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When Professor Peter Sealy recommended me to consider applying for the Laidlaw Scholars Programme, I spent a week trying to come up with research topics to pitch, but my mind was more often than not a blank slate. It was by re-reading *Neuromancer* by William Gibson, one of my favourite literature pieces, that I was motivated to look into company towns. I was not accustomed to academic freedom. It is very common in undergraduate academia to have studies guided by syllabi or professorial direction. Similarly, I initially felt a sense of inertia during the beginning phase of my research project. I was not sure where to begin, unconfident as to what particular pieces of information I should be looking out for. On top of that, my research topic intersected with three disciplines: urban planning, corporatist free-market economics, and history. I felt that my research topic felt robust on paper, but revealed itself as fallible with regards to methodology. As an architecture student, I planned on studying case studies through aesthetic typologies and spatial arrangement. As much as I didn't want to admit it, company towns are the forces of space-intensive manufacturing and economics. My economic analysis is weak, I thought. I only took a crash course in economics in high school. How can I measure factors that depend on subjectivity, like employee happiness?

These fears were dismissed when the time came to visit Pullman, Chicago, and San Bernardino, California. A first-hand visit is tremendously powerful, and Pullman's background as a historical case gave me both the power of hindsight and plenty of secondary sources to analyse. I found independence, freedom and personal autonomy while visiting, which gave me the confidence to study my sites with purpose. For instance, I was able to navigate library archives on my own, which changed the directions of my arguments many times. However, autonomy also gave me the mobility to examine different perspectives. For

example, I could not find much information about San Bernardino, and visited the San Bernardino County Museum on a whim after finishing initial walks around the area. The County Museum's presentation of their history was a eureka moment in explaining San Bernardino's current relevance to Amazon today, which was related to railroad infrastructure laid down in the 19th century for citrus producers and exporters. Therefore, the study was ultimately determined as a historical study which gave me breathing room when it came to methodology.

The research phase was exciting, and empowering in terms of helping me grow my own self initiative. However, the writing and drawing phase came to intimidate me. The scope of the project was unprecedentedly large. With four case studies, the extent to which in-depth investigation could be demonstrated came to exceed the recommended word limit proposed by the Laidlaw scholars programme. In retrospect, it would have been strategic to prioritise the deliverable report as a concise essay and not as a comprehensive study of all four identified archetypes. However, this would limit the study's findings which were important in the secondary case studies, BASF and the Googleplex. This topic may have been proper for a master's thesis instead. Nonetheless, I do not regret my research topic. It was insightful in the sense that it opened up a hidden world of invisible exploitation and changed my view on free market capitalism. Although I am not a Marxist, my final remarks in the paper commented on the Marxist terms found within research literature and also within my paper itself. This paper began with a positive view of free-market capitalism. Having grown in the spectre of the Communist Party of China in Hong Kong where democracy has eroded due to new national security laws, I came to form a negative opinion of communism in my teenage years. The opposing end of the spectrum, therefore, was capitalism and a subsequent political embrace of it. Researching company towns as a component of 'healthy' capitalism forced a reckoning on personal views of economic functions. The exploitative abuse that occurs within company towns was clearly unhealthy but is still present in establishments that do not seem obvious as a company town. This study ultimately has shown that the problems infesting both communism and capitalism cannot be ignored under a delusion of inexistence. However, I would assert that this study was a close examination of corporatism, as well as oligopsony/monopsony capitalism and the conditions in which they fester. To

investigate this topic further would probably examine other aspects of capitalism manifesting within spatial infrastructure. However, this study has established that all economic processes are inherently physical. Another potential topic for comparison would be the study of Soviet 'monotowns', which were closed industrial towns controlled by one single manufacturing committee or Soviet companies. These include examples such as Norilsk in the Russian Arctic region, as well as Pripyat, near Chernobyl, which manufactured military electronics for the Soviet militaries in secret prior to the 1986 Chernobyl disaster. Although it would be difficult to obtain Soviet documents in detail, as well as visit these closed cities in person, this research would be vital in understanding company towns, a tool complicit not only in aggressive capitalist economics, but also when they manifested within a Communist environment. All in all, the potential to examine company towns has not been fully exhausted. Much work remains to be done as part of a research area, to which I am grateful to my advisor, Professor Peter Sealy, for guiding and advising along the way, as well as the Laidlaw Scholars Programme, for their generous funding, belief in my work, as well as their understanding. Finally, to acknowledge the UofT International Scholarship Advisors: Shraddha Prasad, Yvonne Yang and Tanya Udartseva, who kept this programme on track. I look forward to another summer with eye-opening experiences.