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From Industrial Garden to Food Desert: Unearthing the Root Structure of Urban Agriculture in Oakland, California

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In this paper, I use a framework of urban political ecology to explore the rise of urban agriculture (UA) in Oakland, California. As part of a growing effort to reduce its "ecological footprint" and to guarantee access to nutritious food for the urban poor, the City of Oakland has recently embraced a goal of sourcing 30 percent of its food locally, a modest amount of which should come from UA. Many of these small gardens and farms are to be located in so-called "food deserts," low-income areas far from supermarkets, in the Oakland flatlands in order to provide access to fresh food as well as ecological and culinary knowledge to participants and customers. Recent critiques of some food justice initiatives, including urban garden programs, have argued that such projects are neoliberal in nature, emphasizing entrepreneurialism and self-betterment while filling in gaps left by the rolling back of the state. In this paper, I argue that a macro-level structural analysis of Oakland's history reveals the emancipatory role of UA. I demonstrate how flows of industrial capital and racialized urban planning throughout the 20th century concentrated the devaluation of capital to the flatlands, ultimately giving rise to food deserts. Following the logic of what Karl Polanyi referred to as capitalism's "double movement," food justice activists are mobilizing through UA to counter capital's uneven transformation of the flatlands.

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Introduction[1]

An old liquor store stands near the corner of 16th and Center in West Oakland. With its plastic sign cracked and yellowed, its paint pockmarked and peeling away in long lesions from the store's warped clapboard siding, it could be a clichéd metaphor for the decay of America's "inner cities" during the post-industrial era. But it is also representative of the disproportionate number of liquor stores in urban communities of color. These establishments often serve as the sole food retailer in areas that planners and food justice activists have come to call "food deserts." Across the street from the liquor store, the verdure of an urban garden spills through a chain link fence. A colorful orange and yellow sign hanging on the gate advertises a community food security project, welcoming passers-by into the cultivated chaos of garden vegetation. Flanking the entrance to the garden, a produce stand is stocked with a kaleidoscope of brightly colored peppers, persimmons, chard, and salad greens, sold at cost to the ethnically diverse crowd gathered around the display.

When viewed as a metaphor, this actual urban streetscape seems almost contrived—a moral standoff between garden and liquor store, nutrition and intoxication, growth and senescence, stewardship and abandon. As symbols, these two spaces have come to represent opposing forces in the struggle for food justice in the food deserts of the Oakland "flatlands" and elsewhere [see Figure 1]. But on a material level, these two types of food outlets have very real

[1] My deepest gratitude goes to Deborah Lustig, David Minkus, Christine Trost, and the 2007 – '09 Graduate Fellows at the Institute for the Study of Social Change for feedback, insight, and support at various points during the writing process. Many thanks also go to Rachel Brahinsky, Troy Duster, Julie Guthman, Seth Lunine, Kristin Reynolds, Nathan Sayre, and Dick Walker for their comments at various stages of this paper. John Lindenbaum's close reading was particularly helpful, and the insight that processed food pollutes twice [see Footnote 24] is his. Thanks also to Annie Myers for her map of Oakland's gardens. All remaining errors are my own. Finally, a shout out to all the urban farmers, guerrilla gardeners, and food justice activists in the Bay Area and beyond whose work inspires me to keep mine real.

impacts on urban livelihoods, provisioning low-income communities with quite different types of food—fresh organic produce or highly-processed packaged food—leading to very real differences in nutritional intake and wide-reaching effects on public health.

Figure 1: Oakland, California and flatlands districts referenced in this paper.

Urban agriculture (UA) is a widely lauded strategy in the battle to bring healthy food to urban food deserts and has been receiving growing attention in both academic literature and the popular press over the last few years. Skyrocketing food prices worldwide and the economic crisis have pushed UA even further into the spotlight this year.[2] Following on the heels of several major metropolitan areas in North America, the Oakland City Council recently called for 30 percent of its food to come from local sources, including urban gardens and farms (Green

[2] The *New York Times* and *San Francisco Chronicle* reported on UA on an almost weekly basis in 2008. In September, Will Allen, a Milwaukee urban farmer and longtime food justice activist received a MacArthur Genius grant. Journalist Michael Pollan, in an October article for the *New York Times Magazine*, called for the new U.S. president to dig up the South Lawn of the White House lawn to plant a five-acre garden and orchard. Similarly a massive victory garden covered the plaza in front of the San Francisco City Hall for several months in the fall in preparation for the annual Slow Food extravaganza.

2007). This growing local food surge is in part due to the activism of a phalanx of food justice organizations that have established gardens in non-productive vacant lots throughout Oakland, providing fresh produce to those with limited access to healthy food while creating rallying points for community-building and food justice.

While food production in cities is as old as urbanization, it has increasingly drawn the attention of international development workers over the last decade or so. In the global South urban agriculture has served as a buffer for the urban poor against food insecurity brought about by drought, unstable food prices, and declining purchasing power. Non-governmental organizations have actively promoted UA not only as a means of guaranteeing food security but also as an opportunity for micro-enterprise. As urban populations increase, so do demands for meat, eggs, vegetables, and dairy, creating new markets for urban farmers—youth and women, in particular—to earn a living while feeding their families at the same time. Urban household organic waste and animal manure is often recycled back into the farming system, reducing dependency on high-cost chemical fertilizer and "closing" the nutrient cycle (Smit and Nasr 1992; Mougeot 2005; van Veenhuizen 2006; Viljoen 2005).

In the cities of the global North, on the other hand, urban food production has traditionally been seen as a recreational pastime, community-building project, and way to increase urban green space. For more than a century, school garden programs have existed to provide urban children access to green space. Similar programs exist for at-risk youth and prisoners in order to provide them with marketable skills. Public health scholars have recently emphasized the role of community gardens in promoting not only nutrition but also childhood development and socialization (Ozer 2007). Despite this emphasis on recreation and outdoor education, however, urban food production has historically also served a similar role in the U.S.

as in the "developing" world: as a source of food security in lean times. Urban workers frequently filled their plates with food grown in their small yards (Nicolaides 2001). During the depressions of the 1890s and 1930s, urban gardening programs in the U.S. served as a form of unemployment relief. During the two World Wars, urban "victory" gardens were promoted as a measure to protect against potential food shortages (Lawson 2005). Since the 1970s, UA has emerged in economically-depressed neighborhoods both as a way to strengthen cultural ties particularly among immigrants (Hammond 2001; Saldivar-Tanaka and Krasny 2004; Baker 2005) and as a means of subsistence food production. Combining the sustainable agriculture movement's ecological insights and philosophy of localism, the community food security movement's anti-hunger focus, and the environmental justice movement's fight against environmental hazards that disproportionately harm people of color, the food justice movement has been a major force behind the resurgence of UA in North American cities (Gottlieb and Fisher 1996).

Yet nothing is ever a simple case of good versus evil, local versus corporate, mizuna mustard greens versus Mickey's Malt Liquor. Criticism of UA has ranged from the practical to the theoretical. Some critics question the ability of urban gardens to produce sufficient amounts of food. Many worry that vegetables grown in urban gardens might accumulate high levels of heavy metals (Clark, Brabander, and Erdil 2006; Finster, Gray, and Binns 2004). There is also the risk that well-intentioned but overzealous proponents of UA are sometimes so gung-ho about the *idea* of UA that they prescribe it as a panacea to cure all social and environmental ills, even though a city's variegated cultural landscapes and biophysical environment may prevent UA from functioning as intended. Some have argued that UA programs, like other alternative agri-food initiatives, impose external values or visions onto participating communities. This may

manifest as a colonial relationship where white organizations end up telling communities of color what to do (Slocum 2007).

More abstract theoretical critiques argue that UA programs are inadvertently complicit in the neoliberal political agenda; in filling the gaps in the social safety net left by the neoliberal roll-back of state services, these programs ultimately employ a neoliberal discourse of entrepreneurialism and self-help, thereby shifting responsibility to individuals and away from the state, ultimately creating self-disciplining "neoliberal citizen subjects" (Guthman 2007; Pudup 2007). While insightful, applying this type of fine-grained post-structuralist analysis wholesale to UA programs may overlook their potentially revolutionary power. In short, we risk throwing out the proverbial baby with bathwater potentially sullied by the neoliberal bogeyman. Instead, I propose that widening the extent and using a *coarser* grain of analysis can help reveal how these initiatives have arisen as a radical response to structural changes taking place over the last century.

In this paper I focus on the structural role of capital (with an implied capital "C") in order to emphasize the extent to which capital defines the urban environment. Unearthing the historical and structural roots of urban transformation is fundamental to understanding the individual and collective agency that adapts to or resists these changes. Driving down the street "in the cuts" of East Oakland provides a glimpse into how capital's dynamic cycles—its ebbs and flows—have shaped both the built environment and the social relations woven through it, leaving an almost entirely treeless and worn landscape of used car dealerships, taco trucks, liquor stores, dilapidated storefronts, and the occasional chainlinked vacant lot. Understanding the historical and structural roots of urban transformation is fundamental to understanding the individual and collective agency that adapts to or resists these changes. With this in mind, I

draw on theoretical insights from the growing field of urban political ecology to shed light on the structural processes that have created food deserts in the Oakland flatlands and how the food justice struggle and recent efforts to farm urban spaces left fallow by the ebbing of capital *arise from* these structural processes of urban transformation.[3] To better recognize food justice's emancipatory potential and to better tailor UA programs to the meet the varied needs of a socially, economically, and ecologically heterogeneous city such as Oakland, it is helpful first to understand the forces that have hewn its landscape into a crude mosaic of parks and pollution, privilege and poverty, Whole Foods and whole food deserts.[4]

In the first part of this paper, I introduce Oakland and its recent drive towards urban sustainability, including efforts to incorporate food justice and urban agriculture into municipal policies under the direction of several community food security organizations. I then briefly examine the role of capital devaluation in the shaping of the urban landscape and its inhabitants. Using this lens I draw upon existing histories of Oakland and urbanization in California, demographic and economic data, and current "grey literature" to broadly trace the historical geography of Oakland's flatlands during the periods of industrialization and deindustrialization, roughly from the turn of the century to the "neoliberal turn" of the 1980s. I argue that a combination of industrial location, city planning, and racist mortgage lending unevenly developed the city's landscape and concentrated the impacts of capital devaluation within the flatlands, creating food deserts, environmental contamination, and declining public health. The

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[3] Broadly speaking, political ecology is a methodological framework used to uncover linkages across scales between environmental change at the field level and broader social, political, and economic trends. Used mostly in studies of rural settings in the developing world (Peet and Watts 2004; Zimmerer and Bassett 2003), political ecology has been increasingly applied to analyses of environmental change in urban settings in both the developing and industrial world (Heynen, Kaika, and Swyngedouw 2006a; Heynen 2006a, 2006b; Krueger 2007; Brownlow 2006; Robbins and Sharp 2003).

[4] The jury is still out on whether or not "food desert" is an appropriate metaphor. Food may well be available in these so-called "food deserts," but it is generally of poor nutritional value. Fast food outlets may abound while fresh fruit or vegetables are nowhere in sight. Some opt for the term "health food deserts" or "fresh food deserts" while others reject the image of a bleak and parched urban landscape, opting for the lush and primordial "junk food jungles." Others hope to throw out such sensationalist taxonomy altogether, with their potentially racialized nuances linking people of color to "jungles" and "deserts." In this paper I use the old standard "food desert" simply to provide metaphorical contrast to Oakland's history as an "industrial garden."

resulting disparities have catalyzed several periods of social mobilization in Oakland, which in turn have led to the repeated restructuring of capital and the social safety net. Locating UA within this dynamic relationship—which Karl Polanyi (1944 [2001]) called capitalism's "double movement"—helps to underscore the radical nature of UA's historical antecedents and its future emancipatory possibilities. Reframing UA in Oakland as more than food production but also as a transformative movement in a long lineage of flatlands resistance may provide it with the additional legitimacy necessary to reshape local agri-food policy.

Going Green and Growing Greens

Since its beginnings, Oakland, a city of now roughly 415,000, has struggled to move out of the cultural shadow cast by "The City," its better-known and cosmopolitan counterpart across the Bay. Oakland's reputation as San Francisco's dull, industrial step-sibling grew worse in the post-industrial era, as boarded-up factories and warehouses, dilapidated housing stock, and stories of black radicalism, drug deals, and murder gripped the popular imagination. Things have been looking up lately for Oakland, however, as it earns accolades as one of America's leaders in urban sustainability. In 2005 Mayor Jerry Brown, along with the mayors of 50 other cities around the world, signed the UN World Environment Day Urban Environmental Accords and pledged that Oakland would become a more ecologically sound, economically dynamic, and socially equitable city by 2012. As a result of steps taken toward this commitment, it ranked in the top ten sustainable cities in 2005, 2006, and 2008 (Mitchell 2006; SustainLane 2008; Swenerton 2007).

Oakland's commitment to fostering a local food system has played a major part in its high visibility (and subsequent high sustainability rankings). Weekly farmers' markets at ten

locations around the city, a number of farm-to-institution programs[5], and several community gardens run by the Parks and Recreation department keep a steady flow of fresh produce coming into the city. Oakland's local food systems fervor draws in large part from the "foodie" culture of the Bay Area, which, for the last three decades, has been at the center of a vanguard to create an alternative agri-food system that mends the rift between rural farm and urban fork by relying on local small-farms to supply the metropolitan foodshed with fresh and nutritious produce (Walker 2005; Guthman 2004). Despite the strength of the local food system, however, people living in Bay Area food deserts have thus far been unable to reap its benefits and remain tied to the industrial agri-food complex through corporate provisioning of fast-food restaurants, schools, and hospitals, or they are limited to purchasing high-priced, low-quality processed food at corner liquor stores. The "food systems" paradigm has underscored the interconnectivity between health, diet, and built environment, making it increasingly apparent that urban sustainability does not inherently arise from sustainable agriculture, farmers' markets, and North Berkeley's Gourmet Ghetto.

In January 2006 the Oakland City Council authorized the Mayor's Office of Sustainability "to develop an Oakland food policy and plan for thirty percent local area production" (Oakland City Council Resolution No. 79680). Building on a food assessment for Alameda County conducted in 1999, and inspired by similar assessments in Toronto, Vancouver, San Francisco, Portland, Chicago, and a number of other North American metropolises, two UC Berkeley graduate students in the Department of City and Regional Planning completed the Oakland Food Systems Assessment for the Mayor's Office of Sustainability in May 2006 (Unger and Wooten 2006). The document has since served as a springboard for food systems change in

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[5] In such programs, institutions such as schools or hospitals are provisioned with fresh food from local farms, rather than from large-scale, food service monopolies such as Sysco.

Oakland. Upon the report's recommendation, the City Council unanimously passed Resolution No. 80332 CMS, approving a seed grant for $50,000 to establish a municipal food policy council whose mission is "to cultivate a sustainable food system by eliminating hunger, increasing health, expanding a greener economy, and honoring diversity for all current and future generations of Oakland, especially the least served, by ensuring the availability and accessibility of a wide variety of local, safe, sustainably-grown, and nutritious food." Its overall goals include food security, public health, local agriculture, energy efficiency, environmental resource protection, zero-waste, economic and community development, and education, outreach, and advocacy (Oakland City Council Resolution No. 80332). Arising from the same food systems vision, the Health for Oakland's People and Environment (HOPE) Collaborative, an umbrella organization consisting of several community development organizations and spearheaded by the Alameda County Public Health Department, the Food Bank of Alameda County, and the Community Food Security & Nutrition Policy Program of Alameda County UC Cooperative Extension, competed for and won a two-year planning grant for $495,200 from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to develop a municipal program encompassing economic development, local food systems, green built environment, and public health education.

The growing momentum towards Oakland's food systems sustainability signals the beginning of a sea change in how Americans think about where our food comes from, and how it is processed, distributed, and consumed.[6] This growth in public awareness is the culmination of several years of hard work by food justice activists. Drawing inspiration from the anti-poverty, environmental justice, and sustainable agriculture movements, food justice activists have focused

[6] The success in recent years of best selling non-fiction books such as Michael Pollan's *Omnivore's Dilemma* and Eric Schlosser's *Fast Food Nation* point to such a shift. With the food crisis jumping out daily from the front pages of the *New York Times*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, and *The Economist*, the complex and precarious linkages between trade, production, and consumption of both food and oil are finally making it onto the public radar.

on how to ensure equitable access to healthy food in the poorest communities. Food justice programs integrate nutritional and environmental education with community development. While not their only focus, urban agriculture figures centrally into the work of many of these organizations. Several of the food justice community-based organizations (such as City Slicker Farms, People's Grocery, Oakland Food Connection, and Oakland Based Urban Gardens [OBUGs]) provide flatlands residents with fresh produce either via community supported agriculture (CSAs)[7], sliding scale farm stands, or farmers markets [see Appendix 1]. Agri-food education is central to the work of these organizations; many work with school gardens and nurseries, and provide backyard gardening mentoring and cooking classes.

While the small gardens tucked away in the margins and interstices of an urban landscape of asphalt, concrete, and buildings produce only a minimal amount of food, these organizations have been crucial for raising awareness about food injustice, nutrition, and basic environmental science through the production and provisioning of fresh produce to residents living in the food deserts of the Oakland flatlands. By interlacing discourses of food security, social justice, nutrition, and an equitable and safe built environment, these organizations are explicitly raising awareness about the complex interconnectivity of the uneven distribution of resources in Oakland, the health of its citizens, and their ability to produce and access food.

Root Structure: Devaluation of Urban Capital

To understand the rise of UA in Oakland today, it is first necessary to understand the historical processes that have unevenly shaped the city's socio-ecological landscape. Environmental sociologists, political ecologists, and urban geographers have described the

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[7] A CSA is a direct-marketing arrangement that links producers and consumers. Customers purchase a share at the beginning of the season in exchange for weekly deliveries of a box of fresh produce.

material transformation, or "metabolism," of the biophysical environment and human populations by political economic processes such as capitalism (Foster 1999; Gandy 2003; Heynen, Kaika, and Swyngedouw 2006a). David Harvey (2006) stresses the interconnected nature of society and environment; understanding one cannot be done without understanding its relation to the other:

> On the ecological side…we have to understand how the accumulation of capital works through ecosystemic processes, re-shaping them and disturbing them as it goes. Energy flows, shifts in material balances, environmental transformations (some of them irreversible) have to be brought thoroughly within the picture. But the social side cannot be evaded as somehow radically different from its ecological integuement… The circulation of money and capital have to be construed as ecological variables every bit as important as the circulation of air and water. (88)

Such an analysis necessarily takes place at multiple levels. In his analysis of urban hunger in Milwaukee, Nik Heynen (2006b) underscores the importance of looking across scales to understand the connections between hunger and its causes. The physical experience of hunger or the body's biochemical metabolic process cannot be treated as disconnected from the larger-scale processes determining the availability of food. Indeed, the chain of causality spans several levels of scale, from the individual to the household, from neighborhood to municipality, and from national to global.[8]

Viewing socio-ecological change this way certainly complicates analysis (and demands a certain level of interdisciplinarity) but may ultimately offer a fuller, if not more nuanced, understanding of the links between ecology, public health, and social change.[9] Rather than stop

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[8] Rather than envisioning these relations as a nested hierarchy, however, it is helpful to think of a complex web of interconnectivity. Global economic restructuring in the neoliberal era, as well as increasing access to technology and information, have undermined and reorganized the traditional hierarchical relationships. Gail Hollander (2008) in her recent work on the political ecology of global ethanol, frames these relationships as "assemblages," borrowing from Aihwa Ong, Stephen Collier, and Saskia Sassen's reworkings of this Foucauldian concept.

[9] This paper represents one step in such a process. Following methodological cues from the work of Heynen's work on hunger or Paul Robbins' work on lawns and chemical poisoning (Robbins and Sharp 2003; Robbins and Birkenholtz 2003), my dissertation researches the distribution of lead concentrations in vacant lots and gardens in the Oakland flatlands. An urban political ecology of the impact of soil lead on UA requires a chain of explanation spanning several levels of temporal and spatial scale: from concentrations of lead in someone's blood, to the vegetables grown in soil in the garden, to the material legacy of lead deposited through paint or leaded gasoline, to the planning decisions that sited the Cypress Freeway through West Oakland, to the neighborhood's general devaluation due to redlining and the outflow of capital to the industrial suburbs.

at an explanation of how the biophysical environment, human bodies, or social relations are transformed by flows of capital, we should also address how these flows are then resisted, reconfigured, or redirected in response. This dialectic helps to unravel the classic "structure versus agency" binary by instead emphasizing the creative and destructive tension between "actors" (biophysical and social, individual and collective) operating at the same or different spatiotemporal scales.[10] Distinguishing structure from the agency of individual actors becomes simply a question of shifting the grain and extent of analysis.

The web of social and political relations driving and shaping these changes is complex and multi-dimensional. Nevertheless, at the risk of being seen as an economic determinist, I want to focus on one process that is fundamental to the transformation of the urban landscape: the devaluation of capital. It undergirds the structural processes of uneven development and the social disruption that emerges in response. Nowhere is this process so readily apparent as in post-industrial cities such as Oakland. Cities are ground-zero of humans' transformative power, where the influx of capital is visibly inscribed on the landscape in the form of buildings and infrastructure: roads, bridges, power lines, rail lines, sewers. During historical moments of capital overaccumulation following economic booms, surplus capital is invested in this kind of fixed or immobile capital, transforming the urban environment.[11] During economic downturns, as capital retreats from urban industrial zones and industry moves away, the post-industrial city nevertheless retains its industrial character, albeit devalued, dilapidated, and scarred by pollution, often to such a great degree that it precludes future investment.[12] Rents fall. Unemployment

[10] Timothy Mitchell (2002) brilliantly captures this tension in his now classic chapter "Can the Mosquito Speak?".
[11] According to Harvey's analysis, when there is an overaccumulation of surplus capital or labor, it either seeks a spatial fix to find new spaces for investment (2001) or enters into a "second circuit" of capital, and is invested in this kind of "fixed capital" to avoid a crisis of devaluation of one or the other (1989).
[12] In such cases capital actually undermines its own means of production by fouling its resource base, a tendency that James O'Connor (1998) refers to as the "second contradiction" of capitalism, the first being the tendency for capital to undergo crises of overaccumulation.

rises. Both labor and fixed capital are devalued. Harvey (2001) writes, "The geographical landscape which fixed and immobile capital comprises is both a crowning glory of past capital development and a prison which inhibits the further progress of accumulation" (247). These zones left fallow inside the city by capital's retreat belong to what Dick Walker (1978) has called "a lumpengeography of capital," or "a permanent reserve of stagnant places" awaiting new investment once land and labor values have been sufficiently devalued.[13]

From this perspective, the contemporary cityscape is a map of previous cycles of capital accumulation and devaluation, a palimpsest of building, decay, and renewal. The walls of this prison of fixed capital are often clearly delineated by planning, policy, property taxes, and political boundaries. These buttresses and ramparts, whether or not they were crafted with intention, effectively demarcate and quarantine devaluation to prevent its impacts from bleeding over, both metaphorically and materially.[14] As environmental justice literature reveals, this process has been highly racialized historically through zoning, redlining, and neighborhood covenants (Maantay 2002; Self 2003; Matsuoka 2001; Pulido 2000).

Human populations viscerally experience these ebbs and flows of capital. As countless cases in the era of deindustrialization illustrate, capital devaluation has historically been the harbinger of social upheaval in the form of migration, poverty, hunger, crime, and declining public health. Given the extent to which the urban landscape is shaped by capital and its crises of accumulation, urban social struggles against the socioeconomic upheaval that follows are interwoven with struggles for a more equitable environment. Perhaps less obvious to many mainstream environmentalists, struggles to protect or clean up the urban environment are equally

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[13] In the urban morphology literature, the term "urban fallow" denotes derelict land and buildings, abandoned, obsolescent, and awaiting redevelopment, the final successional phase of a so-called "burgage cycle" of urban development (Clark 2001). Viewing urban fallow as part of a broader lumpengeography of capital helps to locate these investment cycles within a larger spatial geography of capital.

[14] As Harvey (2006) elaborates, this concentration of devaluation constitutes another form of capital accumulation by dispossession; by confining devaluation elsewhere, new sites can monopolize production.

as entwined within struggles for social justice. As Swyngedouw and Heynen (2003) point out, "processes of socio-ecological change are…never socially or ecologically neutral" (911). Understanding urban agriculture and food justice in Oakland therefore depends on understanding the structural forces, generally, and capital devaluation more specifically, which gave rise to the movement in the first place. Applying this analytical framework, I next outline Oakland's 20th century history of industrialization and deindustrialization.

An Industrial Garden Grows

In reference to her childhood home of Oakland, Gertrude Stein famously wrote, "there is no there there." While these words have been used to belittle Oakland for the seventy years that have passed since their publication, they remain poignant when taken in their original context. Stein had returned to the city decades later and was unable to recognize the childhood home of her memories in the vast expanse of new housing sprawling eastwards from downtown (Rhomberg 2004). The transformative power that had effaced the "there" of Stein's turn-of-the-century childhood home continued to reshape Oakland as industrial and residential capital flowed and ebbed throughout the rest of the twentieth century.

Advertising Oakland as a "city of homes," speculators from the mid-19th century onwards hoped to cash in on its proximity to San Francisco's bustling commercial center (Scott [1959] 1985). The promise of the seemingly paradoxical union of Arcadia and Utopia that was the aesthetic hallmark of California development—pastoral landscapes embodied within an ordered, neighborhood logic (McClung 2000)—fueled a vibrant housing sector in Oakland, drawing the wealthy merchant class to the Oakland hills and foothills. A booster for housing in Oakland's lower foothills in 1911 advertised "home sites from which [to] look down on the cities about the

bay…far removed from the dirt and turmoil of the work-a-day world" (Bagwell 1982; Scott [1959] 1985).

At the same time, completion of the transcontinental railroad and construction of its terminus in Oakland in 1869 (Bagwell 1982) only accelerated the expansion of industry from San Francisco to the East Bay (Walker 2001); the arrival of iron works, canneries, cotton and lumber mills, breweries, and carriage factories fueled further industrial agglomeration around the rail terminals in West Oakland and the estuary waterfront at the southern edge of downtown. A 1910 promotional booklet published by the Oakland Chamber of Commerce features a world map with all shipping lines leading to "Oakland Opposite the Golden Gate, The Logical Port and Industrial Center of the Pacific Coast" (Scott [1959] 1985).[15]

Worker housing cropped up primarily in West Oakland, between the downtown business district and the rail and shipping terminus. The displacement of San Francisco residents following the 1906 earthquake was a boon for Oakland, bringing in a new workforce and new demands for housing. With population and industry growing at a rapid pace and aided by the extension of horsedrawn and electric streetcar lines, Oakland expanded to the north and east, annexing previously autonomous, unincorporated communities such as Temescal, Brooklyn, Fruitvale, Melrose, and Elmhurst (Scott [1959] 1985; Bagwell 1982; Groth 2004).

World War I saw a massive influx of military capital into Oakland. Automotive manufacturers such as the Durant Motor Company, Hall-Scott Motor Company, and General

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[15] Urban growth obviously does not arise of its own accord but is stewarded by a "growth machine," a coalition/class alliance of business owners, developers, media, and industrialists (Logan and Molotch 1987). In Oakland much of the growth in the earlier part of the century was due in large part to the efforts of the city's powerful growth machine, a class alliance of that included Francis "Borax" Smith, owner of the Key System, progressive mayors Frank Mott (1905-1915) and John Davie (1915-1931), and the city chamber of commerce. The dynamo at the center of it all was the conservative pro-business *Oakland Tribune* under the ownership of the Knowland family from 1915 to 1977. The Knowlands' powerful control of media consolidated the growth machine's grip on city politics for much of the 20th century (Rhomberg 2004; Self 2003). This growth machine resisted San Francisco's repeated efforts to incorporate Oakland into a regional metropolis. Rather than being periphery to San Francisco's core, Oakland's growth machine pushed on several occasions to become the core of an East Bay metropolis (Scott [1959] 1985; Self 2003).

Motors expanded considerably during these years, earning Oakland the moniker "Detroit of the West." Shipbuilding dominated the port. Drawn by the promise of jobs, new workers, many of them African Americans and immigrants, flooded in by the thousands. Oakland's suburbs followed the construction of new factories eastwards during wartime industrialization and continued through the '20s and '30s and again during the second "homefront mobilization" in the '40s (Walker 2001; Bagwell 1982). Integrating the pragmatism of locating industry where land was available with the reformist planning vision of Ebenezer Howard and Lewis Mumford, planners and developers in Oakland (as in Southern California) embraced the paradigm of the "industrial garden": the dispersal of industry away from the mixed-use downtown core but closely tied to nearby, semi-autonomous residential neighborhoods. In these industrial garden suburbs, factory workers would return home by bus or rail to a neighborhood of small, single-family homes, each with a yard or garden. Planners and boosters pushed "garden living" in these quiet and tranquil respites far—but not too far—from the factory grind as a cure to the social and health risks already well-documented in the mixed-use urban slums of the Northeast, Chicago, and to a lesser extent in the older downtown cores of San Francisco, Oakland, and Los Angeles (Self 2003; Hise 1997, 2001). Urban and rural modes of survival came together here, as workers clocked out and headed home to tend vegetables, chickens, and goats in their yards (Nicolaides 2001; Johnson 1993). As Mike Davis (1997) writes, the industrial garden was "a new kind of industrial society where Ford and Darwin, engineering and nature, were combined in a eugenic formula that eliminated the root causes of class conflict and inefficient production" (358); in essence, by keeping the worker happy, productivity could increase while nipping a restive labor movement at the bud.

During the New Deal, the industrial garden expanded into a vast expanse of small homes. Beginning in 1934, a flood of highly subsidized, low-interest mortgage loans from the newly created Federal Housing Administration fed the growth of the suburbs; East Oakland soon filled in with suburban developments of small Mediterranean-style single-family homes. As in other California industrial centers, developers consolidated land purchase, subdivision, construction, and sales in order to maximize efficiency and minimize costs. Vast tracts of prefab homes built from kits with nearly identical floor plans created an economy of scale that dovetailed nicely with the contemporary planning vision of neighborhood cohesion, mixed use, and garden cities to create quintessential industrial gardens. In order to expand homeownership, housing production had to be reorganized into a quasi-Fordist system of on-site assembly of pre-fab components to perfect the “minimum house”: a small, single-family home constructed as cheaply as possible but comfortable and unique enough to satisfy the dream of home ownership (Hise 1997). The newly subdivided suburban landscape was rapidly filled in with these small, single-family homes erected virtually overnight.

However, the federally-subsized dream of homeownership in the industrial garden was not available to everyone. The social idealism of Ebenezer Howard’s garden cities and Lewis Mumford’s inclusive ecotopian regions undergirded the vision of many suburban planners. Nevertheless, the pragmatism of industrial location, the whims of individual developers, and the rising power of racist homeowners’ organizations soon elided their utopian vision. People of color rarely qualified for FHA loans because these were to be applied only to newly constructed homes, and contrary to Howard’s vision of universalist garden cities that welcomed and nourished all workers, new home developments in the suburban industrial gardens were racially exclusive. Until 1948 racial covenants established by developers and homeowners’ associations

prevented people of color from moving in and disturbing social divisions seen as "natural" (Hise 2001; Self 2003; Sugrue 2005). Even after the Supreme Court made racial covenants illegal via *Shelley v. Kraemer* in 1948, such obstacles remained in practice; contractors were rarely able to secure loans for construction for non-whites in a "Caucasians only" neighborhood and realtors feared "the wrath of white homeowners" (Sugrue 2005).

The racialized demarcation of urban space taking place between the wars was not new in California. For decades the labor movement in California had already laid the groundwork for the formation of a virulent form of white class-consciousness via their aggressive exclusion of Asian, Latino, and African American workers (Daniels 1977 [1959]; Saxton 1971; McWilliams [1949] 1999). Easy access to low-cost single-family homes in close proximity to East Oakland's factories simply fueled racist and exclusionary sentiments by creating a sense of bootstrap entitlement. Homeownership thus helped heterogeneous European and Euro-American populations of workers consolidate as a spatially and racially homogenized labor force of "whites," geographically isolated from the radicalism of recent European immigrants and African Americans in West and North Oakland (Rhomberg 2004).[16] Suburbanization of industry and housing was thus a way to escape from the working class and "to attract a better brand of labor, removed from the 'bad moral atmosphere' of the inner city, and promising the stability of homeownership for the 'better class' of workers" (Walker 1981, 400).

As new workers flooded into Oakland during World War II, housing was scarce. Trying to defuse tensions between blacks and southern white migrants, the Oakland Housing Authority located black-only housing projects in West Oakland and corresponding projects for whites in East Oakland. Most of these housing projects were located in industrial areas on landfill and

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[16] This promise of homeownership, which in the Hoover years had risen to be the symbolic pinnacle of American citizenship, was central to the reformist planners' attempt to "Americanize" (read "deradicalize") recent European immigrants and subsume them into a growing class alliance of white, working-class homeowners (Hise 1997).

adjacent to railroads (Johnson 1993). The black population of Oakland grew nearly six-fold in Alameda County between 1940 and 1950, but African Americans were rarely allowed to rent outside of West Oakland due to racial covenants and similar barriers to renting in the new industrial gardens. Ramshackle dwellings in West Oakland were converted and subdivided to accommodate the new migrants. In the post-war years the razing of temporary war migrant housing in the East Bay only increased the housing squeeze. In 1940 15 percent of West Oakland's housing units were overcrowded; a decade later, the percentage had doubled (Johnson 1993).

The practice of bank redlining also stopped the flow of mortgage and property investment capital into parts of the city where African Americans resided. The Federal Home Loan Bank Board, working with banks and local realtors, developed Residential Security Maps and Surveys that divided cities into ranked sections. Most African American neighborhoods were ranked "D" for hazardous and colored red on the maps; homes in these areas rarely qualified for loans. On the other hand, white neighborhoods were ranked higher if they had racial covenants (Sugrue 2005; Maantay 2002). While discriminatory lending existed before the creation of these maps, they helped to reify the delineation between rich and poor, whites and people of color.[17]

Oakland's north-south axis, Telegraph Ave. separated blacks from whites, effectively ghettoizing West Oakland; E. 14th Street served as the east-west redline in East Oakland through the 1950s, limiting blacks to a few blocks adjacent to the industrial zones (Self 2003). Since the late 19th century, Oakland's Asian population was effectively quarantined in Chinatown, south of downtown and west of Lake Merritt. A large Mexican population had developed in the Fruitvale District much earlier to work in the canneries and orchards.

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[17] Some argue that redlining did not actually restrict lending, but that higher interest rates in redlined areas may have prevented investment by builders and buyers (Hillier 2003).

Redlining, along with racial covenants and federal housing subsidies, cultivated a highly racialized urban landscape of prosperity and neglect; the almost entirely white East Oakland became a bountiful industrial garden, while West Oakland, Chinatown, and Fruitvale were left high and dry. Like West Oakland's housing stock, labor—human capital—was also devalued as an influx of post-war migrants saturated the labor market, joining the ranks of the unemployed.[18] As Massey and Denton (1993) argue, segregation bred "hypersegregation," the emergence of "ghetto culture" and the decline (and flight) of the black middle class, cleaving an even greater economic rift between West Oakland and the new East Oakland suburbs, migrants and old timers, blacks and whites, industrial growth and senescence.

Demarcated Desertification

If industrial relocation and FHA-funded residential development were the source of capital flows that irrigated East Oakland's industrial garden during the 1930s and '40s, homeowners associations, zoning, and redlining were the dikes that initially prevented this capital from flowing back towards West Oakland, and then effectively quarantined its devaluation to the few areas where people of color were allowed to live. New capital continued to flow in. Between January 1945 and December 1947 roughly $300 million was spent on the expansion of new plants in the Bay Area (Whitaker 1992). Within the city itself, however, devalued fixed capital—a landscape of dilapidated housing stock and obsolete factories—left little room for new industry to take root.

A highly coordinated growth machine of industry, developers, boosters, and white laborers driven by the promise of homeownership and jobs diverted this latest flow of capital to

[18] The ranks of the unemployed become the rank-and-file of the "industrial reserve army" (Marx [1867] 1976), brought in when necessary to meet production demands or to lower wages when production costs rise, and cast back into the reserve when no longer needed.

the greenfields of the newly incorporated industrial suburbs—San Leandro, Hayward, Fremont, San Lorenzo, Newark, Union City, Milpitas—that flanked the East Bay between Oakland and San Jose. Vast tracts of agricultural land were incorporated into these pro-business municipalities, zoned as industrial, and sold for prices below industrial land prices in Oakland. National companies such as General Motors and Caterpillar built branch plants on these fertile greenfields; defense contracts showered the new industrial suburbs with federal capital, ensuring rapid growth. Here at the urban edge in the new suburbs, industry was given a *tabula rasa*; these new suburban municipalities provided a more favorable business climate, spatially removed from the pressure cooker of the urban center's working class and the grip of recalcitrant city politicians (Self 2003; Walker 1981). In the words of the Bay Area Council which helped drive industrial suburbanization, suburban employees were "more loyal, more cooperative, more productive workers than those in big cities" (cited in Johnson 1993, 212). The implicit (and at times explicit) message to future investors was that this suburban workforce was largely white.

Just as in East Oakland during the interwar years, industry and housing in the new suburbs went hand in hand, part of a concerted planning effort to disperse industry and its suburban residential developments. These industrial shifts and the prosperity of the post-war era further fertilized the American dream of homeownership. Large-scale housing development in the urban periphery and the expansion of automobile ownership cultivated suburban development and white flight, draining urban areas of their tax base. Just as the industrial garden of East Oakland was watered with capital available through FHA loans in the '30s and '40s, the new industrial garden suburbs grew rapidly in the postwar era as a result of these same federal housing subsidies. As Oakland deindustrialized and new factories sprouted in the suburbs, working class white Oaklanders followed, lured by homeownership and proximity to jobs, just as

they had done in the previous wave of inter-war and wartime suburbanization. Between 1949 and 1951 only 600 units among the 75,000 constructed in the Bay Area were open to blacks (Johnson 1993). Upwardly mobile whites joined the downtown ruling elite in their Oakland foothills and hillside neighborhoods, taking their cash with them.[19] In Elmhurst, for example, white residents made up 82 percent of the neighborhood's population in 1960 and median income was $6,154, only about 2 percent lower than the citywide median income; a decade later whites made up only slightly more than a third, while on the other side of the city boundary in San Leandro, people of color were excluded. Median income in Elmhurst dropped to 10 percent lower than that of the city (Whitaker 1992).

As capital was channeled into the industrial suburbs, it began to dry up inside the city's boundaries, leaving the once-verdant urban economy parched of tax revenue. In the late '50s half of Alameda County's manufacturing took place in Oakland; by the early '70s the city's share had declined to less than a third (Self 2003).[20] Unemployment skyrocketed; between 1960 and 1966 10,000 manufacturing jobs were lost. The unemployment rate in 1964 was 11 percent but for blacks was almost twice that high. Business ownership was absentee for the most part. By 1978, only 25 percent of businesses in East Oakland were locally-owned (Henze, Kirshner, and Lillow 1979).

This trend continued in the '80s as jobs shifted from the traditional manufacturing and warehousing sectors to a service based industry. The nine-county Bay Area on the whole benefited from a boom during this period, with a 15 percent growth in jobs between 1981 and

[19] Explanations of "white flight" from the black city center largely revolve around a) white fear of an inundation of blacks into their neighborhoods, b) the American dream of homeownership fueled by post-war prosperity, and c) the expansion of automobile ownership and "car culture." While aspects of this reading of history are certainly valid, the story of suburbanization is more nuanced than this old school view of a big bang spewing little boxes made of ticky-tacky outwards from ground zero at the city center, pulling all the scared white folks with it. By refocusing on the greater logic of metropolitan regionalism and industrial dispersal that helped to steward extensive, dispersed residential development, we can move beyond the urban/suburban dualism and the common trope that suburbanization should be read as a rejection of the city in general (Hise 1997; Walker 1981).

[20] While Oakland's industrial economy was diversified enough that it didn't suffer "the urban crisis" to the same extent as the Rust Belt cities in the Northeast and Midwest, it nevertheless followed the same trend (Sugrue 2005).

1986. Oakland, however, reaped little in the way of this regional bounty; employment grew only by 1.5 percent during these same years. The flatlands bore the brunt of job loss during this period. In the Elmhurst and San Antonio districts employment decreased by roughly a third; West Oakland and Fruitvale lost eight to ten percent of jobs (Landis and Guhathakurta 1989).

As East Oakland's industrial garden slowly withered, housing became available to upwardly mobile people of color for the first time. The Oakland border with San Leandro truly became a color line; just as East Oakland's industrial garden communities had excluded people of color via racial covenants, new housing developments in places like San Leandro and San Lorenzo excluded people of color using racial covenants and informal "gentlemen's agreements" between realtors and homeowners' associations. Creating a class alliance with developers, increasingly conservative white homeowners in the new suburbs helped to exert political pressure to further confine devaluation to the Oakland flatlands. Proposition 14, a 1964 ballot initiative sponsored the California Real Estate Association and supported by 65 percent of voters statewide, essentially overturned the federal Fair Housing Act, passed the year before. In 1978 this same alliance was able to pass the infamous Proposition 13, which severely limited cities' ability to raise property taxes. The resulting decrease in property taxes took a toll on Oakland's already impoverished flatlands, as inflow of revenue was squeezed by more than $14 million, leading to facilities closures and cuts to public services (Rhomberg 2004; Self 2003).

Oakland's demographic shifts were not simply black and white, but multihued. Changing immigration policies in 1965 allowed a greater influx of Latinos into Oakland, primarily into the already heavily Mexican Fruitvale district. By the late 70s and early 80s, the impoverished flatlands became a major center of refugee resettlement for Salvadoran, Guatemalan, Khmer, Lao, Hmong, Khmu, Mien, and Vietnamese fleeing the Cold War's bloody battlegrounds in

Central America and Southeast Asia. Resettlement programs in poor areas such as East Oakland kept the majority of these immigrants poor, adding to an already large and devalued pool of cheap labor for the postindustrial economy (Ong 2003). Social networks provided entry into formal market niches and a vibrant, yet self-exploiting, informal economy, much of it centered in Chinatown, San Antonio, and Fruitvale (Marech 2002).

As the former industrial garden dried up, new capital (in the form of federal urban redevelopment and freeway construction) flowed into the economically parched urban landscape, yet the promised jobs and opportunities never emerged. To the contrary, urban redevelopment ultimately displaced thousands of residents from their homes. Several of the most “blighted” areas were razed under the aegis of urban renewal. Thousands were displaced and forced to relocate. Single-family homes and duplexes were subdivided to accommodate those displaced, adding an additional strain on the dilapidated housing stock. Redlining prevented any new investment for housing repair. Housing in the East Oakland flatlands eventually became dilapidated, as well, due in part to a large number of absentee landlords who were homeowners who had followed the industrial garden to the suburbs, or speculators who bought their devalued property at firesale prices. By 1978 more than two-thirds of East Oakland’s single-family homes and apartments with more than five units were owned by absentee landlords (Henze, Kirshner, and Lillow 1979). Rents grew for increasingly decrepit housing, driving up vacancy rates to the point where the City of Oakland declared a “state of emergency” in April 1974 due to the high number of vacant and abandoned housing units in East Oakland. These 1,200 empty units were seen as a result of the “blighting influence” of E. 14th Street, the major artery running the length of East Oakland. More than half of the structures assessed in the 1972 Elmhurst Redevelopment

Project were categorized as containing "building deficiencies."[21] By the late 1980s, almost a third of vacant houses in the flatlands were considered in "poor" condition by the City of Oakland's Office of Community Development (Whitaker 1992).

As we've seen, the devaluation of capital in Oakland was contained in the flatlands via racist policy and practice. The construction of major transportation corridors through the flatlands helped to spatially reinforce existing socioeconomic divisions in Oakland and other post-industrial American cities, physically demarcating the boundaries between investment and abandon, rich and poor, whites and people of color. Plans for the Nimitz, MacArthur, and Grove-Shafter Freeways were approved in 1958 by the all white Oakland city council (Self 2003). The Grove Shafter Freeway (California Route 24/Interstate 980) effectively severed West Oakland from downtown. The MacArthur (Interstate 580) divided the flatlands and the hills. The Nimitz (Interstate 880), which parallels the MacArthur, was sited through the city's industrial corridor along the southern edge, roughly separating the majority of factories and warehouses from the flatlands residential areas. Other construction projects were sited in devalued flatlands neighborhoods where land values were low and the political power of the community marginal. The Cypress Freeway was constructed right through the middle of West Oakland, razing hundreds of homes and displacing thousands of residents.[22] The Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) system, which began in 1964, had a similar impact on the flatlands. In most of the flatlands, the BART tracks were placed above ground to reduce costs. Construction of the BART line between downtown and the trans-Bay tunnel destroyed 7th Street in West Oakland, the cultural and economic center of Oakland's African American community and

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[21] The state of emergency led to a host of redevelopment initiatives, including the Home Maintenance and Improvement and Urban Homesteading programs.

[22] The Cypress Freeway collapsed in 1989 during the Loma Prieta earthquake, killing 42 people. In response to public outcry over the socioeconomic impact of its original location, the new freeway was built farther west, adjacent to the Port. The old Cypress viaduct is now Mandela Parkway.

displaced several hundred families, many of whom moved to East Oakland where they were faced with rents two to three times as high as what they paid in West Oakland (Whitaker 1992). Small businesses (including grocers) also felt the impact of redevelopment as their clientele was displaced.

The port and its rail lines, the freeways, the Bay Bridge, and the BART were constructed to link Oakland to the world and to position it as a major transportation hub for the economically vibrant Bay Area. But capital and people flowed above West Oakland on freeway overpasses and BART tracks, channeled to San Francisco's enduring commercial center and Oakland's growing industrial suburbs. These conduits of capital served as physical boundaries of devaluation of existing fixed capital in the flatlands, material structures demarcating what zoning and redlining succeeded in doing invisibly on paper. Not only did the benefits of the freeway and BART system—the hallmarks of urban modernity—bypass the flatlands, their construction was marked by dispossession and displacement of Oakland's flatland residents (Self 2003).

As capital devaluation become more and more contained in the flatlands, the city's retail landscape changed dramatically. A depressed flatlands economy made it difficult to retain major retail, including supermarkets. For example, when the new Eastmont Mall, built on the site of the former East Oakland GM factory, held its grand opening in November 1970, it beckoned customers with the promise of unlimited parking and two major department stores, a four-plex movie theater, and food court. By the '80s, however, falling purchasing power and an increase in drug dealing and related violent crime around the mall led to a major decline in retail sales. During the 1990s both department stores closed, as did the mall's Safeway supermarket. With the mall's anchor stores gone, business occupancy dropped to only 30 percent (*Oakland Tribune*

2007). By 1987 only four department stores continued to operate within the city limits (Rhomberg 2004).

This same pattern of capital flight and devaluation transformed food access during the era of deindustrialization in the Oakland flatlands and in U.S. “inner cities” on the whole. Across the country, food retail had been gradually changing since first the arrival of chain grocers stores prior to World War I and by chain supermarkets in the 1930s. After the Second World War, supermarkets (both chain and independent) dominated the lion’s share of food retail. Driven by the entry of women into the workforce, a growing demand for one-stop shopping, automobile culture, and a massive influx of new processed foods derived from subsidized commodities, supermarkets became more and more popular. By 1960 more than two-thirds of groceries were purchased at supermarkets. Unable to compete with the economies of scale enjoyed by supermarkets, many small grocers went out of business. The power of corporate supermarket chains increased during this period as well. By 1975 corporate food retailers controlled about two-thirds of the food retail market, draining capital from the local economy and funneling it off to corporate headquarters (Walker 2005). As food retail became concentrated in the aisles of major supermarkets, food access became increasingly dictated by supermarket location. By the 1970s nationwide economic “stagflation” caused supermarket retail to founder (Walker 2005). The boarded-up hulls of failed supermarkets littered the shoals of America’s post-industrial cities; only some were rigged anew as thrift or dollar stores for consumers with declining purchasing power.

During the ‘80s and ‘90s superstores took over the helm of food retail, spatially concentrating food access in locations often only accessible by car. For working class people, falling wages and retail capital’s retreat from post-industrial urban centers meant that cheap food

availability was limited to big box stores and fast food joints (Walker 2005; Mamen 2007). A junk food jungle sprouted up from the barren stretches of the fresh food desert throughout poor neighborhoods in post-industrial America, capitalizing on the niche left by the retreat of groceries and supermarkets and a demand for food that was easily accessible, convenient, and cheap, sending the incidence of diabetes and obesity skyrocketing (Goldstein et al. 2008). Liquor stores followed a similar successional logic. With the ebb of food retail capital, liquor stores began to serve as the primary source of food provisioning in America's inner cities, yet prices for their goods were often higher than those found at a supermarket, and fresh fruits and vegetables were unavailable.

These national trends played out in the Oakland flatlands, as well. The number of grocery stores in West Oakland declined from 137 in 1960 to 22 in 1980, due largely to the arrival of supermarkets (Fuller 2004). However, by the 1990s, many supermarkets had closed their doors, leaving food retail in the flatlands largely to liquor stores. The Safeway at Eastmont Mall, one of the mall's anchor stores, closed at this time. In a particularly ironic twist, two of the country's four leading supermarkets, Safeway and Lucky Stores, were headquartered in Oakland, yet access to quality food in the once bountiful industrial garden of Oakland's flatlands had evaporated as capital reinvested outside of the city lines. Even today, there are four times as many fast food restaurants and convenience stores than grocery stores and produce vendors in the East Bay ; the number of liquor stores per person in flatlands neighborhoods (3 to 6 stores per 1,000 residents) was two to four times the city average (Spiker, Sorrelgreen, and Williams 2007). No supermarkets serve residents in West Oakland and recent plans for British supermarket giant Tesco to open a West Oakland store have fallen through. West Oaklanders have to cross into the

redeveloped box store land of neighboring Emeryville to shop at Pak-n-Sav. Similarly, East Oaklanders find the best deals across the border in San Leandro.

Poverty, Panther Power, Pollution, People's Grocery & Polanyi

This broad brushstroke history of 20th century Oakland helps to illustrate how the ebbs and flows of capital transform urban landscapes. It is precisely from this historical context—from these dynamic landscapes shaped by years of contained devaluation—that urban gardens have arisen in the urban fallow of Oakland's flatlands. As flows of capital transform the built and natural environments, human populations viscerally experience these transformations as their livelihoods are shaken, undone, and forced to restructure. Such transformations can even become physically embodied as hunger (cf Heynen 2006b), due to a loss of what Nobel laureate Amartya Sen (1983) called "entitlements"—access to food and purchasing power, or as disease related to pollution or other environmental contaminants.

A number of socioeconomic indicators illustrate the toll that a history of contained devaluation (whether of surplus capital, labor, fixed capital, or rent) has taken on Oakland's flatlands [see Table 1]. Median income is 25 percent lower than the citywide average. Between a quarter and a third of people live below the poverty line. In predominantly black neighborhoods, such as West Oakland and Central East Oakland, such statistics paint an even bleaker picture. Unemployment in much of the flatlands is roughly twice the citywide unemployment rate.

Table 1. Selected demographic and socioeconomic indicators from Oakland and flatlands district zip code areas

	Oakland	West Oakland (94607)	San Antonio (94606)	Fruitvale (94601)	Central East Oakland (94621)	Elmhurst (94603)
Total Population	399.477	20,822	41,911	55,130	31,233	31,239
Race/Ethnicity (%)						
White	23%	6%	12%	7%	2%	3%
Black/Af-Am	35%	51%	24%	23%	48%	52%
Latino	22%	13%	21%	49%	41%	37%
Asian	15%	27%	39%	15%	5%	3%
Pacific Islander	1%	1%	1%	2%	0%	1%
Other[##]	4%	3%	4%	3%	3%	3%
Socioeconomic Indicators						
Median Income	$40,055	$21,124	$32,273	$33,152	$29,181	$34,755
Living in Poverty	19%	32%	24%	25%	28%	24%
Unemployed	9%	18%	8%	15%	19%	16%
Home Ownership	41%	24%	20%	34%	44%	52%

[##] Includes the following U.S. Census categories: American Indian, two or more races, and other races.
Source: U.S. Census, 2000, Form SF3

Numbers do not tell the whole story, however. As the history of the flatlands has shown, the retreat of capital is spatially demarcated, as is social upheaval in the form of migration, poverty, hunger, crime, and declining public health. A map of Oakland's socioeconomic landscape vividly illustrates this trend. The stark division between the flatlands and hills is striking and adheres to the boundaries delimited decades ago by the aforementioned freeway construction, redlining, and zoning. The flatlands are home to the highest concentrations of people living below the poverty line [Figure 2] and host the lowest percentage of home ownership and the lowest levels of educational attainment. Perhaps the most striking indicator of this disparity —and certainly most tragic—is the city's homicide rate [Figure 3]. Three-quarters of homicide victims were unemployed at the time of death. A similar percentage of victims were African American, and the vast number of homicides occurred in West Oakland and Elmhurst (ACPHD 2006).[23]

[23] A regularly updated Google map on the *San Francisco Chronicle* website plots Oakland's murders; they almost entirely occur in the flatlands, and are concentrated in West Oakland and Central East Oakland.

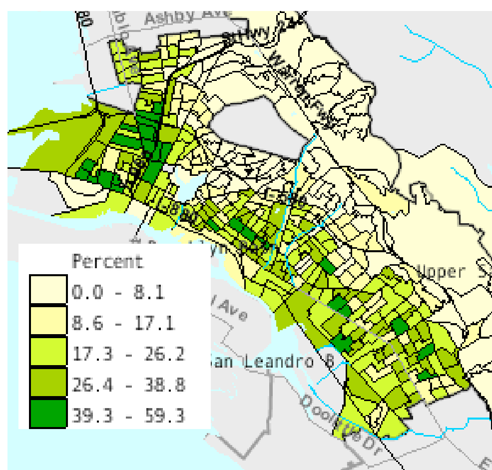

Figure 2: Oakland population living below the poverty line

(Source: U.S. Census, 2000. Online: www.factfinder.census.gov, accessed 6/2008)

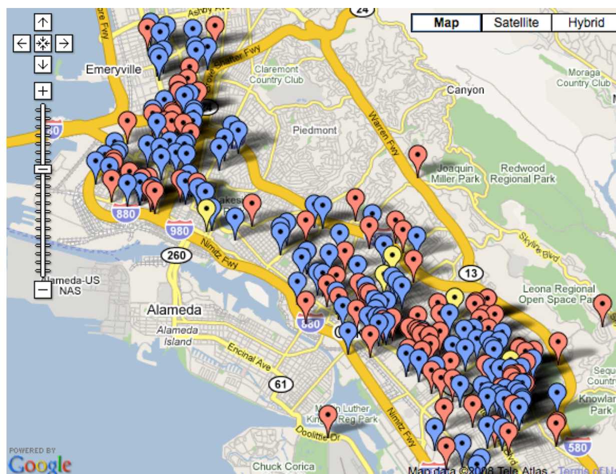

Figure 3: Oakland homicides, 2007 and 2008

(Source: *SF Chronicle*. Online: http://www.sfgate.com/maps/oaklandhomicides/, accessed 10/12/08)

Uneven patterns of investment and devaluation in Oakland have left not only a socioeconomic legacy in the flatlands, but an ecological one, as well. The historical concentration of industry and transportation in the Oakland flatlands has profoundly impacted environmental and public health; the majority of sites regulated by the EPA in Oakland are found here [Figure 4], as are the highest number of cases of asthma and diabetes hospitalization [Appendix 2]. Mortality rates due to heart disease and cancer are 33 to 48 percent higher in East and West Oakland than in Alameda County as a whole (ACPHD 2005).

Figure 4. Toxic releases (blue), hazardous waste (green), and superfund sites (brown).

(Source: EPA. Online: http://www.epa.gov/enviro/html/em/, accessed 10/8/08)

The Port of Oakland has been a major factor in West Oakland's poor population health. Since its establishment in 1927, the Port has been one of the driving forces of Oakland's economic growth machine, but has had to continually expand over the last several decades to remain competitive against the other Pacific ports of Los Angeles, Long Beach, Seattle, and Tacoma (Gulick 2002).[24] Since 1962 it has spent $1.2 billion to expand to 1,210 acres of marine terminals and an intermodal rail facility that sees the arrival of over 2,000 container ships annually. In 2007 nearly 2.4 million containers moved in and out of the Port (Port of Oakland 2007). The diesel exhaust from the ships and the semis that move these containers has had a profound impact on the health of port workers and West Oakland residents. John Castanho, a longshoreman who worked at the Port for more than two decades, describes his working environment and its impact:

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[24] Growing consumer demand for cheap imports and the restructuring of the shipping industry have fueled the Port's expansion over the years. The consolidation of the global shipping industry and technological innovations such as the advent of "intermodalism" (the smooth movement of a container between ship and rail or truck) and of "megaships" and "gigaships" (container vessels carrying upwards of 7,000 containers) forced the Port to adapt to new standards and expectations. New gantry cranes and a 50-foot deep dredging channel were provided to accommodate the gigaships and the intermodal rail terminal needed to keep up with the changing technology.

> We begin unlashing the containers. The black matter from the ship's smokestacks coats the containers and the ship's deck where I will be working. The "black snow" looks like soot inside a chimney. It will be rubbed into my coveralls and boots. It will stick to the perspiration on my skin. When the workday ends, I am wringing wet with sweat. Removing my work gear, I pull a box of baby wipes from my trunk. The less of this stuff I bring home, the less my wife and children will come into contact with. In one wipe of my face, large, dark smudges cover the sheet. If this is on my face, my hands, my clothes, and my boots, how much of it entered my lungs today? I have a good paying job, and I'm in good shape, but how much will working in this environment shorten my life? I have worked in this industry for over 20 years. My father was a longshoreman for 21 years before dying at the age of 45 from asbestosis and throat cancer…. In unanswered questions, blackened baby wipes, and lost loved ones, good movement is costing me and my fellow longshoremen. (Palaniappan, Prakash, and Bailey 2006, 16)

Asthma rates for children are seven times higher in West Oakland than in the rest of the state (Costa et al. 2002) due to the concentration of diesel exhaust and industrial fumes.[25]

These disparities disproportionately impact people of color, as the white population, along with the city's affluence, remains concentrated in the Oakland hills [Figure 5].[26] The opening page of a new report by the Alameda County Public Health Department captures the cumulative, long-term impact of these spatialized and racialized disparities on public health:

> Compared with a White child in the Oakland Hills, an African American born in West Oakland is … seven times more likely to be born into poverty… By fourth grade, this child is … likely to live in a neighborhood with twice the concentration of liquor stores and more fast food outlets… As an adult, he will be five times more likely to be hospitalized for diabetes, twice as likely to be hospitalized for and to die of heart disease, three times more likely to die of stroke, and twice as likely to die of cancer. Born in West Oakland, the person can expect to die almost 15 years earlier than a White person born in the Oakland Hills. (ACPHD 2008)

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[25] Ironically many of the containers moving between the Ports and interstates are shipping the processed foods ultimately stocked on liquor store shelves or deep-fried or microwaved at a fast food joint. The provisioning of processed food in the flatlands, in effect, "pollutes" twice, both when it is shipped and when it is consumed [see Footnote 1].

[26] This demographic is rapidly changing, however, as the city center continues to gentrify. The 2010 census will surely reveal some major changes as the Latino population grows, whites return to downtown and West Oakland, and middle-class blacks move to the suburbs (Hendrix 2001).

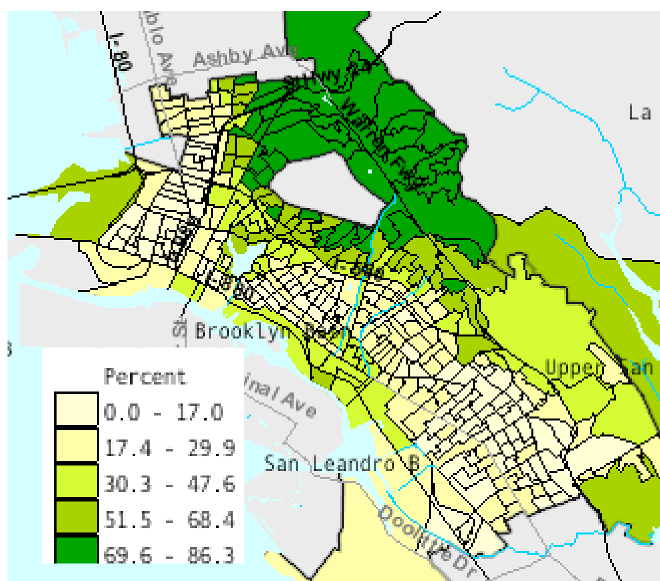

Figure 5: Oakland's white population.

(Source: U.S. Census, 2000. Online: www.factfinder.census.gov, accessed June 2008)

At first glance, these statistics—a testament to the racialization of poverty in America—are no surprise. Yet they are central to the story of UA and the food justice movement. It is precisely the development of such inequities between the flatlands and hills that has given birth to a number of social movements, including the food justice movement. Here it is important to return to the dialectical nature of capital's transformation of the urban landscape. While the seemingly disembodied forces of capital trickle or thunder down into the material world, people react and resist, human agency moves in tension with larger structural forces.[27] In his classic study of political economy, *The Great Transformation*, Karl Polanyi (1944 [2001]) argues that the disembedding of the economy from the social relations that once defined market exchange has been responsible for much of the violence and unrest of the modern era. Without a moral

[27] Of course these structural forces, too, are derived from human agency, from the individual decisions and actions of those in power and of those who submit to capital's hegemony. The Foucauldian metaphor of power operating in capillary forms (via the "governmentality" of discourse and self-discipline, for example) could be useful here were we to limit the extent of our analysis and focus using a finer grain. Yet as I argue in the introduction, observing at coarser grain allows us to perceive the extent to which the arterial and organismal flows of capital shape and dominate the urban socio-ecosystem. In other words, I've intentionally chosen to forsake the trees for a view of the forest.

economy of mutual aid in times of need, the unchecked buying and selling of "fictitious commodities"—land, labor, and money—leads to social upheaval:[28]

> Robbed of the protective covering of cultural institutions, human beings would perish from the effects of social exposure; they would die as the victims of acute social dislocation through vice, perversion, crime, and starvation. Nature would be reduced to its elements, neighborhoods and landscapes defiled, rivers polluted…the power to produce food and raw materials destroyed. Finally, the market administration of purchasing power would periodically liquidate business enterprise, for shortages and surfeits of money would prove as disastrous to business as floods and droughts in primitive society. (76)

In sum, "leaving the fate of soil and people to the market would be tantamount to annihilating them" (137). To protect themselves from such a catastrophic end, people organize as "a deep seated movement … to resist the pernicious effects of a market-controlled economy" (80). This movement in turn forces the restructuring of capital. Polanyi refers to this dialectical relationship as capitalism's "double movement." The counter-movement that arises in response to the unchecked market exchange of fictitious commodities can be productive or destructive, peaceful or violent, exclusive or inclusive, from the right or from the left.

The history of the flatlands—of both its uneven development and the social movements that have organized in response—is a history of capitalism's double movement, a history of struggle to against the impacts of the free market on land, labor, money, and food. By the late 1960s the impact of capital flight and quarantined devaluation had taken its toll on Oakland. The capital-parched flatlands of West and North Oakland proved fertile ground for revolution. The Black Panther Party for Self-Defense (BPP) organized in 1966 in response to chronic police attacks on black youth. Drawing inspiration from Third World revolutionary ideology and world systems theory, the Panthers viewed Oakland as a colonized periphery, exploited and oppressed socioeconomically—and at times violently—by the downtown core. The BPP is perhaps best known for protecting the city's black population against harassment from a predominantly white

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[28] Land, labor, and money are "fictitious commodities" because they were not actually produced as commodities for sale on the market. Additionally they possess qualities that can neither be valued nor regulated by the market.

police force. But it also launched several social programs to fill in gaps left by capital's flight and the urban decay that followed. Section 10 of the October 1966 BPP Party Platform and Program "What We Want, What We Believe" states: "We want land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice and peace" (Foner [1970] 2002). Several BPP programs brought bread and other food to Oakland's flatlands neighborhoods. The Free Breakfast for School Children program

> was created because the Black Panther Party understands that our children need a nourishing breakfast every morning so that they can learn.… It is a beautiful sight to see our children eat in the mornings after remembering the times when our stomachs were not full, and even the teachers in the schools say that there is a great improvement in the academic skills of the children that do get the breakfast. At one time there were children that passed out in class from hunger, or had to be sent home for something to eat. But our children shall be fed, and the Black Panther Party will not let the malady of hunger keep our children down any longer. (*The Black Panther*, 26 March 1969, cited in Foner [1970] 2002, 168)

Two decades later, flatlands activists again reacted when an unregulated market left "neighborhoods and landscapes defiled." The environmental justice (EJ) movement in the East Bay arose in response to the disproportionate impact of air pollution on communities of color, particularly in Richmond and West Oakland. Since its beginnings in the early '80s, the EJ movement has mobilized a multi-racial coalition of various groups focusing on toxics, land use, transportation, public health, and job safety to hold industry and local governments responsible for systematic discrimination (by intent or by outcome) against low-income communities of color (Bullard 2005; Pellow and Brulle 2005). Grassroots organizations with the help of local environmental think tanks fought polluters in the streets and courtrooms: the West County Toxics Coalition battled refinery flaring in Richmond; PUEBLO fought dioxin emissions in Fruitvale; APEN struggled to shield Laotian refugees from exposure to toxic air, water, and soil pollution; a number of community organizations in West Oakland have successfully fought the Port of Oakland, Red Star Yeast, and other polluters (Walker 2007; Pacific Institute 2003; Larsen n.d.; Matsuoka 2003).

At both of these moments in history, activists in Oakland mobilized to counter the social upheaval that arose when land, labor, and money were left to the unrestrained logic of the market, disembedding them from a moral economy of mutual aid and alliance. Unemployment, hunger, and violence marked the "acute social dislocation" occurring in the flatlands and became rallying points for the Panthers. Similarly, as the air, water, soil, and human bodies of the East Bay flatlands physically absorbed the toxic externalities of capitalist production, EJ activists organized in resistance. By forcing the government to acknowledge the impact of pollution on public health in the flatlands, new regulations followed, forcing capital to reorganize; in short, their actions resulted in a partial re-embedding of social relations into the market.

Similarly, UA and the struggle for food justice in Oakland (first by the Panthers and now by a new generation of activists) arose in response to the market's failure to provide affordable access to nutritious food. Food access was whittled away by a suite of interrelated factors. First, the consolidation of the food retail industry and rise and fall of supermarkets reduced the diversity and quantity of food retail choices. Second, falling wages and inflation—both arising from the treatment of labor and money as market commodities—meant declining purchasing power. As we've seen, capital devaluation was increasingly concentrated in the flatlands. Unable to turn a profit, supermarkets, like other retail outlets, emptied their shelves and shut their doors. As entitlements slowly evaporated in the flatlands and food retail capital dried up, transfats and high-fructose corn syrup flowed in. Junk food outlets cropped up to take advantage of the changing economic climate, transforming not only the food retail landscape, but also the culture of food.

The transformation of food culture is due in large part to the commodification of food, an ongoing process that has seen the rise of everything from artificial ingredients and fast food

restaurants, to patented germplasm and nutritionism. Fast food and packaged snack food became the perfect sink for surplus production of grain, beef, poultry, and dairy products and their reconstituted by-products (Levenstein 2003; Goodman, Sorj, and Wilkinson 1987; Kloppenberg 2005; Nestle 2002; Pollan 2006; Schlosser 2005). As food has became increasingly processed and packaged, however, the social relations and cultural meaning surrounding food production and consumption have gradually been obscured by the market-based ideology of cheap food. Food's social significance rarely factors into calculations of profit margins, as social relations and cultural meaning woven into the agri-food system—from the relationship of a farm family to its fields, to the passing down of a recipe from grandparent to grandchild, to the breaking of bread with friends—are impossible to quantified. The fruit of both labor and nature, food is essentially one of Polanyi's fictitious commodities; the treatment of food as a simple commodity to be bought and sold according to market logic ignores this complex weave of relations woven into its production, distribution, preparation, and consumption.

Since the middle of the last century, the profit-based commodification of food has systematically unraveled many of these social relations: farming has evolved into a highly-specialized industry based on inputs and outputs and engages less than 2 percent of the U.S. population; culinary knowledge has been lost; prepackaged meals are consumed alone in a car; public health has been undermined. Just as human bodies absorb the toxic externalities of a factory cutting regulatory corners to make a profit, they absorb the carbohydrates and chemicals of cheap commodity food manufactured for a quick profit. As junk food flowed into the fresh-food deserts/junk food jungles of America's post-industrial ghettoes and depopulated rural communities, diabetes, heart disease, and obesity followed. Indeed, as the flatlands statistics presented in the previous section illustrate, leaving the fate of people and the soil (and by

extension the food grown in it) to the market has been tantamount to a quiet and slow annihilation. While market forces were nothing new in the Oakland flatlands or elsewhere, the combination of agri-food consolidation, capital flight, and demarcated devaluation limited residents' access to healthy and nutritious food.

It is precisely from this historical context that the food justice movement has taken root in the urban fallows of Oakland's flatlands. Indeed, one of food justice's central goals is the re-embedding of the agri-food system with the social relations that have been progressively stripped from it over the last sixty years by commodity agriculture. This approach draws heavily on a vision of "civic agriculture" (Lyson 2004), an interdependent, "commensal community" of stakeholders that "establish[es] or recover[s] social linkages beyond atomistic market relationships through the production, exchange, processing, and consumption of food" (Kloppenberg, Henrickson, and Stevenson 1996, 37).

In Oakland's flatlands, urban agriculture programs have created such opportunities to preserve agri-food knowledge and culture. In East Oakland, Oakland Food Connection reintegrates production and consumption by teaching a curriculum that includes urban gardening and cooking classes to educate children about food culture and nutrition. Similarly People's Grocery throws monthly "grub parties," described by their website as

> events where people of all ages come together over none other than healthy food. Party-goers eat, gain tips from a cooking demo, eat, learn about nutrition, eat, laugh, eat, discuss what's going on in West Oakland, and eat some more. Each event features a talented chef sharing his or her recipes and passing around samples, local artists or performers, and People's Grocery youth providing the audience with interactive education around healthy eating and nutrition. (www.peoplesgrocery.org, accessed 13 July 2008)

These intergenerational and multi-ethnic programs help to reinstate a moral economy into the agri-food system and preserve traditional knowledge that risks dying out with the older generation. For example, urban agriculture allows immigrant groups to preserve their agricultural knowledge and food culture. The Oakland-based Mien Farmers Collaborative grows

traditional Southeast Asian vegetables for sale in the Mien community as part of a nutrition and economic development program sponsored by the East Bay Asian Youth Center. In nearby North Richmond, a neighborhood with a history and socioeconomic plight not unlike that of the Oakland flatlands, the Verde Partnership Garden brings together Latino, African American, Khmu, and Mien parents and elders to share agricultural knowledge with their children and other students.

In a recent documentary, Ted Dixon, garden manager for OBUGs in West Oakland, describes how seniors use the garden as a place to relax as well as a forum in which to pass down traditional knowledge:

> Seniors, they can come into the garden more often, you know, instead of sitting up in their house, they can come and, you know, pull up a weed and tell me what I'm doing wrong. One lady, she's 88, she tells me, "Boy, I'll work a ring around you in that garden. I'll get out of this wheelchair, boy, and put this cane down, and I'll show you what to do." And I enjoy that… And, you know, I like to have them with the teenagers in there, too, with me, right, so they can tell them the things in their past about what they did and pass it on to the youth so the youth can turn around and pass it on, too.[29]

In addition to strengthening intergenerational relationships, urban farms and gardens create a space where the transfer of knowledge accompanies the experience of labor, helping to mend the psychological alienation of humans from their environment (Ollman 1976) and the social and ecological "metabolic rift" between production and consumption (Foster 1999; Marx [1867] 1976).

This re-embedding of food production and consumption with social relations buffers flatlands residents from the impacts of an agri-food system left to the whims of the market, and it arises from capital's contradictory double movement which creates the conditions for its own reshaping. But urban agriculture—and food justice more generally—is more than simply a protective reflex; it offers emancipatory possibility that integrates ecological stewardship with social justice. As Josée Johnston (2008) argues, alternative food initiatives can ultimately serve

[29] Quoted from the 8-minute documentary film *Food Justice: A Growing Movement* (Brimmer and Tucker 2006).

as a counter-hegemonic tool to reclaim "the commons" from the enclosure of capitalist commodification by "ensur[ing] that access to basic life-goods like food can be met through non-commodity channels, particularly when sufficient purchasing power is lacking" (100). "Reclaiming the commons," she explains,

> does not necessarily mean that markets and individual consumption styles are eradicated, but it does demand that markets be reembedded in social structures that ensure that nutritious, sustainable food goes not only to those who can afford it but to everyone, and that alternate modes of provisioning—through cooperative provisioning—are equally developed. (100-101)

For food justice activists these commons are the patchwork of urban fallows in the Oakland's flatlands and other corners of post-industrial America.

Conclusion: Farming (and Framing) the Fallows

Across from the moribund liquor store and in front of the verdant garden on Center Street where we began, a small boy rides his bike around the produce stand and pulls up in front of the price board [Figure 7]. The board is sub-divided into three columns with three different prices for each vegetable. Another sign asks, "Which price level are you in today?" Level 1 reads: "Free Spirit: Your unemployment check hasn't come, or for whatever reason cash is not flowing in. Have some free veggies, no explanation needed." Level 2 follows: "Just Getting By: Money is tight and if it weren't for City Slicker Farms you'd be searching for deals at Safeway." And finally, Level 3: "Sugar Mama/Daddy: You may not be rolling in riches, but you can afford to shop at Whole Foods or the Berkeley Farmers Market. Pay a little more to help someone out. Thanks!" I'm not sure that the boy has paid much attention to the board, but he seems to be at home in and around the garden. He knows all the gardeners by name and asks if there are any sugarsnap peas.

Five blocks away, in a housing project at 10th and Mandela, a backyard gardener shows me the bullet holes in her neighbor's window. "Poor thing, she was scared to death. She's a Filipino lady, doesn't speak any English. Fortunately, she sleeps on the floor so the bullets went over her head, but what if she'd gotten up to get some water or something? Yeah, it's crazy here, especially when it's hot. Sounds like the 4th of July, gunshots going off like firecrackers…" She stares angrily across the parking lot towards a group of young dealers waiting for customers. We turn back to preparing her garden bed, her brow softens, and she tells me what enormous carrots her father used to grow.

Photo 1 (left): City Slicker Farms food stand, West Oakland. Photo by the author, April 2008.

Photo 2 (above): Rooftop garden built by Oakland Food Connection at E.C. Reems school, East Oakland. Photo by the author, July 2008.

Ten miles to the southeast, building planter boxes for a rooftop garden at a school on MacArthur Boulevard and 84th Avenue in East Oakland [Figure 8], I tell a middle-school student that I'm not a big fan of eggplants. "Eggplant?!" he asks incredulously. "What's that? They grow eggs?" "You've never seen an eggplant before?" I ask. Jason Harvey, Executive Director

of Oakland Food Connection, who grew up not far from here, intercedes, "Not yet. We haven't planted those yet this year."

I include these vignettes to illustrate the role that urban agriculture plays in overcoming a history of uneven metabolism in the Oakland flatlands. The bullet holes, the liquor store, and a child who has never heard of an eggplant are all contemporary symptoms of a still-untreated historical legacy of "structural violence" (Farmer 2003) and its multiple axes—race, class, gender, poverty, etc.—that have carved Oakland into a uneven but clearly demarcated landscape of poverty and privilege, white and non-white.

I have chosen to focus primarily on the economic axis in this paper in order to demonstrate that the food justice movement and flatlands UA initiatives have arisen largely in response to these metabolic processes of capital that operate at a structural level. This point is particularly relevant in light of post-structural critiques of urban agriculture and alternative food movements (Pudup 2007; Allen and Guthman 2006; Allen 2004; Guthman 2007). These critiques of the potential neoliberal nature of alternative food initiatives and organized garden projects raise important questions about the entrepreneurial direction that some of these initiatives are taking, and as Julie Guthman has cleverly written, some of these movements may be more naively "Pollyannian than Polanyian." Nevertheless, while any movement runs the risk of being appropriated and subsumed by new modes of capitalist production, it is ultimately important not to underestimate the power of collective action. As Johnston (2008) argues,

> This is not a utopian project that can be achieved through one policy measure or food project. It is a long-term incremental process of reclaiming social life from an excessive reliance on market logic and global commodity chains. Theoretically, we can understand these types of reclamation projects as dialectical critiques of commodification and capitalist enclosure. More concretely, we can understand urban farmers, community kitchens, rooftop gardens, and community-supported agriculture as engendering collective empowerment and personal agency that is based not just on how much you can buy but on values of sufficiency, equity, and stewardship of the commons. (101-102)

Therein lie the makings of a counter-hegemonic bloc capable of debunking the neoliberal myth of the self-regulating market.

I want to conclude by arguing that the UA initiatives led by Oakland's food justice organizations *are* reclaiming food production and consumption from the market by re-embedding the agri-food system with social relations by emphasizing equity, sufficiency, and ecological stewardship. Urban agriculture is not a return to some idyllic agrarian past that never existed in the flatlands; rather, it represents a radical rejection of an agri-food system that has channeled the externalities of capitalist production into the soil of low-income areas and the bodies of the urban poor. Indeed, within Oakland's food justice movement lies precisely the kind of "militant particularism" of a local place and its history—in this case, the flatlands with its history of capital devaluation and political mobilization—that Raymond Williams argued was necessary to engender social change across scales, particularly when allied with parallel social movements, local, national, and international, active at both the street and policy levels.

Successfully farming the urban fallows will clearly require more than the goodwill and sweat of a handful of devoted activists with shovels.[30] By reframing UA as something more than simply food production, food justice activists may be able to undermine the capitalist logic that values urban fallow solely in terms of its potential market value. The work of Oakland's food justice initiatives demonstrate that the weaving together of discourses of food justice, environment, and urban planning can open up new spaces for collaboration between a diverse group of public health officials, environmental planners, and food and environmental justice activists, who can work together to emphasize the values of UA that are difficult to quantify—

[30] I suggest that the term "urban fallow" be used literally as well as metaphorically in reference to urban food justice. Rather than seeing urban fallow as wasteland—vacant lots and abandoned buildings— awaiting the start of a new cycle of development, perhaps we should use the word more literally. In shifting or swidden agricultural systems, land is left fallow in order for it to regenerate and regain its fertility before the next phase of cultivation and planting. In this sense, we can envision urban fallow as fallow commons awaiting reclamation. Indeed, urban agriculturalists are already reclaiming vacant lots and marginal patches of earth abandoned by the ebb of capital.

open space, nutritious food, ecological and culinary knowledge, intergenerational and multicultural relationships, physical activity, and joy. Only through such a concerted effort to link food, health, fitness, education, social justice, and economic empowerment can we take steps towards symbolically and materially mending the metabolic rift that alienates Oaklanders and city dwellers worldwide from their food and the entirety of social relations woven within.

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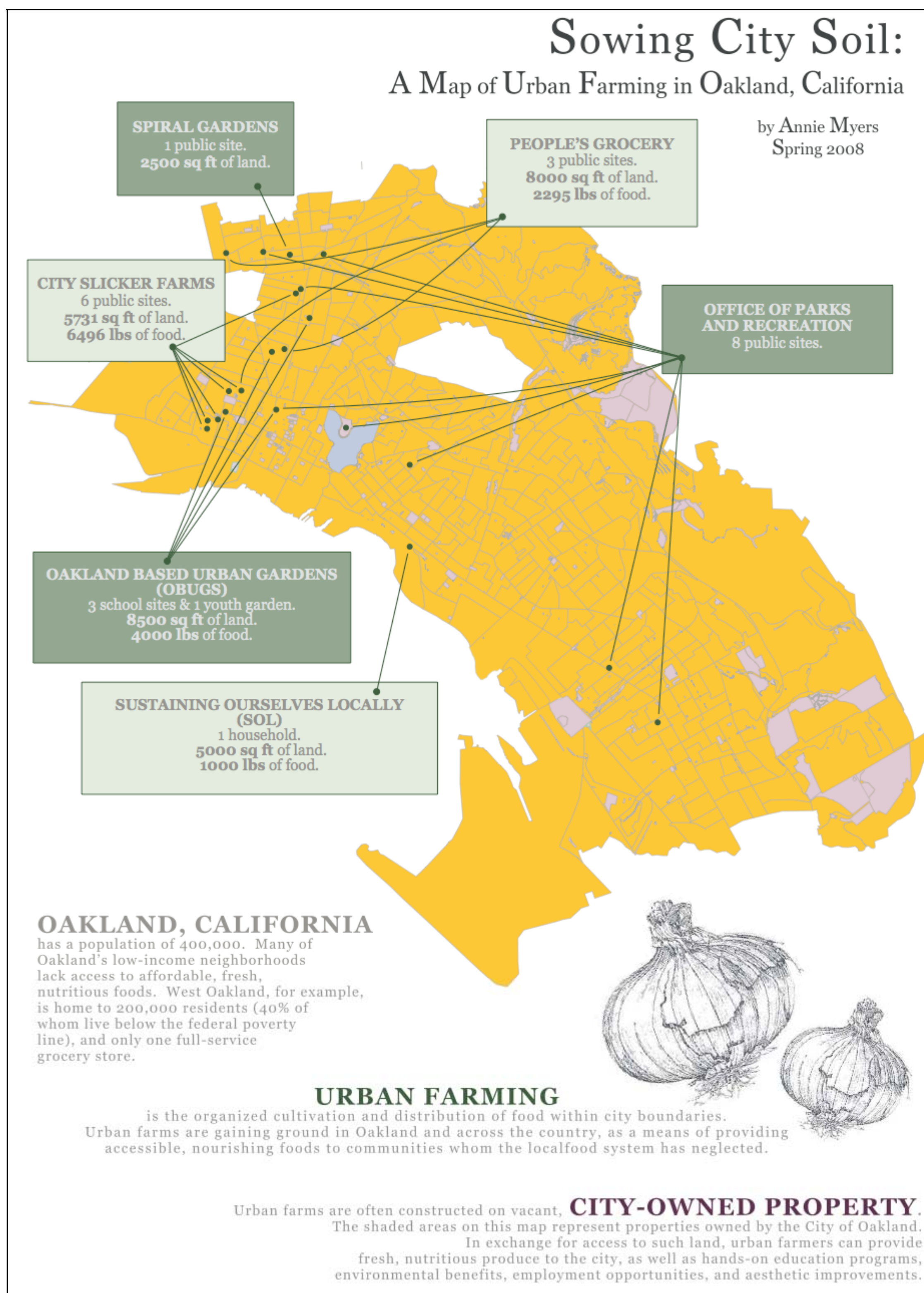
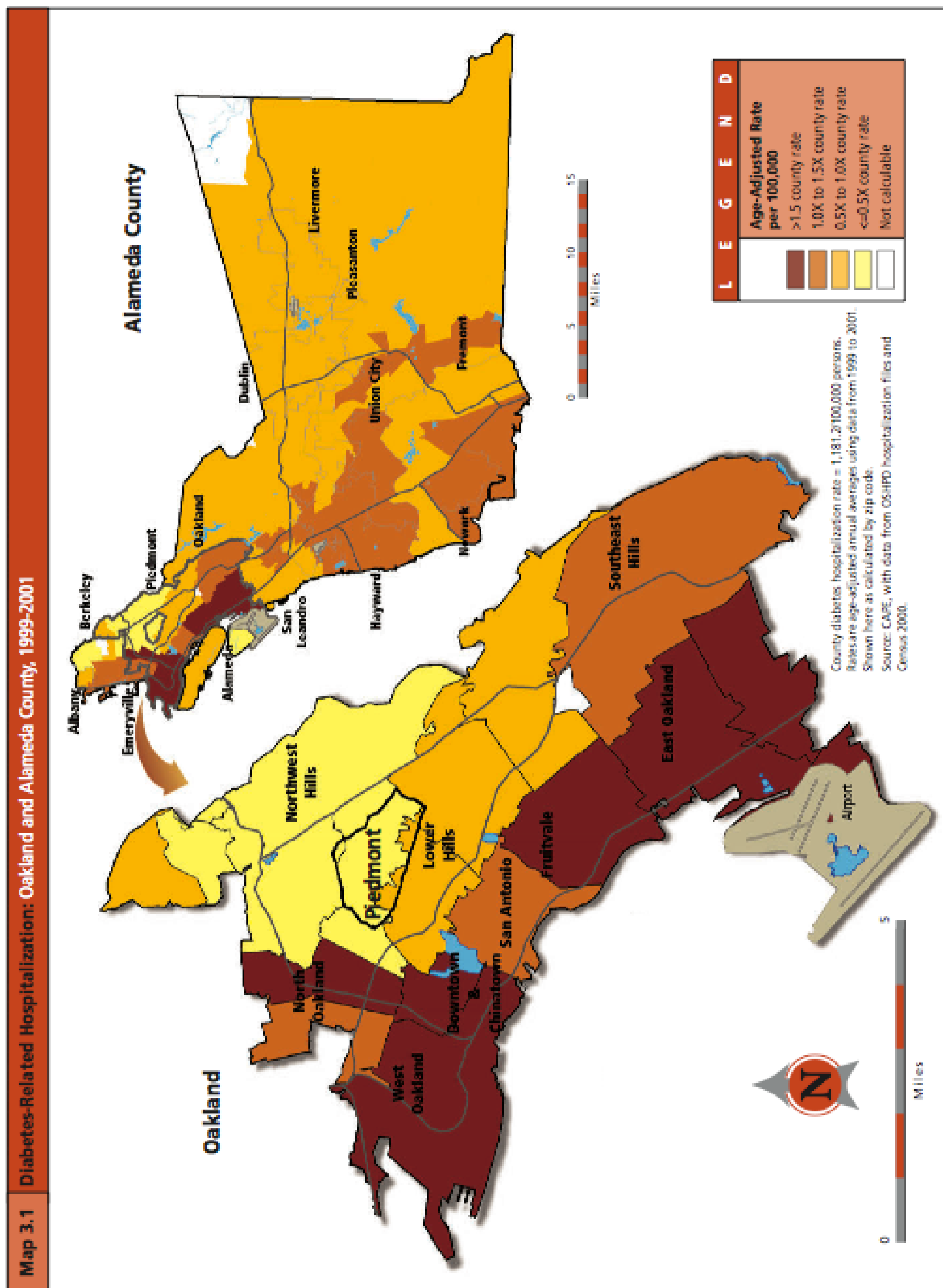
Appendix 1:



Source: http://thoughtsonthetable.wordpress.com/, accessed July 2008.

Appendix 2:



Source: ACPHD 2004

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