A New Campus in the City: Place-Making in South Lake Union

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Abstract

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South Lake Union is experiencing a drastic transformation of its landscape and population since the city of Seattle designated it as a key urban center in 2004. An industrial district and low-income neighborhood described as a "ghost town" in the late 1990s, it is now a proclaimed center of innovation and thriving campus for high-tech and biotech companies. In this project, I explore the place-making practices of the professionals who commute to South Lake Union to work for these global corporations. My focus on their day-to-day activities in public space and on their discourses about South Lake Union helps me explore the ways in which they shape the neighborhood both materially and symbolically, as well as the ways in which these place-making practices shape their collective identity. Through semi-structured interviews and a landscape analysis, I link their construction of South Lake Union as a place dedicated to their work and consumption, and their normalization of whiteness and middle-classness, to broader forces that reproduce and sustain racial capitalism. This work helps me reflect on the possibilities and limitations of studying a socially and numerically dominant group to expose and help disrupt their hegemonic practices.

Introduction

How do people, living their everyday life, collectively shape the places they inhabit and how do they affect the experiences of those around them? More specifically, how do people in a position of power and privilege, such as the white middle class of booming US cities, consciously or unconsciously cement and normalize their hegemony over place through mundane activities and narratives? Who do they erase from their imaginings of place and who do they other and banish in their day-to-day interactions? How do their local individual actions and discourses contribute to the reproduction of broad-scale power hierarchies and social inequalities? What would a disruption of white supremacy from within the white middle-class circles look like? And how can the white middle class do this work without centering their whiteness and middle-classness? What could be the path to accountability and solidarity with those they marginalize?

These questions have been following me for many years—yet they took years to become conscious. Trained in France to become an electronics engineer, I took my first job in Silicon Valley, attracted by the diversity of cultures and life experiences I had discovered there during an internship. An immigrant in a place that was seemingly all business and all new, I did not question our collective gaze, simultaneously turned outward to the high-tech future and inward onto our own elitist milieu. We were all progressive enough to care about "problems elsewhere" but not involved enough to recognize our own part in them.

Moving to Seattle in 2013 served as a wake-up call. The city's local media and its inhabitants were decidedly more interested in talking about the city's growing pains: its struggles with the arrival of Californians like myself, who were raising housing costs and lengthening

commute times exponentially; its rising homelessness and wealth inequalities; its history of redlining and racial segregation, which did not want to disappear. Through this new lens, I was finally able to see the Silicon Valley bubble from the outside, recognized the bubble I was entering in Seattle, and found myself in a moral crisis. Sending checks to non-profits and social justice organizations was not nearly enough of an engagement. I needed to learn more about the American society I had embraced for a dozen years if I wanted to know how to actually work toward social justice, as a member of the white middle class.

My journey through a Bachelor's program in social sciences and this Master's program in geography opened my eyes to the systemic inequalities and structural forces that shape our world. It tells a lot about my own position of power and privilege, but also about our Western culture, that I had never thought of myself as a settler (Simpson, A., 2017; Simpson, L., 2017; Tuck & Yang, 2012), nor had I realized that capitalism is necessarily racist (Gilmore, 2017; Melamed, 2015), nor that it relies on ongoing dispossession (Coulthard, 2014; Federici, 2014; Harvey, 2005). I hadn't fully grasped that individual behaviors and cultural norms are only the manifestations (rather than the root causes) of a globalized economic and political system that thrives on inequalities (Spade, 2016; Roy, 2017). I hadn't challenged "the language of liberal individualism" (Lipsitz, 1995, p. 381) that attributes the causes of social differentiation to individual character rather than social structures, and thus furthers our "possessive investment in whiteness" (p. 368), because I was immersed in a powerful system of normalization of white supremacy, racial capitalism, and settler colonialism that, although it felt extremely unfair, also seemed out of my control. As a woman in a masculinist industry, I had experienced my fair share of belittlements and self-esteem deteriorations, but for my own survival, I had looked for solutions in a form of feminism that, as I later realized, is steeped in the liberal ideal of

individual merit and harnesses “the dream of women’s emancipation. . . to the engine of capitalist accumulation” (Fraser, 2009, p. 110), with all the inequalities and dominations that capitalism requires.

This continuous learning process is helping me in two ways: it allows me to engage in a difficult but necessary reflection on the extent of my own embeddedness in the racial capitalist project, but it also nourishes my desire to look for ways to learn about and disrupt its power structures. Alongside the guilt comes a sense of liberation: knowing that I am taking part in the reproduction of an oppressive, dispossessive, exploitative system (as a member of the white elite) is in fact enabling me to take part in its abolition. This work necessarily starts with an inward gaze. The constant normalization of white middle-class power renders it invisible to its members; the first step in its disruption is to acknowledge its existence and learn about its mechanisms, such as the investment in propertied personhood (Roy, 2017). However, the work shouldn’t stop there, with a self-centered critique of its violences. This work should open the doors to collaborative work with scholars, activists, and informants from marginalized groups who have been engaged in the abolition of racial capitalism and its local expressions of inequalities and injustices for as long as they have existed.

Geography offers the tools to explore the role of spatiality in settler colonial racial capitalism and in the social, cultural, economic, and political processes that sustain it. Power relations are forged in particular places, within a network of places and at various scales (whether spatial, temporal, or social). I am particularly interested in the ways in which processes of hegemony and privilege play out at a small scale, such as a neighborhood, through the mundane behaviors of its inhabitants. This interest stems from my conviction that we all reproduce and resist structural forces through individual actions and discourses within our circles

and in the places we inhabit. Disrupting power structures starts with disrupting the individual behaviors and opinions that maintain them. Thus, I ask how white middle-class individuals collectively shape the places they use every day and how they affect the experiences of those around them. I want to look at the micro-politics of inhabiting a neighborhood's public spaces, thinking of the political as personal (Hall, 2020). My experience in the high-tech industry pushes me to want to explore tech professionals' role in the making of neighborhoods where they work. In fact, exploring my own milieu seems like a logical and necessary step in my intellectual and political journey[1]. More importantly, the relatively recent and rapid expansion of the tech campuses in cities such as San Francisco and Seattle needs to be further researched, especially at the scale of their individual inhabitants as most studies focus on the politics of local government and business leaders (for example, Gibson, 2004; Stehlin, 2016). Moreover, studying people's understandings and uses of a neighborhood where they go to work, rather than reside, might reveal a relationship to place and public space that is more directly tied to racial capitalism, since this is where they contribute to the success of global corporations (and city government) fully invested in the accumulation of capital.

Exploring the practices of a dominant group is not without danger. This project is centered around privilege and power and is lacking the voices of marginalized individuals that would illuminate alternative experiences and possible futures. However, my goal is precisely to expose this hegemony to better disrupt it. This project is a starting point, with which I hope to

[1] In this project, I categorize tech professionals as "middle-class," understanding that the definition of middle-classness is complex, contextual, and always embedded in a web of social factors, geographies, and histories. As I discuss in this thesis, the tech professionals I interviewed inscribed themselves in middle-classness through their discourses regarding modernity, respectability, rationality, capitalism, etc. and through their relationship to poverty (Lawson, 2012).

explore avenues to build solidarities across differences and work toward equity and social justice.

This project explores the current remaking of South Lake Union, a Seattle neighborhood that biotech and high-tech corporations have elected as their new campus, pouring in large amounts of capital, transforming the built environment, and bringing in tens of thousands of workers with their own practices and ideations of place. In broad terms, the case study presented here explores the ways in which tech professionals are remaking urban space and, through this, are involved in processes of hegemony, othering, and erasure. More specifically, I ask: (1) how a privileged and numerically dominant group shapes a neighborhood used as a place of work through their mundane activities in public spaces and through their narratives and implicit or explicit understandings of this place; (2) how the changing landscape and what tech professionals read in it reinforce their understanding of the neighborhood and shapes their collective identity; (3) what these place-making practices renders invisible to them: what don't tech professionals see because of their ideation of the neighborhood?

In this chapter, I review literature on place-making as the core theoretical concept around which this study is articulated. I then provide context with a brief history of South Lake Union and quantitative information about its current working and residential populations. This introduction chapter ends with an outline of the entire thesis.

Place-Making as Guiding Concept

This project takes place-making as its central concept in order to explore the role that the everyday practices and discourses of a social group plays in shaping a neighborhood both

materially and symbolically. The concept of place-making is also useful in exploring how these everyday collective practices and discourses shape the group's identity and sense of belonging.

Place-making— "the cultural, discursive, and material practices through which people imagine and transform places" (Elwood et al, 2015, p. 123) is a process of collective production of place. Blokland (2009) argues with Massey (in *Space, Place and Gender*, 1995) that "beyond individual attachment to place, place-making also occurs as a collective process" (p. 1594). Research on place-making thus tends to focus on specific groups defined by intersecting social attributes such as class, ethnic origin, race, or date of arrival in the place. For example, in her study of Little Italy in New Haven, Connecticut, Blokland (2009) interviews groups that emerged from a mix of social dimensions: "Italian Americans" (defined as residents and former residents of Italian descent and whose heritage in the neighborhood dates back to the 1800s), "poor Blacks" (which Blokland says she "labelled categorically by race, income and residence" (p. 1595) and whose presence in the neighborhood dates back to the 1950s) and "gentrifiers" (the vast majority of whom were "White professional homeowners" (p. 1593) and who arrived in the neighborhood in the 1960s). Similarly, Trudeau (2006) and Smith and Winders (2008) study the conflicting neighborhood imaginaries and place-making practices of two groups with differing immigration, cultural, and racial characteristics. Other studies, such as Elwood et al. (2015), Benson and Jackson, (2013), and Pow (2009) focus their attention on a single group: white middle-class gentrifiers. But like in other studies, their definition of this dominant group is based on an intersection of social differentiators, including race and class. In my study of South Lake Union's transformation, I focus on a single group of white and Asian middle-class tech professionals whose collective identity resides at the intersection of their professional occupation, class, and personal history in the neighborhood.

Places are constantly shaped, contested, and remade, both materially and symbolically, through the place-making practices of various social groups (Massey, 2005). Pow (2009) highlights for example that Shanghai's elite's consumption of manicured front yards physically transforms their "newly privatized residential landscapes" (p. 380) and contributes to the exclusion of the urban poor. Trudeau (2006) shows that the opening of a Hmong ritual slaughterhouse in a 97.2% white rural-residential small town of Minnesota, as well as the legal challenges opposed by the white middle class on the basis of land-use zoning ordinances, also constitute place-making practices (from both social groups) that physically alter the landscape. But place-making isn't always material. Blokland (2009) shows that place-making can also be symbolic by examining the historical narratives of former Italian American residents of Little Italy, New Haven. This group engages in active storytelling that continues to shape the neighborhood from which they departed (by keeping alive its image as "Little Italy" even though it is now gentrified), although they no longer engage in everyday interactions in this space. In my study, I thus aim to explore both the material and the symbolic productions of place.

The studies mentioned above show that place-making is a relational process through which conflicting ideals of place are being negotiated. In fact, Pierce et al. (2011) call for the study of conflicts over places through the lens of "relational place-making" (p. 60). They affirm that "*all* places are relational and always produced through networked politics" (p. 67, emphasis in original). Places are made and contested in relation to other inhabitants. My study, then, pays attention to the social groups that tech professionals construct as "other" and against which they compare themselves.

Furthermore, Elwood et al. (2015) show that place-making practices that lead groups to compare each other play an important role in collective identity formation. For example, some of

the middle-class residents interviewed by the authors, who “position themselves as experts on how to live in the neighborhood” (p. 133), are promoting “self-improvement” activities geared toward poorer people and designed to help them become middle-class. Middle-class residents’ efforts are directed toward the restitution of poorer residents as “middle-class-in-the-making” (p. 132). Place-making thus cements middle-class identity and constructs poverty (that is, the social other) relationally. Through this analysis, Elwood et al. (2015) also show that place and class identities are coproduced. They highlight the tangible changes that middle-class residents’ desire to distance themselves from poorer “others” is driving in the neighborhood, such as the creation of “an orderly, safe, beautiful, owner-occupied neighborhood, replete with consumer amenities” (p. 131). These efforts simultaneously reinforce middle-class normativity and contribute to making this place middle-class. Similarly, for Benson and Jackson (2013), not only do spatial place-making practices help a dominant class claim symbolic power over a place, they also shape this social group’s subjectivities and are “a key feature of identification” (p. 795). In other words, both the place and the group’s identities are changed through place-making, understood as “a discursive practice in action” (p. 797). This is why my research questions interrogate the relationship between understandings of place, productions of place, and collective identity formation, both discursively and through the physical landscape.

For the dominant group, place-making works as a normative practice. Pow (2009) shows for instance that the Shanghai middle-class’s new aesthetic sensibilities “actively construct gated communities as *emblematic* of the urban good life” (p. 372, my emphasis). Relatedly, Benson and Jackson (2013) note in their respondents’ narratives “normative assumptions about the village [of Effingham]” (p. 804) that frame it, through its assumed history, as white and middle-class. The authors highlight that these assumptions are “largely unmarked and unnamed” (p.

804), just as Elwood et al. (2015) highlight the "unacknowledged consensus reproducing middle-class norms" (p. 124), which tends to "erase whiteness" (p. 132) and turn middle-classness into a "'nonclass' status" (p. 133). Spade and Willse (2016) remind us that processes of normalization work to produce a "cultural 'common sense'" (p. 551) that reinforces power by making its organization seem natural. Citing Foucault, these authors argue with feminist theorists and activists that "power operates by generating knowledges about the world that shape the world" (p. 553). By internalizing these disciplinary norms, but also by simultaneously enforcing them violently (Spade and Willse, 2016), dominant groups such as the US white middle class shape their neighborhoods of residence. I am interested in exploring the normative discourses of tech professionals in the neighborhoods where they work and how these discourses shape place.

This normalization, in turn, supports the dominant group's sense of belonging. Benson and Jackson (2013) explain that belonging can be broadly conceived as attachment to one's place of residence. They link the term to place-making by referring to people's choice to move to an area ("elective belonging," per Savage et al. 2005) and their drawing of imaginary boundaries around a desired area ("selective belonging," per Watt's 2009), but insist that these forms of belonging do not suffice to describe people's "dynamic and performative" (p. 797) relationship to place—an argument that is fully supported by the literature reviewed so far. In my study, I explore these various forms of belonging in a neighborhood used for work, as well as active place-making practices.

Among the studies cited above, Elwood et al. (2015) provide the most useful framework for my project. Their study focuses on middle-class residents as the dominant group and analyzes its practices at the scale of the neighborhood, theorized as "dense site of class formation" (p. 128). The authors base their understanding of place-making practices on the (unacknowledged)

normative discourses as well as the "behaviors, interactions with, and expectations of others" (p. 125) that cement middle-class identity and construct poverty relationally. When I ask how a powerful social group claims and settles a neighborhood such as South Lake Union and engage in social othering, I am asking what place-making discourses and practices strengthen tech professionals' dominant position in the neighborhood and distance others by framing them, relationally, as unwelcome or undeserving of this space. My study follows Elwood et al.'s model by focusing on the everyday, mundane, sometimes unacknowledged, sometimes even unconscious place-making efforts of the neighborhood's inhabitants, rather than on more overt politics.

Place-making, then, is a collective process that shapes places physically and symbolically but also shapes the dominant group's identity and sense of belonging relationally. Additional reviews of the place-making literature are weaved into the main chapters of this thesis. I examine the everyday material, cultural, and discursive practices through which place-making operates in Chapter 2, and the co-constitutive relationship between place-making and the landscape in Chapter 3. Moreover, in these chapters, I push the boundaries of the place-making concept to link it to broader processes of settler colonialism and global capitalism, which are only briefly discussed in this introduction. I also discuss some of the place-making practices that marginalized groups use for resistance against these hegemonic forces.

While the concept of place-making provides a useful theoretical basis for my project, geographers have so far used it to describe and explain processes taking place in people's neighborhoods of residence, but not the neighborhoods where they go to work. Place-making practices and understandings of place might be different in a place of work than in a place of residence, given that activities performed there are different and take place at different times, that

the economic relationship to the land and built environment is different, and that attachment to place and to its inhabitants might be different. Moreover, the literature pertaining to urban redevelopments fueled by the high-tech industry, such as in San Francisco (Stehlin, 2016), or by competition in the neoliberal era of globalization in general (Gibson, 2004; Sassen, 2016), focus their attention on the city-level political and legal maneuvers and on the economic forces that enable these transformations, rather than on people's day-to-day-life contributions. I propose to fill the gap left by these two sets of literature combined by exploring place-making in a neighborhood where people go to work, rather than where they live, and by exploring a neoliberal high-tech-fueled neighborhood redevelopment through the lens of mundane activities and narratives rather than through the lens of wider structural forces.

Neighborhood History

The history of South Lake Union as an urban neighborhood is completely tied to settler colonialism, as the city of Seattle was founded on Indigenous territories and developed with the labor and leadership of Indigenous people, including that of Seeathl, after whom the city was named. Seattle and South Lake Union are sitting on the ancestral land of the "People of the Inside Place" (anglicized as "Duwamish"), "Lake People" ("Lakes"), and "People of Tucked Away Inside" ("Shilsholes") (Thrush, 2007, p. 23). White settlers arrived at Alki Point (West Seattle) in 1851 thanks to Indigenous guides and remained a minority among Indigenous communities until 1883, when the new railroad brought an influx of settlers, fueled the city's development, and accelerated Indigenous dispossession, exploitation, and exclusion (Thrush, 2007). Indigenous communities of the Puget Sound have been passing down oral histories dating back to the last Ice Age (Duwamish Tribe Services, 2018c). The rich economic, political, and

spiritual life of these communities was based on a network of winter towns along the region's watersheds, "hinterland prairies and cemeteries, fish camps and hunting grounds" (Thrush, 2007, p. 23), which also extended through "trade and kinship" (p.24) up and down the coast between present-day Vancouver, B.C. and Portland, Oregon, and to the interior plateau of the Columbia River.

While the Duwamish, Suquamish (the people of "Place of Clear Water" (Thrush, 2007, p. 23)), and twenty other tribes of the Puget Sound area signed the Treaty of Point Elliott in 1855 with the governor of Indian affairs for the territory of Washington (Treaty of Point Elliott, 1855), settlers violated the treaty as soon as it was signed (Duwamish Tribe Services, 2018c). In fact, the United States ratified the treaty in 1866 but never kept its promises, among which a reservation for the Duwamish tribe. This treaty is a striking example of "the particular way in which law in colonial contexts enforced Indigenous dispossession and then, granted freedom through the legal tricks of consent and citizenship" (A. Simpson, 2017, p. 20). Its continued violations are unsurprising: "we know with the analytic of settler colonialism that matters are not done, that oppressive structures survive agreements" (A. Simpson, 2017, p. 20).

Settler colonial "place-stories," which tell "who belongs where—and when" (Thrush, 2007, p. 11) are designed to make Indigenous history end were white supremacist settler urban history begins. Thrush (2007) reminds us however that "rather than being mutually exclusive, urban and Native histories in Seattle are in fact mutually constitutive" (p. xiv). In fact, the Indigenous people who welcomed the Denny Party at Alki Point (in what is regarded as Seattle's origin story) were instrumental in the founding and development of the city of Seattle, at least until they were violently excluded from it or rendered invisible to the settlers' eyes. Indigenous people from the entire region came to the new settlement to sell baskets and other crafts and to

work in the farmsteads, sawmills, laundries and brothels, but they also shaped the city through their struggle for survival and inclusion in urban life, for the respect of the terms of the Treaty of Point Elliott, and for the recognition of the Duwamish tribe by the US federal government (a legal battle in which Duwamish leaders are still engaged (Duwamish Tribe Services, 2018b)).

The south shore of "Little Lake," which settler Thomas Mercer renamed Lake Union in 1854 (Thrush, 2007, p. 94), was used as an industrial site early on. Settlers valued its "heavily forested slopes" (Fiset, 2001) for its resources in lumber and its navigable waters as a means of transportation. An Indigenous trail linking Elliott Bay to Little Lake was adopted by settlers as a south-north military road in the 1860s; this route "appears to have facilitated the earliest industrial activity along the southern shoreline of Lake Union where tanneries, cooperages and brick yards were established" (Seattle Department of Neighborhoods, 2014; Thrush 2007). The south end of the lake, which had been claimed by David T. and Louisa Boren Denny in 1851 (City of Seattle Department of Neighborhoods, 2014, p. 6), was "dominated by Denny's sawmill" (Thrush 2007, p. 225) in the early years of the settlement. Tsetseguis, an "elderly Indigenous man" and "close acquaintance of the David Denny family" (p. 225) lived there in the 1870s, along with two hundred settlers working on farms or as laborers in the local industry (Thrush 2007, p.76; City of Seattle Department of Neighborhoods, 2014, p. 7).

Indigenous people "trying to live in traditional ways" were forcefully pushed out of the city at the height of its growth, between 1880 and 1920, while those who remained "became almost invisible as they adapted to life in a new metropolis" (Thrush, 2007, pp. 79-80). However, the struggle for empowerment through "self-affirmative cultural practices" (Coulthard, 2014, p. 23) continued, as evidenced by the organization of an "international urban Indian conference in Seattle" (Thrush, 2007, p. 169) in 1968 and the plan to open an "Indian Center in a vacant site at

the south end of Lake Union" (p. 169) that same year. The center was never built, as federal funds were routed by the city toward other minority communities, but the Duwamish tribe opened a new longhouse in West Seattle in 2009 (Blecha, 2009; Duwamish Tribe Services, 2018a). The Duwamish tribe's work to "reclaim a space to revitalize our culture and preserve our living heritage" is thus ongoing but confronted to invisibilization in the South Lake Union neighborhood, a situation that pushes us to explore how the city and the neighborhood's inhabitants exercise and reproduce white settler power (Duwamish Tribe Services, 2018a).

Denny's sawmill and the transportation of lumber and coal through Lake Union drove an economic boom at the south end of Lake Union in the late nineteenth century. By 1905, the neighborhood had experienced "dense residential development" and featured a school, stores, mills, breweries, a soap factory, and several commercial steam laundry companies (City of Seattle Department of Neighborhoods, 2014, p. 9). The residential population was a blue-collar "ménage of migrants and immigrants who arrived from all over Europe and Scandinavia" (Fiset, 2001), most notably from Russia, Sweden, Norway, and Greece.

The neighborhood then entered a phase of "modern industrialization" with the building of shipping piers and railway freight routes (City of Seattle Department of Neighborhoods, 2014). The construction of a steam plant for electricity in 1914 attracted major manufacturing facilities such as the Ford Assembly Plant and Boeing Airplane Company, confirming the neighborhood's industrial role in the city. After World War I, the neighborhood took a more commercial role with the opening of numerous automobile showrooms, while manufacturing remained strong.

Decline began between the two world wars. The south west corner of South Lake Union around Denny Park was razed along with 20 other blocks of Denny Hill (a major two-phase landscape transformation referred to as the Denny Regrade). Highway 99, constructed in the

early 1930s, further damaged the neighborhood, isolating it from Queen Anne Hill on the west. The neighborhood's residential areas were slowly abandoned, and the school, whose population had "dwindled" and "shifted," closed in 1949 after a violent earthquake. Most of the Cascade and South Lake Union neighborhoods had been rezoned for "industrial, manufacturing and commercial uses" in 1947, preventing the construction of new residences (City of Seattle Department of Neighborhoods, 2014, p. 12). This isolation was made even more profound by the construction of Interstate 5 between Cascade and Capitol Hill (on the eastern edge of the neighborhood) in the 1950s and early 1960s. Many Cascade residents left their neighborhood, as evidenced by the abandonment of the 74-year-old St Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church by its parishioners in 1963 (Fiset, 2001). In 1973, a rezoning ordinance restricted the entire neighborhood to manufacturing uses only, furthering the white residents' flight.

The city's historical reports on South Lake Union are silent on what happened between 1973 and the mid-1990s, highlighting the abandonment and disinvestment that took place during these two decades. By the mid-1990s, the neighborhood was "perceived as an underutilized urban asset" ripe for redevelopment (City of Seattle Department of Neighborhoods, 2014, p. 13). Biotech companies were the first to seize the opportunity of South Lake Union's "cheap land and central location"; Fred Hutch Cancer Research Center opened in 1993 (City of Seattle City Planning, 2007, p. 23). A proposal to build a 74-acre park ("Seattle Commons") on the lake's shore was promoted by Paul Allen, Seattle-born co-founder of Microsoft, but was rejected by local small-business owners and eventually voted down on two occasions in 1995 and 1996 (Baumgarten, 2016). The city of Seattle then adopted a neighborhood plan for South Lake Union in 1998, rezoning it for mixed use and promoting the construction of residential and non-residential buildings (City of Seattle City Planning, 2007). By 2001, Cascade was home to "500

largely low-income renters [who] mix or don't mix with 3,000 workers who toil at the Seattle Times, Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center, and a growing number of high tech and biotech enterprises" (Fiset, 2001).

Paul Allen, who owned 60 acres in South Lake Union (about a third of the privately-owned land) by 2005 through his company Vulcan Real Estate (Mulady, 2005), is credited for having had the vision of a mixed-use neighborhood with high "walkability, excellent public transportation and sustainable design and construction" (Discover South Lake Union, n.d.). These words are clearly place marketing aimed at future white middle-class gentrifiers (Jonas et al., 2015). Following Vulcan's plan, office towers would stand next to luxury and green apartment buildings, five-star hotels, a high-end grocery store, restaurants, and retail stores. The neighborhood would retain its "character" with the preservation of historic landmarks, and its "diversity" (of artists, political activists, and low-income residents) in the Cascade portion of the neighborhood (Young, 2008). The first wave of white middle-class residents to which this vision was destined, and who were attracted by the proximity to downtown and the chance to experience "a little bit of city grit," felt a sense of "camaraderie" in their new urban village and imagined themselves as "pioneers." The materialization of Allen's vision was aided by the city council (heavily lobbied by Allen), who funded a new streetcar line, park renovations, authorized taller buildings, and funneled development projects toward South Lake Union by restricting office constructions in the SoDo district, just south of downtown. The aspirations of developers, city officials, tech corporations, and white middle-class gentrifiers aligned and fueled the neighborhood's transformation.

The neighborhood's land use thus changed dramatically between 1998 and 2006, with the demolition of warehouses and the arrival of tech offices (Figure 1). To "recognize the expected

growth" (or rather to encourage growth) in jobs and households, the city designated South Lake Union as an "Urban Center" in 2004 (City of Seattle City Planning, 2007, p. 4). The new urban center was delimited by Aurora (Highway 99) on the west side, Denny Way on the south, Eastlake Ave (and Interstate 5) on the east, and the lake's south shore on the north. It was divided into six subareas: Dexter (north west corner, on the lake's west shore), Waterfront (lake's south shore), Fairview (lake's east shore), Denny Park (south west corner), Westlake (south), and Cascade (south east corner) (see map, City of Seattle City Planning, 2007, p. 10). Community space in South Lake Union took a larger portion of the neighborhood in 2006 than in 1998, thanks to the addition of Lake Union Park. However, the neighborhood was still dominated by its use as a place of work (Puget Sound Regional Council, 2013). In addition, the abundance of parking and vacant lots was an indication of the growth that was still to come.

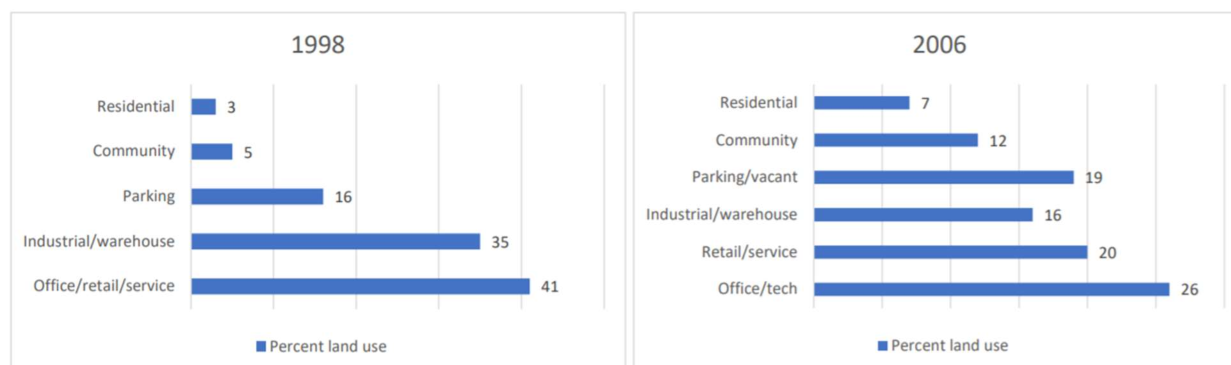

Figure 1: Land use in South Lake Union in 1998 and 2006.
Source: City of Seattle City Planning, 2007, p. 13.

Amazon played an important role in this latest growth wave. The founders had chosen to headquarter their company in Seattle (rather than California) for financial and economic reasons: the absence of a sales tax in Washington state, the city's geographic location near a major book distribution center, and the "pool of talent" from which to hire new employees (Cook, 2011). They chose to set up offices in a city rather than a suburb to attract these future employees, who,

according to Amazon's CEO, "appreciate the energy and dynamism of an urban environment" and prefer to live near their workplace (Bishop, 2014). The company announced in 2007 that it would move its headquarters to South Lake Union and has been gradually renting or buying new office spaces ever since (Brewster, 2007). It occupied over 19% of the entire city's office space by 2017 (Rosenberg, 2017). Amazon's deals with Vulcan Real Estate and the city guaranteed its predominance in the South Lake Union landscape.

In the past few years, development has shifted its focus from office buildings to residential ones. South Lake Union is now, with downtown, the urban center with the most rapid housing growth (46% growth between 2016 and 2018), but it is also one of the most expensive neighborhoods in Seattle. In fact, urban centers and villages are deemed "largely unaffordable to low-income households" (Seattle Office of Planning and Community Development, 2018, p. 41). In 2013, a new "incentive zoning" plan allowed new construction projects to be higher in exchange for "public benefits," including affordable housing, "landmark preservation, incentives to provide space for a public school, and preservation of existing open space" (Director's Report, 2019, p. 1). This legislation unleashed accelerated development, but developers are still fighting the implementation of "public benefits" and argue that they cannot both preserve open space and build affordable housing (Director's Report, 2019). In 2018, only 3.4% of units were rent- and income-restricted. In addition, only 2% of market-rate units could be rented affordably at 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI), and 43% required an income higher than 120% AMI (Seattle Office of Planning and Community Development, 2018, pp. 42, 44). There is still no public school in South Lake Union.

In just over a century and a half, the south shore of Little Lake has seen several waves of dramatic transformations of its landscape and population. While it has always been used by

white settlers predominantly as a place of work, industry, and capital accumulation, it was also home to blue-collar workers, artists, small-business owners, and political activists. Over the last twenty years, South Lake Union has developed into an urban center fully invested in a globalized tech industry that serves the political economic interests of the city and its ambitions to compete in the neoliberal world economy (Gibson, 2004). If tech professionals are pulled into South Lake Union by their employment, they are also attracted to a landscape constructed to cater to their taste for “gritty” and “dynamic” urban environments, in which representations of the past are carefully curated. The neighborhood’s rapid transformation begs further exploration into the processes that, at the scale of individuals, reinforce the capitalist white settler interests of tech corporations, real estate developers, and the city government. We thus now turn to an overview of the neighborhood’s worker and resident populations, as a basis for this inquiry.

Who Inhabits South Lake Union?

The US Census Bureau *Work Area Profile Analysis*[2] data from 2010 and 2017 helps understand the rapid changes that took place in the last decade (Appendix A). Firstly, these statistics confirm South Lake Union’s predominant role as a place of work. Defined here as Census tracts #66, 67, 72, and 73, the neighborhood counted only 28,255 residents in 2017 but 71,905 workers, meaning that the vast majority of South Lake Union (SLU) “inhabitants” are its workers. Secondly, the neighborhood’s workforce is showing unique characteristics when compared to Seattle as a whole: while the city’s workforce grew by 16.5% from 2010 to 2017, SLU’s grew by an astounding 33.9% (an addition of 18,192 workers); SLU’s largest occupation is “professional, scientific, and technical services” (22.2%), while it is “health care and social

[2] https://onthemap.ces.census.gov/

assistance" (13.9%) for Seattle; the biggest worker population growth for Seattle is in "retail trade", but it is again "professional, scientific, and technical services" for SLU. SLU's biggest decreases (in number of workers) over these 7 years were in "management of companies and enterprises" (-24.2%) and income levels in the middle bracket (-17.9%), while Seattle's were in low-income jobs (-21.7%) and non-public administration services (-50.4%). These numbers confirm SLU's shift from an industrial district to a high-tech district.

When looking at all jobs (private and public) at all income levels, the racial and ethnic makeup of SLU's 2017 workforce was very similar to that of Seattle as a whole, with 74% white workers, 15.1% Asian workers, and 6.3% Black or African American workers (to cite the three largest Census categories), and 93.5% were "not Hispanic or Latino." However, private primary jobs in services other than goods producing, trade, transportation and utilities (to focus on the types of jobs performed by tech employees) are occupied by 73.8% white workers, 16.8% Asian workers, and 4.9% Black workers in SLU, compared to 74.3% white, 14.4% Asian, and 6.2% Black workers in Seattle. This confirms the assumption that the tech industry employs slightly more Asian workers and fewer Black workers than other job sectors, as is the case in Silicon Valley (Rangarajan, 2018).

Just like in Seattle as a whole, the largest group of SLU's workers is between 30 and 54 years old (62%) and college-educated (60.6%). However, these groups are even larger in SLU than in Seattle (where they are 58.5% and 55.6% respectively). Nearly three quarters (74.5%) of SLU workers earn an income in the highest bracket (more than $3,333 per month). This portion of the workforce is 75.9% white, 16.8% Asian, and only 3.3% Black in SLU. In comparison, 64.1% of Seattle workers earn more than $3,333 per month, with a similar repartition. Not only are there fewer Black employees in the tech industry than in other job sectors, but they are

underrepresented in the highest income bracket where "professional, scientific, and technical services" workers fall[3]. Amazon's reported US statistics[4] go in this direction as well: as of December 2019, 59.3% of its US-based managers were white, 20.8% were Asian, and 8.3% were Black or African American. Only 8.1% were Hispanic or Latinx. (Hispanic/Latinx is counted as a race in these Amazon statistics, contrarily to how the US Census Bureau reports this information).

SLU's workforce appears less male-dominated than Seattle's (with 50.6% male workers in SLU compared to 52% in Seattle) when looking at all jobs. However, there are more men in private primary jobs in services other than goods producing, trade, transportation and utilities (that is, in tech jobs) in South Lake Union (50.6%) than in Seattle (46.3%). Moreover, 56% of SLU workers (and 57.6% of Seattle workers) in a private primary job and earning more than $3,333 per month were men. Again, this shows that the tech sector is skewed in favor of men. At Amazon worldwide, 72.5% of managers identified as men in December 2019.

SLU's resident population changed even more than its workforce between 2010 and 2017 (Appendix B). According to the US Census Bureau's 2010 and 2017 *American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates*[5], the population grew by 52% in just 7 years (with 6,706 additional residents, compared to a 16% increase in Seattle as a whole). In 2017, SLU's resident population was 58.1% male (50.2% in Seattle as a whole), 43.6% between the ages of 25 and 34 (22.5% in Seattle), 18.2% Asian (14.5% in Seattle), and only 3.9% Black or African American (7.1% in Seattle). In the Cascade neighborhood (defined here as Tract 73), 9.2% residents were Black or

[3] https://www.bls.gov/iag/tgs/iag54.htm
[4] https://www.aboutamazon.com/working-at-amazon/diversity-and-inclusion/our-workforce-data
[5] https://data.census.gov/cedsci/

African American and 16.6% Asian in 2017. The population in this track nearly doubled between 2010 and 2017 (a 91% increase) and the number of housing units nearly tripled (with a 188% increase, compared to 42% in SLU and 11% in Seattle). The number of Asian residents in Tract 73 more than quadrupled (326% increase) while the number of white and Black residents less than doubled (79% and 82% increase respectively). Most notably, household incomes in 2010 were much lower than in 2017. In 2010, the two largest brackets were household incomes under $10,000 per year (16.5% of Tract 73 households, compared to 8.3% in 2017) and $25,000 to $34,999 (20.9%, compared to 6.8% in 2017). In 2017, 21.8% of Tract 73 households had a yearly income of $100,000 to $149,999 (vs. 12% in 2010) and 14.7% earned over $200,000 per year (compared to 2% in 2010). According to the *Inflow/Outflow Job Counts* done in 2017 by the US Census Bureau[6], only 13.3% of SLU's residents (2,144 residents) worked in the neighborhood.

South Lake Union is rapidly becoming a place for high-income, highly educated, young white and Asian men to work. The Cascade portion of the neighborhood is rapidly gentrifying. How does this "tsunami" of tech professionals affect the neighborhood, its uses, its amenities, its imaginings? How do tech professionals interact with long-time inhabitants who are still there and with other new neighborhood actors who also actively inhabit, shape, and contest this place? Through what place-making practices do tech professionals embrace or challenge their employers' and the city's political economic goals for the neighborhood? These are the questions at the core of this project.

[6] https://onthemap.ces.census.gov/

Thesis Outline

In Chapter 1, I discuss my methodology. I discuss the purpose and contours of my research project by identifying ways of collecting qualitative information that align with my commitment to feminist research ethics and methods. This discussion is the opportunity to reflect on my positionality with regards to my topic, my informants, and the social groups I decided not to directly engage with, being mindful of power relationships at all levels. I reflect on what my positionality and choice of informants does and doesn't allow me to know. I also delineate my two primary methods: semi-structured interviews with professionals working in South Lake Union and a landscape analysis based on photographs and textual archives.

In Chapter 2, I provide an in-depth analysis of my interviews with nine tech professionals. I review their overall depiction of South Lake Union and show how it projects an image of white, middle-class, masculinist, and modernist hegemony. I then review my informants' everyday practices, which shape South Lake Union both through what these professionals do (by materializing their ideal of the neighborhood as a place for professionals to work and dine) and what they don't (restricting both spatially and temporally other ways of inhabiting the neighborhood). I end this chapter by reviewing my informants' narratives in more detail; beyond their normalizing depiction of the neighborhood, there emerges a discourse that produces othering and erasure.

In Chapter 3, I conduct a landscape analysis of South Lake Union to show how my interviewees' understanding of the neighborhood (as steeped in global capitalism, urban development, technological innovation, middle-class consumerism, etc.) is tied to the visual cues they receive from the landscape, read as a script. My analysis also shows some of the non-

hegemonic ways in which the neighborhood is inhabited, and which contradict my informants' partial and monolithic view.

My thesis concludes with a reflection on possible trajectories for future research, grounded in this first exploration of hegemonic place-making, and aiming to forge new collaborations to continue to work toward the abolition of settler colonialism, racial capitalism, and white supremacy.

Chapter 1: Methodology

The purpose of my research is to explore some of the processes by which a new, privileged and powerful group of workers arriving in an urban neighborhood in which capital is massively invested, is profoundly transforming this neighborhood—its landscape, its uses, and its imaginings. At the same time, my research aims to provide a sense of the impact this transformation may have on this dominant group's collective identity in relation to those they define as "other" and in relation to the landscape. Using place-making as the core concept that will guide my research, I am working inductively toward an expansion of the theory to include places used for work rather than residence, and places transformed by the globalized tech industry in particular. This research project is exploratory (Babbie 2014).

I am interested in the mundane activities and narratives through which the neighborhood's professionals' shape South Lake Union both physically and symbolically. I am also interested in what the landscape can reveal about the neighborhood's rapid transformation and how the landscape may impact the group's collective understanding of who the neighborhood is being rebuilt for, and for what uses. This project thus calls for the use of a mix of qualitative research methods, focused on these professionals' individual experiences, practices and narratives, and on the landscape itself.

In this chapter, I identify ways of collecting information about this relationship between identity and place. To do so, I discuss how my positionality shapes what I can know: I discuss the politics of the field and in particular the types of field experiences and evidence my positionality as a white, middle-class, immigrant, professional woman formerly employed in tech is enabling or shutting down. With a review of feminist literature, I consider the types of data I

am able to seek, as an insider or quasi insider, and how power relationships related to my positionality and that of my informants are shaping the data.

I also consider the types of data I am *not* able to gather, both because of resource and time constraints and because of my positionality in relation to a wide range of differently positioned neighborhood actors. One major limitation of my research methodology is that it provides an incomplete view of the dynamics at play in the neighborhood and centers the dominant group. For this discussion I am guided by Indigenous, Black, and Latinx feminist scholars' work on the politics of knowledge production and power relations, as well as their work on the ethics of not extracting knowledge from vulnerable populations, when in a position of privilege and power, without seeking and engaging in long-term relations of alliance and solidarity.

This chapter concludes with a detailed description of the methods I used and why they are adequate to answer my research questions. I describe the format and intent of the semi-structured interviews I conducted with professionals working in South Lake Union, the evidence used in my landscape analysis, as well as the ways in which non-participant observation in public spaces provides a context for interpreting my results.

Positionality: On Being an Insider

The fundamental goal of my research is to expose and disrupt the web of power, othering, and dispossession that Western white middle-class individuals, including myself, are reproducing through racial capitalism, in its neoliberal settler colonial form in particular. My approach to research very much aligns with the goals of feminist geographers whose engaged and critical work focuses on dismantling interwoven relations of power. In fact, England (2015)

states that “at the heart, feminist geographies are analyses of the complexities of power, privilege, oppression and representation” (p. 361). Moreover, I am committed to embracing the research ethics and “*epistemological stance*” that feminist geographers have been developing for over fifty years (England, 2015, p. 362). To me, this means looking for ways to integrate theories and methods from various disciplines and sub-fields, but most importantly, being introspective and explicit in my writing about my positionality as a researcher and about my relationship with interview participants and with the larger community with whom I engage. In other words, I want to engage in “reflexive, collaborative, cross-disciplinary, and situated” (Johnson, 2009, p. 44) knowledge production that is “sensitive to plays of power”(Mohammad, 2017, p. 1). Feminist research ethics also implores that I not only strive to understand the world around me but also change it; I therefore plan to share and discuss my results in multiple formats (Jonas et al., 2015).

Feminist qualitative research methods are aimed at understanding individual experiences and at putting them in the context of complex interrelations at multiple scales. A “feminist understanding of the world” implies in fact that I “seek to decipher experiences within broader webs of meanings and within sets of social structures and processes” (England, 2015, pp. 366-367). This is why interpretive qualitative methods such as semi-structured interviews and landscape analysis, conducted with a small and purposeful sample and using a variety of data, are well adapted to my study (England, 2015). While my research methods are mainly qualitative, I use U.S. Census statistics as a preparatory step that helps focus my analysis of qualitative data. I compare South Lake Union’s working and residential populations in 2002 and 2017 “for exploratory analysis, to reveal patterns in places for further research” (Lawson, 1995, p. 454). My preliminary analysis highlights a rapid and drastic demographic change along racial

and class lines that calls attention to dynamics of gentrification and hegemony. Lawson (1995) argues that quantitative methods that "pose questions about *difference*" and help "*describe* relations of power" in a specific context are useful tools in "post-structuralist feminist research" (pp. 453-454). This is what I set out to do in the Introduction chapter, before exploring these power relations further with in-depth qualitative interviews and landscape analysis.

I am also committed to studying South Lake Union's transformation at multiple scales and through multiple theoretical lenses, bringing together understandings of long-term global political and economic forces with those of everyday individual "cultural, discursive, and material [place-making] practices" (Elwood et al. , 2015). Nagar et al. (2002) invite us indeed to close the disconnect between "literatures on economic globalization and feminist understandings of global processes" and to through this, to pay attention to "power relations at various geographical scales" (pp. 258-259). They implore scholars to "attend to the cultural construction of difference" (p. 279) in their research on globalization. My project explores this co-constitution of "the global and the intimate" (Mountz & Hyndman, 2006, p. 446) by analyzing the everyday embodiment and materialization of social relations (along with the sense of "belonging" or "alienation" they produce (p. 447)) in and through a space that is constructed for the accumulation of capital in the global economy. In addition, my project answers Low's (2011) invitation to "study culture and political economy through the lens of space and place" (p. 390) by taking a geographical stance that situates and contextualizes the processes of social othering implicated in the production of a place of work for professionals at the commands of a globalized tech industry. This study aims to link the global with the local and the intimate, the political and economic with the cultural, the symbolic with the physical.

If my project had been more extended in time and resources, ethnography would be my method of choice. In fact, for Geertz (1973), the goal of ethnography is to interpret the "webs of significance" (p.5)—the culture and symbols—of a social group. Ethnographers immerge themselves in the group's everyday life for a long period of time in "search of meaning" (p. 5)—exactly what I am trying to get at with this project. For Herbert (2000) too, "ethnography is a uniquely useful method for uncovering the *processes* and *meanings* that undergird sociospatial life" (p. 550). For Engel, questions of meaning explore "not only what people did but how they explain and [think] about what they did" (Halliday & Schmidt, 2009, p. 90). Ethnography aims to describe the context (the culture, the "flow of social discourse" (Geertz, 1973, p. 20)) in which power relations unfold. But the word "description" is misleading: what ethnographers are after is an interpretation and a deep understanding (or "*verstehen*," to use Max Weber's term) of "people's meaning" (Webley, 2012, p. 6). Ethnography seems particularly well suited to the interpretation of power relations and "webs of significance" through place-making in South Lake Union. However, a Master's thesis project is simply too short to allow for this type of deep understanding. This is why I consider this research to be a preliminary exploration of the power relations taking place in South Lake Union. While they will come short of enabling "deep understanding," my interviews and landscape analysis are designed to at least describe and explore the place-making processes and meanings that my participants enact and experience in the neighborhood, and to identify potential paths for further research.

Geographers researching place-making have adopted a similar mix of qualitative methods. For example, for their study of place-making through performativity in two London neighborhoods, Benson and Jackson (2013) conducted semi-structured interviews with middle-class residents as well as community leaders in each neighborhood. The themes they explored

included “residential choices and trajectories, social relations, use of public services and local amenities, political engagements, and relationship to place” (p. 794). These themes coincide with those I have chosen for my interviews (described later in this chapter). The authors used an inductive process to code the interview transcripts. Elwood et al. (2015) triangulated results from community-produced textual archives, participant observation in community gatherings, and semi-structured interviews with middle-class residents of two Seattle neighborhoods. Their analysis was also inductive and was based on Burawoy’s extended case method. Finally, for her study of competing historical narratives in New Haven, CT, Blokland (2009) conducted interviews with several groups of respondents classified based on their historical ties to the neighborhood as well as their self-identification based on race and income level. She also conducted participant observation in households and public spaces in several areas of the neighborhood (p. 1595). Blokland triangulated these data with the results of a phone survey based on a stratified sample. Furthermore, an in-depth mixed-methods approach that pays attention to the built environment can help uncover exclusions enacted through place-making, such as “aesthetic restrictions that symbolically communicate who is welcomed or excluded” and “political decisions about what is built or not built” (Low, 2011, p. 391). A qualitative exploration that combines semi-structured interviews with a group selected based on its history in the neighborhood (paired with class status and race) with a landscape analysis supplemented by quiet observation and archival research seems well adapted to the study of place-making.

Geographers who use landscape analysis to explore, describe, or explain power relations, or the “social and political productions of meanings” in the landscape advocate for the use of a mix of research methods as well (Duncan & Duncan, 2018, p. 8). They often pair their analysis with other qualitative research methods such as archival research and in-depth interviewing so as

not to rely solely on what is made visible in the landscape. For example, to analyze the landscape of Moraga, a white, exclusive suburb of Oakland, CA, Mitchell (2017) reviewed the archives of several political campaigns that produced Moraga's landscape as white and exclusive. Furthermore, comparing US Census data from Moraga and Oakland helped Mitchell explain Moraga's landscape as being produced relationally through a "politics of exclusivity" that relies on the ghettoization of a poor, racialized minority a few miles away. My approach to landscape analysis, then, as one of several lenses through which to explore place-making practices, are in phase with prior studies. Moreover, these research methods are aligned with those of feminist geographers (England, 2015).

In addition to using feminist methods, I want to situate my work with regards to my social background and life experiences, in the spirit of feminist research ethics. With this research project, I am exploring the ways in which a privileged group of mostly white, mostly highly-educated professionals working in the design and command centers of a globalized tech industry is reshaping a neighborhood that was inhabited by quite a different population just a few years ago. While I am now a student again, I was a member of such a group for many years and still identify with most of these characteristics. I am, indeed, a white, highly educated professional with years of experience working in the tech industry, who have moved to the San Francisco Bay Area and Seattle for my and my partner's careers, transforming and appropriating these places along with my peers. This personal experience gives me the vantage point of an insider or *quasi* insider (now that I have moved away from this profession) that helps me connect with interview participants and gain their trust. Moreover, because I have heard their thoughts and partaken in their day-to-day activities and narratives, I can understand their perspective quite easily. The long journey that takes ethnographers from a position of outsider to one of insider

through “progressive socialization into the life of the group” (Herbert, 2000, p. 552) is thus shortened and allows me to interpret “what people say” with more confidence in this short project (p. 552). One limitation, however, is that by skipping the stage of being new to the group’s “stratified hierarchy of meaningful structures” (Geertz, 1973, pp. 7), I am missing the stage where I could be surprised by my informants’ comments or actions. I won’t be able to count on my own reactions and will need to be more analytical. I believe, however, that my new educational path and self-reflection are bringing back some of the distance I need to be able to notice what a complete insider would consider normal and would therefore not be surprised by.

My closeness to my *topic* is not without issues either. It is important to acknowledge that this project is helping me come to terms with a period of my life that is tainted with more than one painful experience—mostly in the form of micro-aggressions and lack of consideration, understanding, and career opportunities, in an industry that is utterly masculinist (and discriminatory in more than one way) and cannot recognize it. I have also come to understand, through my new education in geography, that tech is very much involved in a neoliberal project to which I do not adhere. While I hope that I am not pursuing this project with a sense of revenge, I cannot deny that my perception of the tech industry is critical. My insider status, then, comes with a loaded baggage of feelings that will undoubtedly bias my analysis. I must take this knowledge about myself into account. Mohammad (2017) reminds us in fact that “true objectivity lies in the recognition that all knowledges are embodied, situated, contextual, and therefore partial” (p. 9). Nevertheless, I believe that it is my duty to bring awareness to those I share so much with, about the processes (some bigger than themselves, some embedded in their everyday actions and thoughts) that produce inequality and oppression in the very places where they work. With this goal, I join “feminist geographers [who] share the political and intellectual

goal of socially and politically changing the world they seek to understand" (England, 2015, p. 361).

Another issue arises from the power relation that exists between my interview respondents and me as a researcher. While my insider status gives me easier access to research participants and might enable quicker understanding of their habits and narratives, their reactions and responses also depend on how they "encounter, read, and position" me; positionality goes both ways (Mohammad, 2017, p. 10). I decided to tell my informants that I had worked in the tech industry, both to let them know that I would understand them and that they could trust me, and to explain why I look older than they might expect a graduate student to look. While I believe I managed to gain trust from my respondents and make them feel relaxed during our conversations, I think that my age and work experience removed some of the power they might have felt over a younger researcher with less work or life experience—a sense of "superiority" that could have helped balance out my relative power as a person researching them and probing into their lives. One of my respondents, a young woman with a PhD, seemed genuinely surprised when she saw me, and it felt as if she was making deliberate effort to look confident, but might have been a little impressed by my age. (I might have been 10 to 15 years older than her.) I was puzzled by the sense of unease I felt during our interview, but later realized that she might have felt uncomfortable because she couldn't be in the position of superiority that she might have enjoyed had I been younger than her, and was compensating by "showing off." In addition, while I didn't frame my topic as being controversial or critical of the tech industry, I wonder if some of my respondents might have felt scrutinized and judged, which could have altered some of their responses. I noticed in particular that they were all very careful about what they said around racial difference, homelessness, and gentrification.

What I can know, then, depends heavily on the research methodology and methods I choose to adopt, but also on my positionality with regards to my topic and with regards to my informants. My intention is to explore and bring to light a phenomenon in which I am personally involved, in order to strike consciousnesses and enable change, starting with myself. I interview subjects whose social status, day-to-day activities, and discourses I know well with the hope that my insider status helps me get more easily at the meanings embedded in my subjects' everyday activities and narratives. However, I also recognize that my closeness to this topic and my focus on just one of the neighborhood's actors creates blind spots, bias, and lack of distance.

Positionality: On Being an Outsider

My reason for choosing to study a group I am a part of is that I am committed to adopting a "collaborative and nonexploitative approach to research" (Johnson, 2009, p. 56). First, researching and working with "my" social group allows me to collaborate and share findings with them to enable change. I think that my role should be to work to address inequalities that stem from and embolden settler colonial racial capitalism, gentrification, and racism at their root (where whiteness stands) rather than try to fix its consequences in social groups I am not a part of. As the Combahee River Collective (2015) clearly states, "eliminating racism in the white women's movement is by definition work for white women to do" (p. 218); a similar work needs to take place in tech.

Second, I worry that researching the populations whom the tech industry and its employees are pushing out of South Lake Union (physically or discursively) would be exploitative. I do not want to extract knowledge from groups who are on the other side of this power equation without having the means or taking the time to make this research truly

collaborative with them. I do not want to speak on their behalf as an outsider, especially if I cannot offer my support through activism or another truly impactful engagement in return. Even if I did, such support might benefit me more than them. White (or otherwise privileged) scholars run the risk of furthering our position of relative advantage when trying to "save the world"—an endeavor that can only "perpetuate 'othering''" (Villenas, 1996, p. 713). In fact, Razack (2002) warns about "women of the First World" who not only try to alleviate their guilt through their work "helping" peoples of the Global South but re-create racial and social hierarchies while doing so; "their development activities fix the natives, confining them to their environment and mode of thought and making them available to be assisted into modernity" (p. 14). Such a warning applies to studies conducted in the United States as well. Tuck and Yang (2012) remind us that "there is a long and bumbled history of non-Indigenous peoples making moves to alleviate the impacts of colonization" and that these attempts constitute "moves to innocence" (p.3).

I find myself in a double bind. Researching marginalized populations as an outsider is exploitative and researching privileged populations as an insider centers privilege. Many feminist scholars in a position of privilege share this dilemma and sense of paralysis, and some go as far as abandoning their research (England, 2015; Staeheli & Lawson, 1994). However, Staeheli and Lawson (1994) urge privileged scholars to turn this moral crisis into an engine for more critical and collaborative work. They argue that while we cannot fully represent and "speak for politically marginalized groups if we do not belong to them," the "space of betweenness" that exists between our worlds "is a site in which we can uncover the experiences and politics of marginalized groups" (p. 99). Recognizing the "partiality and situatedness of all knowledge" allows a researcher to "embrace this tension" and to contribute meaningfully to the

understanding of power relations at various scales (Staeheli & Lawson, 1994, pp. 99-100). By not engaging directly with social groups in South Lake Union other than tech professionals, then, I am missing not only an account of their experiences and understandings of the neighborhood, but an opportunity to fully "engage with people in the field in critical, self-reflexive analysis of the categories that shape [my] research" (Staeheli & Lawson, 1994, p. 100)—something I can only reflect on from a theoretical perspective at the moment. A possible intermediary step would have been to interview key informants such as business owners from the shops that predate the arrival of tech in South Lake Union, or leaders from the neighborhood's social service centers. Unfortunately, the short duration of this project did not allow me to bring this plan to fruition.

I believe that understanding my own community is a necessary first step, though, since I still feel very much at the beginning of my own education and awakening. I hope that future research projects will allow me to move beyond this critical learning and unlearning phase and to engage with a wider range of actors in order to not only depict the complexities of social relations more faithfully, through deep understanding, but to work more actively (and collaboratively) towards social justice. I am encouraged by scholars who, like Pulido (2006), Villenas (1996), and others, engage in deep self-reflections and acknowledge the "multiplicity of [their] identities" as researchers, as well as that of the communities they research (p. 711). For example, Villenas's (1996) reflections on the complexity of her positionality as a Chicana ethnographer, and the "political and personal subjectivities" that go with being simultaneously colonizer and colonized, are prompting me to complexify my analyses. I am also inspired by TallBear's (2014) approach, thinking of research as a relationship-building process. She says, "I inquire in concert with the communities with whom I do research and work… I do not, in simpler terms, exchange data for my aid or service to them" (pp. 1-2). I would like my research

to create a community of tech professionals who are ready to go beyond efforts of recognition (L. Simpson, 2017) and are ready to enact change, in solidarity with the social groups affected by tech's arrival in South Lake Union, but without supplanting or appropriating their resistance efforts. Meanwhile, for this project, I intend to look for complexity and multiplicity of realities in the data that I am able to gather at this stage.

As a white settler researcher, I also believe that I should be engaged in decoloniality. In fact, Ramamurthy and Tambe (2017) argue that "those of us who reside in settler colonies must recognize our own complicity as settlers, whether white, 'Third World,' migrant, or US women of color" (p. 511). To me this means also bringing this complicity to light by sharing the results of my research. Because I am a white settler, I take Lugones's (2010) call very seriously: she says, "the decolonial feminist's task begins by her seeing the colonial difference, emphatically resisting her epistemological habit of erasing it" (p. 753). While I cannot pretend to speak for people who live the "colonial difference," I can resist erasing it, and expose the mechanisms of coloniality that people in my position are consciously or unconsciously reproducing.

What I did

My two primary research methods were semi-structured qualitative interviews with professionals working in South Lake Union and a landscape analysis based on photographs and textual archives. These methods were supplemented by non-participant observation in South Lake Union's public spaces. My goal was to gather data on South Lake Union tech professionals' place-making practices: their uses of public space (such as the locations they visit, the amenities they use), their sense of collective identity in this place, and how they experience, view, and partake in the neighborhood's transformation. In addition, I aimed to gather data on

the physical landscape in which tech professionals are immersed in order to analyze the landscape as both a tool and a product of their place-making practices.

All fieldwork (interviews, quiet on-site observation, and pictures of the landscape) was conducted prior to the COVID-19 crisis and the stay-at-home orders that abruptly changed the day-to-day activities taking place in South Lake Union. Restaurants, coffee shops and stores suddenly closed, “essential services” modified their hours and modes of operation, and employees working in offices were asked to work from home. All my comments and analyses, then, refer to a time that might never come back. A James Beard Foundation (2020) survey conducted in April indicates that four fifths of Seattle’s restaurants may never reopen, and tech companies such as Amazon (Singh & Bhalla, 2020) and Google (Slotkin, 2020) have told their employees to work from home for the remainder of 2020. If corporations find this new arrangement to be in their favor, they may very well instruct some of their employees to continue to work remotely for the long run. It is difficult to know the extent of the long-term changes that this crisis will bring to South Lake Union’s landscape, population, and place-making practices.

Interviews

Semi-structured qualitative interviews took place during the month of February 2020. These interviews helped answer my first two research questions: (1) How does a privileged and numerically dominant group shape a neighborhood used as a place of work through their day-to-day activities in public spaces and through their narratives and implicit or explicit understandings of this place? (2) How does the changing landscape and what tech professionals read in it reinforce their understanding of the neighborhood and shape their collective identity?

My population consisted in the professionals currently working in South Lake Union. My units of measurement and analysis were individual interviewees. Because my research is exploratory, I opted for a nonprobability sampling strategy. For the interviews, I used a snowball sampling method. I approached some of my acquaintances who work (or have until recently worked) in South Lake Union and asked them for referrals via email. I recruited three participants in this way. I also posted a request to my local Buy Nothing group, asking for volunteers to message me privately if they were potentially interested in participating. I recruited six participants in this way, relying on the availability of subjects more than on snowballing per se (Babbie, 2014, p. 199).

The Buy Nothing Project is a "worldwide social movement" that started as "an experimental hyper-local gift economy" in 2013 (The Buy Nothing Project, n.d.). Operating on Facebook, it is divided into neighborhood groups, the residents of which join these online communities to "gift" or lend items they own, freely share their time and talents, or ask to receive for free something they need. Contacting the Buy Nothing group of my residential neighborhood allowed me to reach about 1,600 residents to ask for a gift of their time. I invited group members to contact me privately and received 10 responses within the same day. The limitation of using this neighborhood group is that my sample is not representative of the diverse residential locations of the professionals working in South Lake Union. According to the U.S. Census Bureau[7], private-sector workers in South Lake Union in 2017 resided in a wide range of locations, 54.5% of them within 10 miles of South Lake Union, 30.6% between 10 and 24 miles, and 14.9% over 24 miles away. The highest numbers of residents were found in Belltown and Capitol Hill, and to a lesser degree, Ballard, Fremont, the eastern and southern hillsides of Queen

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[7] https://onthemap.ces.census.gov/

Anne Hill, and Lower Queen Anne. My respondents live in a neighborhood that is close to South Lake Union but is home to a smaller number of its employees. This neighborhood of residence is more family-oriented than those mentioned above, which have the reputation of attracting young "hipsters." This means that my informants may not be perfectly typical of the majority of South Lake Union professionals. Another limitation comes from the fact that a vast majority of members in my local Buy Nothing group are women. I interviewed only one man (representing 11% of my sample), while the private-sector workers in South Lake Union are 53.4% male (and 50.6% male when counting all jobs).

In total, my sample size was nine individuals. My screening consisted in verifying that they were currently working in South Lake Union or had been working in South Lake Union until very recently in a professional job, that they had been working there for at least two months, and that they were physically present in the neighborhood for at least two days per week. My definition of "tech professional" included all professionals working in South Lake Union in a company that is heavily relying on high-tech—including companies such as Amazon, which is both driving tech innovation through its web services and using tech for retail, but also biotech and medical research centers.

Because this study was conducted in Seattle among college-educated workers, I was not faced with any substantial language or cultural barrier. Moreover, since I interviewed tech employees about their use of public space, and not about their jobs, and since I conducted the interviews away from their places of work, I did not seek authorization from their companies—nor did my respondents ask me to seek authorization. All respondents signed a consent form. I treated these interviews as confidential and don't name or identify them in this report.

Each interview lasted about an hour. I recorded these interviews with my phone, took notes during the interviews, and took additional field notes soon after these meetings. I asked the following general questions and added probes and prompts as needed to guide my respondents.

Q1. Tell me about your own history in the neighborhood.

Q2. On a blank piece of paper, please draw a map of the neighborhood and the places that are important to you. Please trace your typical route in and out of the neighborhood.

Q3. Tell me about places in the neighborhood that you enjoy going to.

Q4. Tell me about places you tend to avoid.

Q5. Broadly speaking, what kind of neighborhood is this, in your view?

Q6. I am interested in how you have seen the area change.

   a. What changes have you noticed since you started working in South Lake Union?

   b. What do you see as a positive change?

   c. What do you see as a negative change?

   d. What do you know about the history of the neighborhood and how did you learn about it?

Q7. What changes would you like to see in the neighborhood?

With these questions, my aim was first to gather information about my respondents' uses of the neighborhood: the locations they visit, the amenity they use, the activities they engage in, their consumption habits, etc. (Q2, Q3). I was also interested in learning how they tell their story and how they envision their role in the neighborhood's transformation (Q1, Q6). I wanted to learn how they identify themselves with regards to "tech" and who they define as "Other" (Q4,

Q6). I was also looking for evidence about normative discourse through their definition of the neighborhood (Q5), their preferred neighborhood aesthetics (Q3) or their imaginaries of an ideal neighborhood (Q7). The goal was to collect data not only on what my informants said, but on what they omitted or what they had difficulty talking about. In my field notes, I recorded my impressions on the topics that made my informants hesitant or uneasy and highlighted comments that could hide a second layer of meaning.

In their study of conflict negotiation in a highly racialized urban high school in the US Southwest, Morrill and Musheno (2018) used maps drawn by their informants as one of their qualitative research methods. High school students were asked during interviews to draw "social-sketch maps" (p. 22) where they represented their usual routes and hangout locations, indicating the peer groups they would meet with and those they would try to avoid. These maps and surrounding discussions helped the researchers explore "how youth 'see' the campus and themselves. . . through visual representations that served as 'spatial discourse[s] of place and self'" (p. 22, citing Sarah Pink). My intent with Q2 was very similar. I wanted to explore the ways in which tech professionals represent the neighborhood, where they draw boundaries, and how they see themselves in this landscape. The maps also served as an anchor for further discussion; my informants continued to add to their maps as I asked my other questions.

My focus on place-making made me look for keywords, phrases, and comments around the following themes in the interview transcripts and maps (Blokland, 2009; Benson & Jackson, 2013; Elwood et al., 2015; Pierce et al., 2011; Pow, 2009; Smith & Winders, 2008; Trudeau, 2006):

- Everyday life activities (conceived as material and cultural practices). My informants commented on their habits around commute, lunch time, work, leisure activities, and consumption opportunities.
- Definitions of the neighborhood and the neighborhood's past (conceived as a discursive practice).
- Imaginaries of an ideal neighborhood (as a discursive practice). My informants commented in particular on public transit; greenery, lake views, and brick facades; public spaces; preservation of historical landmarks; ethnic food and cultural diversity.
- Collective identity and reflexivity. These included comments on being a tech professional and on one's role in the neighborhood's transformation.
- Middle-class values (conceived as normative practices). These included comments around commute time and convenience; working in an urban environment; people's dress and wearing of a badge; concerns for safety linked to homelessness and traffic; concerns about pollution from cars.
- Othering, interactions with and expectations of others (conceived as normative practices). These included comments on poorer subjects, racialized others, homeless people, and people working in the neighborhood's stores and restaurants.
- Physical and symbolic boundaries drawn around desirable areas of the neighborhood.

In addition, I paid attention to some of the central themes of the literature on de/coloniality (Lugones, 2010; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Rowe, 2017; Santos, 2014; L. Simpson, 2017; Smith, 2012)

- Coloniality/modernity. My informants commented on the incessant construction work taking place in the neighborhood, on the modernization of old buildings, and on gentrification. I coded them here when described as positive.
- Colonial temporality. This theme was linked to comments on everyday activities, weekend activities, the use of one's time, and on "life in the neighborhood" in general, at various times of the day, week, and year.
- Hegemony. This theme was linked to descriptions of the neighborhood's inhabitants, as well as its uses. I also probed my informants on their awareness and curiosity about the neighborhood's history.
- Alternative uses of the neighborhood. Comments made about nonhegemonic activities were coded as such.

I looked at the frequency of each theme within each transcript as well as its frequency across transcripts to let emerge dominant behaviors and discourses as well as nuances in the responses. I also compared the words and ideas used in response to specific prompts to see more themes emerge from the interviews and linked them back to the concepts of place-making and coloniality. This inductive coding, guided by the theory, helped me uncover patterns of narratives (discourses) and reported behaviors in direct relation to the concepts of place-making and coloniality and to draw conclusions on my informants' place-making practices.

Landscape analysis

The landscape analysis helped me answer my last two research questions: (2) How does the changing landscape and what tech professionals read in it reinforce their understanding of the neighborhood and shape their collective identity? (3) What do tech professionals' place-making practices render invisible to them: what don't they see because of their ideation of the neighborhood?

Question 2 is intentionally overlapping the interviews and landscape analysis to bridge these two methods and bring complexity to the concept of collective identity. In fact, the landscape can be theorized as a text that is both produced and interpreted. Duncan and Duncan (2010) argue that landscapes are performative—that they give social groups a means to perform their group identity. But they also argue that people unconsciously read the landscape and get cues about social relations from the landscape. The landscape as a text is both written through place-making practices and read as a script that shapes collective identity. In my work, I take tech professionals' accounts about what they read in South Lake Union's landscape as a basis for my landscape analysis in order to explore the ways in which they relate to the landscape. But I also use omissions in their narratives and maps as a basis for the exploration of other aspects of the landscape, with the premise that tech professionals' collective identity and imaginings of the neighborhood render these elements invisible to them. This is the object of Question 3.

For the landscape analysis, my population comprised all that was currently visible from publicly accessible spaces in South Lake Union during my "photo expeditions" in May 2019 and January-March 2020, as well as archival photographs of South Lake Union's public spaces in the period preceding the latest redevelopment, that is, the 1990s and early 2000s. Such publicly visible elements of the landscape include buildings' exteriors and courtyards, parks, streets,

construction sites, stores' window displays, street signage, posters, graffiti, street art, and so on. I took pictures anywhere between Lake Union's shore (north boundary of South Lake Union), Denny Way (south), Highway 99 (west) and Interstate 5 (east). This definition of South Lake Union was wide enough to include all the locations that my interview respondents mentioned. The residential area east of Fairview is sometimes referred to as the Cascade neighborhood rather than South Lake Union proper. Some respondents mentioned a few places just south of Denny in the Denny Triangle, such as the Amazon Spheres; those were also taken into consideration.

I reviewed archival photographs from the following online archives:

- HistoryLink.org (in particular, their "Seattle Neighborhoods: Cascade and South Lake Union — Thumbnail History" page[8])
- Museum of History and Industry (MOHAI) digital collection[9]
- Seattle Municipal Archives Digital Collection[10]
- Paul Dorpat's (*Seattle Times* photographer) "Seattle Now & Then" website, (in particular, the following pages: "Westlake, 'The Big Funnel'"[11], "McKay Ford On Westlake"[12], "Lake Union Logs"[13], "Lake Union from Denny Hill, Early 1890s"[14], and "A Dump at Dexter and Aloha"[15]).

My unit of measurement was a photograph of a portion of this landscape and my unit of analysis was a noteworthy element or group of elements (such as those listed previously) in this landscape.

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[8] https://www.historylink.org/file/3178
[9] https://digitalcollections.lib.washington.edu/digital/collection/imlsmohai/search
[10] http://archives.seattle.gov/digital-collections/
[11] https://pauldorpat.com/2017/05/05/seattle-now-then-westlake-the-big-funnel/
[12] https://pauldorpat.com/2016/01/09/seattle-now-then-mckay-ford/
[13] https://pauldorpat.com/2017/10/07/seattle-now-then-lake-union-logs/
[14] https://pauldorpat.com/2018/11/03/seattle-now-then-lake-union-from-denny-hill-early-1890s/
[15] https://pauldorpat.com/2017/09/02/seattle-now-then-a-dump-at-dexter-and-aloha/

My sampling strategy for this analysis was again purposeful sampling, because my research is exploratory, and because I wanted to focus on elements of the landscape that either confirmed my interviewees' reading of it or came to contradict their hegemonic understanding of the neighborhood. I took pictures as I walked through the neighborhood, taking main streets and side streets, paying attention to the office buildings, residences, parks, restaurants and stores mentioned by my informants, but also looking for evidence of presences and uses of this space that were noticeably absent from my interviewees narratives and maps, such as buildings that predate the latest development or don't fit its image of progress, modernity and capital accumulation; signage and graffiti from non-tech neighborhood actors, and so on. I took around 225 photographs and reviewed several dozens of archival pictures.

Two ethical issues arose: one based on privacy for the pictures I took, and one based on copyright for the archival pictures. To respect the privacy of individuals present in public spaces while I was taking pictures, I made sure that no one could be identifiable in my shots (by not taking pictures of their faces or by taking pictures from a distance so that faces would be pixelized if zoomed in). Moreover, I sought and obtained authorization to reproduce the archival pictures I wanted to use in my report.

The goal of this landscape analysis was to draw correlations between professionals' place-making practices and the landscape in which they are immersed, thinking of the landscape both as an "input" that contributes to professionals' sense of belonging and to their choice to work there, and as an "output", that is, a product of their place-making practices. I aimed to place individual (albeit collectively meaningful) activities and discourses in a broader context connecting them to economic and political forces at various scales (e.g. the flows of capital in the urban process, drawing on the work of Harvey (1978), or neoliberal globalization). I also looked

for evidence of resistance to tech professionals' hegemonic place-making in an attempt to think of place as being always contested, heterogenous, and in flux, as theorized by Massey (2005). To do so, I linked elements of the landscape to the historical events and public discourses that enabled their presence, using textual archives. These included primary sources such advertisement from developers and tech companies (for example, from Amazon, Vulcan Real Estate, the South Lake Union Chamber of Commerce), documents from the city council (for example, zoning ordinances and urban planning reports), and maps, as well as secondary sources such as news articles (*The Seattle Times*, *Seattle Post Intelligencer*) and historical analyses (Thrush, 2007; Gibson, 2004).

Non-participant observation

This method helped me put the interviews and landscape analysis in context and facilitated interpretation of other data collected. Observation let me "see with my own eyes" the types of day-to-day practices my informants described during the interviews. I also looked for activities my informants did not mention (with the limitation that my positionality makes me blind to certain behaviors—which is why interviewing a wider range of neighborhood actors would have led to a stronger analysis). In addition, observation brought depth to my landscape analysis by allowing me to know (with the same limitation as above) who is where and when in the landscape.

For the non-participant observation, my population consisted in the adults present in South Lake Union's public spaces at the time of observation. My units of measurement and analysis were individual people. As a quiet observer, I could not make myself known as a researcher and I could not seek consent from the persons I observed (Babbie, 2014). I thus

limited my non-participant observation to general uses of public spaces, for which there is no particular expectation of privacy. I did not exclude any adult from my data, but my subjects remained anonymous and non-identifiable in my field notes. I did not seek to make contact and did not make any audio or video recordings. The types of places I observed were streets and sidewalks, bus stops, plazas and courtyards, shops and restaurants, and public parks.

I conducted non-participant observation on four occasions in January through March 2020. The COVID-19 related "Stay at Home" order of mid-March 2020 put an abrupt stop to my field work. I could not observe professionals in their usual day-to-day activities after this date, as most activity stopped in the neighborhood and I had to stay home. My data is thus quite limited.

However, the data I gathered helped me deepen my understanding of interview responses and people's relationships to the landscape. I recorded:

- People's dress and demeanor, and whether this made them recognizable as "tech employees"
- Whether tech employees tended to walk in groups or alone
- Whether tech employees tended to remain with other tech employees or mix with people from other social groups
- How tech employees behaved during encounters with non-tech employees
- How much physical space was being used/occupied by tech employees at various times

Conclusion

This research is an exploration of the place-making practices of a privileged group to which I have strong ties, and who work in an industry that I also know well. My positionality

with regards to my topic and my informants allows me to better understand the layered meanings of their day-to-day activities and narratives, but also complicates our researcher-researched relationship. Moreover, by focusing on this dominant group of mostly white middle-class professionals, I am depriving my study of the experiences of differently positioned neighborhood actors. This move is in part due to my reluctance to exploit marginalized populations without having the means to participate in their resistance efforts. But it also stems from a desire to collaborate with my community to break inequalities at their root—where power is concentrated. Feminist, Indigenous, Latinx, and Black radical scholars who have theorized power relations and put in practice collaborative, nonexploitative research ethics, are guiding my steps through this learning process.

In the following chapters, I detail the findings of my semi-structured interviews and landscape analysis. These two research methods, along with insights from my non-participant observation of public spaces in South Lake Union, help me link global political and economic processes and discourses with the individual experiences, activities, and narratives of a powerful group, and with the landscape in which they are immersed. Put together, they help highlight the complexity of South Lake Union tech professionals' place-making practices.

Chapter 2: Tech Professionals' Accounts

Previous studies have shown that neighborhoods are shaped (materially and symbolically) by the day-to-day place-making activities and narratives of its residents (Benson & Jackson, 2013; Blokland, 2009; Elwood et al., 2015). Moreover, studies have shown that the production and interpretation of landscapes plays an important part in the processes of place-making and collective identity formation (Pow, 2009; Trudeau, 2006). In this chapter, I use my semi-structured interviews with nine tech professionals employed in South Lake Union to analyze the mechanisms and processes through which a neighborhood is "made" not only by its residents but by the people who use it as a place of work, especially when workers are its numerically dominant and privileged population. I also analyze the relationship between these workers and the landscape, through their own readings and descriptions. I focus my attention on individual normative behaviors and discourses in order to think about urban transformation not only as the local expression of globalized neoliberal capitalist processes (Gibson, 2004; Sassen, 2016; Stehlin, 2016), but as the collective work of individual inhabitants living their day-to-day lives and negotiating local social conflicts (Benson & Jackson, 2013; Blokland, 2009; Elwood et al., 2015; Pow, 2009; Trudeau, 2006). My attention to a place of work helps me think about the ways in which tech professionals' place-making practices reinforce the city's political project of competition in the globalized capitalist economy.

I ground my analysis in studies of place-making practices of powerful groups, such as the white middle class in gentrifying neighborhoods of the United States and United Kingdom, because tech professionals are in such a position of power (Benson & Jackson, 2013; Blokland, 2009; Elwood et al., 2015; Pow, 2009; Trudeau, 2006). But I also rely on studies of place-

making practices of marginalized groups, such as Indigenous, Black, and Latinx women across the United States, to highlight the relational nature of place-making processes (Goeman, 2013; McTighe & Haywood, 2018; Roy, 2017; Smith & Winders, 2008). Finally, the work of decolonial scholars on hegemony, modernity, and temporality help me connect my informants' day-to-day practices to wider processes of settler colonial racial capitalism, with the argument that this is the system tech professionals' everyday actions and normative discourses are reproducing (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Santos, 2014).

This chapter starts with an analysis of the hegemonic depiction that professionals give of South Lake Union, as a way to set the context of their neighborhood imaginary. I argue here that rather than being invested emotionally in making the neighborhood in their image, as scholars have shown they do in their neighborhood or residence (Elwood et al., 2015), these professionals project detachment from and contempt for the neighborhood where they go for their job. I then delve into this group's mundane activities in public spaces and argue that the performativity of place-making should not only be understood as active "doing" (Benson and Jackson, 2013), but also as "not doing," that is, as the foreclosure of certain activities for themselves and for other neighborhood actors. I then take a closer look at my interviewees' narratives, arguing that the image they project of the neighborhood is steeped in implicit and explicit capitalist understandings of place, reinforces white middle-class norms and values, but also works through omissions and erasures—that of differently positioned neighborhood actors, and that of diverse neighborhood histories. I conclude with a discussion of the more nuanced responses I gathered from informants who have lived in Seattle the longest and from informants who expressed being conflicted about their role in the neighborhood's transformation. These deeper knowledges and auto-critiques allow me to understand the possibilities for professionals to engage in political

efforts of accountability and solidarity with marginalized neighborhood actors. These discussions could serve as an entry point for activists looking for allies among tech professionals.

My Informants

In February 2020, I interviewed nine professionals working in South Lake Union at Amazon, Facebook, other high-tech companies, and medical research centers. Three have been living in Seattle for over 20 years; the others moved to the city less than five years ago. Two of them lived in South Lake Union for about a year along their journey, but none of them are living there now; they all live within a few miles of their workplace. Eight of them are women and one is a man. All but two are in their 30s; one is in her late 40s, another in her 60s. Seven of my respondents are white and two are Asian. They grew up in global cities like New York or Los Angeles, in small towns in Colorado or Alaska, in China and in France, but none of them in Seattle or Washington state. All are college educated; several have a master's degree, and several have a PhD. Their backgrounds and experiences are thus similar in many ways, and very different in others. As we will see, my informants commented very reluctantly on their racial and gender identity or did so in a way that tended to normalize whiteness and masculinity. The most salient aspect of their collective identity was their status as middle-class professionals and their use of South Lake Union as the neighborhood where they go to work.

In the following analysis, I draw on phrases and ideas from all our conversations in a single thread, mixing the voices of my informants when they made similar or related comments, and distinguishing them when their opinions or experiences differed. Direct quotes are anonymized but clearly indicated by the use of quotation marks.

Defining South Lake Union: A Hegemonic Understanding

Using the aesthetics of the landscape as a script (Trudeau, 2006; Pow, 2009), my interviewees define South Lake Union as “sterile,” “cold,” “bland,” “lonely,” “impersonal,” “soulless,” and “ugly.” The large sidewalks and absence of grown trees make the abundance of concrete and silvery, shiny skyscrapers unappealing and the neighborhood “not super friendly” to walk through. The buildings are “brand new cubes”: “solid blocks of concrete” that give them a “tech of the future” look that is “just terrible.” To my informants, the streets and buildings “all look the same” and “nothing stands out.” The neighborhood is “unremarkable.” It lacks “character.” As one informant put it, “the character is flashy Amazon.” These descriptions create a sense of detachment from the neighborhood, portrayed as visually unappealing. This discourse corroborates previous findings about the importance of landscape aesthetics in middle class ideation of place, but it also shows that professionals use aesthetic assessments very differently than in their neighborhood of residence. While beauty is constructed as an essential criterion in the choice (and production) of a place of residence (Benson & Jackson, 2013; Elwood et al., 2015; Pow, 2009), ugliness is used here as a way to distance oneself from one’s place of work. Moreover, these descriptions construct South Lake Union as incapable of supporting life (so much so that even the trees, which are “like saplings,” “don't feel like they're ever going to grow because they're surrounded by such concrete”). I argue that this narrative gives professionals the discursive power to dictate what and who counts as being alive, and what and who they allow to live in this neighborhood.

The idea that South Lake Union is a place that is not to be lived in is reinforced by its definition as a place where “people commute to work” but do not reside. My informants were very clear that they “can’t imagine [themselves] living there” and that “it definitely doesn't feel

like a residential area, even though there are lots of high rises there now." They view those who reside in South Lake Union as a "transient corporate population" ("people coming in and out to work for a couple years on specific projects for the tech companies") who, like them, don't love the neighborhood ("[in] other neighborhoods, you see those shirts people where that say 'Queen Anne' or 'Ballard' or 'Crown Hill.' I don't think you're ever going to see that for South Lake Union"). My informants do not want to live there, but also discursively forbid anyone from wanting to live there. As one respondent put it, "I never really understood why anyone would want to live down there."

Despite assertions that South Lake Union is sterile, however, it is also understood as a place experiencing astonishing growth. My informants commented at length on the construction work taking place all around them. One informant counted 10 cranes at once in the sky above Mercer Street, all for different buildings. While living there, one informant noted that "every one of the streets surrounding our apartment was torn up at one point to be replaced." The general sentiment is that construction work is taking place "all the time" and "everywhere" in the neighborhood, and that buildings are "popping up" at a "wild" pace that inspires "awe." While office buildings went up first, construction has now switched to apartment buildings. This apparent contradiction between sterility and growth points to professionals' construction of South Lake Union as a place of economic, rather than organic, growth. All this growth is in fact experienced as unnatural. The neighborhood is described as feeling "very artificial" and "manicured." Rather than feeling "authentic," South Lake Union feels like "a very deliberate thing" that is "fit to purpose for tech workers." There is no doubt in my informants' mind that "the whole neighborhood has been disrupted by Amazon."

The demolition and construction work, then, is turning South Lake Union into a place that my informants described as having a single purpose: that of a working place for tech professionals. They call it a "college campus" or a "tech campus." These descriptions touch on three characteristics: the fact that South Lake Union's demographic is young and educated like you would find on a college campus, the fact that its main industry is tech, and the fact that it is isolated from the rest of the city. This neighborhood is indeed described both as being "downtown" (with the noises, "high rises, and all the hustle and bustle" of a city) and "out of the city," "secluded" in its own "bubble, where some of the rest of the city doesn't quite bleed into"—what one informant described as "urban light." The neighborhood is also described as a "corporate tech park" that is "definitely business oriented." The most visible business and employer is of course Amazon, which makes the neighborhood feel "Amazony." Even the other employers are said to have moved to South Lake Union to "poach talent" from Amazon. For my informants, then, South Lake Union is mainly a place of work and a place of business revolving around Amazon.

The population is described in no less homogenizing terms. When asked who they see in the neighborhood, my informants describe "a younger crowd" of "tech bros," most of them in their "mid-20s to mid-30s," in their first job after college, or "fresh from their master's programs." All they see is "Amazonians." Out of ten people encountered in the streets, an informant would say that eight work for either Microsoft or Amazon, and among these eight, six would probably be with Amazon. These people look wealthy, "very techy and very yuppy." The visual cues that guide my informants in their appraisal include people's dress, whether they wear a badge on a lanyard (blue or orange, depending how long they have been with Amazon), and whether they carry the backpack that Amazon gives its employees during first-day orientation.

While professionals in their 20s don't wear a "uniform," they are recognizable because they look "relatively comfortable" (and wear the backpack). Others are described as "a little army of men in khakis and vests, on their phones, holding laptops". "Older" professionals are said to all wear "jeans and flannel vests." Not only do my informants read the landscape as uniformly catering to tech, but they understand the neighborhood population as being predominantly (if not exclusively) made of tech employees.

Several informants commented on the relative "diversity" that these employees bring to the neighborhood. Two informants commented that "lots of people" are "from other countries," especially Asia and South Asia. Two others were more circumspect in their description, saying that they see "a very wide range of people" but that "more people are from out of town than from this part of town, specifically South Lake Union or even Seattle or Washington." These people have "different backgrounds" that bring "a good span of cultural diversity" to the neighborhood. These comments echo those of tech corporations advertising their (recent and mostly demonstrative) open-mindedness to and search for racial diversity and inclusion, which is often condemned as being a "PR strategy" with no substantial results (Dickey, 2019). Moreover, all my informants agree that there is very little economic or age diversity in South Lake Union. Everyone in sight is "very high income" and young, which confirms that the type of diversity my informants see in the neighborhood corresponds to that envisioned by tech companies.

The wardrobe descriptions (the khakis and vests) also reveal a gender bias. It is as if "Amazonians" and other "tech bros" my informants see in the streets were all men, although they didn't say it directly. Only one informant (who works in a mostly female work environment) commented explicitly on "how male [South Lake Union] feels." She said that the "little army of men" she sees in the streets is "a shock to her system." I didn't have time to probe my informants

(8 out of 9 of them being women) further about this gender bias. However, from my personal experience, women in tech often must downplay their gender and comply with the masculinist discourse of their coworkers to avoid discrimination and boost their careers. This, too, is an indication of professionals' investment in neoliberal ideals, which come with a "new romance of female advancement and gender justice" (Fraser, 2009, p. 110).

These readings of the landscape, population, uses, and overall feel of South Lake Union are very partial and monochromatic. While my informants brought some nuance to these depictions (as we will see later), their discourse was hegemonic, imposing on the neighborhood a capitalist, classist, racialized, and gendered image that erases other forms of being in, or utilizing, space. Not only is the neighborhood understood as already being a place of work for tech professionals, it is seen as ineluctably going even further in this direction through the incessant construction work, which is represented as both outside of their control and single-purposed. These discursive place-making practices symbolically shape the neighborhood in the professionals' image, despite the detachment they claim to feel for it. These practices also consolidate professionals' gendered, classed, whitened identities by normalizing masculinist, middle-class, and color-blind descriptions of the neighborhood where they work. Moreover, by defining South Lake Union as sterile, tech professionals forbid any form of alternative life to take hold in the neighborhood—at least discursively. In doing so, they assert their relative power over those marked as other (Elwood et al., 2015).

Everyday Practices: Place-Making Through Active "Doing" And "Not Doing"

We now turn to the day-to-day activities that South Lake Union professionals reported engaging in during their work week and on the weekend before the COVID-19-related "Stay-at-Home" order, and which materialize the imaginings described in the previous section (Elwood et al., 2015). I argue, in fact, that professionals make place by doing what is "expected" of them (such as preferring certain modes of transportation and consumption), and thus reinforcing middle-class norms, but also by *not* doing what could enable other uses of space, and thus maintaining their hegemonic position in the neighborhood.

Performative Place-Making—What Professionals Do

The professionals I interviewed use South Lake Union primarily as a place of work and professional networking. Seven of them work there every day of the week (although one of them reported also working frequently from home). One splits her time "50/50" between South Lake Union and Bellevue, where her team is planned to move permanently. Another's job is officially in Redmond (near the Microsoft campus, in the suburbs across Lake Washington) but elected to work in an office closer to home "a couple of days a week"—a practice that is very common and encouraged in her company. Only two of them resided in South Lake Union for a year (in 2008 and 2015), but they now all commute from various parts of Queen Anne, a residential neighborhood adjacent to South Lake Union, just west of the lake. In addition to working in the neighborhood, a respondent mentioned meeting other professionals for networking events or to get career advice from her mentor. Several respondents also mentioned going to local restaurants and bars for team building events. In all these work-related activities, my respondents were with

their coworkers or with other professionals. The impression of being in a "bubble" is thus not only discursive but enacted every day by professionals' use of space.

This sense of belonging is reinforced by professionals' modes of transportation in, out, and through the neighborhood. In fact, none of my respondents reported driving to work. Several of them regularly take the bus and walk a couple of blocks to their office building; this is a practice that companies such as Amazon encourage by giving their employees a prepaid year-round public transit pass. Others walk, bike, rideshare, or use of combination of these transportation means. One respondent reported walking all the way from home on summer days but taking the bus on colder or wetter days. One respondent reported biking to work most of the time, walking on nice days, and occasionally parking her car at the bottom of the hill and walking the rest of the way— "if I'm lazy." Several respondents mentioned taking Uber or Lyft rides. One of them does this regularly: she uses Lyft in the morning (sharing her ride with other professionals or riding solo when running late to meetings) and taking the bus on the way home when she has more time—hopping on the bus close to the office, or at the bottom of the hill after a relaxing walk if the weather is nice. My respondents mentioned heavy traffic, streets blocked by construction, high parking rates, and caring for the environment as their reasons for not driving. However, I argue that taking public transit, public bike lanes or walking on public sidewalks is also a practice that helps my respondents "claim" the public spaces of the neighborhood as their own through routine use. In addition, all these modes of transportation give my respondents the opportunity to experience the city in a more sensorial way than if they were driving, which increases their sense of belonging. In fact, one informant explained that tech professionals physically take up a lot of space on the sidewalks. She described the scene outside her office building in these terms: "Packs of tech bros. When it's been raining, with their big

obnoxious orange and white umbrellas taking up the whole sidewalk. I mean, wear a fricking raincoat! [laugh] I mean, I get it. You want to protect your laptop or whatever, but when you've got like six people on the sidewalk, all holding these giant Amazon-owned umbrellas, it just seems a little ridiculous." Mitchell (2003) argues that "the right to the city" as defined by Lefebvre (that is, the right to "use" and "inhabit" the city) "is dependent upon public space"—even if it is rarely clear "who has the right to it" (pp. 5, 19). As he demonstrated through his study of People's Park in Berkeley, understanding "the practice of public space in American cities" (p. 4) is key to understanding whose interests it serves. The heavy use of public spaces and services for their commute indicates that professionals make place through "the practice of public space" and that they see their racialized and classed interests served in South Lake Union.

Apart from working and commuting, professionals' uses of the neighborhood consist mainly in eating lunch, going out for happy hour with friends or coworkers, and occasionally visiting cultural institutions and local shops. My respondents' lunch habits divide them into three groups: those (the majority) who buy lunch from the local grocery stores, food trucks, and restaurants (preferring places with quick service or takeout options), those whose companies offer free lunch options within their buildings, and those who bring lunch from home (a minority). Among those who eat out, an informant reported also grabbing breakfast on the way from the bus stop to the office at a coffeeshop or at the Amazon Go store (a prototype all-automated cashier-less grocery store). Those whose company "feeds them," as one informant said, don't have "a lot of incentive to go out and eat" and thus do not consume from local retailers during their workday. When the weather permits, several informants reported taking their lunch to one of the public spaces in the neighborhood: Lake Union Park, Denny Park, or the Amazon Van Vorst plaza (a privately-owned public plaza that is reportedly frequented by

“Amazonians,” students from the nearby Cornish College for the Arts, and occasionally by families). Most of my informants remain in the neighborhood through their lunch break, some not even leaving their building, some going for a walk to a park or restaurant. One informant reported going to Seattle Center (on the other side of Dexter) occasionally for a change of scenery. These everyday practices contribute to the making of South Lake Union as a place of work-related consumption catering to tech professionals’ needs.

While lunch activities take place daily and happy hours are an important part of many of my informants’ social life, other consumption activities within South Lake Union are a lot more occasional. My informants mentioned, for instance, enjoying the farmers markets and fairs organized regularly at Denny Park and Amazon-Van Vorst during the summer months, or the “moving teahouse” that comes to Denny Park around Christmas. These fairs attract professionals during their lunch break or right after work on their way home. Other cultural activities included visiting MOHAI (the Museum Of History And Industry, located on the lakeshore), The Center for Wooden Boats (just next to MOHAI), music festivals at Lake Union Park, and various music and arts events at Beyond Space, a nightclub with a “Brooklyn vibe” that attracts young stylish professionals like one of my informants, who wear vintage clothes from the Fremont Sunday street market. (I was told that you find out about specific events at Beyond Space through social media only, and you enter through “kind of a secret door” …) My respondents also mentioned high-end and trendy shopping destinations such as REI (a co-op with its flagship store in the neighborhood, selling gear and clothes for camping and sports in the great outdoors), Whole Foods Market (selling organic and natural groceries, and a favorite lunch stop), and West Elm (selling sustainable modern furniture). Finally, they patronize local stores and specialty coffeeshops that “feel very Seattle-y,” as one informant put it, such as Portage Bay and Espresso

Vivace (where, per their website, “baristas prepare smooth espresso & lattes topped with foam art in an industrial-chic space”[16]).

These everyday activities can be construed as embodied acts of place-making. Benson and Jackson (2012) argue indeed that place-making is performative and focus on “the ‘doing’ of place” (p. 794). The authors compare the place-making practices of new white middle-class residents in Peckham, a gentrifying neighborhood of London that the newcomers want to make in their image, with the “place maintenance” practices of new white middle-class residents in West Horsley and Effingham, two villages outside of London with a countryside image that the newcomers want to preserve. Place-making practices in Peckham consisted for instance in transformations of the physical landscape (such as the restauration of Victorian buildings) and the support of local businesses. Likewise, place maintenance in West Horsley and Effingham resulted from individual actions, such as engagements in specific community celebrations that were aimed at preventing change and “reaffirming these villages as white, middle-class spaces” (p. 804). The authors then conclude that “place . . . is thus continually reiterated through the work of individuals” (p. 804). Similarly, Elwood et al. (2015) argue that the “lifestyle and consumption practices” of their white middle-class interviewees, as well as their efforts in “creating an orderly, safe, beautiful owner-occupied neighborhood” constitute “material practices” that shape place (pp. 129-131). In her work with activist Deon Haywood, Laura McTighe relates that a black feminist collective in New Orleans fighting the displacement and intensified policing of black residents in the post-Hurricane Katrina redevelopment “had just claimed the front porch as a site where this organizing could take place and have a space—where revolutionary things happen” (McTighe & Haywood, 2018, p. 25). This practice too constitutes

[16] https://visitseattle.org/faq/where-can-i-get-great-seattle-coffee/

performative place-making. By meeting and talking on their front porches, these activists "produced place" and "made visible the 'absented presence' (see McKittrick 2006, xxv, 33) of Katrina's still displaced" (p. 39).

One major difference between these studies and mine is that I am interviewing individuals about the neighborhood where they work rather than about the neighborhood where they reside. While residents are openly involved in the production of place, South Lake Union's tech professionals claimed that they were not emotionally invested in making the neighborhood where they work in their image. My interviewees position themselves as consumers more than as producers of this place. However, the practices of coming to a neighborhood to work in tech, using public transit and sidewalks, eating lunch at restaurants regularly, networking during happy hour, and consuming cultural performances and high-end goods all produce South Lake Union as a place where the interests of tech professionals are served. Moreover, many of these activities directly serve tech corporations' interests. I argue, then, that tech professionals' place-making practices in their neighborhood of work produce a space that reproduces not only white masculinist middle-classness, but hegemonic processes of capital accumulation in the global economy.

Restrictive Temporality and Spatiality—What Professionals Don't Do

While the activities described above constitute forms of active "'doing' of place" (Benson & Jackson, 2013, p. 794), my interviews reveal that professionals also shape their place of work by "not doing" certain activities and thus hindering alternative uses of space. Professionals' constraints on what is possible in South Lake Union are both temporal and spatial.

They either go or avoid going to the neighborhood at distinct times and describe the neighborhood as busy or empty based on these timed use-patterns. Moreover, they create spatial boundaries by avoiding certain areas of the neighborhood or understanding them as off-reach.

Santos (2014) argues that "the understanding of the world and the way it creates and legitimates social power have a lot to do with conceptions of time and temporality" (p. 170). Tech professionals understand time in South Lake Union as binary, which is also a trait of Western positivism (Santos, 2014). The neighborhood is described as "packed" during work hours on weekdays, and "like a ghost town late at night, early in the morning, [and] especially on the weekends." It is described as "the kind of place that shuts down . . . after like six, seven o'clock." Only a few restaurants and bars open late. On the weekend, it is "completely dead." In other words, the neighborhood is conceived as being alive when professionals are present and dead when they are not, rendering other neighborhood actors as nonexistent. I argue that this understanding is closely linked to the Western conception of time (which decolonial scholars Mignolo and Walsh (2018) call "Western-imagined fictional temporality" (p.3)). In this linear conception of time, the present is contracted to "a fleeting instant" between a past devalued as "premodern" and a future that is permitted to expand "infinitely" (Santos, 2014, pp. 165,170). On this timeline, Western subjects place themselves on the present moment. Santos argues that the contraction of the present "abbreviates" the world (p. 170): it reduces reality to its visible part and renders alternative (non-Western) ways of knowing and being unacceptable and nonexistent. In other words, Western subjects understand themselves as existing in the present and erase those who fall outside their reality. South Lake Union professionals' dualistic temporality thus produces nonexistence for those who inhabit this place very differently, such as the long-time

residents of Cascade, the workers and business owners of the various retail stores and restaurants, the community service workers and their clients, and so on.

This understanding goes hand in hand with actual behaviors: the professionals I interviewed avoid going to South Lake Union for other purposes or at other times than to work. They invoke various reasons for not wanting or needing to be there. First, they view the neighborhood as the place where they come to work every day of the week and prefer spending their leisure time elsewhere. As one informant explained, “I like having separation between my work environment and where I live.” Second, restaurants are closed because business slows down significantly when workers are not around, which, for my informants, means that “there is basically nothing going on” in South Lake Union after work hours. An informant explained that they were extremely surprised to see a Starbucks closed in the middle of Seattle (the chain’s home city) on a weekend (one of the chain’s busiest time in other neighborhoods). In other words, businesses and professionals are creating a vicious cycle: professionals’ absence shuts businesses down on weekends, and then the closed businesses keep them away. Third, because most businesses are closed, the neighborhood is not only devoid of things to do, but it feels “spookily empty.” Professionals look for “more welcoming” and “a little more cozy” neighborhoods to go to, such as Belltown, Capitol Hill, Ballard, or even Lake Sammamish (a town on the east side of Lake Washington), “especially in the wintertime.” My informants are driven by their aesthetics and consumption tastes: according to them, South Lake Union is not a “destination” or a neighborhood where one goes shopping or spends time with friends and family. “There's nothing drawing me there, so I just don't go there,” said one informant. However, my informants also define their use of time in terms of “needs”: one of them doesn’t purposefully avoid the neighborhood but doesn’t go there “just by nature of not needing to go

there.” Similarly, another informant explained, “I've got patterns of places that I need to go. And I don't really feel the need to explore South Lake Union beyond that.” My informants, then, view South Lake Union in utilitarian and consumerist terms, but they also associate their own presence in the neighborhood with its vitality—assuming that there is no life when they are not around. In this sense, they embrace the “hegemonic Western model of rationality” described by Santos (2014) and which actively creates “absences” and “nonexistences” (pp. 164-174).

In addition to these temporal boundaries, South Lake Union professionals create spatial boundaries around the areas where they work and dine, sticking to these and avoiding venturing into parts of the neighborhood where low-income residents and homeless people can be seen. They integrate the Denny Triangle into South Lake Union because these two neighborhoods are “pretty much clumped” aesthetically and functionally (with an abundance of Amazon buildings), but consider the residential part of South Lake Union (also known as the “Cascade” neighborhood, but which developers define as being part of South Lake Union), as separate.

Two informants frankly admitted that they avoid going “anywhere close to the freeway” (Interstate 5, marking the east edge of South Lake Union) because it is a residential area where they don’t “need” to go, but also because Cascade Playground, “though it's a nice community park, it does attract other people that camp around the park. So that's generally also not a nice place to go.” “The homeless shelter near Fairview” was also cited as a reason to avoid the area: I was told that “this part is a little shaky.” When I visited the area in 2019 and 2020, I did not see any tents, either around the park or under the freeway. However, I observed older African American men coming in and out of the low-income housing buildings around the park, as well as people using community services at Immanuel Lutheran Church (such as the food bank or hygiene center). Hence professionals would indeed encounter these residents around Cascade

Playground, since this part of the neighborhood is not only home to affluent young tech professionals in brand new apartment buildings, but to them as well (see Chapter 3). Tech professionals create spatial boundaries both discursively and materially around this area by describing it as potentially dangerous and avoiding going there. These boundaries are linked to professionals' definition of an "Other" who is portrayed as homeless and generates fear. Other areas, in comparison, were qualified as "safe."

Another manifestation of this east/west-of-Fairview boundary transpired from the maps I asked my interviewees to draw. While many of my informants mentioned verbally one or two stores, restaurants, or coffeeshops located east of Fairview, thus including the Cascade part of South Lake Union in their stories, the maps they drew either stopped at Fairview or included very little detail east of Fairview—their two main points of reference there being REI and Espresso Vivace (Figure 2). My informants' knowledge of the Cascade neighborhood was a lot vaguer than their knowledge of the streets and businesses along Westlake Avenue, where most of the restaurants are located. Two maps had a bit more detail east of Fairview: that of the respondent the most explicit about avoiding the area (Figure 3 left), and that of the respondent who had moved to Seattle at age 18, knew more about the history of the neighborhood, enjoyed its oldest landmarks, and regretted the demolition of old houses and stores (Figure 3 right).

Blokland (2009) notes that boundaries (which she terms "borders") can be defined symbolically, based on the meaning one gives to a place "as a frame for identification," and "practically" (pp. 1597-1598), based on daily routines and routes. While the two types of borders don't necessarily coincide, I argue that in the case of South Lake Union professionals, Fairview Avenue serves both as a symbolic and a practical border. Blokland's respondents "on both sides" of their neighborhood (poor and affluent) "generally excluded the other side" (pp. 1597) in their

descriptions. Symbolically, my informants are also excluding the other side of the neighborhood by omitting in their drawings almost anything beyond this border. Practically, my informants are creating a border along Fairview by avoiding venturing beyond it and by creating routines and routes that exclude this side of the neighborhood.

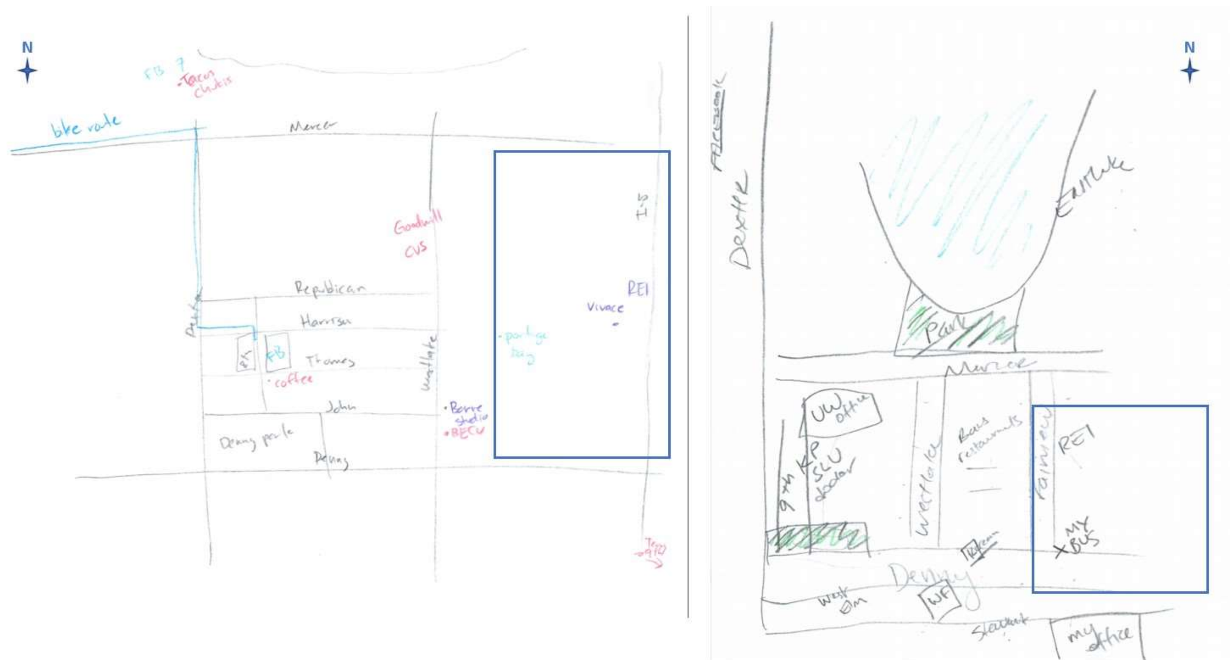

Figure 2: two maps drawn by my informants and showing very little detail east of Fairview (see boxed areas) compared to the rest of the map, even though the edge of South Lake Union is shown as being Interstate 5 and Eastlake.

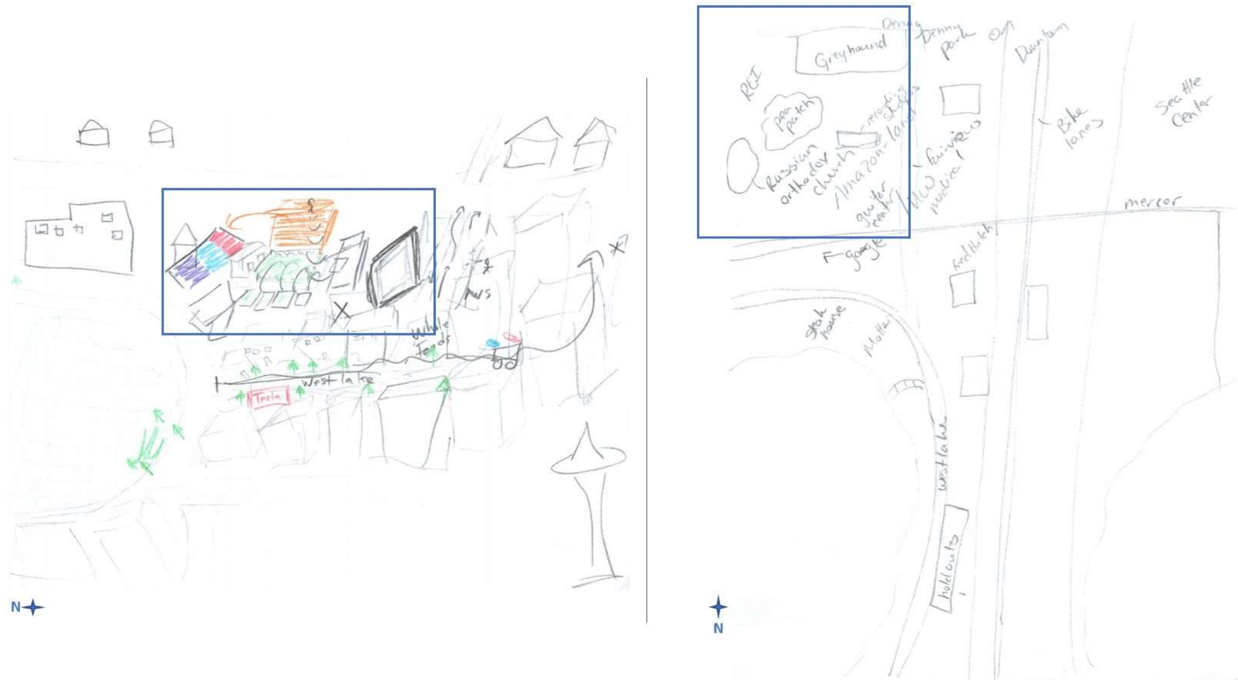

Figure 3: two maps drawn by my informants and showing detail in the Cascade portion of the South Lake Union neighborhood (east of Fairview, in the boxed areas). The map on the left (facing east) shows everything that is "wrong" with this part of town: Cascade Playground and its (imagined or long-gone) encampments, a new "neon colored" apartment building (Chroma), construction noise at Sitka Apartments (shown in brown) reverberating through the neighborhood, and the "big ugly utility transfer station" (Denny Substation). The map on the right (facing south) shows interesting things to see or go to (the P-Patch, "a really cool Russian Orthodox church"—Saint Spiridon Orthodox Cathedral built in 1941, and the REI store), recording studios that are no longer there, and the Denny Substation (identified here as a Greyhound bus terminal).

South Lake Union professionals shape place through their everyday actions as well as through their conscious or unconscious avoidances (or inaction). But they also shape place through conceptions of time and space that symbolically include and exclude. We now take a closer look at the narratives in which these conceptions are embedded.

Discursive Practices: Place-Making Through Narratives

My interviews with tech professionals revealed four main discursive practices in addition to those mentioned above: their stories were steeped in capitalist and modernist understandings of place; they normalized middle-class tastes and imaginaries of an ideal neighborhood; they produced and excluded "others"; and they erased histories. While these narratives are somewhat nuanced and complicated by my informants' conflicted emotions about their role in the neighborhood, I argue that they shape their collective identity as well-paid middle-class professionals and contribute to their making of South Lake Union as a place of capital accumulation.

All my informants understand South Lake Union to be experiencing deep and rapid transformation. They are knowledgeable about the process of gentrification (almost all of them used this word), which they often define as "a double-edged sword." The two edges, however, are defined in economic terms regarding increased business on the one side and the rising price of housing and dining in the neighborhood on the other. While my informants acknowledge that redevelopment might displace low-income residents and small businesses, and demolish parts of the neighborhood's history, many focus their explanations on the flows of capital, improvements in efficiency, and modernization that new constructions and corporations are bringing to the area. They define the process in a few main steps, omitting the political and economic disinvestment that made South Lake Union ripe for redevelopment in the first place (Jonas et al., 2015). For my informants, the changes started when developers saw an opportunity to make a profit in the cheap, underutilized land, and started investing in the neighborhood. As one respondent put it: "I can totally see how developers coming in would be like 'this is prime real estate. It's on the water. It's in the middle of neighborhoods where people want to be. And downtown is already,

especially for Seattle, pretty dense . . . This is underutilized, and what a gold mine!' I can totally see that." Next, they explain, Amazon and Microsoft moved in (in reality, Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center came first, as the company started acquiring land in the neighborhood in 1988 (Russell, 2018); Amazon announced its move in 2007. Amazon's move is, however, regarded as "the coming of age of South Lake Union" (Day, 2017)). Then came apartment complexes "that brought more people, which brought more restaurants and it kind of cascaded into what it is today." The "high priced luxury housing" is believed to be empty "because nobody can actually afford to live there. And yet the existence of them is artificially driving up the cost of housing units all over the city." My informants put faith in the market to regulate housing prices: "Maybe someday it'll balance itself out and they'll move the price down and more people will get into them." They view the new constructions as inevitable, as "it's not financially feasible to maintain an old [one-level] coffeeshop that has a huge footprint" in an area where the real estate market is so hot.

While my informants feel some nostalgia about these historic buildings, they generally view the economic growth of the neighborhood as positive. For example, they appreciate that Amazon and "the tech companies that support or work with Amazon" have brought in business to the area thanks to their own growth. It has given restaurants "the opportunity to flourish" and my informants conclude that they would "rather live in a boom city than a bust city." They appreciate that South Lake Union has been "more effective" than other neighborhoods at "driving business in" and "encouraging people building more desirable jobs in the city center." This reliance on market logics of rationality, profitability and progress helps professionals stay emotionally and politically detached from this place, as we have seen through other elements of their discourse.

Linked to this economic understanding is a discourse that praises modernity. Not only does the redevelopment of South Lake Union bring in more business and better jobs, but for my informants, it helps improve the environment. New constructions start by removing soil contaminated by the former mills, and they allow "more efficiency in sustainability efforts with water, heating, electricity, cooling," and so forth. These improvements are believed to be for the greater good: "It's cleaner. It's safer" and "you kind of *have* to just take out some of the old stuff to put in newer things *that more people can enjoy*" (my emphasis). Mignolo and Walsh (2018) understand modernity as a "set of self-serving narratives" that rely on "fiction," "rhetoric," and "storytelling of good things to come" (p. 3, p. 109). The narratives of my informants indicate their support for the supposed "imperatives" (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p.3) of modernity through its two signifiers: "modernization" and "development" (p. 109). They support the need to destroy in order to create. I am reminded of Berman's (1982) analysis of Goethe's Faust, whose modernization endeavors destroyed everything deemed "old," including the parcel of Philemon and Baucis, an elderly couple whom Faust could have left alone, if his vision of modernity had not been totalizing. Berman also describes Robert Moses's obsession with completely transforming New York City in the 1950s. And Harvey (2003) describes Haussmann's transformation of Paris in the 19th century in similar terms of "creative destruction." The rapid and dramatic transformation of South Lake Union's built environment in the last two decades, and the seemingly unending construction work taking place block after block, are emblematic of what these authors have described. While this transformation is not the work of individual tech professionals, their adoption of the discourse of modernity legitimizes it. Moreover, professionals seem to think of this modernization as beneficial to everyone without acknowledging the widening inequalities that it produces.

Another element of discourse related to professionals' capitalist understanding of place can be found in their consumption habits, tastes, and imaginaries of an ideal neighborhood, all of which tend to normalize their whiteness and middle-classness (Elwood et al., 2015). As we have seen earlier, consumption in South Lake Union consists mainly in going out for lunch or happy hour, and occasionally taking friends and family to one of the few music and arts venues and museums in the neighborhood. My informants were very knowledgeable about the neighborhood's offerings. Together, they mentioned going to close to 80 different restaurants, coffee shops, stores, music venues, and museums in South Lake Union (70% of them being restaurants and coffee shops). They identified close to 50 of these businesses by their exact name. The portrayed normalcy of frequently going out to these establishments normalizes the "imagined middle-class consumer who has the time and money to patronize them" (Elwood et al., 2015, p. 132). Moreover, tastes, just like consumption habits, reinforce white middle-class normativity. The atmosphere and quality of the food served in South Lake Union's restaurants was an important criterion, although several informants also paid attention to price and speed of service, since they eat out often and in the middle of their workday. Ethnic restaurants were often singled out and talked about enthusiastically ("a really good teriyaki place," a "really delicious pho place", "a great little Korean grocer," "a fabulous Lebanese Persian restaurant—it's absolutely delicious") while restaurants serving more Americanized fare were simply mentioned by name. These ethnic restaurants help professionals produce a neighborhood that is "predominantly white but diverse enough to be experienced and perceived as fun and 'cool'" (Elwood et al., 2015, p. 132). This taste for "ethnic character" and "cultural diversity" also transpired in discussions regarding my informants' choice to work in an urban environment rather than a suburban tech campus. The advantages of working in a city were in fact having

"access to a variety of things" and being "in the real world." It is "the different little places and the different people that come through" that give cities their charm. However, as we have seen earlier, my informants avoid the areas of the neighborhood where low-income African American residents live, which reinforces the idea that diversity is only "fun" as long as the neighborhood remains predominantly white and middle class. Moreover, my informants reported preferring South Lake Union to places that don't feel as "safe," such as downtown where "you have to deal with a lot of the societal issues," or Belltown (just minutes away) because it is "not like the cutest of places" and it is "known for repeated incidents of people just smashing car windows." Cuteness and safety in these comments act as codes for whiteness and middle-class respectability, in opposition to representations of poorer people of color as ugly and dangerous. My informants' "celebratory" articulation of diversity, then, can be interpreted as a way to reinforce white normativity (Elwood et al, 2015, p. 132).

Several other narratives completed this picture of an idealized neighborhood. For instance, my informants would like to see more efficient public transit— "for the convenience factor" and because "it makes for a nicer commute" than driving. The search for convenience and comfort was a common theme throughout the interviews and highlights the privileged position of my respondents. The preservation of historic landmarks was also important to some of my respondents, mainly for their aesthetics, since "historical architecture bits" (such as the facades of old buildings) give "character" to the area. My informants did not regret the demolition of some of the local stores (such as Guitar Center) that were "eyesores" but mourned those that were aesthetically pleasing, such as Row House on Republican, a "really charming and super cute set of restaurants and cafes . . . in old bungalows from the 20s." They enjoyed the Christmas lights around Denny Park and the lake views (especially stunning from office

buildings' roof decks, I was told). They yearned for the more "neighborhoody, older feel" that "brick and brimstone" bring to neighborhoods such as Ballard. They declared wanting to see more "green spaces" in South Lake Union, such as public parks and streets lined with mature trees, and more pedestrian areas that could "change the tenor" of the neighborhood and make it feel less "sterile." With Pow (2009), I argue that the desire for and consumption of these "aesthetically pleasing landscapes" (p. 371) can be understood as a middle-class place-making practice that reinforces the elite's collective identity but also feeds a politics of exclusion and urban segregation.

Such exclusion and othering was particularly visible in my interviewees' response to the question "who do you see in South Lake Union?" As I have shown earlier, the vast majority of people my informants see in the streets are "Amazonians" or other wealthy-looking tech professionals. However, this crowd was compared by nearly all my informants to just one other group: homeless people. A few respondents mentioned other neighborhood actors in their stories—the workers employed at restaurants and stores, neighborhood residents, families, police officers, tourists at the Amazon Spheres. These groups were mentioned in passing, but the comparison with homeless people was systematic, even when informants wanted to say that they don't see many homeless people and panhandlers in the neighborhood. Homeless people served as a benchmark and represented the "worst case scenario" on a spectrum of success and wealth; professionals put themselves implicitly at the other end of this spectrum. Seeing people line up at the "soup kitchen" across from the Amazon Spheres, for instance, was a way to "keep people like myself in perspective. I always think if I'm having a bad day, there's always somebody having a worse day." Elwood et al. (2015) call this type of comparison a "defensive relationality that establishes [middle-class residents] as not 'other,' not poor, not lazy, not disordered, and so

on" (p. 128). In addition to being described as poor, homeless people were often described as being "less fortunate" (that is, having bad luck) or suffering from mental illness and needing to be cared for. These paternalistic descriptions deprived these individuals of their agency. My informants felt "uncomfortable" and "horrible" (that is, guilty) during their encounters with homeless people who made them aware of their own privilege and inaction, yet they did not know how to solve the issue except through charity, a poverty politics that Lawson and Elwood (2018) qualify as "thinkable," that is, rooted in liberal ideology, and which "frames deserving impoverished people as flawed but reformable, and poverty as a technical and apolitical problem" (p. 10). Thinking of homelessness as a matter of bad luck or mental illness shields my informants from having to envision the structural processes of systemic impoverishment that the global tech economy, and its local expressions in urban redevelopment and gentrification, generate. At the same time, the process of othering (or thinking of oneself as "not 'other'") serves to comfort tech professionals in their understanding of themselves as both lucky and compassionate.

Finally, exclusion was noticeable in my informants' accounts of the neighborhood's history, as their knowledge was very narrow and selective. This partial rendering of the past can be understood as a discursive form of place-making. Blokland (2009) argues in fact that competing narratives shape social groups' identities and sense of belonging, and eventually impact material outcomes. She states that "residents' historical narratives are processes of place-making that, once dominant in a public discourse, affect what defines 'community' and what does not" (p. 1594). She shows that Italian Americans and "gentrifiers" in Little Italy, New Haven, CT, create group-specific narratives "through active recalling together" (p. 1605). Their two historical accounts, while opposed (the former group remembering a thriving community

from which they had been evicted, the latter remembering being the saviors of a derelict neighborhood), both dominate the public discourse. The residents defined as "Black Poor," on the other end, "made a point of disidentifying with their residential area" by not engaging in shared recalling (p. 1605). But their "untold" narrative still shaped their group's identity and sense of belonging. In the end, the dominant voices were able to secure resources from the city that less vocal groups didn't, and thus can be interpreted as discursive place-making practices. Through her mapping of Indigenous women's literature, Goeman (2013) also shows the power of narratives in shaping place and centering specific knowledges.

One of my respondents moved to Seattle in the 1980s and painted a rich picture of the neighborhood. While working in the catering business, she had discovered that South Lake Union was a hub for the wholesale of flowers and other supplies for flower markets; she worked for a while in this industry, which has now moved to Georgetown. This informant described South Lake Union of the 1980s-1990s as "very mixed" and hosting a unique set of "unusual boutique industries and family-owned businesses." She told me that Boeing was manufacturing parts in the neighborhood and that Bartell drugstores started there too. She remembered the fight against the plan for The Commons, the park envisioned by Paul Allen, which would have been Seattle's "Central Park." Academics from the University of Washington had reportedly helped create an inventory of "Western-style warehouse buildings" and other landmarks (such as the utilitarian train station that received goods from the East Coast and Canada at Terry and Thomas) in an effort to designate South Lake Union as a historic district and prevent the park from becoming a reality. She remembered that brick roads constructed with bricks from China were still visible in the 1980s (the bricks served to match the load of lumber that crossed the Pacific Ocean in the other direction, since goods from China were very light: "spices, silk and

porcelains”). She regretted that these brick roads have been paved over. She defined the construction of REI’s flagship store in 1996 as “a turning point for the neighborhood,” as this was a “very green building” and REI leaders were “active listeners of the community.” My informant attributed to the efforts of Cascade residents the fact that South Lake Union became a pilot for the LEED program (Leadership in Energy and Environment Design). She also knew that Duwamish fishing villages dotted the lake’s shore before white settlers claimed the land and built lumber mills. She related that the navy took over when the lumber industry became obsolete, and that the aeronautic industry revived the lake’s shore once the navy was gone. She also mentioned that a woolly mammoth tusk was found at a construction site “in the last 5-6 years.” My interviewee could still see traces of this rich past in the neighborhood. Among the few family-owned businesses that remain in South Lake Union, she mentioned Kenmore Air, which operates seaplanes on Lake Union, Glazer’s Camera, Kaufer’s religious store (which now seems to have moved to the Industrial District), City Hardware (which is now closed), and Weber Thompson architects. This history is incredibly detailed; it highlights a deep attachment to the neighborhood and a great interest in its past.

By contrast, my other informants admitted that they knew “very little” about South Lake Union’s history. Most of them only knew a few facts about the period preceding the redevelopment, depicting the neighborhood as “industrial” and “abandoned,” “very low cost … primarily because of the drugs.” The pre-redevelopment landscape is thought to have been made of warehouses, repair shops, vintage stores, and used furniture stores; “and that was about it.” By the time my informants moved to Seattle, most of these stores were closed. On the Cascade side, there were “very old houses that were kind of rundown and a little sketchy.” An earlier period had seen “laundry companies that did bulk laundry for maybe hotels;” the MOHAI building was

“owned by the military” and “Seattle Times had been there.” One respondent told me about the Spite Mounds of Denny Triangle, when residents in “big Victorian era houses” had refused to sell their land for the regrade. My informants learned the little history they knew from Lyft and Uber drivers and from friends who have lived in Seattle for “20, 30 years,” or occasionally from a neighborhood blog or book. A few informants declared being curious or interested in the history of South Lake Union, but even the one who showed the most nostalgia limited her descriptions to the industrial past of the neighborhood or remained vague. She enjoyed watching Gasworks park across the lake, taking a bus ride along “shipping warehouses” and “in the direction that all the ships would come into,” and loved being surprised when she stumbled upon “this really great old church that looks like it's been there for like a hundred and twenty years.” These selective histories reduce South Lake Union’s past to the last few decades and to a small number of neighborhood actors, mainly business owners. These selective histories erase Indigenous past and present on this land; they erase the history of the Cascade neighborhood residents.

These erasures constitute a form of discursive place-making that reinforces professionals’ sense of legitimacy and belonging: my informants are working in a neighborhood that, in their eyes, was already a place of work and business, and they don’t believe that they are, as one informant told me, “displacing decades long homeowners, like if I was moving in the Central District,” since the neighborhood was “mostly warehouses and parking lots.” Long-term residents who experienced the changes first-hand and those who have been displaced are completely omitted from this imaginary. South Lake Union professionals retell the portion of the neighborhood’s history that suits their needs (as people using it as a place of work and contributing to its revival), and in doing so, discursively and materially shape it.

Conclusion

Professionals' depictions of the South Lake Union landscape, their mundane activities in this neighborhood, the narratives in which they define their tastes and habits, the people and histories they see, as well those they don't, all participate to normalizing a hegemonic, whitened, middle-class, capitalist, and modernist understanding of place and time, and work to shape the neighborhood to these professionals' image.

While my informants might not be fully conscious of their place-making practices, several of them expressed being uneasy about their role in the neighborhood's transformation. As one of them explained, "I definitely always had a feeling of [being] one of these assholes. I'm one of these people who came in from the outside, I'm like part of the wave of Amazonians that are destroying your neighborhood. . . I may not be the root cause of it, but I'm part of it." However, while she would prefer to see "different people, different ages, different ethnicities . . . different types of people who can live and work there," in her mind the transformation of South Lake Union is irreversible and she doesn't know what to do about it: "it might be too late for South Lake Union, because so much of it has already been demolished and replaced." Similarly, another respondent acknowledged being one of the "very techy, very yuppy" people she sees in the neighborhood and "felt quite conflicted as a tech worker, being part of that whole problem" of gentrification, "which is not great, overall, for the most people." She would prefer a "more equitable distribution of opportunities and wealth," yet she doesn't "see this ever happening." In framing the neighborhood's transformation as inevitable and outside of their control, tech professionals express having no agency but also no interest in addressing the inequalities that result from this transformation. While they seem at first to go in the direction of an auto-critique, my informants' comments quickly turn back to a politically normative analysis that exempts

them from accountability and forecloses any real effort toward solidarity. Another informant criticized the sense of entitlement that some of her peers seem to exhibit; she wished that "there was at least a nod to the fact that other people might exist in the world." Yet another acknowledged being one of those who "close off" and turn a "blind eye" toward the panhandlers they cross on the sidewalks, but explained this behavior as a preservation mechanism ("There's a lot asked of us as well at our jobs. It's intense; family and that job take focus and priority"). The norms that are guiding my respondents' understanding of the world are preventing them from conceiving "unthinkable" solutions to the hegemony they impose on the neighborhood—solutions outside the liberal frame of meritocracy and moralistic compassion, and embedded in collaborative, communal, embodied practices of care, equity, and social justice (Lawson & Elwood, 2018; McKittrick, 2016; Cahuas, 2019). Yet the self-reflection some of my informants started here holds the potential to be turned into a desire to participate in collaborative efforts towards meaningful change, starting with a desire to learn about the neighborhood's complex history and the multitude of actors present today.

Chapter 3: Reading the Landscape

Trudeau (2006) defines landscape through "its ability to be a text within which a variety of meanings can be scripted, maintained, and even hidden" (pp. 437-438). It is this notion of landscape as a text that is both produced through place-making and consumed as a source of information regarding social relations and group identities that I want to explore in this chapter. The landscape analysis presented here helps me answer my research questions regarding the relationship between the landscape and place-making processes. Guided by my interviews, I explore some of the ways in which tech professionals contribute to the transformation of the landscape, but also some of the ways in which the changing landscape, as they read it, reinforces their understandings of the neighborhood and shapes their collective identity. I also analyze some of the elements of the landscape that my interview participants did not mention, arguing that these omissions constitute discursive place-making practices.

I start this landscape analysis with an overview of the broad economic and political forces that are enabling South Lake Union's latest redevelopment in order to define the environment in which tech professionals are immersed and that they help produce. I argue that these broad forces are visible in the landscape, which then acts as a visual reminder (and performance) of whom the neighborhood is made for. I then look more closely at some of the ways in which the neighborhood caters to tech professionals and how this effort creates exclusions and erasures. I end with an analysis of the counter-narratives I found in the landscape, which indicate that South Lake Union, like any place, is a place of multiplicity despite the hegemonic endeavors of the dominant group. Exposing the landscape features that tech professionals omit from their descriptions not only helps paint a more complex picture of the neighborhood, but points to the

neighborhood actors with whom tech professionals interested in social justice could seek to build relationships.

My analysis is based on quiet observation in the neighborhood in May-June 2019 and February-March 2020. The pictures presented in this chapter illustrate this broader set of photographs. I also used archival photographs from the sources listed in Chapter 1; some are included here as well and marked as such in the figure titles.

Global/neoliberal economic and political forces on display

The global is the local

The tech professionals I interviewed describe South Lake Union as a "tech campus" where professionals commute to work, but don't reside, and where modern office buildings, such as those of Amazon, Google, Facebook and Apple, dominate the landscape (Figure 4). The architecture of these buildings—for the most part concrete towers with sharp angles, glass walls, greenery on the rooftops, and retail stores, cafes, and quiet plazas at the ground level—is easily recognizable and very distinct from the architecture of the warehouses and factories of these companies' other sites (Figure 5). There is no doubt when walking through South Lake Union that the jobs being performed in these office buildings are at the top of the organization and that the neighborhood serves as a node of command and control for these companies.

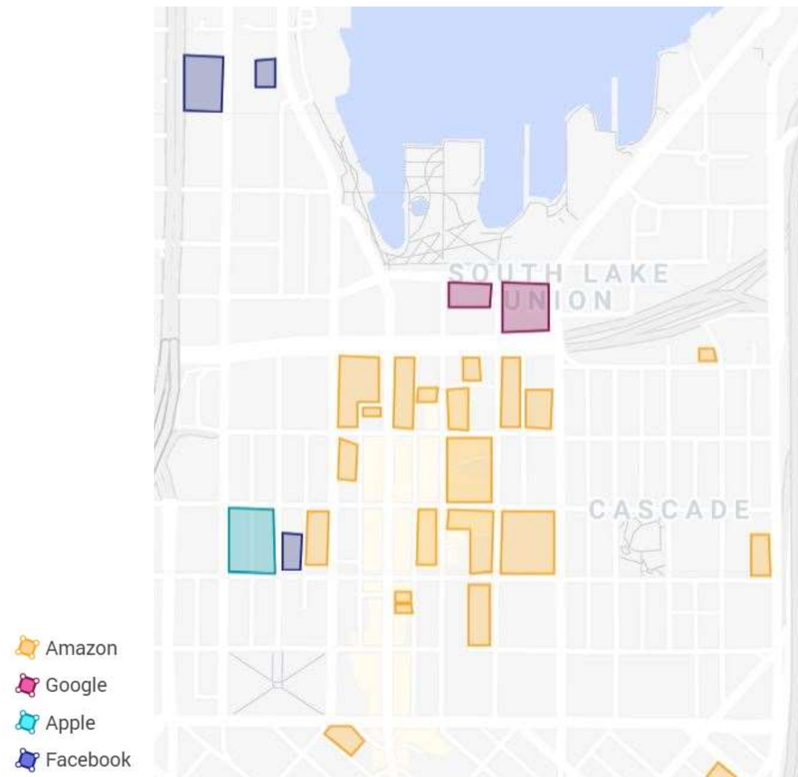

Figure 4: Global tech companies in South Lake Union. Map created 5/9/2020 with Google MyMaps based on information from Google Maps.

Figure 5: Amazon's Van Vorst building and plaza on Terry Ave N (top left), Apple's new building under construction on Dexter Ave N (bottom left), and Google on Valley St (right). Pictures taken on 5/17/2019 (Amazon building) and 3/7/2020 (Apple and Google buildings).

The job openings in Seattle for these companies (aside from the low-wage $17/hour "flexible" grocery shopping and delivery jobs at Amazon, which don't require offices) are indeed for highly skilled professionals in software engineering, program management, recruiting, and so on. These centers of innovation and management rely on the work of lower-waged workers in fulfillment centers outside the city (in Kent, WA, for example, as well as all over the world), software development centers in India, semiconductor foundries and assembly lines in China and Southeast Asia, etc. The companies the most visible in the neighborhood (in terms of number of office buildings and signage, for instance) thus appear fully immersed in global capitalism. In fact, Amazon, Google, Facebook and Apple have globalized their operations to take advantage of the lowest available production costs and tax rates in the world and share a similar vision of world domination. Amazon[17] strives to be "Earth's most customer-centric company;" Google's mission[18] "is to organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful;" Facebook[19] endeavors to "bring the world closer together" (the word "world" comes up 61 times in this 2017 address by Mark Zuckerberg); and an Apple press release[20] dated January 28, 2020 reads that "Apple's more than 100,000 employees are dedicated to making the best products on earth, and to leaving the world better than we found it." With its abundance of modern office towers built for their labor, the South Lake Union landscape tells tech professionals that they are actors in these global enterprises and that they are at the top of their worldwide organizations.

In other words, the local landscape of South Lake Union is fully embedded in the globalized economy. Therefore, tech professionals' place-making practices, by aiming to secure South Lake Union as a tech campus for their activity, also reinforce global capitalism. For Jarosz

[17] https://www.amazon.jobs/en/working/working-amazon/#our-dna
[18] https://about.google/
[19] https://www.facebook.com/notes/mark-zuckerberg/bringing-the-world-closer-together/10154944663901634/
[20] https://www.apple.com/newsroom/2020/01/apple-reports-record-first-quarter-results/

and Qazi (2000), the global “does not exist externally to the local” but “unfolds within and is shaped by particular landscapes” (p. 9). South Lake Union’s tech landscape clearly shows this connection and interdependence between the global economy, the local landscape, and its local actors. Gibson (2004) further argues that local government decisions are best understood when studied in their global context. He sets his analysis of the “revitalization” of downtown Seattle in the late 1990s and early 2000s in neoliberal globalization and argues that the efforts made by the city hall and influential business owners around Westlake Park must be read as a desire to turn Seattle into a “spectacular city” capable of attracting foreign capital investment and of competing with other cities. Local decisions affecting the built environment, such as the opening of Benaroya Hall to boost Seattle’s image as a cultural center, or the non-opening of a “first-of-a-kind “hygiene center” for the Seattle homeless in the heart of downtown” (p. 192), are connected to these global trends. Similarly, we can analyze the city council’s decisions regarding South Lake Union in the light of the city’s political-economic project to compete in the global economy by attracting global tech companies. In fact, the city’s designation of South Lake Union as a key urban center, its rezoning deliberations to allow ever taller buildings, its decision to repeal the head tax on large corporations (which would have funded affordable housing) after Amazon’s threat to leave the city (Semuels, 2018), and so on, all stem from a global neoliberal trend of “urban entrepreneurialism” (Jonas et al., 2015, p. 143).

Through this analysis of the global in the local, we can see that tech professionals’ place-making practices, their normalization of white middle-class values, and their efforts (conscious of not) toward hegemony in the neighborhood, not only affect the poorer racialized “others” of the neighborhood, but actively reproduce larger patterns of global racial capitalism.

The urban process and capitalism

While the landscape reveals patterns occurring on a global scale, it can also be read with a more local framing of capitalism, such as the urban booms and busts theorized by Harvey. My interview participants themselves framed South Lake Union's latest redevelopment in these terms, thinking of the "gold mine" that cheap, underutilized land represented for investors and the rising housing prices that result from this reinvestment.

Harvey (1978) ties the "urban process" to Marx's theory of accumulation under capitalism. In fact he argues that "a 'surplus' of both capital and labour in relation to current production and consumption" in the primary circuit of capital is necessary to "facilitate the movement of capital into the formation of long-term assets, particularly those comprising the built environment" (p. 107). Such a movement of capital into the secondary circuit solves overaccumulation in the primary circuit by finding a new productive use for this capital, in a process that Harvey calls a 'crisis' and that scholars often refer to as 'spatial fix.' Investment in fixed capital leads however to a central contradiction: while capital is poured into physical assets (such as the built environment) to increase productivity (and thus accumulation), this productivity finds itself constrained by the physical attributes of the assets and the need to amortize investments, while devaluation could "enable the pursuit of new and more productive forms of fixed capital" (p. 123). This contradiction is also explained by individual capitalists' tendency to overaccumulate and under-invest (because investment in the built environment requires enormous amounts of money and risk), in a move that is detrimental to the capitalist class as a whole. These contradictions result in cyclical investment in the built environment, with waves lasting 15 to 25 years ("sometimes called Kuznets cycles," p. 116), symptomatic of the "knife-edge path" (p. 124) that capitalists negotiate between preservation and destruction of past

capital investments in the built environment. Mitchell (2005) summarizes Harvey's argument (elaborated in *The Limits of Capital*, 1982) in his call for a more geographic approach to working-class studies. Mitchell insists on the importance of location under capitalism (an importance which stems from the contradiction of constructing a built environment that "might undermine its own reason for being") and concludes that "geography is thus central to the very functioning of capitalism, not just incidental to it" (pp. 82-83). Harvey also notes that "financial and state institutions" serve as "a kind of collective nerve center governing and *mediating* the relations between the primary and secondary circuits of capital" (p. 107, emphasis in original). These waves of investment in the built environment in specific locations, aided by the state (or city hall) and financial institutions (through the credit system), can be read in the landscape through a longitudinal study.

Comparing South Lake Union's landscape in the late 1990s and early 2000s with today's landscape reveals a wave of disinvestment and reinvestment in the built environment similar to that described above. Figure 6 shows a picture taken by *The Seattle Times* photographer Paul Dorpat in 2003[21]. This shot is looking east from the McKay building (a Ford dealership open until 1991, the terra-cotta façade of which is now part of the new Allen Institute building) across Westlake Avenue, between Mercer St and Valley St. This scene is typical of South Lake Union just before the latest redevelopment, with low industrial buildings visible in the background, large street-level parking lots (center), an auto service center (front left) and a gas station (front right). Although we cannot generalize from a single shot, this part of town seems deserted: there are no pedestrians, no cars at the gas station or on the street, and very few cars in the parking

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[21] This picture and anterior pictures taken from the same location are available at https://pauldorpat.com/2016/01/09/seattle-now-then-mckay-ford/.

lots. Commentators describe South Lake Union in similar terms: for Gene Balk of *The Seattle Times* (2016), “the old, down-at-heel South Lake Union of the 1990s [was] less a neighborhood than a patchwork of parking lots, warehouses and low-slung industrial buildings. It felt like a ghost town, even at midday.” A half-page ad[22] provided by Amazon in *The Seattle Times* describes South Lake Union of the 1990s as “overlooked and quiet,” “sleepy and low-key.” When asked what they knew about South Lake Union’s history, my informants described scenes of abandoned warehouses, closed stores, and drug-user squats that correspond to this image. They justified the neighborhood’s redevelopment based on this image of empty and dangerous land.

Figure 6: Looking east across Westlake Ave N between Mercer St (right) and Valley St (left). Photograph by Paul Dorpat, ca. 2003. Reproduced with authorization.

As we have seen in the Introduction chapter, the neighborhood had indeed been cut off from the rest of the city with the construction of Highway 99 in the 1930s and Interstate 5 in the 1950s. Further decline can be attributed to rezoning ordinances that barred the construction of new residences since 1947 and progressively turned South Lake Union into an industrial,

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[22] https://www.seattletimes.com/sponsored/south-lake-union-how-business-investment-builds-a-community/

commercial and manufacturing district. The neighborhood has been zoned almost exclusively for manufacturing use from 1973 to 1998, at which time the City Council adopted a new neighborhood plan that boosted residential and office development. In 2004, the City Council identified South Lake Union as a key Urban Center and promoted aggressive redevelopment (City of Seattle Department of Neighborhoods, 2014; City of Seattle City Planning, 2007).

Investors such as Paul Allen took advantage of the 1990s devaluation and underutilization. In fact, Allen's real estate investment group, Vulcan Real Estate, owned a third of South Lake Union in 2010 (Olmsted 2010) and has now undertaken 38 developments in the neighborhood[23]. The Westlake lot described previously (Figure 6) is now being readied for construction by Vulcan Real Estate (see Figure 7).

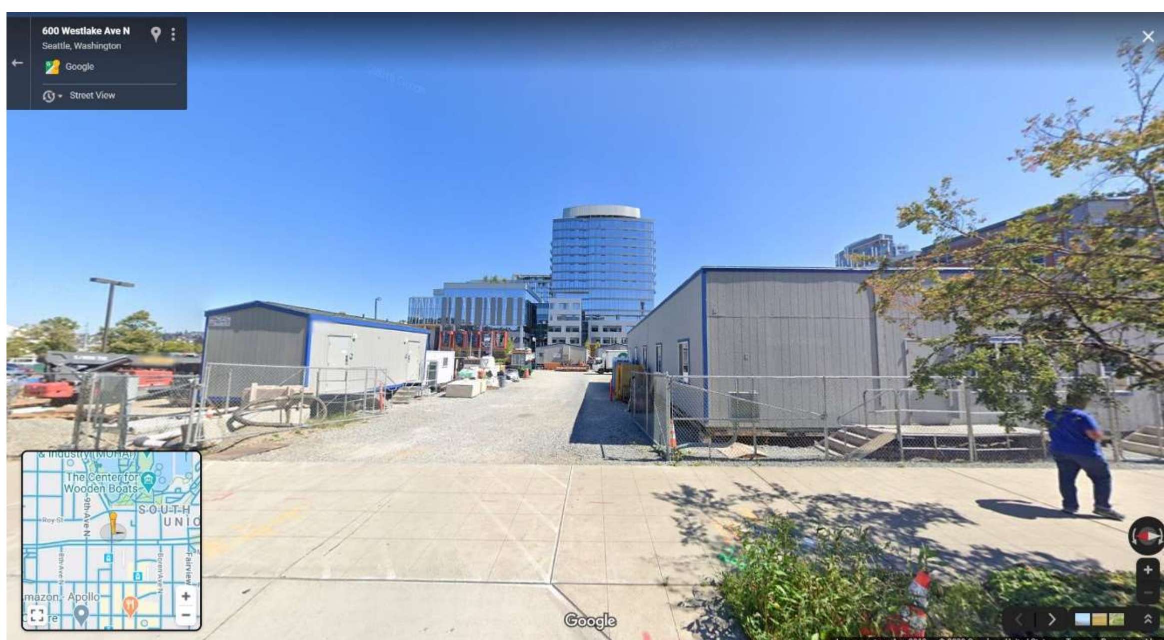

Figure 7: Google Street View picture of 600 Westlake Ave N, between Alley St (left) and Mercer St (right). Taken in August 2019.

[23] https://vulcanrealestate.com/About-Us.aspx

In 2008, the city authorized the "excavation of 30,000 cu. yds. for remediation of soil" on this Westlake lot[24]. Vulcan Real Estate requested a construction permit in 2014 for a 16-story apartment building with retail and restaurant on the ground floor and an underground parking garage—ready for tech professionals' labor and for middle-class consumption[25]. On March 6, 2020 authorization was given to construct temporary offices and restrooms for six months (pictured here)[26]. East of the construction zone (in the picture's background) stand Google's new office buildings, which opened in October 2019 (Long, 2019) and are also owned by Vulcan Real Estate[27]. Using Harvey's framework, we can see that the construction of these tall buildings used for work and commerce are extremely productive, not just in terms of their renewed real estate value, but in terms of the productive uses that this built environment enables. This explains why the city might be interested in promoting redevelopments such as the one taking place in South Lake Union, inscribing global patterns into this local landscape once again. Moreover, we see that new constructions are furthering tech's domination over the neighborhood by providing more spaces for their use and more visual cues to celebrate modernity. This construction site indicates that massive capital investment, which started 20 years ago, seems to not have stopped yet. However, recent studies show that we might be nearing the peak of the current Kuznets cycle, as Seattle is no longer among the five fastest growing cities in the nation (Balk, 2020). Moreover, the sudden (and potentially long-lasting) withdrawal of tech workers from South Lake Union due to the COVID-19 crisis might be the "irrational rationalizer" that will precipitate the neighborhood's devaluation (Harvey, 1978, p. 112).

[24] https://www.seattleinprogress.com/project/3007463
[25] https://www.seattleinprogress.com/project/3017484
[26] https://www.seattleinprogress.com/project/3034804
[27] https://vulcanrealestate.com/slu_timeline/

Redevelopment is taking place in the residential portions of the neighborhood as well, despite my informants' sentiment that they did not displace anyone (Bhatt, 2006). East of Fairview Avenue, in the once working-class neighborhood called Cascade that is now considered part of South Lake Union, residences are seeing the same process of devaluation, reinvestment, and added productivity as industrial buildings. Figure 8 shows three single family houses that were demolished shortly after I took their picture in May 2019 and are being replaced with high-end condominiums (studios and one-bedroom apartments only). The advertisement around the construction site displays young white professionals relaxing on a boat and invites prospective buyers to "relax, recharge, and make South Lake Union your home." This new construction, catering to young professionals, is another example of the ways in which the landscape is being produced for and by its privileged and powerful actors. Just across the street are two low-income housing buildings, reminding us that places are actually more heterogeneous than the dominant group describe them (I get back to this later in this chapter).

Figure 8: Houses on Republican St at Minor Ave N, replaced with luxury condominiums. Pictures taken on 5/17/2019 (left) and 2/29/2020 (right) at the same location.

In addition to the material changes and physical displacement, the transformation that the city is enabling has a profound impact on people's sense of belonging in the neighborhood. Trudeau (2006) uses land-use zoning classifications as an example of how a dominant group, through its support from municipal governments, can bound a "segment of space" and impose on it "a particular geographical imagination" that is exclusive (p. 423). This codification of landscapes "defines the terms of belonging" (p. 437) because landscapes can be understood visually and thus, when bounded in this way, communicate norms of "acceptable social behavior and visual aesthetic" (p. 422). The support and transgression of zoning ordinances he studied constitute political forms of place-making that are inscribed in the landscape. Similarly, the city's designation of South Lake Union as a key urban center and its focus on economic growth and high-end residences reinforce tech professionals' sense of belonging in the neighborhood.

The "shop floor" of innovation

As we have seen, South Lake Union is full of visual cues that reinforce the dominance of globalization and capital investment. This hegemonic effort is also visible in the instrumentalization and glorification of innovation. In fact, constructing office and retail buildings and luxury apartments might not be the only way that South Lake Union produces value. In his analysis of San Francisco's "technology-driven wave of growth" since 2008, Stehlin (2016, p. 474) argues that value can also be extracted from public spaces such as coffee shops and parks, which tech companies encourage their employees to use as workspaces, rather than "only" for social reproduction. By turning urban neighborhoods into tech campuses that combine and blur the lines between housing, leisure and work, tech companies can extract value from their workers around the clock: "the formation of 'knowledge corridors' combining high-tech

employment with amenity-laden housing and a 'vibrant' public realm constitutes a form of gentrification that in part functions to create the 'shop floor' of the 'innovation economy'" (p. 479).

This is the vision Paul Allen had for South Lake Union. In fact, one of Vulcan Real Estate's four core principles[28] is to "build properties that add vibrancy to neighborhoods" with a mix of residences, offices, and amenities. While South Lake Union counts to date more workers than residents, the recent construction of several apartment buildings might help create a real mixed-use neighborhood from which to extract maximum value.

Figure 9 shows two examples of mixed-use spaces designed to create a "shop floor" for innovation outside office spaces. The ground floor of Amazon's Houdini office building (left) contains a coffee shop, an Amazon Go cashier-less grocery store, as well as chairs and tables inside the publicly accessible gallery and courtyard, where people can work and socialize outside the office. The Collective[29] (Figure 9 right) is a members-only space that combines all sorts of amenities (such as locally crafted food and drinks, an art gallery, a hammock garden, and many more) and describes itself as a "high impact urban basecamp where locals can craft a home and community based on common interests and shared ventures" with an emphasis on collaboration and community stewardship. This ultra-trendy communal (but private) space strikes me as a perfect example of space put to productive use while being separate from their members' employers.

[28] https://vulcanrealestate.com/Principles.aspx
[29] https://www.collectiveseattle.com/

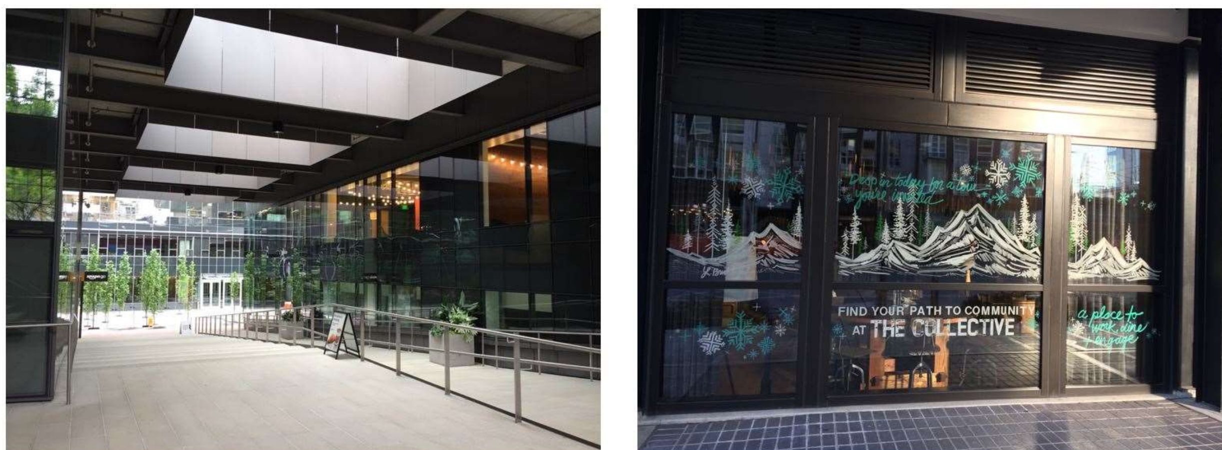

Figure 9: Mixed-use spaces creating a “shop floor” for innovation. Amazon Houdini and The Collective. Pictures taken 5/17/2019 (left) and 3/7/2020 (right).

The landscape contains public spaces designed to produce value through innovation, but it also serves as an element of discourse that idealizes innovation. Representations of South Lake Union as a modern campus for innovation can indeed be found throughout the neighborhood. For example, the Museum of History and Industry (MOHAI) is adorned with an immense “Innovation” sign next to its entrance as an advertisement for the Bezos Innovation Center on the ground floor of MOHAI. The neighborhood is also pioneering sustainable architecture and serves as a pilot program for the LEED-ND (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design-Neighborhood Development) certification and rating system[30]. One of the most visible green building features in South Lake Union is the “Swale on Yale” on Pontius Avenue, a rainwater runoff filtering system designed to avoid pollution in Lake Union[31] (see Figure 10).

[30] https://vulcanrealestate.com/getattachment/e9572d87-5181-4626-824f-fa0ce65a123c/2011_04_27_SLU-Urban-Center-Plan-Earns-LEED.aspx
[31] https://vulcanrealestate.com/Stories/Good-to-be-Green.aspx

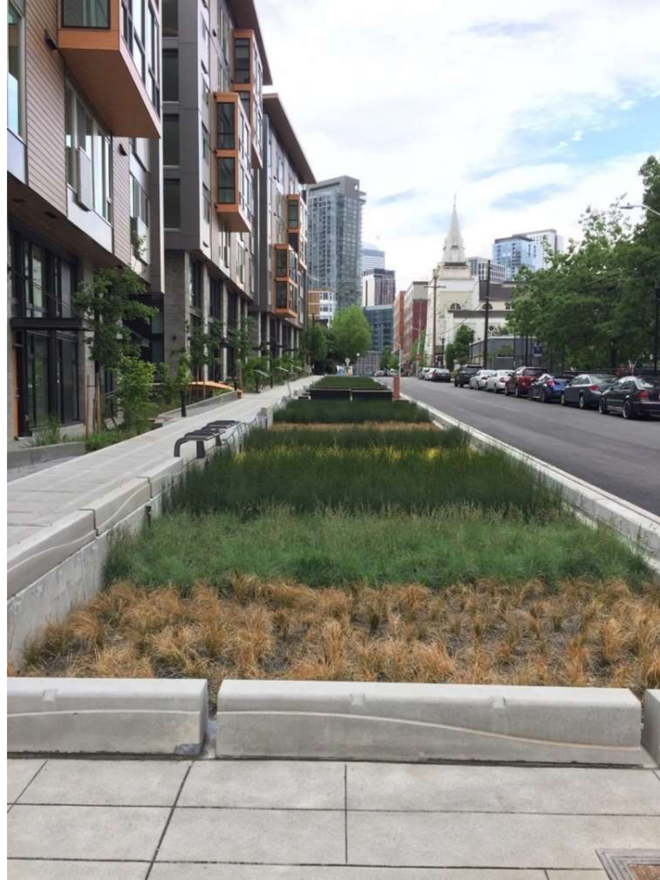

Figure 10: Swale on Yale along Pontius Avenue. Innovation in sustainable urbanism.
Picture taken 5/17/2019.

Innovation is thus both an engine of accumulation outside of office spaces and work hours (but still in the neighborhood) and an element of the modernist discourse that furthers racial capitalism and coloniality in South Lake Union. My informants' professional networking activities during happy hours are place-making practices that also produce capital through after-hours cross-company professional collaboration and innovation. Their justification for the modernization of office buildings for the sake of environmental safety and health is inscribed in the discourse of innovation as universally beneficial.

Catering to Tech—an exclusionary endeavor

The display of power of the global tech economy through office buildings aesthetics, the validation of the neighborhood's redevelopment for capital accumulation, and the glorification of innovation, all work to reinforce tech professionals' sense of belonging and legitimacy in South Lake Union. The neighborhood's landscape sends the message that tech professionals' activities and imaginings are favored over others' and therefore projects a discourse of exclusion and erasure. This discourse is evidenced in the types of amenities offered in the neighborhood, the ways in which tech companies choose to participate in the community, and the ways in which history is represented.

Amenities offerings

An abundance of services cater to young tech professionals in South Lake Union: stylish restaurants serving lunch and happy hour, coffee shops with free Wi-Fi and elaborate drinks, fully equipped gyms (one of them reading "transform yourself" on its external wall), dog lounges, and so on. My interview participants were very familiar with many of these places, which transpired as important sites of place-making and middle-class identity formation.

The aesthetic characteristics of these sites of consumption are an important contributor to the discourse of exclusivity. Pow (2009) notes that landscapes can play a "depoliticized" place-making role. The "elite middle-class" residents she studied in a gated community of Shanghai "consciously and deliberately acquire . . . aesthetic tastes" (p. 382) that solidify their class identity and "produce dramatic normative and exclusionary effects" (p. 372). Aesthetic norms and their materialization in the landscape lead to urban segregation not only through

securitization (with gates around the residences), but also “in an experiential sort of way” (through aesthetic choices) (p. 382). In South Lake Union, the aesthetic norms of the office buildings and sites of consumption reinforce segregation in favor of the elite. In addition, because many of these businesses are open on weekdays, when the professionals are there, but closed at night and on the weekends, their operation seems to be dictated by tech professionals. These hours of operation are forcing residents to leave the neighborhood to dine and shop, sending a message of exclusion toward the neighborhood’s residents.

I observed many other messages of exclusivity in the neighborhood. For example:

- A security guard in full gear was stationed at the entrance of Whole Foods Market, just a few yards away from a panhandler on the sidewalk just outside the main entrance.
- Office buildings all have lobbies with guards and card readers.
- The restaurants and stores entrances seem welcoming to the middle class but not to poorer prospective customers. For instance, the message and the choice of language in the coffeeshop window below (Figure 11) is clearly targeting a young, hip, wealthy clientele, but simultaneously keeps anyone outside of this demographic at bay.

Figure 11: Water bowls and dog-friendly message outside a South Lake Union coffeeshop. The message reads: “it’s not vodka, we promise! PS: bring them in… like please.” Picture taken 2/29/2020.

Finally, the absence of public schools shows that families with school-aged children are not a priority for the city. Three small private daycare centers (a Montessori school for children 3 to 5 years old and two daycare centers for infants to pre-K) invite younger families to the Cascade neighborhood, again showing that young professionals in two-earner households and with the means to afford a private daycare center are the target audience for the new apartment complexes of the area.

Tech companies' community outreach

Tech companies are sponsoring social services in their communities (donating large amounts of money, but far less than they would pay through a head tax (Archibald, 2020)), and some of these efforts are noticeable in the landscape. The Mary's Place shelter on Dexter just west of Denny Park is one example. The apprenticeship program offered by Fare Start, which runs a coffee shop named Rise in Amazon's Houdini building, is another. However, while these services might be helpful to their clients, they follow the neoliberal ethos of meritocracy that Stehlin (2016) noted in San Francisco and come with the mission of reforming individuals through rehabilitation and reintegration that is also typical of the neoliberalism to which these corporations adhere (Stuart, 2016).

The selection of individuals worthy of help can be read in Mary's Place's choice to focus on families, even though families represented only 22% of the homeless population in Seattle in 2019 (Applied Survey Research, 2019). In fact, "Mary's Place provides safe, inclusive shelter and services that support women, children and families"[32]. Amazon[33] is supporting Mary's Place substantially. The company is lending (rent and utility free for ten years) half of its newest building to Mary's Place for a family shelter of 30 rooms that will open in the Denny Triangle (just south of South Lake Union) in the spring of 2020. Amazon is also giving $5 million to Plymouth Housing, which has a "housing first" philosophy[34] (meaning that it is not meritocratic and low barrier to entry): "Plymouth offers [its] residents a home without asking them to prove that they're ready for it," and will match $5 million of employee donations, but the head tax

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[32] https://www.marysplaceseattle.org/get-help
[33] https://www.marysplaceseattle.org/marys-place-2/marysplaceintheretrograde
[34] https://plymouthhousing.org/why-housing-first/

Amazon opposed in 2019 would have brought $48 million annually to Seattle's efforts to combat homelessness (Feiner, 2019).

These selective and self-serving engagements with the community mirror the discourses I observed in my informants' responses to questions about their role in the neighborhood's transformation.

A carefully curated history

The historic buildings and landmarks that have been deemed worthy of preservation in South Lake Union are another indication of the city's project to promote the neighborhood as a site of economic growth and a site for middle-classness to flourish, to the detriment of other imaginings.

While walking through South Lake Union and recording landmarks that relate to its past, I noted many brick façades from the early 20th century. Out of the 38 historical locations I recorded, 23 (60%) were buildings or façades from buildings built in the 1900s to 1940s for industrial or commercial purposes (Figure 12). This was the case, for example, of the J.T. Hardeman Hat Co. building (1920), which has been converted into offices; the Firestone Tire Building (1929), which will become the "greenest office building of its size in the world" in 2022[35], and whose façade, officially landmarked by the city, will be preserved (Figure 13 left); the McKay Ford dealership (1922), the terra-cotta façade of which has been moved to a new location on Mercer Street after the demolition of the showroom (Pryne, 2008), and added to the new Paul Allen Institute building (Figure 13 right); or the Supply Laundry Company building (1904), which operated until 1985 continuously, and has recently been transformed into an

[35]https://martinselig.com/property/400-westlake-south-lake-union-seattle/

apartment building featuring officially landmarked historical details, such as a masonry smokestack and wooden beams[36] (Figure 14). The industrial past of South Lake Union is thus well represented—it is the most noticeable part of the neighborhood's past. This overrepresentation is partly due to type of materials used (long-lasting bricks compared to the wood of residential homes) and the footprint of the buildings (better suited than small house properties to host office buildings), but it also reflects the city's advertisement of South Lake Union as a working neighborhood, rather than a residential one.

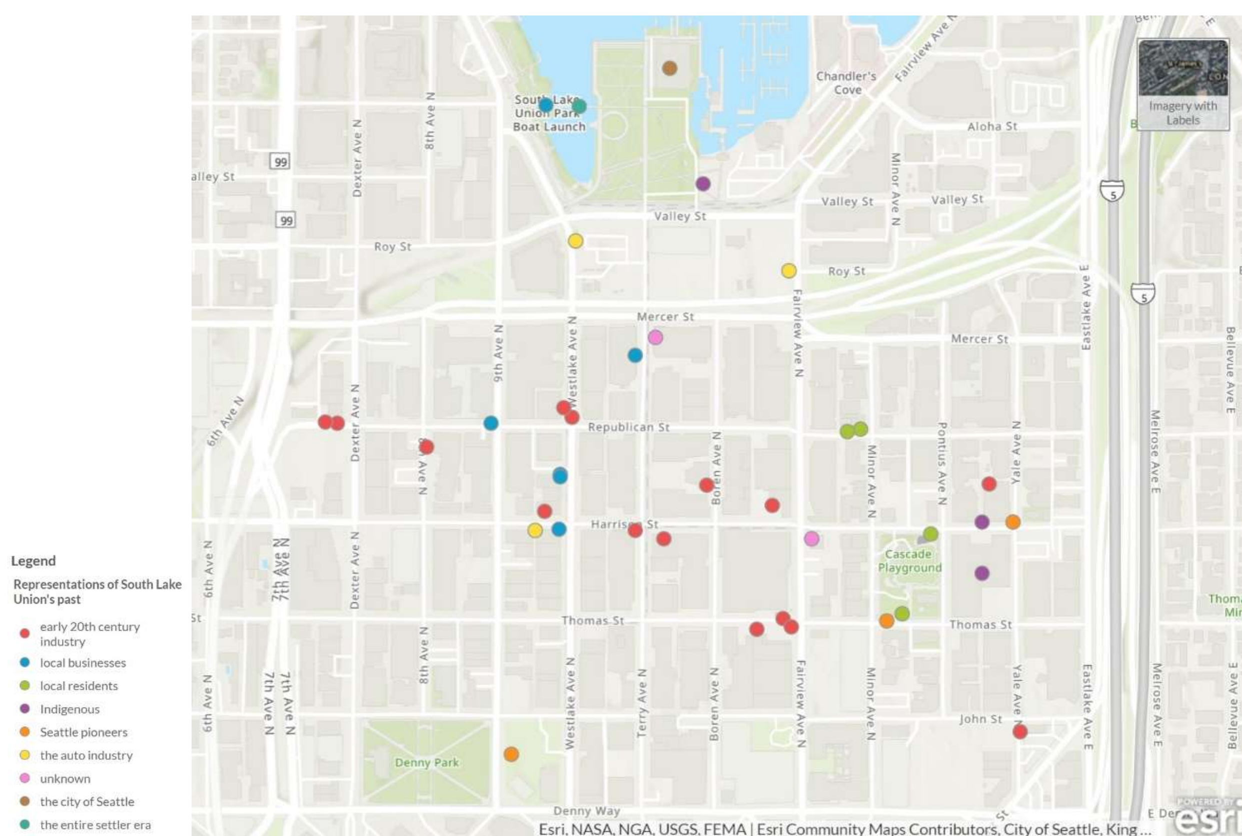

Figure 12: Representations of South Lake Union's. The predominant 20th century industrial history is symbolized in red. past. Map created in May 2020 based on a survey I conducted in June 2019.

[36] https://www.stackhouseapartments.com/ourhistory.aspx

In addition, the preservation of these brick and terra-cotta facades serve to please middle-class aesthetic tastes, as they bring "character" to the neighborhood—a criterion that my informants foregrounded in their descriptions of an ideal neighborhood. These historic-looking elements of the landscape are used as a desirable "lifestyle amenity" (de Oliver, 2016) that contributes to the attractiveness of the neighborhood, which otherwise looks so new (and the buildings of which are so "boxy" and "repetitive") that it feels "soulless" (Grinnell 2015).

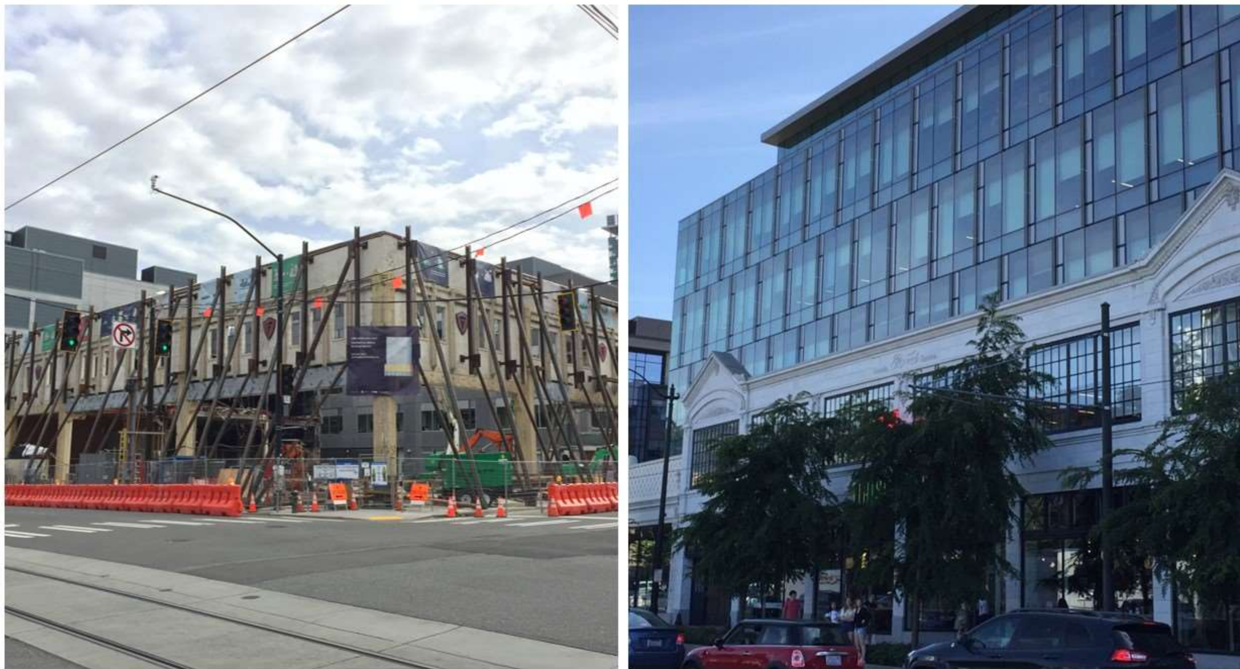

Figure 13: The terra-cotta façade and emblems of the 1929 Firestone auto care center on Westlake Avenue (left) is being preserved to be included at the base of a new 15-story office building[37]. The terra-cotta façade of McKay's 1922 Ford dealership (right), demolished in 2009, adorns the Paul Allen Institute building, 70 feet north of the showroom's original location (Pryne, 2008). Pictures taken 5/5/2020 (left) and 6/1/2019 (right).

[37] https://martinselig.com/property/400-westlake-south-lake-union-seattle/

Figure 14: The 2014 Stack House apartment complex on Harrison Street includes office and restaurant space in the 1904 Supply Laundry building (registered in the National Register of Historic Places[38]), of which the brick facades, timber beams and wooden windows have been preserved. The laundry's masonry smokestack is the centerpiece of the complex's courtyard and advertised as "a touchstone of a bygone era"[39]. Pictures taken 6/3/2019.

These representations of the past produce erasures and exclusion, however. In fact, the abundance of early to mid-20th century industrial and commercial landmarks reduces South Lake Union's history to this short period of white settler occupation and makes this past seem homogeneous. In particular, Indigenous life on the lakeshore is relegated to a pre-settler past. A footbridge at Lake Union Park (Figure 15 left) takes passerby through the history of South Lake Union from 1850 (the year before the arrival of the Denny Party) to 2010 (the year the bridge was inaugurated). In this representation of the past, Duwamish presence is fixed in 1850, dwarfing their millenary history to a single year (or at best a few hundred years, per the plaque's

[38] https://www.nps.gov/nr/feature/places/13000209.htm
[39] https://www.stackhouseapartments.com/ourhistory.aspx

description), and trapping it in the pre-modern. Razack (2002) argues in fact that "mythologies or national stories… about a nation's origins and history… produce European settlers as the bearers of civilization while simultaneously trapping Aboriginal people in the pre-modern, that is, before civilization occurred" (p. 2). Despite Duwamish people's instrumental contributions to Seattle's development, their history in the city is portrayed as ending with the arrival of the first white settlers.

The Center for Wooden Boats also seems to be sending a potentially confusing message regarding Indigenous cultural heritage in South Lake Union. A totem pole stands in fact at the center's entrance (Figure 15 right). While the totem pole has been received as a gift from the Tlingit tribe of Klawock, Alaska, in reciprocity for a canoe that the Indigenous community of Seattle had given them two years earlier (Wong 2007), uninformed visitors might construe this artifact as representing the culture of local peoples. The exhibition of this totem pole without explanation is merely a tokenistic nod to Indigenous presence, as was the case with the totem poles at Victor Steinbrueck Park near Pike Place Market (Kroman 2018). In fact, commentators argue that the Steinbrueck Park "poles were created to honor Native history. But they do not represent the people on whose land Seattle now sits." There are now efforts to remove these controversial totem poles. At the Center for Wooden Boats, two Haida canoes typical of the Pacific Northwest are presented with a plaque, but the Alaskan totem pole is presented without one. One can actually see an empty stand in front of it.

The erasure or confinement of Indigenous heritage to the distant past, but also tokenism (that is, a well-meaning but superficial and sometimes misguided homage to the past) legitimize white setters' claims to land. They discharge South Lake Unions' newcomers from having to reckon with their participation in the settler colonial project.

Figure 15: Lake Union Park's 2010 footbridge (left) provides a chronology of population size and major milestones in South Lake Union's history. The first vignette, set in1850, a year before the arrival of the Denny Party at Alki Point (marking the start of white settler history in Seattle), reads "Duwamish people have lived for hundreds of years in a village at this site, on this Native lake." A totem pole by a carver master of the Tlingit tribe of Klawock, Alaska (right) is on display at the entrance of The Center for Wooden Boats; the panel that seems designed to provide a description is empty. Pictures taken 6/1/2019.

A Richer Picture

Despite all these efforts for hegemony, the landscape reveals a rich picture of diverse uses and understandings of the neighborhood, as well as contestation.

Elwood et al. (2017) invite us to think about space relationally and to understand it simultaneously through its "coherences/permanences" and its "openness/fluidity" (p. 6). The previous sections were based mainly on Harvey's conception of place as constituted through "particular fixities wherein power coheres in institutions, social relations, economies and

ecologies." In fact, I argued that South Lake Union's landscape revealed patterns of neoliberal globalization, flow of capital, and the hegemonic discourse of a powerful group made of investors, city officials, and corporations. However, Elwood et al. (2017) argue that space is pluralist and that "fixity and motion [are] dialectically interrelated." They invite us to also "view spatiality as constantly in flux, constituted through networked, fluid, and multiple processes that relentlessly open up diverse arrangements of life and power" (p. 6). Massey (2005) thinks of space as "the sphere of heterogeneity . . . the sphere of relations . . . [and] the sphere of coevalness, of radical contemporaneity" (p. 99). She refuses to reduce "coexisting heterogeneity" to a "temporal sequence," as dictated by the project of modernity that confines different realities to different historical periods (pp. 68-69). In this section, then, I propose to think about the complexity that various actors bring to South Lake Union.

The intersection at Thomas St and Pontius Ave N is a case in point. Café Hagen (Figure 16 left) is a new trendy coffee shop favored by residents from the brand-new Sitka Apartments complex on the same block. On the Saturday morning when I took this picture, middle-class individuals in their 30s, wearing "casual wear," were walking their dogs or roller blading to and from the café. A man brought his ceramic mug in, then went back to Sitka Apartments to sip his steaming coffee in the tranquility of his gated residence. The sidewalk is adorned with A-frame signs advertising the nearby apartment complexes and parking lots ($275 a month to park at Sitka. Easy sign up!). However, on the other side of Thomas stands Immanuel Lutheran Church, built in 1907, and which has had "feeding and sheltering partnerships in our building for 35 years," including community meals, a food bank, as well as hygiene and recovery programs[40]. The church visibly needs repair work on its facades and roof. A man in his 60s is eating pizza

[40] http://immanuelseattle.org/immanuel-community-services/

from a box, seated on a chair propped by one of the church's side doors on Thomas. Across from the church on Thomas, and across Café Hagen on Pontius, is the Cascade P-Patch Community Garden and Cascade People's Center (run by the YMCA and Seattle Parks and Recreations). A poster in the center's window acknowledges that "we gather on Indigenous land." Another sign welcomes people of all races, genders, abilities, countries of origin, and sexual orientations (Figure 17). The garden, established in 1996, is empty on this grey and cold Saturday morning. Plots here are either individually owned or maintained by volunteers to supply local food banks (Figure 16 right). Behind the church, we can spot two cranes constructing high rises in the Denny Triangle. Along Minor in the background of the pictures are new apartment buildings and Amazon's Houdini building. This scene is very heterogeneous and shows just how partial an all-tech viewpoint can be.

Figure 16: Heterogeneity at Thomas St and Pontius Ave N. Pictures taken 2/29/2020.

Figure 17: Cascade People's Center. Picture taken 2/29/2020.

Just on the other side of the community garden, at Harrison St and Minor Ave N, lies another set of competing and coexisting views (Figure 18). Here we see a miniature garden planted by the community (The Happy Garden). A Little Free Library contains books deposited by neighbors. On top of the pile of children's books: *Who Are Venus and Serena Williams*. In the case, one can also find Disney stories, a children's book in Spanish, and a religious book about St Peter. Among the adult's books: a Daniel Steel novel, *La Edad de Oro* (a literary anthology in Spanish), and *The Hypnobirth Book: An Inspirational Guide for a Calm, Confident, Natural Birth*. So many worlds are colliding on these bookshelves! Behind this eclectic garden and book collection, the manicured playground is lit (in the middle of the day) by string lights, giving the impression that the lights have been added to make the park look "safer" to parents (that is, not "abandoned" or left to homeless people). The "no camping, this park is closed to the public 11:30pm to 4am" sign at the entrance of the park reinforces this message coming from the city, and contrasts greatly with the community garden.

These scenes don't correspond to the description of sterility given by my interview participants, nor to the imagined danger of walking by the P-Patch. They represent the contemporaneity of very different projects: one centered on capital accumulation in the global tech economy and its local amenities aided by the city through zoning and policing, the other centered on building and serving a diverse and inclusive community of residents.

Figure 18: Minor Ave N between Thomas St and Harrison St. Picture taken 2/29/2020.

Further west into "Amazonland," I witnessed a scene on a Saturday morning in late February that exemplifies the type of "multiplicity of trajectories" (Massey, 2005, p. 100) through which places are constantly being made, in contrast with the tech tsunami. On the foreground of Figure 19, Seattle City Light workers are installing "an underground electrical vault" to "increase electrical reliability" in the neighborhood[41], as required by the growing

[41] http://www.seattle.gov/light/atwork/release.asp?RN=415

number of offices and high-end apartment buildings. The street is blocked every weekend since August 2019 and reopens for professionals going to work during the week. In the background, we see a group of about 40 to 50 peaceful demonstrators, which I believe were Protectors of the Salish Sea[42]. This group led by Indigenous climate activists from the Nisqually People, Salmon People, and Southern resident Orca People started a prayer walk in September 2019 (and reached the state capitol in March 2020) to demand from Governor Inslee the declaration of a climate emergency and the end of fossil fuel exploration projects in the state of Washington. Six marchers were arrested the previous Sunday at this intersection (Brunner, 2020). When I took the picture, police officers on bikes were posted on both sides of Republican St and seemed nearly as numerous as the protestors, in a display of force that seemed disproportionate. Finally, we can see stickers on the back of the parking sign in the picture's foreground. One reads, "abolish ICE, abolish SPD." Another reads, "reject heteronormativity." Lastly, Shepard Fairey's OBEY Giant invites viewers to "question both the sticker and their relationship with their surroundings" and is often construed as a provocation[43].

[42] https://protectorsofthesalishsea.org/
[43] https://obeygiant.com/propaganda/manifesto/

Figure 19: Construction and demonstration at Fairview Ave N and Republican St. Picture taken 2/29/2020.

Other forms of resistance more closely related to South Lake Union itself can be read in the landscape. First, Councilmember Kshama Sawant and union leader Sara Nelson are organizing a “Tax Amazon” campaign designed to “fight for social housing” (Figure 20 left). This movement is a direct confrontation of Amazon’s (so far successful) efforts to avoid being taxed and to manage social housing efforts through philanthropy rather than through government—following the neoliberal ideal of “small government” and privatization of social services, and preserving control over the company’s profits. Although this particular event was not held in South Lake Union, the posters placed on Amazon’s “turf” are a clear sign of resistance. Second, Athletic Awards (Figure 20 top right) is a family-owned business located on Republican St since 1983, and whose owner led opposition to the Seattle Commons project (which would have closed or displaced 130 small businesses) in the 1990s. The trophy shop refused to sell its property, painted its exterior walls in a defiant yellow, and now does business

with the neighborhood's largest corporations (Baumgarten, 2016). Finally, a house at 417 Minor Ave N, built in 1909, is still standing among the office and apartment buildings (Figure 20 bottom right). While the house looks closed, nothing indicates that construction is planned there. The house is not for sale and hasn't been sold since 1982 (it sold then for $34,000; it is now estimated at over $800,000)[44]. The owner might be refusing to sell too.

Figure 20: Resisting gentrification and demolition. Pictures taken 2/29/2020 (left and bottom right) and 5/17/2019 (top right).

A more discrete but no less powerful sign of resistance can be found on an electric box just outside the Tesla showroom on Westlake Ave N, the busiest street in South Lake Union, and one that my interview participants identified as the nerve center of the neighborhood. An anonymous poem reads (Figure 21):

[44] https://www.redfin.com/WA/Seattle/417-Minor-Ave-N-98109/home/2060888

homeless

I'm my Dreams

I am who I say

I.. AM

Figure 21: Poem on Westlake Ave N at Republican St. Picture taken 2/29/2020.

This poem, "hiding in plain sight" on Westlake Avenue, is a poignant example of the non-hegemonic ways of inhabiting the neighborhood that the tech professionals I interviewed did

not see or did not mention because they construct South Lake Union as a space made for their work.

The neighborhood's low-income residents, the social service workers, volunteers, and clients, the small business owners, climate and housing activists, long-time homeowners, and homeless inhabitants, are the groups of neighborhood actors that tech professionals could engage with, in their search for accountability and solidarity. Exploring South Lake Union in the manner of this landscape analysis could thus be a first step in this engagement for social justice.

To conclude this section, I want to acknowledge that more time, insider knowledge, and focus would be needed to find evidence of activity that is purposefully hiding or going stealth, because of social or legal pressures, in the landscape. Brown (2000) has shown, for instance, that although gay spaces are concealed in the city because of homophobia and because "homosexual acts have been explicitly outlawed" until recently (and remain so in many countries[45]), "the closet has material expression in the urban landscape" (pp. 70-71, 85) and that it takes time and additional research methods to find evidence of its presence. He concludes that Lefebvre's "emphasis on visuality" in his theory of the production of space "might be somewhat overstated" (p. 85). I know that I am not able to see everything that is going on in South Lake Union's landscape, both because of time and resource constraints and because of my own blindness, and that I cannot fully rely on a landscape analysis to understand it. Collaborative research work with neighborhood actors other than tech professionals would undoubtedly reveal additional layers of uses and contestations that my positionality prevents me from discovering on my own.

[45] https://ilga.org/maps-sexual-orientation-laws

Conclusion

Patterns of place-making abound in the South Lake Union landscape. What is most visible is the presence of global corporations with their shiny office buildings and the high-end amenities that go with them to attract "talent," as their Human Resource departments would say, to this "shop floor for innovation." The patterns of a flow of capital into the built environment, the boom that followed the bust, are also inscribed in the demolitions and construction sites, and in the obvious gain in productivity that every new square foot of office space, retail, or luxury apartment provides. The new aesthetics of South Lake Union, the services being offered (or not), and the display of innovation as a central motto, are there to reinforce the dominant group's understanding of the neighborhood and its collective white middle-class identity. The landscape seems to tell who belongs there and who doesn't. However, the landscape is also "hiding in plain sight" evidence of contestation and resistance against these efforts of hegemony. What is invisibilized in professionals' descriptions of South Lake Union are the low-income and working-class inhabitants whose shops and residences are there to stay, the homeless people who find services in the neighborhood and write poetry on the walls, the activists who fight against capitalism and state violence, and for the climate and social housing. South Lake Union is indeed full of these complex social relations and tensions, which make it an ever-changing space of multiplicity. The landscape is produced through the place-making activities of more than one social group. The complexity of its production is there for the dominant group of tech professionals to read.

Conclusion

This project started with a fascination for South Lake Union that I couldn't quite explain. The sheer magnitude and rapidity of its transformation seemed important not only for the city of Seattle, but more broadly in terms of social justice: how could such a massive influx of capital and such a tsunami of wealthy newcomers not profoundly affect the neighborhood? But this project is also rooted in my desire to learn about and expose processes of reproduction of power and privilege to better disrupt them from within. Therefore, I set out to explore this urban redevelopment with a focus on its incoming population: the mostly white, highly paid professionals working for Amazon, Google, and other high-tech and biotech companies. This emphasis on the everyday activities and discourses of individuals helped me think about the ways in which power "takes place" (in the geographic sense), not only through the macro-politics of the city government, real estate developers, and tech corporations, but also through the micro-politics of the members of the dominant group.

Choosing place-making as a core theoretical concept allowed me to explore the processes through which a place is shaped both materially and symbolically through mundane practices, as well as the ways in which place shapes collective identities. The concept helped me argue that tech professionals in South Lake Union produce this neighborhood, both through actions and words (for example, through their use of public space, consumption habits, aesthetic tastes, and selective storytelling), as a place dedicated to their work and consumption. Place-making helped me think about the production of place as not only collective but relational, through this dominant group's comparisons with those they define as "other" or physically avoid by creating boundaries between the parts of the neighborhood that cater to their needs and the parts they

construct as ugly or dangerous. Finally, the concept of place-making helped me think about my informants' responses as discursive practices that bolster their hegemony through erasure: the non-acknowledgment of their social status and power; the omission of race and gender in responses that were in fact reinforcing white and masculinist understandings of place and group identity; the partial and self-legitimizing constructions of the neighborhood's history.

However, South Lake Union is not just a place where tech professionals reproduce and normalize white middle-class supremacy, as they do in their neighborhoods of residence. South Lake Union is also a place where they engage directly in the reproduction of racial capitalism through their work for globalized tech corporations and through their embrace of these corporations' ideals of capital accumulation, modernity, hegemony, rationality, neoliberalism, and so on. I thus strove to link local, embodied place-making practices to broader political economic processes by folding into my analysis discussions on global capitalism, the urban process, and western conceptions of time and modernity. These theoretical lenses helped me argue that tech professionals' production of place and their collective identity formation are fully embedded in the settler colonial racial capitalist project. This was evident in their understanding of time as binary, in the way they read the landscape as a display of economic booms and busts, and in their omissions of non-tech-centric uses of the neighborhood, of histories not focused on urban growth, of low-income residents, of people working in the restaurants and grocery stores they patronize, etc.

Tech professionals proclaimed a complete detachment from South Lake Union, defining it as a place where they do not want to live or spend leisure time, and as a place they do not feel invested in trying to "improve" to fit their ideal image of a desirable neighborhood. To the contrary, they defined it as aesthetically sterile and as dead in their absence. It is through this

distancing, rather than through emotional, material, and discursive investment in the neighborhood (as they would do in their neighborhood of residence), that they forbid alternative uses of this place and cemented their hegemony over it. Moreover, they were clearly understanding South Lake Union as a place designed for the accumulation of capital, through its construction as a tech campus serving the economic interests of global tech corporations and of real estate developers. My informants marveled at the economic growth and incessant construction work taking place in the neighborhood. Their reading of the landscape reinforced their understanding of South Lake Union as a place of innovation and growth and it legitimized their own place in the neighborhood: it exempted them of any sense of accountability to the social inequalities this hegemony creates, because the neighborhood's transformation was represented as inevitable and out of their control. In addition, my informants' place-making practices can be read as local expressions of the global forces of racial capitalism, based on their support of modernity and economic growth (through destruction and redevelopment of the built environment and through technological innovation) and of a Western understanding of temporality, portrayed as linear (trapping "others" in the past) and binary (erasing nonhegemonic existences), that were more apparent than in a neighborhood of residence because they were inscribed in more directly capitalistic endeavors. Tech professionals' use of public space to commute to work, to build their professional network, and to consume during their workday, highlights these place-making practices as strongly linked to the city's entrepreneurialism and to its investment in making South Lake Union "safe" for their use. Studying place-making in a neighborhood where tech professionals go to work thus brings forth their relationship to power structures (such as the city government and tech corporations) more clearly than in a neighborhood where they reside.

My informants' responses to my research questions coalesced around their use of the neighborhood, their professional status, their middle-class values, and their investment in whiteness. However, my focus on these few criteria hides more complex intersections of social differentiators and sources of discrimination—for example age, gender, sexuality, immigration, or religion. Further research would need to look at the specific role Asian tech professionals play in this place-making, for example, since a relatively large portion of the tech population identifies as Asian. Pulido (2006) asserts that "in some circles, Asian Americans are almost considered 'honorary whites'" (p. 26) and are "not readily seen as an oppressed group" (p. 161). In my analysis, I erased Asian tech professionals' oppression and invisibilized their unique experience in this regard. I also erased the experiences of other minorities within the tech workforce. The next step in my analysis would be to pay closer attention to social differences among tech professionals. Moreover, from experience, I know that many tech professionals are immigrants; this adds another layer of complexity to the analysis of place-making, since here I read place-making practices through American understandings of whiteness and middle-classness. A deeper analysis of the concept of middle-classness would also help make this analysis richer: what characterizes middle-classness and where do tech professionals fall with regard to this category?

My choice to focus on a dominant group is inherently limited in the first place. Not only does this approach center privilege, but it also erases the voices and knowledges of the groups who contest and resist tech professionals' settling of South Lake Union. Answering my research questions about the role of tech professionals in the neighborhood's transformation through the experiences of those they exclude and erase would bring to light practices I am not able to see because I am too close to tech professionals' point of view. Furthermore, if I interviewed non-

tech individuals, I would be able to answer other research questions, more centered on the heterogeneity of place or on the contestations opposed to the tech tsunami. I had two main reasons for choosing to interview tech professionals and analyze the landscape from their point of view. First, this project was a way for me to explore my own embeddedness in white supremacy and racial capitalism. Knowing what is going on in my own circles was a necessary first step in my intellectual formation. In fact, how could I possibly disrupt what is invisible to me? Second, I wanted this project to contribute to the abolition of power structures, and to me this meant exposing their support mechanism—where whiteness and class privilege are normalized and reproduced on a day-to-day basis. My role as a white scholar should be to disrupt whiteness, rather than try to "fix" its effects on Black, Indigenous, and people of color communities (which is both paternalizing and damaging).

However, to disrupt whiteness, I also need to explore alternatives, and this cannot be done by looking solely inward. Now that I have done this study and explored whiteness and privilege from within, the next step should be to explore the experiences of marginalized South Lake Union inhabitants. This would help me know exactly who tech professionals are invisibilizing and how (which is difficult to do by simply asking tech professionals), but it would also center the knowledges of those who are already resisting and defying racial capitalism and let them lead the way to an "otherwise" they are already practicing. This next phase would help me go beyond the critique of processes of social othering and the reproduction of power structures, and toward grounded and relational accountability and solidarity with those who have always been on the frontlines of these struggles through embodied praxes of care and stewardship.

While the normalization of liberal framings of success, respectability, safety, beauty, temporality, and so on, prevented my informants from imagining alternative uses of the neighborhood and alternative lives within it—in other words, alternative presents and futures, several of them expressed feelings of guilt and internal conflict about the transformation of the neighborhood. They understood themselves as being part of the crowd of “very techy, very yuppy” professionals who alter the landscape through their employment and consumption in South Lake Union, and who alter the neighborhood’s demographic makeup. In a sense, they are at the junction where I found myself before deciding to go back to school and study social injustices. I take this as a sign that some tech professionals could be prompted to learn more about their role in the neighborhood and to join those working toward the abolition of power structures. Recent news have shown that tech professionals have indeed been using their influence in solidarity with victims of racial capitalism. In November 2018, hundreds of Google employees walked out of their offices in several Seattle locations, demanding “structural change in the name of transparency, accountability and equity” and protesting sexual harassment, “abuse of power” and systemic racism (Schlosser, 2018). In March 2020, amid the COVID-19 pandemic, an Amazon Vice President resigned after the company fired two professionals who had helped warehouse workers organize to demand “expand[ed] sick leave, hazard pay and childcare.” In a blog post, the former Vice President expressed his disgust for “21st-century capitalism,” which “treats humans in the warehouses as fungible units of pick-and-pack potential” (Zaveri, 2020). Finally, in September 2019, one of my informants joined the march organized by Amazon employees in support of the worldwide youth climate strike (Teirstein, 2019). In front of the Amazon Spheres in the Denny Triangle, employees from several South Lake Union tech companies joined the three thousand Amazon employees who had started the

movement. The strikers pressured their employers to implement stricter environmental goals for their companies and aimed to put them in competition with each other through their collective action. My informant (who works for one of the smaller tech companies) described this day as a defining moment in tech professionals' collective sense of identity and solidarity for a cause that goes beyond (or counter to) their personal interests. These collective actions indicate tech professionals' engagement in accountability and solidarity on specific issues. They also show the potential of neighborhoods such as South Lake Union to become centers for the organization of collective action by the professionals who work there.

However, abolishing power structures requires the disruption of day-to-day practices and discourses as well. In my interviews with tech professionals, I did not find evidence that my informants were ready for such reflexivity and commitment to personal change. Further research would be needed to fully explore this first impression. Further research is also needed to explore the kinds of "otherwise" that are for now "unthinkable" to tech professionals, as liberal subjects (Lawson et al., 2018). As a member of the white middle class, I struggle to define this otherwise too. My landscape analysis provides a few paths for exploration. If this research project was longer, my next step would be to seek to forge relationships of accountability and solidarity with those who contest, resist, or otherwise "make place" in South Lake Union, despite or in relation to tech professionals' hegemonic efforts. With the feminist commitment to nonexploitative research methods and to political engagement in research, the goal of this second phase would be to center the knowledges of activists and marginalized neighborhood actors resisting tech domination and to explore ways in which tech professionals could align with and support these goals through a disruption of their normalizing day-to-day practices, and through directed acts of solidarity and accountability. This exploration would be guided by scholarly work on alternative

understandings and practices of place, such as Leanne Simpson's (2017) Indigenous radical resurgence or McKittrick's (2016) "praxes of rebellious subversion" (p. 87). McKittrick and Wood argue in fact that Black communities understand and practice place "as the location of co-operation, stewardship and social justice rather than just as sites to be dominated, enclosed, commodified, exploited, and segregated" (Cahuas, 2019). Co-operation and stewardship are forms of place-making that are so far "unthinkable" for my informants and could be the basis of the disruption of white supremacy by those embedded in it. This exploration would also be guided by scholarly work on the disruption of the "colonial sense of time" (Wynter in McKittrick, 2016, p. 87), with a focus on the disruption of narratives of progress, for example, or on erased histories and presents (Santos, 2014).

South Lake Union experienced an abrupt disruption in March 2020 with Governor Inslee's order to "Stay Home, Stay Healthy" because of the COVID-19 pandemic (State of Washington, 2020). Tech companies such as Amazon had anticipated this order and requested their office employees to work from home a few weeks earlier (all while keeping their warehouse workers and delivery crews on site) (Korosec, 2020). While the "Stay-at-Home" order is in place through the end of May, Amazon is inviting its employees to work from home until at least October, and Google and Facebook until the end of the year (Lerman & Greene, 2020). Meanwhile, the Center for Disease Control issued reopening guidelines for workplaces that include health monitoring, disinfection, modified office furniture and desk spacing, and limited use of public transit. These measures could incentivize companies to keep their employees at home indefinitely (Richtel, 2020). A San Francisco venture capitalist already argues that "this whole mind-set of 'campus' is going away… If anything, companies can reduce real estate costs" (Lerman & Greene, 2020). If South Lake Union tech companies decide to

vacate their office buildings permanently, the entire neighborhood will be impacted. Further research will then be needed to evaluate the consequences of this withdrawal, both in the landscape and in the place-making practices of those who will remain or come to the neighborhood.

This project started with my fascination for a neighborhood in rapid transformation, and it is ending with more profound questions than it addressed. Learning about whiteness and privilege—and unlearning the behaviors and discourses that sustain them—are lifelong endeavors. There is a lot more I need to understand about the complexity of situating one's work without centering one's own experience, of exposing processes of hegemony and normalization without centering whiteness and privilege, of learning from marginalized groups without exploiting their experiences. What we are living right now, with the blatant display of profound racial inequality and injustice in the management of the COVID-19 crisis and in policing in the United States, are giving me a sharper perspective on my role in anti-racist and anti-capitalist struggles as a white scholar. The imperative of accountability toward people of color and of solidarity through direct collaboration are more apparent to me now than they were when I designed this project. I look forward to applying these new learnings in future work.

Appendix A: South Lake Union and Seattle as a Place of Work

Overall growth 2010-2017	**Seattle**	**South Lake Union**
All jobs	+16.5% (+83,036 workers)	+33.9% (+18,192 workers)

Table1: Overall growth in worker population from 2010 to 2017

Largest population (2017)	**Seattle**	**South Lake Union**
Jobs by worker age	Age 30 to 54 (58.5%)	Age 30 to 54 (62.0%)
Jobs by Earnings	More than $3,333 per month (64.1%)	More than $3,333 per month (74.5%)
Jobs by NAICS Industry Sector	Health Care and Social Assistance (13.9%)	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (22.2%)
2nd largest	Retail Trade (12.0%)	Educational Services (14.8%)
3rd largest	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services (11.8%)	Information (12.2%)
Jobs by Worker Race	White Alone (73.3%)	White Alone (74.0%)
2nd largest	Asian Alone (15.2%)	Asian Alone (15.1%)
3rd largest	Black or African American Alone (6.4%)	Black or African American Alone (6.3%)
Jobs by Worker Ethnicity	Not Hispanic or Latino (92.4%)	Not Hispanic or Latino (93.5%)
Jobs by Worker Educational Attainment	Bachelor's degree or advanced degree (32.4%)	Bachelor's degree or advanced degree (38.4%)
2nd largest	Some college or Associate degree (23.2%)	Some college or Associate degree (22.2%)
Jobs by Worker Sex	Male (52.0%)	Male (50.6%)

Table 2: Largest worker population by category in 2017

Smallest population (2017)	**Seattle**	**South Lake Union**
Jobs by worker age	Age 55 or older (19.6%)	Age 55 or older (18.8%)
Jobs by Earnings	$1,250 per month or less (13.7%)	$1,250 per month or less (9.2%)
Jobs by NAICS Industry Sector	Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction (0.0%)	Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction (0.0%)
2nd largest	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting (0.2%)	Utilities (0.0%)
3rd largest	Utilities (0.5%)	Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting (0.1%)
Jobs by Worker Race	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander Alone (0.5%)	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander Alone (0.4%)
2nd largest	American Indian or Alaska Native Alone (0.8%)	American Indian or Alaska Native Alone (0.6%)
3rd largest	Two or More Race Groups (3.8%)	Two or More Race Groups (3.6%)

Jobs by Worker Ethnicity	Hispanic or Latino (7.6%)	Hispanic or Latino (6.5%)
Jobs by Worker Educational Attainment	Less than high school (7.1%)	Less than high school (6.1%)
2nd largest	High school or equivalent, no college (15.4%)	High school or equivalent, no college (14.0%)
Jobs by Worker Sex	Female (48.0%)	Female (49.4%)

Table 3: Smallest worker population by category in 2017

Biggest growth 2010-2017	**Seattle**	**South Lake Union**
Jobs by worker age	Age 30 to 54	Age 30 to 54
Jobs by Earnings	More than $3,333 per month	More than $3,333 per month
Jobs by NAICS Industry Sector	Retail Trade	Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services
2nd highest growth	Accommodation and Food Services	Information
3rd highest growth	Information	Accommodation and Food Services
Jobs by Worker Race	White Alone	White Alone
2nd highest growth	Asian Alone	Asian Alone
3rd highest growth	Two or More Race Groups	Two or More Race Groups
Jobs by Worker Ethnicity	Not Hispanic or Latino	Not Hispanic or Latino
Jobs by Worker Educational Attainment	Educational attainment not available (workers aged 29 or younger)	Bachelor's degree or advanced degree
Jobs by Worker Sex	Male	Male

Table 4: Biggest growth in population (in absolute numbers) by category, 2010 to 2017

Biggest decrease 2010-2017	**Seattle**	**South Lake Union**
Jobs by worker age	Age 55 or older (growth)	Age 55 or older (growth)
Jobs by Earnings	$1,250 per month or less (21.7% decrease)	$1,251 to $3,333 per month (17.9% decrease)
Jobs by NAICS Industry Sector	Other Services (excluding Public Administration) (50.4% decrease)	Management of Companies and Enterprises (24.2% decrease)
2nd highest growth	Public Administration (decrease)	Public Administration (decrease)
3rd highest growth	Manufacturing (decrease)	Finance and Insurance (decrease)
Jobs by Worker Race	American Indian or Alaska Native Alone (decrease)	American Indian or Alaska Native Alone (growth)
2nd highest growth	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander Alone (growth)	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander Alone (growth)
3rd highest growth	Black or African American Alone (growth)	Black or African American Alone (growth)
Jobs by Worker Ethnicity	Hispanic or Latino (growth)	Hispanic or Latino (growth)

Jobs by Worker Educational Attainment	Less than high school (growth)	Less than high school (growth)
Jobs by Worker Sex	Female (growth)	Female (growth)

Table 5: Biggest decrease (or smallest growth) in population (in absolute numbers) by category, 2010 to 2017

Job category	**Area**	**White workers**	**Asian workers**	**Black or African American workers**	**Hispanic or Latino workers (any race)**
All jobs	Seattle	73.3%	15.2%	6.4%	7.6%
	SLU	74.0%	15.1%	6.3%	6.5%
Private primary jobs in services other than goods producing, trade, transportation and utilities	Seattle	74.3%	14.4%	6.2%	7.7%
	SLU	73.8%	16.8%	4.9%	7%
Private primary jobs earning more than $3,333 per month	Seattle (64.1% of workforce)	76%	15.8%	3.8%	6.1%
	SLU (75.9% of workforce)	75.9%	16.8%	3.3%	6.1%

Table 6: Workforce by race and ethnicity in Seattle and South Lake Union in 2017

Job category	**Area**	**Male workers**
All jobs	Seattle	52%
	SLU	50.6%
Private primary jobs in services other than goods producing, trade, transportation and utilities	Seattle	46.3%
	SLU	50.6%
Private primary jobs earning more than $3,333 per month	Seattle (64.1% of workforce)	57.6%
	SLU (75.9% of workforce)	56%

Table 7: Workforce by gender in Seattle and South Lake Union in 2017

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics (Beginning of Quarter Employment, 2nd Quarter of 2002-2017), https://onthemap.ces.census.gov/.

Analysis type: area profile. Selection area as: work. Year(s): 2017, 2010. Job type: all jobs. Labor market segment: all workers. Selection area: 72 (King, WA); 73 (King, WA); 66 (King, WA); 67 (King, WA) from Census tracts, and Seattle city, WA.

Appendix B: South Lake Union and Seattle as a Place of Residence

Seattle	2017	2010	Increase
Total Population	688,245	595,240	16%
Male	50.2%	49.6%	
25 to 34 years old	22.5%	20.5%	
White alone	68.6%	70.5%	
Black alone	7.1%	7.8%	
Asian alone	14.5%	13.7%	
Housing units	334,739	302,465	11%

Table 1: Demographic changes among Seattle residents, 2010 to 2017

					2010 to 2017 comparisons		
South Lake Union	**2017**		**2010**		Ratio	Absolute Difference	Increase
Total Population	19,567		12,861		1.5	6,706	52%
Male	11,360	58.1%	6,458	50.2%	1.8	4,902	76%
25 to 34 years old	8,534	43.6%	5,161	40.1%	1.3	2,076	32%
White alone	13,425	68.6%	9,816	76.3%	1.4	3,609	37%
Black alone	766	3.9%	528	4.1%	1.5	238	45%
Asian alone	3,562	18.2%	1,337	10.4%	2.7	2,225	166%
Other race	188	1.0%	371	2.9%	0.5	-183	-49%
2 or more races	1,644	8.4%	245	1.9%	6.7	1,399	571%
Housing units	13,519		9,527		1.4	3,992	42%

Table 2: Demographic changes among South Lake Union residents, 2010 to 2017

					2010 to 2017 comparisons		
Tract 73 (Cascade)	**2017**		**2010**		Ratio	Absolute Difference	Increase
Total Population	6,613		3,463		1.9	3,150	91%
Male	3,936	59.5%	1,951	56.3%	2.0	1,985	102%
25 to 34 years old	2,317	35.0%	1,951	56.3%	1.2	366	19%
White alone	4,215	63.7%	2,349	67.8%	1.8	1,866	79%
Black alone	611	9.2%	336	9.7%	1.8	275	82%
Asian alone	1,099	16.6%	258	7.5%	4.3	841	326%
Other race	190	2.9%	279	8.1%	0.7	(89)	-32%
2 or more races	428	6.5%	204	5.9%	2.1	224	110%
Housing units	3,463		1,204		2.9	2,259	188%

Table 3: Demographic changes among Cascade neighborhood residents, 2010 to 2017

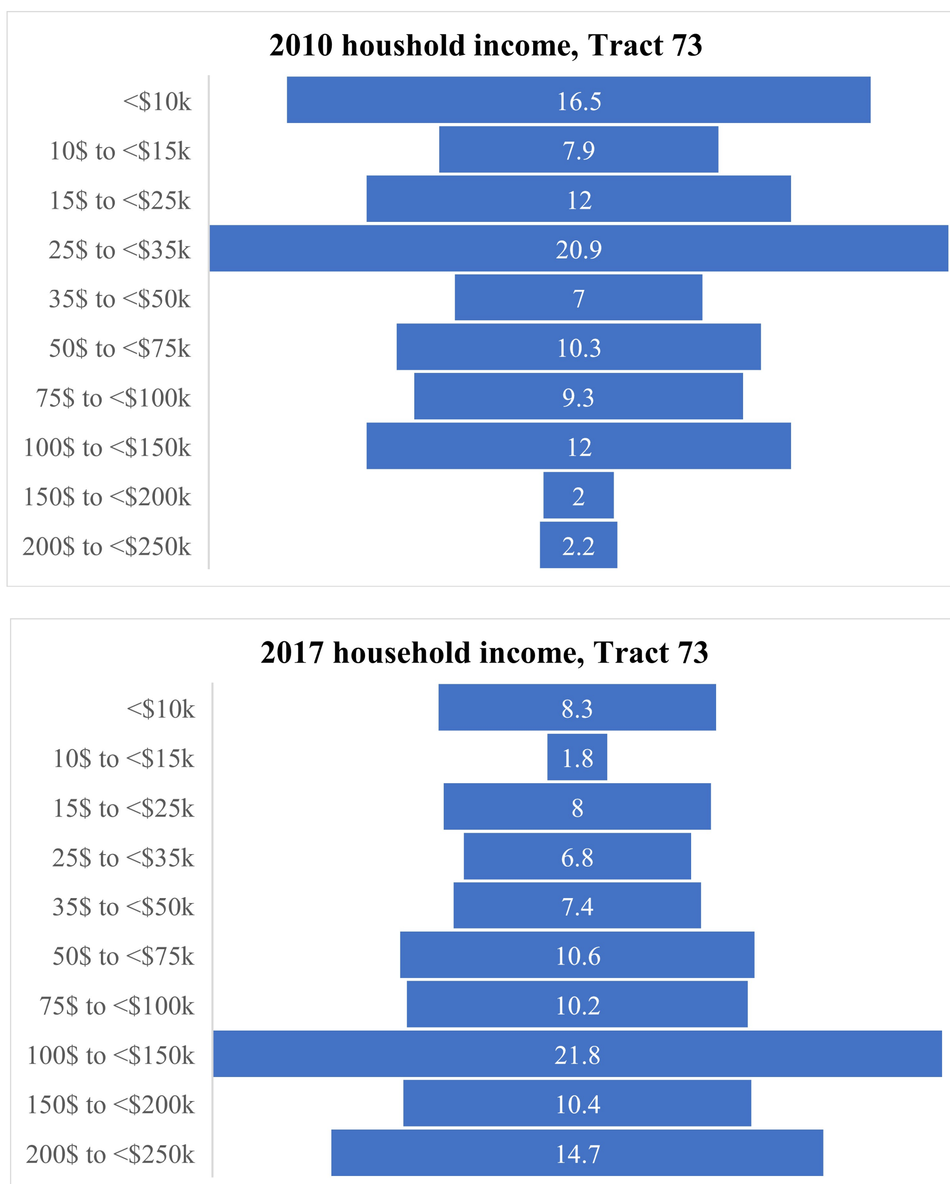

Figure 22: Household income in the Cascade neighborhood, 2010 and 2017

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Center for Enterprise Dissemination Services and Consumer Innovation (CEDSCI), American Community Survey 5-year estimates data profiles, 2010 and 2017, https://data.census.gov/cedsci.

Selection area: Census tracts 66, 67, 72, and 73, and city of Seattle.

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