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Redefining the city and demolishing the rest: The techno-green fix in postcrash Cleveland, Ohio

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Abstract

This paper examines the techno-environmental urban policy that emerged in Cleveland, Ohio following the financial crisis, consisting primarily of mass demolition and greening programs, we argue this techno-green fix is an urban redevelopment strategy in shrinking cities that reshapes these places into manageable islands of urban development. Demolition and green reuse accelerated displacement without gentrification in long established low-income communities of color while reinforcing the racial hierarchies in US property markets. We demonstrate how the unevenness of the demolition program mirrors earlier racialized practices while adopting the rhetoric and strategy of "smart shrinkage." We show that behind its neutral and scientific ambition, this strategy targets the most disadvantaged areas of the inner city. The market rational of these programs reproduces old patterns of racial segregation in the city. Finally, we show that the "green" dimension of this strategy is highly ambivalent. If "greening" is publicly presented as a means to benefit marginalized areas and residents, it is also used as a way to transfer the maintenance of urban services to poor residents on the city's east side, to erase urban spaces, and to foster market dynamics.

Keywords

Shrinking cities, demolition, segregation, greening, urban decline

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Introduction

Contemporary approaches to urban decline increasingly rely on a regime of policy innovation and technical application. Local state representatives, policymakers, planners, and foundations have coalesced around an amalgam of progressive environmentalism and urban renewal in growing numbers of shrinking cities in Europe and North-America. In the US, the rhetoric around this techno-green approach to ''un-developing'' the city is situated both as an antidote to mass mortgage foreclosures and economic crisis and as a novel engagement with chronic decline in the core of Rust Belt cities. This seemingly apolitical approach is presented as essential to arrest an urban crisis. The shrinking city is increasingly portrayed as a site for new conceptions of the urban, one of gardens and villages that are both ecologically intentioned and economically viable.

However, the tools and practices of this model, the bulldozer, the withdrawal of services, and redirection of resources to neighborhoods with greater profit potential mirror previous urban development practices while following the contour lines of urban segregation in cities in the northern US. These approaches to urban shrinkage diverge from contemporary urban development in that the most permanent and regressive components of urban triage, service withdrawal, demolition, and state abandonment are utilized to drive displacement without gentrification and to clear-cut threats to state-led gentrification primarily in low-income communities of color. The demolition of and state withdrawal from neighborhoods is a response to the organized abandonment of previous decades and the asset stripping of the financial crisis (Gilmore, 2008; Rugh and Massey, 2010). Rather than seeking to reimagine the city center for the middle-class as has been classically done in many postindustrial cities for the last two decades (Rousseau, 2009), the turn toward mass demolition of the urban neighborhoods in decline, creates moats, wilds, and wastelands, between these places and more typical gentrification projects.[1] The bulldozers of the state turn under neglected swaths of these cities while physically constructing new social and racial frontiers, with algorithms and maps aligned to markets rather than populations.

Shrinking cities have long served as privileged sites for the experimentation of ''innovative'' urban policies. Since the 1960s, these sites have played a key role in debates on redevelopment strategies and the role of the state at all levels in producing and managing the dynamic of uneven development (Beauregard, 2003; Harvey, 1989). The great financial crisis created the context for this type of experimentation by destabilizing property markets and accelerating decline in low-income neighborhoods. In cities such as Buffalo, Cleveland, Detroit, St Louis, and Toledo, abandonment and disinvestment provoked the adoption of ''new'' approaches, portrayed as ''innovative'' or ''alternative'' strategies (Béal and Rousseau, 2014; Coppola, 2014).

These practices, labeled as ''smart shrinkage'' or ''right-sizing'' have gained considerable interest among academics. Recent work on urban shrinkage is dominated by planning scholars who often adopt a descriptive and normative approach to urban policies in the context of decline (Aalbers and Bernt, 2018; Béal et al., 2016). For these scholars, ''smart shrinkage'' is based on an acceptance of decline and a will to adapt the city, in whole or part, for a future without growth. It is also characterized by the implementation of policies addressing vacancy and abandonment such as land banking and alternative zoning categories for urban gardens and blotting (the adoption of vacant lots by adjacent neighbors). The tools these policies rely on, such as mass demolition, are described as both a necessity and as making possible ''alternative'' and ''creative'' reuse of vacant space. However, for critical scholars, these strategies rely on a spatially, socially, and racially selective vision of urban redevelopment with some neighborhoods deemed viable

and others intentionally abandoned. As such, these strategies echo past programs and practice like urban renewal, redlining, and benign neglect (Aalbers, 2014; Rhodes and Russo, 2013). These arguments critique the claims of state actors, foundations, and urban practitioners that smart shrinkage is a neutral and technical rationality (Akers, 2015). But it is precisely the ''alternative'' green reuses of vacant land resulting from the implementation of selective demolition policies that makes this new round of urban redevelopment so difficult to criticize for urban movements. This article argues smart shrinkage and right sizing policies should be analyzed as a techno-green fix. This is an urban redevelopment strategy that allocates austerity through technological abstractions and environmental rhetoric to resolve the longstanding crises of urban decline and its acceleration following the twinned shocks of the last decade. Over the last century, technology has been central to the planning and execution of neighborhood development and undevelopment from conceptualizing slums through photography over a century ago to the contemporary digital renderings of landscape architects of lush parks that erase former neighborhoods (Akers, 2017; Kirkpatrick, 2015). ''Green'' solutions are at the forefront of managing decline, reframing the politics of abandonment and demolition while both obscuring the disparate racial impacts in the political imaginary of planners and public officials and reifying the racialized hierarchies of property markets.

The application of this approach in the Rust Belt takes the form of mass demolition in primarily Black neighborhoods and low-income areas. If redevelopment of these areas is acknowledged at all it is generally within the context of passive environmental uses with few people rather than as active or stabilized neighborhoods. The progressive ideals of this green rhetoric and an assumed apolitics of technology facilitate this redefinition of the city, it uses, and who belongs. These programs and practices are often directed, overseen, and funded by organizations and government agencies operating beyond the local scale or as quasi-governmental agencies. Though an imperfect binary, these institutions and their directors often operate from majority white suburbs while deciding the fate of neighborhoods in majority Black cities. These primarily white institutions constructing contemporary geographies of segregation by determining the fate of the city and majority Black neighborhoods through the disposition and demolition of property (Harris, 1992).

The longer history of technology and rhetoric in the remaking of US cities is deeply implicated in the geographies of urban segregation while operating within the logics of racial capitalism. The racialized hierarchies of property markets are evidenced across the last century from the maintenance and regulation of the slums through exclusion and covenants (Gotham, 2002), the systematic devaluation and organized abandonment of redlining (Gordon, 2004; Hanlon, 2011), the targeted demolition of urban renewal (Baldwin, 1963; Ryan, 2012), block busting and contract selling (Satter, 2009), and predatory subprime lending (Darden and Wyly, 2010). The systematic devaluation and demolition of predominantly Black spaces in the inner city concomitantly devalues these spaces while producing opportunities for White pioneers to unlock potential values (Badger et al., 2019; Perry et al., 2018). The postpolitical management of a techno-green fix both frames abandonment within broader ecological goals while reinforcing racialization in property markets. In an analysis of contemporary development practices in Detroit, Safransky (2017) argues, these politics has been ''haunted by colonial conquest, historical racialized dispossession, and a state that has perpetuated white property privilege.'' Both the foreclosure crisis and the right-sizing strategies implemented as fixes to land abandonment demonstrate the fluidity of white property privilege from its earliest rights to land and labor to its contemporary exercise through power and access to economic opportunity (Harris, 1992). The broader effects of the most recent crises in the United States were

disproportionately borne by communities of color, and these same communities are now the target of state-led displacement and a predatory housing market that are shifting geographies of segregation (Akers and Seymour, 2018; Roy, 2017; Safransky, 2014; Seymour and Akers, 2019). The emergence of green solutions such as low-density or urban agriculture—often portrayed as progressive management of decline—is part of this movement. These green practices demonstrate the instrumental role of environmental sustainability in the (re)production of social, and above all, racial frontiers within the city (Heynen, 2016; McClintock, 2017; Rosol et al., 2017; Smith, 2008; Tretter, 2016). For all its seductive assets, the techno-green fix appears as a powerful urban redevelopment strategy that constructs the shrinking city as manageable islands of urban development while accelerating displacement without gentrification in long established low-income communities of color and reinforcing the racialization of property markets.

In this paper, we analyze this techno-green fix through a critical analysis of the strategies implemented in Cleveland, Ohio, a city "emblematic" of urban decline (Souther, 2017). We argue that Cleveland's urban strategy reinforces existing dynamics of extreme social and racial segregation between the eastern and western banks of the Cuyahoga River by targeting punitive measures to the east and allocating development resources to the west and select eastern sites such as university and medical corridors established through Urban Renewal in earlier decades. The intensity of the foreclosure crisis in Cleveland generated novel political responses to deal with urban decline. Yet these strategies hew to the racial boundaries and class divisions that marked Cleveland's growth and decline in the 20th century. The Cuyahoga County Land Bank (CCLB) plays a central role in these new strategies through the implementation of programs mixing renovation, demolition, and support to green uses of vacant spaces, which are often portrayed as "progressive" (Alexander, 2011) or as "consciously managerial" (Hackworth, 2014). In our analysis, the function of the land bank is to both erase the complexities of racial-spatial ordering on Cleveland's east side while concomitantly generating vacant swaths to protect areas of potential or active state-led gentrification efforts. It serves as a powerful tool for suburban elites in both greening and whitening the city. In Cleveland, this suburban takeover relies on two dimensions. The first is symbolic: promoting a low-density, green-friendly suburban and exurban "bourgeois utopias" lifestyle (Fishman, 2008) in the dense postindustrial city. The second dimension is more material: these new, "postcrash" urban planning tools allow the white political elite, who ran the city for decades before being marginalized by suburbanization and demographic change, to reconstitute its power at the county and state levels and reclaim strategic issues of urban development.

This strategy is framed through a postpolitical narrative of technical management and of "greening" the shrinking postindustrial city (Swyngedouw, 2009) This so-called neutral management of decline relies on the market, particularly real estate markets, as the arbiter of success. For current officials, the market is a mysterious force appeased by the demolition of neighborhoods on the city's east side and eastern inner ring suburbs. Some of these areas are targeted for their proximity to educational and cultural institutions that could anchor development. Other areas are seen as economically unviable. This reliance on the market has peculiar ways of distributing ameliorative and punitive actions, both historically and in the present as they remain tethered to the racial-spatial ordering of cities.

This research is part of a larger project comparing redevelopment policies in shrinking cities in France, Germany, and the US. Cleveland was chosen as a research site because of its reputation for a "progressive" model of decline management in the international planning literature and media. We draw on 40 semi-structured interviews conducted in July 2016

with various stakeholders in Cleveland (land bank administrators, city and county elected officials, community development actors). We collected and analyzed demolition data in Cleveland. Finally, we toured the east side of Cleveland conducting interviews with residents participating in the land bank's side yard program and making observations in gardens.

Redefining the City: CCLB

The chronic decline of Cleveland has generated a number of strategies and policies intended to revitalize the local economy and stabilize low-income neighborhoods. Mass demolition and targeted investment are central to these strategies. The land bank created in the wake of the foreclosure crisis has been a central player overseeing demolition and engaging in the development and deployment of tools to target areas considered beyond market viability. Its mass demolition strategy echoes Urban Renewal and Urban Triage but differs from previous programs in several aspects: its scale, its entrepreneurial approach, and its "suburban" roots.

A brief history of demolition in Cleveland

By the mid-1950s, Cleveland's population was in decline. The loss of manufacturing in sectors such as railroad and steel took a particular toll. These conditions were compounded as whites and wealth shifted to Cleveland's booming suburbs. The city's race lines were thickly carved through the racialization of mortgage lending in the redlining of the Homeowners Loan Corporation. The effects of targeted disinvestment intensified during the Second Great Migration as Blacks moved to the city looking for work only to find limited employment and few housing opportunities due to entrenched segregation and economic restructuring. Many of these migrants were forced to settle on Cleveland's east side. The active disinvestment of these neighborhoods played a crucial role in growing racial and ethnic tensions with uprisings in neighborhoods such as Hough, Glenville, Fairfax, and St Clair-Superior. The policy responses were contrasted and controversial. Mayor Ralph Locher (1962–1967) initiated an aggressive demolition strategy that was partly based on the use of deliberate arsons (Kerr, 2012). The objective was to raze portions of the east side to facilitate the extension of universities and hospitals. A policy implemented by Mayor Carl Stokes (the first Black mayor of Cleveland elected in 1968) was an elaborate and controversial strategy to disperse underprivileged Black populations throughout the city. While influential local actors, such as the Cleveland Foundation, were strong proponents of Locher's mass demolition strategy, Stokes' administration developed a more nuanced approach—what the planning department called "equity planning" (Krumholz, 1982)—emphasizing population dispersion, limited demolitions, and priority on the rehabilitation of existing housing stock (Moore, 2003).

In 1971, Ralph Perks defeated Stokes and mass demolition replaced the policy nuance that had followed the urban rebellions in Cleveland. Perks, a Republican and ally of the local economic elite, aligned with the Cleveland Foundation and their approach to urban development. Cleveland Foundation chairman John Folcker declared that massive demolition was necessary to "eliminate the surplus of housing [...] and raise the rental rate to the level which [would] sustain operating costs and support the loans to rehabilitate good units" (Folcker, quoted by Kerr, 2012). The Perks administration adopted a strategy of "planned shrinkage" adapted to a political context of declining

federal funding and a preoccupation with the issue of urban abandonment. This triage policy primarily targeted Black neighborhoods for demolition. In the 1970s, Hough, a low-income Black neighborhood on the east side lost almost half of its original housing stock through 8500 demolitions. Its population decreased nearly 50% falling from 53,500 to 22,500 residents.

From the 1970s to the mid-2000s Cleveland alternated between urban development strategies though it relied less on demolition in the 1980s and 1990s. The progressive politics of the Kucinich administration (Swanstrom, 1985) gave way to the aggressive entrepreneurial strategy of George Voinovich (1980–1989). As mayor, Voinovich focused on downtown redevelopment. This entrepreneurial strategy was largely ineffective in addressing socio-economic problems in the city (Keating et al., 1995). However, it continued to be pursued by Voinovich's successors, much as it was in cities across the United States (Harvey, 1989).

Landbanks and the management of extreme decline

Cleveland's decline deepened in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Though much of the US Federal Reserve and global financial institutions remained blind to the risks associated with the spread of subprime mortgages, the impact in some of the city's most deprived neighborhoods was visible as foreclosures doubled between 1995 and 2001. They doubled again by 2007. This led to extensive abandonment in areas such as Hough, Mount Pleasant, and Slavic Village where half of the housing stock was foreclosed (Kotlowitz, 2009). Only New Orleans (Hurricane Katrina) and Detroit lost a greater percentage of population than Cleveland between 2000 and 2010 (−17.1% according to the US Census). General indicators of decline such as the poverty rate (40%) and property abandonment (15,000) increased rapidly. While the crisis was greatest on the city's east side it also began to affect previously stable suburban areas such as South Euclid and Cleveland Heights.

The pace and depth of decline triggered local reactions. By 2002, local political elites had tried and failed to pass statewide legislation banning predatory lending. In 2008, the city filed suit against 21 banks and lenders. This also failed as the court ruled the city had not established the causal link between subprime lending and urban abandonment. These examples illustrate the willingness of local actors to scale responses to the foreclosure crisis to address its root causes and the difficulties in pursuing new strategies or new mechanisms to deal with chronic urban decline. According to the former County Treasurer, one of the key actors in the creation of the land bank, the context of absolute emergency was crucial:

> And part of why we started the land bank, I always used the metaphor of a war. If this is a war between the people and the banks, banks won. And we knew that by 2005, 2006, it was over. There was nothing left. We could not fight anymore, value was leaving. The city was a disaster; the crisis had not yet been completed. (Interview, former County Treasurer, July 2016)

Since the 1970s, the City of Cleveland operated a land bank. Based on a managerial model, it was integrated into the city council. As a consequence, the Cleveland Land Bank had neither the financial resources nor the technical skills to manage all abandoned properties in the city. The limits of this tool led a group of city and county officials to pursue a better funded and more empowered countywide institution, now the CCLB.

Their main objective was to allow the CCLB to rapidly acquire blighted properties and return them to ''productive'' use through rehabilitation or demolition. The creation of the

CCLB required State legislation, a fraught proposition in Ohio, a state with strong conservative and anti-urban values.

> It was very controversial. And when it passed, the legislature said, 'We're only going to allow you to create one land bank in Ohio, just one, Cuyahoga County.' And it was very helpful to me because I knew many of them. I knew them because I had been there before warning about the foreclosure crisis. They would look away when they saw me, but I knew them. I would say, 'Remember when I was here, and I told you what was going to happen?' They had bad memories. (Interview, former County Treasurer, July 2016)

The legislation placed two conditions to the creation of the land bank. First, it was to follow an entrepreneurial approach of land management (a selective, as opposed to a catch-all, process of acquisitions, rehabilitation or demolition, and an efficient resale strategy). Second, it would function without the creation of new taxes. The Land bank would be funded by capturing a portion of the interest on unpaid property taxes. This provided CCLB with approximately $6.5 million annually to finance its operations. Despite these constraints, the ''new'' land bank was granted more extensive powers than its ''old'' counterpart. The parameters for intervention had fewer limits. It developed a proactive entrepreneurial strategy centered on the demolition of large portions of the city's east side. Between 2007 and 2015, 8000 homes were demolished by the CCLB alone, mainly in Black neighborhoods (see Figure 1 Map of demolition). The land bank has proposed to demolish an additional 5000 properties.

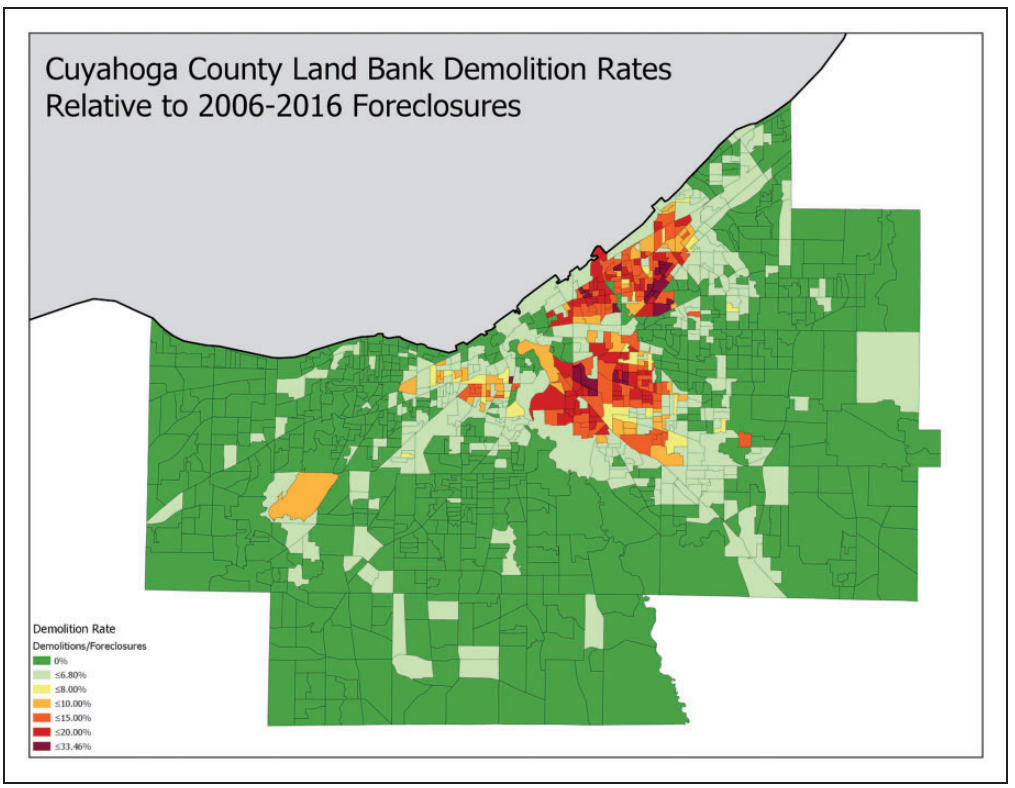

Figure 1. CCLB demolitions of foreclosed homes 2006–2016.

Division among political elites

The demolition strategy of the CCLB is often characterized by policymakers, funders, and those involved in its development as the primary way to invigorate markets and respond to urban decline (Rosenman and Walker, 2016). A narrative similar to urban renewal and the Cleveland Foundation backed programs of mass demolition in the 1970s. Yet, the creation of the CCLB was also a product of division among local political elites. Following McQuarrie (2005), we can trace the beginning of this division to the 1970s, when the postwar compromise on a "growth machine" from which the segregated Black neighborhoods were excluded collapsed under the intensification of the industrial crisis and the riots. The resulting political crisis finally led to a compromise in which "growth-oriented elites were able to focus neighborhood organizations on physical redevelopment rather than protesting the distribution of resources. In exchange, neighborhoods received resources and significantly expanded neighborhood control over development" (McQuarrie, 2005: 261).

This local compromise was challenged by the foreclosure crisis. Two groups emerged with different conceptions of the city's future, different scales of intervention, and finally different governance tools and arrangements. One group coalesced around the Black political elite that have dominated the city council since Franck Jackson was elected mayor in 2005. This group controls and relies on many of the city's community development institutions. They do not have a radically new agenda but have adapted the neoliberal urban development approach pursued by Republican mayoral administrations in the 1980s. Unlike Voinovich and Michael White in the 1990s, this group pursues development opportunities beyond the downtown core focusing on community development at the neighborhood level. Councilors maintain political support by distributing grants and facilitating local requests in their ward. Several interviewees complained about the clientelist feature taken by this redistribution, especially in the wards located in the deprived neighborhoods of the east. The second group is primarily composed of the white political elite that led municipal government for decades. Now less influential in the city, this group utilized the crisis to reconstitute its power at the county and state level and reclaim strategic issues of urban development, particularly through the CCLB. The demolition and the greening of eastern parts of the city promoted by the white suburban elite is not based on grassroots demands which would be mediated by community organizations, but on the expertise of environmental organizations such as the Western Land Reserve Conservancy and its Thriving Communities Institute which is directed by the main initiator of the Land bank legislation in Ohio, Jim Rokakis. Through reports and conferences, this organization has been instrumental in pushing for green solutions such as low-density urbanism, urban agriculture, and the reforesting of the city.

The division between these two groups was evident in the creation of the CCLB. The institution continues to be challenged by city councilors, especially those representing the city's east side:

> When we passed the land bank bill here, you should know, that the strongest opposition came from the City of Cleveland. The biggest beneficiary, by far, has been the city. The land bank has done phenomenal work in the city, and yet the city, because they fear loss of power, and loss of control, fought the land bank right down the final vote on the floor of the legislature. (Interview, former County Treasurer 2016)

East side councilors characterize the land bank as a takeover of the city by a few actors who were once city councilors in the 1980s.

The disparity of demolition: Race and deconstruction

In this section we argue the demolition program in Cleveland is a political project carrying forward the racialized logics of urban renewal programs in the US over the past century. Proponents claim using market indicators and data make the process rational and apolitical. For program funders such as the Western Reserve Land Conservancy, the disparate impact on Black neighborhoods is simply a reflection of the foreclosure crisis (Ford, 2018). Both market rationality and technocratic approaches to urban development and planning are deeply implicated in the perpetuation of segregation in American cities. In essence, claims of demolition as the solution are an unsurprising end to the inability of urban regimes to address systemic and structural inequalities. It is a decision to erase rather than redresses the ''urban crisis.'' In inner city neighborhoods with limited gentrification potential, demolition continues to be the first and last preference for urban policymakers.

The faith in markets

In interviews with officials tied to Cleveland's demolition program, three key assumptions emerged to explain officials and funders reliance on market indicators and real estate measures to guide their work and funding decisions. One, most housing in inner city neighborhoods is unsalvageable. Two, people are not returning to the city. Three, job opportunities would continue to be limited. For these officials, foundation employees, and nonprofit developers, there were two caveats; one, Millennials believed in the city and were moving to the inner core and two, new development would be possible in corridors anchored by universities and medical institutions. In interviews with residents in some of the city's most segregated and poor neighborhoods, conversations focused on the forces that hindered community building such as limited educational opportunities, few jobs, and economic and physical insecurity. City and county government were often seen as contributing to these issues rather than resolving them if they were acknowledged as intervening at all.

This distance between officials and the neighborhood is often captured in critical academic literature (Kinder, 2016). In Cleveland, interviewees display a clear understanding of power as indifferent and often punitive:

> I don't mean to be dismissive of that, the land bank is certainly not a human development. It's not a people-focused strategy at all. And I think that one of the disappointing things for me about the land bank has been that it was a very best-kept secret for a while. So, the first couple years, only people in community development and government knew about the land bank. And then the word got out. Whether that was intentional or unintentionally, the word gets out. People are like, 'Oh wow! I've been living next to these vacant structures forever; they've been a hazard in my neighborhood forever.' I have some agency; I want to do something with it. Knock on the land bank's door for like, 'How do I access a property or do whatever?' There's been very little response there. And I think people are discovering that the land bank is not an apparatus of people. It's an apparatus of industry. And that industry is community development, and a little bit economic development, folks in the economic development world paying attention a little bit, but it's not a resource for people. (Interview, neighborhood development agency, July 2016)

For officials, redevelopment was about market potential or the lack of it, not the existing community. The varied scale and scope in the perspective of our interviewees demonstrate the ways in which these plans and practices differently affect residents. This difference is also generated by the perspective of officials that see blight and poverty as synonymous and

individuals as carries of these attributes. This conception of residents combined with the desire to further privilege potential developers manifests in a demolition program that maps onto past urban renewal projects and also primarily targets low-income communities of color, a program that offers lucrative incentives for development, expends millions on demolition while offering low-income residents side lots that are sinking into basements that were improperly filled.

Under the data, the politics

The financial crisis generated severe restructuring in Rust Belt cities in the US. It accelerated the long slow decline of inner city neighborhoods and severely dampened property tax revenues these cities depend on to survive. Publicly funded residential demolition became the primary response following the crisis. Cleveland and Cuyahoga County are at the forefront in developing and championing mass demolition programs. Though the scale of Cleveland's program and ambition are dwarfed by the number of demolitions in cities like Detroit, its city and county officials, foundations, and private business have coalesced into one of the most effective urban decline machines in the United States. This coalition has drawn heavily on the technocrats and experts selling new mapping technologies and econometric models in declining cities throughout the Great Lakes. These small companies, such as Detroit-based Dynamo Metrics and Loveland Technologies among others, run reams of municipal data through models and transform these findings into maps they claim demonstrate the necessity and efficacy of demolition as a contemporary urban solution.[2]

These private companies and the public and philanthropic agencies that hire them insist on apolitical/ahistorical understandings of both the data they use and the cities that serve as their research subject. One firm owner argued decline is "an information crisis" not an outcome of racial segregation and poverty in the American city (Gallagher, 2015). In these new urbanist analyses of decline, models are left intentionally blind to these issues while the foundation funded reports from these companies offer cursory socio-economic statistics. An urban analytics founder argued "property is nothing more than price" and that the rise and fall in values was the measure of a program's effectiveness (Interview, firm executive, 2016). For those in the decline coalition, dealing with both an immediate crisis and the long-term ineffectiveness of public policy in prior decades, this "apolitical" technology driven market-first approach offers a means to address the current urban crisis. Yet, it merely follows the logic of slum clearance and urban renewal in utilizing data and the market as justification to target particular areas of the city. It is deeply political, and this absence of reflection and analysis reproduces the racialized hierarchies performed by property markets.

Over 70% of CCLB's residential demolitions occurred in predominantly Black neighborhoods on the east side (see Figure 1—Foreclosure/Demo). Public officials and demolition proponents point to the disparate impact of subprime foreclosure in these neighborhoods as the reason for concentrated removal. Land Bank officials claim these are the areas with the greatest need for demolition (Farkas, 2017). Foundations claim demolition is the solution because there is no market for the properties (Ford, 2017) and because there is "a significant positive value gaps between distressed residential structures and vacant lots" (Griswold, 2014). Still, out of the top 10 block groups for mortgage foreclosure, three were on Cleveland's east side, and yet these were the only block groups of the 10 with a high volume of demolition. There are a number of factors at play in explaining why demolition rates are so much higher in these areas; the condition of

housing stock, the types of property lost in foreclosure, postforeclosure care, but heavily segregated areas of Cleveland experience demolition at higher rate even when accounting for foreclosures.

The arguments of demolition proponents echo those of earlier urban reformers determined to take on blight, but what is absent from current rhetoric is the promise of immediate development (Akers, 2017). Instead, these areas are characterized by the lack of a market or as unsalvageable. This rhetoric is further embedded in the landscape as demolition crews leave basements and debris to lower demolition costs while increasing the cost of any future development plan. The production of a dysfunctional market on the east side is the result of segregation, public policies that enabled and maintained it both in the allocation of resources to the suburbs and by withholding capital from inner city neighborhoods, and market-first policies used to plow under neighborhoods for marginal economic development projects. The foreclosure crisis was an additional blow to already hamstrung neighborhoods on the city's east side.

Racially motivated policy such as redlining creates path dependencies that continue to manifest in the present. As early as the 1940s, Cleveland's east side was designated as the site for Black settlement. Demolition and redlining are not directly connected, but the active withholding of investment capital in these areas generates conditions that make aging housing stock cheaper to demolish than renovate decades later. In the postwar years, public officials utilized the federal urban renewal program to target low-income communities of color for commercial redevelopment. The limited number of demolitions within urban renewal boundaries in the current period demonstrates the clear-cutting methods of these earlier interventions. CCLB's focus on demolition in areas such as University and Euclid reflect targeting strategies in the few areas designated for gentrification, such as the Cleveland Clinic, Cleveland State University, and Case Western Reserve University.

The particular geographies of racialized capitalism are illustrated in the prevalence of demolition in Cleveland's predominantly Black neighborhoods and the conspicuous absence of demolition on the city's majority white west side and extremely white suburbs to the south and west of the city. The process of segregation and the hoarding of municipal resources by surrounding suburbs are illustrated in postwar growth of Cuyahoga County spurred by redlining and government subsidies for developers (Checkoway, 1980; Freund, 2010; Sugrue, 2014). The history of demolition is one of market production, often justified by market risk (redlining), market potential (urban renewal), and market absence (contemporary demolition). In each of these instances, data, new forms of technology, and claims that these technocratic approaches were apolitical were utilized to support these programs (Akers, 2017; Gordon, 2004). These segregated geographies of profit and loss demonstrate how social difference is ''baked-in'' to property data, economic models, and market analysis not absent from them.

Greening Cleveland's east side

Following the subprime crisis, green development has become an increasingly common urban redevelopment in shrinking US cities. Critical scholars examining these practices in Detroit are skeptical these programs will achieve their promises of greater social justice given the spatial, social, and racial selectivity in its current deployment (Kirkpatrick, 2015; Safransky, 2014). In this section, we build on these arguments to demonstrate how ''green'' discourses reproduce social capital and political power for the white coalition's demolition strategy in Cleveland. The ''progressive'' appeal of the CCLB is largely drawn

from its stance on "green" use of demolished lots and urban agriculture. However, this progressive ideal is debatable. The "greening" strategy is part of a dual management of the inner city that passes the costs of city maintenance to residents in some places and serves as levers for eco-gentrification in others. More importantly, the "greening" of the east side is central to the struggle for control of Cleveland's redevelopment between the Black municipal elite and the white suburban power structure. In the end, the "green" stance of the land bank both complements the technical discourse justifying the demolition of Black neighborhoods by neutralizing the race and class politics of these policies.

The side yard program: Transferring urban maintenance to the residents?

The CCLB often uses imagery of urban agriculture in Cleveland to promote its work (Figure 2). The land bank draws on these images of "green" uses to legitimate its work in two ways. First, urban agriculture appears as a "progressive" use of vacant land. It is framed as assisting residents, particularly those in "food deserts" generated by abandonment on the east side. Second, urban agriculture and more generally the greening of the vacant parcels is seen as a means to "stabilize" neighborhoods affected by the subprime crisis. The CCLB "side yard" program sells vacant plots to neighboring residents for a small fee. The plot is "greened" by CCLB sub-contractors that are financed by federal demolition funds.

Figure 2. Urban agriculture is a prominent part of the CCLB's marketing strategy.

The buyer chooses from three types of landscaping. As the director of the land bank explained, the maintenance of the vacant parcels by the neighbors is a key element on the strategy of the land bank:

> It's best to give it to somebody who lives next door. So long as they are eligible, they are paying their taxes, they are not ready to fall in, we will sell them for one hundred or two hundred, I forget. And there's a little application on our website, but those come with a grant for one of three templates that are greening. If you're interested, they're very pretty, it's not anything... It's not a rainforest but it's very pretty. The templates, you can pick a template and we do the work. We hire, and we have eligible, up to five thousand dollars on those. It's very popular. (Interview, direction of the Cuyahoga Land Bank, July 2016)

However, a visit to residents participating in the side yard program revealed other issues. For example, Cheryl—a retired Black woman living in Glenville—saw the demolition of the abandoned house next door as an opportunity to disrupt the drug traffic on the corner near her home. She worked to develop her side lot into a community hub that could host birthday parties and local gatherings and serve as another source of income selling food on Friday evenings in the summer. Cheryl added a grill, a garden, paths, seating, and a shade structure to the lot. But most activity had ceased by the summer of 2016. Her lot was sinking into the basement of the demolished structure (Figure 3).

The ground was pitched and uneven. Cheryl still used it for family events, but she did not think it was safe for neighborhood cookouts and gatherings. Her neighbors also felt the garden was not safe and told us they would not come again for a meeting. It seemed, for a time, that this side lot captured some of the promise planners and urban practitioners see in blotting and side lot programs. Yet most of this was undone by cost-cutting in the demolition program that left Cheryl and others with sinking side lots that they could not afford to fix and were no longer the county or city's responsibility. But in broader sense,

Figure 3. A fissure in the side lot Cheryl purchased from the CCLB.

neither Cheryl nor her neighbors saw homeowners taking over vacant lots as solving issues in their neighborhood. Cheryl and the other residents made it clear that the land bank was destroying their neighborhood through demolition, only making things worse in an already poor area. Countering the designation of their neighborhood as "dead" by the land bank, some of the residents had set up a small company to quickly buy, renovate, and rent the houses targeted for demolition (Figure 4). In a neighborhood of aging residents, death, assisted care, or a move to be closer to grandchildren, continued to decrease the number of residents. Cheryl said she would never leave, and that might be the case, but her next door neighbors said they were headed to Georgia before winter set in and their daughter, who lived in Atlanta, made it clear they would not be back.

The decision to leave basements at the site of demolished houses demonstrates the absolute abandonment of the neighborhood by city and county officials. It is portrayed as a cost saving measure and efficient use of limited resources by demolition officials. Basements filled with debris raise the cost of any development by thousands of dollars. In depressed housing markets, this type of cost signals it is no longer a viable site. The transferring of side lots is promoted as a way to address food insecurity through urban gardening, but it is also a means of transferring the cost of care from the government to local residents. Cheryl's side lot on the east side is the material manifestation of a policy of neighborhood abandonment "tearing down the city to save it" and an austerity framework downloading the costs of decline to its poorest residents in the guise of a progressive environmental approach to decline. In the end, understanding Cleveland's numerous side lots used to grow vegetables in the food desert in the light of the city's racialized massive demolition policy requires to keep in mind the ambiguity of urban agriculture. As McClintock (2018: no pagination) argues these practices

> serve as both a tool of racial dispossession and a tool of resistance to these same processes and their outcomes. Urban agriculture is not *inherently* one way or another - it is simply an everyday

Figure 4. Glenville residents survey property repairs. Some residents had begun pooling funds to purchase and repair houses in order to prevent mass demolition by the land bank.

practice. *How it is mobilized and by whom*, however, can make all the difference in whether it serves to bolster racial capitalism or to undermine it.

In the case of Cleveland's techno-green fix, we should add, however, two more questions: *who* is benefitting from these products and *where*, does the promotion of such a narrative come from?

The Cleveland narrative of urban agriculture and forestry

Beyond the side yard program, CCLB's land consolidation operations allow for projects on a larger scale. These are concentrated in the central districts of Kinsman and Central, some of the poorest neighborhoods in the city. The local CDC has attempted to capitalize on the volume of vacant lots and several city ordinances to develop an area dedicated to urban agriculture including chicken farming, beekeeping, and aquaculture. Most projects in the Kinsman Agricultural Zone were not profitable and were abandoned. The limits of urban agriculture as a lever for social and economic redevelopment within a poor neighborhood were described by the director of the Kinsman CDC as follows:

> One challenge is that agriculture itself, it is hard work. It's very hard work. Agriculture in our country is highly subsidized, which is those who are doing it on a large scale. So, if you're doing it on a really small scale, you have no subsidy. It takes, there are very low margins. Especially if you're doing it to make money, there are very, very low margins. So practically, it's difficult, from a financial standpoint, and from a labor standpoint. (Interview, director of CDC Burton, Bell, Carr, July 2016)

Central is also hosting Green City Growers, a large-scale urban farm dedicated to the production of lettuce. The farm is operated as a cooperative owned by its employees, which all come from the neighborhood. Initial capitalization for the project was provided The Cleveland Fund through University Circle, Inc., a nonprofit focused on development, and built on a piece of land assembled by the CCLB. University Circle, Inc. focuses on new development in and around Case Western Reserve University on the city's east side. As one of the interviewees told us, the University Circle needs to expand if it wants to stay competitive. This expansion, however, can only be done at the expanse of the surrounding neighborhoods. The nationally praised "Cleveland model" by which the "anchored institutions" help to create a sustainable development in the impoverished neighborhoods of the shrinking city appears in this light as just another compromise: green jobs against demolition. One the one hand, urban agriculture, here, does indeed create good quality jobs. But on the other one, it also contributes to silencing voices against the demolition of predominantly Black neighborhoods.

Many of Cleveland's larger-scale and land bank-supported urban agriculture projects are fueled by the rapid growth of short-circuit food marketing in US cities. Urban researchers find such circuits to be levers for gentrification (Rosol, 2012), especially in declining US cities (McClintock, 2018). In Cleveland, several investors are positioned both 'downstream,' provisioning local service industries (micro-breweries, farmers markets, etc.) in gentrified or gentrifying areas on the west side and "upstream," buying low-priced plots from CCLB mainly located on the east side. The pragmatic vision of the land bank leads it to favor the sale to local residents and thereby delegate the "greening" of the city to them. The implementation of such a strategy in the name of "stabilization" is also accompanied by the search for major investors: as indicated by the director of the land bank, "I love green. But I've got to have somebody that can afford to do green" (Interview, CCLB Director, July 2016).

This search for investors wishing to confer a "green" use on the land is more generally in line with the gentrification strategy implemented by several powerful players in Cleveland's governance, and in particular the CDCs. Overall, their action favors the settlement of young middle-class households in impoverished central neighborhoods in Cleveland. For example, a Neighborhood Progress executive, the agency managing all CDCs operating in Cleveland, said:

> So, I'm always curious about the housing product of organization like Neighborhood Progress and a lot of our CDCs are building, re-building, rehabbing whatever. Who is it for, and what is that group's economic reality? And I think that's where it's really complex in our work, because it can't be, the products that we're creating, or rehabbing are not for the people that are currently there. Not in the way that we are rehabbing them, it can't be, because we know those people's economic reality. They can't afford it, and we know they can't afford it. (Interview, Neighborhood Progress, July 2016)

Gentrification in Cleveland is driven by government policies and resource allocation. It is concentrated in the West of the city (Detroit Shoreway, Tremont, Ohio City). The short-circuits allowed by the development of urban agriculture in the eastern districts provide a lever for this phenomenon as they accompany the "gourmetisation," that is to say the increasingly important role of nonindustrial and locally produced food, in the gentrification of American cities (Joassart-Marcelli and Bosco, 2014; Zukin, 2008) (Figure 5). The director of the land bank explained the interest of an owner of multiple restaurants located in the gentrified district of Ohio City for a large parcel assembled by the land bank:

> In the end, we have a winery that's going to take one acre. If you went down Twenty-Fifth there, I don't know if you remember some of the places, it was Great Lakes Brewery, there was Market

Figure 5. A farmer's market in the recent affluent development of Battery Park, in the West of the inner city. The farmer's market is managed by the property developers. Several of the producers come from the eastern part of Cleveland.

> Garden, there was Beer Market... Those are those, the primary partner in all of those restaurants is a man who they do all this stuff, locally grown things. They're very urban-oriented. And so, they're acquiring the other, they're acquiring the farm and allowing the winery to be there as well as locally grown food for those restaurants. It's a use. (Interview, direction of the Cuyahoga Land Bank, July 2016)

As a long-term de-densification tool, urban forestry appears a powerful tool to create scarcity and therefore, value, in shrinking cities. The recent creation of an urban forestry project in Detroit (Hantz Farms) by a local financial investor is the subject of local controversy, with the investor suspected of pursuing a speculative scheme buttressed by low cost transfers of municipal land under the guise of creating an urban forest. The urban forest planted in predominantly Black residential neighborhoods effectively prevents rehabilitation of these dwellings (Safransky, 2014). In Cleveland, the forest is intensely promoted as a "stabilization" tool, particularly by demolition proponents. The controversy around urban forestry in Cleveland reveals once again the conflict between the Black municipal elite and the suburban white elite running county agencies and foundations. The former county treasurer, now head of a foundation dedicated to promoting forestry in Cleveland, explained his opposition to the current mayor, who refuses to plant trees so as not to obstruct possible future private reinvestments in demolished neighborhoods:

> I love green space, and I think most people in cities, if they were made available, would take advantage of it. I think it's a good use. The mayor, we've had our problems. We've been fighting with the city. We have all this vacant land, we said to the city, "Let us plant trees." [They said] "No we don't want you to plant trees." [We said] "Why?" [They said] "Well we don't want to take care of them." [We said] "We'll take care of them." [They said] "No, we think there's going to be development there." [Laughs] [We said] "When? When?" So, we said to the city, "Let us plant, this is vacant lot, here's this tree, here's this lot. Let us plant along the rear lines, one, two, three, trees. We'll plant them. Leave the front, that's fine. And if you really have people that want to develop, and if worse comes to worst you'll move the tree, or you'll cut the tree down.

The controversy surrounding urban forestry reveals a more general conflict around the future of Cleveland. It illustrates how mass demolitions in the inner city create the opportunity to re-plan the city around a "green" vision derived from the ideals of white middle-class suburbs:

> So, for our organization is heavily involved in an effort called, 'Re-forest our city.' And we believe, they've done surveys and they've shown that Cleveland has a tree canopy coverage ratio of eighteen percent. Now that means, that if a raindrop falls from the sky, the chance of it hitting a tree in the city is eighteen percent. Which is very low. If you go to some of the more leafy suburbs like this one, it's about forty percent. There are some suburbs like Honey Valley and Gate's Mills and Moreland Hills where it's seventy percent. When I was a councilman in Cleveland, nobody ever called me and said, "Plant a tree." What they would do is call and say, 'Cut the tree down. I don't want to rake the leaves. I don't want to have to deal with it.' So, the point is, we have to create a little change here in the mindset.

Conclusion: Towards a postpolitical management of urban decline

The main development strategy in postcrash Cleveland is massive demolition supported by a techno-green fix. It is a remaking of the city through market driven technical approaches and a rhetoric of a progressive environmentalism. These practices draw a direct line between state-led gentrification practices, uneven development, and competing visions of urban

futures by local elites. The creation of the CCLB is embedded in the struggle between black and white elites in Cleveland. These factions' power lay in two different scales, the city and the county. Their struggles over the future of Cleveland and in the implementation of competing visions are born out in the various land use policies and approaches to chronic decline. Mass demolition of Black neighborhoods on the city's east side is not only a response to the crisis but also the restructuring of the racial spatial order in the city, one that prescribes a future for gentrifying neighborhoods on the city's west side and potential sites of gentrification around universities and hospitals and demolition, urban forests, and side lots for the rest. Finally, it demonstrates how this massive but selective demolition relies on a progressive narrative of ''greening'' to erase the urban crisis and remake the city, or at least the vacant swaths generated by demolition, into the tamed and controlled nature of the suburban form. Behind these green discourses, the rationality of the land bank is not the redevelopment of the city but redefining what is the city and demolishing the rest.

Green rhetoric obscures the disparate racial impact of mass demolition in this round of urban redevelopment. The decline of Cleveland's east side is an outcome of the logic racialized capital in which spaces are isolated, exploited, and disinvested. This techno-green fix utilizes the postpolitical consensus on data driven rationality, technology, and market measures in evacuating the politics of segregation, disinvestment, and housing access while simultaneously reinforcing racialization in property markets.

Demolition is both a tool inscribing racial and class meaning in the land and demarcating the limits of state and market actors' geographic imagination. For officials, the obstacles to Cleveland's redevelopment, lack of population growth, an aged and declining housing stock, and limited jobs are something that can be overcome in areas bordering civic institutions or already existing gentrification but intractable in other predominantly Black inner city neighborhoods. In these places, policies and programs focus on demolition first and the transfer (sometimes through assemblage) of vacant land to adjacent residents, neighbors, and organizations such as universities and clinics. Blotting and side lot programs are promoted as opportunities for property owners to have ''a larger yard'' for their kids to play in or to grow a garden. This rhetoric obscures the withdrawal of the state and the offloading of maintenance costs. It is portrayed as an opportunity for residents to attain the suburban dream, just one in which security is absent, the police force deadly, the neighboring houses are vacant, and side lots are sinking.

Highlights

- Links environmental rhetoric and demolition practices with longer history of racial segregation in Cleveland's urban development strategy.
- Demonstrates the divided racial politics of greening strategies and demolition programs in Cleveland.
- Introduces the concept of a techno-green fix as a means to analyze increasingly sophisticated development/undevelopment strategies in US cities.

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Notes

1. Mass demolition refers to the practice of demolishing thousands of vacant or abandoned houses. This was a common approach in for US cities particularly in the Great Lakes Region following the 2008 financial crisis.
2. These two companies were some of the earliest urban analytics and geovisualization contractors in Cleveland and Detroit. Other larger purveyors include The Reinvestment Fund out of Philadelphia, which has provided data and market mapping to over 20 cities.

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