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Contesting Green Lifestyles in the Emerald City: The Urban Sustainability Fix to Capitalism and the Production of Exclusion in South Lake Union, Seattle

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Contesting Green Lifestyles in the Emerald City:
The Urban Sustainability Fix to Capitalism and the Production of
Exclusion in South Lake Union, Seattle

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Senior Thesis

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INTRODUCTION
'Green' Capital in SLU: Introducing the Urban Sustainability Fix to Capitalism

After 22 years of riding the metro bus, taking Seattle's streetcar from downtown to the newly redeveloped South Lake Union (SLU) neighborhood felt like a dream. The ride was nearly silent as we whooshed through the streets, the handgrips gleaming, unscratched, seemingly untouched since the SLU lined opened in December 2007; at 1 pm on a weekday, there were only two other people in my car. It was an uncharacteristically sunny day for January in the Pacific Northwest, and as we glided into SLU, the sun glinted off the glass of the highrise apartments erupting from the sidewalks. When I exited the streetcar 10 minutes after boarding, I was amazed by both the number of people on the streets and how clean everything looked, especially in comparison to downtown. Mostly young, White, and clothed in business casual, the lunch crowd milled around the street, grabbing tacos, Thai, and even sushi from food trucks that lined the streets. Others sat down to eat at one of the seemingly endless cafés, bars, or restaurants that comprise the first floor of most buildings. "The rhythm of the city has changed… South Lake Union is now a second downtown," one of the founders of the famous Center For Wooden Boats, and SLU resident since the 1960s told me (Wagner 2014, personal communication).

What existed here before the turn of the millennium "consisted of warehouses, light industry, and auto shops, and was in many less valuable for the city as a whole," writes urban planning student Michael Ward in his master's thesis about the neighborhood (10). The "relatively low income" homes that comprised the residential Cascade sub-neighborhood of SLU were also not maximizing the potential real estate potentials of the area, but within the last 15 years all this has changed (Purcell 112). South Lake Union has transformed. No longer a relatively sparsely populated neighborhood at the geographic center yet economic margin of the city, SLU is currently one of the hottest real estate markets in Seattle.

Moreover, the redevelopment of SLU has been carried out "according to a distinct New Urbanist ideal: mixed-use, green/sustainable building technologies, and dense, walkable urban form." Geographer Mark Purcell writes that those behind the redevelopment, "see the project as nothing short of a grand enterprise to re-imagine the city," (115). This re-imagining of the city, however, has entailed a sharp increase in unaffordability.

Seattle, nicknamed the Emerald City, has always had a green aura about it, even if only due to the color of its well-watered vegetation, but as of late, the perception of Seattle as an environmentally-conscious place to live has been incorporated into the city's current economic boom. In this thesis, I would like to situate urban sustainability discourse within the context the increasing unaffordability and general exclusivity of gentrified cities like Seattle, focusing on the case study of the "green" redevelopment of the South Lake Union neighborhood. A recent article in the monthly lifestyle publication, *Seattle Magazine*, writes:

> Ambition and energy permeate South Lake Union. It feels hopeful, forward thinking, exciting—a place where creative and brilliant people are working, in many cases, to better the world. But amid the bevy of new apartments, bakeries, restaurants, shops, coffeehouses, event spaces and more is still plenty of old Seattle flavor—rustic warehouses and Alaska-bound fishing boats. And isn't that what the city is about? A place where skyscrapers meet the natural world, where one can (and many do) kayak and bicycle to work? (Hansen 2013)

South Lake Union is a neighborhood, but it is not just a neighborhood. It is a neighborhood that embodies the city government's aspirations for Seattle's economic future, as well as its favoring of the needs of capital over those of existing residents. SLU was designed to be "green", a model of sustainable New Urbanism featuring high density housing and mixed use zoning (Ward 9). Marketing tools and media such as the article quoted above present SLU as an embodiment of the very essence of what it means to live in Seattle, of the future of Seattle, and its green image is a central part of that.

Much of what makes SLU interesting is that within its framework of straightforward capitalist real estate development, the project of creating SLU has very explicit aspirations, many of them concerned with issues of trying to "better the world." Not only does it house the headquarters of the world's largest philanthropic organization, the Gates Foundation, multiple global health NGOs, and a carefully planned "hub" of biotechnology companies, but it is also meant to facilitate a green low carbon lifestyle for its residents. Much of this has been publically lauded and stands at the core of why SLU is considered to be the future of a Seattle that represents both progressive politics and "smart" economics. In the following chapters I explore what it means to take seriously the engagement of environmental discourse by contemporary economic forces. I begin by examining what role SLU plays in Seattle's economy, and how elements of environmental discourse are incorporated into that role. How is sustainability defined in SLU: which discourses are implemented there and which are left out? Finally, I wonder how this market-oriented sustainability affects access to space and who is considered "sustainable"? What does this mean for questions of urban equity in Seattle?

Relevant Literature and Theoretical Framework

In many ways, the case of an "undervalued" urban industrial area in a desirable city being redeveloped in a way that benefits the wealthy elite and marginalizes the lower socio-economic classes is a common story. Yet what I find interesting about the case of SLU is the way environmentalism is incorporated into the discourse of development and helps drive it. While reflecting a collective concern and desire for more ecologically balanced development, the green New Urbanism of SLU also serves to justify the exclusion and

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marginalization of the unprivileged sectors of society and remake the city to best serve the needs of highly mobile capital.

This last point is key. Developers do not only co-opt sustainability discourse for their own purposes, but actually *need* sustainability discourse in order to continue a new phase of infrastructure development spurred by the desire for reduced carbon emissions. This phenomenon is the focus of my thesis. Drawing primarily from David Harvey's insights regarding the role of spatial fixes in temporarily resolving crises of capitalism, I will apply While et al.'s conceptual expansion of those ideas to interpret the redevelopment of SLU as an example of the "urban sustainability fix to capitalism." Harvey views capitalism as a machine of perpetual growth, and growth as inherently based on speculation. As such, capitalist economic structures are not just prone to crisis, but inevitably fall into crisis (Harvey 71). Crisis occurs when growth stagnates, stymieing capital accumulation. When this happens, capitalists must find ways to circumvent that barrier in order to reinitiate the cycle of growth. One such circumvention is through the transformation of physical space, embedding excess capital in a new landscape that will better enable the smooth flow of capital and the accumulation of profit. In particular, Harvey's work highlights the importance of the alignment of class and state interests in this transformation of physical space. In *The Enigma of Capital* he writes, "The two primary systemic agents in our time are the state and capital. The geographic landscape of capital accumulation is perpetually evolving, largely under the impulsion of the speculative needs of further accumulation… and only secondarily in relation to the needs of people," (ibid 185). If the geography of a certain place does not adequately facilitate the circulation of capital, state-facilitated creative destruction of that landscape can provide a spatial fix to this barrier to capital accumulation (ibid 191). This process allows roaming surplus capital to reinvest itself in the embedded

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landscape in order to speculate greater future surpluses and satisfy capitalism's need for growth. As Harvey points out, this is a process that privileges the needs of capital over those of people.

British geographers and planners While et al. have sought to understand the recent incorporation of environmental discourse in urban redevelopment by expanding upon this notion of a spatial fix. In their article about the rise of the "Entrepreneurial city" in Manchester and Leeds, they write:

> …sustainable development is itself interpreted as part of the search for a spatio-institutional fix to safeguard growth trajectories in the wake of industrial capitalism's long downturn, the global `ecological crisis' and the rise of popular environmentalism. The notion of a sustainability fix does not deny progress on ecological issues, but draws attention to the selective incorporation of ecological goals in the greening of [the] urban… (While et al. 551)

Popular awareness of the dangers of climate change and environmental degradation, as well as the desire to change them, is providing the impetus for a new form of creative destruction based on reversing carbon-dependant development. After WWII, new technologies, primarily the automobile, allowed 20th century urbanism to take on entirely new forms than ever before possible, opening up spaces far beyond the traditional city limits for development and instigating massive infrastructural changes. By the turn of the 21st century, however, long after the entrenchment of suburbanization in the United States, growing concerns about not only the social but ecological effects of automobile reliance and its associated sprawl fueled the rise of New Urbanism. Much of what New Urbanism seeks to do is yet again remake the infrastructure of the city, ironically in manner very similar to that in place before WWII.

This reimagining includes investing in public transportation, dense housing infrastructure, renovating old housing stock, and the implementation of countless new

infrastructure technologies like green roofs and solar panels. However, these environmental foci of New Urbanism are also useful when viewed through the lens of the need for capital to reinvest spatially. Economically, the turn towards environmentalism and new, ostensibly more ecologically sound, infrastructure comes at a time when the decline of suburbia has created the need for capital to find new venues. Even before the US real estate market collapsed in the 2008 financial crisis, the demand for suburban car-intensive development was slowing down, and since the crash the most valuable real estate in the United States can be found in dense urban centers. This reflects a demographic trend in which the young, educated, and wealthy (and often White) are returning to city centers after decades of flight to the suburbs (Hanscom 2011). In this context, popular environmental concern about carbon emissions paired with a renewed elite interest in urban living opens up the potential for a new spatial fix for the investment of capital.

This fix transforms the space for the benefit of the elite who control and possess capital. In the context of a capitalist real estate market, the urban sustainability fix necessitates the production of exclusionary space in order to create the highest value investment opportunities for capital. In redeveloping SLU as a profitable wealthy enclave, the sustainability fix produces a classed distinction based on who can appreciate and afford the amenities of New Urbanism. I will examine this classed exclusion in the context of another geographer who has interrogated Seattle's environmental policies, Sarah Dooling.

In 2009, Dooling coined the term "ecological gentrification" in her article about the use of environmental planning agendas to justify the displacement of homeless people from public green spaces in Seattle (621). I would like to extend the meaning of this term to encompass "green" developments such as SLU, which while perhaps better for the environment than conventional development, are not socially just in their exclusion of low-

income populations. By framing a "sustainable" lifestyle as something only available to the wealthy, this gentrification not only ends up marking low-income individuals as unsustainable, but actually produces them as such through its role in pushing them to the margins of the city where walking and public transportation are less accessible.

Gentrification, whether ecological or not, is often an exclusionary process. However, by couching SLU within the progressive and urgent discourse of sustainability, this exclusion can seem justified, rendering those displaced or shut out as necessary collateral damage in the quest for a better ecological future. In writing this thesis, I intend to question these assumptions by understanding capital's adoption of sustainability discourse as a means to circumvent its contradictions. I believe this intervention can help us better conceptualize how and why the redevelopment has occurred the way it has, and what can be done differently. This is primarily a story about stories, about how discourses distort, alter, and ultimately produce a reality that serves the interest of capital, and potentially how those discourses could be changed to promote equity and inclusion.

Due to this focus on discourse and the way sustainability is promoted and conceptualized, my methodology will supplement academic sources with analysis of various media including newspaper articles, developer websites, and interviews with neighborhood inhabitants and developers. By doing so, I begin to unpack how environmental discourses and their internal power dynamics, and actors interact, compliment, contradict, and ultimately produce SLU and its residents. This production has implications not just for the neighborhood itself, but for Seattle and the contemporary American city. As sustainability discourse continues to rise in prominence, I believe making tangible the role of capital logic in shaping this discourse and its subsequent human effects is the first step to effectively challenging classed sustainability discourse rather than simply lamenting its results.

Chapter Narrative

The first chapter will focus on the recent historical development of SLU and its grounding in the economic realities of contemporary Seattle. In order to do this, I will in large part rely on the work of Don Purcell and Matt Sparke, geographers at the University of Washington, as well as that of one of Purcell's graduate students in urban planning, Michael Ward. They have all produced excellent accounts situating SLU's political economy within Seattle's recent history, but none have focused primarily on SLU's environmental branding or its relationship to the crises of capitalism. Ward briefly critiques, but does not fully address the environmental goals of SLU's New Urbanism. They describe Seattle's efforts to attract mobile capital to the city, but I wish to contextualize the embrace of sustainability discourse in SLU within these efforts and capitalism's tendency towards crisis. The city needs capital and capital needs somewhere profitable to invest, and these to interests become articulated through the collective desire to remake urban infrastructure as less carbon-dependant.

In the second chapter, I will further unpack how Vulcan Real Estate actually articulates that sustainability discourse. My research with Vulcan Real Estate have indicated that there exists a genuine desire to approach development differently, but my goal in this thesis is to reveal the ways in which that approach is circumscribed and necessitated by the logic of capital growth. People move to South Lake Union not just because they have well paid jobs, but because they are attracted to the image of SLU as a more ecologically oriented community, and I explore how that desire is articulated in Vulcan's sustainability discourse through the promotion of a "sustainable" consumer lifestyle. How does Vulcan Real Estate define and advertise this lifestyle and to what means. Ultimately, I question how this discourse limits our collective imagination of what "sustainability" means?

In chapter three I will explore how market driven "sustainable" development actually affects and becomes embodied by the residents of South Lake Union. By focusing on notions of housing prices and access to space, I will investigate the ways in which sustainability becomes classed and ecological gentrification occurs. The human significance of the urban sustainability fix to capitalism occurs on the scale of the body and its exclusion or inclusion, its mobility or immobility, and ultimately how "sustainable" or "unsustainable" that body is considered. Having attempted to define SLU's sustainability discourse in the last chapter, I will investigate how the internal logic of that discourse necessitates the transformation of the space into one of exclusivity. How does exclusivity become embodied? Does the reclamation of public space and walking for wealthier people inevitably result in the cleansing of heterogeneous populations from the public and private spaces of SLU?

In my conclusion, I will attempt to use the previous chapters to consider how we could possibly re-imagine SLU's environmental discourse to be more inclusive. I give a brief synopsis of Vulcan's newest development, Yesler Terrace, a mixed-income neighborhood, and look at how SLU is being used as both a model and a warning for how to approach New Urbanism in Seattle. While acknowledging that the urban sustainability fix is useful for temporarily allowing capitalism to evade crisis and remake cities as less carbon-intensive in the process, I wonder how we can adjust our conceptions of sustainability to not be classed, to not include the sustaining of iniquitous hierarchies? Given that SLU's sustainability efforts primarily capitalize on concerns about carbon emissions and global climate change, I argue that climate change represents a collective challenge. As such, it necessitates inclusive action to ensure our collective human security. Using Judith Butler's concept of precarity, I argue that in order to effectively address climate change, instead of segregating bodies and abiding by pre-existing socio-economic hierarchies, we must reconceptualize ourselves as

interconnected and thus open space for collective action and more inclusive conceptions of

sustainability.

Figure 0.1. Map of Seattle's Downtown as viewed aerially from the north (Vulcan "South Lake Union" 2010). The roads marked in red indicate the neighborhood's boundaries, an area of approximately one square mile

CHAPTER ONE
Growing the Emerald City: Situating South Lake Union within Seattle's Economy

*"I call[ed] it the Emerald City, and to make the name fit better I put green spectacles on all the people, so that everything they saw was green." -*The Wizard of Oz

In his writings on Seattle, geographer Matt Sparke invokes Frank L. Baum's classic children's story as a parable, comparing the Wizard's literal greenwashing of his Emerald City with Seattle's branding of an eco-friendly image (56). When Dorothy arrives in the city of Oz she discovers that the Wizard trades in spectacle and illusion, and Sparke claims Seattle is engaging in a similar sort of spectacle. This greenwashing comprises part of the city's attempts to stay competitive in the era of mobile capital and economic globalization, and is a key component of the efforts to brand Seattle as possessing "world class livability" (ibid 54).

Seattle, a port city that originally grew from its proximity to lumber and Alaska during the gold rush, is currently attempting to position itself within the new economy. Since the 1970s, concurrent with the broader shifts from a Fordist model of capitalism to the flexibility of the "new economy," Seattle's economy has become increasingly tech-focused. Technology-based industry has come to dominate the region's economy to such an extent that it now comprises 40% of all employment in Washington state (Beyers 23). This is part of a broader economic shift towards information and technology, industries which have become increasingly important to the American economy as the physical production of goods has shifted to become one of the least-profitable components of the global supply chain (see: Klein 2000). In the Puget Sound region, this shift has mostly occurred successfully, and though the Seattle Metropolitan Statistical Area only encompasses around 3.2 million inhabitants, "for a city of its size, it has an extremely productive economy and is a prominent node in many different global economic networks," (Purcell 110). Microsoft has

led this tech-boom in the region, and the money from the company's success has resulted in a significant "spinout" effect that has shaped the present structure of the local economy (Beyers 23). The redevelopment of SLU can be understood both in the continued importance of Microsoft fortunes in the Seattle region and the reorientation towards the information economy.

The origins of this development date back to the early 1990s, when Paul Allen, the billionaire co-founder of Microsoft, agreed to back a project known as the Seattle Commons, which sought to create a 61 acre lakefront park surrounded by an urban village around the southern edge of Lake Union. Allen provided $20 million of capital to purchase properties along this strip of land before the project was approved in order to circumvent the skyrocketing property values that would inevitably follow. If the project went through, he would sell these properties to the city without a profit, but if voters rejected the proposal, Allen would be left with a substantial chunk of undervalued real estate, making him the largest private property owner in SLU. Despite backing from many prominent political and business figures in the city, the Seattle Commons project was defeated on the ballet in 1995 with 47% of the vote (Iglitzin 1995). However, while the project itself was dead, millions of dollars worth of real estate located just north of the downtown business core was still in Paul Allen's hands, under the auspices of the newly created real estate division of Allen's Vulcan Inc., a company that invests in a wide range of ventures ("About Us" 2014).

Figure 1.1. Proposed plan for the "Seattle Commons" park and development (Wikipedia Commons 2014).

In the wake of the failure of the Commons project, Vulcan Real Estate continued to acquire more property in South Lake Union, and by the end of 2010, Vulcan owned 1/3 of the total land acreage in SLU. By their own measures, this makes SLU one of the "largest urban revitalization projects in the country." (Vulcan "South Lake Union" 2010). By and large, after construction the company continues to manage the properties it develops, meaning Vulcan Real Estate will remain a major presence in the neighborhood for the foreseeable future. The company and SLU are intimately linked to such an extent that the first hit on a Google search of "South Lake Union" takes you to a website entitled "Discover South Lake Union," run by Vulcan Real Estate, discursively erasing the distinction between

Vulcan and the neighborhood. At the time of writing, SLU represents 80% of the company's property holdings, though in recent years Vulcan Real Estate both won a bid to redevelop the Yesler Terrace neighborhood of Seattle and purchased its first property outside of Seattle, an office building in Arizona ("About Us" 2014; Monahan 2013; Sunnucks 2010). However, due to this link between neighborhood and developer, in the following chapters I will focus on Vulcan's specific interpretation of sustainability and development in SLU.

Figure 1.2. Map of SLU. Dark gray represents Vulcan Real Estate's property holdings in neighborhood as of 2010 (Vulcan, "South Lake Union"). Within SLU, Vulcan Real Estate owns proportionally the least property in the Cascade sub-neighborhood, which is bounded by N Fairview Ave and E Eastlake Ave.

After the voters rejected the Seattle Commons, an alternate plan for South Lake Union took shape, one did not require public approval. The mixed-use urban village envisioned for the project was still to be built, but without the park that comprised the "commons" of the original proposal.

In the following decade, Vulcan would mostly tear down the industrial infrastructure that previously stood in the area and replace it with buildings that follow the New Urbanist values of mixed residential and commercial spaces, all built at a high density to enable people walkable access to amenities (Ward 4). In Seattle, a fairly gentrified city, there is very little undervalued space left, and so high density planning has the added incentive of maximizing profit for builders. While the majority of the neighborhood was industrial, the eastern edge of SLU is comprised of the residential Cascade neighborhood, which has discursively been lumped in with South Lake Union as redevelopment and gentrification have progressed and spilled into Cascade (Young 2008).

It is true that the population of SLU before its redevelopment was relatively low compared the rest of Seattle, and mostly limited to the Cascade area. However, this argument is often used to invisibilize those who did and do live there and downplay their right to influence the decisions affecting their neighborhood. While Vulcan claims to work with stakeholders, it is evident that the stakeholders they are interested in are selective, the development process largely excluding the Cascade Neighborhood Council in favor of SLUFAN, a business-dominated group that does not include any Cascade residents (Purcell 120-1). In the redevelopment process, Vulcan Real Estate and the City of Seattle have discursively constructed SLU as an empty space waiting to be filled in.

For example, in 2000, Vulcan Real Estate purchased the Lillian Apartments, an affordable housing apartment complex in Cascade, and replaced it with high-end apartments amidst protest. Built in 1908, the Lillian was torn down 95 years later by Vulcan after the city deemed the repair costs to be overly burdensome. However, in a hearing by the Department of Construction and Land Use, evidence was found that Vulcan intentionally damaged the building in order to inflate repair costs and secure its demolition (Cat Le 2002). While technically not illegal, this act displays both Vulcan's lack of concern for the low-income residents of Cascade and the paradigm of progress that has gripped the new SLU. Sherman Alexie, perhaps the most famous living Native American author and workday resident of SLU, writes:

> South Lake Union is not interested in nostalgia, at least not in terms of architecture. Dozens of old buildings have been demolished and more are currently being demolished…Yesterday, I spent 20 minutes watching a crew tear down a brick wall, and I thought of the workers, long since dead, who first built that wall. As much as I love the new, I remain haunted by the old. Just like you. Just like this neighborhood. ("South Lake Union Is Not Interested in Nostalgia" 2012)

The redevelopment of South Lake Union has happened so quickly and with such intensity that it has come to represent the zeitgeist surrounding Seattle's shifting realities. Part of this is by design, the intention of SLU's New Urbanist design. Inherent in the name, New Urbanism attempts to create a new type of city, and both Vulcan Real Estate and the City of Seattle envision that new city to be the home to the industries of Seattle's future. While initially the proposal faced major opposition from neighborhood residents and some government officials, the combination of environmental rhetoric and the lure of jobs resulted in the City of Seattle's strong support of Vulcan's plan. A Seattle Times article from 2008 notes:

> From the start, Vulcan held a strong a political hand. Environmentalists lauded the company's vision of dense development close to downtown, while

labor leaders liked the boom in construction jobs. [Former Mayor] Nickels, looking at a slumping regional economy in 2002, quickly threw his support behind Vulcan. He blasted those who didn't jump aboard as anti-jobs, and the council soon agreed. (Young 2008)

Even though SLU has been a primarily private venture, the city government has provided significant public money for neighborhood infrastructure improvements in the name of jobs, tax revenue, and eco-consciousness. These investments include constructing the South Lake Union Street Car (infamous for the scandalous acronym formed by its original name, the South Lake Union Trolley), a modern streetcar system that connects SLU to the downtown core, as well as installing high capacity electrical grids necessary for biotechnology research (Ward 10).

By 2008, 100 million dollars in public funds had already gone into SLU's redevelopment, the same amount of money taxpayers rejected paying to fund the building of the Seattle Commons. In this scenario, however, there is no commons, just the vague promise of collective economic benefit (Sparke 67). In the era of highly mobile capital, this is often considered enough. Even though at the moment Seattle's economic growth is strong, over the years the city has suffered booms and busts dating back to the gold rush. Most recently, the loss of Boeing's headquarters to Chicago has instilled a "sense of urgency" to attract and keep capital in the city (Purcell 110).

One of these new industries Seattle hopes to draw to the city and keep there is biotechnology. Through infrastructure design and the concentration of a skilled workforce, SLU is in the process of becoming a biotech research hub, potentially one of the big industries of Seattle's future economy (Ward 10). When the major decisions about planning were being made, both the then-governor of Washington, Christine Gregoire, and the mayor of Seattle, Greg Nickels, were very supportive of the plan to create this so-called technopole, as a way of securing Seattle and Washington's competitive advantage in the coming economy

(Purcell 116). While not a biotech company, the other well-known technology company headquartered in SLU is the online retail giant Amazon.com, the largest single occupant of office space in the neighborhood.

Similarly, SLU is also home to the global health NGOs PATH and Group Health, as well as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the largest (which in the non-profit world translates to best endowed) foundation in the world. Located just a few blocks north of where the WTO protests occurred in 1999, "The landscape of South Lake Union… has ultimately become a place where the anti-capitalist calls for global justice articulated in the WTO protests have been rerouted into more market-friendly activities today," (Sparke 51-2). Corroborating Sparke's interpretation, in 2008 Senator Patty Murray even stated that "Global Health is now part of our region's economy," which is telling in the way that NGOs are now recognized not just as means to do good, but as lucrative industries unto themselves (ibid 65). While NGOs do not pay local taxes, they provide relatively well-paid jobs to city residents as well as a positive and influential image for Seattle. These hubs are all part of the information economy, which find profit not in physical goods, but instead in ideas, scientific discoveries, and human resources.

In a similar manner to global justice, SLU can be viewed as place where calls for environmental responsibility have been transformed into a key component of contemporary capitalist real estate development. The office buildings of downtown have empty space, but having been built in the 1980s and before, they are no longer suited to the industries of Seattle's new economy. Attracting biotech or flexible creative jobs like those at Amazon requires new infrastructure investment, and this is what South Lake Union provides to the City of Seattle and to excess capital in need of investment. The rise of information and technology as the most profitable sectors of the Seattle and general American economy

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occurred around the same time as the emergence of popular environmentalism in the United States, and while not causally linked, there exist connections between the two phenomena. In his profile of a new resident of SLU, journalist Bob Young reveals the ecological consciousness of those new economy workers who are drawn to SLU and New Urbanism: "[Kelly Goodejohn] moved to South Lake Union because she was ready to walk her talk. In charge of procuring sustainable products for Starbucks, Goodejohn wanted to live within strolling distance of downtown restaurants and stores, 'to do something better for the planet,'" he writes (2008). In order to ensure that this spatial fix oriented towards new economy industries is successful, developers must cater to the environmental consciousness of those workers.

Relevant to this thesis is the way that the promotion of the successful post-industrial city in the United States and much of the Global North relies upon a reinterpretation of the collective imagination of the urban. These branding efforts have sought to foster the image of the city as "clean and attractive – 'a place for business' yet devoid of factories," (While et al. 551). Historically, industry and its associated factories have evoked concerns about pollution and health problems, and in the wake of deindustrialization that has swept much of the Global North, cities have invoked the livability of a clean(er) environment to promote their newly factory-less existence as a positive thing. These branding efforts have promoted the post-industrial city as the city of the future, and its supposed ecological credentials are a large part of that. Returning to Sparke's point at the beginning of this chapter, "world class livability," has become an important concept in whether a space is considered a good investment. Contemporary cities must be "livable" for the economic elite, and a significant aspect of branding livability is an environmentally-friendly image (Sparke 56).

Thus, Seattle's public identity as both a successful city in the new economy, and an environmentally conscious place, are linked and expressed through SLU's sustainable New Urbanist ambitions. The growing influence of environmental discourse has begun to impact the way development is approached, and in light of disinvestment from suburban sprawl, is providing new impetus for capital to invest in dense urbanism. New Urbanist sustainability discourse benefits cities looking to attract capital, especially in light of the connection between the rise of the new economy and the importance of sustainability branding in maintaining its associated industries. In this sense, sustainable urbanism provides a spatial fix to capitalism, but it also demands questioning what is meant by "sustainability" in the context of SLU? What elements of environmentalism are incorporated into the urban sustainability fix as it manifest there, and which are left out? This is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER TWO
Consuming a Lower Carbon Lifestyle: Defining Sustainability in SLU

"Not TV or illegal drugs but the automobile has been the chief destroyer of American communities." -Jane Jacobs (37) Activist and inspiration to the New Urbanist movement

Having established the economic importance of SLU for Seattle and the potential for the urban sustainability fix to temporarily resolve capital's need for growth, in this chapter I will unpack the form through which this fix manifests in SLU. In order to answer the questions I posed at the end of chapter one, I spoke to one of Vulcan's Development Managers, known as their unofficial sustainability point person, and analyzed the company's promotional materials to see how sustainability is presented and sold to the public. A good summation of Vulcan's marketing strategy can be found in the "Why South Lake Union" section of the promotional website for the neighborhood. About halfway through explaining "why" the text states:

> Another way South Lake Union humbles other neighborhoods is in its devotion to sustainability. There are more LEED-certified buildings here or on the way than in any other part of the city. Combine that with pedestrian-centric streets, plenty of parks, and a truly usable public transportation system, and it all adds up to the color green. ("Why South Lake Union" 2014)

Based on this information, the version of sustainability touted by Vulcan differentiates it from most contemporary American development through a mix of personal and structural changes primarily focused on reducing the carbon output of SLU's inhabitants. The company is attempting to embed ideals of ecological consciousness into the infrastructure of the city, enabling more sustainable living through lower carbon living, primarily by eliminating the need for residents to use cars. The greenness of SLU is also rooted in the greater movement for individuals to be conscious consumers and use their purchasing power to enact greater changes. In SLU they can do this by selecting an apartment based on its LEED certification and location in a walkable neighborhood. The

importance of New Urbanist walkability and transit accessibility is reiterated in other part of their website, which describes sustainability as a lifestyle:

> We're working with expert urban planners in Seattle's South Lake Union neighborhood to create a pedestrian-oriented urban environment where residents, tenants and visitors can experience a car-free *sustainable lifestyle* with convenient access to regional transit systems ("Stewardship" 2014; emphasis my own)

What does it mean when sustainability is sold as a lifestyle? And what does it mean when that lifestyle is branded not as more sustainable, but completely sustainable? In his discussion of Seattle's environmental branding, Sparke writes, "Along with all the sustainable development discourse in the city, a great deal of what has actually been sustained in the idea of world-class livability itself," (56). This represents an insight into the nature of sustainability discourse in SLU: if we accept that SLU represents a sustainable lifestyle, then Sparke suggests this definition of sustainability is less about sustaining the viability of ecological systems than the comforts associated with a resource-intensive American lifestyle. This notion is further illuminated by Cascade resident and artist, C Davida Ingram, who describes the new SLU as "a consumer lifestyle district" (Monahan 2013). The sustainable lifestyle of SLU is inextricable from a consumer lifestyle, one that is carried out through daily acts of green consumption, the most important of which is paying to live in South Lake Union. Recognizing that this consumption is key to what makes SLU a good spatial fix to capitalism, I will now look at the actual ecological-components of this sustainable lifestyle.

An important component of branded livability is the greenness associated with being able to live a car-free urban lifestyle. This is important for a few reasons. Namely, it helps reveal that the primary focus of SLU's sustainability efforts and image is on reducing carbon emissions as compared to other American cities. This reflects a trend in environmental discourse in which "carbon footprints" are the primary means by which to quantify and

potentially decrease the ecological impact of human activities. Of course, the idea that living a less carbon dependant lifestyle could render an American consumer completely in harmony with the environment is also a very limited view of ecology. Nevertheless, it is true that cars are an incredibly large source of carbon dioxide pollution, and in a discourse where carbon emissions are the primary means of evaluating one's impact on the planet, eliminating the need for a car addresses both questions of personal responsibility and the need for infrastructure-level changes (Owen 2008). Finally, focusing on the carbon footprint of driving speaks to a broader trend in which altering an individual's actions are seen as the primary way to address environmental issues.

In SLU, Vulcan's individualized sustainability efforts often are enacted through social media, which the company uses as a "conduit for behavioral change (Anonymous, personal interview). The company provides instructions to residents on how to use their smart thermostats and reminds them via Twitter or Facebook to turn off their lights or similar green tips. In this way the company follows up with the residents of their buildings to make sure they know how to use the energy saving infrastructure available to them and alter their personal behavior to fit the ideal sustainable lifestyle of SLU.

Officially, Vulcan conceives of sustainability as something that is enacted as part of the master plan for the neighborhood as well as on the individual level of each project and the people who live and work there. For the Responsible Property Investing Conference in 2010, Vulcan compiled a slideshow called "South Lake Union: Creating a Sustainable Community in Seattle" that I was given access to by the company. In this presentation, the slide entitled "Sensitivity to Environment" divides Vulcan's sustainability efforts into two categories, "Neighborhood Level" and "Project Level." Project level focuses on LEED

certification and energy and water efficiency, while neighborhood level is characterized by transit-oriented and walkable mixed-use (Vulcan "South Lake Union" 2010).

For an example of "project level" sustainability, it is useful to look at the way a specific property's greenness is advertised. The Alcyone Apartments, Vulcan's first apartment building, offers bike and kayak storage and a rooftop garden that uses recycled rainwater ("Amenities" 2014). These are all lifestyle amenities, enabling residents to indulge their green thumbs or partake in the very Pacific Northwest activity of kayaking on Lake Union. While they evoke nature and the outdoors, neither of these activities does anything to directly address environmental degradation. The marketing website also highlights as "Green features" energy efficient windows, drought-resistance landscaping to reduce water usage, and the use of low toxin paint. Very little else is listed ("Green Facts" 2014).

David Owen, an influential journalist and author about green urbanism, states that "sustainability is a context, not a gadget or a technology," and this ethos can be seen in projects like the Alcyone (Owen 40). While its project level sustainability includes reduced water and energy consumption, the Alcyone relies primarily upon a broader neighborhood level context for its green credentials. While Vulcan certainly incorporates technology and gadgets (such as smart thermostats) into its sustainability efforts, this building's primary claim to "greenness" stems from its location in a walkable neighborhood at the center of an urban area easily accessible via public transportation (Anonymous, personal interview). Interestingly, the Greek mythological figure of Alcyone is the etymological root of halcyon days, those nostalgic times of past happiness. Perhaps the PR team who named the building intended to harken back to the halcyon days before automobiles, the Alycone's main ecological feature.

South Lake Union is "a walker's paradise" says www.walkscore.com, a website that helps renters identify walkable neighborhoods. Giving SLU a Walk Score of 98 out of 100, the site testifies that "daily errands do not require a car." Cars are one of the biggest sources of carbon emissions for Americans, the vast majority of whom live in car-reliant communities. Thus, moving to SLU presents an opportunity for a very different lifestyle, one that reduces an individual's personal contribution to climate change… so long as they can afford it, of course.

In addition to mixed-used walkability, it should also be noted that Vulcan has made large-scale green infrastructure improvements in SLU that are not commodities unto themselves. Most prominent among these is the Swale on Yale, a 10 million dollar partnership between Vulcan and the Seattle Public Utilities to build four "swales" to catch and clean pollutants from water runoff flowing from Capitol Hill before it enters Lake Union (Vulcan "Stewardship" 2014). Swales are biofiltration systems comprised of rocks, sand, and vegetation able to remove 92% of heavy metals, oil, and various contaminants from the rain runoff before it reaches the lake (ibid; Vulcan "South Lake Union" 2010). Public-private partnerships of this kind are a common feature of contemporary urban governance in which austerity measures have necessitated the filling of budget shortfalls with private money (Lavine 145). While the Swales represent one of the most innovative ecologically-oriented features of SLU, I believe it is also important to view these efforts as part of a broader PR strategy to associate Vulcan and environmental sustainability, and publically legitimize the company's branding of a sustainable lifestyle.

As of late, many companies have sought to associate themselves with environmental consciousness, and investing in projects like the Swale on Yale helps authenticate Vulcan's ecological credentials in the eyes of consumers. In conversation, the Vulcan representative I

met explicitly referenced the popularity of "greenwashing" within the corporate sphere, but emphasized that Vulcan's efforts at being green are much more than a superficial image strategy. Another way the company attempts to maintain its sustainable image is through the amount of time it has been involved in the green building movement. Their Discover SLU website indirectly references greenwashing by attempting to establish its sustainability efforts as more than just a vaneer. "It's not that unusual to find LEED-certified buildings and multi-family homes these days. What makes South Lake Union a bit different is that this neighborhood didn't jump on the bandwagon after green became fashionable," the section entitled "Be Green Here" begins. From the start it admits that "green" credentials are in vogue, but much in the way people claim to have liked a certain band before it went mainstream, SLU posits its greenness on its early embrace of the sustainability trend. The section ends with, "In short, 'green' isn't a marketing catchword in South Lake Union. It's a full-time, long-time serious commitment." While SLU may be committed to what they envision as sustainable, it is hard to argue that green is not a marketing catchphrase. A major reason people live in SLU is due to these green credentials, and thus the developers want to market them.

When Vulcan first began selling units in SLU, the official environmental certification of their buildings was not something potential renters would ask about, however the representative I spoke to claims that in subsequent years this trend in consumer attitude and awareness has completely turned around (Anonymous, personal interview). Consumers are now aware of things like LEED certification and factor an apartment's ecological certification into their decisions about where to live. In particular, the Vulcan representative singled out "Gen Y" as being especially attuned to and interested in reducing their environmental impact (ibid).

This is still not an entirely accepted business model, and part of Vulcan's goal is to show that sustainability can be profitable (ibid). Indeed, sustainability has been embraced in SLU because it is profitable. It was repeatedly emphasized to me that Vulcan is not a foundation or any sort of nonprofit venture, but is instead interested in the merging of environmental sustainability and the ability to sustain a profitable business, what their website refers to as the "business case for sustainability" ("Sustainability," Vulcan website). In fact, they believe that as consumers become more conscious, companies must become more sustainable in order to remain in business (Anonymous, personal interview). What this also helps reiterate is that a primary goal of sustainability discourse in SLU is the sustenance of capital accumulation, not just that of ecological balance. It is this insight that makes the neighborhood a prime example of the urban sustainability fix to capitalism.

This merging of capital and environmental interests can be viewed in Vulcan's claim that they evaluate projects based on three criteria: "financial, community, and environment[al]" (Vulcan "South Lake Union" 2010). All of these categories are notable in terms of the production of South Lake Union. 'Financial' refers simply to giving profitable market returns on investments, while 'community' is defined as "respect[ing] and work[ing] with stakeholders to foster healthy communities." Their commitment to the 'environment' is expressed through a mandate to "protect the environment through sustainable development that conserves natural resources and creates healthy places to live and work," (ibid). In this conception, sustainability is interpreted to mean conserving natural resource consumption, at least when compared to similar development

In the combination of these three criteria, a reciprocal relationship between environmentalism, community and business is posited as a win-win, but it is important to remember While et al.'s contention that the urban sustainability fix is a "selective

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incorporation of environmental goals," meaning one should not simply take those incorporations at face value or assume they are comprehensive (552). I am not saying Vulcan's environmental work is insubstantial, but instead am attempting to unpack how that work is used to sustain the accumulation of capital and consequently reinforce structural inequalities produced by that process. In order for sustainability to aid the accumulation of capital, only those conceptions of sustainability that are commodifiable and marketable are included in SLU's environmental discourse. Focusing on relative carbon footprints is useful because there are technological fixes to that problem. However, even within the question of carbon footprints, the idea that transportation is the primary source of personal carbon emission is a limited notion. A large portion of an individual's carbon emissions actually go beyond that individual's direct actions and instead are ingrained in their political contexts. Being an American citizen, for example, pushes one's carbon footprint automatically to two planets simply due to "societal" impacts such as infrastructure, health care, and military ("FAQ" 2014).

Addressing broader questions of consumption patterns in the US or the environmental toll of the American military presence will most likely never be part of a commercial conception of sustainability, but SLU's marketed version of sustainability deserves to be problematized because it has the potential to dominate the mainstream discourse of environmental sustainability. When residents of SLU are marketed as stewards of the earth and not as actors with a complex relationship to climate change and the rest of life on the planet, it erases both the deficiencies of that approach as well as the exclusion that is inherent in producing the "sustainable" lifestyle of the new SLU resident. This exclusion is the subject of the following chapter.

CHAPTER THREE
Walkable Urbanism and Ecological Gentrification: The Production of Class-Based Exclusion

The bulletin boards are filled with calls to gather and proclaim your South Lake Unionism. It feels self-congratulatory, as in, "Yeah, you and I can afford the rent and everybody else can't! —Sherman Alexie ("Living Among Strangers" 2012)

With the present success of Amazon.com and the other businesses in South Lake Union, the urban sustainability fix appears to be working. Vulcan Real Estate's investments continue to prove incredibly profitable and the city government is gaining the economic hub it desired ("What We do" 2014). In this way, sustainably branded urbanism in SLU provides a good spatial investment for capital. However, Harvey notes that when creative destruction takes the form of a transformation of the urban environment, any negative effects tend to disproportionately affect those "marginalized from political power," including the poor (Harvey 176). This trend remains true for the urban sustainability fix as it manifests in SLU. The rapid rise in property values in the area over the last decade has generated discussion about the acceleration of gentrification in Seattle and which residents city policymakers value (Keeley 2013). In South Lake Union, this gentrification is imbued with green branding, an expansion of what Dooling calls ecological gentrification, and discursively produces low-income residents as unsustainable excluded bodies.

In the previous chapter I demonstrated that the primary green feature of SLU is its walkability, which enables a relatively low-carbon lifestyle compared to most car-dependant American developments. However, because the majority of the infrastructure in the United States is geared towards automobiles, walking as a form of transportation is an inherently classed practice. Some people walk because it is their only affordable option, but an ecologically conscious wealthy class is now embracing walkable urbanism as part of a branded green lifestyle. In the United States, only 30% of people self-report walking as a

regular form of transportation, and when broken down by income, walking as a form of transportation mobility is practiced disproportionately by the lowest income brackets (Kruger et al. 332).

However, the return of a wealthier class to the city complicates this trend. The economic ability to live in a walkable urban environment is becoming the exclusive domain of the wealthy, while the trend towards the suburbanization of poverty means that low income people, those who walk because they cannot afford to drive, are increasingly living in environments where walking is an untenable form of transportation. I posit that when the creation of walkable urban space is predicated primarily on creating a high market value area, low-income residents are excluded and the very notion of who can live a sustainable lifestyle becomes classed. Sustainability discourse defined through personal consumption is limited by the fact that one's ability to engage with those individualistic green practices is dependent not just on environmental consciousness but monetary access to space and amenities. As low-income residents are gentrified to the urban periphery, away from easy public transportation and walkable neighborhoods, they are produced as environmentally unsustainable and thus worthy of exclusion. In this chapter I examine how exclusion is manifested and how it creates classed divisions between people considered sustainable and unsustainable.

Ecological Gentrification Through Real Estate

Before Vulcan began its redevelopment of South Lake Union, the area had some of the lowest cost housing in the city (Purcell 112). Now, according to real estate website Zillow.com, the average current monthly rent in SLU is $1,930, while in January 2014 another real estate website reported that rents in the Eastlake block of South Lake Union

were the highest in all of downtown Seattle, with the median rental price per bedroom in the neighborhood totaling $2,248 (Zillow.com Mar. 2014; Cook 2014).
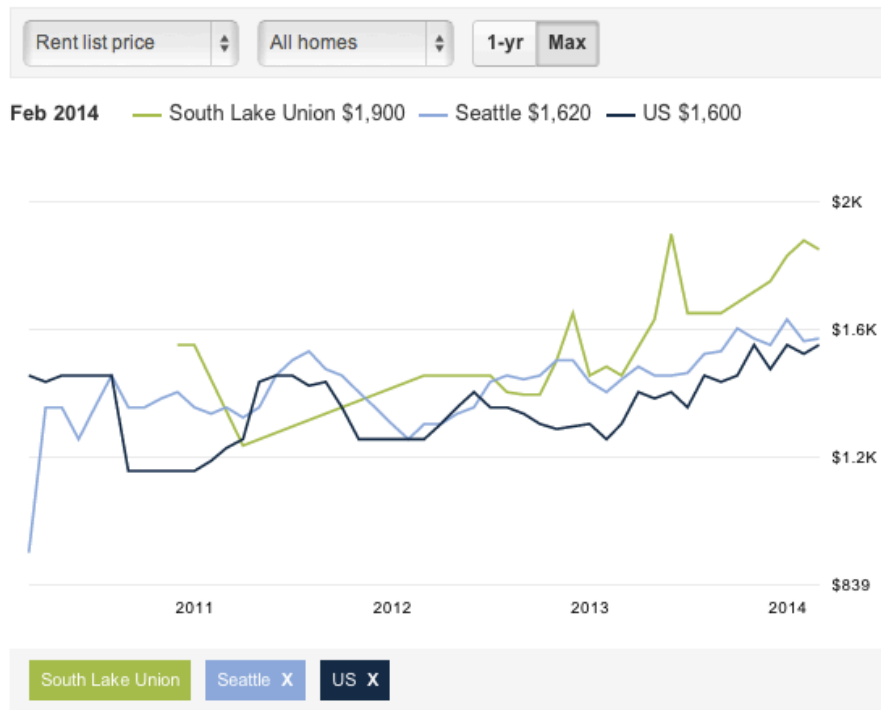

Figure 3.1. Chart indicating average price of rentals on the market in SLU, Seattle, and the United State from 2011-2014 (Source: www.zillow.com).

The average rent within the City of Seattle is a still substantial $1,609, and rents are continuing to rise (Zillow.com Mar. 2014). According to a 2013 report by Reis, a company that sells data related to the real estate industry, apartment rents have risen faster in Seattle than any other major American metropolis tracked, including San Francisco and Boston, and much of this increase is related to the high demand brought on by Seattle's booming job market, much of it centered around SLU (Bhatt 2013). Unit construction has increased greatly as well, which according to market logic should temper price increases. However, Jonathan Grant, the executive director of the Seattle Tenants Union, contends, "The reality is that these units are high cost, and often these were taken out of affordable housing stock.

That's why you see this theory of supply and demand being turned on its head," (Vaughn 2013).

Many people are concerned about this disappearance of low cost housing from the city. A recent article in the Seattle Times stated that the mayor of Seattle and the city council "agree, Seattle needs to get more benefits when it creates wealth for property owner through upzones [vertical high density zoning] allowing taller buildings," (Young "New Improved" 2013). One such benefit the author mentions is the creation of affordable housing. This article was written in the midst of a joint proposal from former Mayor McGinn and Vulcan to again ease height limitations in SLU, allowing buildings of up to 40 stories tall in the area, an easement some in the city council were pushing only to grant if it helped guarantee the construction of their proposed goal of 4,000 new subsidized housing units over the next 20 years (ibid).

Vulcan Real Estate's pushback against this stipulation indicates that the sustainable lifestyle marketed in SLU does not include lower-income individuals. Although the company does donate money "to low-income housing," the vast majority of that housing is not in SLU itself (Anonymous, personal interview). Instead, the company claims its commitment to economic diversity can be found in the approximately 7% of units designated "workforce housing," which are available for those who do not meet the standards for low-income subsidized housing yet still cannot afford the market rate. To qualify for workforce housing, a single person must earn more than 60% but less than 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI), which in 2013 corresponded to between $37,080 and $49,440 ("South Lake Union" 2010; "2014 Income and Rent Limits"). The latter figure which would entail earning an hourly wage of about $24, more than double Washington's current minimum wage of $9.19. Seattle City Council Member Nick Licata claims that the city has made some headway on

providing subsidized housing, pointing to an increase from 778 "affordable" housing units in

SLU in 2004 to 1,274 in 2013 (Licata 2013). However, Licata is counting workforce housing

as affordable, when the real housing shortage in Seattle is for the 25% of Seattleites who

earn less than 30% of the AMI (ibid; Bertolet 2014).

As part of the recent fight over the inclusion of affordable housing in SLU, another

city council member, Richard Conley, suggested that Seattle give up on mandating Vulcan

Real Estate to build subsidized units in SLU itself and instead locate those units in the

Rainier Valley, a poorer, historically African-American area in the South End of the city

(Licata 2013; Holden 2013). The spatial inequity this plan would perpetuate was denounced

by many housing advocates, as well as Kshama Sawant, the Socialist Alternative candidate

who ultimately ended up unseating Conley in November of that year. In an email statement

she wrote,

> [Conley would] allow real estate corporations to gobble up large chunks of
> land in the central areas of the city to build upmarket condos, and for low-
> income people to be pushed farther out into the fringes of the city. If this is
> not income and race segregation, I don't know what is. (Holden 2013)

In his masters thesis regarding SLU for the University of Washington, Michael K.

Ward suggests that the redevelopment of SLU does not so much represent a revitalization of

the area but simply a spatial shifting of poverty (4). Conley's plan would have pushed low-

income residents to the South End, but that area is gentrifying as well, and as rents climb

throughout the city limits, evidence indicates many struggling residents are simply leaving the

city (Vaughn 2013). A Seattle Times article focusing on the growing struggle to pay rent

found that, "While wealthy newcomers are helping to revitalize neighborhood business

districts, the reality is that many renters, saddled by stagnant wages, are being forced to

reexamine lifestyle choices and, in some cases, move out of Seattle altogether," (ibid). This

exemplifies the trend towards the suburbanization of poverty. While the American suburbs

are often thought of as the residency of choice for the white middle class, white flight from the city has begun to reverse in gentrifying cities like Seattle and capital investment is shifting from suburban to urban investment. This has entailed a reorientation of the geographic distribution of poverty towards the suburbs (Badger 2013).

This shift has very tangible ramifications on the lives of the working poor. Jobs remain primarily within urban centers, while transportation options become substantially more limited the further outside the city one lives. This dynamic necessitates either longer, more difficult commutes either using public transportation or driving (ibid). Liz Osteen, a Case Manager at Compass, one of the few remaining transitional housing sites for homeless women in Cascade, told me that part of her job is to help her clients find permanent housing, but the only places they can afford tend to be south of the city in Renton, Tukwila, or even Pierce County (Osteen, personal interview 2014). This spatial configuration results in hardship for these women because most personal services are located in Downtown Seattle, far from their new homes. She points out that these are the people who most rely on public transportation, but that the city's transportation hub is also located in Downtown, the area they have been economically excluded from (ibid).

Council Member Licata's website specifically links the suburbanization of poverty with unsustainability. By his estimates, the number of affordable housing units in SLU needs to more than double in order to accommodate the area's workers. He writes,

> "Affordable housing is clearly needed for our mid and lower wage workers so that they are not commuting over long distances, carrying a personal financial burden and a having a community-wide environmental impact by contributing to greater carbon emissions," (Licata 2013).

As it is, the City of Seattle already is characterized by lengthy commutes due to real estate prices untenable to many workers. City statistics show that only 37% of workers in the city actually reside within Seattle city limits, and a full quarter of workers commute from outside

the Greater Seattle region (ibid).   Ecological gentrification means the ability for members of

the upper classes to live more "ecological" lives at the expense of the ability of others to do

the same.

Seattle Neighborhood	Walk Score	Average monthly rent for one bedroom apartment
Downtown	98	$2,450
South Lake Union	97	$1,900
Ballard	91	$1,750
University District	91	$1,650
Capitol Hill	90	$1,600

Figure 3.2

City	Walk Score	Average monthly rent for one bedroom apartment
Burien	47	$1,100
Tukwila	44	$1,050
Renton	37	$1,480
Seatac	36	$1,350
Kent	36	$1,200

Figure 3.3

Figures 3.2 and 3.3. Charts comparing the walk score of suburban cities of the Greater
Seattle area to dense urban neighborhood within the city (Compiled from
www.walkscore.com and www.zillow.com April 2014). Suburban rent is generally lower, but
represents much more limited mobility for those without cars. Note that these scores
represent aggregates, and parts of these cities are more walkable than others, but that by and
large driving or bussing are the only viable transportation options in the Seattle suburbs.
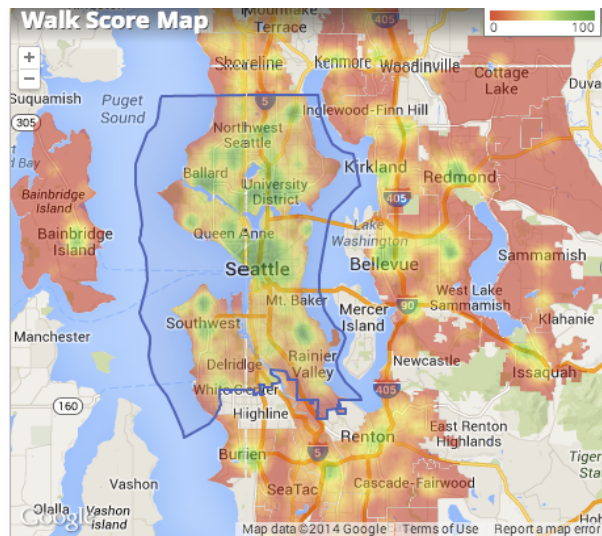

Figure 3.4. A heatmap of the Greater Seattle Area depicting walkability
(www.walkscore.com). Note that SLU is located near the center of the map beneath the
second "n" in "Queen Anne."

Part of this exclusion is intentional, a means of attracting further capital and making SLU a profitable investment. One of Vulcan's promotional pamphlets encourages retailers to "put your business at the center of 56,000 residents and 35,000 affluent, well-educated day workers," and on the next page gives the statistic that "59% of residents have 4+ years of college." (Vulcan, "Add Your Name" 2014). This kind of advertising explicitly reveals the kind of SLU resident Vulcan holds to be ideal (meaning profitable): well-educated affluent consumers.

The role of this kind of consumer in drawing capital to SLU is important not just for businesses but other potential renters and consumers as well. A wealthy family friend once mentioned in conversation that, "We considered buying a condo downtown, until someone pointed out that we would be wracked by liberal guilt every time we stepped outside and saw all the homeless people," (Anonymous, personal communication 2013). Her acknowledgment of the discomfort embodied in the shared physical proximity of those at the top of the socio-economic hierarchy and those so far down that hierarchy as to not even possess shelter, is telling. The attitude she expressed does not question the conditions that produce and perpetuate extreme wealth inequality, but instead prefers that the reality of such conditions not be visible in her day-to-day life. This outlook laments the existence of poverty but finds the idea of being continually confronted by that existence unacceptable. I mention this not to demonize person who made that statement, but to illuminate the kind of attitudes towards social class and heterogeneity in public space that developers respond to when strategizing high-end developments.

In SLU, as in any high-end development in the United States, there is a fear that the affluent educated classes will not want to live there if they feel the presence of people who

challenge their sense of security. Yet, the liberal urbanites whom SLU seeks to attract also do not wish to have the physical presence of walls or other similar visible apparatuses of security. In his discussion of the history of barbed wire, Olivier Razac writes that the blatant forms of separation and violence embodied by the symbol of barbed wire are no longer widely accepted by people who "don't want to see the means of segregation which they nevertheless seek," (Razac 111). Instead, urban development projects such as SLU seek to create homogenous space using more subtle methods of control.

> In the city, spatial hierarchy is produced by even more insidious openings and closings. The interfaces of urban access remove certain categories of the population and attract others by requiring a specific level of wealth, and by emitting symbolic signals with regard to social, ethnic, or cultural affiliation… This discreet violence invites certain social or ethnic groups to occupy a given space and dissuades others from doing so. It does not forbid. This is done in such a way that choosing and rejecting seem to result simultaneously from the level of income and from a free choice based on personal preferences. (ibid 113)

In this quote, Razac suggests that "the violence of power is unacceptable only when we see it in action," (113) while excluding undesirable (low-income) people through property values or other means of consumption is acceptable. When the ability to participate in and inform sustainability discourse is tied and made dependant on wealth, this is the violence of power at work.

As a generalized condition contemporary cities in the United States are defined by skyrocketing income inequality and a subsequent turn towards defensive urbanism in the name of safety and comfort (see: Davis 1990, 2006). While the representative of Vulcan I spoke with was adamant that we dispel what he considers the myth that it costs more to build green, there is no denying that Vulcan's SLU developments are geared towards an affluent clientele. While SLU has no walls, it does have housing accessible only to the

wealthiest urbanites, as well as stores that communicate socially and monetarily who is welcome there.

Urban geographer Mike Davis has written extensively about the increasing spatial segregation of the urban landscape, and in his writings about Los Angeles – which he refers to as "Fortress LA," Davis quotes *Urban Land* magazine's development directives for cities and developers to "overcome fear of crime in downtowns." In this tactical manipulation of space, the author outlines strategies to ensure that space is only used by desirable bodies in order to enable maximum capital accumulation:

> *Create a Dense, Compact, Multifunctional Core Area.* A downtown can be designed and developed to make visitors feel that it… is attractive and the type of place that 'respectable people' like themselves tend to frequent…. A core downtown area that is compact, densely developed and multifunctional will concentrate people, giving them more activities… The activities offered in this core are will determine what 'type' of people will be strolling its sidewalks; locating offices and housing for middle- and upper-income residents in or near the core area can assure a high percentage of 'respectable,' law-abiding pedestrians. (Davis *City of Quartz* 231, emphasis in original)

In this description, the basic tenets of which have been embraced in South Lake Union, low-income people and the affordable units in which to house them, are implicitly associated with not being respectable or law-abiding, considered to contribute to anxieties about crime and insecurity. The *Urban Land* author is saying that in order to make middle and upper-income people feel safe in a space, planners must feed into pre-existing prejudices against lower-income residents and cleanse them from the downtown core. In the context of the urban sustainability fix, in order for the transformed space of the city to maximize the flow of capital and profitability of the enterprise, wealthy consumers must be privileged and low-income residents excluded.

Ecological Gentrification through Lifestyle Amenities

I argue that informal methods, such as the communication of class markers by stores, are another primary means through which exclusion is produced in SLU. In particular, shopping and dining establishments are imbued with class markers. Due to SLU's relatively new status, the stores that have opened there were specifically placed in order to both benefit from and produce the kind of clientele that can afford to be part of the green SLU lifestyle. There exists a symbiotic relationship between stores and developers in creating a space of relatively homogenous interests and consumption habits/abilities.

Significantly, an evaluation of the list of businesses in SLU reveals that the only grocery store in the neighborhood is Whole Foods, ("SLU Amenities Map" 2014). Whole Foods is known both for selling organic food produced using less ecologically damaging methods than more conventional farms, and for having prices well beyond the means of many Americans. Whole Foods and similar such stores are financially inaccessible to a clientele that does not exist on the higher echelons of the socio-economic ladder.

In our interview, the Case Manager at Compass also told me that many of the women she works with are finding groceries within their price range harder and harder to locate (Osteen, personal interview). These women do not have cars, yet they cannot afford to buy food from the one grocery store located within a walkable distance. Occasionally, the shelter will take the women in a van to go shopping either at a cheaper grocery store in a nearby neighborhood or to Walmart in the suburbs north of the city. Even though they live in a New Urbanist neighborhood, these women must drive more than half an hour to shop at a suburban superstore just to be able to afford food (ibid).

Not only does this discourage low-income people from living or being in SLU, but the lack of food, a necessity for life, available within their budget is an informal yet very

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tangible thing that marks SLU as exclusionary. In recent years there has been an increased

academic and activist interest in "food deserts," areas where healthy food, especially

produce, is not available. In South Lake Union, good food is technically available in

abundance, but not to those without the financial means to buy it, effectively producing a

class-stratified food desert. The sustainable lifestyle advertised as being able to walk from a

$2000 a month apartment to Whole Foods is a vision that speaks to a very selective group of

individuals, and when those are the only options in the neighborhood, actively prevents

people who do not fit that mold from living SLU's sustainably branded lifestyle.

Previous studies have demonstrated that a strong discursive link exists between

boutique stores and restaurants and gentrification. The visibility of these commercial spaces

is seen by pre-existing residents as markers of encroachment and is associated with fears of

displacement (Zukin 48). Boutiques not only mark the space of the neighborhood as 'safe'

for future investment and increased property values, but physically replace stores and

services that cater to lower-income people, thus increasing their instability (ibid).

Stores in SLU include a "dog bakery" called Scraps where people can buy freshly

baked treats for their dogs from a pastry case, a used climbing and outdoor gear shop, and a

store that exclusively sells designer and modern style baby furniture ("SLU Amenities Map"

2014). The only store I could identify that does not seem directly aimed toward young urban

professionals is a new Goodwill outlet, though perhaps the popularity of the Grammy

winning hit "Thrift Shop" by Seattle rapper Macklemore, indicates that even shopping for

second hand clothing can now be considered within the terrain of the wealthy, especially the

environmentally conscious among them.

Many of these stores incorporate elements of sustainability discourse into their

businesses as well. The baby store sells organic cotton onsies, the outdoor gear store caters

to a green lifestyle image, and one of the least expensive restaurants in SLU is called Homegrown: Sustainable Sandwiches. In addition to having sustainable in its name, Homegrown's promotional materials say, "beyond using fresh, sustainable ingredients... Homegrown strives for sustainability as a local business through the green materials we print and serve on, to our rejection of bottled water, to our 100% compostable and recyclable product" ("Homegrown" 2014). All of these venues integrate sustainability into personal consumption and the branding of a particular green lifestyle that complements Vulcan's intentions for the neighborhood.

These spaces indicate that SLU is meant for the wealthy, and thus associate wealth with sustainability. Geographer Laura Pulido writes that the poor in particular have traditionally been unable to been seen as ecologically legitimate in the eyes of the state or other powerful actors, and this remains true in the case of SLU (Pulido 37, 46). Vulcan's advertising portrays its residents as environmental stewards, but I have demonstrated how that stewardship is only available to the wealthy. In the ecological gentrification of the space of SLU, the low-income people excluded from the space are conceived of not just as unwanted, but as unsustainable. As ecological gentrification occurs, people on the socio-economic margins have almost no choice but to live on the car-dependant periphery of the city or to shop at Walmart, actions that in turn further mark them as unsustainable.   In this process, class becomes imbued with ecological overtones, and the perceived unsustainability of low-income people becomes a tacit justification for SLU's exclusionary nature.

The production of sustainable bodies mimics the production of the sustainable city explored in chapter one. Just as the city of the future is envisioned to be a transformation from the dirty industrial economy to the supposedly clean post-industrial economy, industrial (working class, blue collar, or homeless) bodies are classed and ranked as

unsustainable in comparison to the post-industrial, new economy bodies moving to SLU.

The information and technology workers who can afford SLU are discursively produced by

Vulcan and the City of Seattle as the ideal sustainable subjects of Seattle's future, and little

place is left for other discourses of sustainability. One of the key employers in that new

economy, The Bill & Melinda Gate's Foundation, is "Guided by the belief that every life has

equal value… and works to help all people lead healthy, productive lives," (Gates

Foundation Fact Sheet). But when low-income people are excluded from the very

neighborhood in which the foundation is headquartered, it is clear that those who planned

and embrace SLU do not act based on this same belief.

CONCLUSION
Contesting Exclusion: Precarity in the Era of Climate Change

The Yesler Terrace gentrification proposal will remove vulnerable youth and families from their homes, reduce available affordable housing and increase everyone's rent prices, all for the goal of a New Seattle built to serve the privileged. -Ernest Saadiq Morris, Attorney/Director of Urban Youth Justice ("Yesler Terrace Gentrification" 2012)

SLU as a Potentially Contested Model

In early 2013, the Seattle Housing Authority (SHA) officially announced that based on the company's success in South Lake Union, Vulcan Real Estate will be the City's partner in redeveloping the Yesler Terrace neighborhood in a New Urbanist style. Yesler Terrace, built in the early 1940s as part of the New Deal, was Seattle's first public housing project and the nation's first racially integrated public housing development (Young "Housing Board" 2013). Yesler is known for having avoided the social alienation of the nation's other "projects," and the neighborhood's current 1,200 residents are still among the most ethnically diverse in Seattle (Mudede 2013). Similar to in South Lake Union, a new streetcar line will soon connect Yesler to Downtown Seattle, and due to this proximity, capital and the City now recognize Yesler as a potentially valuable investment.

Like SLU, Yesler is being envisioned in a New Urbanist style, with high-density residential towers, mixed-use zoning, and an emphasis on walkability and transit access to the new streetcar ("Moving Forward" 2013). However, unlike SLU, the Yesler Terrace redevelopment is specifically envisioned as a mixed-income neighborhood. In addition to 3,199 market rate units, the SHA is committed to one-for-one replacement of the current stock of 561 low-income housing, and the development will include an additional 1,140 units of housing for residents earning below the AMI. Notably, the three residential towers Vulcan has proposed would all be market-rate, the subsidized housing located in separate buildings constructed by a different company (Ibid). Residents have also pointed out that

there is currently no information about where the current inhabitants will live while the development is constructed, nor the extent to which the project will adequately address Seattle's affordable housing deficit (Black 2013).

I have introduced Yesler Terrace into my discussion because I believe it represents the potential future impacts of Vulcan's SLU redevelopment on sustainability and class discourse in Seattle. The economic boom that has taken hold in SLU has demonstrated that sustainability *can* be profitable, at least the version of sustainability defined by New Urbanist walkability, but it has also elevated concerns about class exclusion. Concerns about carbon emissions and a desire to make the city appealing to information and technology industries continue to merge in an effort to create the "New Seattle' described by Morris, but the proposal for Yesler also formally acknowledges the need for mixed-income neighborhoods. In conceptualizing this, it is important to remember that in both neighborhoods the process of redevelopment is not something stagnant, but instead something that is continuous and constantly able to be shaped. Ultimately, either social pressure will push more inclusive walkable urbanism, or capital will continue ecologically gentrifying undervalued urban spaces until it is no longer profitable and a new spatial fix to capitalism becomes necessary.

Contesting Exclusion through the Recognition of Precarity

In this conclusion, I would like to introduce Judith Butler's conception of precarity as a means of understanding the intellectual failings of the current form of sustainability as ecological gentrification exemplified by SLU. She writes, "if we accept the insight that our very survival depends not on the policing of a boundary… but on recognizing how we are bound up with others, then this leads us to reconsider the way in which we conceptualize the body in the field of politics," (Butler 52). Embracing walkable cities is a primarily a means to

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address climate change, and our vulnerability to climate change it something that is embodied. Exclusion in South Lake Union also an embodied process, however, by embracing Judith Butler's assessment of the interconnectivity of life, perhaps we can find different approaches to carbon-reduction.

In the market-driven context of 21st century America, the very real concerns presented by climate change and environmental degradation have been overshadowed by the use of sustainability discourse as a tool for capital accumulation. These market-strategies are presented as a win-win for developers and the environment (and by extension, all those who benefit from a healthy environment, which is all of us). As such, this normative argument implies that the market is quite literally saving the world. However, when one looks into the tangible effects of ecologically-oriented developments like South Lake Union, the sweeping nature of this argument is put into question, both from an ecological point of view and one that construes environmental and social justice as inextricably linked.

My concern in the potential proliferation of SLU-style ecologically-oriented development in Yesler Terrace or elsewhere is not that Vulcan's building techniques fundamentally flawed or a sham, but that they feed into a belief that climate change can be addressed through the exclusive personal consumption of the elite. This belief deserves to be problematized because it ignores both the inadequacies of personal consumption in addressing issues of industrial capitalism and its own role in perpetuating other sorts of violence through this consumption. When wealthy consumers rent or buy property in South Lake Union in order to partake in its green lifestyle, they do not consider the dispossession and increased precarity of the lives of those on the socio-economic margins that is produced by SLU's redevelopment, nor the collective challenge posed by climate change.

Geographer Christian Parenti writes that "the social impacts of climate change are already upon us, articulating themselves through the preexisting crises of poverty and violence," (225). The violence of climate change is not something entirely new, but instead manifests through an amplification of the conditions in inequity that already define the global socio-economic order. Moreover, there is already enough carbon in the atmosphere that climate change is no longer a question of whether it will occur, but to what extent. This means that the challenge of climate change is not just how to mitigate it, but how to respond to these climactic shifts in a manner that does not perpetuate pre-existing asymmetries of power (ibid 226). While those in the most precarious situations often suffer the earliest damages, ultimately no one is exempt from deep structural fissures. The urban poor, excluded from South Lake Union to lives of precarity on the city peripheries, are among those in the area who will bear the majority of climate change-induced crises. Excluding them in the name of building a more sustainable future is not only unjust, but portends badly for the future chances of effective climate change mitigation.

To an extent, all of our lives are increasing in precarity. Climate change represents an increased vulnerability for all life, and though its effects disproportionately affect the already-marginalized, it is important for us to make collective change. Our shared precarity stems both from the ecological realities of the global nature of climate change, as well as the social realities of extreme inequity, and so instead of practicing ecological gentrification, our approaches to climate change should embrace social heterogeneity as a means to create truly resilient responses. Addressing climate change means recognizing the interconnectivity of life, that one's own survival is dependant upon on the survival of others. In South Lake Union, ecological gentrification results in the marking of bodies along class lines as sustainable or unsustainable, included or excluded, less or more precarious. However, I

would like to challenge us to envision versions of sustainability that do not gentrify, that does not exclude low-income people from that space and the ability to lead less carbon-dependant lifestyles.

Finally, I would like to leave room for challenging my conclusions about SLU. While SLU is exclusive, it is not impermeable. I would like to contend that though accessibility may limit the ability of low-income people to walk in SLU, it is not impossible. Spatial cleansing occurs because their presence represents a threat to the vision of profitable sustainability, but by walking, they are able to assert their existence and lay a claim to the area. In this manner, walkable urbanism has transgressive potential and perhaps the ability to shape future discourse around sustainability.

While investigating the conditions surrounding the creation of this neighborhood, I've come to see the domination of popular ecological discourse by the logic of capital accumulation as a way to understand our limited conceptions of "sustainability." However, that naturalization is not a given. It has to constantly be produced, and understanding our shared precarity in the face of climate change has the potential to challenge these ways of thinking. My goal in this thesis has been to illuminate how these discourses are presented and thus reproduced, in the hope that by doing this the points of contestation will be made clearer. It is from there that the work of challenging elitist notions of sustainability and creating truly ecologically resilient communities can begin. Perhaps walking and acknowledging the diversity of life around us is a good place to start.

Final Thoughts on this Project

> There are a lot more brown-skinned folks in South Lake Union than in most other neighborhoods in Seattle. When I mentioned this to my basketball friends, one of them said, 'But it's not black or Latino, is it?'
> 'Not much,' I said. 'By physical appearance, I'd guess most of the diversity is East Indian working tech and medical.'
> 'So you've got white people and East Indians. Is that diverse?'

'And they are all college-educated and have good, even great, jobs.'
'Not so diverse then?' When we speak of diversity, we speak blurrily about race. But we rarely speak of class, education, and politics. If everybody in a mixed-race neighborhood makes good money, then it's only partially diverse, right? Partially diverse is an oxymoron. Does that make South Lake Union an oxymoronic destination? –Sherman Alexie ("Diversity" 2013)

I quote Alexie here because in a way my project is also oxymoronic. I believe dense urbanism has the potential to address the real problem of the United States' high-carbon infrastructure, but I also advocate against the way those policies have been implemented. I believe investing in dense urbanism is a good method for capitalism to avoid crisis, but I also believe it creates social crises in the process. I argue against exclusion, but I also have excluded aspects of the story of SLU. In particular, I quote him to reveal the manner in which I did not address the complex relationship between class and race as it relates to this neighborhood and Seattle. Many of the tech-workers in SLU are foreign-born and do not identify as White. However, inside, and especially outside of tech, socio-economic marginalization in Seattle is deeply racialized (Morrill et al. 2011). In particular, the debates over the location of low-income housing reveal the intersections and fissures of race and class in the "New Seattle," processes I believe deserve deeper interrogation.

Indeed, I would have liked to include a greater diversity of voices. For example, I advocate on behalf of those who have been marginalized, but they primarily remain an abstraction. Liz Osteen, the social worker I interviewed about transitional housing, mentioned that while she felt the class situation in SLU was bleak at the moment, the women she works with are planning on creating a video to explain their stories. They hope to give faces and life to those who are excluded, and at the very least, I hope my thesis inspires people to seek out such voices.

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