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From Gay City to GLAmazon: Building Community in Corporate Seattle

Evelyn Chow

Seattle University

From Gay City to GLAmazon:

Building Community in Corporate Seattle

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By

Evelyn Chow

Committee in charge:

Professor Jodi O'Brien Director

Professor Paul Kidder, Reader

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This honors thesis by Evelyn Chow is approved.

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Dr. Jodi O'Brien   Date

_____/_____

Dr. Paul Kidder   Date

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"Cities have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they are created by everybody."

- Jane Jacobs, *The Death And Life of Great American Cities*

"The city is not merely a repository of pleasures. It is the stage on which we fight our battles, where we act out the drama of our own lives. It can enhance or corrode our ability to cope with everyday challenges. It can steal our autonomy or give us the freedom to thrive. It can offer a navigable environment, or it can create a series of impossible gauntlets that wear us down daily. The messages encoded in architecture and systems can foster a sense of mastery or helplessness."

- Charles Montgomery, *Happy City*

"A revolution that does not produce a new space has not realized its full potential"

- Henri Lefebvre, *Le Droit à la ville*

"We can begin by doing small things at the local level, like planting community gardens or looking out for our neighbors. That is how change takes place in living systems, not from above but from within, from many local actions occurring simultaneously."

- Grace Lee Boggs

"Without community, there is no liberation."

- Audre Lorde

"Another world is not only possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing."

- Arundhati Roy, *Confronting Empire*

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Acknowledgements

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Introduction to content and framework

I grew up in a city with a population of approximately 351,000 people, less than half of the population of the Seattle city area (725,000~); O'ahu is an island of approximately 600 square miles, while King County is 2,307 square miles. I bounce back and forth between the palm trees and the evergreens, trading in the Pacific Ocean for the Salish Sea, mongoose for squirrels and raccoons. Although spatially different, both these lands have facilitated my expansive growth. Specifically, both of these places have introduced and re-introduced me to the concepts of diaspora and home, community, and specifically, an "LGBTQ+ community."

I came out as a lesbian in my sophomore year of high school. Between the years of 2012-2015, I grew into a "gay rights activist." My development of a somewhat politicized consciousness involved learning some mainstream history about the gay liberation movement from the 70s throughout the 2000s. I didn't realize at the time that the stories of movements I was being fed were whitewashed and filtered almost entirely with pacifism. I recall watching many movies and documentaries set in big cities and telling myself that amidst all of the heartbreak I experienced in high school angsting over "straight girls," that I would move to a gay/liberal city and find "the one" for me. I yearned for discussions with older gays, to hear what their experience was like growing up in a time when "gay" and "lesbian" were much more crucified than the setting I grew up in, to hear about the community they had built and the resilience they developed growing up amongst such animosity. The narrative of these desires is not uncommon for my generation. I had fortuitously gotten involved in several organizations (HIV/AIDS awareness/prevention non-profits, Gay-Straight Alliance networks across the islands, etc.) in the midst of my activism in high school which brought me a wealth of access to people who had been involved in the fight for gay and trans liberation over the past few decades.

Many of the folks I met and learned from had lived in the continental U.S. for one or more periods of their lives, and told me stories about the big cities (San Francisco, New York City, etc.), which made my little gay heart burst at the seams picturing the possibilities for community that were before me as I sifted through my options for college.

I still remember the first time I toured Seattle University in 2014 during the college selection process. I pictured what it would be like living so close to the Seattle-Capitol Hill neighborhood, where sidewalks were painted with rainbows and each storefront had an "all are welcome" sign (or some variation of it) – how could there *not* be strong queer communities to join and be a part of here? I chose Seattle University above all for financial reasons; however, I was also lured in by the well-known culture of acceptance for the LGBTQ+ community in Seattle. In high school, I existed within several circles of LGBTQ+ youth, but it didn't feel like community. Instead, it felt fragmented; the masculine white gays who had the most visibility within activism and organizing on the islands didn't seem to have any place for me in their visions for the future. Within my friend groups, predominantly made up of Asian and Pacific Islander folks, I witnessed and experienced sentiments of homophobia and transphobia.

When I arrived in Seattle, I attempted to take all of the same steps I took when I got involved with the LGBTQ+ community in Hawai'i. I hit up all the non-profits, the school clubs, and when I turned 21, the bars and nightclubs. However, amidst my eagerness, it was difficult to find groups to join. The big non-profits I considered volunteering for thought that we had accomplished all that needed to be done for the LGBTQ+ after the legalization of same-gender marriage (DeFilippis 2015:38). I looked on the directories of the tall high-rise buildings I visited or interned at for any semblance of the type of community I yearned for; then it dawned on me that the type of community I was searching for did not necessarily exist within fancy downtown

or gentrified Capitol Hill office spaces. So at the end of most days during my first two years in college, I still felt aimless and relatively alone. What was it that made me feel so out of place in a city that was supposed to embrace my queerness, which I once considered my most marginalized identity?

When I was introduced to community organizing, I learned that strong communities are built and maintained through relationships that are established with time and intent, not simply present and existing in space for one to jump into immediately. Through urban sociology I also learned about the concept of "space" and its connection to community. Political scientist Mark Neocleous articulates how the question of space is inherent in the idea of the state, specifically the correlation between spatial dimension and social order and how the state produces space for some and not others. Space, therefore, is crucial in facilitating the development of community and has the power to influence if and how relationships form. Given this importance, what happens when public spaces such as parks, sidewalks, community centers, and small businesses – spaces where I thought I would find my community– are increasingly conceded to major corporations and luxury real-estate developers such as they are in the city of Seattle?

In *Happy City*, author Charles Montgomery states that "the most important psychological effect of the city is the way in which it moderates our relationships with other people" (2013: 37). Accepting this as a premise for my research, my question for Seattle is: How are urban relationships and community-building affected by the private/corporate sprawl onto historically public spaces? Does this corporate sector encroachment impede urban social activism and engagement?

Among Seattle residents, 12.9% identify as gay, lesbian or bisexual, which is one of the highest per capita population in the country just behind San Francisco. San Francisco and Seattle,

once historically significant hubs of LGBTQ+ activism and community, are now also homes to some of the world's largest corporations (Lockheed Martin, Google, Amazon, Boeing, Microsoft, and more). Urban sociological works chronicle the demise of minoritized residents and marginalized communities as a consequence of urban corporate development. Author Timothy Gibson (2003) documents the early 2000s project of downtown Seattle "revitalization" in his book *Securing the Spectacular City*, which lays the premise for much of the justification and backdoor political deals that allowed urban corporate sprawl to occur. Using census data from 2000 and 2010 while citing the historical segregation of Seattle as a ubiquitously present barrier to integration even to this day, University of Washington's Amy Spring analyzes and documents the decentralization of gay urban enclaves In this process of urban, corporate-shaped gentrification the neighborhoods that were once home and refuge to many minoritized communities, have experienced skyrocketing rents and mortgages. Many folks who do not have access to intergenerational land/home ownership and wealth (Black Americans, immigrants, and, to an extent, people who have severed family ties due to factors such as homophobia and transphobia), have been forcibly priced out of neighborhoods where strong communities once existed and prospered.

At the same time, there have also been community-based attempts to preserve the cultures of Seattle that have been diminished or pushed out due to the gentrification. Rachel Dovey, award-winning freelance writer and former USC Annenberg fellow, chronicles the loss of historical Seattle businesses, once lively gathering spots, to gentrification within neighborhoods such as the Central District and Pioneer Square in a crowdsourced online digital database, which can be accessed at nextcity.org (2017). This became the inspiration for the book *Ghosts of Seattle Past*, which was a finalist for the 2018 Washington State Book Award. Another

grassroots attempt to preserve Seattle culture and resist corporate sprawl was initiated by Seattle-based organizer and national movement builder for immigrant rights, online organizing, and arts and culture preservation Cynthia Brothers in 2016. Brothers created a live archive (accessible on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and online website) titled "Vanishing Seattle," in which she documents the displaced and disappearing institutions, small businesses, and cultures of Seattle – often due to gentrification and development – and celebrates the spaces and communities that give this city its soul.

There is a powerful tradition that I am building from in my work to recognize possibilities of community in urban spaces. At my core, I am doing this research because I want to tell a larger story about space, the complexities of what creates communities, what drives urban migration for queer and trans people, and what happens to communities when corporate-favoring policies are implemented into municipal structures. Many local observers report that Seattle policy has been significantly influenced by corporate interests and that these interests shape current urban development. For example, Geekwire's tech reporter Nat Levy wrote a highly-circulated exposé that revealed Amazon contributed $350k to support Jenny Durkan (now incumbent) for the Seattle mayoral position, its biggest local contribution ever (Levy 2017). Reputable Crosscut reporter David Kroman has also extensively covered the influence of corporate money in Seattle City Council, specifically as Amazon and other businesses fought against the Seattle Employee Head Tax, which would have generated over $20 million towards affordable housing. For many people walking around urban Seattle these days, the shadow of corporate influence in the form of expanding skyscrapers, towering yellow cranes, and ever-present construction sites seems hauntingly real. According to a 2017 report by Seattle Times reporter Mike Rosenburg (Rosenburg, González 2017), Amazon owns at least 8.1 million square

feet of office space in Seattle (19% of all prime office space in the city proper), more than the next 43 companies combined. This number is also likely to have increased since 2017 given Amazon's new acquisitions and vertiginous development. What are the consequences of this shift in the Seattle landscape for neighborhoods, communities and the groups who have, until recently, called them home?

My thesis focuses on the city's current population boom cycle and how it interacts with historic and current exclusionary city planning, community building, corporate-sponsored gentrification, and shifting trends in LGBTQ urban migration. That said, there is no such thing as a single queer or trans community and LGBTQ communities always intersect with multiple groups and interests. Disabilities advocacy groups also have high stakes in urban planning with much to offer in terms of a developing literature. For example, the writings and resources put together by Bay Area based organizer Mia Mingus, a queer and disabled woman of color, in her blog "Leaving Evidence" (Mingus 2012) have become widely-referenced by movement organizers across the country. Therefore, while this research came out of my interest in the development of "LGBTQ+" communities in cities like Seattle, I will also be exploring how disability justice (specifically the movement's work around accessibility and inclusion) changes the framework of urban migration as it intersects with fights for land use justice and racial equity.

Land Acknowledgement

"Urban Indians were the generation born in the city. We've been moving for a long time, but the land moves with you like memory. An Urban Indian belongs to the city, and cities belong to the earth. Everything here is formed in relation to every other living and nonliving thing from the earth… Cities form in the same way as galaxies."
-   Tommy Orange, *There There* (2018: 11)

I embark on this endeavor to define the relationship between space and community and research the movement to/from Seattle with a critical understanding that the land I refer to now as Seattle has been stolen and colonized from the Indigenous Coast Salish tribes. The area that I will be writing about is what is characterized today as the Greater Seattle Area; however, the peoples who have lived here originally referred to these as the Duwamish, Puget Sound Salish, Snohomish, Puyallup, Suquamish, Klallam, and Skagit territories, and potentially more names which have been violently erased. To this day, the Duwamish and many others are still not federally recognized by the same state that committed genocide on them. As a settler myself, I acknowledge that I am benefiting from the care that they have bestowed and continue to bestow upon this unceded land and will I continuously do my best to pay homage to the many peoples who are still here.

I believe that while doing a land acknowledgement in an academic setting, it is important to identify and deconstruct the structures and logics of settler colonialism as they affect all areas of life today, especially as they carry over into institutions like universities. Scholars on settler colonialism such as Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz, J. Kēhaulani Kauanui, and Patrick Wolfe encourage us to view settler colonialism not merely as some stagnant event that took place in the past (though our history textbooks would like to pass it off as such), but as ongoing processes embedded in the structures of our society. In reality, effects of colonialism are present today as dominant power structures such as patriarchy, compulsive heteronormativity, white supremacy, and anti-black racism-- all of which Seattle is no exception to. The violence of settler colonialism is also carried over into the process of map-making; for example, the naming of streets and neighborhoods after the colonizers (e.g. Yesler, Terry, Denny, etc.)

Another colonialist logic that is important to recognize and deconstruct regarding gender and sexuality and how they have saturated our society. These logics translate into the ways European imperialists attempted to manage sexuality through managing gender variance. In their text *Intimate Empires*, Rizzo and Gerontakis provide critical content of the colonial project to study, regulate, and force a binary gender conformity onto gender variant communities from the *mahu* of Tahiti to the *hijras* of traditional Hindu societies to two-spirit Amerindian peoples. One particularly sinister way in which the US government attempted to erase two-spirit peoples was by forcing non-transgender Native American boys to don what was imposed as "female attire" as punishment for breaking rules at reservation boarding schools. This association of humiliation with cross-dressing soon turned Native Americans against two-spirit persons, who became the target of contempt and persecution (Rizzo & Gerontakis 247).

The patriarchal structures of colonialism come particularly at the expense of Indigenous women, who endured physical, psychological, and generational violence, and the intersections of urbanity and feminism are rooted in this colonial structure. Today, Seattle has the highest count of missing and murdered indigenous women (MMIW) across U.S. cities since the 1940s (Smith 2018).

Another logic embedded within colonialist logics is heteronormativity, and Dr. Andrea Smith writes explicitly about the heteronormativity of settler colonialism, highlighting the need for a conversation between queer and Native studies. This conversation is important, she argues, because the logics of settler colonialism *and* decolonization must be queered in order to properly speak to the genocidal present that not only continues to disappear Indigenous peoples but reinforces the structures of white supremacy, settler colonialism, and heteropatriarchy that affect all people today. Queer and Native studies are intertwined in that both their histories are

grounded in colonial projects, regardless of the different directions these respective studies branch out in. Embracing a critical lens in Native studies can help to accentuate and disrupt the connection between queer theory and its tendency to fall back on and center white settler narratives at the expense of indigenous people who end up becoming the foils for the emergence of "postcolonial, postmodern, diasporic, queer studies." (Smith 2010). The intersection of these two studies is important to understanding the history and culture surrounding settler colonialism and heteronormativity. Queer studies at its core is meant to disrupt social order, and if that is the case, then a native person may already be queered given their complete othering and the genocide of their people and culture. I hope to provide space for this intersection to take place throughout this paper.

Analytical framework: Radical Urbanism

In this past year, I have studied urban migration and city planning of Seattle through the framework of radical urbanism. Urbanism is the study of how inhabitants of a city interact within and are influenced by the literal structures of the city-- the built environment. An example of this is how cities are designed to prioritize streets for cars over people. More lanes for cars means less sidewalk space for other commuting methods (walking, biking), which therefore incentivizes and normalizes people commuting by car rather than taking public transit or walking. The way cities are built have the potential to shape our decisions without us even being conscious of it. For too many Black Americans and other minoritized ethnic groups, women, disabled people, and queer and trans people, the sense of security that a city should provide for its residents is not

a reality in the way that it is for their white, male, temporarily able-bodied (TAB)[1] counterparts.

Cities are largely designed and planned by and for white men, with less thought to safety and

eaes of passage for others[2]. The study of radical urbanism centers the question: what bodies and

structures are prioritized and accommodated within city structures? This is not a question for

only our urban planners and architects to articulate (in reality perhaps many of them actually

haven't), but *all* inhabitants of the city. It is important for people to engage with these questions,

both directly and indirectly. For example, consider someone who has to wake up three hours

early to commute via public transit to their place of work or someone who is unhoused and

looking for a place to sleep in the city streets, only to realize that the few public park or bus

benches available have a metal bar running down the middle to prevent anyone being able to lay

down flat on the platform[3].

In a field dominated by men, one of the most influential urban theorists is Jane Jacobs, a

visionary woman whose writings continue to provide a blueprint for safe, vibrant, holistic cities.

Jacobs wrote soaringly of the intersections between street traffic, neighborhood safety, transit

and independently-owned commercial storefronts. She observed that when there are more

affordable housing options and more street traffic—more "eyes on the street," as she famously

put it—residents feel safer and rates of crime decline (1961: 13). In such spaces, citizens begin

to see themselves as part of the interconnected fabric that makes us want to congregate in cities

in the first place. City planners and developers have had over a half-century to internalize and

implement Jacobs' insights, dispensing them as she did in the seminal texts *The Death and Life*

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[1] This term is used by disability justice activists, who want to bring awareness to the fact that many people who are disabled are not necessarily born with physical disabilities, and this could change at any point given injuries and accidents and a lack of affordable, comprehensive health care available in the United States.

[2] According to Data USA: https://datausa.io/profile/soc/urban-regional-planners#demographics

[3] See Mbembe on necropolitics: Mbembe, Achille, and Steve Corcoran. *Necropolitics*. Duke University Press, 2019.

of Great American Cities (1961), *The Economy of Cities* (1969), and *Cities and the Wealth of Nations* (1984). Still, few of the lawmakers, legislators, police chiefs and politicians who determine the direction of cities like Seattle have heeded her words.

What makes radical urbanism, "radical?" It is radical in the sense that it centers the people and reframes the discussion about space to prioritize mixed-use urbanism and universal accessibility. In other words, radical urbanism aspires to plan cities from the bottom up, not from our currently established top-down approach. Today, city planners and developers rely on top-down mechanisms such as master plans and developer-friendly tax breaks which prioritize the already dominant voices within society. In the city of Seattle, master plans and government regulations regarding zoning and building codes are crafted within the confines of a conference room dozens of stories up the Seattle Municipal Tower, far removed from the people on the ground, literally. Radical urbanism attempts to re-center small and/or home-operated businesses such as Mom and Pop shops over corporate chains to fostering economic growth from the bottom-up. However, municipal governments also control zoning and building codes, which essentially dictates what certain lands can and cannot be allocated for (i.e. business use, residential building, etc).

In *Happy City*, Montgomery builds on the work that has been done by Jane Jacobs and goes into depth regarding the effects that city planning, specifically with regard to public transportation access and suburbia, have had on a contemporary international scale in the multiple cities he visits. He argues in his work that the growth of low-density, car-dependent suburbs is a root cause of, simply put, unhappiness. He builds a strong case for the fact that cars are the reason we are facing a detriment in happiness in many major cities and, even more so, suburban areas. Think about it-- even though a car is generally built with the capacity to hold 4+

people, how often do people actually carpool? Cars have become an even smaller and isolated enclave in which people retreat, following the development of single-family homes. When a city is built to prioritize mobility via cars rather than options on the ground such as walking, public transit, and/or biking for the everyday commuter, we lose our connection to a city that facilitates interactions with others. Cities that are more densely populated with a mix of housing options and encourage people to travel on foot, on bike, or via public transport create more opportunities for interaction, not to mention its impact on our environment. The invention of the suburbs, a result of white flight from densely populated inner-cities, is therefore not only bad for one's mental health, it is also bad for the planet-- generating and promoting an unsustainable level of greenhouse gas emissions.

Montgomery touches on the necessity of public engagement by giving an exposition of Aristotle's philosophies, citing that happiness is not merely a pursuit of all things that bring pleasure, but instead is comprised of being an active member of society. His conclusion is resonant of Jacobs', that the way cities are designed literally affect our daily decisions and thus our moods. Jacobs talks about this desire for diversity of interaction in her book, stating:

> Although it is hard to believe, while looking at dull gray areas, or at housing projects or at civic centers, the fact is that big cities are natural generators of diversity and prolific incubators of new enterprises and ideas of all kinds… The diversity, of whatever kind, that is generated by cities rests on the fact that in cities so many people are close together, and among them contain so many different tastes, skills, needs, supplies, and bees in their bonnets. (Jacobs 1961: 147).

Indeed, one of the allures of city living is the simultaneous promise of constant stimulation as well as a supposed cloak of anonymity. Cities promise endless possibilities and yet the potential to stifle it all at once.

We are in an age where cities around the world play a critical role in determining the future of humanity. For instance, growing urban development is directly linked to climate change, which has resulted in deteriorating land conditions where climate refugees must flee their homelands. As of 2018, 55% of the world's population live in urban areas. The UN projects that by 2050, that number will rise to 68%, over two-thirds of the world's population. Yet here in the United States, many, if not all, of our major cities are imbued and designed with racist and exclusionary intents. One example is redlining in the United States whereby the lines for tax distributions for public resources, such as schools, are drawn to exclude segregated minoritized ethnic populations. . Therefore, schools in poorer communities (i.e. communities of color) have less funding for full-time staff, teachers, and up-to-date textbooks. Seattle is not an exception to this and carries into today with its own history of redlining, "urban renewal," creation of waste projects (e.g. toxic waste sites, prisons), and transportation inequities. For instance, in Seattle, Black people were redlined into the Central District, where the district elementary school is also one of the most under-resourced schools, Bailey Gatzert Elementary. Approximately one-fifth of Bailey Gatzert's youth were reported to be homeless or in unstable housing in 2016 due to the rising costs of market-rate housing in the area, which is currently being gentrified. One block down from the elementary school is also where the King County Youth Detention Center is located, so families who have gone and continue to go to school in the area, predominantly Black and immigrant youth, are forced to pass by prison cells on their commute. This example is just one of many that reveal the visible and not-so-visible inequities in city planning.

The final segment of my analytical framework will concern the ways cities seek to attract and/or profile diversity for marketing purposes without actually creating the infrastructures that guarantee safety and accessibility for these groups. Cities often benefit from the cultural capital

of ethnic and/or queer spaces, boasting their rhetoric of diversity and inclusivity (see: City of

Seattle website), yet when it comes to supporting and implementing policies that would empower

those who are most impacted by state-sanctioned violence such as racism, poverty, and more, the

silence of our elected representatives is resounding[4]. For instance, Seattle benefits from its

reputation as a liberal city that embraces a progressive, queer lifestyle and provides some of the

best transgender-inclusive health care in the country. However, this embrace is only relevant to a

certain class of (mostly wealthy) gays and lesbians. As an urban structure, Seattle has failed to

contend with rapidly escalating homelessness and lack of affordable housing, which

simultaneously makes it an unsafe city for highly minoritized and marginalized queer groups.

Seattle's challenges with affordable housing/homelessness exacerbates the problems that these

minoritized groups already face. What does it mean for our city's current residents and those on

their way to live in a place that has been set up to exclude certain people at the outset? How do

we create cities that are set up for everyone to not only survive, but thrive? This is the question

radical urbanism seeks to answer.

What makes a city? The relationship between space and community

Space as it has been categorized as property was and continues to be one of the most

valued assets in the United States. The right to life, liberty, and property-- a phrase introduced by

social contract philosopher and "father of Liberalism" John Locke[5]-- was the referential founding

tenet of the United States' Declaration of Independence. Thomas Jefferson changed the last pillar

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[4] I'm thinking specifically about King County level projects such as the $230~ million project of reconstructing the Youth Detention Center, and how the majority of Seattle City Council members and legislators have not out with public statements about the racist origins of imprisonment, even though the city champions its "Race and Social Justice Initiative (RSJI).
[5] This phrase was introduced in Locke's *Two Treatises of Government,* originally published in 1689.

to the "pursuit of happiness," codifying that every man* in the United States is entitled the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Though the term "property" was replaced in Jefferson's revision, the right to property and to defend one's property is still a central ideal upheld by the highest courts on this land. Property ownership automatically excluded certain communities such as Indigenous peoples, women, enslaved Africans, and indentured servants made up of many Asian migrant workers-- all of whom were not officially recognized by the state, some not even until the 20th century. At the same time, it is important to mention that recognition by the state was and is not the goal of many social movements. In fact, many Indigenous peoples fought against US recognition on the basis that it validates the settler-colonial state. However, lack of recognition by the state means a lack of space that is designated for those communities. Linguistically, the term 'state' is an etymological hybrid, combining roots from *estate*, referring to land and the property rights over that land, and *status*, referring to authority and the rights associated with a certain standing (Neocleous 410). Therefore, the notion of the state is literally rooted in the ideology of imperialists' right to seizing and claiming lands. By only allowing access to land to a narrow group of people, the capitalist city is foundationally incapable of equitably providing the basic needs and desires of the whole urban populace. In other words, space has been and continues to only be meant for certain people. Today, cities that have followed this design scheme and philosophy have become highly stratified culturally, socially, and economically, which directly impedes possibilities of tangible community or urbanity.

The rise of empire in Paris during the decades of the 1840s and 50s marks the shift in history toward our contemporary capitalist urban-planning philosophy and design, which has become the model for city development and expansion throughout most of the world (Harvey

25). This carries over into today, where the principles of urban-planning within our capitalist context in the United States are constructed to maintain the top-down approach that works to protect rights to property and profit, which typically benefits wealthy white men. A top-down approach to governance and planning, while seemingly effective in a traditional and conservative sense, often ends up only centering those who are well-resourced, while excluding and even criminalizing those who are deemed deviant from an established cultural norm.

For centuries, across all of the continents of the world, the ideal of the city has been crafted with the intention of representing the centralization of culture and civilization. It was in urban centres that philosophers and other intellectuals would gather to engage in debates with one another, that people would converge to haggle over groceries or services, that residents would go to engage in the democratic process of creating the best shared commons they could for the sake of the greater good. Cities represent both the geographic and social center of intellectual growth and innovation, a hub for people and ideas to congregate. However, the blueprint for this vision is not easy to draft. Cities are often held as a promise for what the future can be, a utopian imaginary. But this does not make them any less susceptible to the forces of greed and power imbalances that are woven into their foundations. Political and social ideologies are undeniably present in the structures and institutions of the city, including its courthouses, police forces, educational institutions, and public transportation, which shape the interactions people have within them. This section will cover the theory, history, and philosophy relevant to a critical study in urban sociology to demonstrate how Seattle's living structures are sustaining inequities within minoritized communities.

Seattle's Investments in Whiteness

In his book *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness,* American Studies scholar and sociologist George Lipsitz demonstrates how city planning policies have aided a systematic investment in whiteness throughout the history of the United States, resulting in a place-based social hierarchy. His adept analysis accounts for advantages that come to individuals racialized as white through profits made from housing secured in discriminatory markets, unequal educations allocated to children of different races, insider networks that channel employment opportunities to the relatives and friends of those who have profited most from present and past racial discrimination, and intergenerational transfers of inherited wealth that pass on the accumulation of wealth by discrimination to succeeding generations (Lipsitz 1998: vii). Lipsitz's historical analyses of public policy are pertinent to understanding the intersecting structural foundations of racist housing, transportation, education, and city planning policies. In this following section, I will be grounding his analyses with examples of structural inequities in Seattle which work to ensure the well-being and cultivation of a thriving society for white people at the detriment of other racially minoritized communities.

Access to housing is central to the livability of a city; however, many cities in the US, including Seattle, have lost a significant amount of its public housing through the process of urban renewal in the past decades. Urban renewal was and continues to be a tool used by the federal government to systematically deracinate community in minoritized neighborhoods. From the 1940s through 60s, many local "pro-growth" coalitions were led by liberal (white) mayors, during which they heralded that we need to build more housing for poor people. During this time, low-income housing units were removed at an alarmingly fast pace; however, 90% of the units removed were never replaced. The land that was acquired through this removal ended up

going towards commercial, industrial, and municipal projects, leaving less than 20% of that land allocated towards replacement housing. Of the $120 billion invested into renewal projects at the time, only less than 2% of it were available to non-white people (Lipsitz 8).

The Yesler Terrace public housing units are one example of the shrinking of public commons in Seattle. Yesler Terrace was created as the first racially integrated public-housing in all of the United States, made up of 561 family-sized housing units. Elders who lived in these complexes were made up of all ethnicities; Black folk would live alongside migrant workers from Asia, next to their poor white neighbors. This coexistence built a strong sense of community amongst these residents of Seattle, where neighbors all knew each other and routinely walked to each other's homes at the end of each night to talk story. Within the decade that talks of redevelopment started and the Yesler Terrace complexes have been torn down with the initial promise of low-income housing, we have seen how the influence of the private market and the drive for profit has made it so the condominiums replacing Yesler Terrace housing are "mixed-income" but specifically developed with surrounding market-rate condos of the neighborhood in mind. For reference, Batik Seattle, a new apartment complex that is open on the lands that once were Yesler Terrace units has a starting rental fee of over two thousand dollars a month for a 600-square foot one-bedroom apartment. Much of the criticism and feedback from community members who used to live in these units who have been forced elsewhere (New Holly, Rainier Heights, etc.) state that the new units are not accessible for families with children, especially given the lack of yard or green space. Another concern is how the new housing units are all protected with security systems that require key swipes to get onto certain floors, creating physical barriers between neighbors within the same complex.

Urban renewal triggered a massive displacement in inner-city communities, specifically

for Black, immigrant, and other PoC communities. In concurrence with urban renewal, Federal Housing Administration (FHA) officials financed the flight of low-income white people out of the densely-populated inner-city neighborhoods, leading to the creation of the suburbs – what is termed today as white flight. The creation of suburbs resulted in the need for transportation to and from downtown places of employment. At this time, the federal government created federally funded highway designs that consequently ran through neighborhoods of minority communities. Though Lipsitz's analysis did not include this, the federal prioritization of highways for cars can be traced to the rising power of automobile corporations on municipal decisions. Instead of prioritizing the development of widely accessible public transportation lines throughout not only cities but also throughout the US, the government has prioritized investments in less accessible private vehicles. Here in Seattle, the impacts of this lack of investment in public transit infrastructure is evident. For instance, Seattle trails behind all major cities of its size, and some smaller, in investment in public light rail. Transportation was and is crucial for the desegregation of neighborhoods yet carries in it many inequities.

In Seattle and many other major metropolitan areas, transportation is calculated to be the second highest living cost after rent/mortgage payments. Our transportation choices also greatly affect the environment; in Seattle, 60% of our greenhouse gas emissions come from road transportation. Public transit is designed for the single commuter and does not accommodate families, which also means it does not accommodate elders, youth, people with physical disabilities, poor people (re: fare enforcement), and so forth. Concurrently with the development in white suburbia and lifting up connections for people who lived in the suburbs, there were cuts to federal civilian employment in the downtown city area. Federal jobs such as office and record centers were created or moved to suburb areas. This growth of job opportunities in the suburbs

was increasingly inaccessible to those who did not live there due to previous concerns about commuter costs.

Now that we see the broad foundation of segregation in US cities and suburbs, we can focus on the characteristics of a neighborhood based on its location and population. Perhaps one of the most visible ways cities were planned to prioritize the safety and well-being of white neighborhoods is the creation and placement of waste projects such as prisons, toxic waste dumps, incinerators, and garbage dumps. In Houston, Texas, for example, more than 75% of municipal garbage incinerators and 100% of city-owned garbage dumps are located in Black neighborhoods (Lipsitz 10). Here in Seattle, the King County Youth Jail is located a mere two blocks away from Bailey Gatzert Elementary School, one of the poorest elementary schools in the city, and both located within the historical limits of the Central District. Another example can be seen from the 1992 study by staff writers for the National Law Journal examining the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) response to the 1,000+ toxic waste cases in the United States and found that polluters of sites near the greatest white population received penalties of 500% higher than penalties imposed on minority areas. This carries over into today, where corporations will systematically target Native American reservations when looking for locations for hazardous waste incinerators, solid waste landfills, and nuclear waste storage facilities. Race of the neighborhood continues to be the determining factor for the state in determining locations of municipal waste sites. This environmental racism makes the possessive investment in whiteness a literal matter of life or death, what Achille Mbembe describes as necropolitics—the way in which the state has control over which bodies may live or die.

Excluded, Inside the Lines

Wing Luke Museum of the Asian Pacific American Experience Exhibit: "Excluded, Inside the Lines | Access and Exclusion: Who gets to belong?" (March 7, 2019 - February 23, 2020)

Recently, the Wing Luke museum, with much community support, uncovered an exhibit about the history of redlining in Seattle and its impacts through individual stories and policy analyses. The exhibit begins with a detailed account of the exclusion of Indigenous peoples from Seattle and continues by weaving together a display of the interconnected financial, environmental, physical factors that have affected people of color, predominantly Black folks, from purchasing homes in Seattle. The display ends by detailing the history of resistance, innovation, solidarity and creativity that have shaped Seattle in the midst of this exclusionary zoning (See Figure 1).

This exhibit centered the question: "who gets to belong?" Below is the text from the introduction to their exhibit:

> What is your American dream? For many, it means a safe and supportive place to live, work, raise family and connect with others. A sense of belonging. A feeling of freedom. Think about where you grew up. How hard or easy was it for you to live there? Do you consider it home? Where do you live now? What is you/your family's migration story? Are you new to where you live?

> Would you have been able to live where you do 60 years ago? 20 years ago? Even a few years ago? How have things changed to make it easier or harder for you to live there? For others?

This exhibit compiled specific policies and vignettes of the history of housing exclusion in Seattle that I would not have known to look for otherwise (See Figure 2). For example, the exhibit had a section that discussed the role of the real estate agent in racist housing policies, specifically how realtors were allowed to use race to decide who to show and sell houses to. In 1903, a Black man named Horace Cayton bought a house in Capitol Hill. A white realtor challenged this purchase in 1909 and took it to court to have the Caytons removed from the

neighborhood, arguing that their presence in the neighborhood caused real estate values to depreciate. The court ruled in the Caytons' favor; however, they still had to move five months later due to financial difficulties. In 1959, a white family called the O'Mearas refused to sell their house to Robert Jones and his wife because they were Black. The Joneses decided to appeal to the Washington State Board of Discrimination, which ruled in their favor. However, this did not stop the O'Mearas from appealing the case to the Washington State Supreme Court, which ruled in favor of the O'Mearas on the basis that the Jones's FHA loan did not meet the definition of publicly assisted housing.

In addition to structural barriers such as banks refusing loans, requiring higher mortgage rates from certain communities based on racist assessments of neighborhoods, and racially restrictive covenants denying ownership of property to communities of color, *and* homeowners refusing to sell their places based on race-- *even if* you were to overcome all of these barriers to purchase a home -- realtors, neighbors, and other parties still attempt to force you out. These are the foundations upon which Seattle has built its city and homes, and this historical reality carries over into local fights for justice and liberation.

In and Out Migrations

Why do people move to and/or from cities? What does this do to communities? While there are many individually-based reasons, there are certain identifiable themes and structures operating within patterns of migration. Here I address two specific types of migration: in and out migration. Within these, there are two types of out migration: voluntary and forced. Voluntary out migration includes examples such as upsizing or downsizing, shifting family relations such as marriage or divorce, moving because of a job, etc. Forced out migration is typically a result of increasing housing unaffordability brought about by shifting market, demographic, and

neighborhood trends. This type of out migration occurs in tandem with in migration as an influx of newcomers attracted to a neighborhood for its supposed cultural and geographical attributes as well as relative affordability. These newcomers take up existing housing stock and drive up prices. Surrounding markets begin to reflect the tastes and preferences of these newcomers without taking into account the communities who have historically lived here. This is process is commonly referred to as gentrification.

In Seattle, gentrification and displacement of minoritized communities has been driven by rent increases/lack of affordable housing. Despite the fact that the City of Seattle's $16 minimum wage is one of the highest in the nation, this does not match up proportionately with the soaring costs of living in the city. Between 2010 and 2017, rents around Seattle raised 63%, especially in neighborhoods that have historically been inhabited by Black residents and immigrants, such as the Central District. Therefore, many communities, especially communities of color, have been moving further south or further north outside of city limits. This includes area of south King County such as SeaTac, Burien, Renton, Tukwila, and White Center. Despite the fact that the City of Seattle *knows* its vulnerable populations are at increasingly high risk of being displaced (See Figure 2), no efforts have been made to moderate luxury developers who are attempting to move into neighborhoods like the Chinatown-International District, which is the city's most at-risk neighborhood. According to the City of Seattle's Displacement Risk Index, you are more likely to be evicted if you:

- Are a renter
- Speak English as a second language
- Hold no college degree or lower degree
- Earn a working-class income
- Live in proximity to bus stops, the light rail, or the street car
- Live in proximity to a park, community center, or library.

These are all true of the residents of the Chinatown-International district, where the average age of a resident is 65+ years old and the median income is approximately $30,000k a year. Yet, the CID is currently involved in fights against a Taiwanese luxury developer attempting to build the 17-story Koda Condominium, which many community members have mobilized against due to fear of precedent for more displacement.

What we are seeing in Seattle is not only an influx but an efflux of residents. According to census data, about 104,000 people move away from King County[6] every year.[7] The largest demographic moving away from the city is millennials (people ages 18 to 34) (Balk 2018). This leads to my next section: what are the drivers of in and out migration? What is this doing to the character of the neighborhoods that used to be home and refuge to so many minoritized communities?

Seattle: A Gay City

Historically, gay and lesbian communities have been impacted by decisions and policies on a structural level. The "great gay migration" (coined by anthropologist Kate Weston) happened post-Stonewall, as gays and lesbians became more motivated to come out of the closet en masse and move to big cities where they knew they could find others like themselves. Amy Gluckman and Betsy Reed first examine the surge of attention to the gay community in the 1990s, specifically looking at the origins and implications of corporate interest in the gay market. Homosexuality, along with other identities, has long been ostracized and demonized by the general population in the U.S. Despite decades of protest and demand for liberation and inclusion

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[6] The biggest cities that make up Martin Luther King County are Seattle, Bellevue, Renton, Kent, Redmond, Kirkland, Federal Way, Issaquah, Shoreline, Burien, Sammamish, Maple Valley, Tukwila, Woodinville, SeaTac, and Des Moines.
[7] There is not enough data to look at Seattle-specific movement, but it is a safe assumption that many of these residents are from Seattle

by the LGBTQ+ community throughout the 1950's and onward, it was not until the 1990s that the invisibility of gays and lesbians began to diminish. This is due to the series of studies and surveys that came out in popular gay publications such as *Out* and *The Advocate*, that prompted corporate attitudes towards the gays began to shift drastically. This well-publicized data contained statistics such as: "readers of gay publications have an average household income of $63,100, compared to $36,500 for all households." (What this statistic doesn't publicize is that magazines, specifically magazine subscriptions, at the time were costly and only a very specific sect of people in the gay community were able to afford it). Another common selling point for embracing, or at least, tolerating, the gays that persists into today is the increasingly false assumption that gay and lesbian people do not have children. At this point, it was determined that the profits to be reaped ("untold millions!") from treating gay men and lesbians as a trend-setting consumer group finally outweighed the financial risks of inflaming right-wing hate (Gluckman & Reed 1997). This newfound visibility for the gay community has been widely embraced by gays and lesbians with privileged identities, but not as much for Black queers and other queer/trans people of color or poor queer/trans people. This visibility carries over into whose struggles are documented and assuaged versus whose struggles go unacknowledged.

How does the development of queer identity, then, relate to politics during these past few decades? Why is this important to understanding gay migration? Steven Seidman's article delves into identity and politics in the wake of postmodernism and new social movements. Identity politics, to Seidman, is limiting in its capacity to understand identity in its wholeness and uniqueness, as every individual has a different set of circumstances shaping their understanding of what is normally considered a universal identity (such as race). Rather than focus on an individual, though, Seidman advocates for a shift away from this to one that situates an

individual in society, embedded in institutions and cultural practices/norms (post-structuralism) (Seidman 1993). Seidman's article proposes that we ground how a rethinking of sexual identity could look from a social basis, through power analysis and narrative rather than broad analytical writing. Unlike other seemingly external identifiers such as race/ethnicity or age, queerness (as well as gender) are not as easily identifiable via external features. Much of this literature on gay identity thus makes me question the concept of an "LGBTQ+ community" and whether or not that truly exists. DeFilippis' article puts out the notion that there is actually no real coherent "LGBT community." His article highlighted key points about the ways in which the fluidity and variance of sexual identity and gender identity have been tried and forced into a capitalist, imperialist, white supremacist agenda. There is so much variance in experiences and positionalities within different people who identify as lesbian, gay, transgender, bisexual, and/or queer that it is impossible to claim much unity in all of these identities. (DeFilippis 2015).

Now we move into the implications of white queer visibility and their desire to build community. Liz Millward provides a strong critical analysis of gay gentrification as it has impacted marginalized communities. Although systemic gentrification began in the 1950s, the process is particularly associated with the 1960s and 1970s and, within LGBT communities, usually with white gay men. White males, both gay and straight, have been characterized as tending to command higher earning power than women in all sectors, as well as most Latinx, Black, Asian, Native American, and Pacific Islander men. When combined with their relative lack of dependents, white gay men have had economic advantages that made home ownership in low-income neighborhoods a possibility. Existing LGBT "ghettos" (sic) did not necessarily gentrify, but adjacent residential neighborhoods tended to attract gay men seeking access to ghetto amenities, potential sexual partners, and safety in numbers. Their presence and their

attempts to beautify (sanitize) and create identifiably gay space in their rented homes attracted

more gay men as well as gay landlords or developers to a neighborhood. The rehabilitation of old

housing stock by gay men and some lesbians was quite widespread, occurring on a significant

scale in the Castro and the Mission Districts in San Francisco, South Beach in Miami, and of

course, Capital Hill in Seattle (Millward 2004: 446).

Gary Atkins provides a Seattle-specific history regarding the exile faced by the gay and

lesbian communities from the late 1800s and the evolution of this demonization into a culture of

(facial) inclusivity through a detailed collection of oral histories and public records. The story

starts, in his book, in 1893, when the Washington State legislature began to pass a set of laws

that made homosexuality and any mention of it a crime. However, as this plays out historically,

gays found refuge in places beyond the general public scope which were usually underground

theaters and dance clubs. Slowly, with the assistance of corrupt police and dollar bills, they

began coming above ground to openly gay bars. Police were contently bribed to stay out of these

clubs; at the same time, it is worth pointing out, police were terrorizing Black neighborhoods.

However, in Atkins' narrative, an increasingly public presence of gays was followed by the

emergence of many gay social service groups and organizations, and decades later, the election

of openly gay representatives to the state and city levels. Notable groups to come out of this rise

include the Dorian Society, as well as gay businesses and advocacy groups such as the Greater

Seattle Business Association as well as certain branches of the church. Towards the end of his

book, Atkins champions the progress made on the gay and lesbian fronts:

> Is it possible for gays and lesbians, for example, so long in hiding and so diverse
> in this race, class, and politics, to really construct a sense that they belong within a
> heterosexual landscape such as Seattle's? It seems that an answer could justifiably
> be yes… Over the course of a few decades, they became able to win elections, to
> influence policies, and to participate in all the important fragments of the civic

conversation (Atkins 2013: 382).

While impressive, there is a chunk that is missing from this puzzle. These "seats at the table" so to speak have been, as stated, taken up by predominantly white men and other privileged bodies, leaving behind the most disenfranchised. Boykin's article reveals the problematic nature of gay and lesbian movements in their tendency to use umbrella terms such as "inclusive" and "diverse" without specifying what these terms are really referring to. Instead, they argue, these words have become empty shells for those who are non-white, specifically black, gay and lesbian folks. The whiteness of the gay and lesbian movement has co-opted the language of inclusivity and diversity, much to the benefit of accruing social capital. This is a problem because it allows white queers the comfort of pretending that they are open to "all," while the most impacted folks who are black trans, gay, and lesbian folks are, again, pushed to the bottom of the rung and disregarded (Boykin 2002). More recently and specifically in the context of Seattle, it means that queer and trans people with economic privileges, predominantly white, have influenced the neighborhood scene (Ghaziani 2014: 240).

From Gay City to GLAmazon

Mass migrations to urban centers are not uncommon throughout history. Whether the case of migrant populations seeking refuge or labor, people have always flocked to cities for opportunity. However, what is happening in Seattle, I argue, is historically unprecedented. Amazon employs over 45,000 people in its downtown campus, located in South Lake Union. Many of Amazon's new workers have starting salaries of six figures and are not local to the area. On top of Amazon, there are several more tech companies who have offices in downtown Seattle such as Google and Facebook. This massive influx of highly paid tech workers, predominantly men who are white and South Asian, heterosexual, and single, has significantly shifted the

character of South Lake Union from one of low income housing for people who historically couldn't afford Capitol Hill to an upscale, glossy urban galore. Concurrently, a rapidly shifting constituency means new respective preferences that will influence the character of the neighborhood. These new workers are coming in from all over the world, specifically countries in Asia. However, while Amazon specifically prompts and invites its employees to be globally minded, where does room for local engagement and concern fit in? What does their increasingly large presence do to the local housing and retail market?

Neoliberalism

The vertiginous shifts in Seattle post-Amazon are unparalled throughout the development of any other major city in the United States; however, these results were not entirely unpredictable due to the historical and philosophical nature of neoliberalism. The consequence of neoliberalism's philosophy of a hyper-privatized market is an unregulated housing market, which results in forced out migration for communities who are economically disenfranchised. Today, we live in cities that have been crafted by neoliberal policies that prioritize a profit margin and the individual's rights to private property over human rights. As capitalism is the political economy of this time period, a foundational understanding of neoliberalism is crucial to understanding the phenomena of Seattle migrations.

What are some of the historical practices that have resulted in this late-stage capitalist municipal planning? Neoliberalism is the underlying economic philosophy that drives this corporate sponsorship. Titled such due to the revitalization of the principles of 19th century liberalism that valued *laissez-faire* and free markets, neoliberalism is the chapter of late-capitalism that we are in and is made up of a complex series of institutions and policies regarding

deregulation of the market, tax reforms, privatization, and the shrinkage of social support systems. While capitalism is the exploitation of land, labor, and resources, neoliberalism takes these premises and exacerbates all of them through the process of policy changes that radically deregulate and deindustrialize the market. Neoliberalism undermines the social safety net by creating incentive structures for big businesses (e.g. oil, agriculture, etc.). Neoliberalism, thus, has altered the role of government from ensuring the welfare of society to maximizing the opportunities for capital growth, at the expense of marginalized bodies (Brenner and Theodore 2002). How are these underlying philosophies of neoliberalism connected to city zoning and how does this impact the lives of everyday citizens?

One of the main propagated tenets of capitalism is the spirit of competition, with the pro-capitalist argument being that competition breeds character and creativity within society (e.g. the competition to produce a successful business stimulates better business ideas that will lead to economic growth). However, neoliberalism's aim is to eliminate the notion of public goods, holding strongly to privatization, not as an end but as a process of shrinking the commons. Therefore, I argue that neoliberalism does not even allow for the idea of a common society in which everyone exists. When the private market system encouraged by capitalism is all about profit, there is no incentive to provide for the common good, in this case, creating dense public housing or social services. In this sense, neoliberalism is anti-community at its core. The shrinkage of public spaces (e.g. parks, housing, sidewalks, benches -- all things owned and controlled by the government and private enterprises) is specifically neoliberal in that it takes away spaces that have historically facilitated organizing that makes our society and communities happier and in-tune with one another's humanity.

Corporate-Sponsored Development

Corporate-sponsored development within Seattle is distinct from the average run-of-the-mill gentrification and especially significant in understanding Seattle. In the average US city, the top employer of the city has less than 5 percent of local office space. In Seattle, Amazon owns at least 8.1 million square feet, which is 19 percent of all prime real estate downtown. This is more than the next 43 largest employers in the city combined (see Figure 4). Amazon's urban tech campus leaves every other US campus in the dust, with the next largest in Columbus, Ohio at 3.6 million square feet. Within the past decade, over 350 acres of public areas in South Lake Union have undergone renovations in the form of transportation and infrastructure upgrades and expanding public transit, road networks, parks and utilities, at the expense of hundreds of millions of taxpayers' dollars. The rate at which developers were approved for construction and the exceptions they were granted is a testament to the City of Seattle's corporate-friendly policies.

Corporate growth within Seattle has led to extensive worker in-migration consisting of employees with high salaries and a market for high-rent, market-rate housing. Between the years of 2010 and 2017, apartment rents raised 63 percent higher, as Seattle has become the fastest-growing city in the country. Home costs are rising faster in Seattle than anywhere in the nation, and have doubled in the past five years, pushing the middle class to surrounding, less expensive cities within King County. Structurally, exclusionary zoning makes apartment buildings illegal in 80% of Seattle. At the same time, about two thirds of Seattle's residential properties are single-family homes, which are the largest, most expensive types of homes that can be built. However, during the construction of the Amazon campus, Amazon officials were able to "collaborate" with city planners to design each city block to hold one high-rise and mid-rise building, connected by outdoor public spaces. There are reports that "workers of Amazon, Microsoft, or Google do not

require housing deposits" on several up-and-coming apartment complexes, in the midst of one of the greatest housing crises the state has seen. If the US federal government grants corporations personhood, can we consider them bad citizens? What about their workers?

"Diversity and Inclusion"

Seattle is branded one of the "gayest" cities in America. The Capitol Hill neighborhood is recognized as a "gayborhood," or a neighborhood that can be identified by its current or historical presence of a large LGBTQ+ community, identifiable by the rainbow sidewalks along Broadway avenue and the plethora of "gay-friendly" businesses and gathering spaces. Historically, gayborhoods are not only places where some members of the LGBTQ+ community can take refuge, but also places where they set the trend and tone. However, over the past few decades, many historically gay-owned businesses have either been relocated or gone out of business, unable to keep up with the rapidly shifting landscape in Capitol Hill and beyond. Seattle is not unique in this sense; several cities across the US have become home to what we call gayborhoods in the past few decades, only to become hollow remnants of what used to be. The irony is in the way that Seattle thrives on its reputation as a liberal/progressive city amidst the many injustices woven into the foundations of the city, as well as into the ongoing injustices perpetuated by increasing corporate presence. In other words, the city of Seattle and other corporations engage in the performance of allyship through rhetoric of "diversity" and "inclusion" as an allure for migration or working at said company. The city and its corporations pride themselves on facially progressive politics, yet in actuality are the root of the many injustices throughout the city.

GLAmazon is the name of Amazon's LGBTQ+ affinity group for those interested in "LGBTQ+ topics" and their allies. It is the inspiration behind my title today because of its ironic,

almost contradictory The goal of GLAmazon is to "support all LGBTQ+ and allied Amazon employees" worldwide. At Pride events throughout the city of Seattle, GLAmazon employees table to market how great it is to work for a company like Amazon that embraces their respective identities. However, what does positive representation mean for the Indigenous, poor, unhoused, disabled, queer and trans people of color Seattle uses its liberal branding as a smokescreen for the ongoing gentrification, displacement, and housing crisis. Currently, Seattle celebrates having its first woman mayor in decades (Mayor Jenny Durkan), especially one who identifies a lesbian. Our new City of Seattle Police Department Chief, Carmen Best, is a Black woman. Many liberals across the city celebrated these decisions as indicators of progressive social justice. But does the presence of these municipal leaders automatically mean that they will be working to dismantle the very structures that oppress those who share their identities? Can these individuals undo a long history of urban planning invested in whiteness and favoring a few historically wealthy, influential families and, more recently, large corporations?

So in the city within which *all* identities are embraced, what might we expect to see? Perhaps an establishment that wants to signal its virtue will place a sign that says "we welcome ALL races, religions, countries of origin, sexual orientations, and genders. We stand with YOU. You are SAFE here" (see Figure 6). However, that very same establishment might don a "restrooms are for customer use only" sign parallel, automatically excluding people who cannot afford to be patrons in their establishment the basic courtesy for maintaining hygiene. Residentially, one may see a yard sign perched in front of a large wealthy home that says "in this house, we believe: Black Lives Matter, no human is illegal, Love is Love, women's rights are human rights, science is real, water is life, and 'injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere'" (Figure 5). However, that very same home may very well also have a high-tech

security system installed, with a reminder on that sign that says "Smile ☺ you're on camera." This results in an ironic cognitive dissonance that is the crux of my research: there is a disconnect between the expressed values and actions of Seattle liberals. Whether it's merely performative, or well-intentioned, we must still confront the realities, tensions, and ironies between gentrifiers and the communities they're gentrifying.

In the famous Amazon Spheres, there are all gender bathrooms on every other floor, universally designed walkways, multiple open meeting spaces, and an abundance of greenery that literally covers the walls. Amazon in this sense has created an ideal work environment, one that is stimulating and contains many spaces for public congregation to do work with one another—an ideal community building space. However, if you walk two blocks south from the spheres, you arrive at a McDonalds, inside and in front of which there are usually unhoused people asking for spare change. The juxtaposition of this extreme wealth within just a few city blocks has become the norm in Seattle, where splotches of land have been occupied and redeveloped by luxury real-estate developers. Amazon made a record high $40 million a day in profit during this first quarter of 2019, double the projections from investors. It could pay for the $400 million a year that McKinsey (management consulting company) says is needed to close Seattle's affordable housing gap in 10 days.

Where do we go from here (literally)?

Aaron Dixon, former captain of the Seattle Black Panther Party, organizes by a principle known in organizing circles as the 25/75 rule. The rule is that we must spent 25% of our time on critique, building up power analyses to be able to identify the root causes of problems in our society. However, the majority of our time, the 75%, must be spent creating the world that we want to live in. As I come to the conclusion of this thesis, I want to present methods and

solutions that have come up throughout my research in attempt to democratize urban planning

through the application and interpretation of principles within the radical urbanist philosophy.

These principles range between the incorporation of structural participatory planning models (in

other words, democratizing the process of space-planning), land use reform, and sustainable

development practices within larger urban planning processes. At the same time, change must

come not only from the structural but the interpersonal levels.

Dean Spade's term "trickle-up justice" comes in handy when conceptualizing a

framework through which we can begin to implement justice. Trickle-up justice is a flop of the

idea of "trickle-down" benefits (i.e. the Reagan neoconservative idea that by helping those

closest to the norm of power reach success, their success will trickle down and those benefits

will be enjoyed by everyone). Instead, by centering the needs of those who are most impacted by

all of these systems of oppression (e.g. black queer and trans women, poor queer and trans

people of color, Indigenous two-spirit people, disabled LGBTQ+ people, and so forth), we will

address a multitude of systems at once and be able to then deconstruct them. The urgent need for

an intersectional approach to liberation can be done by centering those most marginalized

beyond mere tokenization, giving them the platforms, making sure they are put into leadership or

authoritative roles.

Spade discusses that oftentimes, trans and gender non-conforming people are made to

follow the model of civil rights and desire for "equality" as sparked in the gay rights movement.

However, this agenda is rooted in a desire for legal protections under the law and a desire for

visibility and legal recognition. This strategy is ineffective as it still grants validity to the power

of the state, which is the root cause of violence against those who are most impacted (Spade

2015). As has been seen, the majority of Seattle's gay population has long been complicit and

silent on issues of racism, sexism, transphobia, ableism, and economic inequities, and therefore allows this administrative violence to run rampant while Seattle still benefits off of the cultural capital of supposed "LGBT acceptance." In order to address the many challenges facing our most vulnerable populations in the city, we must move beyond queer identity politics of representation and strive for a city that will support us all. This includes building analyses that are anti-racist, anti-patriarchal, anti-imperialist, and beyond.

Cities across America need to unite against big corporations

Seattle is the birthplace of Amazon. Concurrently, its city government has catered to corporations by refusing to tax them in ways that could benefit working people. For instance, when the Seattle city council made a backdoor deal to repeal the proposed Employee Head Tax in June 2018, it intentionally scrapped tens of millions of dollars that would have gone toward affordable housing. However, it doesn't have to be this way. Across the country, the people of New York City chose a different path. Despite a full-court press from the mayor, the governor, and business interest groups, a grassroots movement of ordinary people defeated the richest man in the world. Amazon's lauded HQ2, which would have allowed the company to usurp millions of dollars in public funds, was rejected by the people of Queens who correctly saw the deal as the blatant giveaway that it was.

On one hand, Seattle's actions were the latest act of political surrender to big business; on the other, activists across the country rightly took New York's resistance as proof that a better world without capitalist encroachment of public resources is possible. After being vanquished in New York, Amazon may continue its search for a new city to land its second headquarters. But at a time of widening wealth inequalities, cities must learn how to stand in solidarity with one

another. Our cities must refuse a race to the bottom to see who can offer up the most public resources to for-profit entities. If we stand our ground, we can usher in a new age of equity and prosperity for all. In the age of Amazon, cities need solidarity.

Just like workers have been pit against one another to ensure employers have their pick of desperate employees who are willing to work for less and less, cities believe they have no choice but to compete against one another for corporate suitors. To address this, we need to shift the public discourse to one of solidarity. Labor leaders have long understood what solidarity means. For example, if your co-workers organize for better pay, you do not try to take their place by posing as less of a "problem" employee to your boss. And if there is a strike, you do not cross the picket line. Cities have been slower to grasp these lessons.

A considerable part of this race to the bottom has involved sabotaging organized labor. Amazon has not been known for its friendliness to unions. In September 2018, the company's union-busting techniques were made known to the world when Gizmodo revealed 45-minute anti-union video that circulated among Amazon management. "We do not believe unions are in the best interest of our customers [and] our shareholders," the video brazenly declared. Unsurprisingly, Amazon's negotiations with New York City suddenly broke down the day after union officials pressed the company for stronger worker protections and a promise to allow workers to unionize.

Effective labor organizing is powerful because it leverages the labor that makes the literal institution function. In the spirit of labor organizing and direct action, a potential solution on the systematic level would be to hold a strike but instead of withholding labor, state officials commit to withholding public resources for the concession of large corporations. If state legislatures across the country came together to ban taxpayer funded giveaways to corporations, they would

be sending the message that people united in common struggle can and should have control over the distribution of public resources.

Political candidates and office holders must build the political will to make our federal government re-prioritize investments in affordable housing, transportation, child care, and social services. In the meantime, cities must not cross the picket line. If elected politicians stand firmly alongside the people, major corporations will have to change how they do business. They might have to discontinue the kind of union-busting activity that Amazon has been known for. Instead of relying on corporate philanthropic contributions, such as the $500 million loan from Microsoft in 2018 towards local housing solutions, perhaps state and city legislators should re-examine Washington state's regressive tax system, which disproportionately taxes the poor a larger amount of their income than the rich. For instance, in Seattle, workers who made less than $21,000 a year will pay up to 17% of that income to state and local taxes.

When cities stand up for themselves, they stand up for each other. People deserve to live in cities that foster public space and resources for the common good. To do so, however, organizers and politicians in cities across the world will have to stand in solidarity with each other and commit to not forfeiting public trust for the private gain of a few.

Sustainable Urbanism

A key theme that came up during my research for solutions to the crisis created by the neoliberal tech city of Seattle is affordability within density. These luxury real estate developments, while dense, are deeply unaffordable and therefore inaccessible to working-class people. Building our city's capacity for dense neighborhoods within existing and historically low-income neighborhoods is a practical and tangible way to produce space for those who been intentionally excluded from city limits unless as domestic workers, midnight cleaning crews,

back-of-house cooks, and others. Though there are many new establishments opening up within the Denny triangle that suit the chicer tastes of the constituency, those who work in these establishments as support staff do not get as much attention.

Seattle now also has the nation's third-highest concentration of mega-commuters – people traveling at least 90 minutes each way to work. Their numbers have grown 72 percent in five years. Within these processes of capitalist urban planning and development, there is a struggle to achieve spatial justice or social equity. In this context, spatial justice can be understood as the creation of equitable geographies that produce and influence positive social relations. Instead, these cities create a system of spatial injustices that further marginalize certain sectors of the population including immigrants, low-income individuals, and people of color. Furthermore, the lack of democracy within the rigid processes of modern urban planning have further alienated a plurality of the population from their ability to become fully and truly involved within the decision-making process.

In short, the urban planning models developed within the hegemonic capitalist context have carried no concern for any semblance of spatial justice and have consistently worked to deny certain marginalized sectors of the urban population of their right to the city. This includes a collective culture shift away from the embrace of private property which has been instilled in us. Jane Jacobs talks about this when engaging in visioning for what our cities could look like. A thriving city, she observed, would invest less in police, who she argues merely patrol isolated enclaves of private property. Instead, city governments should be investing in infrastructure and space that sustains residents (like sidewalks) and control the amount of commercial development that is allowed to take place of residential housing. As a result, residents would see themselves as

part of the interconnected fabric that makes us want to congregate in cities in the first place

(Jacobs 1961).

As previously covered, housing policies in Seattle make it incredibly difficult for people

from working-class backgrounds to afford a living space. A key tool to keep rents and home

prices under control in cities across Washington state is to lift restrictions that prevent all but the

largest, most expensive homes on our residential land, otherwise known as single-family zoning.

Giving owners more freedom to create accessory dwelling units (ADUs)—backyard cottages,

granny flats, basement apartments, mother-in-law apartments—in our cities' centrally-located,

convenient neighborhoods help more Washington families find modest, affordable homes near

work, transit, and schools. When we center those most marginalized and impacted by the city's

exclusionary policies, all people benefit. Below, I've narrowed down 4 central concerns to

creating and sustaining a thriving neighborhood: community affordability, sustainability, shared

opportunity, and economic security.

- Affordability:
  - High rent and home prices are driving people out of Washington communities. The freedom to add modest, affordable options helps preserve the kinds of mixed-income communities we value, where all kinds of families, of all incomes, can afford to live.
- Sustainability:
  - Adding a variety of home options in job centers, near transit and schools, benefits everyone in our communities by preventing sprawl, helping cut traffic and commute times, and taming infrastructure needs. Modest homes, convenient to transit, jobs, schools, and amenities are a tool in the fight against climate change. Garden suites, mother-in-law apartments, and backyard cottages—these unassuming homes are compact, which makes them remarkably energy efficient, cutting lifetime CO_2 emissions by as much as 40 percent as compared with medium sized single-family homes.
- Shared opportunities:
  - Where we live shapes our lives and our long-term success—from the length and cost of our commute, where we shop for groceries, and our children's schools. To expand opportunity for all, Washington cities need solutions that provide a variety

> of home choices in neighborhoods close to jobs, schools, transit, parks, and businesses. Backyard cottages and mother-in-law apartments can add lower-cost housing options to all neighborhoods, creating more equitable access to things like schools with broad resources.

- Boost economic security for families:
  - Workforce housing near places people work strengthens middle-class and low-income families and helps communities thrive.

Fighting for our Right to the City

In 1968, the same year that Dr. Martin Luther King's assassination sparked widespread civil unrest in Seattle, French philosopher Henri Lefebvre coined the phrase "right to the city." Lefebvre wrote that "the right to the city cannot be conceived of as a return to 'traditional' cities. It can only be formulated as a renewed commitment to urban life. Only the working class can be the carrier of this commitment." The "Right to the City" idea and slogan has been reclaimed by urbanist social movements and organizers alike as a reinvigorated call to action to reclaim the city as a democratized, co-created space—a place for life detached from the growing effects that commodification and capitalism has had over social interaction and the rise of spatial inequalities in worldwide cities throughout the last two centuries (Harvey 2008: 39). The phrase has also started making its way into the public commons, serving as a rallying cry for climate justice and economic equity in cities all over the world. Today, I want to re-embrace the idea of fighting for *our* right to the city because, as demonstrated, the powers that privatize and segregate our cities will not relinquish their position easily. Society has become anti-collectivist; through the factors of neoliberalism, segregation, and other public policies surrounding city planning, we have been robbed of living collectively. As Frederick Douglass once said, power concedes nothing without a demand. But when we fight and organize, we can win.

Key takeaways from my studies + reflections

German philosopher and sociologist Georg Simmel writes critically on mental life and the effect of living in cities, specifically the type of culture created by living in cities. In his essay "Metropolis and Mental Life," he explores the intersection of the development of psychology and urbanism, arguing that individuals who live in a city environment develop a "protective organ," which offers a buffer between the individual and the constantly changing environment of the city. This buffer is manifest in the rise of logic and intellect; in other words, the rise of a "blase attitude" or pretentiousness that comes off as apathetic towards emotional concerns. Compared to smaller rural environments, where everyone is familiar with everyone's business, individuals who live in the city develop very different personal and social dynamics (Simmel 1961). Simmel discusses at-length the contrast between small-town interactions and big city interactions. Small towns, he says, often host a familiarity and vibrancy with which people greet one another, facilitated by years of recognition and knowledge of similar lands. In the city, however, encounters are fleeting and do not warrant a significant amount of effort or emotion. This metropolitan lifestyle is increasingly concerned with accomplishments, rationality, and knowledge. This isolationist mindset and strive for monetary gain within cities reduces the desire to join extracurricular activities that nourish souls or engage the community at large.

My interest in this researching radical urbanism was driven by my personal stake in much of these changes that have been documented throughout the paper, as well as a desire to go deeper into the applications of urban sociology. As a student at Seattle University, a private university nestled in between the intersection of many of these neighborhoods (Capitol Hill, Central District, International District, Central Business District), I have seen firsthand the rapid changes along 12th and Jefferson, Broadway, and downtown Seattle in the miniscule 4 years I

have lived here. What can be gained from this research is a look into patterns and root causes of this hyper shrinkage of public spaces and resources in the name of urban revitalization and ethnic/cultural diversity at the expense of those who embody the lived culture and history of this neighborhood. While change is in fact inevitable, much of the study of sociology illuminates how structures that enable capitalism and neoliberalism are implemented by humans. This research has prompted me to push against my previous hegemonic ideal that all of us who are present in mutual spaces are present in the same way. Perhaps instead of calls for people on multiple ends of the political spectrum to find "common ground," we should be creating an actual common ground that serves us all.

On an individual level, we are socialized into the process of learning and internalizing neoliberal culture, which in and of itself conditions us to conform to structures of oppression. Seattle's neoliberal housing policies and municipal structures teach us that individualism is a norm, that it is a privilege to own private properties and exist within these siloed enclaves, and that certain bodies don't belong in the city's spaces. In Seattle, there has been local pushback against the presence of "tech bros," whose arrival coincides with the arrival of newer luxury apartment complexes that charge an obscene amount for a few hundred square feet of space. However, what hasn't been talked about enough is how the "tech bro" living situation (a few hundred square feet in a private apartment in places around South Lake Union and Capitol Hill-- where many of the campuses for these new corporations house its workers) is a hyper visible way in which individualism has permeated our culture.

Decades ago, before satellites and social media were able to convey messages to a nationwide audience in the blink of a second, movement builders were able to connect across state lines, across borders, and across their own backyards. Information was spread through

reliable word of mouth and letters, and though it was a slower process, people always showed up. Today, movement builders in Seattle are barely able to keep up with what movements are happening in Tacoma or SeaTac. What is happening that makes us so isolated from our fellow peers? I hope that throughout this paper, I have provided a snippet of the ways in which our literal structures, as well as our social structures, have manufactured a culture of isolation and hyper-desire for personal space.

These city structures make up the social construction of our realities, which is illuminated through a sociological imagination as well as a deeper understanding of municipal and social structures. However, these structures were created by people, which means it can be dismantled by people as well. Sociology at its core, however, is an action-- a way to view and exist in the world. While it is overwhelming to think about all of the logistics behind the social construction of reality, it is through organizing our people that we will be able to deconstruct and dismantle the oppressive realities all communities face. As existing research indicates, U.S. social structures are set up to diffuse and demobilize community organizing and people-led movements; however, by breaking down these social structures with a tangible understanding of how the literal structures have been built, we move closer to collective liberation that guarantees access to rights and resources for all. In the words of the late Ursula LeGuin, "we live in capitalism. Its power seems inescapable. But, so did the divine right of kings. Any human power can be resisted and changed by human beings."

So what does it mean to imagine a city in which we do not have to claim or declare safe spaces, or sanctuary spaces – a city in which the space is for all? What does it look like for a city to be truly inclusive, living up to the progressive standards it superficially champions? Ultimately the goal is to create a city that is livable and accommodates everybody and every

body; with this reclamation of public space, people are able to participate in the processes that shape and build the city. At the same time, however, cities are dense, messy, unpredictable, and cosmopolitan. What does radical urbanism look like in praxis in communities that need it the most?

Culturally, we have not made enough space for our communities to envision what our world could look like by making space for a radically new type of social relationship. What would a thriving queer urban community look like? Where do people *meet* each other nowadays? Gay communities are often built through institutions of bars where alcohol and drugs are involved; I didn't get to turn 21 until very recently, during the last half of my senior year in college. Until then, anytime I saw an event with the LGBTQ+ acronym on it on Facebook I was hyper-aware of whether it was 21+ or not. I grew exasperated at the idea that my coming into a queer/trans community necessarily meant I had to participate in social institutions I didn't always feel comfortable participating in. This extends into my desire to create social relations with people outside of a setting where alcohol was necessarily a social lubricant. Don't get me wrong-- I, like many queers, love and embrace dancing with strangers at the Wild Rose. However, this can't be the extent of where my communities congregate to organize.

What would a thriving, civically engaged community look like? To create this, we not only need new municipal structures, we also need to become new *people*. One of the most beneficial things I've learned during my time in sociology is how our bodies literally develop based on how we are socialized. Today, we have been socialized to need our own personal space, more so than past generations. We can't just be retreating to our private enclaves or 30 square foot bedrooms every night watching television alone, driving our car into the parking lot and taking that elevator straight up to our apartment unit, voting every four years and considering

that the extent of our political engagement. As we have seen, the idea of "community" is

dangerous to cities built on a neoliberal platform (e.g. "tech cities," "smart cities," etc.). Shifting

this is going to take a dramatic shift in the way people build relationships with each other. This

will take leaning into community, learning with and alongside your communities, and in doing
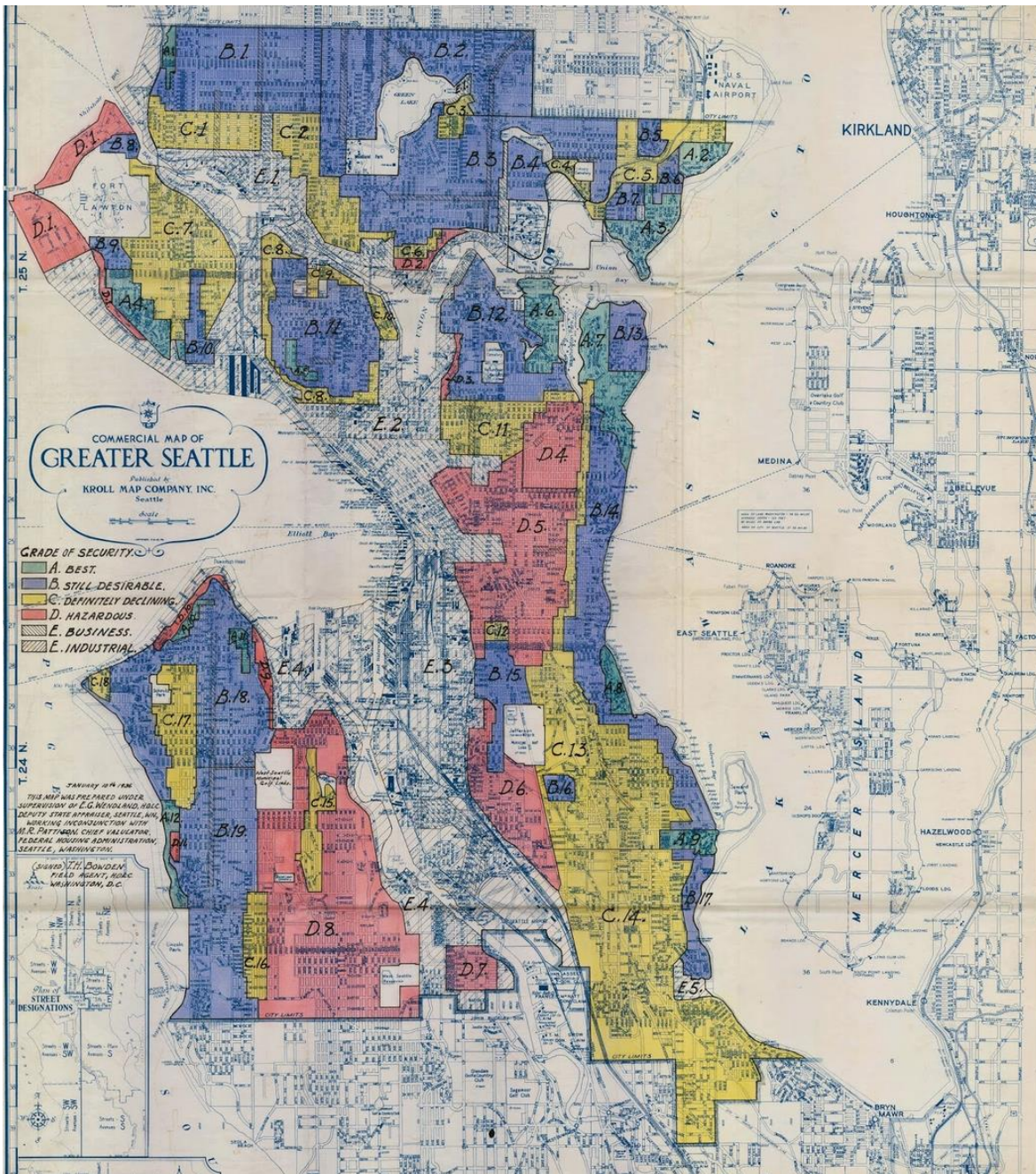
so, the future may be compelling.

Appendix

Figure 1: Commercial map of the Greater Seattle area by the Kroll map company detailing the specific rankings each neighborhood was categorized by during segregation in Seattle. Neighborhoods were ranked based on their "grade of security" for loans. Among the places deemed "hazardous" are the Central District, the International District, Delridge (now a food desert), White Center (now considered "unincorporated King County") and more.
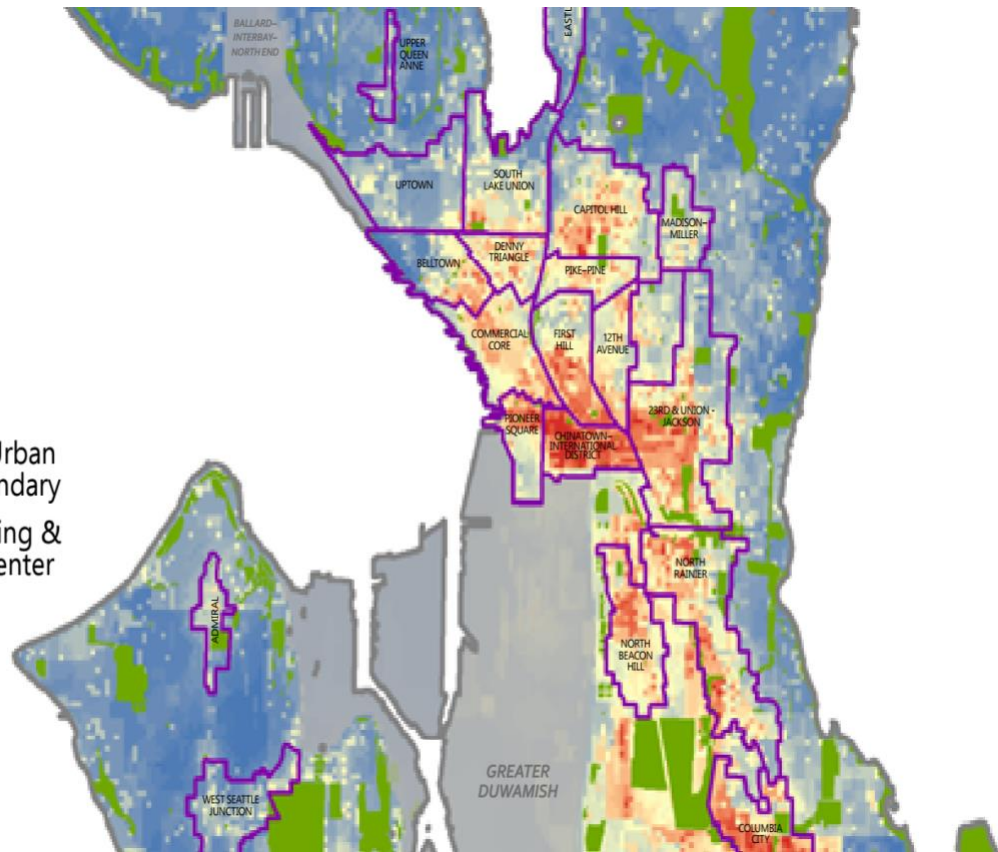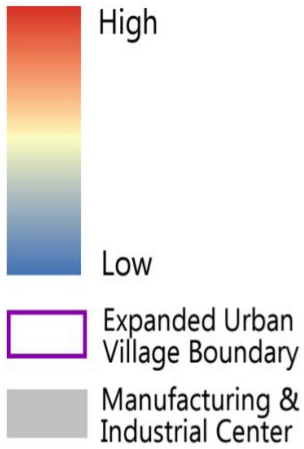
Figure 2: Graphic put out by the City of Seattle Mayor's office detailing certain neighborhoods' risks of being displaced, specifically how likely people in the neighborhood are to be evicted or priced out.
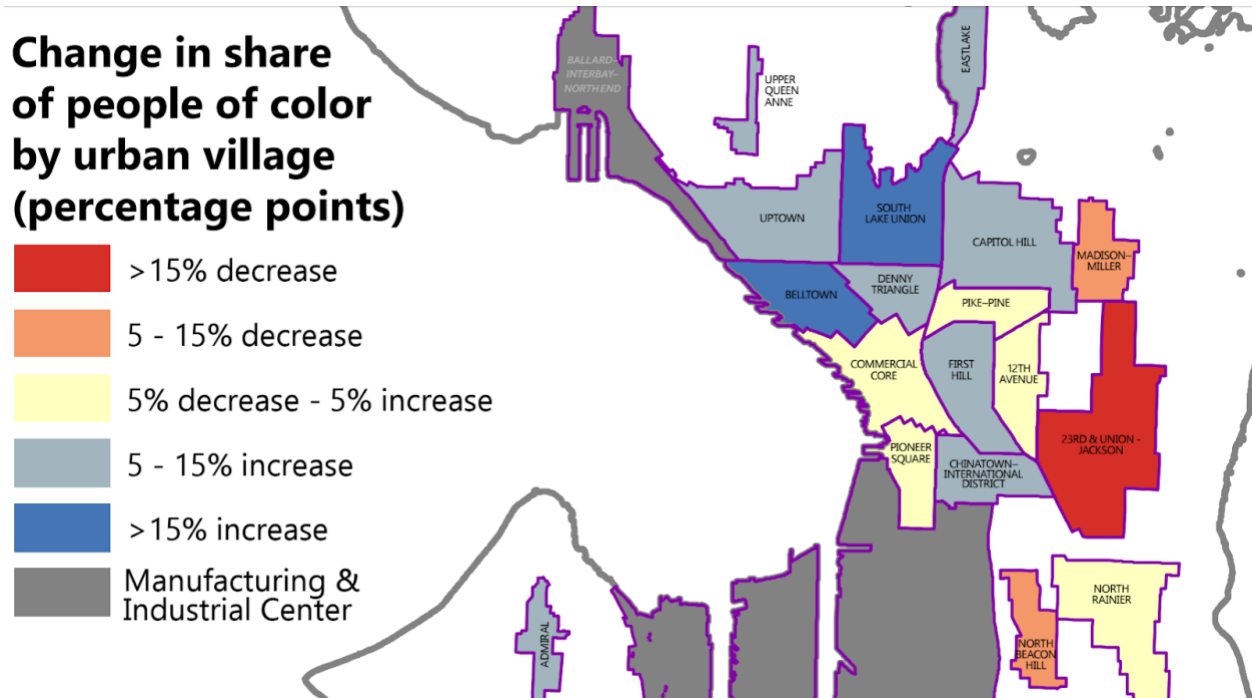
Figure 3: Graphic put together by the City of Seattle's Office of Planning and Development in their Seattle 2035 report (*Growth and Equity* 2016). This graphic indicates the change in ownership/share of property of people of color in the Central Seattle area by percentage between the years of 1990-2010. The neighborhood with the largest decrease in share is the Central District, specifically marked at the intersection of 23rd and Union.

Figure 4: Graphic demonstrating that it 43 companies to match Amazon's 8.1+ million square feet of office space in Seattle. Source: Seattle Times 2017.

Figure 5: Black yard sign with different colored text stating: in this house, we believe: Black Lives Matter, no human is illegal, Love is Love, women's rights are human rights, science is real, water is life, and 'injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.'" Bottom left side of the sign has a sticker that reads "Smile ☺ you're on camera," denoting the presence of a security system.

Figure 6: Two window panels of an establishment. Left poster reads: "We welcome all races, all religions, all countries of origin, all sexual orientations, all genders. We stand with you. You are safe here." Right panel states "restrooms are for customer use only."

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