In their riotous tracks: Screen media and placemaking in Vancouver's chinatown

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the impact of screen media and digital technology on creative placemaking efforts in Vancouver's Chinatown. It reviews interdisciplinary research on placemaking as relational, networked practices that navigate conflicts and aspire towards social inclusion while operating in an urban context where diverse populations are engaged in daily interactions that cross ethnic and linguistic boundaries. A discussion of the placemaking initiatives of the collective Youth Collaborative for Chinatown (YCC) illustrates the ethos of grassroots placemaking practices in Vancouver's Chinatown and the way they intervene into competing discourses of heritage, multiculturalism, and gentrification. The main case study analyzes *360 Riot Walk*, a historical walking tour in Vancouver's Chinatown designed by media artist Henry Tsang, focusing on the project's use of screen media and digital technology to provoke experiences of discomfort and unbelonging. The conclusion reflects on the importance of feeling "out of place" in placemaking efforts that engage with traumatic histories.

1. Prologue

After I completed *360 Riot Walk*, a historical video walking tour designed by media artist Henry Tsang that I was researching for this article, I made my way to Chinatown BBQ to pick up a take-out order of roast pork and steamed chicken. In recent years, I never went to Vancouver's Chinatown without visiting my favourite eatery. Walking west from the tour's last stop on Powell Street towards Chinatown, I wound my way through old clan association buildings, dilapidated souvenir shops, upscale bars and Asian fusion restaurants, semi-empty 1980s-style malls where small art galleries have begun to set up shop, and gleaming new high-rises at various stages of construction and development. The brightly lit and minimally decorated Chinatown BBQ on East Pender Street would serve well as an emblem of the neighbourhood's still evolving story. Touted as Chinese Canadian developer and entrepreneur Carol Lee's "culinary vision for the neighbourhood" (Morrow, 2018), the restaurant represents Lee's attempt to repackage traditional Chinatown businesses in ways that would appeal to the new and more affluent demographics without alienating long-time residents. After Daisy Garden, a long-time establishment in Chinatown, burnt down in 2015, Lee hired its former staff to recreate the old restaurant's menu for a new eatery in a neighbouring site, complete with refurbished furniture from Foo's Ho Ho, another neighbourhood restaurant that had gone out of business. Even though Chinatown BBQ has only been in its current site

since 2018, Lee's efforts succeeded in creating a feeling of familiarity that ameliorates — some may more cynically argue, obfuscates — the fast-paced changes that are daily remaking the century-old neighbourhood.

With the smell of Cantonese-style barbecued meat wafting from the passenger seat, I drove home as the streets outside sped past like a tracking shot on a movie screen. Chinatown blends seamlessly into its neighbouring Downtown East Side (DTES), Vancouver's most vulnerable and marginalized neighbourhood, where homelessness and addiction leave their mark even as ever more expensive condo developments and upscale shops and restaurants appear in its midst as my drive continues west towards the downtown core.

What does placemaking mean in a space so layered with historical resonances and contemporary tension? What is the role of screen media, such as the video walking tour I just experienced, in making (and unmaking) a sense of place on these streets? The following are my reflections.

2. Placemaking

Research on placemaking and the creative arts has largely been conducted within the framework of "creative placemaking." In Canada, the term was first coined in 2006 by Artscape, a Toronto-based NGO which started as a provider of affordable studio space for artists and has

since become a broad-based social enterprise that collaborates with government, developers, arts organizations, artists, and community groups "to leverage the power of arts and culture as a catalyst for cultural, community and urban development" (Artscape makes space, n.d.). Artscape has also championed what they term "DIY Creative Placemaking" by providing a conceptual and practical "toolbox" of support and resources for anyone, at any level, involved in creative placemaking projects (*D.I.Y.* Artscape, n.d.). As defined by Artscape, "creative placemaking" is a flexible and elastic concept that covers a wide range of creative practices that are enabled by collaboration amongst partners ranging from planners and developers to artists and curators. Since the term's adoption by the National Endowment for the Art (NEA) in the U. S. as a major cultural policy under the Obama administration in 2010, scholarship on "creative placemaking" has become more focused on the impact of the specific U.S. policy, viewing it as a "predominantly American policy concept" with no or only tangential mention of Artscape's earlier, more grassroots conception (Redaelli, 2019). Discussion since has focused on the sector, ethos, and art practices inspired by the U.S. policy, the challenges posed by its conceptual fuzziness, and the failure of many of its programs to fully address inequities and displacement of marginalized communities (Courage & McKeown, 2018). This association of "creative placemaking" with a fiscally driven, top-down approach has led some scholars to distinguish socially engaged and community driven arts practices from creative placemaking altogether. Cara Courage, for example, describes the art projects she studies as "social practice placemaking" which she argues is closer to "ordinary placemaking" than the kind of creative placemaking defined in the NEA policy (Courage, 2020).

Courage's distinction is in line with the broader theoretical literature on placemaking which spans a range of disciplinary perspectives but is uniformly critical of top-down strategies that impose the vision of "place professionals" (such as architects and planners) on a locale, often to the benefit of urban elites (such as landowners and developers) and without equal and meaningful participation from those who live, work, and interact there. These studies also propose new theoretical concepts and methodological procedures to recognize alternative forms of placemaking and show how they could improve, or at times oppose, strategies favoured by elite stakeholders. Shifting the focus from place identity to place contestation, the collaborative work of urban geographers Pierce et al. (2011) advocates the notion of "relational placemaking" to investigate how stakeholders with different interests and power invoke competing "place-frames" through an interactive "networked process" to assert and advance their positions. Anthropologist Melinda Hinkson's (2017) work on the "precarious placemaking" practices of displaced Indigenous people in Australia explores the transformative potential of spaces where abiding structures (such as colonial history and kinship relationships) coexist with shifting networks (through social media or new domestic arrangements) under conditions of trauma and survival. Making explicit the underlying impulse of many of these recent studies to understand placemaking in the context of social justice, social psychologist Erin Toolis (2017) uses the term "critical placemaking" to identify "efforts that attend to inequities and work to promote social justice by disrupting systems of domination and creating public places that are accessible and inclusive, plural, and participatory" (p. 188). While such practices of "critical placemaking" tend to be associated with minority communities seeking redress and inclusion (Hunter et al., 2016), there are also cases when the placemaking practices of one minority group — such as the rise of gentrified gay neighbourhood in San Francisco — may result in the displacement of other communities (Mattson, 2015). Furthermore, while progressive forms of identity-based placemaking have benefitted from the impact of multiculturalism policy on urban planning, Jeffrey Hou (2013) has critiqued the failure of the model to recognize new migration patterns and paradigms of mobility in cities where day-to-day encounters are culturally fluid and rarely bound by any singular form of identity. Hou develops the framework of "transcultural placemaking" to recognize "the

instability of culture(s) and the emergent nature of cultural formation and reconstitution in the shifting terrains of today's cities" and to highlight "the instrumentality of placemaking as a vehicle for cross-cultural learning, individual agency, and collective actions" (p. 336).

An interesting set of solutions to address this need for "transcultural placemaking" can be found in the recent and rapidly developing scholarship on "digital placemaking," a term that originated from its relatively narrow definition as digital technology installed in public locations to the now very broad definition as placemaking strategies that use any form of digital technology as well as the associate impact of digital media on urban experiences of identity and belonging (Toland et al., 2020, p. 254). The rapidly emerging scholarship on digital placemaking includes a very diverse range of case studies that encompass participatory technologies for civic engagement (Fredericks, Hespanhol, Parker, Zhou, & Tomitsch, 2018), interactive game design to support community awareness (Pang & Pan, 2020), public data art that aims at connecting bystanders to a location (Georgescu Paquin, 2019) and much more. As the digital becomes so thoroughly embedded in everyday life, it may be hard pressed today to find placemaking strategies and practices that do not, in one way or another, implicate some form of digital technology. By the same token, the range of what falls under "digital placemaking" in current scholarship is so varied—from large-scale, government or corporate-funded projects that involve professional expertise and complex technology to grassroots campaigns that simply utilize social media to activate community participation—that any reference to the term would benefit from a greater level of nuance and specificity. More recent scholarship on "digital placemaking" takes stock of the COVID-19 pandemic and analyzes how people experience their sense of place and navigate the digital environment as they grapple with disruptions to their mobility and connections with one another (Halegoua & Polson, 2021). While such scholarship "demonstrates how digital media constitute new methods for experiencing physical locations, expressing differential mobilities, and how users participate in narrating a sense of place into being," they also remind us that digital placemaking can amplify as well as erase conditions of inequalities, proliferate as well as limit users' sense of mobility and connection (Halegoua & Polson, 2021).

In this article, I am interested in the creative use of location-based augmented reality (AR), in conjunction with screen media and the activity of walking, to provoke new ways to understand, experience, and engage with the historical sense of place in a transcultural city like Vancouver. In the next section, I will first show how these recent theoretical formulations of placemaking—as relational, networked practices that navigate conflicts and aspire towards social inclusion, that involve strategies of accommodation as well as resistance, while operating in an urban context where diverse and mobile populations are engaged in culturally fluid daily interactions that cross ethnic and linguistic boundaries—animate grassroots placemaking projects in Vancouver's Chinatown. To set up the context, I discuss the placemaking initiatives of the collective Youth Collaborative for Chinatown (YCC). Drawing on the documentation of one of the group's co-founders, who submitted the group's inaugural project design as part of an M.A. program project in Planning, I illustrate the prevalent ethos of grassroots placemaking in the neighbourhood as a form of intervention into competing discourses of heritage, multiculturalism, and gentrification which have continued to shape the neighbourhood's contentious development. I will then turn to an analysis of my main case study *360 Riot Walk*, a historical walking tour in Vancouver's Chinatown designed by artist Henry Tsang. I discuss the project's use of digital technology to provoke experiences of discomfort and unbelonging and conclude with a reflection on the importance of feeling "out of place" in placemaking efforts that engage with traumatic histories.

3. Chinatown

Studies of Chinatown—especially of those in North American cities—often approach Chinatown as an "enclave": a closed-off ethnic community where generations of Chinese migrants live in relative social and cultural isolation from mainstream society. Kay Anderson (1991)'s study of Vancouver's Chinatown represents an early subversion of this dominant framework. The study was contemporaneous with Doreen Massey's impactful intervention into debates on the politics of place at the time. Critical of nationalist and localist nostalgia around place identity, Massey (1994) argues that "place" is not, as commonly understood, "singular, fixed, and unproblematic in its identity" (p. 5). Rather, Massey (2018) re-envisions "place" as an open and porous process through which social, cultural, and economic relations cross-cut and intersect across a multiplicity of spaces. Approaching Vancouver's Chinatown through this relational sense of place, Anderson's (1991) study shows how an uneven process of racialization, enacted through legislation and urban policies over the span of a century, has constructed Chinatown as a place of racial difference in various guises. Anderson examines how all three levels of governments — federal, provincial, municipal — construct and legitimize "Chineseness" as a category of otherness, which becomes objectified in space through the idea of Chinatown, whether as a vice-ridden ghetto in the early twentieth century, a slum in need of reforms in the 1950s–1960s, or an ethnic neighbourhood leveraged for tourism after the official adoption of multiculturalism in 1972. While Anderson argues that multicultural initiatives to preserve the "essential character" of Chinatown during this period reflects another form of racialization, her study also shows how different stakeholders — including Chinatown's inhabitants themselves — negotiate this process through strategies of accommodation as well as resistance. Geographer David Lai's study of other Chinatowns in the province especially illustrates the cultural, economic, and social reasons behind Chinatown as a space of self-segregation, rather than just a result of racism and racialization (Lai, 1988). Anderson's more recent collaborative work on Sydney's Chinatown (Anderson et al., 2019) turns to the complex dynamics of the past two decades — the global rise of China's economic power, more diverse waves of Asian migration and international students, and new modes of mobility — that are transforming Chinatown in ways that cannot be adequately understood in studies that presuppose nation and ethnicity as discrete units of analysis (Anderson, 2018, p.136). These new dynamics are similarly relevant to understanding Vancouver's Chinatown in contemporary times. Recent scholarship traces the decline of Vancouver's Chinatown as a result of a "splintered Chinese diaspora" (Madokoro, 2011) and affluent Chinese neighbourhoods emerging elsewhere in the city (Li & Li, 2011), while strategies of revitalization have led to increased gentrification (Pottie-Sherman, 2013) and disinvestment from neighbourhood businesses and vulnerable long-time residents (Fung, 2016).

Because of these concerns with Chinatown's decline and dissatisfaction with revitalization strategies that privilege real estate development and gentrification, grassroots placemaking projects in Vancouver's Chinatown are eager to enter into direct dialogue with municipal policies, with an aim to assert actual influence on the neighbourhood's ongoing development. A powerful recent example is the work of Youth Collaborative for Chinatown (YCC), a volunteer-run youth organization that aims to "activate" Chinatown's public space through intergenerational and intercultural collaboration (Youth Collaborative for Chinatown, n.d.). YCC co-founder Kathryn Lennon has kept a detailed documentation of the design and execution of the group's first major project in 2015, "Hot and Noisy Chinatown Mahjong Socials," which she submitted as part of her M.A. program in Planning (2016). My discussion here draws from her documentation, which shows that the project was conceived to implement "actionable parts" of the Chinatown Vision Directions, a set of land use and development guidelines adopted by the Vancouver city council in 2002, and the more recent Chinatown Neighbourhood Plan, released in 2012 (p. 16). By framing its project within the discourse of municipal policy, while identifying and addressing specific policy priorities on youth connection, public space improvement, and the development of social and cultural activity hub, YCC wants to ensure that its own voice and the "place frame" it offers become part of the city's conversation on Chinatown's future development. The city's policy discourse aligns with the broad global trend in urban planning and design (Loebach et al., 2020) to not only make public spaces welcoming and available to young people but, more importantly, to also include young people's participation in making decisions for the planning and design of their communities. YCC's direct appeal to the city for inclusion is an effective means to pressure municipal decision-makers to make good on their broad policy promise in local contexts.

"Hot and Noisy Chinatown Mahjong Socials," a series of activities that took place over the summer of 2015, aimed at activating three different registers of public space in Vancouver's Chinatown: material space (through enlivening a physical site), social space (through creating networks and community), and narrative space (through circulating stories and memories) (Lennon, 2016, p.15). The material site chosen was Chinatown Memorial Square which, created in 1995, was designed for commemorative activities throughout the year but has remained under-utilized on other days (p. 32). Flanked by a garden, a Chinese cultural centre, a large parkade, and a sports field, the spacious square is usually a place where tourists and pedestrian pass through to get to other destinations but rarely a place of congregation. The project turned this relatively quiet plaza into a "hot and noisy" (a literal translation of a Cantonese phrase that means "festive") social space through the staging of communal activities centered around a dozen or so tables of mah jong game. Mah jong, being a popular game played in Chinese-speaking communities all around Asia, brought a sense of familiarity to Chinatown inhabitants and easily facilitated sociality amongst its players. At the same time, it provided a visually and sonically interesting sight to bystanders while soliciting a range of reactions, including enthusiasm (from fans of the game), curiosity (from those unfamiliar with the game), and disapproval (from those objecting to the game's origin as a form of gambling). In the absence of formal funding and official organizational status, YCC organizers built the events' participant base through leveraging their social connections: members are willing to use their clan and society membership, professional connections with non-profit and arts communities, and friendship with members of other active youth organizations such as Indigenous, Japanese Canadian and Philippine Canadian youth groups, to source volunteers, donations, and introductions. This informal form of relational organizing fostered what the group termed "together-help" (in contrast to "self-help") (p. 35) and created a multi-lingual, intergenerational, and culturally diverse network around the project. By attracting new participants to an activity previously only familiar to the site's oldest inhabitants, the project generated intergenerational and intercultural sociality which in turn resulted in a new narrative space where stories and memories intermingled in unexpected ways.

Recognizing the effectiveness of art-based activities to "bring ceremonial and cultural activities into public space in an inclusive way" (Lennon, 2016, p. 37), YCC's close collaboration with artists is a distinctive character of the group's placemaking projects. "Hot and Noisy Chinatown Mahjong Socials" invited community-based artists to design the activity space and the project's communication material, and facilitated an opportunity for artist Yule Len Lum to finish a mosaic together with event participants (p. 37). This collaborative model has continued in subsequent projects, where the boundary between ordinary placemaking activities and artistic creation was further dissolved. For example, "Cantonese Saturday School" is an ongoing language learning program which aims to "advocate for an endangered community and language under threat" by linking "a heritage classroom to Chinatown's streets, shops and spaces in experience of a living Cantonese community" (Cantonese Saturday School, n.d.). Its first iteration in 2014 was documented as part of "M'goi/Do Jeh: Sites, Rites and Gratitude," an art

exhibit combining poetry, visual art, and a community "memory map" that was curated by Tyler Russel for Centre A, a public gallery of contemporary Asian art located in Chinatown (Kwa and Lennon, n.d.). Another example is "Our Chinatown Soundscape," which YCC developed in collaboration with the Vancouver Soundwalk Collective in 2018 (Pop-ups and Partnerships, n.d.). The project combined the format of a tourist walking tour with the listening practice and sonic principles associated with Vancouver's New Music scene. In these projects, the placemaking activity itself — interacting with a neighbourhood through learning the language of its inhabitants or through audible and sensual engagement with its acoustic environment — is inseparable from the artistic process, and the very act of public participation becomes a form of creativity.

While these placemaking projects often invoke notions of belonging and inclusion, there is always also a felt sense, especially amongst young activists, that complex histories of non-belonging, exclusion, and dispossession haunt all the spaces that the placemaking projects aim to activate for public participation. What kind of projects can engage these histories head on and to what effect? Specifically, how might the creative use of digital technology—which can be simultaneously inclusive and exclusive, evocative and intrusive, transformative and discomforting—produce a more complex kind of placemaking that reckons with oppressive histories?

4. 360 riot walk

The spirit of grassroots placemaking, as well as an interest in the complex and often discomforting history of place, are essential elements in the work of Vancouver-based video and media artist Henry Tsang. Throughout his career and spanning projects both transnational and local in scope, Tsang has worked in close collaboration with urban historians, planners, and community organizers in site-specific projects that invite public participation through quotidian activities. For example, the large-scale *Maraya* (2008–2015) project staged a series of interactive public artworks in two cities to "mirror" a pair of architecturally related sites: Vancouver's False Creek, which was the result of an urban regeneration megaproject influenced by Hong Kong urbanism; and the artificially constructed canal city of the Dubai Marina, which was in turn inspired by Vancouver's new "Asianized" urban aesthetics (Lowry & McCann, 2011). Pedestrians from both locations were invited to interact with a public art installation equipped with an automated pan-tilt-zoom camera programmed to search, connect, and remix street level images from the two sites. By linking the experiences of ordinary people in two cities that "inter-reference" contemporary Asian urbanism through each other's planning processes, the project explores the impact of architectural mobility and global city building on "those who live in, move through and in between them" ("Maraya," n.d.). Much more intimate in scale, The Unwelcome Dinner (2017) commemorated the 130th anniversary of Vancouver's first anti-Chinese riot in 1887, when white labourers drove out Chinese workers from their camps and then went on to loot and burn their homes in Chinatown. The project hosted a dinner, created by chefs Jacob Deacon-Evans and Wesley Young after the archival menus from the late 1800s. The dinner was held at Roede House Museum, a Queen Anne Revival style home built in 1893 which is the site of the former forests that the Chinese workers were removing when they were attacked. While *Maraya* invited participants to experience a place in connection to spatial elsewheres, *The Unwelcome Dinner* prompted its participants to make temporal connections to historical experiences that occurred on site. Tsang's interest in Vancouver's history of anti-Asian racism, and fascination with food as a medium, continue in Riot Food Here (2018), a project that mapped the route of a subsequent anti-Asian riot in 1907 by setting up food stations en route, where pedestrians were invited to accept food offerings prepared by Chef Kris Barnholden, who drew inspiration from the cuisines of European, Chinese, Japanese, Aboriginal and Punjabi communities to reflect the culinary traditions of people living in the area at the time.

Created in collaboration with historian Michael Barnholden, studio technician Sean Arden, and community partners from the Chinatown area, *360 Riot Walk* (2019) continues *Riot Food Here*'s exploration of anti-Asian racism in Vancouver. The project was funded by four main sources: provincial grants for the arts (the British Columbia Arts Council and from) and for the creative industries (Create BC), academic grants (Social Sciences and Humanities Research council), municipal funding (from the Vancouver Parks and Recreation Board), and support from neighbourhood organizations such as the Japanese Language School and the Chinese Canadian Historical Society amongst others. These sources of funding focus the project's objectives on artistic and intellectual considerations as well as impact on the neighbourhood and its communities. In 2021, Tsang announced that the project will henceforth be under "the stewardship" of the Powell Street Festival Society, a non-profit arts organization that honours the displaced spaces and histories of Japanese Canadian community in the neighbourhood. The stewardship ensures that *360 Riot Walk* remains connected with the neighbourhood and its ongoing social and creative activities.

360 Riot Walk's use of video screen, locative media, and augmented reality (AR) technology produces new and provocative forms of engagement with the neighbourhood. While similar to the ways AR has been used commercially to provide site information for tourists or product information for shoppers, *360 Riot Walk* deploys such information to generate a complex (and often uncomfortable) experience for participants as it takes them through the route of a mob who, after attending a rally organized by the Asiatic Exclusion League, chased and attacked Asian Canadians on September 7, 1907. The walk's itinerary encompasses Chinatown where rioters destroyed Chinese-owned businesses and fought with inhabitants, as well as an area about three blocks to its north and to its east, which is the historical site of the former Japantown where rioters continued their attack the day after. The riot culminated from years of widespread anti-immigration sentiments in the city, particularly from white labour union activism from both sides of the Canada-US border against immigrant Chinese, Japanese, and Punjabi Sikh immigrant workers (Chang, 2012, p.182-234).

Using a tablet or mobile phone with motion and orientation access enabled, participants follow an interactive map with thirteen designated stops en route. Touching the marker of each stop on the map loads a 360° panoramic image of the location. By using the compass on the screen to orient or manually lining up the on-screen image with corresponding landmarks off screen, participants see fragmented layers of historical images superimposed onto their view of the live environment. Moving the screen in place gives participants an immersive, 360° panoramic view of this hybrid landscape, stitching past/present and recorded/live views into each other. A narrated soundtrack tells stories about the neighbourhood and details of the riot in relation to the specific location. The narration can be played in English, Cantonese, Japanese, or Punjabi, which are languages spoken by communities in the neighbourhood at that time.

In a discussion of the impact of digital mapping and geospatial technologies on historical placemaking, Marianna Pavlovskaya suggests that there are two significant shifts in placemaking practices: from archives to cyberspace and from streets to cyberspace (2016, 160). Instead of following these shifts, however, *360 Riot Walk* uses these technologies not to replace but to *juxtapose* digital and analog experiences. In so doing, it does not so much shift from archives and streets to cyberspace but rather produces a new experience of archives and of streets. In the following section, I will explore the potential significance of these strategies for placemaking through analyzing three elements of the project: walking, navigating, and dwelling.

4.1. Walking the riot

From de Certeau's (2011) well-known account of walking as a means to perceive the city on "ground level" (p. 91–110) to more recent scholarship on walking as a form of ethnographic placemaking (Lee &

Ingold, 2006; Pink, 2008), the practice of walking has often been theorized as an ideal form of urban engagement. Phenomenological accounts poetically describe walking as an "instinctively performed" and "elemental way of perceiving urban places": it is embodied, natural, and habitual, yet it also has a "purposive sensibility" (Wunderlich, 2008, p.126-8). Creative walking tours of Chinatown discussed earlier, such as YCC's Chinatown Soundscape Tour or Tsang's *Riot Food Here*, similarly highlight walking as a practice that fosters patience, attention, and observation through its organic connection to, respectively, sound and taste. The importance that these projects accord to walking implicitly recalls one of the neighbourhood's most significant historical legacies: the fierce anti-freeway protests in Chinatown during the 1960s which succeeded in stopping the planned construction of a freeway that would have cut through Chinatown and spawn LA-style elevated roadways across the downtown core (Anderson, 1991, p. 206). This history of citizen engagement in Chinatown is now cited as a crucial precedent for the vision of Vancouver as a "walkable city" and for the numerous "walkability projects" championed by urban planners (James, 2017).

However, some scholars have cautioned that the romanticization of walking over-states its inherent resistant potential (Middleton, 2011, p. 93-4). The emphasis placed on walking's "natural" and "instinctive" attributes also runs the risk of neglecting the technologized nature of contemporary everyday life. Geographer Nigel Thrift (2008) famously supplements de Certeau's account of "walking in the city" with a discussion of "driving in the city." Thrift argues that automobility has by now sunk so deeply "into our 'technological unconscious'" that it should be considered as much an embodied practice of everyday life as walking (p. 75). Media technology such as the sound system, which was initially characteristic of the driving environment (Bull, 2001), is now thoroughly integrated with mobile and wearable devices and become a routine part of the walking experience as well. In other words, if walking is the quintessential placemaking activity in urban space, then so too is driving even if, as Shaun Moores (2012) takes care to acknowledge, "there may be frictions between the placemaking activities of the pedestrians and car-drivers" (p.36).

360 Riot Walk combines the mobility of walking and the visuality of driving to produce a complex, friction-filled experience in Chinatown. During each stop of the walking tour, the AR-enabled screen immerses the walker in a motion-activated panoramic visuality that resembles the moving scenery a driver views though the windshield. This visual experience of driving has long been linked to cinematic spectatorship. In Anne Friedberg's (2002) historical study of the screen, she refines Virilio's "blunt equation" between "automotive mobility and cinematic visuality" to argue that a shared paradoxical experience of mobility and stasis connects the driver and the cinematic spectator: both are static while they experience a mobile visuality (p.186). *360 Riot Walk* dissolves the boundary between the supposedly "organic" experience of walking with the technologized experience of driving and watching a film. It allows the walker to experience, momentarily, the visuality of a driver/spectator. However, unlike the driver within a vehicle or a spectator in a cinema, the walker's body is not static: its motion activates the panoramic image on screen. Nor is the body protected or separated from the environment by the windshield of the cinematic screen. It is exposed to the surrounding environment. Visually, *360 Riot Walk* produces a jarring juxtaposition of past and present: vanished historical buildings now layered onto their successors, horse-drawn carriages next to currently parked cars, anti-Asian posters as well as Asian-owned shopfronts from the last century superimposed on the façade of today's cosmopolitan buildings. The narration on the soundtrack alternates between two registers: a historical tour-style account of background information about the neighbourhood and a cinematic account of the violent confrontation between the rioters and inhabitants in Chinatown and Japantown.

4.2. Navigating the riot

While *360 Riot Walk* ensconces its walking participants within a driver/spectator's visuality, it also produces an interactive experience as participants have to navigate with their hand (by touching the destination marker on the map) as well as with their body (by moving with the on-screen image in order to line up with its off-screen counterpart). In her study of mobile screens, Nanna Verhoeff (2012) suggests that the act of navigation is "a specific mode of interaction at the intersection of visuality and mobility" (p. 133). Verhoeff is especially interested in digital mapping technology, which she argues produces an active process of viewing: a co-creation of visuality while in motion. In the case of AR technology, Verhoeff argues further that AR allows users to co-create not only a visual representation, but a spatial relation to the environment. Verhoeff's example is an AR browser that superimposes augmented information onto a live camera feed. The screen, which projects a live image through the device's camera, appears to the viewer as though it is a "transparent" window, framed by the "edges of the screen" (p.158-9). While *360 Riot Walk* does not use a live camera feed, it asks its participants to line up the on-screen image with the off-screen environment, thus creating a similar illusion: the recorded image appears *as though* it is a live feed. Navigating with the screen in this way produces a similar form of spatial intervention: an "interactive cartography" (p.162) that Verhoeff describes as "procedural, in the sense that movement through space and interaction with on-screen layers of digital information to off-screen geographical and material presence unfolds in time" (p.163). *360 Riot Walk* parallels this procedure of visual co-creation (as the walker moves and the panoramic image unfolds) with a movement through historical time, as images and narration of places, faces, and stories from time past merge with the present location. This "co-creation," however, implicates the navigator not only in an act of creativity, but uncomfortably also in an act of complicity. The walking tour traces the route, and thus places the walker in the position, of the anti-Asian rioters. Participants are in effect navigating themselves through a violent intrusion into someone else's neighbourhood, destroying their businesses and livelihood while denying their right to belong.

4.3. Dwelling in the riot

What is the impact of a creative media work that produces such an experience of discomfort and unbelonging? What might it illuminate about other, arguably more idealized, placemaking projects that have been taking place in Vancouver's Chinatown?

In Shaun Moores' (2012) elegant and eclectic account of scholarship on place, he draws from phenomenological geography and social anthropology to explicate the core arguments of the "dwelling perspective" (p.41-45), which understands place to be a "practical and emotional accomplishment" (p.94) through habitual activities. It is through repeating everyday practices over and over again that an attachment to, and sense of familiarity with, a place develops. Eschewing the nostalgia or localism that characterizes some "dwelling perspectives," Moores is critical of claims that technological development in media and in transportation are weakening or homogenizing this sense of place (66–68). Instead, Moores argues that "dwelling" is not only possible in mobility, but may even be facilitated by transport or sites of transportation (such as feelings of at-homeness in airports or in car travel) and by mobile media (such as the way cell phones teleports the familiarity of home for travellers). In his empirical study of how young Eastern European migrants form an emergent sense of attachment and belonging to their new homes in three British cities, Moores finds that repeated navigation on public transport (which habituates them to place details) and habitual use of media technology (which connects the familiarity of "back home" to the new environment) are crucial to creating a sense of place for newcomers in an unfamiliar environment (p.94-102).

360 Riot Walk, interestingly, stands this notion of dwelling on its

head. The media in Moores' study that generate a sense of belonging, such as the screen people use for long-distance communication and the navigational devices they use to orient themselves in a strange city, are used here instead to disconnect participants from their habitual sense of familiarity with Chinatown. That is, participants are hailed into the subject position of hostile outsiders who are intruding on the place. When the tour reaches Japantown just outside Chinatown's perimeter, it further serves as a reminder of places lost to history altogether, as there are no remaining landmarks with which to line up with the on-screen historical images. Japantown disappeared completely from the neighbourhood after its inhabitants were forcibly displaced and resettled into internment camps during World War II. *360 Riot Walk* asks its participants to dwell in the violence of the 1907 riot, the entangled relations and frictions amongst all its historical players, the lingering effects of racism on the neighbourhood, and ghostly echoes of places that no longer have any palpable traces off screen.

Aside from the experience of historical trauma, the walking tour — perhaps unwittingly — generates still another feeling of discomfort. The project's landing page issues this statement of caution: "If you are on a self-guided tour, please be aware that the area has a higher density of vulnerable and marginalized people; it may be a good idea to go with someone. Because you will be aiming your device in every direction, you may be perceived as taking photos of local residents, which may cause a reaction. Be courteous, and take the time to let them know that you are watching a recorded video" 360 Riot Walk (n.d.). The statement is a reminder that while the participants are dwelling imaginatively in an act of violence against the neighbourhood, their presence is also uncomfortably close to an actual intrusion into the present-day site. The relation between the intersecting neighbourhoods of Chinatown and the Downtown Eastside (DTES) (where "the vulnerable and marginalized people" the note refers to reside) is complex. Much has been written about the history of the DTES and the failure of municipal policies to alleviate chronic poverty and homelessness (Brunet-Jailly, 2014). While some have compared the history of dispossession between the DTES and Asian Canadian communities, especially that of Japanese Canadians who were displaced (Masuda et al., 2020) and arguably also those in Chinatown who are marginalized by gentrification (Fung, 2016), others have also noted the differential impact of "regeneration" efforts on the DTES and its surrounding communities (Mckenzie & Hutton, 2015). The cautionary statement issued by *360 Riot Walk* further positions its participants as outsiders whose very activity of pointing a screen at the neighbourhood conjures up a threatening history of exploitation and intrusion.

While other creative placemaking projects tend to encourage participants to foster a connection to Chinatown, whether through learning its inhabitants' language and games, eating their traditional foods, or listening to the neighbourhood's environmental sound, *360 Riot Walk* audaciously demands its participants to become uncomfortable and disconnected as they walk along the route of racist rioters, navigate the violent intrusion of someone else's space, and dwell in the trauma and loss of the neighbourhood's fractious history and contemporary tension. Participants' disorienting experience using the digital screen to navigate between different modes of mobility and visuality, between a location's past and present, as well as their own awareness as an intruder into a space where they do not belong, creates a sense of place that should be as important as one that prompts feelings of inclusion and belonging.

5. Out of place

Recent conceptualizations of AR identify four affordances of the technology (Heemsbergen et al., 2021). The first is visual (dis)integrity, which refers to how users are enabled to "refuse organic perception and actively embrace computational perception" (pp. 836-7), similar to the way participants of *360 Riot Walk* are walking while adopting the perception of a driver. The second is environmental activation (pp.839-40), which refers to how AR affords "the (built) environment

extending its reality to us," such that different topographies and temporalities can be perceived on the same plane, much like the way actual buildings in the present extend into their historical images on the same visual plane for the walking tour participants aligning the screen to the environment. The third, contextual pointalisation (pp.838-9), refers to how AR affords discrete points of interest in the environment to create a spatial attention economy, like the way *360 Riot Walk* contextualizes its participants' immediate environment within a traumatic historical event. The last affordance, four-dimensional place(ment), refers to experiences in AR which are not only spatial but also temporal, in ways that combine asynchronous and synchronous communication contexts (pp.84). Elements of the walking tour, such as its soundtrack, locative maps, and videos, can be experienced apart from each other and outside of the context of the walking tour, thus potentially generative of completely different spatial and temporal contexts to experience the work. These defining features of AR enable the small screen in *360 Riot Walk* to create an experience of perceptual dissonance and visual distortion from its ambient environment. In their study of large screens in public space, Papastergiadis et al. (2016) coin the notion "ambient awareness" to refer to "the sensibility that attends to the field by relating elements that are peripheral to each other and organizing them into a new form," citing the omnipresence of large screens in public urban spaces as a key platform for interactions emerging from this sensibility (pp.211). By wrenching its participants' ambient awareness from their surroundings to an extraordinary visual and perceptual world, produced by the AR-enabled small screen, that feels both out of place and out of time, *360 Riot Walk* uses digital media to create a (dis)connection to place that seeks to recall, rather than erase, violence and trauma.

In their study of historical walking tours in Vancouver, Aoki and Yoshimizu (2015) note the "positive and progressive potential of walking" but also call attention to "the constraints of positionality, knowledge, experience … as they intervene … and activate omissions and embodied resistances to the immersive and immediate potential of walking" (p. 280). They recount how they felt "out of place" when they were "confronted with a lack of recognition of presence and absence of communities whose lifeworlds are or very recently were located" in the sites of their tours (p.279). In Edward Said's memoir titled *Out of Place* (1999), which records vanished worlds of dispossession and exile, he writes of the dissonances that have pervaded his personal and intellectual life, how they have taught him to prefer "being not quite right and out of place" (p.295). *360 Riot Walk*'s creative use of screen media, AR, and locative technology produces a sense of dissonance in the oft-idealized activity of walking while exposing the simultaneously transformative and intrusive potential of digital placemaking. It allows its participants to feel out of place in the neighbourhood whose traumatic history of racism and dispossession the project invokes. In so doing, the project accentuates, rather than ameliorates, the constraints noted by Aoki and Yoshimizu about walking tours. *360 Riot Walk* reminds us of the displaced history, disappeared places, and dispossessed communities that placemaking activities cannot recover, but which we can honour and remember.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Helen Hok-Sze Leung: is the sole author of this article.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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