiet and small organization. I conducted a rich and immersive ethnographic study of the organization over a period of 19 months. In this study, I explore Better World’s response to the threat of displacement in order to understand how place-oriented environmental disruptions influence the flow of organizational identity over time.

Research approach and philosophy

I approached this study from an interpretive perspective, that is, with the underlying belief that multiple actors form multiple subjective meanings about objects and issues around them and that these meanings are negotiated “socially and historically” (Berger & Luckmann, 1991 [1965]; Creswell, 2007 pg. 21; Meyers, 2009). Essentially interpretivism assumes that people experience the world subjectively and thus their perceptions of reality vary. Further, these perceptions are formed through ongoing processes of interaction and negotiation. Therefore, as a researcher I see as my job to *understand* subjective meanings, taken-for-granted knowledge, actions, and interactions of actors within their social setting, instead of being focused on *a* reality that is ‘out there, waiting to be discovered’. Consequently, following Charmaz’s (2006) and Clifford’s (1983) recommendations, my ultimate goal for this research is to interpret local culture and to provide a conceptualization of the studied phenomena in abstract terms. Thus, I deemed an immersive study the best epistemological approach to explore my field setting in detail.

Similarly, some broad questions that I have used as mental guidelines throughout data collection have been aimed at understanding people's experience of their social worlds. For example, how do actors experience their work, what issues do they deem important and relevant, and how do they interpret pressing issues. Clearly, this approach is farther away from neat causal models; messy explorations following from these questions require immersion in the setting and developing an understanding of actors' worlds (Van Maanen, 2011). Further, since a scientific method cannot be laid out upfront that would automatically lead to 'the truth' (Smith, 2008), I approached the field with the mindset that research question, as well as design, will evolve over time and thus entered the setting with open-ended questions and an open mind.

An interpretive approach is well suited for this study for two reasons. First, due to a lack of prior familiarity with "local knowledge" (Geertz, 1983, p. 167) or specific understanding of what was to be studied in the field, I was willing to be guided by the setting toward my research question. Even Jo, Better World's Director of Programs and Development couldn't quite put his finger on what the top management exactly wanted by my involvement with the organization or what is it that would be of immediate interest to the organization. Therefore, I tried to rely on my own observation of Better World to tell me what's exciting and relevant to the members or surprising to me as a researcher. Second, Charmaz (2006b) argues that interpretive theorizing has a broader reach as it can move beyond the studied phenomena, immediate individuals or situations and is, therefore, a more robust approach to theorizing (as opposed to a positivist approach).

Building on this philosophical approach, I designed this research as an ethnographic study where I associated myself with the organization for a considerably long period of 19 months. This research design suited my ontological commitments as it provided me "access to

the meaning” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019, p. 8) that guided social action and the processes that generate such action. Also, it was appropriate given the “theory-method fit” (Gehman et al., 2018) that it furnished.

One particular tool available to researchers approaching their study from an interpretivist perspective is ‘reflexivity’ (Creswell, 2007; Devereux & Hoddinott, 1993; Van Maanen, 2011). The analogy used for understanding reflexivity is that of a mirror and a person. While reflection is simply a person staring at themselves in the mirror, a person engaging in reflexivity is thought of as looking at themselves from a distance while they see their reflection in the mirror. This can be contrasted with traditional forms of ethnography where the researcher’s purpose was to be a ‘fly on the wall’ to minimize the influence of the researcher on the field setting. In contrast, reflexive anthropology takes the researcher as a part of the ethnography itself (Devereux & Hoddinott, 1993). Therefore, the researchers’ interactions, reactions to observations, and their overall experience all form part of the data.

An alternative way to understanding reflexivity is by juxtaposing it against naturalism. From a naturalistic perspective an ethnographer’s task is to walk the fine line between being an insider and an outsider, thereby capturing cultural variations or patterns from an insider’s as well as from an outsider’s perspective. In other words, naturalism suggests ‘marginalism’ as a *modus operandi* to ethnographers. In contradistinction to naturalism, reflexivity acknowledges that a researcher’s social background, their history, values, and interests all play a vital role in shaping a researcher’s orientation toward their work. Therefore, all these characteristics will reflect in different aspects of her research, including data gathering and analysis (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019). Therefore, marginalism (or objectivity, as proposed by positivists) should not be the goal of an ethnographer. The objective should be to ‘just be’ and acknowledge that being

in the field means influencing data collection and letting one's being form a part of the entire process.

Accordingly, these understandings of reflexivity have two implications for an ethnographic account. First, authors adopting a reflexive approach will likely engage in “meditations” on the conditions of production of ethnographies (Van Maanen, 2011). Van Maanen (2011) notes two important conventions for the creation of such meditative accounts. He terms these “personalized author(ity)” (pg. 74) (i.e., first-person accounts) and “the fieldworker’s point of view” (pg. 76) that is, showing one’s vulnerabilities, flaws, and potentially an evolving understanding of the culture being observe. And second, authors of ethnographies will create their own path for analysis (of course, while following best practices), instead of walking a pre-defined path (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019). I relied heavily on this technique during data collection as well as analysis. For example, I drew ‘big stars’ in my field notes to indicate my surprise during field observations. I also developed a ‘side-note’ convention to record my own reactions too – my field notes are often marked with little notes on the side of the page where I documented how I reacted to a situation at that moment. Consequently, I adopt this approach in my writing of this dissertation as well.

Following my research philosophy, I upheld two principles in the field – it is important to observe people in their natural settings, and it is crucial to observe interactions; this process has been adaptive and iterative. Thus, rather than being guided by a specific theory, I have let my first experiences at the setting, direct my research questions and design. In line with commonly suggested protocols of an interpretive inquiry (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002), I have adhered to broad questions and have attempted to observe processes of interaction up close. Below I describe my research design and analysis procedures in greater detail.

Data collection and analysis

Although my field setting was entirely novel to me, and it was my first experience of conducting an organizational ethnography, I had taken a course in ethnographic methods during the coursework of my doctoral program. Therefore, I expected that I would need to collect rich data from multiple sources including field observations, interviews, informal chats, documents, and other archival sources (Creswell, 2007; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019). Soon after entering the field, I found this theoretical knowledge becoming a necessity.

I had set out to study the bank that Better World had started operating. This bank was soon to be officially launched when I entered the organization. However, the official launch of the bank got delayed (almost by a year), and I discovered that organizational members were far more concerned about the building redevelopment plan. Therefore, I started paying closer attention to their actions and the backstory regarding building redevelopment. As the focus of my study shifted from the initial interest in the bank, I found myself surrounded by a host of information, which was not readily discernable due to my lack of prior knowledge of the organization. I was especially intrigued by Better World's efforts aimed at staying in downtown and the question, 'why can't they just move' kept puzzling me. Therefore, in order to fully understand what was going on around me and to interpret the data being obtained through observations, I relied on documents, informal chats, and interviews. I adhered to this approach throughout my fieldwork as I found that this helped me better understand the motivations and processes leading to Better World's actions. Below I describe how I obtained my data from a variety of sources and the strategies that I adopted for analyzing it.

Also, since my study involved human participants, I obtained approval to collect data from the Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. A copy of my ethics approval form is attached at Appendix F.

Field access and rapport

While I had officially gained what many organizational ethnographers have termed ‘unfettered access’ to the organization, and while members of Better World welcomed me in the organization with open arms and exhibited immense generosity right from the get-go, I discovered that it still took time and patience for them to fully get used to my presence at the organization. I first realized this while volunteering at the drop-in center when one of Better World’s community members (users of their services) warned me not to “plant bombs” at her Better World after coming to know my country of origin [adapted from field notes, November 2016]. I knew I would have to be tactful (in the best possible way) to make people around me comfortable with my presence.

I used several strategies to gain acceptability. First, I dressed very casually in an attempt to minimize the possibility of standing out. Second, I controlled my urge to record things while ‘in the thick of it’. Instead, I kept a small notepad and a small pen concealed in the back pocket of my jeans and only took notes (scribbles) either when in the restroom or just after leaving, even though I told all informants candidly that I was a researcher to maintain integrity later on. Third, I tried to be opportunistic and attempted to manage a positive image while in the field. For example, after suspecting me for a terrorist and addressing me as such that same community member kept asking me to fetch her things including “water, coffee, toilet paper roll, and information about pet food”. However, despite experiencing a mix of frustration, anger, and sadness at that moment, I kept helping her. Fourth, whenever possible, I tried to remember

people's names and addressed them by their names. JK, my boss at the drop-in center, had said at the time of recruiting me as a volunteer that many times a name is all that their community members have, so I was always careful about trying to remember their names. Finally, I kept showing up despite feeling vulnerable and at times, not wanting to go at all. My going through this emotional roller coaster paid off: not only did my time spent volunteering at the drop-in center at Better World help me truly understand the roots of the organization, but it also informed my interpretation of the interactions of members of the management team during their meetings. Also, it earned me well-coveted respect from some of the community members. I reproduce the following incident from my field notes to show that my presence had been accepted at the drop-in center:

“I was just going to put away empty dishes that I had picked up while cleaning after lunchtime when one community member sitting at a table almost in the center of the room called me up saying, ‘miss, please come here when you’re done putting those away’. I went to their table after putting the dishes away, and then what followed was the best experience that I had while volunteering at Better World.

J: we saw you work around here and we wanted to thank you. We’ve seen many volunteers come, but they just hide in the kitchen back there and don’t talk to the people around here.

Me: Oh, thank you!!! (I must have looked embarrassed as he continued to say more)

J: No seriously, everyone who comes to volunteer here has something going, even then people like you come here for us and then give us your time, so that’s wonderful.

Then he introduced me to R and B at the table; they told me about their backgrounds, and I heard their moving stories of struggle, bravery, and persistence. Before leaving from the drop-in center, B hugged me and thanked me again. Her eyes were beautiful, so I praised her, and she smugly told me that she gets a lot of propositions at the drop-in, but that she knows that some of them might be motivated by the fact that she is housed. She left soon afterward, and I got chatting with a staff member...” [Adapted from field notes, February 2017]

This incident gave me confidence that my presence was no longer a threat to the community members. In fact, Jo, the director who had suggested that I volunteer at the drop-in happened to witness this incident and later commented, “I see that you have made friends here and they’re (community members are) comfortable... that’s really good”. Being able to gain the confidence of community members also helped break the ice with the management team. Members of the management team often showed up in the drop-in center for ‘lunch coverage’, that is, to cover for the drop-in staff so that they could take their lunch breaks. There, I had a chance to meet or at least see some of the managers from teams, including operations, development, finance, housing, street outreach, and needle-exchange programs at the drop-in. Therefore, when they saw me later during management team meetings, I was not a total stranger.

While still volunteering, I found out during an informal chat with the manager of Better World’s new bank that the management team meets once a week (every Wednesday) to discuss the broader issues facing the organization. She was also one of the first informants to tell me that the organization was soon to come up with its new building plan and that the management team was extremely busy with that project. This information, coupled with my amazement at the contrast between Better World and their arena neighbor intrigued me to dig deeper into the matter using documents. It is by reading these documents, including newspaper articles, and reports published by the city of Edmonton, that I came to realize how big a deal was the arena for Better World. Therefore, I asked for access to management team meetings and gathered rich data by attending management team meetings between January 2017 and May 2018.

Data Sources

The data that I collected for this study can primarily be grouped under four broad categories, as outlined by Creswell (2007): Field observations, interviews, documents, and

audio-visual artifacts. Collection of these data was guided by best practices described in texts on qualitative (especially ethnographic) methods (e.g., Corbin & Strauss, 2014; Creswell, 2007; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019; Myers, 2013; Van Maanen, 2011). I collected these data from a variety of sources in order to be able to develop a rich understanding of my context. Many decisions regarding data collection were situation specific. I narrate the process of data collection below:

Field Observations

I started as a volunteer-researcher at Better World's drop-in center and their newly opened bank. Not knowing what to observe, my initial field notes favored breadth over depth of observations (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019). In the beginning, I tried to jot down at least a few lines about each and everything I observed during my time at Better World. Field notes in the beginning also served as accounts of the physical environment within the organization, for example, description of offices, and layout of spaces. Gradually, however, I started writing more in-depth notes while still aiming not to sacrifice breadth entirely. Hammersley and Atkinson (2019) note that this is expected depending upon the researcher's early experiences in the field. For example, one of the field notes that I wrote after volunteering in the drop-in center was dedicated almost entirely to elaborating upon the lunch routine. I documented how hamburgers were distributed for lunch and included minutiae about who served lunch, who all were in the kitchen. How some people were being served at their tables, while others had to wait in queue, how some people in the line were cursing at their turn, how did volunteers serving lunch react to their cursing, how did employees respond to their cursing, how someone fought with the servers when we ran out of food. I volunteered at Better World for a total of 50 hours between October

2016 and February 2017. I used initial days of observation to shortlist potential interview informants for exploratory interviews.

Further, after obtaining access to management team meetings, I sat on weekly management team meetings as a silent observer between January 2017 and May 2018. Jo, who was my primary contact at the organization, acted as my liaison upon my request and after obtaining support for my attendance of these management meetings from the management team, invited me to join in. The bulk of data comes from observation of the management meetings. I attended four types of management meetings: weekly management team meetings (47), where the top management team of the organization met to discuss important issues pertinent to the organization and made important organization-wide decisions. These meetings were well structured and proceeded in the order of a pre-defined meeting agenda distributed to the attendees ahead of time. I also attended 12 ‘daily morning meetings’; attendees included all staff present at Better World’s premises, including members of the top management team as well as front line staff. These meetings can be thought of as an organizational-level communication mechanism; here the agenda was guided by issues pertinent on an everyday basis, and members informed each other of important upcoming events, or other details relevant to the entire organization. Finally, I attended five departmental meetings and one management retreat session, which was a moderated session for the whole management team to discuss issues facing the organization and them as managers.

In total, I attended 65 management meetings, daily morning meetings, and other management events, yielding a total of 112 hours of observation. Management meetings offered an excellent opportunity to understand what was relevant to Better World as an organization, the actions that the organization was taking, and the processes through which they were arriving at

decisions resulting in those actions. The duration of these meetings ranged from 20 minutes to 8 hours. On average, weekly management team meetings, which are the most important source of data for this study, lasted for 1 hour and 45 minutes. A majority of these meetings were audio-recorded; I also took hand-written notes during meetings. I deemed these to cause minimal interruption to the process as these meetings were always being recorded internally (assistant to the Executive Director typed minutes during meetings) and almost all members of the management team appeared at the meeting with memo pads, notepads, or laptops and recorded and took notes during meetings. Therefore, my notetaking behavior was not awkward or outright disruptive.

Documents

Documents are another critical source of data. I collected publicly available documents from sources, including City of Edmonton archives (325), and local newspapers (350). I also collected 37 documents from Better World's internal records, including the organization's building redevelopment proposal, three-year strategic plan, communications strategy, organizational charts, organizational policy documents, and annual reports. I have primarily used these documents to understand the context of my study and to trace part of the process of identity change from pre-observation stages.

I first started collecting documents during the early days of observations at the bank. The two organizations presented such a vast material contrast that every time I walked to Better World, I couldn't help but notice it. One incident, in particular, guided my initial conversations about the arena with members of Better World.

Today, October 6th, 2016, was supposed to be my first day in the field. However, on this very day construction crew working at the sports arena accidentally broke Better World's main water supply consequently flooding Better World's

basement. The building was vacated and shut down for the day. Both the manager of the bank and the in-charge of volunteers wrote emails to me to stop me from visiting that day and told me that they will reschedule when possible. one of the emails read:

“Hi Asma,

Due to circumstances beyond our control (water outage and flooding) we are suspending operations for the day.

I will re-contact you when possible to reschedule our meeting.

JK, Drop-in & Volunteer Coordinator, Better World”

[Adapted from field notes, October 2016]

I was a bit disappointed about not being able to go to the field on my first day of field visit. However, in retrospect, this incident was vital in shaping the direction of my research. I started finding newspaper articles online about the new arena and Better World and came across articles that informed me that the development of the arena had been important to Better World. Also, when I did reschedule a visit to Better World, later on in October 2016, conversations about the arena acted as an ice-breaker, especially at the bank with the bank manager. Sitting in the well-lit open space of the bank with large windows, we could see the arena. When I asked how the repair work had been coming along, she shook her head and rolled her eyes, “it has been a mess! Can you imagine, we’ve had to keep people (community members) out, our mental health unit (which operated from the basement of the building) had to move (upstairs in the same building), ... people are sharing offices, don’t know when will this (construction across the street) end” [adapted from field notes, October 2016]. Thus, I started looking for background information through documents. Collection of relevant documents continued throughout analysis and initial write-ups. In total, documents collected have yielded 1580 pages of text.

Interviews

“Ethnographic interviews” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019, p. 108) are the third important source of data for this study. These interviews served two purposes. First, to gain focus and second to gain insights pertaining to the phenomena that I was observing during later stages. Initial interviews highlighted participants’ views on what was important from an organizational perspective and therefore, helped direct my focus during observations. When I started at the organization as a volunteer, I could hardly understand what to ‘observe’. Thus, in line with my research approach, I reached out to ten members of the organization including the executive director, directors, and managers, using a mix of opportunistic and purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2007). During these preliminary interviews, I asked them open-ended questions about changes the interviewees may have observed in and around Better World, and whether they liked some aspects of their job more than others. I was able to schedule interviews with 7 of these organizational members. These initial interviews enabled me to understand that members of Better World saw the organization as different from before, especially in terms of growth and professionalization. These interviews also revealed that top levels in the organization were deeply concerned about their new neighbor – the arena. Thus, I decided to zoom in (Nicolini, 2008) on members’ changing understanding of a Better World and the organization’s response to the arena.

During later stages of data collection, my observations pointed me toward potential interviewees for more ethnographic interviews. I conducted 35 additional interviews between fall of 2017 and June 2018. Before conducting these interviews, I had engaged in preliminary analysis (explained ahead), and therefore, these later interviews were more theoretically focused and the sample was chosen more purposefully (Creswell, 2007; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019).

All interviews were semi-structured and audio-recorded. Interview length ranged from 1 to 4 hours. Interviews were transcribed with the help of electronic and human transcribers.

Besides formal interviews, I used my time while volunteering at the drop-in to engage in informal chats with members of the organization who would come to the drop-in center. I engaged in 12 informal chats, which lasted for 30 minutes on average. During these chats, I had the opportunity to talk to six frontline staff members, three volunteers, and three assistant managers.

Audio-Visual Artifacts

Finally, I collected other audio-visual artifacts, including photographs (43), videos (11), maps (10), and webpages (5). These have also helped me contextualize and to capture the richness of Better World's story.

The following table, Table 3, represents data sources and their uses in the process of analysis.

Table 3- Data Sources and Uses in Analysis

Data (# of pages)	What's Included?	Where From?	What For?
Observation Notes (825 Pages)	Participant and Non-Participant observations	50 hours of volunteer work at the drop-in center between October 2016 and February 2017 and Attendance of 65 management team meetings between January 2017 and May 2018 (112 hours of observation)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. To understand what the organization deems important and relevant b. To situate actions within their historical context (why is the organization doing what it is doing) c. To guide the formation of theoretical research question d. To understand specific actions being taken for the management of identity
Interviews (560 Pages)	7 exploratory interviews 35 Interviews in second wave	1 Executive Director, 6 directors and 17 managers, 8 assistant managers, President, CEO downtown business association, ED partner organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. To triangulate on organization's view of 'what's relevant' . b. To ask follow-up questions on observation notes d. To understand members' views of Better World (and their evolution) e. To understand members' interpretations of the place-oriented disruption
Documents (1580 Pages)	Organization's blog, website, annual reports, published social media, newsletter sent to 'ambassadors', strategic plan and communication strategy documents, organizational charts, emails, meeting minutes, meeting agenda (37) Newspaper Articles (350) Provincial, Municipal, and other field-level Documents (325)	Organizational website and organization's social media handles, organizational records Widely circulated and read newspapers locally and nationally; based on keywords using organization name City's website, Mayor's blog, Canadian Observatory for Homelessness, New arena's website, Homeward Trust's website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. To understand the mission and goals of the organization b. To develop ideas for interview questions c. To develop a timeline of events d. To understand the historical evolution of organizational identity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. To understand the issue of homelessness and the importance of arena development b. To strengthen understanding of pressing issues gained from observations c. To triangulate information from interviews <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. To trace the historical evolution of the 'inner city' b. To develop ideas and themes for interviews c. To understand the issue of homelessness d. To understand the context of arena development
Other Audio-Visual Sources (69)	Photographs, maps, videos, blogs, etc.	Taken on organizational premises; downloads from Google Earth,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. To show the impact of disruption on Better World b. To develop rich contextual understanding of Better World c. To aid the process of sensemaking during analysis

Analysis Steps

In this study, I aimed at understanding how place-oriented environmental disruptions influence the process of organizational identity change. Specifically, I eventually became interested in understanding how do place-oriented environmental disruptions inform actors' sense of place? And in turn, how does actors' sense of place shape the flow of organizational identity? Given the paucity of theoretical development on the specific area of interest, I opted to design an immersive, ethnographic study in order to gain rich insights. Also, in line with recommendations from organizational scholars (Gehman et al., 2018; Reay, Zafar, Monteiro, & Glaser, 2019) and anthropologists (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019), I designed a customized approach to analysis, drawing inspiration from relatively recent organizational ethnographies (Bechky & Okhuysen, 2011; e.g. Heaphy, 2017; Lawrence & Dover, 2015; Lifshitz-Assaf, 2018; Smets et al., 2015; Zilber, 2002). I also obtained much-needed guidance from texts on or containing insights about ethnographic methods including (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 2007; Given, 2008; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019; Myers, 2013; Van Maanen, 2011). Finally, since I was relying on a dataset comprising of observations as well as documents, I referred to studies that have engaged in generating processes through document data (e.g., Fan & Zietsma, 2016)

Stage 1 – initial grounded coding

As is expected of inductive qualitative research, I initially approached the data with an open mind (Creswell, 2007). In order to understand 'what was going on' (Corbin & Strauss, 2014), I initially engaged in "line-by-line" coding (Charmaz, 2006, p. 50) of seven exploratory interviews and 40 newspaper articles, collected initially, with the aid of Nvivo 12. Also, while expanding and reading my field notes, I made comments with the help of sticky notes (and Microsoft Word's 'comment' option) wherever I was surprised or intrigued. I also wrote brief

thematic memos in order to expand on my comments on the field notes. This exercise led to the emergence of some important themes and categories, which I either enriched or abandoned later with the help of interviews, documents, and more observations. Two of the themes that seemed to recur more often broadly pertained to changing organization's core, and responding to the arena. While as a result of my earliest meetings with some of the informants I had gone in expecting to see some form of organizational change, the organization's actions pertaining to their place were an early surprise. Thus, this gave me some insights into what was important and relevant to my informants and what were they experiencing. Based on this preliminary coding, I developed a cognitive map connecting these themes in a boxes and arrows diagram (Langley & Ravasi, 2019). This step guided future data collection and analysis. The cognitive map indicated a non-linear and iterative relationship between emergent themes. Therefore, I consulted scholarly works on organizational processes (Langley & Tsoukas, 2016; Pratt, 2012; Reinecke & Ansari, 2016) so as to better understand processual aspects of emergent themes and to engage in appropriate process analysis techniques.

Stage 2 – development of a timeline

Though listed as stage 2, I engaged in the development of a timeline very much in parallel with stage 1. I used Microsoft Excel to create a record of Better World's actions sorted by date, mainly starting at 2009 and advancing this timeline along with the study itself. Besides recording Better World's 'actions', I followed Langley and Abdallah's (2011) recommendation to elucidate relevant contextual factors and included a record of contextual events especially those concerning the arena, that might have triggered Better World's actions. I decided that a timeline was necessary because I had posed a 'how' or process-oriented question, and expected it to yield some form of process. For example, when I found out that Better World had created a

new position for ‘communications lead’ this action became a point in the timeline. This timeline also helped me write a narrative about Better World (included above). A detailed timeline is presented below in Table 4.

Table 4- Timeline of Key Events

Sr. No	Better World's Action/External Event	Date
1	Better World Starts Operating	1971
2	Edmonton ice rink opens for the Oilers	1974
3	Moves to current downtown location	1995
4	Downtown redevelopment first phase	1997
.	.	.
5	City of Edmonton engages in second wave of downtown redevelopment	2008
6	City of Edmonton initiates a 10-year plan to END homelessness	2010
7	New Better World ED (Julian Daly) takes charge	Jul-09
8	Better World ED introduces himself and Better World to other agencies	2009
9	Better World puts a signboard at the front	2009
10	Better World mentions arena as potential trouble for the first time in their annual report	2010
11	City Council approves the Arena Deal with the developer	May-13
12	Better World purchases their land and building	Aug-13
13	New arena naming rights sold to a telecommunication company	Dec-13
14	Groundbreaking of the arena begins	Mar-14
15	Better World starts work on partnership with ATB to open a bank	May-14
16	Better World Forms it first significant official collaboration called C5 (with 4 other agencies in the city)	Jun-14
17	Heavy turnover recognized in Annual Report (in positive terms)	Dec-14
18	Better World reflects on who they are given their extensive growth	Jun-15
19	Better World publicly announces its own building redevelopment plan	Dec-15
20	Better World brings in an auditor to conduct its social media audit	Apr-16
21	Better World starts its ambassador program	Apr-16
22	Better World develops its first official communications strategy (educate, advocate, humanize)	Sep-16

23	Better World Opens its Bank in Collaboration with ATB Financial	Sep-16
24	Official Opening of Rogers Place	Sep-16
25	Better World receives informal confirmation of 0.25 Million Dollars towards planning building redevelopment from Provincial Government	Dec-16
26	Informal announcement from political circles spreads the news of 0.25 million dollars	Jan-17
27	Better World Starts talks with community agencies re Building Redevelopment	Jan-17
28	Revisiting Barring Policy	Jan-17
29	Better World approaches local councilor to secure alliance	Jan-17
30	Better World revisits their barring policy	Jan-17
31	Separate position created for 'director of development' and 'director of programs'	Feb-17
32	Provincial Government allocates 0.25 million dollars to Better World toward building redevelopment proposal	Mar-17
33	Better World restructure themselves as a charity	Mar-17
34	Better World Starts the 'Ambassador' Program	May-17
35	Better World secures alliances from 15 core partners for building redevelopment	Jun-17
36	Better World hosts their first impact session (on harm reduction philosophy)	Jun-17
37	Better World hosts their second impact session (on their social enterprises)	Aug-17
38	Director of Better World shows their community member's mural on the arena's wall	Aug-17
39	Better World hosts their third impact session on their bank for the homeless	Oct-17
40	Better World fully opens their bank for the homeless	Sep-17
41	Better World hires a full-time 'Communications Lead' (their former social media auditor)	Sep-17
42	Better World submits building re-development plan to the municipal government	Oct-17
43	Better World starts its food truck	Oct-17
44	Better World holds 1st pub night (specific focus on harm reduction)	Oct-17
45	Better World introduce staff vests	Nov-17
46	Better World receives an award from Federal Government for their service	Nov-17

47	Better World holds 2nd pub night (focus on social enterprises)	Nov-17
48	Better World holds 3rd pub night (focus on mental health in the inner city)	Dec-17
49	Better World conduct their first ever 'staff engagement survey'	Jan-18
50	Better World revisits their employee 'support and supervision' policy	Feb-18
51	ED and other partners meet with Mayor to confront him regarding decision on funding for building	Mar-18
52	ED announces to management team that potential collaborative has disbanded	Mar-18
53	Better World creates a position Ambassador Coordinator	Mar-18
54	Better World write their first organization-wide 'critical incident reporting' policy	Mar-18
55	Better World hosts an elaborate treaty flag hoisting ceremony	Apr-18
56	City makes Better World their representative for their new inner-city wellness project 'recover' (project welcome mat rolls out at Better World)	May-18
57	Better World hosts Impact Session # 4 (on their programs for youth)	Jun-18
58	Better World hires a full-time "Ambassador Engagement Coordinator"	Jul-18
59	Better World titles their Christmas campaign "That's BS"	Oct-18

Stage 3 – focused coding and vignette writing

In the third stage, almost midway through data collection, I engaged in what Charmaz (2006) has termed 'focused coding'. This coding helped deepen the existing themes and more importantly, coupled with the timeline that I had developed, enabled me to compare and contrast organizational actions over time. I began to see variation in organizational actions over time. For example, I noticed that the strategies to connect with the broader public were becoming more assertive over time (notice events numbered 53, 58, and 59 on the timeline). At this stage, I referred to the extant literature on geographical fields, communities, place, space, urban geography, human territoriality, organizational identity, and environmental disruptions.

By iterating between data and existing literature, I came to understand Better World's case as that of organizational identity change in response to a material, place-oriented disruption. However, I was unclear on how the process was unfolding. That is, I was able to 'see' but was not able to 'articulate' interlinkages (Klag & Langley, 2013). Therefore, I engaged in a systematic analysis of field notes by means of writing reflexive vignettes about themes that had emerged through the process of coding. For example, for a code that I titled 'reinforcing who we are', I wrote a detailed reflexive vignette about the organization's decision to introduce staff vests. In this vignette I included details about the discussions that took place in management meetings during the decision-making process, I highlighted details about why the organization was debating this decision at all, and also included what they thought and discussed would be the implications of this decision. Although, vignettes or specific examples have been mainly described as a tool for representation of findings (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2019), writing these vignettes provided further opportunity to understand the underlying mechanisms that led the generation of organizational actions. Since these vignettes were written to elaborate upon specific codes, writing vignettes also allowed for comparison and contrast between codes/themes over time (Corbin & Strauss, 2014).

Stage 4 – temporal bracketing

In this stage of analysis, I adopted two strategies: first, I revisited my timeline to identify relevant temporal milestones. Since my objective was to elaborate upon the flow of organizational identity over time in the face of place-oriented disruptions, I chose those specific actions (conducted by Better World) as theoretically-relevant milestones that pertained to the organization's place. The three milestones that I selected were, formally acknowledging arena as a threat, purchase of land and building, and public announcement of the plan to develop a new

building. Second, I used the conceptual map produced as a result of initial coding, my reflexive vignettes and the milestones identified on the timeline of events for “comparison”, “aggregation”, and “decomposition” of themes (Langley & Ravasi, 2019, p. 183). This temporal bracketing (Langley, 1999; Langley & Abdallah, 2011) enabled me to engage in further comparison and contrast between phases. I noticed that during all the three bracketed phases, the organization was taking actions regarding, their place, their representation in the outside world, their core internal aspects, albeit in different ways. Thus, I arrived at three aggregate themes to explain the process of identity change: territorial work, identity work, and image work. I paid particular attention to how each of these types of work transitioned through different phases to identify connections between them. This conceptual or creative leap (Klag & Langley, 2013; Langley, 1999) was aided massively by vignette and memo writing during earlier phases. Importantly, discussions with my supervisor throughout the process admittedly kept me from drowning in the sea of data and helped me bridge the gap between data and theory. The resulting process model is presented in the findings section as Figure 1.

In conclusion, building on a comprehensive and rich dataset comprising of field observations, interviews, informal chats, I adopted a reflexive and interpretive approach to analyzing this data and arrived at a process model explaining how place-oriented disruptions influence the flow of organizational identity.

Chapter 4: Findings – Interaction of territorial work, identity work, and image work

In this rich ethnographic study, I aim to understand the influence of place-oriented disruptions on organizational identity. Mainly, I asked how do place-oriented environmental disruptions inform actors' sense of place? And how does actors' sense of place shape the flow of organizational identity? My findings reveal that the interaction of three inter-related processes of *territorial work*, *image work*, and *identity work* together determined the trajectory of organizational identity over time. Territorial work is guided by organizational territoriality, that is, actors' sense of connection with their place, and is aimed at management or defense of an organization's place. Identity work represents members' efforts to manage, sustain, or change their understandings of who they are as an organization. Finally, image work refers to an organization's efforts to align external understandings of who the organization is with the internal understanding of identity.

In this study, I adopt an emergent view of organizational identity, which some have termed 'identity as becoming' (Gioia & Hamilton, 2016, p. 30; Gioia & Patvardhan, 2012; Schultz, 2016). This view sees identity as flowing through time, that is, identity remains in a constant state of flux, and therefore, identity change becomes the norm rather than the exception. My findings reveal that through members' engagement in territorial work in response to a significant territorial disruption that Better World faced, the flow of Better World's identity shifted such that members started understanding Better World as a stronger organization. As such, my findings shed light on the process whereby members of an organization make sense of 'who they are becoming'.

The analysis of my data revealed that between 2010 and 2018 Better World repeatedly engaged in the processes of territorial work, identity work, and image work, albeit in different

ways and different orders. Therefore, I organize my findings into three temporal phases imbued with varying forms of territorial work, image work, and identity work, as revealed by the analysis. I term these phases *feeling connected with the territory*, *publicly claiming territory*, and *fortifying territory*. During each of these phases, Better World engaged in different strategies and tactics regarding these types of work. My findings reveal that it is through an amalgamation of these processes that members of Better World altered their understanding of who they are over time— from a small, less powerful, quietly tucked-away organization to a large, more powerful, professional, formalized, and vocal entity. In this section, I elaborate upon the process of Better World’s identity transformation over time. Although I represent the three phases as if they are clearly demarcated in time, there were overlaps.

Phase I: Feeling connected with the territory

During the initial phase of the study, I engaged in some exploratory interviews with the objective of discovering what Better World understood as pertinent. These interviews, coupled with my initial observations, turned out to be fundamental in shaping the direction of my study. During these interviews, many members of the organization referred to several changes that they had experienced over the past 8-9 years. This led me to gather archival documents and to probe my informants more about the history of the organization and its evolution. I mainly understood the organization’s activities during this phase by employing these documents and retrospective accounts. During the first phase of findings, I describe the beginnings of Better World’s identity evolution and its influence on the organization’s territorial work.

The start of the first phase is marked by the beginning of new leadership and the realization by the organization that the arena deal was undoubtedly going ahead. This was also the time when the organization started making changes in its core aspects under the new

leadership. As such, the start of this phase marks a new era of changes at the organization. I term this phase ‘feeling connected with the territory’ as, during this phase, the organization came to understand their place as their territory. This happened in part due to the organization’s engagement in the two specific forms of identity and image works (altering who we are, and developing rapport with key audiences, respectively).

Altering who we are:

Better World’s initial identity work can be described as a set of identity changing activities carried out by the organization’s leadership team. These activities include justifying new ways and challenging historical practices. I was consistently informed during interviews, informal chats, and by means of observations that since their inception in 1971 until 2009 the roots of the organization were very relational and informal – members understood Better World as a small grass-roots organization where little attention was paid to developing or implementing policies, producing or storing formal records of work. Further, many of the employees were former ‘community members’ (service users or clients) with lived experiences and little or no professional organizational experience or training and working in isolation (as opposed to forming collaborations and partnerships with other organizations) was considered the best approach to work. Importantly, huge emphasis was levied on developing close (personal, to some extent) relationships with the community members.

In 2009 a new leader took charge of the organization and began to change the fundamental aspects deeply embedded within the organization. Therefore, beginning to change who we are required challenging the old ways of doing things and introducing and justifying new ways. I found that one of the core aspects that they challenged was the organization’s informal ways of doing things in the past. For example, when I had the opportunity to interview the

Executive Director of the organization during exploratory interviews, he recounted the efforts toward becoming more formalized:

“[Ten years ago] We were not following through on supporting people to make the changes they wanted in their life. There was a lack of accountability in the organization... I said to people at the time, I know it was a bit brutal but being nice is not enough...So we needed to ... become more professional in that respect. We needed to start recording our work and writing reports.” [interview with the Executive Director, March 2017]

Further, my informants told me that they were well aware of a negative narrative around homelessness and the homeless people among the broader community. That is, homeless people were generally considered lazy, irresponsible people who did not want to change their situations. Therefore, organizational members thought of Better World as a place where they could hide the issue of homelessness and those ‘causing’ this issue.

“... Ten years ago... when people wanted to scare their kids by showing them negative outcomes they would bring them to Better World and go: look at these people... this is what will happen to you if you don’t study or whatever they wanted their kids to do... So we had to put a stop to it and say, hey you can’t come in to do this.” [Interview with Director of Group Homes Programs, 2018])

Consequently, they wanted to remain hidden as an organization. However, the newly appointed Executive Director of the organization also challenged the need to stay concealed, thereby providing members with an impetus to reconsider who they are. Specifically, besides stressing the importance of becoming more formalized, the organization also encouraged its members to become more outward looking – For example, the Executive Director noted in his address in the annual report of 2010:

Following the considerable organizational changes of 2008-09 this last year has been marked more by organizational and internal consolidation....Where we did see considerable change internally was in the physical renovations we undertook. We planned and executed an ambitious renovations program for the community center that included moving the reception area down to the front door area [Annual Report, 2010]

During his first interview with me, the Executive Director recollected this very incident while explaining that at that time members of Better World understood the organization as a small, quietly tucked-away organization and wanted it to remain that way. He was very enthusiastic about telling me that he tried to change that as he believed the organization did fantastic work and they ought to stop hiding that. He said,

“It was very interesting on a symbolic level. So our reception was in the middle of the building, so no one was there to meet you when you entered, it was all about being in the know in a sense.” [Executive Director, Interview, March 2017].

Finally, the organization also reviewed its human resource choices. While still in the process of making my way into the organization, I invited Better World’s Director of Programs and Development as a guest speaker to a management class that I taught as part of my doctoral program requirements. He informed my class that when the organization underwent a leadership change in 2009, many changes were implemented. While many had supported the new ways of doing things at Better World, the organization “had to let go of others, very deliberately, who did not buy into these changes” [informal chat with a director, October 2016]. This quote was later backed by the Executive Director during an interview as well.

Altogether, identity work in this phase was aimed at beginning to alter members’ understandings of who Better World was by providing them with opportunities to reexamine Better World as a small, informal, grass-roots organization and by providing them with concrete evidence that it was not the case! Better World did this by challenging historical work practices and by encouraging new ways of doing things.

Developing rapport with key audiences:

I found that another key strategy that Better World followed was developing a good rapport with key audiences, which included Better World's funders, politicians, and other similar agencies in the city. Thus, I understand this tactic as a form of image work whereby Better World sought to develop a positive image. This tactic was deeply interconnected with the actions aimed at altering members understanding of 'who we are'. Better World realized that its internal work practices were reflecting negatively on how it was being seen in the outside community, particularly by its funders. The Executive Director looked grim, with his eyebrows arched, looking down as if he could still recall the tough times when he explained to me during an interview how he faced the pressure to change, as funders' expectations of Better World were changing. He said:

“Years ago, funders didn't really request a lot from organizations that were funded, and organizations didn't give much. I think there was a view that we (agencies) do good work just let us alone and give us money and let us do our job... What was clear to me when I came in was that that were to change; that funders no longer found that attitude acceptable and that you had to be accountable and you had to report on what you did, you had to show value for money, you had to show outcomes, at least make an attempt to, and we changed in that respect. I think we became active in demonstrating to people what we can do with the money they gave us. I think that's why we've been successful because we show good outcomes. I think our funders get excellent value for money with what we do, especially with very vulnerable, hard to work with folks.” [Executive Director Interview, March 2017]

Therefore, he pushed for internal changes that would help Better World build a good rapport with its funders. In this way, the organization's image developing work also enabled its identity-changing work during this phase. For example, the need for reporting arose as the organization wanted to develop a positive image with its funders. In turn, this started changing the informal roots of the organization as members were now required to take time out from their

relationship building activities and focus on more formal activities. The Executive Director of the organization recollected during his initial interview with me:

“I said to people at the time (at the start of his time), we were not going beyond the cup of coffee, metaphorically and literally sometimes.” [ED Interview, March 2017]

Also, I was surprised to learn that Better World that was a highly collaborative organization at the start of my engagement with it, could have existed in a silo as some point. The Executive Director of one of Better World’s partner agencies also expressed her surprise at not working with Better World sooner. When I asked her to describe their agency’s relationship with Better World, she said,

“I have to go a little bit back (in time) uh because they've been around for a long, long time. We've been around for not as long. Uh, so we've been around since the mid-nineties to 2010, maybe 2009 I want to say, um, is, is when we first sort of came together in an informal kind of. Um, but from our beginning, which was 94 to 2008 or 2009 or whatever that was. We existed separately. Um, and um, how we came together was both of our organizations went through a leadership change, right. So our ED passed away, their ED retired. I stepped in as the new ED here. I wasn't new to the organization, but I was a new Ed and [ED Name] was a new Ed over there. Both filling sort of big shoes.

We followed some big leaders when we took our positions, so, uh, in a collegial way, he reached out and that's how we first came together, um, after sort of, um, supporting one another in our journey, as the leaders of these established organizations, we started to wonder why we weren't working together before.” (laughed and shrugged) [Interview, ED of a partner organization, March 2018]

This was mirrored by members of Better World who told me that as an organization they had been working independently until 2009, and therefore they were not well connected in the circle of other social service agencies. One of the managers said, “Better World has just historically been a very protective and insular organization, not really looking to make too much of a broader public statement about what we do, why we do it. So that was kind of part of my early role is how do you get the name out there and build a bit of a base of elite, of people who

support you.” [Interview Manager, November 2017]. Therefore, besides engaging in identity work, the organization also got involved in image work, aimed at developing an image of the organization. Due to members’ understanding that Better World was being seen negatively by its government funders and was not being acknowledged by other social service agencies, image developing work was primarily targeted at making the organization appear on the proverbial radar, rather than have it fly under it.

Specifically, as part of its image work, the organization introduced itself to other similar agencies and built goodwill with them. This happened at the top levels in the organization. The newly appointed Executive Director of the organization reached out and introduced Better World to other agencies and developed connections. During this phase, the organization also learned more about the merits of collaborating by starting small partnering initiatives with other agencies. For example, Better World’s engagement with external agencies is noted as follows in the organization’s 2010 annual report:

“This year saw us much more engaged with partners in the non-profit and government sectors. We were a founding member of the Inner-City Executive Directors Group which meets monthly and which we chair and service. This group has been both very functional and productive, and our membership has led to a number of joint working arrangements as well as much closer relationships with sister inner-city agencies.” [Annual report, 2010]

Although the organization reached out to other agencies and government, my findings suggest that members of Better World did not dedicate equivalent attention to creating a more positive image with the general public. Though the organization made efforts to engage with the broader community, its archival records indicate Better World’s funders (government in particular) and other agencies as focal audiences that were the target of the organization’s image-developing work. I urge you to read the following quote from the organization’s 2010 annual report as a point of departure. It especially stood out to me as I was amazed to note the contrast

between the organization's definition of 'effective storytelling' in 2010 versus the time that I entered the organization (2016).

“We have been telling our story and the story of our clients and community more effectively this year. We have had consistent and greatly increased media coverage of our issues, activities, and events. Our events continue to be successful and extremely well attended. We added an additional Roundance this year and now hold two a year as well as holding a Sweat Lodge every month. We held a Christmas Party for our kids and over 200 came. We served 1500 meals at both our Thanksgiving and ICAF Roast Beef dinners. Over 1000 people attended our Canada Day event.” [Annual report, 2010]

Overall, Better World's initial image work introduced an external focus at the organization and laid a solid foundation for the organization to expand on this image work during later phases. That is, the organization became more inclined to keep an eye on external changes and became more open to collaborations. Reiterating this newly developed external focus the organization notes in their annual report of 2010:

“As a community and organization, Better World was, this year, much more engaged with and affected by the events and developments in the world beyond our walls...”

Problematizing and bonding with the territory:

We kept a close eye on the downtown Arena development, reflecting on and planning for what it might mean for us as well as urging the [developer's name], City councilors and the Mayor to adopt a Community Benefits Agreement as the way to develop the project”. [Annual Report, 2010]

The first time that I noticed the arena being mentioned in Better World's official documents is their annual report of 2010, and the tone of this mention is that of alarm. I found that after noticing the arena as a potential threat, the organization engaged in problematizing its place and experienced a strong sense of affiliation with the place. This sense of association was guided by the organization's empathy toward the users of its services, and its understanding of its location as 'home' and eventually resulted in the organization safeguarding its place.

Consequently, the organization was able to deal with the threat of displacement very effectively and turned it into an opportunity for growth and development.

Interviewees told me that toward the end of 2012 Better World became sure that the arena construction would take place. The place-oriented disruption that Better World faced made it realize its sense of connection with its place. When faced with the threat of displacement and deciding to stay, Better World highlighted two bases of affiliation with its place – a strong bond with the client community, and a location-based sense of (organizational) self. Since Better World’s decision to stay was surprising to me, I pursued the question as to why Better World needed to remain in downtown during interviews with the top management. A common theme that ran through the answers to this question was the organization’s empathy toward its community members (clients). This recurrent theme of strong affiliation with clients was always evident at all levels of the organization during observations as well. The following two accounts from my observations very aptly sum up the organization’s strong bond with the users of its services. The first one is an account of an all-staff morning meeting that I observed, and the second one has been adapted from my field notes while serving as a frontline volunteer at the drop-in center in the organization.

“The room was full of chatty people and it was fairly loud in the room when F’s very loud ‘Gooood Mooorningggg’ caught everyone’s attention and allowed for the daily morning meeting routine to commence.

Breaking the silence, the Executive Director then continued with his usual questions, ‘anything from yesterday? anything for today?’. Perhaps there was nothing of relevance to everyone to report; therefore, his questions were met with silence on part of the meeting participants, who were all the staff present on the community center’s premises. When no one said anything, the executive director continued,

“one of the concerns that I have noticed is just how busy we are at this time of the year. Just yesterday I noticed how some of the community members were sitting on the floor in the hallway in a less-than-dignified manner. This is not

acceptable as we want people to feel welcomed and respected here. I know it is (cold weather in fall) already brutal and it is the toughest time of the year, pushing people on edge. And we are going to discuss this in the morning meeting today, to brainstorm ideas on how to deal with it, but I encourage people to come forward if anyone has any ideas. Please share with your managers. But one thing I will absolutely not have is to put a cap on the number of people who can be in the building at any given time... No, I will not have that done! We cannot see people outside in this weather, especially knowing that some of our neighbors (pointing to another social service agency) have decided to renovate their drop-in center at this time of the year and that place is not available to the community members.”

This statement was followed by nods across the room. The meeting was concluded with ‘snaps’ to nursing students for volunteering and helping the community members get provincial healthcare cards. (‘Snaps’ is a staff appreciation system at Better World where people write anonymous notes, acknowledging the good work of others in the organization and put them in a jar. Someone pulls out a random note and reads it aloud in every morning meeting, followed by everyone in the room snapping their fingers to appreciate the nominee). [Field observation, morning meeting, November 15, 2017].

This incident reveals that top levels in the organization were deeply concerned about the physical and emotional wellbeing of the organization’s clients. Similarly, the following adaptation from my observation re-counts similar beliefs at the frontline in the organization.

“J is one of the very well-known staff members working at the front line. She seems to know everyone, and everyone seems to know here. She was on kitchen duty today. When we finished serving lunch, I walked out of the kitchen area and was standing in the drop-in when J asked me to find a pair of long johns for a young girl – a community member.

J (to me): Can you look in the donations room and find [name] a pair of long-johns? She tells me she doesn’t want to drink, but she was born in an environment where she has to... She’s a princess; please look after her.

I went in the donations room, which was a mess from donations flooding in. Bags of donated items were scattered on the floor and there was no way anyone could find anything in that heap at that moment. M and JJ the social work students and volunteers, who had become my good friends were sorting through the stuff to make it more accessible. They complained to me about night staff who would ‘just dump stuff in the room and leave it for the volunteers to sort through’. After looking for a while, I gave up went back to the drop-in center and told J that I was unable to find a pair of long johns or an alternative. But she wasn’t satisfied with my answer. Telling the girl to wait, she went in the

donations room herself, and when she was unable to find anything appropriate herself, she came outside and told the girl to come again the next day.” [Field observation, December 2016]

These are only two of the many similar incidents that reveal that regardless of their position in the organization, members of Better World felt a strong connection with the clients and were committed to pushing their own as well as organizational limits in order to best serve the clients. Therefore, the realization that the arena construction was certainly going ahead led Better World to see their lack of ownership over their place as a problem requiring a solution. They understood that construction of the arena might result in Better World being kicked out of their place, leaving many of the already homeless people stranded even further. This understanding of arena construction as a problem flared up the sense of connection with the organization’s place and motivated Better World’s actions aimed at safeguarding its place, enabling the organization to stay in the area.

Further, being new to the City of Edmonton and unaware of the city’s history, I collected documents published by the city and about the city’s history, especially paying attention to past, current, and future development plans. These documents revealed that the City of Edmonton has been through several economic ups and downs (“Boom and bust,” 2001) and development in the suburbs of the city during economic booms, led to a ‘hollowing’ of downtown (“Capital city downtown plan”, 2010). Consequently, many of city’s homeless people took shelter in the city’s inner core and in responding to the needs of these people, many social service agencies now operate from the downtown core (“Homeless Census”, 2016; 2018). Therefore, Better World problematized its place in the face of arena construction due to several pragmatic and affective client-related reasons. The first and more pragmatic reason was proximity to the users of the organization’s services. Not surprisingly, homeless people have limited mobility. During a field

observation of one of the organization's impact sessions, Better World's employees highlighted 'being able to afford public transit passes' as a fundamental challenge hindering job search process for the homeless. Therefore, being located in downtown translates into client accessibility for the Better World and in contrast, moving away from city center would mean a loss of connection with a majority of the users of the organization's services. One of my informants recalled during an interview,

“Me: [speaking about Better World's building redevelopment plan] Was it (this location) important for the organization, because the three alternative locations that were proposed (in building redevelopment plan) were all in downtown?”

A: I think of our community, we did quite a bit of consultations with the community. It's really, it's important to them to be part of the area. I think it's also... I mean our reality is a lot of our folks use shelter services and so being near to the shelters is extremely important. We kind of put ourselves in a place where the community's not going to be able to access easily, so ease of access, but I also think it is important that um, like I said, our folks deserve just as much the same treatment and as anyone else. And why should they have to be moved somewhere else, more hidden away, so people don't have to, you know, see them because they (the broader community) think they're (our clients are) scary or they think they're dirty, or they don't look good for business. [Interview, Director of Programs, 2018 March]

As the above quote indicates, besides being motivated by pragmatic concerns such as meeting accessibility needs of its clients, Better World's stance on staying in downtown was also guided by the organization's desire to enhance mental and emotional well-being of its clients. This motivation is, in turn, rooted in the organization's strong relational culture. This relational tradition, though restrained to some extent toward the end of my observations, still guides decision-making at all levels in the organization and sometimes even makes arriving at decisions complicated. For example, users of Better World's services are not allowed to consume any intoxicating substances including alcohol and drugs when present on the organization's premises (except for when on their recently opened supervised consumption site). Therefore, if a client is

found using (substances) on the organization's premises, organizational members are supposed to 'bar' them from coming to Better World for some time. An elaborate policy termed 'barring policy' guides members' decision on when and for how long might they bar a certain community member. However, during my observation of management team meetings at Better World, I was surprised by how frequently the decisions around barring community members would come under contestation on the account that barring someone is not straightforward when you know their tragic circumstances (as is often the case with Better World's client community). Just as the decision to bar someone from the organization was based on many factors including empathy with the clients, being familiar with the situations of the community members informed Better World's immediate response to the (then potential) construction of the arena. The future arena was deemed a threat of dislocation and put Better World more in touch with how they conceptualized their place.

Further, besides problematizing its place due to members' empathy toward clients, Better World also felt a strong sense of connection with its downtown location. This can be described as members' identity-based affiliation with their place. Many of my informants referred to Better World as a *home*, while responding to 'who we are'. This was depicted during observations and interviews in two ways. First, the members of Better World described the organization as a home for the community members, and second, their answers to 'who we are as an organization' frequently evoked their location as the organization's home. For example, the phrase 'inner-city entity' was used regularly to describe the organization during interviews with me, and in internal and external communications of the organization. Also, consider the following instance:

"I had reached well before 8:30 am for the morning meeting today, so I was not in any rush. As I made my way to Better World, through blowing snow, I noticed a pile of something buried under snow, right against Better World's wall... upon taking a closer look, I realized that it was a man! I quickly ran inside and reported

it to the first manager that I could get hold of. He walked outside with me and casually talked to the person.

Manager: how are you doing there, partner?

Community member: I am fine, just relaxing (irritation was obvious in his voice at being disturbed).

Manager: Alright, we'll let you relax

Manager (to me): sometimes it is just good to let them be at home. The good thing is that it is not very cold." [Field observation, February 2018]

This incident shows that members of Better World were well aware of their clients' association with their organization's place and made clients feel 'at home' when present on the organization's premises. This also translated into members' perceiving Better World as a home and naturally wanted to minimize disturbance to their 'home'. During my first tour to Better World in May 2016, the Director of Development told me about many of the organization's services. Informing me about the organization's ID services he said, 'life on the streets can be rough, documents stolen etc., so our ID department keeps their (clients') records as well. Many of them (clients) don't have a permanent address, so they use us as their permanent address. We are home to them, you know". Therefore, the arena was considered to be driving the organization toward 'homelessness'. The executive director's address included in the organization's annual report noted:

"The challenges we faced as a whole community need to be acknowledged:... ; worries about the Arena development, what that means for us, and deep fears about being displaced, becoming homeless ourselves..." [Annual Report, 2013]

This quote from the Executive Director of the organization indicates that the second aspect of understanding Better World as a home was grounded in members' strong identity-based affiliation with their organization's location. Merriam-Webster defines 'home' as "one's place of residence", and as "the social unit formed by a family living together" ("Definition of

HOME,” n.d.). In this sense, to the members of Better World, their place strongly informed their understanding of one of the social groups that they were connected with, which, in turn, fed into members’ understandings of who they are as an organization. That is, being in the inner-city allowed Better World to serve the groups of people who are deeply embedded in the city’s inner core, therefore informing members’ understanding of the organization as an inner-city agency. In another interesting example, when asked how he would describe ‘who Better World is’, one of the managers answered:

‘We’re an inner-city charity that works with the most marginalized individuals in our city, namely, the homeless. I bet you 95 percent of the people we work with on a face-to-face basis have either experienced chronic homelessness or are currently experiencing chronic homelessness. Many are not welcomed or valued in many other places in society and the city. We welcome them, and we work with them on their pace on their level and meet them where they are at...’
[Interview, Manager Development, November 2017]

To sum up, Better World problematized their organization’s place and felt a sense of connection with it. Consequently, they deemed their organizational premises as their territory, worthy of defense. Members’ problematization of their place and their sense of connection with it was based on their strong empathy toward the clients, as well as on their location-grounded understandings of who Better World is. Therefore, when the city announced its plan to develop the arena in Better World’s immediate neighborhood, the organization felt threatened on behalf of its community members and this raised the organization’s sense of connection with its place.

Phase II: Publicly claiming territory

The start of this phase is marked by Better World’s purchase of their land and building in August 2013. This was a focal moment in time for the organization and a “game changer” as many of the members described it during interviews and chats. By the time I entered the organization, this event had already occurred; therefore, I turned to documents and retrospective

accounts once again in order to understand what was going on at that time. Two data sources were especially important in helping me understand the sequence of events during this phase. First, I searched for some details on the organization's website and found a written account of the purchase of the organization's building. Second, I requested a meeting with one of my primary informants, Jo, who was also deeply engaged in the organization's building redevelopment plan, and therefore, was well informed about events pertaining to the acquisition of the organization's building.

These data, coupled with ongoing observations and interviews, shaped my understanding of Better World's actions during this phase. While before this phase, Better World saw the development of the arena as a threat, during this phase, the organization's understanding of arena changed, such that, it started seeing the development of the arena as an opportunity. Subsequently, members of Better World also came to understand themselves as a stronger organization and engaged in valorizing the organization's strengths. In this phase, the organization also built on its image work in the previous phase and extended it further.

Strategically gaining control over territory:

"We've been trying to secure our future for several years now," ED said. "The price of not being here and the possibility of being displaced and losing the center from which we deliver our services would have been a price too high to pay for us." [newspaper archive, ED]

Led by the heightened sense of connection with their place, Better World engaged in a very concrete form of territorial work during this phase. Particularly, the organization strategically gained legal rights to their place, and as such, publicly claimed their territory. Many of my informants avidly recalled the times when the decision was made to purchase their land and building. They framed this as a very important decision for the organization that changed the game, so to speak. For example, when I asked if she could recall any conversations that were

happening at the time of purchase of their building and tell me something about the time that the decision was being made to buy Better World's land and building, the Director of Finance at Better World recounted:

“(drumming on the table with both hands, excitedly laughing and going yee-haw) ...

Hey, so its amazing story. I love to tell this story! I can't remember how many years we've been in this building. I think it's over 29... (at that time) ...we were pretty like transient ourselves as an organization. And we are trying to find as a home, and nobody would rent, nobody would rent to us. We couldn't find a home. We were homeless apparently! And so (landlord name) decided that he was going to rent us this (current) space and so we forged that relationship. And so he was our landlord for many years, many, many, many years. And then he passed away... so the business gets dealt by kids and (new landlord's name) he's, oh he's just the coolest guy. Um, and so we then had businesses with him...

And then all this talk started to come about with the arena and stuff like that. And we thought okay, well we better do something to solidify our home. And we were like 'ooooow wweee we're going to be ousted outta here if we don't do something. So we talked to (new landlord's name) because (he) was also willing to sell to us a couple of times and said, sure (to selling). Um, so then the negotiations opened up. In that time...I mean, keep in mind, we have very good relationships (with the landlord). In that time (arena developer's name)... had offered to buy this building had tried to buy this place as well. So then we decided to try and get our ducks in a row. And then as in the negotiations, when you buy a ...buy a house, you know, you make the offer and then there's a counter-offer all that stuff. It gets very stressful. (landlord's name), we lost him for about a week... we didn't hear from him. We were so worried. We had found out that (the arena developer) had offered him three times the price, *three times the price* of this place... And then he finally came out and said let's just do the deal... So we got it.” [Interview, Director of Finance, February 2018].

Similar sentiments were expressed by other informants who asserted that Better World would have been wiped out, had it not been for the organization securing its place.

This action was guided by two recurrent factors as revealed by my data. I term these factors, experiencing a lack of agenda-setting capabilities and experiencing being pushed out. As I explain, both of these were the organization's experiences of low powerfulness, however as

part of their territorial work the organization turned these experiences around and used both to their advantage very effectively.

First, Better World experienced a lack of agenda-setting capabilities in the early phases of the arena development. Not having a voice in the process of developments occurring all around the organization and not being able to speak on behalf of its clients, while experiencing a heightened sense of connection with its place left the organization frustrated. With the organization having little say in how its physical environment might come to be shaped, members of Better World felt that they were the weaker party involved in the action. The Executive Director recollected about not having a voice in the process during an interview with me:

“Did the city involve us? No. There was no consultation with local community with the development, we were told what was happening and had the opportunity to comment as any citizen, no community impact assessment work done which was extremely unusual. We did push for it at that time, but they didn’t/wouldn’t do it, the previous admin... They did traffic impact assessments and this and that but nothing about the community around.” [Interview, Executive Director, March 2017]

Consequently, the organization initially sought to gain some voice in the process by participating in forums seeking to include community benefits (for the marginalized people and small businesses) as part of the agenda of arena development. Specifically, Better World joined a private coalition that worked to critically analyze the development of the arena and proposed a stronger community benefits agreement intended to ensure that the publicly-funded arena sufficiently gives back to its immediate community. However, the efforts of the group seeking community benefits did not yield favorable outcomes for Better World or its clients; the city’s community benefits agreement was seen as a hoax by the popular press as well as by social scientists observing the arena deal between the city and the private developer. It was deemed that

besides a few temporary employment opportunities, no long-term benefit would accumulate to the arena's homeless neighbors. For example, one local newspaper article reported:

“The City’s agreement with the arena group is comparatively (compared to other benefit agreements in North America) brief. The one-page community benefits agreement requires a new committee to look at parking and noise problems associated with the arena. The developer will “use their best efforts to encourage job training and employment programs targeted at low-income and high-needs residents of downtown (city name) communities” during and after construction.” [News Archive, February 2016]

In the same newspaper article, an arena representative cleared the arena owners of any responsibility toward the issue of homelessness. He was quoted saying, “...the benefits have limits... I think there’s a view that we’ll solve all those (homelessness, low wages, few jobs) problems. We can’t do it alone. Some of the issues in the core area that are generational will not be solved by one company,” [Newspaper archive, February 2016]. Even though, Better World’s voice in the process remained subdued even after the organization purchased its land and building, the action considerably increased the organization’s capability to highlight to audiences what matters and needs attention. The issue of homelessness in Edmonton downtown became undeniable after Better World’s purchase of its land and building, as this action garnered a lot of media attention and therefore highlighted the issue of homelessness in the downtown area. Therefore, by purchasing its land and building the organization not only secured its presence geographically but also reified the power imbalance between itself and the forces pushing them out of the area. This gained the organization public sympathy and made it impossible for the arena owners to push Better World out. As one newspaper article noted, “Downtown (city) arena isn’t pushing Better World anywhere” [Newspaper archive, 2014 March].

Second, Better World experienced being pushed out of its home for two reasons. First, the Better World realized the political will that backed the new arena and the powerful players

whom the organization was up against, and second, the organization strongly felt the undeniable contrast between itself and the new arena when it was constructed.

During observations and chats, members of Better World emphasized political forces backing the arena and acknowledged the lack of equivalent political support for the homeless people that the organization served. This led Better World to view itself as being on the receiving end of broader political decisions regarding downtown's revitalization. For example, during an interview, one of the managers candidly expressed the political dynamics surrounding Better World and its clients.

“Researcher: In terms of the developments that are happening in downtown, how can Better World continue to exist as is?”

Manager: Wow. I mean (Executive Director's name) is trying to get us new space that's more responsive to our community... whether it's successful or not (gestures 'can't say' by shrugging shoulders). I mean there's the saying that 'that which does not grow tends to wither and die' and the problem with this location is that it's tough for us to grow because there's political pressure to that. We should just travel up and die because... because I mean, the reality is income support only exists to keep these people that we have here... away from rich people. You know that's true for any social program in any country, in any city. If you look at the real reason for social programs and agencies, why we're funded is to keep those unwashed people out of my yard, keep them from bothering the good people.” [Interview, Manager Youth Programs, November, 2017]

The other factor that contributed to Better World's understanding of its weaker position was an undeniable material contrast between their new opulent neighbor and themselves. When shown an image of the organization against the arena, members invariably pointed to the contrast that the new arena building presented against Better World. This contrast operated in two ways. On the one hand, it made the threat of being pushed out very real. Many members expressed the fear of being displaced as Better World's presence might be seen as a blight on the area and might cause discomfort to the arena's target market. Also, the underlying intent of the arena was to give the downtown area a facelift and members of Better World understood that their presence

(along with that of their community members) in the area was being seen as a hurdle in the realization of that face-lifting objective. For example, during an interview, a manager compared their situation to that of commercialization in close proximity to Egyptian pyramids which, in her opinion not only lowered the historical value of the pyramids but also was indicative of the government's lack of interest in maintaining that value. She noted that the presence of the arena had modernized downtown, indicating her lament at not receiving equal investment for the homeless. She said,

“(looking at a photograph showing Better World and the new arena against each other during the interview) ... The contrast is mind-blowing and I think about all of the money (that has gone into making the new development), but yeah, you know, I was, I was talking to um, a friend of mine who's Egyptian and she was telling me about you could be looking at the pyramids, but behind you (shakes head), like looking at something that's thousands and thousands and thousands of years old, but behind you is a McDonald's so all you have to do is turn around and see. So it kind of reminds me of that is you could be looking at this beautiful expensive, you know, building and (go), and it's, wow, this is amazing, this is beautiful and it'd be great for downtown, like, look at all of it and look at all this stuff, but you just need to turn around and see the poorest most vulnerable population. So, It's the, it's just so extreme that all you have to do is just turn your back on it (the issue of homelessness). So weird.” [Interview, Manager Drop-in, April 2018].

On the other hand, using this contrast to its advantage, Better World also initiate the narrative that the organization (and its clients) also deserved an improved, fit-for-purpose facility to match the chicness right across the street from them. They argued that given that the city had money to invest in several developmental projects, they should also use part of those funds for the needy ones in the city. For example, the Executive Director of Better World noted in an interview with a local newspaper:

“Revamping downtown is great, [he] notes, but we should also be willing to put money toward helping our most vulnerable populations. “I think a society can often be judged by how it treats its richest citizens and its poorest citizens,” says [Executive Director's Name]. “And frankly, I'd want to be living in a society

that treats its poorest citizens well and does not bias the system and the resources in favor of its richest citizens.” [Newspaper Archive, August 2015]

Thus, although, the striking material contrast made Better World well aware of its not-so-strong position, the organization was quick to realize the importance of its place and to secure it. Through its territorial work in this phase, Better World laid the foundation for carrying out its own development plans. Specifically, the organization’s welcoming stance on the developments in its surroundings and its interest in being a part of those developments was compelling. That is, the argument that the city’s neediest also deserve a chance to be included in the developments was a subtle yet powerful shaming strategy directed toward the powerful development coalition. This strategy safeguarded Better World against the political opposition aimed at pushing the organization out and paved way for the organization to engage in its own development plans. Even the politicians who were not quite pro-Better World had to acknowledge the need to help Better World’s clients in the context of downtown revitalization. For example, the city councilor responsible for downtown core said in an interview to a local newspaper:

“Coun. [name], whose ward covers downtown, called the (Better World’s initial building redevelopment) design fabulous, but said he’d like to do more consultation to determine the best way of helping a homeless population that often has addiction and mental-health problems.

Other inner-city agencies are also looking at expanding, he said. “There are only so many dollars. What is the best answer for [the city] and the province...? Does the Better World proposal fit in that plan? I don’t know yet,” he said. “The Better World proposal is really interesting and could be part of the answer ... but we have to look at (the city) holistically.” [newspaper archive, December 2015]

Thus, while he was not entirely sold on to the idea of funding Better World’s building redevelopment plan, he acknowledged the plan. This suggests that Better World’s territorial work aimed at claiming their territory did not go unnoticed.

Valorizing who we are:

As a result of territorial work leading to the purchase of the organization's land and building, members of Better World came to understand themselves as a powerful organization and expressed this newly found sense of powerfulness in many ways. Notably, members of Better World frequently reminded each other of the organization's strengths and sought to closely monitor and deal with any recurrent aberrations affecting the organization in any way.

First, Better World acknowledged its place as a source of significant strength. It reassured members of Better World's continuity and provided certainty. Acknowledging the organization's place as a source of its powerfulness, one of the managers noted in an interview with me:

“Thank God for [Executive Director Name] to be here and thank God for his insightfulness... I'm going to say this honestly, this guy says, *bullshit*... we're going to buy this land, hurry up, and he did it [bangs her hands on her desk] *bamm*, and now we're here, and they can't push us... [Executive Director Name] brings this perspective, *bull!* this is our land, and we're staying” [Interview with Cultural Support Program Manager, March 2018]

During observations of management meetings, I consistently noticed that many conversations about the organization's building redevelopment plans foregrounded this sense of powerfulness that followed along with the purchase of the organization's building. As such, this sense of powerfulness inspired members to understand Better World as a leader in bringing about social change in the city. The following conversation between the members of the management team at Better World shows that the purchase of the building opened up several opportunities for Better World and discussions on these new opportunities provided members with chances to remind each other of the organization's strengths. The discussion in the segment noted below moved from the organization's building redevelopment plan to a potentially controversial service to be provided in the future building. When one of the managers present at the meeting raised

concerns about that service, the group steered the conversation toward being the best possible agency in the city to provide that service.

As had been happening at the previous meetings, the Executive Director instantly had everyone's keen attention as soon as he said, "in terms of building redevelopment", he continued, "some good updates. Although, I was sick on Friday, but there was very good meeting when we presented the draft of our business case to our core partners, and that went extremely well. Everyone is still very keen, even more so now (having seen the draft), so that's progressing. It will be good... at what stage would you guys like to see a draft? Do you want to see it soon? It would be good to. Yeah, I think it is getting reasonably complete now." He seemed to be very proud of the progress that had been made thus far regarding Better World's building redevelopment plan and wanted to continue but stopped when he observed one of the managers being a bit uneasy.

ED: Sorry C you have something?

C: I am still... I am confused on what's going to happen with this 'drunk tank'*.

ED: Yeah.. well the plan at the moment, the idea anyway would be that if and when we get the new building it (drunk tank) is going to be detox based... probably (one collaborator) is going to have 24 detox beds and 15 (detox beds) for (another collaborator)... And the idea is that there will be some of the space for the drunk tank in that. People who are intoxicated they could be brought in a detox environment already so... when they do sober up if they want to go into drunk tank that will be there for them also.

C: I am just having a really hard time with people challenging me on that in the community. Not community members but colleagues and other people just about the fact that someone is being remanded to be there and I am not really sure how to argue it. *Like I get the idea, I do get it that if someone has to go there and do that (some other agency) then we should be the ones to do it.* But I can't... people keep coming at me with like how you can support people being remanded, control people, indigenous people especially. It is an argument that I struggle to have with people in my circles. So I don't know..

ED: Yeah I think it is a fair one we went to Winnipeg to look at MS which is kind of the best known drunk tank of this kind there... yeah this is not one of those black and white... when the opportunity came up in Winnipeg, they took it for that very reason that you said. There were other agencies around that potentially could have taken on to doing that and they (MS) felt that they were best placed to serve the community in a sensitive way and in a supportive way... *So, I mean it may not be the best argument for the world, but I think it a strong one that if someone's going to do it the organization that is best placed to do it*

in our city in the most sensibly and supportively is Better World. Because we are the leaders in harm reduction and it should be done in a harm reduction fashion. So that's the key reason why we are very open and interested to do it. Because frankly if we don't do it (then)... it could be done in way that's quite brutal I think and inappropriate. So yeah. That's the thing.

C: The argument that I keep getting back is that we should be the ones fighting that it doesn't happen at all.

Jo: Well it (already) does happen. They put them (community members) in police cells.

C: I know... I know

Jo: Right

C: But it just really hard to have that conversation

Jo: The question is whether you want a health-based approach, or do you want a justice-based approach.

ED: And we are the best possible agency to offer a health-based approach.

C: So, if someone says to you that you should be fighting that it doesn't happen at all, that no one ever gets reprimanded for public intoxication, what's your... how do you respond to that?

BJ: Well for me the answer is, yeah in an ideal world it wouldn't be happening at all. But sometimes you have to be realistic about what's the next best thing and this is what we can do. Just like a lot of our other work.

C: Yes, that is the answer that I give too. *That ideally it wouldn't be happening, and it is already happening, and we are the best people to do it.* But the answer that I keep getting is that 'you're at *Better World*' (tone suggesting that she understands Better World to be the best-in-class)

BJ: You know, its never going to happen. The police are never going to stop picking people for intoxicating in public, and I myself have seen guys on W avenue after a show or something, that I think need to be picked up because they're going to hurt someone or get hurt themselves. That's just life, right...

ED: And then there's the fear that we may be seen by our community (client community) as supporters of their jailers and this is a concern that we raised at MS in Winnipeg, *but interestingly they said that that didn't happen there because they were highly regarded within the community and they (clients) knew*

that MS was pretty much there for them (He then shrugged and tilted his head to gesture that the same is true for Better World in their city).

*upon following up on ‘drunk tank’ later, I was informed by the director of development that the idea of a drunk tank was proposed by the city’s police chief some years ago. The thought was to forcibly bring intoxicated people in at some facility other than jails, and ask them to get treated and detoxicated for up to 48 hours or so before they would be let go. This was meant to reduce the burden on the justice system. The idea was initially rejected by social service agencies as they did not want to bring people in forcibly.

[Management team meeting, June 2017; emphasis added]

As is clear, members took pride in doing things better than other social service agencies, expressed their understanding that they were the only agency who knew how to best serve its clients and felt capable of delivering those services in the best possible way. The organization was also keen to observe how others provided similar services, frequently engaged in comparison and contrast, and assured each other of their uniqueness as an organization. This, in turn, informed members’ sense of Better World’s powerfulness as they felt assured that they were doing their work much better than others. For example, Better World learned lessons on how to best deal with downtown revitalization by visiting agencies in other cities that had experienced similar circumstances. After one such visit to a neighboring city, the Executive Director expressed pride in his organization’s much superior service delivery; he debriefed in the management meeting:

“...(the neighboring city) gets so much more investment and infrastructure. Makes us really motivated around our building. It's not like we are asking for something unreasonable. Why if you are homeless and living in extreme poverty in (the neighboring city) you get a very different context for your service delivery? I happen to think we have more services in (our city) and probably better quality and more community engagement. But the physical context in which they are delivered is much poorer than (the neighboring city). We thought that might be a new narrative to play on with the whole (inter-city) thing. To add to our portfolio of narratives... We also saw organizations... They each had around 3-5 people per position (IT and HR etc). And they asked how much we had and we told them that we kind of share one position across four agencies,

and they were like whaaaaaat!!! One guy looked horrified (laughter burst in the room)...

(we also) went to see (a downtown) drop-in, just to get ideas about things they are doing things around buildings... We went to an organization that told us they saw 300-500 people a day. We were there prime time 11 o'clock and we literally saw five people in one section and maybe another 6 in another section. We didn't see more than 15 people, and we were there about an hour and a half, no one outside either. The weather was alright, not too cold, not super warm either. Wherever we went, we didn't see a lot of community members. Reminded us that we may not have fancy systems and this much infrastructure as them, we do so much better at being in the trenches with our community. And we had more programming too than what they had to offer..." [ED at Management team meeting, March 2017]

Thus, post the purchase of its land and building, Better World's efforts to redevelop a better building for themselves informed members of their powerfulness as an organization. Another manifestation of members' understanding of Better World's increasing powerfulness was its practice of 'monitoring community trends'. The organization frequently expressed interest in monitoring (and proactively dealing with) any recurring events or practices inside or outside the organization that might influence its work or its clients. These 'trends' were broad-ranging; the organization kept an eye on geographical as well as social issues that could potentially affect it. The underlying reason behind monitoring these trends was the organization's assumption that once tracked promptly, it will manage the nuisance. In this way, this practice of monitoring community trends reflects members' sense of Better World as a strong organization. For example, in one of the management meetings, Better World's management team declared their desire to dictate a policy that was aimed at restricting their clients' access to the arena's public skating rink. Here's the excerpt from the meeting conversation:

ED: Okay, community trends. Inside or outside the organization?

A: I think we are starting to see the beginning of the rink becoming less open. I hope that's not the case, but I know the community rink, which used to be totally open for people to go see the practices, is now closed, and they are told to report anyone who isn't supposed to be there. It's a security issue.

ED: who is supposed to be there?

A: the people who are practicing.

ED: but they're on the ice aren't they?

A: yeah, but there have been issues brought forward, people causing issues, stuff has been stolen. So, unfortunately, it takes away space, but that is why the decision was made – they've had a lot of incidents

ED: so if community members want to go in, could they go to the security side to watch? Would they be let in?

A: shakes head in negative

ED: No (translating A's headshake in negative). (after a pause) that's a real shame. Do you have a sense of how many people were going to watch the games, practices or whatever it is.

A: I don't think a whole lot, but the problem is the very few people who come in cause (trouble)... and the guys who told us that they start banging on the glass and yelling at the players. As funny as it is, it causes (disturbance)... and they do have to call security because he is causing a disturbance and grabbing stuff... A few instances like that just cause it to be – well they do have a responsibility to make sure it's a safe facility.

ED: I get that, but I wonder if it's the same true for other rec centers. Every rec center in the city must have stuff stolen from it and people behaving a bit oddly (Yeahs and Ahans... others agreeing and nodding), so it's kind of like, why is our 'supposedly community arena' being shut down at first sight of any trouble... And I know you're not justifying it, but I think we need to keep an eye on that and talk to them because for our community, that's a nice thing for them to do... *I just worry when policy gets made anywhere on the basis of the behavior of a minority of people, not based on the needs of the majority. So that's what concerns me. Not that those instances aren't serious. I mean they are. But we can't let them drive policy... (to a manager with a contact at the arena) Bre, could you have a chat with Karen (his contact at the community arena)?*

Bre: yeah, for sure [Management Team Meeting, January 2017]

Altogether, Better World's work to gain control over its territory led to identity work, whereby members engage in actions and conversations that made them understand Better World differently – as a more powerful organization. This sense of organizational powerfulness developed as members became more confident in the continuity of their work by obtaining legal rights to the organization's place. Also, they felt more capable of influencing outcomes for their clients.

Projecting an attractive vision:

Better World's territory claiming work in the form of the purchase of the organization's land and building stirred conversations about what it means to own the building. These conversations resulted in the organization perceiving an opportunity to redevelop its own building to better suit its operational needs and to better fit with the developments around them. "We want to develop a site that fits in with developments around it. We don't want to stand apart from developments, we want to be a part of it" [Executive Director in News Archive, March 21, 2014]. This gave the organization an impetus to reach out to others in the community. Mainly, during this phase, the organization's image work consisted of activities aimed at building a robust support system for its ambitious building redevelopment plan, and streamlining external communications. Specifically, Better World reached out to other social service agencies, and several orders of the government and successfully secured a promise of a grant from the provincial government to propose a plan for its building.

"This has also been a year in which we reflected on what we are, continued to advocate for the things that are important to us and to dream and plan for our future together as a community." [Annual Report, 2015]

Further, Better World also started becoming more strategic about its representation in the broader community. During this phase, they created a position for their first-ever

communications director. The person chosen for this position had extensive experience in the media. The objective of this appointment was to “develop a public face for Better World in the media” [Interview, Manager, June 2018].

Interestingly, as the organization started community conversations regarding its building redevelopment plan, it adopted two specific strategies: exhibiting flexibility and strategically voicing concerns over issues. When Better World decided that it wanted to redevelop its own building, the organization shared this plan with other agencies in the city and when others showed interest in joining them, they “allowed other agencies to choose in (on the plan)” [Interview Executive Director, March 2018]. This action gained the organization greater visibility in the right places – other agencies were quick to get behind Better World’s building redevelopment project, and the organization was also able to create a buzz about itself and its plan in the political circles. Better World also secured preliminary funding from the provincial government to develop a proposal for its building. As a result of being flexible in choosing partners, Better World even partnered with agencies whose philosophies stood in direct contrast with its own (e.g., provincial health authority, and city police). Recalling how quickly things had moved during the process of collaborating on its building redevelopment plan, the Executive Director said in one of the management team meetings:

“... people got back really quickly and made reason really quickly – even people who I *know* are almost impossible to make reason with. They got back within less than an hour.” [ED at a management team meeting, February 2018].

This also fed partially into Better World’s identity work and thus resulted in members trying to understand the organization differently. Particularly, having many agencies backing up the organization's future plans pertaining to its territory, gave members the confidence that they

were on the right track and on their way to becoming even stronger as an organization. Reporting on building redevelopment update, the Executive Director noted in one of the meetings:

“...it’s always interesting to see some of the city people from the city were really delighted (to find out about the grant for building redevelopment) and happy and it was really nice... seeing the amount of civil servants who have been really supporters of growth and they’ve been really there for us. And then (I) was talking with the community agencies who are genuinely really pleased... (I also) met with our city councilor (who was not very supportive of the organization’s plan) yesterday morning to tell him (about our building redevelopment plan) as well. He (had) heard it (already). I think I needed to let him know we are now in play, so to speak. So just continue to meet people... (Management team meeting, January 2017)

Further, Better World also realized that it needed to show flexibility if it were to involve others in the plan. Consequently, members became more conscious of what was really core to them and what aspects of the organization they could let go of. The outcome of this flexibility surfaced in later phases when during the preparation of the organization’s building redevelopment plan, Better World let go of their visual identity (their logo) and even their name and adopted a group identity. However, all thirteen values of the organization were adopted by the proposed collaboration.

Similarly, despite being aware of potential political sabotage of the project and negative narratives surrounding the building redevelopment project, Better World used positive messages to spread the word about themselves and their future building redevelopment plan in the political circles. Specifically, while Better World was in the process of gaining support from other agencies, the city government also announced its own plan to develop a collaborative wellness center that would compete directly with Better World’s plan. However, instead of adopting a competitive stance, Better World focused on aligning the mission of its plan to that of the city’s. At several occasions, the building redevelopment project was termed, ‘reconciliation in action’ to align the project with the city government’s goals to eradicate homelessness. Several members of

the organization, including the Communications Lead and directors, confirmed the organization's 'toning down' strategy during this phase in retrospective interviews.

Thus, in this phase, Better World projected itself very positively in the outside world – to its funders, other agencies, and also started targeting the broader community in subtle ways, thereby completing groundwork for further augmentation of its image. However, Better World's image work remained low-key and amenable, and territorial work took the main stage.

Phase III: Fortifying Territory

This phase starts with the organization's official public announcement of its plan to build a better building for itself. Once Better World had publicly claimed its territory by purchasing its land and building, the organization moved on to 'fortifying' this territory. I borrow the term 'fortifying' from its historical use in the military, where it is used to indicate the construction of a fort. In times of peace, this fort entrenches a ruler in a particular place and in times of battle or attack, it serves to protect or defend the place and the ruler. By engaging in concrete work on their building redevelopment plan, Better World also seemed to fortify its territory. However, the organization equally emphasized identity and image work in this phase.

Expanding Territory:

The following quote from the Executive Director of the organization appearing in the organization's annual report sums up how the organization engaged in territorial work during this phase:

“The purchase has also opened up new opportunities for us, and there has been much subsequent work done to look at how we might redevelop our current site or locate to another site in the inner-city and create a more ‘fit for purpose’ community center for the community we serve. Owning our building allows us to explore our options from a position of strength and not vulnerability. It allows us to stay where we are and if we ever choose to move, to move on our terms.”
[Annual Report, 2014]

In this final phase, Better World's territorial work was marked by efforts to aggrandize or further establish its territory by developing a proposal to build its building and by submitting that proposal to the provincial government. Better World accomplished this through the processes of managing time and assembling partners. During meetings, I observed a sense of urgency to develop a proposal for Better World's building redevelopment. The Executive Director of the organization noted at several occasions during management team meetings that he is extremely busy working with partners (other agencies) on the building redevelopment plan. I remember rushing to meet him for the first interview over an early breakfast shortly after 7:00 am at a café across the street from Better World, as he was engaged in meetings regarding building redevelopment and had no other time available. The following excerpt adapted from my field notes illustrates this understanding that time management was considered crucially important during the process of building redevelopment.

I could sense the rush to get things done regarding building redevelopment again. A lot was said in a very short time and I was grateful for my recorder! The point of the conversation was to plan consultations with community members and staff about the new building that Better World was planning. Staying true to their essence, they wanted input from community members about the potential location of the building and what services would they like to have. But the Executive Director also added something about wanting to consult the management team about the potential funding model. Not sure what he wanted input on, one of the manager's clarified:

C: Sorry [ED Name], what are the three topics we were talking about with building redevelopment? There was site ...

ED: Site (potential location), operations – what services and design, and the other one which is really not much concern to consultation is the funding model. Not really looking toward community members to tell us where we might find the money. So this is all (consultations) going to happen relatively quickly. And I think I said it before, that time is our biggest enemy, we need to get as much done as quickly as possible while those supporters are in their positions of power, whether political or senior bureaucrats.

Further, Better World amplified its efforts to develop its building by creating buy-in among other social service agencies and taking the lead on the plan. The organization hired a renowned architect to produce renderings of its future building and enthusiastically brought all potential partners together. I could feel the ED's nostalgia and saw a glint in his eye when he recollected how some of the representatives from partner agencies were 'huddled around a floor plan trying to figure out where would be best to put their respective services, how it would be best for the clients coming in... not for their particular organization' [interview, ED, March 2018].

During this phase, Better World built on its work in the previous phases and focused on obtaining more formal commitments from other agencies during this phase.

"our MLA and our champion [name] inadvertently let the cat out of the bag (publicly announced that we have the funding now), but after we have this funding, we can go to the next stage so... It's been a good thing in a way because *it's allowed us to now start talking to our community partners*, so that did a good job in getting meetings really quickly" [Executive Director during a management meeting, emphasis included in the original statement, January 2017]

Although the organization's plan to redevelop its building along with its partners has come to a halt, the organization is already thinking of alternative ways to fund the project. "we don't go down easy," the Executive Director told me in an informal chat. In the meantime, the organization has started expressing 'who we are' through its existing building. This is evident in how the organization hosted a flag-raising ceremony to hoist a treaty 6 flag on its building and painted a large medicine wheel on its walkway to as a homage to who the organization serves. Also, Better World's Executive Director reached out to the city's mayor to directly have a conversation about the city's decision to rebut Better World's building redevelopment proposal.

Asserting an image of strength:

Following the purchase of its land and building, Better World engaged in image projecting strategies that helped the organization gain support from other agencies and politicians and equipped the organization with capabilities to further project its image more systematically. Also, building onto the groundwork done in the second phase, Better World used more assertive strategies to create a positive and strong image in the outside world, especially with the broader public. Specifically, the organization portrayed its value in the community and targeted cognitive headspace. The following incident illustrates that Better World was keen on explaining why its approach to work was the best suited for its community members and aimed to dictate how the broader community should perceive, help, and interact with the organization and its homeless clients:

I had never seen Better World so empty and quiet, but today I was visiting for a special reason – they were holding an ‘impact session’ on Better World’s ‘social enterprises’ for their ‘ambassadors’ outside of the regular hours of operation. I arrived at about 6:30 pm but there were still about 15 minutes till the start of the session so I just hung out with the three members of Better World who were conducting this session – their manager of development (Bre), director of development (Jo), and one of the former community members (B) who had gotten rid of his addictions, and was now working with one of the organization’s many social enterprises. Ten ambassadors in total (including myself) attended this session. The hosts had set-up the session in a fun yet professional way. Seating was arranged in roundtables, snacks were provided, and white chart papers that had been pasted on the walls in the organization’s drop-in center signaled a fun Better World kind of activity. The ambassadors were soon told to take their seats and the session commenced. Bre, the manager of development, led the session.

Bre: Hi folks, welcome to our bi-monthly impact session on Better World’s social enterprises. We are an inner-city charity. We started delivering our services in 1971. The community that we serve deal with complex issues. Many of them are homeless, and 60- 70 percent of our community members are indigenous people. We are the city’s largest indigenous-serving organization. We are all about relationship building, and we meet people where they are at. I’ll get to that in a minute but before let me tell you a very interesting story.

In my first month at Better World, he continued, I successfully housed 8 people, which was a HUGE success, HUGEE!! I was extremely proud of myself. Just next month all of those people were evicted! ('oohhh Nooos' and chuckles at roundtables).

This experience really told me that in order to serve this community, it is extremely important to be community-led and that's what Better World does. We work to educate, advocate, and humanize (followed with a detailed explanation of what these meant).

We do all of these through impact sessions, plus an objective of inviting you here is to tell you how you can be involved.”

Bre then continued with more on Better World's social enterprises following this introduction to Better World and advocating the organization's approach to working. After Bre's talk, B, who was a former community member, shared his struggles as a former homeless person and credited his turnaround to Better World's approach to work. [adapted from field notes, August 2017].

As such, by demonstrating the value of its work Better World sought to dictate social norms in its locale; the organization indicated that homeless people were very much human beings with very real and complex challenges and ought to be treated respectfully, rather than being pushed out of their home.

Further, through its image work in this phase, Better World established why its presence in downtown was necessary. These strategies included becoming an educator, invoking emotions, and expanding its reach beyond its borders. These tactics were primarily targeted at the broader community. Further, toward the end of this phase, Better World also became more upfront about issues and let go of its 'toning down' strategy adopted during the second phase. The organization's Communications Lead mentioned to me during an interview that his “strategy is to have at least one story in the media from Better World every week” [Interview, January 2018].

The Director of Operations noted in an interview, “around fall of 2016, we came up with this [communication] strategy, educate, advocate, and humanize. It was decided that all our

outgoing communications must hit at least one or two and ideally all three aspects” [November 2017]. This quote amazed me at the arc that the organization’s ‘effective storytelling’ had followed from its initial image work to its image work during this phase. Better World’s image work during this phase undoubtedly reflected the organization’s strength. The educator role of the organization was fulfilled by starting conversations about its work and the challenging nature of this work. For example, the organization started a bi-monthly newsletter termed “Ambassador Insider” and associated “impact sessions” – informatory sessions for the broader community on topics including, homelessness, harm-reduction (Better World’s guiding philosophy), and social enterprises run by Better World. Impact sessions were held at the organization’s premises and were meant to bring people in and to help them understand as to why Better World was needed and why the organization’s philosophy was best suited to serving its clients. The following has been adapted from the author’s field notes:

“I was at one of the impact sessions that was meant to portray the usefulness of Better World’s social enterprises to the broader community.

When the session started, Jo (one of the directors) handed out post-it notes to all of the attendees... Mine read, ‘physical disability’. All of the participants were asked to assume that they were going through the condition mentioned on the slip. We were then asked to individually brainstorm answers to the question, ‘what challenges would you face during job search, and on the job if you had the condition noted on the slip’? Following initial brainstorming, we were asked to team up with another person, assume that we had both physical/mental/social challenges written on our slips and re-think answers to the same question.

At the end of this exercise, Bre (one of the managers) explained that often the people that they serve come in with multiple challenges, and how it helps to find employment for the people that they serve through their social enterprises.

The session was massively impactful. Even to this day, I shudder at the thought of having to look for a job with a physical disability, while also going through depression.

[Observation of Social Enterprises Impact Session, September 2017]

The executive team at Better World also systematically invoked emotions among the members of society. An example is the organization's "Take-the-pledge" campaign around Christmas 2017. Campaign brochures were distributed in residential communities in the surrounding areas and challenged the local community. The brochures read, "Do you know that an average Canadian family spends \$2000 over Christmas? # Take the Pledge. Do the holidays differently this year. We are asking individuals to donate just 10% of their holiday budget, volunteer for 10 hours over the winter and do one of our 10 Better World holiday activities".

Better World also worked to expand its reach beyond its borders in order to announce to the broader community that it was doing important work in the inner core of the city. For example, "ambassadors" -- members of the broader community were recruited, so that they could, in turn, inform their circle about Better World. The first issue of the organization's newsletter read:

"Welcome to the inaugural edition of the Ambassador Insider, Better World's guide for our community of Ambassadors. Every two months, we will provide you with valuable insights on one particular social issue currently impacting the people we serve, and how we are responding to it. More importantly, we'll let you know what you can do about it." [Ambassador Insider, May 2017].

Also, the organization held "pub nights" at different pubs in downtown, participated in fun activities to raise funds and focused on leveraging informal ties to broadcast its activities. All these identity work tactics helped Better World to situate itself as an important part of the downtown core and to set the norms of interaction in the area. That is, the organization made clear that the work it does is not easy, and by holding different engagement sessions encouraged other businesses and neighboring community to respect it as an organization and its clients.

Finally, Better World also engaged in the form of image work that I term, 'targeting cognitive headspace'. The actions that I group under this theme can be best described as

deliberate attempts to gain cognitive space in the minds of audiences, thereby expanding the organization's territory to include a geographical as well as cognitive place and to influence the meanings associated with the organization's territory. Although many of the organization's actions are indicative of this connection (e.g. hoisting a treaty flag, or painting a medicine wheel on their front walkway), a very specific example of the organization reminding the broader community that the terms 'inner-city' and 'downtown' have rich meaning associated with them, is given in the organization's proposal to redevelop its building. The organization notes:

“In early 2014, the City of Edmonton gave the green light to begin construction on a downtown arena. For many, the announcement was emblematic of a city that had regained its confidence and was willing to invest in its future. For one of its nearest neighbors – Better World – the announcement was the spark for a process of rethinking and reimagining. How could Better World and vulnerable people it serves be a part of the regeneration that was coming?”

With construction on the new arena well underway, Better World unveiled a bold plan to redevelop the agency's current facility into a community hub. The plan envisioned an iconic landmark designed by Manasac Isaac Architects that would celebrate the indigenous people and culture that were such a big part of the Better world community.”

They write further, “Too often we forget that the city of (name) sits entirely on Treaty land. Yet, there is no landmark or facility in the heart of our city that celebrates this collective heritage. (indicating that we want to be that collective heritage)” [Better World's business case, 2018]

Further, the organization's out-going communications, and social media strategies have become more reflective of the organization's strengthening identity. Specifically, during this phase, Better World abandoned its former 'toning down' policy and shifted toward being more upfront about issues. The biggest example is the organization's focus on data collection and its public presentation. By collecting and displaying its data, the organization is becoming much more forthcoming about why its existence in downtown is important. “We are certainly going to be more upfront about issues now”, said the Communications Lead in an interview with me. For

the first time in the over 40-year history of the organization, they have a communications department, which is working to develop a systematic communications strategy for the organization with the objective of sending out well-thought-out, systematic and coherent narratives about the organization. The Executive Director of the organization takes personal interest in the communication function of the organization. “in today’s meeting the ED had already mentioned about four times that he will be working closely with the communications lead on various projects. The entire room burst into laughter when he said it once more just before the meeting came to an end... A, the Director of Programs, nudged E, the Communications Lead, ‘seems like you will be working a lot’...” [February 28th, management meeting, adapted from field notes].

Better World’s recent actions also speak to the organization’s assertive projection of its image. For example, in April 2018 the organization hoisted a flag, representing a land treaty between the Canadian Crown and First Nations, in an elaborate ceremony, as a strong reminder that Better World (and their neighbors) stand on this treaty land, which has historically belonged to many of the organization’s clients. Another interesting example is the organization’s Christmas campaign planning for 2018.

I was quite taken aback to hear from one of the directors that Better World was thinking of launching a donations campaign for Christmas 2018 titled ‘That’BS’!

“You mean Bullshit?” I double-checked as it did not really register with me that they would do that.

“Well yeah”, he said and continued, “we want to remind people that just donating once a year is not enough, more needs to be done to help our community, so we’re calling BS... let’s hope we get approval to do it because it is a little edgy.”

They later did launch this campaign for Christmas 2018.

[Informal chat with a Director, May 2018]

Finally, internal conversations about improving public access to the organization started to stir up. “honestly, I think our existing phone lines are inefficient... people leave and they remain assigned to them, and when somebody from outside calls the front desk, they are transferred to the wrong extension as even [receptionist’s name] doesn’t know who’s where ... I think we want to be as accessible as possible... we should make it easy to reach us [ED in a management team meeting, March 2018, while proposing switching to a purely mobile phone-based access system]”

Overall, Better World’s image work in this phase targeted various audiences, especially members of the broader community, but also funding agencies, and political circles. However, during this phase, I noticed a shift in the organization’s understanding of their key audiences, from politicians to the broader community. Whereas during earlier phases, Better World developed a positive image with its funders and politicians in agreeable ways; they were not reluctant to use assertive tactics for their image work during this final phase. Also, much greater emphasis was levied on creating buy-in among the broader public. Their image work also moved from being irregular and low-key to systematic, calculated, and assertive. From simply appearing on the radar of other agencies and political circles, to explaining the value of its work in the community, to strategically targeting headspace in the minds of its audiences, the organization has come a long way. These efforts of displaying its essence to the outside world were coupled with the organization’s internal re-arrangement of the core aspects explained below.

Reinforcing who we are:

A large part of identity work during this phase focused on expanding the portfolio of the organization’s programs and services in innovative ways. In fact, this theme of rapid growth kept

surprising me throughout my fieldwork, which spans over a large part of this final temporal phase. The Director of Operations mentioned in an interview, “ I've seen how we've grown, even the time I've been here [2 years], 30 percent! I mean, it's, it's existential for a lot of, you know, imagine if a... I dunno, some other organization grew that much in a year... what would that look like in a corporate environment, you know, and I think they would, you know, they'd be setting their hair on fire, right?” [Interview, November 2017]. Between Fall 2016 and Summer 2018, the organization added several program and services including a food truck, an employment training program in collaboration with the Food Bank in the city, a bank, and a supervised consumption site. Although members of Better World already understood the organization as a very innovative social service agency (nearly all of my informants used the adjective ‘innovative’ to describe who Better World is), the addition of novel programming further enhanced this understanding and supported the organization’s image work. Members acknowledge that the organization’s innovativeness has been instrumental in its rapid growth and increasing strength. Throughout my engagement with the organization, I observed several instances that affirmed this view. To illustrate, the organization started an innovative social enterprise, whereby the broader community could recruit Better World’s clients for various chores on their daily to-do lists. One of these tasks was ‘standing in queue. The text on the social enterprises’ website reads:

“That *cool new thing* is about to get released, and you need to be one of the first people to have it! Our taskers are ready to stand in line for you. Ideal for folks who are differently-abled or unable to stand for long periods of time and fanatics who aren't available to camp out in line.” [social enterprise website, emphasis included in original, Retrieved October 2018]

One of the directors noted in an interview how Better World’s growth has been due to the organization being open to exploring novel ideas. While answering how have you experienced

such rapid growth, he said, “It been due to our not saying no... over the past few years especially, we’ve said well this will work for our community let’s try this and if that doesn’t work we’ll try something else that seems interesting. [Interview, May 2018].” As explained earlier, a large part of the organizations’ image work was to describe what Better World did and how it served its community members. Therefore, this innovativeness filled members with a great sense of pride and enabled them to start community conversations regarding what they do and how. One of the managers told me during an interview, “For example, having a bank gives us a talking point with the broader community, we’ll go hey, by the way, do you know that we have a bank? And they’ll be interested in listening” [March, 2018].

This innovativeness was a product of the organization’s territorial work to a large extent. By owning legal rights to its place, Better World became deeply entrenched in the area and became open to expanding and exploring novel ideas and opportunities to serve its community members. Consequently, Better World became receptive to innovative and out-of-the-box ideas and started implementing them. While answering about the changes that she had observed over the past couple of years at the organization, one of the managers at the organization noted during the interview, “like I could take a crazy idea to (the top management) and if it helps serve our community members better... they would just run with it” [Interview, April 2018]. As such, the organization’s increasing innovativeness was a by-product of their territorial work and, in turn, facilitated a large part of the organization’s work to assert its image.

Simultaneously, the expansion resulting from the organization’s innovativeness necessitated a reinforcement of the organization’s professional self. Since this innovativeness resulted in the expansion of the organization’s programs and services, it was also coupled with budgetary and staff increases. Therefore, the historically-relevant relationship-based approach to

work started becoming obsolete, and policies and protocols started replacing the do-what-feels-right culture. That is, the organization's core characteristic – its relationship-oriented approach of doing business was changing fast now, and employees were left perplexed about the essence of the organization. For example, a director noted in an interview:

“We're always bouncing back and forth between being [non-prescriptive and prescriptive]... Because I also think historically Better World was way too nonprescriptive and you've (addressing me specifically) probably witnessed a transition from a completely fluid kind of no rules kind of a deal with things as they come to now transitioning into a more prescription, but with also the value that reflects relationship-based, these kinds of things. And that's a hard tension.” [Director of Operations, November 2017].

The management team addressed these internal confusions and tensions by becoming more ‘prescriptive.’ Within a span of a year-and-a-half, I observed policies on barring, theft reporting and video surveillance, harassment, payroll, and critical incident reporting being either revisited (iteratively) or written-up from scratch. Further, staff members were told to maintain greater boundaries between themselves and their clients. As such, the organization started becoming a more formalized organization. The following instance demonstrates that Better World had started taking policy-making very seriously.

The previous week I had seen for myself what had happened to Bi. She was all shaken up when one of the clients had shouted at her. After the incident, Bi had left for home, and her department head, the Director of Finance had called a staff meeting to assure them that top management will look into the matter seriously.

During the week, they must have decided to make it into a policy as one of the main discussion topics at the next management team meeting was the development of ‘critical incident reporting policy’.

When one of the managers from the development team, Bre, noted that ‘staff often don't want to report such incidents formally because they know the clients well and can understand that they (the client) must be having a bad day or something, plus they often do come around and go hey, you know I'm sorry, I was rude before... (nods across the room)’, another one, M from needle

exchange program commented, 'just because they work at Better World doesn't mean they (the employees) should have to suck it up'.

During this meeting, a cross-functional team was created to collaborate and write-up the critical incident reporting policy from scratch. This team subsequently developed the policy and a detailed critical incident reporting form. It was decided that the employee who is the target of the 'critical incident' plus two eyewitnesses must file a report with a manager in the organization about the critical incident. The manager was to then follow-up with the target of the incident at regular intervals to ensure that the employee was getting the right support" [Adapted from management team meetings held between March 2018 and April 2018]

Over the course of observations, several other policies were discussed and developed.

Further, the organization revisited who it is through several structural changes; many new roles were created or reshuffled, and some departments were restructured to indicate a changing Better World. For example, the organization created a new department called 'Better World Ventures' which was the overarching program for all of the organization's social enterprises including junk removal, moving, cleaning, ad hoc services, food truck, and the bank. Another example is the creation of a separate role for the Director of Development that was not only focused on finding the right opportunities and building connections in the broader community for the organization but was also made responsible for employee mentoring for leadership positions, and their support and supervision.

Further, as Better World started becoming more policy-oriented, part of its identity work also became geared toward reinforcing understanding around the 'new' Better World. As such, the organization moved toward the issue of policy implementation and encouraged consistency of newly introduced practices. As such, the organization addressed what and how we do, in order to shape members' understanding of 'who we are' as an organization. The following experience is probably one of my most memorable experiences in the field and indicates the tendency to practice policies and protocols.

“As I made my way toward Better World, I noticed a short and fast-moving queue at the narrow entrance. Upon entering the front lobby, I was greeted by a new face, I had never met her before. After a brief exchange of pleasantries, she asked me a shocking question. She asked, ‘where do you sleep?’

I had seen this coming... I had sat in meetings weeks before where the management had been discussing the issue of recording their numbers at the entrance. At one point stamps, similar to the ones tattooed to the skin at clubs were also proposed to count the number of individual clients served in a day. But I didn’t expect that it would feel so awkward to be asked whether I am a homeless person. I must have gone numb with shock as the concierge rephrased her question, ‘are you housed?’

Having recovered from the initial shock, I promptly replied, “yes, yes, I am housed.” She also asked me my age bracket and the gender that I identified with and recorded all this data in her handy little tablet.

That day onward, I had to repeat the same exercise every time I tried to enter the building.” [adapted from field notes, February 2018]

This incident reflects part of the organization’s focus on data collection and representation. Collecting data at its entrance helped the organization come up with more accurate numbers of how many individuals it welcome each day. This, in turn, helped the organization demonstrate the value of its work in the community. Similarly, the organization’s barring policy is another example of consistent policy application. Consistent application of the barring policy was mainly an issue due to the organization’s historical relational roots; having known the community members very well over long periods of time, employees sometimes found it hard to keep the community members from entering the building when they exhibit less desirable behaviors. The organization also dealt with this by paying attention to the issue of policy implementation. “I think part of the problem is us [senior management at the organization]! If we are not consistent about applying the policies, then the frontline staff will be confused”, noted the ED during one of the management team meetings. Consequently, the

organization focused on greater implementation and consistency in the implementation of its policies and practices.

Relatedly, the proverbial boundary between staff and community has been an issue at Better World. Owing to the organization's relationship-oriented approach, staff tended to identify with the community strongly and considered themselves as 'one' with the community they served (historically many of them also used to have lived experiences as well). In order to facilitate a different understanding of who Better World is, the organizations addressed difficult questions during management team meetings, including, should Better World call community members clients? And should staff have the same powder rooms as community members? I found that while the organization still focused on portraying oneness with the community members, it did introduce some boundaries on the employee-staff relationship. For example, managers were told to communicate to their teams that staff are not to buy cigarettes from community members, not to keep their money safe for them, and so on. Another example of setting boundaries between staff and community members is the introduction of staff vests – blue and gray colored vests that were meant to differentiate staff from community members. To encourage others to sport those vests, the Executive Director of the organization showed up in one of the team meetings wearing the jacket himself.

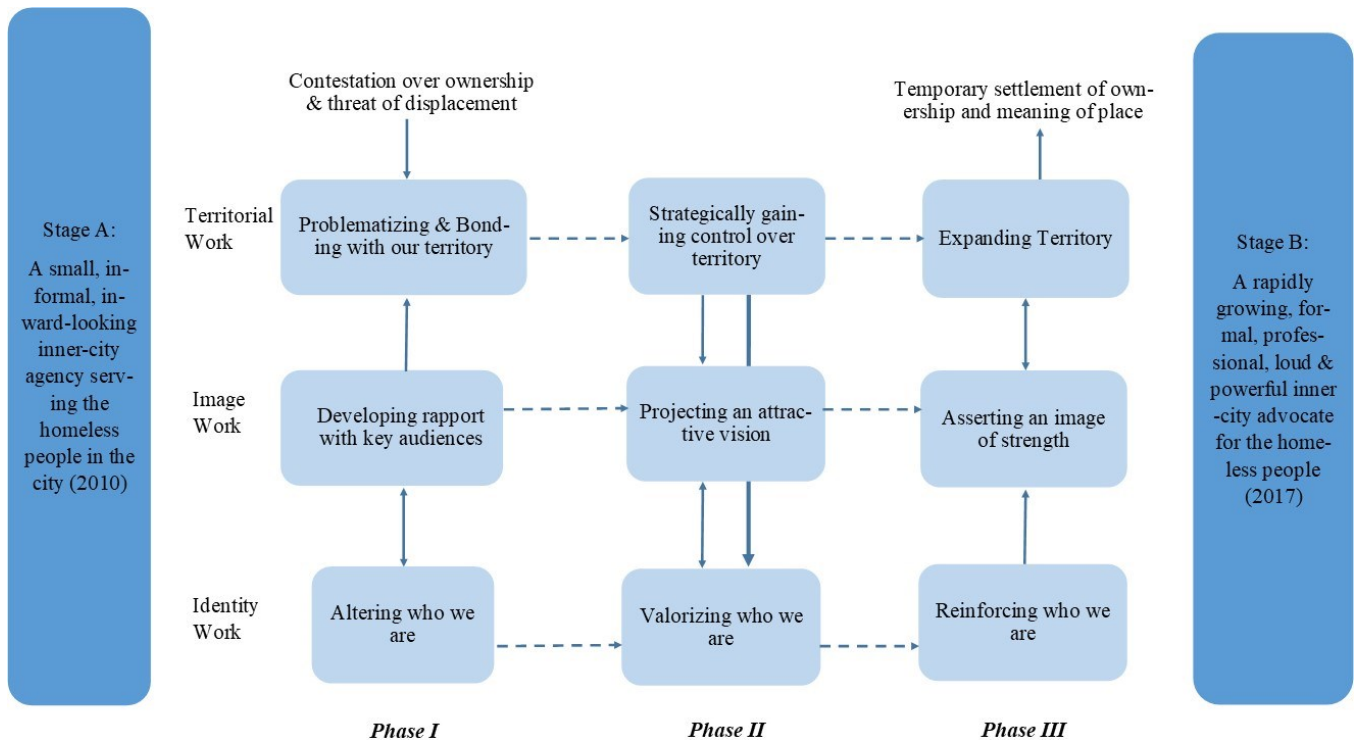
Finally, the organization also used external means to promulgate the changing identity of Better World internally. Specifically, some of its programs that did not traditionally apply for accreditation were encouraged to move toward obtaining accreditation. Once approved, these other programs were also bound by formal record-keeping and reporting regulations, promoting formalization in the organization. This spirit seeped into the rest of the organization as well. The

following experience at Better World is an instantiation of how this spirit of formalization was seeping into who the organization was becoming.

As part of data collection, I was asking for as many organizational documents as I thought would be relevant to understating Better World. Therefore, in February 2018, I asked if they could give me access to their financial statements? I was told that the organization prepared but did not publish their financial statements, ‘Oh we’ve never really had a formal report (makes air quotes) reports... our annual report has always been sort of um... one big address from (the executive director), I’ll ask Di (his assistant) to see if she can find them somewhere and give them to you’. Only a few months following this conversation, I received an email from Better World in September 2018 informing their ambassadors (including myself) that they had, for the first time in their history published their annual report. The email read, “Hello Asma, we here at Better World are very proud and excited to be able to present to you, our loyal ambassador, our 2018 General Annual Report. This is a representation of the work, passion, and innovation of the year past, and goals for our future.” [Adapted from field notes from February and September 2018].

To sum up, by obtaining accreditations for some of its programs, by quickly moving toward consistent implementation of policies, and by addressing staff – community member boundaries, Better World provided the impetus for a revised understanding of who the organization is. Together with the organization’s other efforts to revisit ‘who we are’, in turn, enabled the organization to engage in asserting a positive image in the broader community. I summarize my findings through the following conceptual model, Figure 1. And Table 5 summarizes the themes relevant to each of Better World’s strategies.

Figure 1- Summary of Findings



Legend:
Solid lines indicate intra-phase connections and dotted lines represent inter-phase connections.

Table 5- Themes emergent in identity, image, and territorial works over time

	Identity Work	Image Work	Territorial Work
Phase I Feeling Connected	<p><i>Altering who we</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - justifying new ways - challenging historical practices 	<p><i>Developing rapport with key audiences</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - initiating collaborations - building goodwill through good work 	<p><i>Problematizing and bonding with the territory</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - problematizing our place - feeling a sense of connection with place
Phase II Public Claiming	<p><i>Valorizing who we are</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - taking pride in organizational strengths - monitoring trends 	<p><i>Projecting an attractive vision</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - building support for territorial work - streamlining external communications 	<p><i>Strategically gaining control over territory</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - experiencing a lack of agenda-setting capabilities - experiencing being pushed out
Phase III Fortifying	<p><i>Reinforcing who we are</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - revisiting who we are - reinforcing adjusted understanding of who we are 	<p><i>Asserting an image of strength</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - portraying value in the community - targeting cognitive headspace 	<p><i>Expanding Territory</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - managing time - assembling partners

Becoming stronger: The interaction of organizational identity, image, and territorial work

In this study, I explored how place-oriented environmental disruptions influence the flow of organizational identity. Particularly, I asked how do place-oriented environmental disruptions inform actors' sense of place? And how does actors' sense of place shape organizational identity dynamics? My findings suggest that actors' sense of their place and their understanding of 'who we are', are deeply intertwined. In making sense of environmental disruptions, they may channel a sense of affiliation with their place and respond accordingly. In this section, I propose a theoretical framework to explicate how place-oriented environmental disruptions can influence the process of organizational identity, and how the process of responding to such disruptions might alter members' understanding of their organization's powerfulness.

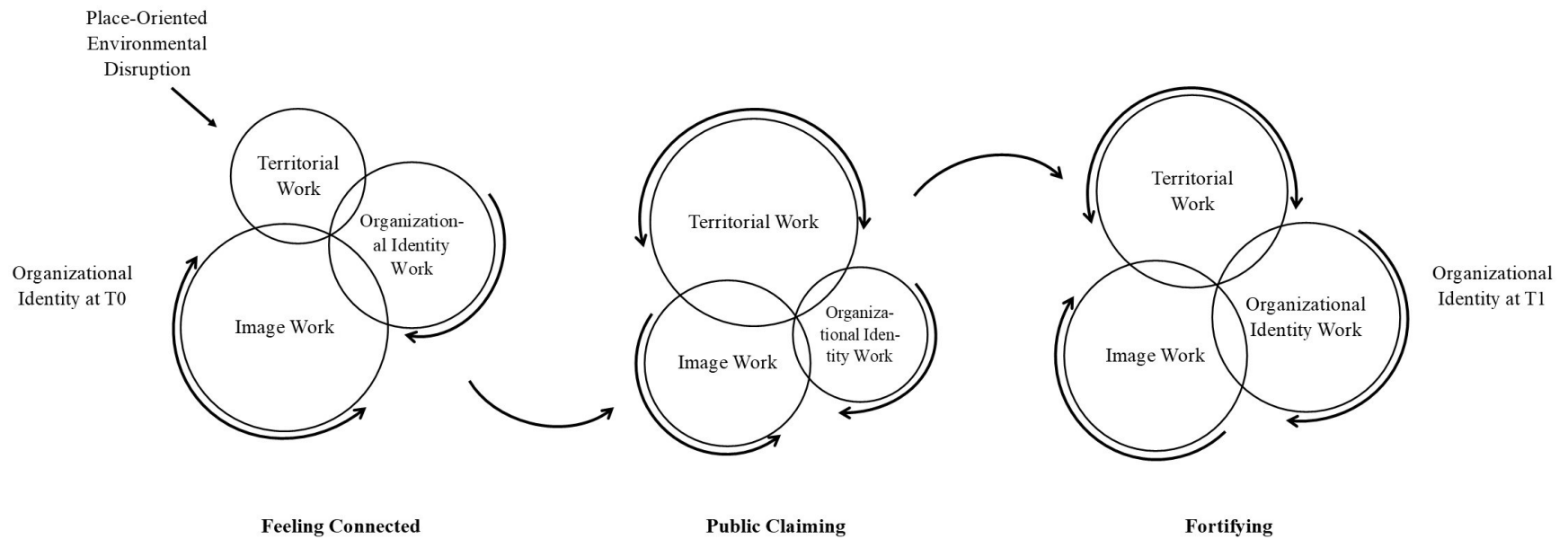
When Better World's immediate physical environment was disrupted in the form of the sports arena, the organization experienced the disruption on two levels. First, at a topographical level, the organization felt threatened by contestation over its location. The developer who owned the arena also expressed interest in purchasing blocks of land surrounding the arena, including Better World's site. It is a matter of public records that the developer even purchased the residential property immediately adjacent to Better World and furnished the tenants with a one-year notice to vacate. Therefore, the most direct form of threat was a potential loss of place, which, according to my informants, could have resulted in the organization's demise.

The second aspect of this threat was more abstract and was felt at a social level. As it was a part of an overarching downtown revitalization program, the main objective of arena development was to increase the flow of urbanized crowds in downtown through sports, concerts and other events, thereby converting inner-city into a place known for entertainment opportunities (as opposed to a place for the homeless in the city). This development, therefore,

upset the traditional social milieu in the downtown area, thereby threatening the historical meaning associated with ‘inner-city’. Thus, to borrow the terminology from the literature on place (Cresswell, 2014), development of the arena in downtown disturbed Better World’s location, locale, and sets of meaning associated with the geography. Accordingly, Better World’s response to this disruption was two-pronged; the organization not only addressed the very material, geographical threat but also dealt with the social aspects of the threat.

Particularly, I understand the organization’s various tactics between 2010 and 2018 as different forms of territorial work, image work, and identity work. I found that the organization’s territorial work provided an impetus for and was, in turn, facilitated by various forms of identity work and image work overtime. Building on Sack’s (1983, 1986) work on human territoriality, I define territorial work as ‘*actions aimed at management, change, or defense of one’s territory*’. These actions are, in turn, guided by organizational territoriality, ‘an organization’s sense of connection with their place’. My findings suggest that an organization’s territorial work, image work, and identity work together shape the trajectory of an organization’s identity. In the case of Better World, this was seen through members’ understanding of Better World as a more powerful organization. The following model, Figure 2, represents how Better World’s territorial work, identity work, and image work interacted over time, leading to Better World’s changing identity.

Figure 2- Flow of organizational identity in the face of territorial disruption



Legend:

Size of circles indicates the proportionate importance that the organization granted to different forms of work during different phases. And overlap indicates the extent to which one influenced the other.

Overall, this model suggests that the flow of organizational identity will shift in response to territorial disruption as follows (taking identity in a continuous state of becoming). If and when an organization experiences some form of territorial disruption (whether or not deemed as positive or negative by the organization), the disruption will enhance an organization's sense of connection with its place. Feeling connected with its territory will provide the impetus for further territorial work in the form of the organization publicly claiming this territory. Although in the case of Better World, the organization publicly claimed its territory by means of owning legal rights to its place, a generic public claim could also include subtle forms of territorial work such as publicizing organizational affiliation with territory (e.g. 'a Silicon Valley company' or 'serving Alberta since 1985' etc.). This public claiming of territory will, in turn, influence the flow of organizational identity. In the case of Better World, it enhanced members' sense of Better World's powerfulness, a turn in the flow of identity, which is likely to replicate in other scenarios as well. Finally, public claiming of territory will lead organizations to fortify their territory – a term that I borrow from the military, indicating further solidification of an organization's presence in an area. Fortification of an organization's territory will, in turn, be supported by the organization's actions to reconcile an altering understanding of who they are as an organization and through the assertion of their image of strength.

Immediately after the threat was felt, Better World's territorial work highlighted a sense of connectedness with its place, that is, the organization started understanding its place as its territory. This work was supported by the organization's work to alter its identity and by its work to develop a positive image-developing work. These forms of image and identity work were initiated by the then-new leadership of the organization and served to connect Better World to the world outside and bring it out of its silo. This gave the organization an outward focus,

making it more aware of environmental events. Following its sense of connectedness with its place, Better World purchased its land and building. This very concrete form of territorial work (publicly claiming territory), in turn, fueled identity valorizing work and image projecting work in the second phase. That is, members of Better World started understanding the organization as a more powerful entity and reminded each other of organizational strengths. They also utilized this sense of powerfulness to connect more with their counterparts and political circles in order to rally support for the next phase of the organization's territorial work, i.e., fortifying territory. Further, Better World also streamlined its external communications by hiring a communications director whose position was created to ensure that Better World has a systematic presence in the media.

In the final phase, which starts with Better World announcing its plans to develop a bigger and better facility for itself, the organization strengthened its identity by adding an array of programs and services. This focus on growth, led to the expansion of programs and services offered by the organization, which in turn tremendously shifted the way the organization had done business in the past. Therefore, Better World not only had to revisit internal understanding of who it is, but the organization also had to find ways to reinforce this adjusted understanding. Accordingly, the organization matched up internal systems and policies with the fast-growing organization to reinforce a new understanding of who it was becoming. Better World also extensively used this identity work to actively assert a positive image by portraying the value of its work in the community.

Through its image work during the final phase, Better World consistently reminded the broader community of its presence in the area and strategically gained headspace in the minds of audiences. By constantly remaining in the public eye, the organization strongly suggested that

although the city was attempting to transform its downtown into a different place than it had historically been, the area very much belonged to the homeless people (and by extension to Better World) as well. Therefore, the organization attempted to influence what it meant to be in the inner-city. Overall, through their efforts to target cognitive headspace, Better World invoked their preferred meanings associated with their place, which further grounded their presence in the area and supported their final form of territorial work, that is, fortifying territory. Table 6 summarizes these interconnections.

Table 6- Interconnections between identity work, image work, and territorial work

	Identity Work	Territorial Work	Image Work	Interconnections	Example from data
Phase I Feeling Connected	Altering	Problematizing and Bonding	Developing	<p>Image developing work helps create an outward focus and build connections;</p> <p>organizations become more focused on external events and more likely to be aware of how external events influence them;</p> <p>they are also likely to explore new ways of working, which provides an impetus for altering the understanding of who they are</p>	<p>becoming more open to partnerships and reaching out to other agencies</p> <p>“why should our clients not have an equal chance to be in the area.”</p>
Phase II Public Claiming	Valorizing	Claiming	Projecting	<p>Claiming territory provides reasons to members to understand their organization as powerful and to 'valorize' themselves.</p> <p>This provides confidence for projecting a more positive image</p>	<p>our work has gained us a great deal of attention in the media (annual report_2014)</p>
Phase III Fortifying	Reinforcing	Expanding	Asserting	<p>Territory expanding work provides a continuity lens and enables interpretation of external events as opportunities;</p> <p>Seeing opportunities results in an expansion of what an organization does and how, and also provides reasons for reinforcing the altering understandings of 'who we are'</p> <p>It also provides confidence to assert a positive image</p>	<p>in early 2014... celebrate the indigenous people and culture...[from business case]</p> <p>'overflowing of donations' due to successful Christmas (#takethepledge) campaign</p>

Summary of Findings

Through the interaction of Better World's identity work, image work, and territorial work, members' understanding of Better World's powerfulness increased. While answering my question, "have you seen any changes in Better World as a result of the building redevelopment exercise?" one of the managers responded, "it's given the organization a new kind of swagger (chuckles) No seriously, it's certainly put us on the map more so than we already were with politicians, with bureaucrats, people." [Interview, Manager, March 2018]

Although the organization was on its way to becoming different from its past self under the new leadership, all these changes were incremental until the organization experienced a territorial disruption in the form of a national hockey league arena, constructed quite literally in the organization's face. Better World promptly purchased its current land and building, right when the arena developers were about to move ahead with their construction project in 2013. Post this territorial work, the answer to 'who Better World is' changed rapidly. Through this study, I have argued that place is a fundamental referent for organizational members to understand who they are. Territorial work conducted by Better World in response to the place-oriented disruption influenced the trajectory of organizational identity.

Therefore, my findings suggest a relationship between organizational territory and identity; the evolution of organizational identity followed the progression of organizational territoriality, that is, Better World's sense of connection with its place. Therefore, these findings suggest that it might be fruitful to understand organizational identity as a multidimensional concept where the answer to who we are is understood in terms of 'what we do (core business), how we do it (core practices and guiding philosophy) and importantly, 'where we are located' or where we belong (organizational territory). For example, in the case of Better World 'we are all

about the community we serve’, ‘we follow a harm-reduction based approach, which means meeting people where they are at instead of imposing a pre-determined treatment’, and ‘we are an inner-city agency’, together represent members’ understanding of who they are as an organization. Thus, I argue that place is a crucial referent for organizational identity.

I present a summary of my findings as bullet points below:

Phase I:

1. Around 2010, Better World experienced leadership change, which resulted in the organization engaging in identity work by changing some core practices, and image work by introducing itself to other similar agencies in the city.
2. The organization’s image work fed partially into its early territorial work by giving the organization an outward focus, that is, Better World started keeping a close eye on developments regarding the arena because of their newly developed outward focus.
3. Better World’s image work also fed into the organization’s identity work in part – as the organization tried to improve its image with its funders, it challenged historically-grounded internal practices such as too much focus on relationship building and introduced new practices, such as reporting. This gave members an impetus to reconstruct an understanding of who they are as an organization.
4. Better World understood arena development as a threat and consequently felt a heightened sense of connection with its place, thereby conceiving its geographical location as its territory.

Phase II:

1. The most prominent form of work in this phase was territorial work. Better World publicly claimed its territory by obtained legal rights to its land and building (its territory). This territorial work yielded the following outcomes:
 - a. Members engaged in identity work that included frequent reminders of Better World's strengths. This, in turn, indicated that members had started seeing Better World as a stronger and more powerful organization.
 - b. Better World gained a lot of attention and visibility in the right places (political circles and media), thereby putting the organization on the map.
 - c. Better World reached out to other agencies and politicians to gather support for its plans pertaining to their territory and streamlined its external communications by creating a position for the Director of Communications.
 - d. This image work fed back into identity work as reaching other agencies and gaining their support reassured members of the organization's powerfulness.

Phase III:

Having claimed its territory publicly in the previous phase, Better World moved toward fortifying the same in this phase. The organization announced its plan to redevelop its building. This resulted in the following outcomes and actions:

- a. Better World started seeing arena development as an opportunity for its own expansion and added a host of programs and service. Annual growth rate reached 30% between 2016 and 2017.
- b. Expansion of Better World's programs and services necessitated a more formal organization. Therefore, identity work comprised of new policy development and

- implementation, thereby reinforcing a different understanding of who Better World is becoming by means of addressing how it does business.
- c. This identity work fed into the organization's image work: expansion of programming also facilitated the demonstration of value of Better World's work in the community and allowed the organization to strategically remain in the public eye. For example, having a bank gained a lot of media attention, and allowed members to reach out to the broader community and tell them about the novel ways through which Better World was helping the marginalized people.
 - d. This image work of asserting its presence in the public eye also fed into the Better World's territorial work. By demonstrating what they do, how and why, Better World firmly established its place in downtown.

Identity change:

1. As a consequence of the interactions between the organization's territorial work, identity work, and image work overtime, Better World's identity evolved in the following ways:
 - a. from a small to a larger organization
 - b. from an informal, relationship-oriented to a more formalized, policy-oriented organization
 - c. from a quietly tucked-away inward-looking organization to a loud and proud advocate for the homeless, which was much more outward-looking (collaborative approach)
 - d. from a less powerful to a more powerful organization

Chapter 5: Discussion

In this inductive ethnographic study, I studied a social enterprise that was assertive about staying at their downtown location after experiencing a push to relocate in the face of a changing downtown. The gentrification of Edmonton downtown in general, and especially the construction of a national sports arena right across the street from Better World, forced the organization to consider what its downtown location meant for its work. To wit, I found that the organization deemed its place as important and felt a sense of connection with it. Consequently, Better World purchased its land and building, which it was previously leasing from a private owner. This symbolic move stirred things up at Better World; the flow of organizational identity shifted such that members' understanding of Better World's powerfulness got amplified and they engaged in growth and expansion related activities. Further, feeding on this understanding of a stronger organization, Better World asserted an image of strength in the outside world as well and by doing so, firmly established its place in downtown.

My findings reaffirm Dutton and Dukerich's (1991) assertion that "keeping an eye in the mirror" is essential for identity dynamics. However, I extend this view and argue that keeping one's feet on the ground is also equally important for the processes of organizational identity. In this section, I build on my findings to highlight the implications of the study in the form of three primary theoretical contributions. First, I draw from the emergent notion of "identity as a flow" to elucidate what place-oriented disruptions mean for the flow of organizational identity. Second, I argue that place is an important and overlooked referent for organizational identity-related processes. Finally, I discuss how the notion of power is central to the discussion on organizational identity.

The flow of organizational identity and environmental disruptions

In this study, I build on organizational identity research that views identity as a continuous flow or as a process of becoming (Gioia & Patvardhan, 2012; Gioia, Price, Hamilton, & Thomas, 2010; Schultz, 2016; Schultz & Hernes, 2013). Although previous studies concerning organizational identity have elucidated the processes of identity change in response to environmental disruptions (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Petriglieri & Devine, 2016; Ravasi & Schultz, 2006), these studies have not shed light on how environmental disruptions might influence the flow of organizational identity. That is if organizational identity is in a continuous state of flux, *how (the flow of) identity will change* if the process is interrupted by environmental disruptions. Drawing inspirations from calls to understand the flow of identity (Pratt, 2012; Schultz, 2016; Schultz et al., 2012), this study goes beyond the existing works on organizational identity change and takes identity-as-a-flow as its starting point. Particularly, before Better World felt threatened by the new arena, it had already started working toward altering how members understood it. My findings reveal that due to the occurrence of the place-oriented disruption, members' understandings of Better World started including a sense of powerfulness about the organization. While the leadership team at Better World had set out to move the organization toward professionalization, formalization, and collaboration, none of the informants ever stated that achieving organizational strength or sense of powerfulness was also one of the aims of their (identity) work.

Thus, my study suggests that environmental disruptions can influence the trajectory of organizational identity. I explain this by positing a recursive relationship between issue interpretation and members' responses to environmental disruptions. Although, identity scholars have shown that members' responses to environmental disruptions depend upon how they

interpret a disruption (Corley & Gioia, 2004; Elsbach & Kramer, 1996; Gioia & Thomas, 1996; Ravasi & Schultz, 2006). My findings also suggest that members' initial response to an environmental disruption feeds back into their interpretation of issues. In the case of Better World, the organization purchased its building after initially interpreting the arena as a threat. However, the organization's initial response of purchasing its land and building led it to interpret the arena as an opportunity for its own growth and development. Seeing these opportunities for expansion put the organization on a path of growth, requiring members to engage in identity work and enabling them to understand the organization as stronger than before.

As is suggested by existing identity change studies (e.g., Dutton & Dukerick, 1991), the particular direction that organizational identity flows in will largely depend upon what members of an organization make of the issue at hand. However, my study also shows that the processes pertinent to an organization's place and territory are also relevant for understanding identity as a process. Specifically, the flow of Better World's identity seems to mirror the progression of the organization's territorial work. For example, problematizing and bonding with the territory also led to conversations about who the organization is; strengthening of the organization's position with respect to its place was followed by an amplified sense of strength about the organization; and expansion of the organization's territory resulted in extended efforts aimed at reinforcing understanding of who the organization was becoming. Thus, it may be argued that organizational identity will flow parallel to the organization's response to the disruption, strengthening and amplifying as a result of a stronger or more assertive response to environmental disruption.

Extant literature hints that this might indeed be the case. For example, in the case of Keystone, an NGO, Tracey and Phillips (2016) show that when Keystone faced the disruption in the form of stigma due to their linkage with immigrant populations, the organization responded

to this disruption forcefully and valorized their connection with the stigmatized population, rather than trying to change their image in the eyes of their key stakeholders. These actions resulted in the eradication of stigma (interpreted differently, resulted in the strengthening of Keystone's identity).

In sum, in line with this stream of research that views identity as a flow, I also portray identity as a continuously evolving process by mapping its evolution over three temporal phases. However, my findings take this understanding of identity one step ahead by revealing that the trajectory that this flow might take is also a function of external events. As such, I follow Pratt's (2012) suggestion that we need to further explore figure-ground relationships concerning identity, where "identity is figure."

Organizational identity and place

Existing research examining organizational identity change in response to environmental disruptions has overlooked an organization's place as part of its environment. Therefore, the dynamics between an organization's place and its identity have remained underexplored. Starting with the understanding that place is an important facet of social (and therefore, organizational) life (Gieryn, 2000; Lawrence & Dover, 2015; Molotch, 2002), I aimed to explore the relatively understudied dynamics between place and organizational identity in this study. I examined the process of Better World's identity change and found that the organization's identity change was deeply interconnected with its territoriality, or simply its sense of connection with its place. Specifically, findings suggest a recursive relationship between place- and identity-related processes. Better World's initial identity work aimed at making practice-level changes within the organization fueled the organization's image work, which, in turn, helped the organization become more aware of its environment. This awareness subsequently led the organization to

keep a close eye on its environment, including changes to its place. Therefore, when the arena presented itself as a potential threat, the organization came to understand its place as its territory, a geographical area with which an actor develops a sense of affiliation, and promptly secured it. This initial territorial work led to further identity (and image) work, which helped affirm the organization's existence in the local community. Understanding place and identity in a recursive relationship with each other offers two primary contributions to the literature on organizational identity vis a vis place.

First, I draw from the literatures on human geography and environmental psychology to introduce the concept of organizational territoriality, defined here as a sense of connection with a place. While the notion of territoriality is not entirely novel in the organizational context, it has primarily been applied to the study of human behavior *within* organizations (e.g., Brown et al., 2005; Elsbach, 2003), rather than to understand organizational-level phenomena. Embedded in the concept of territoriality, is the idea that actors strongly associate with and therefore want to exert control over places (Devine-Wright & Howes, 2010; Lewicka, 2011; Sack, 1983). I show that as Better World's territoriality led the organization to exercise control over its territory, the flow of its identity changed to include a sense of strength. Based on this finding, I argue that identity change related with pronunciation or strengthening of an organization's identity might be, in part, due to territorial disruptions and the organization's response to this place-oriented disruption. Material shifts in Better World's immediate environment represented a stark contrast between the city's rich and poor and consequently brought the organization under a lot of attention. This attention provided members with the opportunity to start conversations about who they are and what they do, thereby marking the strengthening the organization's presence in the area by means of image work.

Second, I propose place as vital for processes related to identity. To say the least, place provides the arena within which social action unfolds (Cresswell, 2014; Lawrence & Dover, 2015). Despite several hints in extant literature about the relevance of place for organizational processes (and organizational identity), the scholarship on identity has yet to embrace identity-related processes. For example, as a social enclosure, place contains work (Battilana, Sengul, Pache, & Model, 2015; Kellogg, 2009; Reay et al., 2017). As a carrier of culture and tradition (e.g., Glynn, 2008b; Lounsbury, 2007), place may invoke collective memory, also vital for identity processes (Anteby & Molnár, 2012). This study takes these hints seriously to reveal one way in which place is central to the flow of organizational identity: as a dimension of organizational identity. Just as who we are and what we do are referents for organizational identity, where we are located also informs a sense of who we are (and who we are becoming). In Table 7, I outline place as an important dimension of organizational identity.

Table 7- Dimensions of Organizational Identity

Dimensions of Organizational Identity	What we do	How we do it	Where we are located
Root metaphor	Performance	Performance	Situatedness
Source	External or internal to the organization: institutional environment, industry identity, business strategy, intersubjective interactions, history and organizational memory	Internal to the organization: intersubjective interactions, culturally and historically grounded practices	External to the organization: organization's place
Observed through	Rhetoric, actions	Everyday work practices	Dependence on or relevance of place for work
Drives action aimed at	organizational mission and strategy	practices	geographical location
Examples from literature	Ravasi & Schultz (2006); Dutton & Dukerich (1991); Tracey & Phillips (2016)	Golden-Biddle & Rao (1997); Corley & Gioia (2004)	None known*
Example from data	"[in response to describe 'who we are as an organization'] I would say, we are all about the people we serve"	The executive director walks into the meeting room wearing the organization's new blue vest for staff members. Instead of walking straight in, he twirls at the entrance of a room and gains attention from the management team. Staff vests were introduced to ensure staff are recognizable from clients (a huge change for the organization that practices blurring boundaries between clients and employees)	While there is something symbolic about not being "forced out" of its home of 20 years, Better World sees a significant opportunity to support its service delivery and make a positive contribution to downtown regeneration by re-developing its current site

*Although the existing literature suggests that place and identity might be connected, no studies to the best of my knowledge have explicitly explored an organization's location as part of its identity.

Organizational Identity and sense of strength

My findings show that engaging in territoriality enhanced member's sense of Better World's strength. This finding highlights important interconnections between organizational identity and power. As explained in the chapter on methods, the arena was an embodiment of the political and hegemonic pressures that Better World was facing. Therefore, by responding to the arena, the organization, in fact, resisted these pressures.

Though organizational identity scholars have acknowledged that the issue of power and politics is important to organizational identity dynamics, this discussion has mainly dealt with how the formation of organizational identity might be a political process *within* organizations. For example, building on Lukes' (2005) idea of 'interest' and overt domination, Kenny, Whittle, and Willmott (2016) suggest that interested actors will likely, in pursuit, of their interest push for a certain understanding of organizational identity. However, by and large, identity scholarship remains devoid of discussions on broader societal level power and politics.

This study begins to fill this void. Particularly, my findings suggest that more latent forms of domination (Lukes, 2005), such as control over political agenda or the ability to raise issues, maybe even more potent in shaping identity processes than more overt forms of power. For example, during the first temporal phase, Better World primarily engaged in identity work (altering who we are) due to broader societal politics of domination. To wit, besides wanting better living conditions for those sleeping rough, City of Edmonton's plan to *end* homelessness was motivated by the costs that homeless people incurred on the city's services. Therefore, agencies that served the homeless people were pressured to 'show' outcomes and hence the organization needed to become more formalized.

My findings show further that as Better World responded to the threat of displacement, organizational members came to understand the organization as a more powerful organization and the organization's image work became more assertive and representative of this sense of powerfulness over time. As part of this image work, Better World presented an attractive vision of a new collaborative hub and brought a group of 15 agencies together on the issue of their building redevelopment. This finding helps me draw a direct connection between organizational identity and symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1989). Bourdieu notes that the epitome of power is symbolic power – the ability to make groups and to mobilize (Bourdieu, 1989). As such, by means of their identity and image work, Better World gained the ability to speak on behalf of the homeless people in assertive ways. Thus, my research suggests that processes of identity are deeply connected with the processes of broader societal power and politics. Since the process of responding to territorial disruption was deeply intertwined with identity and image work and resulted in a more powerful Better World, I pose the question of the influence of broader politics of domination on organizational identity dynamics and flow.

As such, the flow of Better World's identity can be understood as a story of resistance to hegemony. Therefore, future research looking to explore the interconnections between political processes and organizational identity could further explicate how organizational identity formation, change, and even the flow of identity is a function of hegemonic pressures that operate in an organization's environment. Or how and under what other circumstances can identity serve as means to resisting hegemonic pressures. It may also be fruitful to examine mechanisms that help strengthen organizational identity when an organization faces political pressures.

A nuanced perspective on identity work

Another contribution of this study is to bring forth a nuanced perspective on organizational identity work. Originally conceived at the individual level (Kreiner, Hollensbe, & Sheep, 2006; Snow & Anderson, 1987), identity work has now been extrapolated to the organizational level and has been defined as members' agentic efforts aimed at managing, changing, and sustaining organizational identity (Kreiner et al., 2015; Kreiner & Murphy, 2016). How external events or actors may contribute to members' identity work has not been addressed at all. Therefore, by showing that territorial work, image work, and identity work are intertwined, this study brings the role of external audiences in shaping identity work to the forefront.

As such, this study answers Kreiner and Murphy's (2016) call to deliberate upon conditions under which identity work is "non-consciously maintained" (pg. 287). Better World's engagement in territorial and image works, created a feedback loop and enabled members to conduct identity work. During observations, I noted that members did not deliberately engage in discussions of the organization's strength, but valorized who they were becoming as a sub-conscious process and as a by-product of territorial and image work.

Overall, my research offers several contributions to the literature on organizational identity. First, I argue that the direction of the flow of organizational identity may be shaped by environmental disruptions. Second, I develop place as an important dimension of organizational identity. Third, I suggest close connections between organizational identity and power. Finally, I present a nuanced perspective on organizational identity work. I present my closing remarks in the next and final section of my dissertation.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

In this study, I explored how Better World made sense of the place-oriented disruption that it faced and how its response to the arena influenced identity processes at the organization . Specifically, I asked how do place-oriented environmental disruptions influence the flow of organizational identity? The title of this study ‘what doesn’t kill us makes us stronger’ is reflective of the processes that ensued at Better World. I found that three territory-related processes, feeling connected with the territory, public claiming territory, and fortifying territory prompted (or were prompted by) different forms of identity and image work at Better World. As a result of the organization’s ongoing territorial work, image work, and identity work, Better World emerged as a stronger, more vocal, outward-looking, professional and formal organization, and is on its way to becoming all this even more so.

Although Better World’s territoriality and resulting territorial work is an extreme case (Patton, 2002) in the sense that the organization purchased legal rights to its land and building, which not many other organizations might do, I certainly see my findings as transferable beyond Better World. I have defined territoriality as an actor’s sense of connection with their place. Thus, any actor who has been socialized in the character and tradition of a specific place may experience territoriality and engage in territorial work. However, in order for territoriality to generate territorial work, I see dependence on the place as a vital scope condition. In the organizational context, some examples may include social enterprises whose clients are usually not welcomed in other geographies and mainstream businesses, relatively smaller and less resourceful organizations for whom it might not be financially viable to relocate, and organizations that provide localized services. I expect that the intensity of territorial work will be directly proportional to the extent of dependence on place.

My research bears important implications for practice. Social geographers have noticed that downtowns all over the world are undergoing revitalization (Gendron & Domhoff, 2009; Zukin, 1991). This phenomenon reflects a broader social and political agenda resulting in the (re)transformation of the hearts of cities into vibrant places, which they once were. As cities of the world develop exciting downtowns to compete for tourists and businesses on the international stage, many homeless people who take refuge in downtowns are pushed to margins even further. Having spent considerable time observing a social agency fighting for its place, I can vouch for the havoc such developments create for social enterprises that serve some of the neediest. Elites often make decisions on behalf of these agencies and the users of their services, thereby (perhaps not intentionally) creating fixed-pie solutions and win-lose scenarios. Thus, through the medium of this research, I urge urban planners and politicians to stay close to the faultlines, where the real action is. As such, I strongly suggest the need for collaborative and inclusive urban planning decisions.

Writing this dissertation has been a personally important endeavor, and I would like to end it on a personal note. The place one belongs to or the places one has visited often become points for small talk in conversations – “where are you originally from?” wins the vote for ‘the most asked question’ for me in Canada. Place can also be the common thread underlying friendships and strong bonds – I find that I related better with other people who have had similar place-related experiences. “Oh yeah! In Brazil too? This happens in Pakistan all the time as well”, is what I find saying frequently to a very dear friend of mine, who is originally from Brazil. We both bond over commonalities in our places of origin. Interestingly, place is also indicative of relative power. For example, citizens of the United States of America can travel in a less restricted or unrestricted manner to 185 countries as of January 2019. This number dwindles

drastically if the place of origin on a passport is listed as Ethiopia, and even more so if it is Afghanistan. Place can be an important strategic resource for nations. For example, India and Pakistan have fought over Kashmir for 72 long years. Place can also be a source of reverence highly revered, for example, Makkah or Jerusalem. Finally, place becomes the most immediate source of self-recognition (Castells, 2010). In retrospect, I can vouch for the fact that a researcher's place of origin can have a huge impact on their research as well.

I was born and raised in Pakistan and never traveled outside the country until the age of 27. As is true for most developing parts of the World, the issues of poverty, income inequality, corruption, and lack of resources, are part of a common person's everyday life in Pakistan. The prevalent perception there is that the developed parts of the world are free from such issues. Call this naivete, but this is the perception that I brought along when I first came to Canada in 2011. For the most part, this perception remained intact until the fall of 2014, when I moved to Western Canada in order to pursue a doctoral degree in Business. This is when I realized that the developed West is also riddled with similar issues similar to those that were commonplace in Pakistan. I was now encountering homeless people every day and in abundance. This was a shock to me and therefore, triggered my interest in the setting, and immediately got me thinking more deeply about it.

My engagement with Better World for the purpose of this study has truly been an enriching experience. Admittedly when I saw homeless people around me before going to Better World, I had very little appreciation for what all they must go through as people living on the streets. What surprised me the most about these people is that they were resilient! And that, to be honest, is an understatement! They laughed and cracked jokes with each other, sat down to play a game of cards, lounged in the same stiff chairs in the drop-in center to watch Tom Cruise in

action on the television in the room, prayed and meditated, let their creative juices flow by creating artwork pasted all over the walls in Better World's drop-in center, patiently (and at times not so patiently) lined up for one serving of food, took ownership of the drop-in center (some of them volunteered at the center too) – in short they were full of life despite the fact that life had been tough on them. They taught me to be grateful for what I have, and I am really truly grateful for having known people at Better World and all the wonderful work they do for some of the most deserving people in the city.

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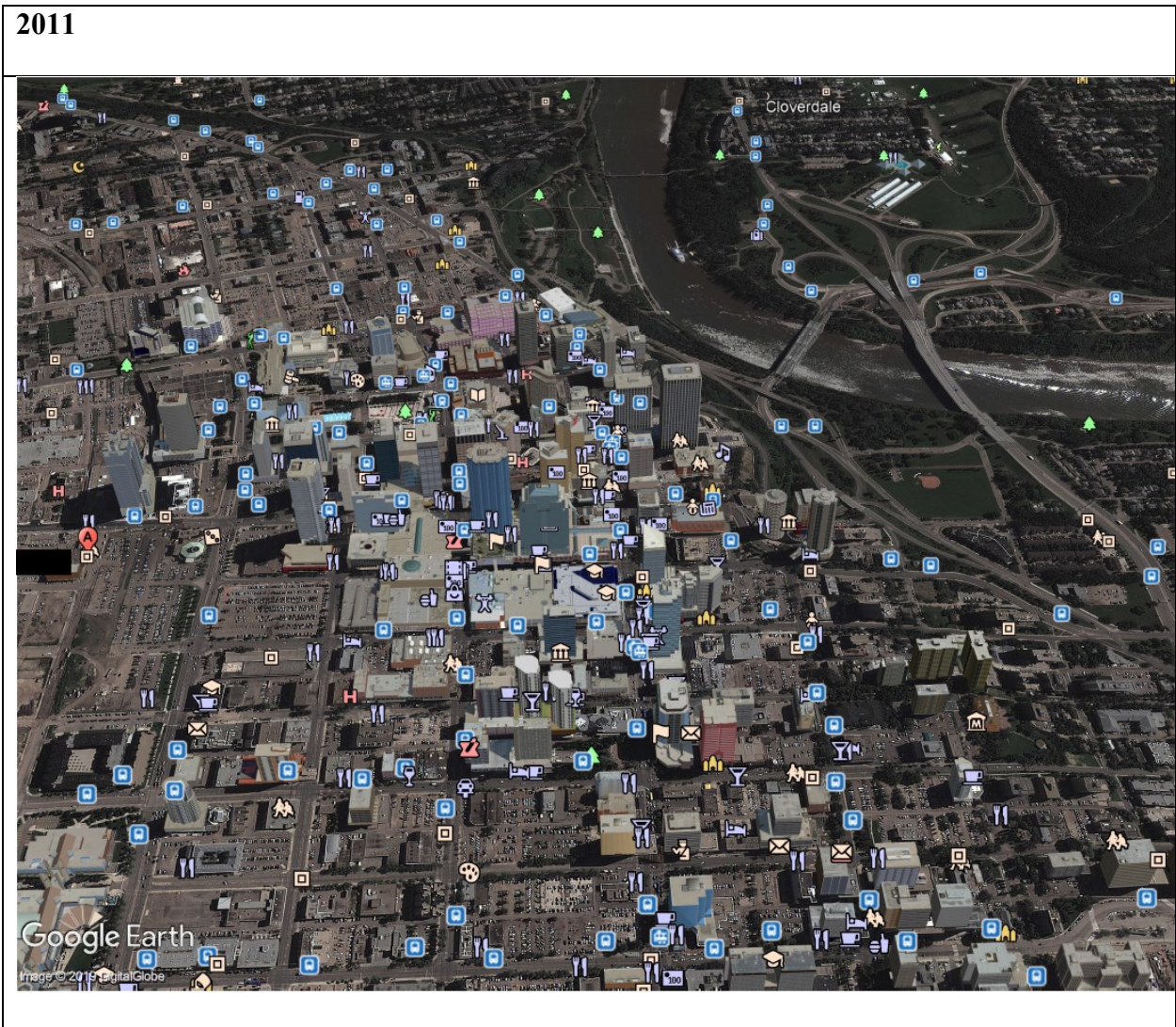
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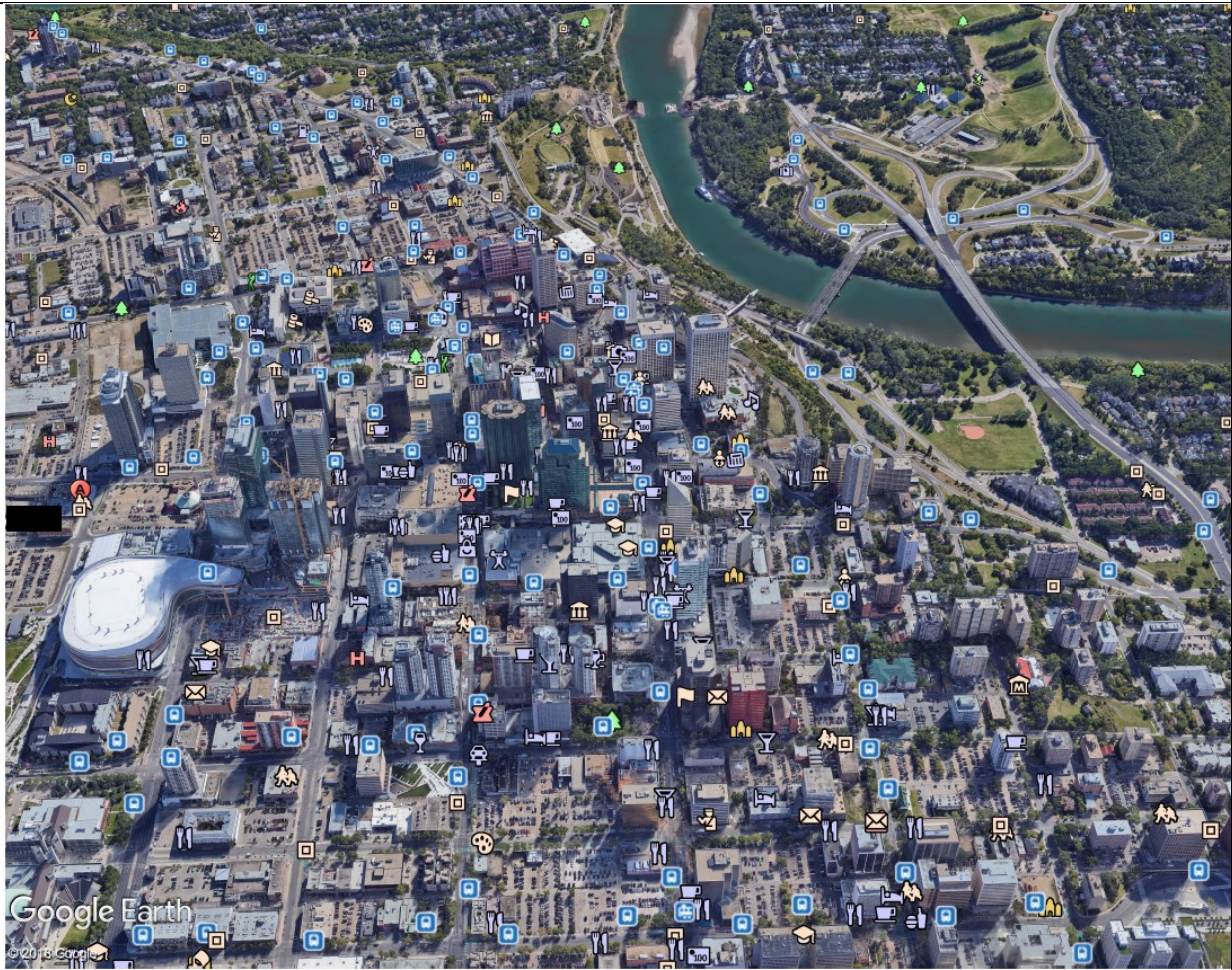
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Appendix A – Development in Downtown Edmonton

Better World is marked at 'point A' in these maps.



2018

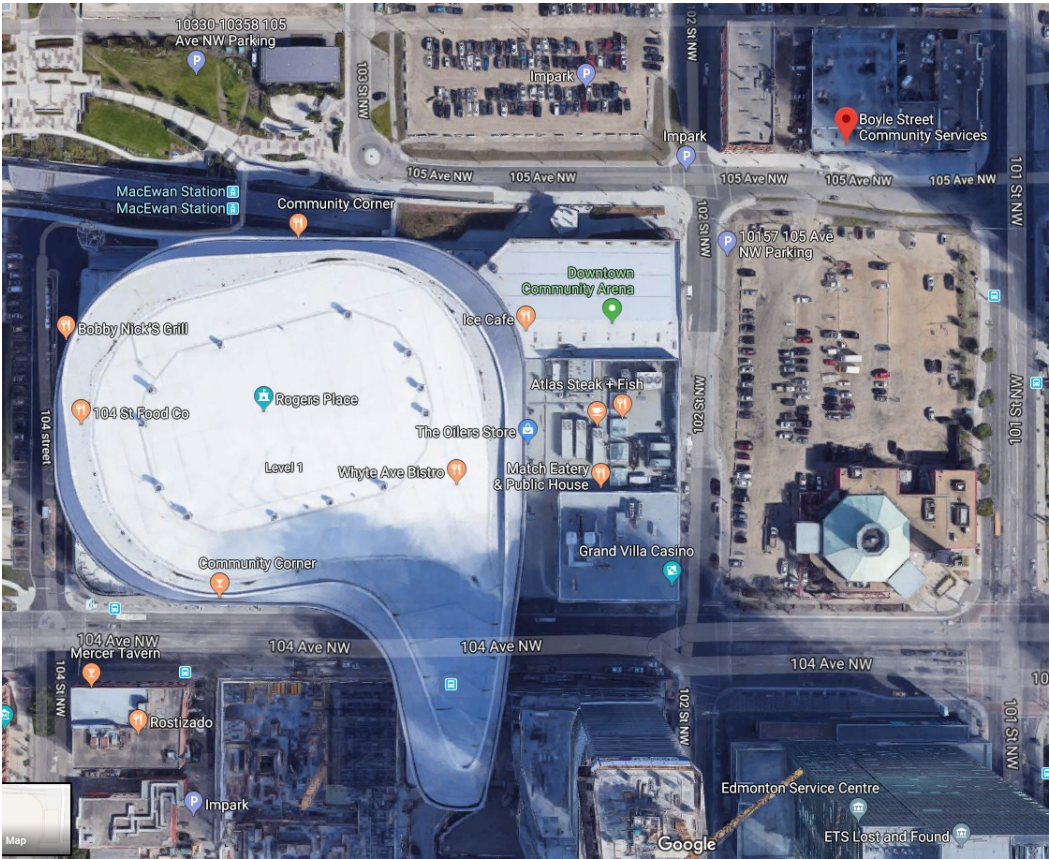


Appendix B – Pictures shown to interview participants

Picture coded as 1:



Picture coded as 2:



Appendix C— Interview guides

Exploratory interview guide:

1. What is your role in this organization, and how has your role evolved over time?
 - a. What does your job involve?
 - b. How has your job evolved over time?

2. What is the purpose of the organization?

3. What do you think the organization is good at?

4. What could be improved about the organization?

5. Have you observed any changes in and around the organization in the past few years?

6. Why the name “Four Directions Financial” (only for people involved in the bank opened by the organization)?

7. What needs to be done to move toward the organization’s stated goals?

Follow-up ethnographic interview guide:

1. Could you first tell me about your role in the organization?
 - a. Follow up questions on tenure, past experiences, job duties, performance metrics.

2. Over the course of your affiliation with Better World, how has your job evolved?
 - a. What are the aspects of your job that really stand out to you?
 - b. Do any of your duties, or performance metrics inform how you understand who Better World is?

3. If I were to ask you ‘who is Better World’ how would you answer me?
 - a. (alternative) Can you please complete the sentence, ‘Better World is...’OR
 - b. If you were to pick 3-5 adjectives to describe Better World, what would those be?
 - c. If I were to ask you the same question 10 years ago, would you change anything about the answer?

4. Are you aware of the organization’s building redevelopment plan?
 - a. Why in your understanding, the organization needed to stay in downtown?
 - b. Have any of the adjectives you used to describe Better World become more salient to you recently, especially in light of talks regarding the building redevelopment plan?

5. Who according to you, are the organization’s key stakeholders?
 - a. Could you please describe the organization’s relation to these stakeholders?
 - b. How as Better World managed its relationship with key stakeholders in over time?

6. Use of projective technique: as participants to describe the two pictures in their own words – pictures attached as Appendix B.
 - a. I am thinking of using these pictures in my dissertation. They show Better World and the arena. Do they generate any thoughts for you?

Appendix D – Better World Becoming Powerful

Controlling Agenda

In addition to the data cataloged for the study included in the data table (Table 3), I also collected over 300 unique documents from the City of Edmonton’s website. These included city council’s meeting minutes and reports, city government’s records of budgets, initiatives, strategies, city’s urban design projects & planning, and city’s programs and services for communities. I used these documents to scrape information about the number of times “Better World” was mentioned in each of these documents. I also paid attention to the objective with which the organization’s name was mentioned in the city’s records and categorized these records accordingly. Specifically, in the following table, ‘city government’ indicates instances where Better World was mentioned with reference to budgets, city initiatives regarding art, wellness planning, or elimination of poverty. Similarly, ‘city council records’ (minutes of meetings) indicate Better World’s presence at city hall increased as they were increasingly listed as attendees during these meetings.

I used Better World’s representation in city hall and other city government documents as an indication of the organization’s increasing strength, with higher frequencies representing a greater potential to control political agenda. These findings show that over the years, Better World’s potential to control political agenda has increased, with the highest being in 2016. Note that 2016 was a vital year for Better World’s building redevelopment plan. In December 2015 they publicly announced the development of their building and in 2016 worked to obtain a grant from the provincial government to develop a proposal for their building. I represent the findings in the following table (though I have recorded these from 1985 to present, I only present the most

recent decade). Better World’s representation in city documents before the turn of the century was negligible.

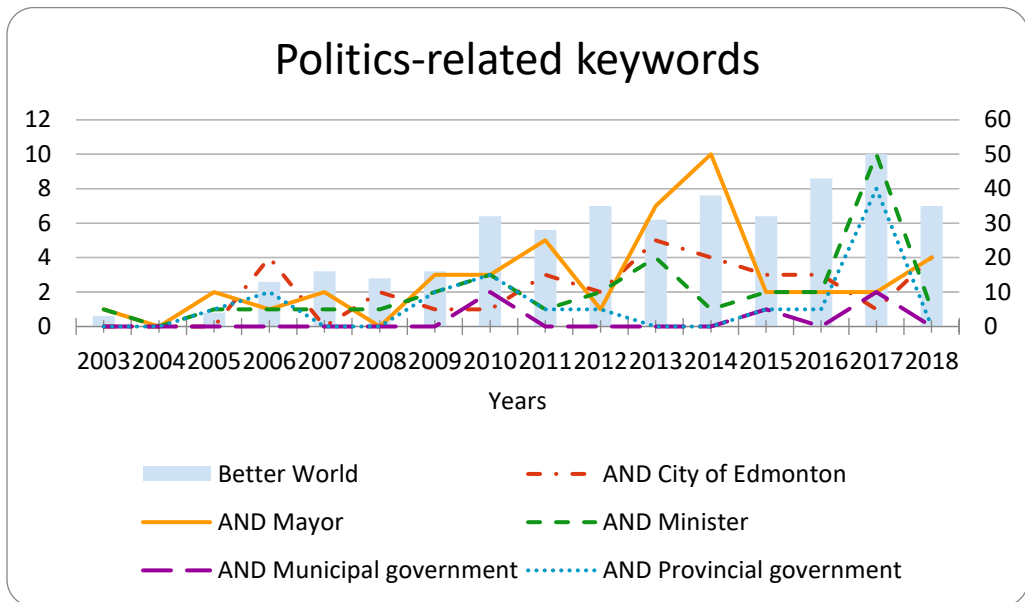
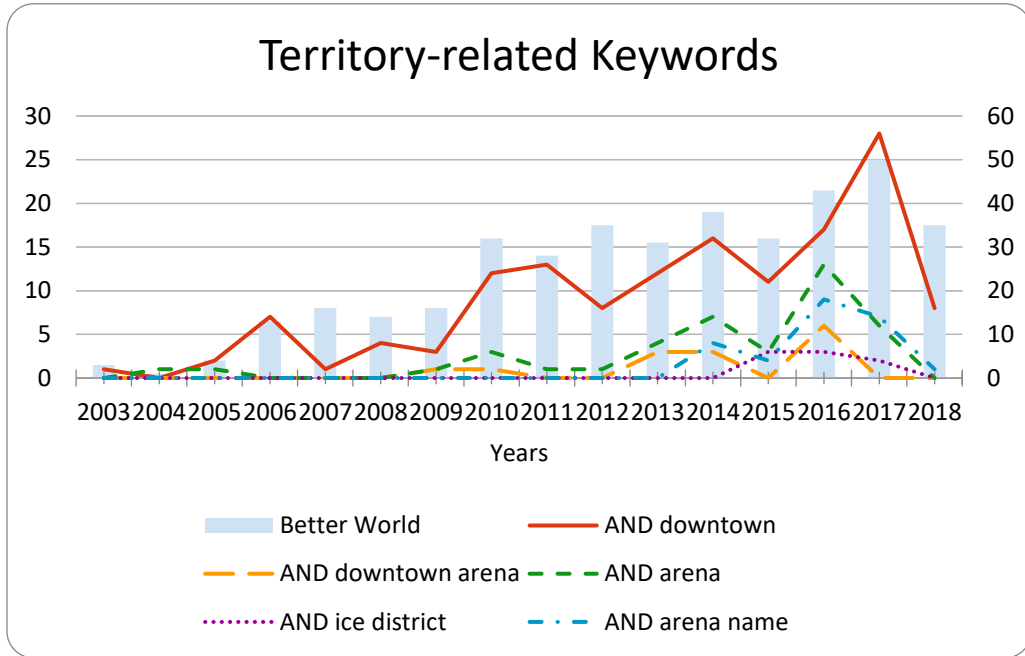
Record Category/Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
City Government	1	1	5	4	3	6	4	3	12	1
City Council Records	21	9	14	11	6	10	29	9	4	0
Miscellaneous	0	1	0	1	1	3	4	7	5	4
Projects & Plans	1	0	0	1	0	0	2	2	1	0
Programs & Services	1	4	3	5	4	6	3	3	5	1
Total per year	24	15	22	22	14	25	42	24	27	6

Highlighting Issues

I also examined whether Better World gained the power to ‘raise issues or potential issues’, as they responded to the arena. Using Better World’s presence in the media over time as a proxy of the organization’s power to raise issues. This seemed especially relevant as the rich knowledge of the organization gained through field observations and interviews informed my understanding that Better World was indeed creating internal systems to maintain a systematic presence in the media so as to highlight issues that they deemed important, such as challenges faced by the homeless, systemic causes of homelessness, and mental illness. In order to find out whether Better World had gained any issue-based power, in relation to their response to the arena, I downloaded 350 newspaper articles from the year 2000 to 2019 using Factiva database. I searched the entire database for articles where “Better World” appeared. Then, using this collection of articles, I used python to create a program to search several keywords in conjunction with Better World. I grouped these keywords into two broad categories: territory-related words (e.g., downtown, arena, arena’s name etc.), and politics-related keywords (e.g., mayor, minister, city of Edmonton etc.)

The results presented in the form of graphs below show that as Better World responded to the arena, their presence in the media increased in conjunction with both categories of keywords.

Better Worlds presence begins to peak around 2012 and continues onward.



*vertical axes represent frequency counts; vertical axis on the right represents Better World's frequencies and the one on the left represents counts of keywords that appeared in close proximity to Better World.

Appendix E – Representative Quotes

Theoretical Dimension	Second Order Themes	Selective Representative Quotes
Organizational Identity Work	Altering who we are	<p>So we're hiring a lot more people who are university educated, who are middle class, who are young. They're coming from things like social work programs, university programs where there's an expectation of certain policies being in place and certain practices being followed and so we've kind of had to adapt [Interview with Director of Operations, November 2017]</p> <p>A lot more students become coming in (being hired), more formal and so people really hate that their people are very angry at Better World for becoming a more formal that day forces and the, and the different things that the agency is, is because lots of people really resist that kind of thing. [manager in an interview, November 2017]</p> <p>So we're looking to be a lot more collaborative. A lot of non-profits are still in that us and them modes and are more reluctant. They feel like if they're more collaborative then they're missing out on bigger pieces of the pie financially [manager speaking of changes she has seen during exploratory interview, November 2016]</p>
	Valorizing who we are	<p>Researcher: "What would you say is the most noticeable change about Better World over the past two to three years?"</p> <p>Director: Its our programming... we've tremendously expanded our services [Interview with Director of Development, October 2016]</p> <p>[speaking of a potential safe sobering site]... if someone is to do it, might as well be us... we'll do it in the most sensitive way possible [even if it is against our mandate to ask people to sober down before they avail any services] [Director of Development at Management Team Meeting, April 2017]</p> <p>"[Name] has done such an amazing job with the data... its not live yet but you can check it out at [weblink]... yeah it looks amazing... [people pulled out their mobile phones and laptops and engaged in conversations about how innovative Better World is and what amazing things they are doing]"[during Management Team Meeting, January 2018]</p>
	Reinforcing who we are	<p>"so what do folks think we should do about staff vests... we haven't done it for symbolic reasons... we will stand apart from our community?... Lets go around the table for a quick vote.." [ED at Management Team Meeting, Aug 2017]</p> <p>...Remind teams the current barring policy... So if you haven't already talked to your teams about the barring policy – has everyone talked to their teams? Please, this is an important policy for us as an organization, as a community. [ED at Management Team Meeting, February 2017]</p> <p>[on salary and job description review]</p>

Jo: So there's been a couple of different situations where team members have said because job postings have been posted, some of them have the exact same job title but the salary is different. One job will pay more than the other but they are both front line positions. There's situations where we've posted jobs and another person has realized that they have the same job and are getting paid less. So there is this discrepancy between what people are getting paid, and so in an effort to create internal equity in pay – which does not mean everyone gets paid the same thing – we are going through a process to evaluate all frontline job descriptions and put it through this evaluation matrix to determine staffing matrix.

...We are moving forward with a little bit of a reorganization on the director level... I have decided to split what is [Name's] current role into two director roles to create a Director of Programs and a Director of development..." [ED at Management Team Meeting, March 2017]

Developing rapport with key audiences

"we want to be a part of the development, not apart from it" [ED while announcing Better World's building redevelopment plan, Press Conference Video, December 2015]

There's three people I know of certainly [who are trying to sabotage the building redevelopment project]. But they are influential and people kind of listen to them because not everyone knows what they are really like and that's problematic...I'm not overly worried though. [ED in Management Team Meeting, March 2017]

Projecting an attractive vision

"... A drop-in support worker interviewed a homeless community member and the video was posted on the organization's website and its social media platforms. The worker asks the community member about some of the top googled questions regarding the homeless people, do the homeless... choose to be homeless, have rights, and have a future..." she ends with an enthusiastic message being certain that the homeless have a future [Video evidence, November 2017]

Image Work

So we continue to reach out to peer agencies, and I think that must be a characteristic of how we do this, even if organizations that haven't been as supportive or enthusiastic about us and our redevelopment.." [ED at Management Team Meeting, January 2017]

"I think the approach we are taking is to bring people in in a very open-minded way and say we are in this together and we have a general vision but you can help us fill in the detail with what that looks like." [ED at Management Team Meeting, March 2017]

[describing the 'pub night']... [Department Name] did a great job... they set up needles at a table at Sherlock there and it created a lot of buzz and attention and we were just sitting there and chatting... people were very interested... some chats lasted for hours. It was AWESOME... [manager at management team meeting, November, 2017]

Asserting an image strength	<p>“It initiated an Ambassador program that educates people about Better World so that they can in turn educate their friends, families and colleagues about our work and the community we serve. The program has already recruited 500 ambassadors.” [Annual report, 2016]</p> <p>Researcher: "So what's Better World's take been on this negative narrative (in the context of potential political sabotage of Better World's plans for its building)?</p> <p>Communications Lead: "...we've toned down a lot of what we've had to say for the last two years, I think as an organization, certainly in the last five months of me being here, uh, that's a product of the redevelopment project and we're not going to be doing that anymore..." [Interview with Communications Lead, January 2018]</p>
Problematizing and bonding with the territory	<p>This, there was definitely the onboarding of Elliot, the communications lead, which has really revitalized our public image and our relationship building with our, uh, identified stakeholders and potential stakeholders. Um, and I think we've been more deliberate in the way that we market ourselves to those stakeholders.</p>
Territorial Work	<p>“With the arena development now almost certainly going ahead, the future of the community center site has been much in mind.” [Annual Report, 2012]</p> <p>I felt it was time for a building in our city that made visible people generally, but specifically indigenous people that we serve and unapologetically serving. [ED in an interview on the need to have their own building]</p> <p>With the opening of Rogers Place, the invisible has suddenly become visible. Facilities like Better World – a former banana-ripening warehouse that had squatted on the margins of downtown for decades – now stand in stark contrast to the size and opulence of Edmonton’s newest jewel... Unasked, they have become a living symbol of the division between rich and the poor. It is a tale of two cities: something which most citizens, in good conscience, find uneasy at best and unacceptable at worst. [Business Case for Building Redevelopment, pg. 26]</p> <p>Physical changes, whole regeneration of downtown and hasn’t really affected us as much as people thought it would. I never thought it would hugely but it has been a big effect in that it has given us an opportunity to look at our own redevelopment and I think that we always chose, we made a conscious choice that we would enter into the physical changes and not retreat from them or head in the sand, pretend it wasn’t happening or disengage from them. We’ve tried to engage with it and to be part of that because they’re coming into our neighborhood and impacts the people we serve to some extent. [ED in an interview, March 2017]</p>
Strategically gaining control over territory	<p>Better World announced Thursday it plans to put up a new building on its downtown site that will include housing, a pharmacy and an aboriginal boutique hotel. [Newspaper archives, August 2015]</p>

“We become poorer as a city if we displace people,” [ED’s name, the executive director of Better World, says.

“I’m feeling really glad that we bought the building and the land that we’re on because we want to stay where we are,” he adds. [Newspaper archives, November 2014]

"I watch the treaty six flag being raised as a group of drummers drums a native tune... it is a moving ceremony" [Video evidence retrieved from organization’s social media, hoisting date April 2018]

Expanding territory

A lot of energy this year has gone into The redevelopment of the community center. This project has become something bigger than ourselves in many ways. Through the partnerships, we now have over 15 partners from government non-government and private organizations who want to join with us in creating a collaborative integrated service hub for the most vulnerable Edmontonians [annual report, 2017]
