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## **Unbecoming place: urban imaginaries in transition in Detroit**

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### **Abstract**

The population of Detroit has been steadily declining since the 1950's, but the imaginaries that shape the city are in constant transformation, changing with each successive government or regeneration initiative. Since 2010, downtown Detroit has been targeted by blight removal projects, real estate speculation, and redevelopment plans. These growth-oriented imaginaries shape the ways in which place is perceived and encountered – materially and conceptually – often responding to ruin and decay with erasures and evictions that play out through cultural geographies of precarity, simultaneously disappearing and reproducing conditions of inequality.

The changes in the city are reflected in my own experiences of Detroit in 2009 and 2015, using walking and driving methods to support grounded and emplaced encounters with the 'unbecoming' ruins in the city. The city of 2009 is being replaced – in imagination, and in reality – by a new way of thinking about Detroit, which asks us to imagine differently, to positively re-envision the future possibilities for growth and change.

This paper interrogates the different imaginaries of regeneration in the city, and considers, through urban ruins, places that are absent from the new way of thinking Detroit. Through Berlant's 'precarity' and Massey's 'emplacement', this discussion reveals a complex process of unbecoming that is typified in the unstable material, cultural, and historical geographies that structure the experience of place in Detroit.

### **Keywords**

Detroit, urban ruins, urban imaginaries, urban decay, unbecoming, place.

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## Introduction

This paper presents a reconsideration of established debates on urban regeneration by investigating the author's encounters of being in – walking and driving – Detroit in 2009 and 2015, examining sites of urban ruin and renewal alongside official redevelopment narratives. What is new here, building on existing critiques of planned gentrification<sup>1</sup> is the framing of urban – or 'modern' – ruins<sup>2</sup> as valuable and precarious *places*, where redevelopment emerges as domination through the politics of spatial organisation<sup>3</sup> to produce precarity<sup>4</sup>, as evidenced in the always (un)becoming trajectory of place<sup>5</sup>. This sense of unbecoming is intercepted through walking and driving (in and through) ruins – methods that, as this paper will discuss, are particularly attuned to the everyday experience of redevelopment in Detroit.

Detroit has long been a city in crisis, particularly in terms of uneven development and racial segregation and inequality<sup>6</sup>, caught between mass ruin, and a history of economic, primarily industrial, booms<sup>7</sup>. As a result, the cultural geography of Detroit has long been impacted by social and economic precarity that, in part, manifests in the city's mass ruination and population decline. However, recent moves to reimagine Detroit's future as a green-growth oriented city of economic prosperity and positive change have produced new modes of precarity for both the built environment, and vulnerable citizens.

There are thus a number of competing urban imaginaries of Detroit, three of which will be discussed in this paper: The urban ruin imaginary, Detroit Future City imaginary, and an associated greening imaginary. These new ways of thinking Detroit consist of

future-focused plans that increasingly emphasise economic growth and capital over human and social wellbeing. Furthermore, despite aggressive anti-blight strategies, abandonment and dereliction remain common, with further ruin, insecurity, and precarity the inevitable result of renewal, producing forces of unbecoming that threaten particular places (and their people, and histories), with disappearance from the urban fabric.

### **Driving and Walking Detroit**

The driving and walking method of this paper is grounded in the idea that ruinous geographies of unbecoming in Detroit are best understood through direct encounters with the everyday sense of urban decay in the landscape<sup>8</sup>. Given the scale of decline, and the “inefficient, fragmented” public transport in Detroit, driving is one of the most common ways that locals encounter ruins in the city<sup>9</sup>. Furthermore, for the researcher, driving in contemporary Detroit also intersects with the inherently automobile centered culture of the city, from the history of car manufacture, to the proliferation of urban highways<sup>10</sup>. Detroit, as “automobile territory”<sup>11</sup> makes an interesting case for methods that encompass driving, but also walking – the former a dominant mode of mobility in a city poorly served by public transport; the latter (as my time in the city revealed), simultaneously perceived as the transit mode of the urban poor, and the urban ideal sought by gentrifying incomers seeking walkable, green neighbourhoods<sup>12</sup>. While automobility itself structures a particularly modern urban experience<sup>13</sup>, for most inner-city Detroiters living in a long-declining city hit by deindustrialisation and urban shrinkage, driving through ruins is a central part of their everyday experience of place in

their local neighbourhoods, and the inner ring of urban decay that dominates the urban core.

Driving, as a method, provides an overall sense of the phenomena of urban ruination in Detroit – in 2009, this took the form of a meandering and self directed investigation, structured by ordinary flows of traffic, punctuated by visits to specific sites of iconic mass decay (for example, the Packard Plant and Michigan Central Station). In 2015, I adapted this method to include informal driving interviews with four Detroit locals (two existing contacts, two tour guides), taking me to sites in the inner city that were of significance to them.

Walking – walking in the city, but especially walking in (or through) ruins – affords a unique perspective on urban regeneration. As Tim Edensor (speaking of industrial ruins), explains:

“While such sites are frequently vilified as despondent realms, spaces of waste and blights on the landscape, they support a range of human activities and a plethora of nonhuman life forms, as well as offering [...] experiences at variance to the often over-coded, themed spaces of urban renewal. They are thus able to talk back to these apparently seamless processes of regeneration...”<sup>14</sup>

Where driving attunes the visitor to the flows of Detroit – the hubs along Woodward Avenue and Midtown, the University; the elevated roads that give sweeping views of ruin-fields and construction, uneven development in action – walking introduces a more

direct form of encounter, an *emplaced* encounter with unbecoming<sup>15</sup>. Critically intercepting Detroit's real and abstract ruin necessitates a method grounded in material decay – encounters with places that have become precarious as they are left to fall apart, and which simultaneously reflect the precarity of local residents who live “the reality of decline”, alongside the threat of demolition for redevelopment facilitated by renewal imaginaries<sup>16</sup>.

### **Detroit in context**

The key issues historically problematised in Detroit include decentralisation, disinvestment, and population shrinkage (encompassing capital flight and white flight)<sup>17</sup>. Like many post-industrial spaces in America, the result has typically been spatial segregation – low income, majority black neighbourhoods with high levels of unemployment and deprivation. This in turn leads to what Graham et al describe as “spatial stigma”, in which the dilapidated state of a declining area facilitates negative perceptions of place and, by association, residents<sup>18</sup>. As this paper will discuss, such stigmatisation of place precipitates the conditions of unbecoming – a place needs to be devalued to justify erasure, and spatial organisation of the city depends on areas deemed to be obsolete, or not fulfilling their function, in order to free-up sites for redevelopment<sup>19</sup>.

When I first visited Detroit in 2009, the decay of the built environment dominated the landscape: industrial ruins, disintegrating roadways, broken streetlights, rubbish-strewn wastelands, and abandoned buildings were the norm throughout much of the city. Mass decay was the most noticeable aspect of a particularly devastating period of decline that

originated with post-war deindustrialisation, social inequality, and the resulting abandonment and population loss<sup>20</sup>. Around this time, urban exploration of Detroit's mass ruin hit the mainstream, and by 2011, widely distributed aestheticisations of Detroit's ruin were criticised as "ruin porn" that romanticised urban ruins, and Detroit's ostensibly emptied out core.<sup>21</sup> Detroit was very much occupied, however – even if the life of the city was to be found amongst real, material ruin.

Amidst talk of a real estate boom, Quicken Loans moved to Downtown Detroit in 2010, and the image of a ruined city began to be challenged by calls to reimagine Detroit as a space open to possibility,<sup>22</sup> an opportunity-focused narrative of renewal and renaissance that gained momentum following the city's bankruptcy in 2013. After decades of decline, Detroit began to attract large-scale redevelopment, ruin tourism, and entrepreneurialism. This period of regeneration has been criticised for pushing residents out, disappearing neighbourhoods<sup>23</sup>, while the "reimagining" of Detroit has been condemned in particular for declaring habited places to be "abandoned" zones open for demolition and "greening". The greening strategy itself, in which derelict neighbourhoods are to be flattened and transformed into open "green" zones, has been labeled "settler colonialism", within the overall mechanism of planned gentrification<sup>24</sup>.

The Detroit Future City Strategic Framework, released by Detroit Future City (DFC), is a collaborative report that details plans for the city's renewal<sup>25</sup>. The "future city" imaginary put forward by this report reflects the development logics at work in Detroit between 2009 and 2015, and is grounded in economic growth, private innovation, mass demolitions and land clearances, and population shifts (bringing new residents and development focused change to existing neighbourhoods). In 2016, DFC (now the DFC

Implementation Office), published an updated planning document that provides a detailed account of Detroit's greening imaginary that calls for the transformation of "structure free" and vacant land<sup>26</sup> through sustainable intentional use, and reflects pre-2016 initiatives for "degrowth" and "rightsizing".

By the time of my visit in 2015, the future city imaginary had put into action large-scale demolitions that substantially reduced the omnipresent ruin, generating swathes of open ground ready for redevelopment. Previously derelict buildings and quiet streets were actively in use, particularly Downtown, and the iconic ruin of Michigan Central Station, though still disused, was under renovation.

**Figure 1.** Michigan Central Station, 2009.

**Figure 2.** Michigan Central Station, 2015.

As these changes suggest, entrepreneurialism and gentrification<sup>27</sup> are key to Detroit's reconstruction, reflecting what Alice Mah identifies as a growth-oriented rhetoric that reveals the deeper ideological roots at the heart of renewal strategies. In the past, "[e]ntrepreneurial cities explicitly focused on improving the image of their cities through place-marketing, city branding, boosterism, and fostering public-private partnerships."<sup>28</sup> The DFC reports are representative of boosterist branding that commercialises the formation of urban space, and markets a new lifestyle to incoming residents with glossy reports and images that project an ideal urban future. Detroit's regeneration model facilitates the circulation of global capital for gentrification<sup>29</sup> – and the "official urban imaginary of demolition for development"<sup>30</sup> intensifies conditions that produce precarity for existing communities, because it naturalises the politics of

foreclosure and forced acquisition. This attitude is evidenced the labeling of decay in terms of infestation or disease (for example, as a “cancer”<sup>31</sup>), as if ruins are an indifferent plague to be exterminated, instead of places that visibly mark decades of disinvestment that have produced precarious social, cultural, and economic conditions for vulnerable groups.

Despite these aggressive redevelopment strategies, however, in 2015 the roads remained cracked and overgrown. Street signs and lighting (though improved) were still scarce. As some areas made a surprising turnaround, many neighbourhoods – particularly those beyond the regeneration corridors on the Eastside, or on the Northwest edge of the city proper – continued to decline, even after rounds of clearance. After two years of mass-demolitions, there remain tens of thousands of ruined structures throughout the city – Detroit remains defined by an urban ruin imaginary, even as it is redefined by a future city and greening imaginary.

In Detroit, for the last half century, the experience of place – of paths, of haunts, of street corners, of inside and outside, of stability and insecurity – has been defined by flows of capital – vacillating between excess and absence. The “always in transition”, “always becoming” aspect of place has thus been largely grounded in a politics of accumulation and dereliction – mass production and mass decay.

Decay and development delineate the problems with precarity in Detroit, where the most vulnerable citizens live with ruin on one hand and destructive regeneration and incoming gentrification on the other. The precarity of residents is most easily readable in the urban landscape, a geography in transition, whether through decay or demolitions.



Such changes are best understood in terms of the process of unbecoming – whether slow ruin, or swift demolition.

The process of unbecoming (discussed in more detail below) points to the destructive nature of such redevelopment strategies, drawing in the material realities of urban decay and redevelopment with the abstract makings of place, situating urban ruination within regeneration projects that tend to disappear local and everyday practices and places. These changes are enacted through urban imaginaries that project a “clean slate” vision of Detroit, akin to fourth wave gentrification in which wide ranging powers for redevelopment are used to produce spaces for incoming residents, effectively pushing existing populations out by radically transforming ruined (and formerly run-down) neighbourhoods into highly desirable real estate<sup>32</sup>.

Much like the “evictions” of New York described by Rosalyn Deutsche, the current process of gentrification in Detroit is dominated by “wild terrain” claims of reinhabiting an empty city<sup>33</sup> through arts, culture, and property led regeneration strategies<sup>34</sup> and a renewal mantra that demonstrates that “[t]he dominant ideology about the city” is to “respond to urban questions by constructing images of well-managed and beautiful cities”<sup>35</sup>. This ideology accompanies a politics of erasure, reimagining the ideal city in terms of order, and marking ruins out as aberrations to be removed from the urban fabric.

## **Unbecoming Place**

Place is always somewhat precarious, because it is always in transition. Doreen Massey writes that “the identity of places, indeed the very identification of places as particular places, is always in that sense temporary, uncertain, and in process.”<sup>36</sup> Tim Cresswell echoes Massey in saying that “places are never complete, finished, or bounded but are always becoming – in process”<sup>37</sup>, providing a framework for place as always *becoming*. This is as true of ruin and regeneration as any other moment in the process, but these are perhaps best understood as particular moments in the production of place that are specifically involved in *unbecoming*.

Unbecoming describes the condition of constantly shifting place transformations, where capitalist disinvestment produces declining, ruinous, neighbourhoods<sup>38</sup> in which the resulting precarity of local populations is then exacerbated as capitalism re-admits the local ruin into circuits of global production, completing the downswing of unbecoming with demolition, redevelopment and gentrification. A ruin in transition from occupied site to decay, regeneration, or erasure is thus an unbecoming place.

As Doreen Massey insists, place is a site of local struggle, and reimagining is the product of power-geometries, where capitalism (rather than being placeless) engages in the making and remaking of place to suit its own ends<sup>39</sup>. Power-geometries are also about differential mobility – to say people live amongst the ruins, or that ruins are threatened places, acknowledges unbecoming as a visible, material outcome when the disappearance of industry and capital (for example) leaves people stranded in decaying cities and towns; but also where redevelopment moves people on, and excludes them from the production of place<sup>40</sup>.

Places thus do not “have single essential identities”– instead, place is in a state of flux, characterised by multiple histories, and experiences<sup>41</sup>. Unbecoming ruins make for vital ruminations upon the nature of place and politics because threatened places, as polyvalent sites of encounter, stand for extinguished rights over place-making. Imaginaries do powerful political work in this sense, eradicating social flows discursively to make way for material erasure, and evictions of people whose mobility has already been curtailed by “the downward spiral of economic stagnation in inner cities”, and social stratification<sup>42</sup>. Derelict sites attract future-focused imaginaries, which serve to destabilise established politics of place as a means to claim social and cultural territory for capital<sup>43</sup>.

What is particularly important to both unbecoming and the walking and driving methods is Massey’s expansion of place to broadly encompass meaningful, embodied *emplacement*: “the meaningful relation to place is intimately bound up with the embodied nature of perception [...] every groundedness, through that very fact of emplacement, is meaningful”<sup>44</sup> – groundedness of place exists in decaying and unbecoming ruins as much as any other site of emplacement.

In 2015, I arranged informal tours with residents through the streets of Detroit. We drove through block after block of collapsing buildings – and every few minutes one of my companions was pointing out the ruinous remnants of a building that had some meaningful role in their lives. Some pointed out schools that are now empty shells; houses and blocks of flats with collapsing porches and grass-obscured steps; or spoke of parents and grandparents who were married in churches that now stood open to the sky.

During my “tours” in 2015, three different residents brought me past one particular house – derelict, but one of the few still standing on a slowly disappearing street. The house is probably beyond salvage, but remains a key location in my memory of Detroit, just as it stands in the memory of those who brought me to this place, still a significant landmark in their minds.

**Figure 3.** Old House, 2015.

Those I drove with knew exactly when to slow for a specific dip or pothole in torn up bitumen. They knew most streets by name, and houses by sight, but found the vacant blocks disorientating and sometimes had to try a few times before hitting on the street they wanted. My guides drove by memory and feel, attuned to the landscape and scanning for visual clues – grasping Detroit in this way provides insight into the lived experiences of a city – specifically a city defined by wide boulevards and vast blocks, uneven development, and mass ruin.

The personal, embodied experience of decay – the smell of damp and mold, the chilly contrast between a boarded up house and a hot day, the ephemera of human occupation (past and present), the graffiti on the walls, long grass divided by human-and-animal tracks... hole-ridden fences, half-empty bottles, spray-paint cans, flapping pigeons, wild kittens, paint flakes, still-warm ashes, banging roofs, rotting wood and squelching floors, unrestricted thresholds and faded repossession and warning notices: these are all place forming, even as they are place disappearing.

*Precarity*

My time driving and walking the ruins of Detroit showed that these sites aren't just decaying eyesores, they are implicated in the organisation of the world under capital, in change and possibility, in modes of living, in felt pressures – in the making and mediation of place through bodily contact. Through the lens of unbecoming, and as spaces of precarity, ruins are affective sites of frayed fantasies, the Post-Fordist reality of life in (and amongst) the detritus of mobile capital<sup>45</sup>. Lauren Berlant notes that life in ruins is ongoing, particularly amongst black Americans and those most affected by poverty and inequality, disproportionately stranded in declining economies and shrinking cities<sup>46</sup>.

For Ben Anderson, precarity is read through Berlant's critique of constant reinvestment in capital (despite the failures and broken promises of industrial capitalism). Precarity, entwined with affect, is about "the real conditions of how life is lived"<sup>47</sup>, the collective investment in perpetual *becoming*, despite languishing in a space of unknowable future conditions of life. In Detroit, this failure is entwined with Berlant's cruel optimism – a hope that manifests as an affective sense of precarity, infused with the feelings of past, present, and future instability: "For what defines the affective quality of precarity is not only that the present is saturated with a sort of restlessness, but also that the future is made uncertain and becomes difficult or impossible to predict. [...] precarity makes present an unstable here and now vaguely menaced by an uncertain future."<sup>48</sup>

### **Contested imaginaries – ruin to renaissance**

Andreas Huyssen suggests that urban imaginaries<sup>49</sup> contrast "glittering metropolitan centres" against "haunting spectres of crime, corruption, and decay", but also that they

are “the way city dwellers imagine their own city as a place of everyday life”<sup>50</sup>. The everyday city of Detroit is still substantially defined by its ruins, threatened by forces of unbecoming that reflect what Schumpeter refers to as creative destruction<sup>51</sup>.

Perceptions of Detroit – in ruin and renewal – are reflected by the dominant imaginaries of urban ruin (destruction and decline), the future city (growth and profit) and greening (renewal and regeneration).

### *Urban ruin imaginary*

If Detroit is a city of modern ruins, it appears this way at least partially because of the “urban ruin imaginary”<sup>52</sup>, disseminated in popular culture (particularly through photograph and film), which frames Detroit as the quintessential space of the post-industrial American spectacle, beset by inexorable mass ruin. Perhaps the single biggest criticism of ruin porn is that images of urban ruination fail to show the city of Detroit as occupied – as Dora Apel asks, “where are the people?”. The mainstream urban ruin imaginary is much criticised, with urban exploration and ruin photography in particular presenting “a depopulated ‘ruin porn’ that privileges the aesthetic charge of ruination, thereby ignoring the contextual economic and social devastation and the role of finance and government in its creation”<sup>53</sup>.

At the same time, however, the ruin imaginary offers a counter narrative to constant growth and newness, potentially revealing the very destruction at the heart of capitalism, which critics suggest is absent from practices and attitudes that don’t immediately condemn urban ruins.<sup>54</sup> Ruins offer strategies for resistance, alternatives to demolition for development approaches that seek to reduce buildings to rubble,<sup>55</sup>; indeed, they have been used for research in cultural and historical geography<sup>56</sup>; as

temporary art installations<sup>57</sup>; or, in terms of political urban exploration,<sup>58</sup>... not for romantic or spectacular effect, but for their critical importance.

Urban ruins are exceptionally vulnerable to sudden disappearance, and as such, boldly reveal the currents of destructive urban change – in particular, they stand for the precarity of place itself. Camilo José Vergara, in *American Ruins*, expresses a connection to derelict and ruined buildings that is directly related to their precarious status:

“In urban America I found the challenge of my life. I became so attached to derelict buildings that sadness came not from seeing them overgrown or deteriorating [...] but from their sudden and violent destruction, which often left a big gap in the urban fabric”<sup>59</sup>

This sudden and violent destruction is part of the life of the ruin, a life that – through the urban ruin imaginary – attends to the inherently destructive flows of profit and capital and the uneven development that shapes contemporary cities. Landscapes in ruin are what remain to remind us that the logic of perpetual accumulation does not benefit populations and places equally.

In an interview conducted with an “urban exploration” tour guide, we spoke about places that she knew – not as functioning settled locations, but as ruins: “...places like the Fisher body or the Packard Plant where I’ve been there twenty plus times”, places, under threat of redevelopment which reveal the fragility of place itself, subject to the whims of development imaginaries: “I’m especially sad when they demolish a building, because they are destroying a piece of history... Park Avenue [a hotel recently

imploded to make way for the new Red Wings stadium] – they decided it was more important for them to have a loading dock, so that’s why that building no longer exists”.

I, too, know this building as a ruin – I visited the Park Avenue site in 2009, then standing side by side with its equally derelict companion, windowless and doorless; open to the elements. On the ground floor was a waist high pile of rubbish, divided in two by a goat path leading through the old blankets and mattresses, and a mess of used needles and takeaway containers – signs of a particularly grinding daily life in Detroit, but life nonetheless.

**Figure 4.** Hotel Eddystone, 2009.

**Figure 5.** Park Avenue Hotel, 2009.

Like the Vergara, or the Detroit locals who mourn absent ruins, the urban ruin imaginary values these buildings, even in decay, as *places* – perhaps not particularly functional or ideal places, but something more than worthless husks, or future profits. Regeneration focused imaginaries, meanwhile, are supported by an underlying belief in the economic value of urban space, in which place is a lifestyle to be marketed. The new vision for Detroit doesn’t see places in transition – it sees blighted blocks, vacant land, and unoccupied real estate, a “no-place-at-all” fallacy that supports developers’ interests in spatial ordering and positive city branding.<sup>60</sup>

### *Future city imaginary*

The blight removal strategy that responds to this ruin imaginary may ultimately transform the image of the city – but into what?



In Detroit, the future city approach is put forward by a coalition of government, business, and nonprofit “stakeholders”, who collectively reimagine Detroit through major population change and mass redevelopment. For example, The 7.2SQM report<sup>61</sup> shows that this partnership is focused on one outcome: making Detroit a new place, driving change through redevelopment. A section titled “people” contains demographics on “young and college educated” (who make up as little as 1% of the population in some areas, although markedly increased in the downtown area), but nothing on poverty or unemployment, which impact a large proportion of the city, due to long term decline. The ruin imaginary of Detroit appears in warehouse conversions and authentic creative hubs, but is otherwise invisible, despite the ongoing dilapidation of many areas. The report expresses hope that the new city will “attract” the right people to Detroit – those they term “sophisticates”, revealing a way of thinking about the city that overlooks poor, non-college-educated Detroiters who, already disadvantaged by years of decline, are further precaritized through the erasure of their presence – and their places – from the future cityscape.

The future imaginary can be understood in terms of an urban frontier, generating practices of “settler colonialism,” both a rationality for building huge land banks to sell off to private developers, and an imaginary of Detroit as a kind of wild frontier to be reclaimed by newcomers<sup>62</sup>. This attitude is clearly evident in the next wave of development, which deploys clearance policies to produce open space for sustainable greening, pre-empting a new wave of erasure and evictions as planned shrinkage selectively (and artificially) returns former neighbourhoods to nature. Though greening suggests the opposite of mass development, it is supported by the same stakeholders and

within the same rubric as the future city imaginary – an entrepreneurial city model that focuses on branding, profit, and growth, made possible by devaluing the places that are already established – through declining – and the people to whom they are significant.

### *Greening imaginary*

The notion that Detroit can be resurrected by becoming a “green city” is summarised by The Danish Architecture Centre, which describes Detroit as an “unexpected urban laboratory”, suggesting that the “failure” of Detroit can be reversed with “green growth” strategies, urban farming, and philanthropists who are able to “come to the rescue”, to help build sustainable infrastructure<sup>63</sup>. This imaginary seems particularly well-matched to the inner-city growth plans presented by the coalitions of developers and local authorities who wish to attract newcomers with the promise of cheap land and boundless opportunity, presenting an appealing and affordable long-term solution to the unsightly brownfields and empty lots that follow deindustrialisation, shrinkage, and mass demolition.

The report proposes that such sites be repurposed for: natural environments such as meadows, wetlands, and forests; storm water infrastructure that supports natural infiltration and storage; landscapes that produce harvestable products like food or energy; parks and recreation; and buffers between residential space and polluted or high activity areas.<sup>64</sup>

This green imaginary is intermingled with strategies of degrowth that are deployed to “rightsized” a city that is projected to continue losing residents (presenting Detroit with serious challenges in terms of funding and the provision of services). That is, unlike the

majority of renewal strategies, Detroit's plan is not "premised on the idea of economic growth rather than contraction"<sup>65</sup> alone, but includes plans to empty out and green-over ostensibly "unoccupied" areas with parks, waterscapes, urban farms, and other sustainable landscapes – removing basic residential infrastructure like roads and sanitation in the process. This imaginary reflects ecological and green thinking that tends to naturalise decay and emphasise the absence of human activity, rather than identify human origins of decline (a similar critique to those leveled at ruin explorers or photographers<sup>66</sup>), anticipating community-maintained gardens and parks, and vast unkempt urban prairie.

The areas that are the focus of this greening are under threat by an imaginary that perceives an empty landscape instead of *places* undergoing constant change and transformation. In this way, the greening imaginary facilitates unbecoming on a mass scale. "Detroit's public infrastructure is being dismembered and repurposed as green infrastructure"<sup>67</sup> in which abandoned buildings and derelict structures might be obliterated under meadows, or wind turbines. The strategy of demolition and urban greening "obscures previous geographies of settlement and prepares the land for a new round of accumulation and development"<sup>68</sup>, making the demolition of ruins emblematic of both physical erasure, and the invisibility of ongoing precarity amongst Detroit's most vulnerable residents.

In the greening imaginary, replacing derelict places with perceivedly natural landscapes does more than erase the long and brutal history of disinvestment, it also makes invisible the historical load of trauma, and justifies this with a discourse of cleansing a contaminated landscape. As Nate Millington suggests, this is especially significant in

Detroit, a majority black city, because “ideas about nature are often articulated through hidden discourses of race and purity”, signalling the “attempted erasure of African-American Detroiters from the landscape”<sup>69</sup> through geographically targeted remediations that overwhelmingly impact neighbourhoods with few (predominantly black) residents, and high concentrations of poverty.

To put it another way, the least desirable neighbourhoods in the city are the most likely to be occupied by precarious populations; those who live in poverty, are unemployed, have low educational attainment, are of minority backgrounds, or are otherwise marginalised. They are also the neighbourhoods targeted by the future city and greening imaginaries and, therefore, open to the most aggressive strategies for redevelopment and erasure.

### **Ruinous Places**

Uneven development and the colonisation of urban space through future-focused imaginaries not only produces more ruins – like those of Detroit – but also, when paired with greening and cleansing discourses, renders people (and their complex histories and geographies) fundamentally worthless. Although not present in PR campaigns or reports, the term “human blight” comes up often in discussions of Detroit. For example, during a meeting session for the Detroit Land Bank Authority, a local resident described “human blight” in her neighbourhood as “individuals hanging out”, people who are “unemployable” or “don’t want to go to school but want to do well”<sup>70</sup>. This marking-out of social ills as a form of blight demonstrates that attitude that some people – like some places – are obsolete detritus to be brought into productive use or else eliminated from

the landscape. This attitude is exemplified by the imagined future city to be sold to newcomers for the profit of those who constructed it, and a greening imaginary that frames progress as the erasure of a history of poverty, neglect, and racial segregation from the landscape, as if these too are forms of blight or contamination.

This is perhaps the most significant way in which imaginaries perpetuate precarity, through evictions that are initiated on the level of what can be imagined, presenting current (if run-down) localities not as existing places, but as *future* places under construction. Imaginaries that project a future for ideal (rather than remaining) citizens, are followed through with demolitions, rebranding, redevelopment, and a spatial ordering that excludes certain residents from the production, and occupation, of place.

There is evidence in Detroit that this process is well underway. The recently renovated Albert building (formerly The Griswold) provided subsidised housing for seniors until they were evicted in 2014 to make way for more upscale housing. Located in an emerging apartment hub around Capitol Park in Downtown Detroit, the luxury block is now seen by many as a positive sign of change – but it is also a site of erasure. Much of the hype around the development talks about the building and surrounding streets as if they have been empty for decades, perpetuating the myth of the “unoccupied” core (much like the city without people criticism of the ruin imaginary).

When I passed through the area in 2009, many of the buildings around Capitol Park in Downtown Detroit were abandoned – some, like the Book Tower (currently under renovation by Gilbert’s development company), were derelict, but others, like The Griswold, though extremely run down, were clearly occupied. Residents were sitting on

the low wall beneath the window out the front, coming and going between the apartment block and the nearby park, where people sat waiting for buses and socialising. By 2015, as I took an official tour through the area, it had become a construction zone, with most of the buildings slated for redevelopment, framed by banners telling of exciting new things “coming soon” – the tour guide said nothing about the former residents, instead emphasising the amazing transition from empty to occupied.

In a newspaper interview from 2013, Detroit resident Recardo Berrien sees that the future plan for the city has little to do with the current residents, who are already being displaced by its vision: "We don't see 'us' in none of this. No elderly and poor. We are nowhere in the plans of anyone down here."<sup>71</sup> The residents of The Griswold were pushed aside because they were in the way of profit, but also, fundamentally, because the official imaginary that anticipates only well-educated, young, wealthy, usually white residents disappears the poor, the old, those lacking in education, and, in Detroit, usually black residents. This imaginary, in practice, not only evicts those who cannot afford to remain, displacing them from their homes, but also renders their histories, experiences, and collective and private memories of the places they leave behind invisible in the conversion from worthless real estate to a valuable market. Even the previous name designations have been purged from the site, so that although the building itself was not ruined or demolished, the place that once was has been erased through the process of unbecoming.

In 2009, I walked from one end of the Packard Plant to the other – a relic of the moving production line, it stretches for more than a kilometer. For more than an hour my

companion and I walked the uneven concrete, listening to the crack and creak of the structure giving way, gazing at collapsed floors or unconsciously cataloguing smells: crushed greenery, stagnant water, burnt rubber. After decades of decay, we were walking the moment of unbecoming for the Packard plant – an obsolete site of no value to the economy, but also a place where people lived out their working lives, a place that affords embodied, grounded, emplacement. When I returned in 2015, little had changed – but there were hints of pending intervention: a security guard who gave us permission to walk around – but not inside – the structure; and a sign promising “revitalization” of the site<sup>72</sup>.

Despite the urban ruin and redevelopment imaginaries of an unoccupied wasteland, the Packard Plant doesn't sit in an empty void without human connection. Walking back along Concord Avenue in 2009, I counted a dozen or so houses amongst otherwise vacant blocks within sight of the plant. Most of these houses were occupied, with cars parked nearby, maintained lawns, washing on the line – by 2015 many were unoccupied and boarded up, semi-derelict, and embedded in unbecoming. Seeing this transition from active habitation to abandonment up-close, within the context of a larger field of decaying remnants, reinforced my sense that these are not my ruins to talk about as dead relics or empty spaces (the habit of developers and government in particular, but also urban explorers). They are in fact places on the brink of disappearance, places that define street corners and sit alongside people's houses, places encountered on the walk or drive between work and home – places that ground the everyday experience of those who live in the areas of Detroit most affected by abandonment and shrinkage. The revitalisation of the plant, is purported to be “for the betterment of Detroit”, and people are invited to “get involved” on their website<sup>73</sup> – and yet, the key message from the

developers follows the same rhetoric as the rest of the city: bringing in newcomers through aggressive erasure, gentrification, and boosterist strategies, rather than attending to the needs of local populations, or their sense of place.

**Figure 6.** Revitalising the Packard Plant, 2015.

The greening strategy is no less destructive. Sara Safransky points out that depicting Detroit as a natural landscape or wilderness perpetuates the myth that Detroit is an open no-man's land, a vision that simultaneously extinguishes black claims to the landscape, and attempts to reverse the racially charged image of Detroit as a blighted ghetto by ignoring the continuing presence of those who, until recently, still lived downtown, not by choice, but by necessity. The official imaginary rarely acknowledges the fact that it is overwhelmingly black and poor people who are being displaced through the production of a newly segregated urban core<sup>74</sup>.

Eviction is more than the displacement of the extremely vulnerable, it is also an erasure of real histories, of people's pasts; it impedes people's ability to shape their own future, it turns their places into sites threatened by unbecoming. Through the production of dominant imaginaries, the Detroit revitalisation push overlooks the complex and situated emplacement of the citizens of Detroit – especially in decaying and abandoned landscapes – and legitimises evictions, erasures, and clearances that move people on, and exclude them from the production of place.

**Conclusion**



This paper puts forward the argument that modern, urban ruins are critical sites of human presence, and markers of lived precarity – as Berlant suggests, “precarity provides a dominant *structure* and *experience* across the present moment” – precarity is not just economic or material deprivation, it is structural, an affective atmosphere that pervades the sensed environment alongside the contingencies of everyday life<sup>75</sup>.

Unbecoming ruins mirror the bodily affects of instability and uncertainty, of lives made and unmade by the vacillations of capital – with redevelopment in Detroit since 2009, the erasure of ruins under the banner of renewal has generated further precarity for those people (and places) that are not accounted for in the imaginary of urban regeneration.

While the future city and greening imaginaries disappear ruinous places, and by association, the people with whom they are entwined, the imaginary that values ruins themselves potentially points to some alternatives beyond inevitable growth or useless decay – these material remnants are places entangled in a complex process of transition, not just one industrial ruin, or one abandoned house, but an intricate network of habitation and abandonment, in thrall to the contractions and expansions of the economy.

Walking and driving the ruins of Detroit during a peak period for mass decay in the city reveals that the fallacy of the unoccupied city cannot be countered by a pejorative attitude to decay, by reactive erasure, or by the denial that people live amongst ruins. If we overlook the ruins of Detroit we are overlooking the fractured, fragmented social relations that constantly threaten the built environment, the precarious places that

structure the city; and the precarious lives lived amongst ruins, erasure, and reconstruction.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> There is an extensive body of work on regeneration and urban renewal in geography and urban studies – for this paper, key sources include: Rosalyn Deutsche’s work on evictions in New York: (R. Deutsche, *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics* (London, England: The MIT Press, 1996); Neil Smith’s expansive discussions on gentrification and global development (for example: N. Smith, *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996); N. Smith, 'New Globalism, New Urbanism: Gentrification as Global Urban Strategy', *Antipode* 34 2002); and Loretta Lee’s work (with others) on gentrification, regeneration, and exclusion (L. Lees and C. Melhuish, 'Arts-Led Regeneration in the UK: The Rhetoric and the Evidence on Urban Social Inclusion', *European Urban and Regional Studies* 22, 2015, pp. 242-60; L. Lees, T. Slater and E. Wyly, *Gentrification* (New York and Oxon: Routledge, 2008)). Specifically regarding planned gentrification, see Smith’s pioneering work on development, capital, and space (N. Smith, *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital, and the Production of Space* (Oxford UK and Cambridge MA: Basil Blackwell, 1984) and Alice Mah’s work on urban renewal in the UK (A. Mah, 'Demolition for Development: A Critical Analysis of Official Urban Imaginaries in Past and Present UK Cities', *Journal of Historical Sociology* 25, 2012) – Mah’s discussion of “demolition for development” imaginaries is of particular importance here.

<sup>2</sup> The use of “ruins” or “urban ruins” here follows the work of Marshall Berman, and also the photographer Camilo José Vergara (M. Berman, 'Among the Ruins', *New Internationalist*, 1987; C.J. Vergara, *American Ruins* (New York: Monacelli Press, 1999). The term is situated within the wider field of modern ruin studies, for an overview see: C. Desilvey and T. Edensor, 'Reckoning with Ruins', *Progress in Human Geography* 1, 2012.

<sup>3</sup> Deutsche, *Evictions*, pp. 50-51

<sup>4</sup> The notion of precarity expanded in this paper is derived partially from Berlant’s *Cruel Optimism*, but mostly from Anderson’s reading of Berlant’s critique of the inherent instability of capitalism (see L. Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011) and B. Anderson, *Encountering Affect: Capacities, Apparatuses, Conditions* (Surrey and Burlington: Ashgate, 2014))

<sup>5</sup> The concept of “unbecoming”, is adapted from the work of Tim Cresswell, and Doreen Massey, where place as always in process, or always becoming, which is discussed in more detail later in this paper. (T. Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction* (Malden MA and Oxford UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2004); T. Cresswell, *In Place/out of Place* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); D. Massey, 'Places and Their Pasts', *History Workshop Journal*, 39, 1995)

<sup>6</sup> For an excellent overview see: J.T. Darden, R.C. Hill, J. Thomas and R. Thomas, *Detroit: Race and Uneven Development* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987); T. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996).

- <sup>7</sup> The history of boom, bust and industry in Detroit is detailed in: G. Galster, *Driving Detroit: The Quest for Respect in the Motor City* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012)
- <sup>8</sup> T. Edensor, 'Mundane Hauntings: Commuting through the Phantasmagoric Working-Class Spaces of Manchester, England', *Cultural Geographies*, 15, 2008
- <sup>9</sup> Galster, *Driving Detroit*, p. 266
- <sup>10</sup> Galster, *Driving Detroit*, p. 43
- <sup>11</sup> P. Merriman, *Driving Spaces: A Cultural-Historical Geography of England's M1 Motorway* (Malden MA and Oxford UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), p. 17
- <sup>12</sup> S. Meerow and J.P. Newell, 'Spatial Planning for Multifunctional Green Infrastructure: Growing Resilience in Detroit', *Landscape and Urban Planning*, 159, 2016, pp. 62-75
- <sup>13</sup> N. Thrift, 'Driving in the City', *Theory, Culture, and Society*, 2, 2004, pp. 41-59
- <sup>14</sup> T. Edensor, Walking Through Ruins in T. Ingold and J.L. Vegunst, *Ways of Walking: Ethnography and Practice on Foot*, Aldershot England and Burlington USA: Ashgate, 2008), p. 123
- <sup>15</sup> See Doreen Massey's work on emplacement in reference to global flows of capital, power-geometries, and the production of place: D. Massey, 'Power-Geometry and a Progressive Sense of Place' in J. Bird, B. Curtis, T. Putnam, G. Robertson and L. Tickner, *Mapping the Futures: Local Cultures, Global Change*, London and New York: Routledge, 1993); D. Massey, 'Geographies of Responsibility', *Geografiska Annaler* 8, 2004, pp. 5-18
- <sup>16</sup> L.A. Reese, J. Eckert, G. Sands and I. Vojnovic, "'It's Safe to Come, We've Got Lattes": Development Disparities in Detroit', *Cities*, 60, 2016, pp. 367-77
- <sup>17</sup> Darden et al, *Race and Uneven Development*; J.T. Darden and R. Thomas, *Detroit: Race Riots, Racial Conflicts, and Efforts to Bridge the Racial Divide* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2013)
- <sup>18</sup> Spatial stigma is particularly identified with poor health and wellbeing outcomes for Detroiters in L.F.P. Graham, Mark B; Lopez, William D; Stern, Alexandra M; Peterson, Jerry; Keen, Danya E, 'Spatial Stigma and Health in Postindustrial Detroit', *International Quarterly of Community Health Education*, 36, 2016.
- <sup>19</sup> For a detailed discussion of this process see Deutsche, *Evictions*, pp. 51-52.
- <sup>20</sup> T. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis* p. 8.
- <sup>21</sup> J.P. Leary, Detroitism, Guernica Magazine, [https://www.guernicamag.com/features/leary\\_1\\_15\\_11/](https://www.guernicamag.com/features/leary_1_15_11/), January 15, 2011, accessed 1/3/2016.
- <sup>22</sup> J. Gallagher, *Reimagining Detroit: Opportunities for Redefining an American City* (Detroit, Michigan, Wayne State University Press, 2010).
- <sup>23</sup> For a summary, see J.F. McDonald, 'What Happened to and in Detroit', *Urban Studies*, 51(16), 2014, pp. 1-21; for a direct critique of Detroit's changing landscape see L.A. Reese et al *It's Safe to Come*; on entrepreneurialism, see D. Harvey, 'From Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism: The Transformation in Urban Governance in Late Capitalism', *Geografiska Annale*, 71, 1989. Draus in particular identifies renewal strategies in Detroit as worsening, rather than ameliorating, the decline of neighbourhoods and the marginalization of local populations: "We Don't Have No Neighbourhood": Advanced Marginality and Urban Agriculture in Detroit', *Urban Studies*, 51, 2014, pp. 2523-2538.
- <sup>24</sup> In particular, see L.O. Kirkpatrick, 'Urban Triage, City Systems, and the Remnants of Community: Some "Sticky" Complications in the Greening of Detroit', *Journal of*

- Urban History*, 41, 2015 and S. Safransky, 'Greening the Urban Frontier: Race, Property, and Resettlement in Detroit', *Geoforum*, 56, 2014.
- <sup>25</sup> Detroit Future City, The Detroit Strategic Framework, <http://detroitfuturecity.com/framework/>, 2013, accessed 1/5/2017.
- <sup>26</sup> Detroit Future City, Achieving an Integrated Open Space Network in Detroit, <http://detroitfuturecity.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Open-Space-Report-2016.pdf> (2016), accessed 1/5/2017
- <sup>27</sup> N. Smith, 'New Globalism, New Urbanism: Gentrification as Global Urban Strategy', *Antipode* 34 (2002); D. Harvey, 'From Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism: The Transformation in Urban Governance in Late Capitalism', *Geografiska Annale* 71, 1989.
- <sup>28</sup> A. Mah, *Demolition for Development*, p. 154-55.
- <sup>29</sup> N. Smith, *New Globalism*.
- <sup>30</sup> A. Mah, *Demolition for Development*, p. 154.
- <sup>31</sup> Detroit Blight Removal Task Force, "Detroit Blight Removal Task Force Plan", <http://report.timetoendblight.org/index.html> (2014), accessed 1/3/2016
- <sup>32</sup> On fourth wave regeneration in New Orleans see: L. Lees, T. Slater and E. Wyly, *Gentrification*, p. 185. James Rhodes also links New Orleans and Detroit through discourses of disaster which facilitate regeneration: J. Rhodes, Extending the "Urban Disaster" Paradigm: From New Orleans to Detroit (and Beyond?) in W.M. Taylor, M.P. Levine, O. Rooksby and J.-K. Sobott, *The "Katrina Effect": On The Nature of Catastrophe*, London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015)
- <sup>33</sup> Deutsche, *Evictions*, p. 69
- <sup>34</sup> S. Zukin, *Loft Living: Culture and Capital in Urban Change* (New Brunswick New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1989), p. 193; see also, Lees and Melhuish, *Arts-Led Regeneration*; Smith, *New Urban Frontier*; Mah *Demolition for Development*
- <sup>35</sup> Deutsche, *Evictions*, p. 69
- <sup>36</sup> D. Massey, 'Places and Their Pasts', *History Workshop Journal* (1995). p. 190.
- <sup>37</sup> T. Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction* (Malden MA and Oxford UK, Blackwell Publishing, 2004), p. 68.
- <sup>38</sup> M. Dewar, E. Seymour and O. Druță, 'Disinvesting in the City: The Role of Tax Foreclosure in Detroit', *Urban Affairs Review*, 51, 2015, pp. 587-615
- <sup>39</sup> Deutsche, for example, criticises planners' "spatial organization" of New York as overlooking politics of place, or seeing the political dimensions of place as problems to be resolved by restructuring place and dictating what can happen there, imposing "coherence, rationality, and order on space" Deutsche, *Evictions*, p. 78. In this context, Massey's power-geometry is about who has control over reimagining – and thus, producing – space and place.
- <sup>40</sup> Massey, *Power-geometry*, p. 62
- <sup>41</sup> Massey, *Power-geometry*, p. 65
- <sup>42</sup> On erasure and social aspects see Deutsche, *Evictions*, p. 49-109; On stagnations, see Harvey, *From Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism*, p. 9; On stratification, see Lees, Slater, Wyly, *Gentrification*, p. 43
- <sup>43</sup> For a discussion on this process see Massey, *Power-geometry*; Deutsche, *Evictions*, pp. 3-109; Reese et al, *It's Safe to Come*; Lees and Melhuish, *Arts-led regeneration*.
- <sup>44</sup> Massey, *Geographies of Responsibility*, p. 8

- <sup>45</sup> Massey and Berlant in particular identify people's lived realities and experiences, under the transformations wrought by mobile and indifferent capital, as encompassing those places (and people) that have been left behind by the logic of perpetual growth.
- <sup>46</sup> Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, p. 255.
- <sup>47</sup> Anderson, *Encountering Affect*, p. 107
- <sup>48</sup> Anderson, *Encountering Affect*, p. 129
- <sup>49</sup> A. Mah, *Demolition for Development*, p. 154.
- <sup>50</sup> A. Huyssen, *Other Cities, Other Worlds: Urban Imaginaries in a Globalizing Age* (Durham, N.C and London: Duke University Press, 2008), p. 5 and p. 3
- <sup>51</sup> See A. Mah, *Demolition for Development*, p. 155; and S. Cairns and J.M. Jacobs, *Buildings Must Die: A Perverse View of Architecture* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2014), p. 59
- <sup>52</sup> D. Apel, *Beautiful Terrible Ruins: Detroit and the Anxiety of Decline* (New Brunswick, New Jersey, London: Rutgers University Press, 2015). In relation to Detroit see p. 152.
- <sup>53</sup> C. Desilvey and T. Edensor, 'Reckoning with Ruins', *Progress in Human Geography* 1, 2012, p. 6.
- <sup>54</sup> B. Olsen and Þ. Pétursdóttir, 'Imaging Modern Decay: The Aesthetics of Ruin Photography', *Journal of Contemporary Archaeology*, 1, 2014.
- <sup>55</sup> G. Steinmetz, 'Harrowed Landscapes: White Ruingazers in Namibia and Detroit and the Cultivation of Memory', *Visual Studies* 23, 2008, p. 213.
- <sup>56</sup> C. Desilvey, *Palliative Curation: Art and Entropy on Orford Ness* in B. Olsen and Þ. Pétursdóttir, *Ruin Memories*, (London and New York: Routledge 2014); C. Lavery and L. Hassall, 'A Future for Hashima', *Performance Research*, 20, 2015.
- <sup>57</sup> T. Dekeyser and B.L. Garrett, 'Last Breath: Unofficial Pre-Demolition Celebrations', *Cultural Geographies*, 1, 2015.
- <sup>58</sup> L. Bennett, 'Bunkerology – A Case Study in the Theory and Practice of Urban Exploration', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 29, 2011.
- <sup>59</sup> C.J. Vergara, 'Downtown Detroit: An American Acropolis', *Planning* 61, 1995, p. 23
- <sup>60</sup> E.S. Casey, *Getting Back into Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), p. 15. Any claim to such lack of place is something that Casey states to be impossible, for we are always in place, and even "no place" is a named place.
- <sup>61</sup> Hudson-Webber Foundation, Detroit Economic Growth Corporation, the Downtown Detroit Partnership, Midtown Detroit Inc, Invest Detroit and Data Driven Detroit, 7.2 Sq Mi Report, <http://detroitsevenpointtwo.com/>, accessed 1/5/2017
- <sup>62</sup> S. Safransky, *Greening the Urban Frontier*
- <sup>63</sup> DAC & Cities, *Detroit: From Motorcity to an Unexpected Urban Laboratory*, Danish Architecture Centre, <http://www.dac.dk/en/dac-cities/sustainable-cities/all-cases/economy/detroit-from-motorcity-to-an-unexpected-urban-laboratory/> accessed 1/3/2016.
- <sup>64</sup> Detroit Future City, *Integrated Open Space*, p.5
- <sup>65</sup> A. Mah, *Demolition for Development*, p. 171
- <sup>66</sup> S. Safransky, *Greening the Urban Frontier*; N. Millington, 'Post-Industrial Imaginaries: Nature, Representation and Ruin in Detroit, Michigan', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 37(1), 2013. Both suggest that just as the fetishisation of nature in the ruin overlooks people, so do urban greening strategies.
- <sup>67</sup> S. Safransky *Greening the Urban Frontier*, p. 239

<sup>68</sup> S. Safransky, *Greening the Urban Frontier*, p. 246

<sup>69</sup> Millington, *Post-Industrial Imaginaries* p. 290-291

<sup>70</sup> See Detroit Land Bank Authority, [www.buildingdetroit.org](http://www.buildingdetroit.org), accessed 1/3/2016

<sup>71</sup> B. McGraw, *Meet the Downtown Residents Who Say They Are Being Pushed Aside for the 'New Detroit'* ed. Secondary B. McGraw [http://www.deadlinedetroit.com/articles/4721/meet\\_the\\_downtown\\_residents\\_who\\_say\\_they\\_are\\_being\\_pushed\\_aside\\_for\\_the\\_new\\_detroit](http://www.deadlinedetroit.com/articles/4721/meet_the_downtown_residents_who_say_they_are_being_pushed_aside_for_the_new_detroit) accessed 1/3/2016

<sup>72</sup> This project is still underway, and follows the typical model of arts-and-culture led regeneration. For updates see <http://packardplantproject.com>, accessed 1/5/2017

<sup>73</sup> <http://packardplantproject.com/getinvolved/index.html>, accessed 1/5/2017

<sup>74</sup> P. Jargowsky, *Architecture of Segregation: Civil Unrest, the Concentration of Poverty, and Public Policy*, <https://tcf.org/content/report/architecture-of-segregation/>, accessed 1/3/2016

<sup>75</sup> Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, pp. 192-193