

Groundstory

Addressing the roots of gentrification
one brick, one story, at a time

WHAT

Groundstory (Histoire de terrain) is a collective impact initiative with a mandate to uncover and address the drivers and adverse ripple effects of gentrification, including growing income inequality, increasing geographic segmentation/polarization by income, loss of affordable housing and vital community spaces, and involuntary socio-spatial displacement of lower-income households and small businesses (including the arts) from Toronto, Hamilton, and other communities across Ontario.

For decades, artists have been commonly implicated in traditional debates around the facilitation of gentrification and displacement. However, recent research indicates that the “standard arts-led gentrification narrative is too generalized or simply no longer applicable to contemporary arts-gentrification processes.” (Grodach, Foster & Murdoch, 2016).

Groundstory will detail, and respond to, these evolving narratives.

WHY

Groundstory seeks to answer such complex questions as:

a) Mapping drivers and impacts of the arts in contemporary gentrification and displacement

What are the contributing factors to gentrification? What neighbourhoods are gentrifying? Who are the most impacted by gentrification (by culture, ethnicity, region, income, etc)? Where are displaced residents and businesses of gentrifying neighbourhoods moving to? What sacrifices are being made to stay where they are, either by choice or by lack of viable housing/spacing alternatives? Are municipal plans being activated in affected communities to respond to these displacements and migrations? Do the roles of individual creative industries, and even specific businesses and venues, change in different regions and neighbourhoods across Ontario, including film/media, visual, performing arts, etc? If so, what are the factors that are driving these differences? Are there positive changes to local, regional and provincial economies due to gentrification? Are there linkages and connections to gentrification trends in other regions nationally and globally?

b) Interventions and policies that can mitigate the growth of income inequality and arts/non-arts displacement in major urban centres

Pressure-testing the effectiveness of emerging and traditional responses to the ripple effects of contemporary gentrification, including: developing multilateral charitable, land value, foreign investor, and vacant property taxation policies; municipal zoning and economic, urban, and cultural planning strategies; national and municipal housing policies, development and maintenance of social housing and co-operatives; laneway suites; storefront theatres, DIY/makerspaces, pop-up studios, creative entrepreneur hubs; diversity and inclusion strategies; tenant's unions; neighbourhood land trusts; decent work and fair-pay policies; arts income averaging; low or universal income assistance; and others.

c) Means of connecting independent and siloed stakeholders toward a sustainable approach

How may diverse partners come together to implement a shared agenda and theory of change? To what degree can non-profits, business, government, artists, and arts organizations play a shared leadership role in addressing gentrification that cultivates greater connections, collaborations, shared strategies and resources? What strategies, knowledge, and resources already happening or available on the ground can be brought together to deepen impact for collective benefit? How may those most impacted by the ripple effects of gentrification be engaged in the initiative? What tools and methodologies are necessary to sustain a positive shared measurement / impact evaluation process?

HOW

With pending funding from Ontario Trillium Foundation, the first stage of **Groundstory** will invite cross-sectoral leaders from the arts, business, non-profit, and government sectors to come together to cultivate consensus and urgency to move forward with a multi-year collaboration. Spanning Winter 2018 to Spring 2019, major activities for stage one include:

- Convene cross-sectoral stakeholders, and identify who else needs to be involved
- Define the Leadership Committee and its role
- Develop a common agenda
- Establish a theory of change and shared measurement approach
- Map the system/landscape and build a strong case for change
- Identify what data (and what gaps in data) exists
- Community outreach and engagement to attract participation.

WHO

Groundstory is initiated by ArtsPond / Étang d'Arts (Toronto). Founded in 2014 and incorporated as a non-profit in 2016, the mandate of ArtsPond/Étang d'Arts is to incite positive systemic change in Canada's arts and culture sector through innovative collaborations on-the-ground and in-the-cloud.

INFO

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ACTIVITIES (PHASE ONE)

Winter 2018 to Spring 2018

1) Convene cross-sectoral stakeholders

Regular monthly convening's of stakeholders will provide opportunities to:

- Build trusting relationships that will be sustained long-term
- Define an effective governance and communications structure
- Define roles of the Backbone and Leadership Committee
- Further define the issue and develop agreement on a Common Agenda
- Identify a Theory of Change and Strategic Learning Approach, including shared data collection and analysis
- Determine sustainable plan of action and geographic scope for Mutually-Reinforcing/High Leverage Activities in subsequent stages (local, regional, and/or province-wide)
- Identify and recruit other cross-sector stakeholders
- Deepen internal understanding and community awareness of the Collective Impact framework and motivate leaders to embrace its potential for mutual benefit
- At least one convening will take place in Hamilton, remainder in Toronto
- Meetings video-recorded for archival purposes, French translation upon request

2) Map the system/landscape

- Regional, national, international literature review
- Focus group interviews and public roundtables with displaced citizens and small businesses in Toronto and Hamilton

3) Outreach and community engagement

- Public information webinars in English and French to share knowledge province-wide

4) Evaluation and reporting

- Produce and maintain bilingual project website, blog, and shared resource library
- Prepare and disseminate bilingual final report in print and online formats
- Write and submit proposals to prospective funders for stage two.

DELIVERABLES

- 1) **Establish structured Leadership Committee with minimum eight (8) convening sessions** featuring stakeholders representative of the fabric of Ontario, including emerging and established leaders from the arts, government, business, and non-profit sectors, as well as displaced/low-income citizens from diverse communities in Toronto and Hamilton.
- 2) **Facilitate two (2) focus group interviews and roundtables with displaced regional arts groups/artists in Toronto and Hamilton, complete an international literature review, and engage a data scientist** to develop a solid evidence base for future support; identify what data (and gaps in data) exists; and identify methods to effectively manage and share collected data long-term.
- 3) **Host two (2) public information sessions/webinars** to engage and attract greater awareness and participation by the broader public.
- 4) **Publish a bilingual website and final report** to clearly articulate the issue; evaluate identified values and summarize findings; disseminate recommendations for interventions to take place in phase two; and attract additional funding support.

Whether future resources allow Groundstory to extend into multiple cities across Ontario, or the collective decides it is prudent to focus attention on a small number of priority neighbourhoods, these deliverables will ensure a strong foundation is in place for subsequent phases.