6

UNEVEN RACIAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE ABOLITION ECOLOGY OF THE CITY

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Introduction

In the opening of the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx (1848, 50) memorably wrote:

> The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. *Freeman and slave* [emphasis added], patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes.

Two years later, in 1850, the United States' Congress passed into law "The Fugitive Slave Law" (or Fugitive Slave Act). According to Foner (2015), the act was part of the Compromise of 1850 between white supremacist Southern interests intent on maintaining slavery and Northern interests who while often engaging in abolitionist rhetoric, were too passive to help abolitionist aspirations materialize into law. The act required all citizens of the US, regardless of their position on slavery, to aid in the capture and return of any and all escaped slaves. Because residents of free states were unwittingly implicated in slavery through this act, it led to a watershed moment in US abolitionist history, and simultaneously shaped the trajectory of US urbanization. Now held accountable to Federal Law for helping runaway slaves, Northerners started to speak up and increasingly agitate for emancipatory change. As Marx (1976 [1867]) discussed uneven development in *Capital Volume 1*, the contradictions contained within capitalism present themselves through the concurrent development of affluence for those with enough social power to harness capitalist processes and at the same time the proliferation of poverty for people who do not (Smith 2008). There continues to be inadequate discussion of these

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long-existing forms of racial capitalism relative to other dimensions of political economy, especially as related to how colonial and racial oppression have long shaped explicitly *uneven racial development* (Robinson 1983).

According to Blackburn (2011), the campaign to radicalize the resistance to Southern secession—to turn the US Civil War into a social revolution, into the Second American Revolution—had a major impact on both Marx's political imagination and his writing. During the 1860s Marx increased his use of "emancipation." He had used the word in his earlier writing, but had discontinued doing so during the late 1840s by the time he wrote the *Manifesto*. Then, according to Blackburn, in the 1860s returning to this language, Marx changed how he wrote about liberation via "emancipation" in line with US abolitionist struggles, as he wrote about the Civil War in his journalism, and because he was inspired by the political possibilities of the Second American Revolution.

For many early abolitionists, the word "emancipation" invoked the idea of the "Emancipator," which at that time many imagined to be President Lincoln, or perhaps God given the oppressive conditions slaves were living within, as an external agent carrying out the process of liberation. In contrast to this, Marx believed the new working class would be the agent of its own liberation. While he was inspired by abolitionist politics and their goals, he infused his writing about it with a more proletarian political vision of the changes that were possible, that is, he argued that oppressed individuals and their comrades should see themselves as the engine of change as opposed to waiting for that change to be done for them. This resonates still within many struggles against racial capitalism, even if heterodox political framings of Marxism and abolitionist politics require greater dialogue, synthesis, and solidarity under the banner of abolishing racial capitalism.

I want to set up this chapter by illustrating the importance for abolitionist politics and attention to uneven racial development through the context of Atlanta. Atlanta is the only major North American city to have been destroyed through an act of war, and the "Battle of Atlanta" which occurred on July 22, 1864 left only 400 of the city's buildings standing. Union forces, under the command of William T. Sherman, wanting to crush what had become the most important transportation and supply hub of the Confederacy, defeated Confederate forces defending the city. After ordering the evacuation of the city, Sherman ordered that most of the buildings in the city be burned to the ground. This act of metabolic transformation is different from other examples we have as urban political ecology (UPE) continues to evolve.

Prior to its razing, Atlanta owed its origins to two important episodes: capitalist transportation infrastructure and colonial displacement. In the 1830s the US forcibly removed Indigenous people, specifically the Cherokee and Creeks Nations, from northwest Georgia and extended railroad lines into the state's interior. These twin moves of capital investment and what would be tantamount to genocide through the harrowing "Trail of Tears" that relocated surviving Native Americans to Oklahoma led to Atlanta's founding. Robinson (1983, 77) means that colonial and racial capitalist ideology is deeply embedded within Atlanta's history:

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> The violent event of colonial aggression and its corollary of "Indian" slavery had already been transmuted in Franklin's neo-nativistic "American" mind into a relationship of supplication secured by an economic rationale; indeed, the dependence of "new Comers" on natives already reversed.

Robinson clarifies the logics of racial capitalism by then saying:

> The curtain of supremacist ideology had by now begun its descent on American thought, obscuring from the historically unconscious generations of descendants of colonialists and later immigrants the oppressive violence and exploitation interwoven in the structure of the republic.

This ideology manifests in the urban built environment when the milepost that marked the south-eastern end point, or terminus, of the Western and Atlantic Railroad led to the founding of the city, initially named "Terminus." In 1845 however Terminus adopted the new name, "Atlanta," which was a feminine version of the word "Atlantic." The fall of Atlanta in 1864 was a critical moment in the Civil War, giving the North a confident edge over the South, which led to the eventual surrender of the Confederacy. The capture of the "Gate City of the South" was especially important for the re-election of President Abraham Lincoln as he was in a contentious election campaign against the Democratic opponent George B. McClellan. Thus the razing of Atlanta is tied directly to Lincoln's re-election and thus the legal abolition of slavery in the US.

Atlanta emerged from the ashes—hence the city's official symbol, the phoenix—and was gradually rebuilt, as its population increased rapidly after the war. Atlanta received migrants from surrounding counties and states: from 1860 to 1870 it doubled in population, from 14,427 to 33,336. In a pattern seen across the US South after the Civil War, many freed slaves moved from plantations to towns or cities for work, including Atlanta which went from 20.5% African-American in 1860 to 45.7% African-American in 1870. These racialized population shifts created new forms of urbanization. Through the creation of many new jobs, employment boomed, and Atlanta soon became the industrial and commercial centre of the US South again. Many of these new African-American residents clustered in segregated neighbourhoods adjacent to emerging black institutions of higher education. Elsewhere, black Atlantans were largely confined to low-lying, flood-prone areas and other less desirable sections of the city. In an 1879 article in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine,* Ingersoll discusses one of the three main areas in the City where African-Americans had begun to cluster by saying:

> A feature of the city to which no well-ordered resident will be likely to direct a stranger's attention is "Shermantown" – a random collection of huts forming a dense negro settlement in the heart of an otherwise attractive portion of the place.

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By the turn of the century, "Jim Crow" segregation ordinances and regulations were firmly in place to keep racial groups apart and define their respective rights, privileges, and social status. The phoenix at the centre of the City's official emblem is just as much symbolic of the metabolic processes through which it has been produced, as it is anything else. In *Imagineering Atlanta: The Politics of Place in the City of Dreams*, Rutheiser (1996, 19) suggests:

> In a rhetorical turn that gives a rather literal twist to Schumpeter's notion of "creative destruction," the sacking of Atlanta is now ritually invoked as point of reference and justification for virtually every municipally sanctioned spasm of demolition and displacement. Having been destroyed once, Atlantans have learned to embrace such tragedy as a necessary, and even desirable, virtue.

Atlantans, like the Greeks and Egyptians who invoked the mighty Phoenix before them, have not paid sufficient attention to the uneven and oppressive socionatural relations that actually led to the renewal, the rising from the ashes, in the same way scholars working with UPE have yet to pay sufficient attention to uneven racial development of cities or the political possibilities that can spring from these processes in response to them.

Uneven racial development and the metabolization of urbanizing nature

The early foundations of UPE were decidedly built upon Marxist urban political economy (Keil 2003, 2005; Swyngedouw and Heynen 2003; Heynen 2014). As opposed to this being a limiting factor as some have suggested, I think the dialectical logic central to Marxist approaches allows for the deliberate expansion of UPE to more systematically internalize not only more traditional attention to the contradictions of capitalism, but also the contradictions of white supremacy as articulated within the "Black Geographies" tradition (McKittrick and Woods 2007). This is a point Harvey (1998, 407) sets up when he says:

> Who exactly gets inserted where is a detailed historical-geographical question that defies any simple theoretical answer. But Marx is plainly aware that bodies are differentiated and marked by different physical productive capacities and qualities according to history, geography, culture, and tradition. He [Marx] is also aware that signs of race, ethnicity, age, and gender are used as external measures of what certain kind of labourer is capable of or permitted to do.

Swyngedouw's (1996, 66) early framing of UPE also offers the theoretical dynamism that allows, actually demands, the deliberate and explicit political opening of UPE when he suggested that cities bound together society and nature in "inseparable" and "infinitely bound up" ways, but ways that were "full of contradictions, tensions and conflicts."

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Because UPE provides an integrated and relational approach, it is an ideal avenue for unravelling, if only for a second, over and over, the disempowering and empowering ways racial capitalism, legacies of white supremacy, and what is often called environmental injustice together go to form highly uneven urban landscapes in ways that are more than thinking about any one of these concepts will allow. Because the historical collisions of these socio-ecological relations go to foster uneven racial development, and always have in the US, deliberately inserting them into our analyses of the ever-changing constellations of urban space is necessary for the sake of producing the varieties of revolutionary theory and praxis that abolitionists are still fighting for in the city.

The central notion of metabolism within UPE helps analyse, through a dialectical, or relational approach, these tousled and messy interconnected economic, political, social, and ecological processes that simultaneously churn to generate highly uneven racialized urban landscapes. In the preface of *In the Nature of Cities* (Heynen, Kaika and Swyngedouw 2006), Smith (2006, xiii) wrote:

> The notion of metabolism set up the circulation of matter, value and representations as the vortex of social nature. But, as the original German term, "Stoffwechsel," better suggests, this is not simply a repetitive process of circulation through already established pathways. Habitual circulation there certainly is, but no sense of long-term or even necessarily short-term equilibrium. Rather, "Stoffwechsel" expresses a sense of *creativity*.

This notion of "creativity" that Smith highlights is important and has yet to be taken up in serious ways but offers important opportunities for bridging between UPE and Black Geographies. This creativity implies that urban environmental consumption, production, and restructuring are not at all a static circulation and recirculation of materials as much urban theory implies. Rather, the metabolic processes that are driven through presses and pulses of uneven racial development, are the same dynamic process through which new socio-spatial formations, intertwinings, and collaborative enmeshing of racialized nature and white supremacist society emerge and are explicitly created. We can further develop this notion by drawing on Williams's (2001 [1961], 43) genealogical efforts with "the creative idea" through which he works to show how creativity and human expression, in constant tension with nature, offer the ongoing "struggle to remake ourselves—to change our personal organization so that we may love in proper relation to our environment" and that this effort "is in fact often painful." The creative idea, what I am saying Smith helps us see at the centre of metabolic processes central to uneven racial development, is at the core of what Williams (2001 [1961], 141) articulates as the "long revolution." Thus, this moment of creativity explodes with both oppressive and emancipatory possibilities, because it is indeed open to whichever power relations are dominant and most expansive, whether that is white-supremacist socionatural relations so dominant in the past and today, or hopefully, the increasingly powerful currents of abolitionist socionatural relations.

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Within the Black Geographies tradition, McKittrick (2013) has shown the nuanced ways in which "plantation geographies" continue to provide foundations for contemporary urbanism and racial capitalism and can be used to better historically situate the creativity inherent in the metabolization of racialized urban nature. McKittrick helps to think about how the resulting urban form of Atlanta is always part of its racialized past, a logic she calls "plantation futures":

> [Plantation futures is] a conceptualisation of time-space that tracks the plantation toward the prison and the impoverished and destroyed city sectors and, consequently, brings into sharp focus the ways the plantation is an ongoing locus of antiblack violence and death that can no longer analytically sustain this violence.
>
> *McKittrick (2013, 2)*

McKittrick thus provides tools for us within UPE to more explicitly address how race, space, and history hang together, opening towards a connection with decolonial activism and thinking of contemporary groups like Black Lives Matter. Perhaps unwittingly, she starts setting an agenda for the study of uneven racial development and abolitionist UPE when she further expands upon the connections between plantation futures and urbanization (McKittrick 2013, 13):

> The plantation spatialises early conceptions of urban life within the context of a racial economy: The plantation that anticipates the city, does not necessarily posit that things have gotten better as racial violence haunts, but rather that the struggles we face, intellectually, are a continuation of plantation narratives that dichotomise geographies into us/them and hide secretive histories that undo the teleological and biocentric underpinnings of spatiality.

While Black Geographies and discussions of race have started to figure in UPE (Heynen 2016) they have mostly done so as a result of uneven development or an "add on," in a longer list of "other" dynamics at play driving urban processes. It is urgent for UPE, if it aims to continue to remain politically valuable, to develop more robust theorizing of how the underlying histories of racial capitalism and uneven racial development have shaped metabolic processes that produce urban nature. Other resources for such a project are also developing around subaltern and postcolonial urbanism (Roy 2011; Lawhon, Ernstson and Silver 2014). In particular Roy's (2011) discussion of subaltern urbanism offers an important frame for connecting the urban history of a city like Atlanta with the existing body of UPE in forward thinking ways. In her essay on "rethinking subaltern urbanism" Roy (2011, 231) pushes for a theoretical project that breaks with "ontological and topological understandings of subalternity," and sketches a path forward that can help think through uneven racial development in a city like Atlanta.

While Roy's work and that of many others have developed within a thrust of rethinking urbanization through global South experiences (Lawhon, Ernstson

PROOF

and Silver 2014), its robust heterogeneity and openness helps to also frame a city like Atlanta. Through the same register of subaltern urbanity, from Gramsci, Spivak (1999) to Roy and beyond, we find tools to articulate the unseen, unheard, and not yet integrated socionatural processes that connect the plantation with the city through "plantation futures."

It is in this sense that I read McKittrick (2006, 75 and 77) as pushing Smith's point on uneven development by showing how the logics of racialization inherent in uneven development and the production of space must be embedded within efforts at understanding the creativity inherent in urban metabolization:

> If the plantation represents the scale of the town, the auction block figuratively and materially displays a smaller scale—the body or bodies—within the town. The Slave auction block therefore contributes to the economic and ideological borders of the area because it is necessarily implicit to the town economy.

This spatial reconfiguration of racial capitalism, "block" by "block," opens up insights about the uneven racial development and metabolization of cities amidst racial capitalism. This reverberates in Max Shachtman's classic account from 1933 on urbanization in *Race and Revolution* when he discusses the "universal segregation" of African-Americans into the unhealthiest, least desirable, and relatively most expensive sections of US cities (Shachtman 1933, 42).

The manner in which slavery prefigured these forms of urbanization by impeding the currents of creativity through exclusion is important. To this point, we can also turn to Wade's (1967) discussion from *Slavery in the Cities: The South, 1820–1860* when he draws on a range of historical analyses to show how slaves who were able to spend time in cities had broader opportunities to intermingle with other African-Americans and whites. Through these interactions, Wade discusses how being in cities offered the chance to talk and learn more about emancipatory political ideas as well as banal discussion of the everyday. Thus, the city offered revolutionary potential whereas rural slaves were insulated from the early abolitionist currents. Wade (1967, 245) argues that: "The city, with its intelligence and enterprise, is a dangerous place for the slave" and then discussed that this "danger" came about as slaves were exposed to "knowledge of human rights" and an increased sense of mobility that fuelled abolitionist aspirations.

To prevent opportunities for interaction is thus about impeding particular kinds of creativity that come together to both form revolutionary action and facilitate the accompanying forms of socionatural metabolic changes that occur within and shape urbanizing spaces. As bluntly put by Wade (1967, 245), and as a recipe for white supremacist policy: "It is found expedient, almost necessary, to remove the slave from these influences, and send him back to the intellectual stagnation and gloom of the plantation."

The social processes and spatial forms central to Wade's discussion of *Slavery in the Cities* also open up other contemporary threads scholars working within urban

PROOF

theory continue to struggle with regarding the limited and static definitions of what constitutes "the city" and urban form more generally (Angelo and Wachsmuth 2015; Brenner and Schmid 2015; Peck 2015). The interactions that Wade speaks to at the intersection of the rural and urban in the political lives of slaves and their possibilities demonstrate how uneven racial development of urban nature is always an *emergent* process; that we should foreground ideas of *urbanizing* space that contrast to stale, singular, polycentric, narrow representations of the kinds of "methodological cityism" discussed by Angelo and Wachsmuth (2015). Woods (2002, 64) interestingly prefigured much of this debate when he argued for the importance of studying regions that included urban and rural space. His driving logic was based in the ways power in rural space was entangled with proximate uneven metropolitan power-relations through "the weight of history."

When we look more deeply at the urbanization of many US Southern cities, especially Atlanta, that African-American labour was essential to create cities along the logics of white supremacist goals. In *Black Reconstruction* Du Bois (1998 [1935], 5) opens up these labouring dynamics when he says:

> Black labour became the foundation stone not only of the Southern social structure, but of Northern manufacture and commerce, of the English factory system, of European commerce, of buying and selling on a worldwide scale; new cities were built on the results of black labour, and a new labour problem, involving all white labour, arose both in Europe and America.

Robinson (1983, 212) adds to this point, by saying:

> For Blacks, in sociological and political terms, one of the most important events in American history at the time of the First World War was the migration to the sites of urban and particularly northern industry.

The confluence of past white supremacist logics with the proliferation of racial capitalist dynamics both provided an explosive context for uneven racial development to inform the metabolic interactions across urban US Southern and Northern urbanization. At the same time, just like the slaves were coming to the cities, these interactions across larger scales sowed the seeds of a revolutionary possibility due to the oppressive forms of urbanism that continued to be reproduced through this broader spatial context.

In line with Chakrabarty's (2009) sentiments within *Provincializing Europe*, and other efforts by scholars working in subaltern and postcolonial urban studies, I take seriously the need to think more deeply about the categories of thought that can help urban political ecology reach deeper into the political matters that drive uneven racial development and the metabolization of urbanizing space amidst racial capitalism. As such, I now want to move toward developing the idea of "abolition ecology."

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Toward an abolition ecology

Historically we know that race is imbricated in every episode, artefact, and institution within US urban history, as Gilmore (2002), McKittrick (2006; 2013), Pulido (2015; 2016), Wilson (2000), Woods (1998; 2002), and others have shown. Taking uneven racial development more seriously then, resonates with Roy's efforts toward further developing subaltern urbanism when she argues for (2011, 228):

> an important correction to the silences of urban historiography and theory [...] that has repeatedly ignored the urbanism that is the life and livelihood of much of the world's humanity.

Roy's sentiments are in line with nascent efforts within explicitly UPE research to grapple with and better internalize "Southern theory" for the sake of expanding the range of political contexts that have yet to be fully articulated into how we approach urban nature. I am thinking specifically about the work of Lawhon, Ernstson and Silver (2014, 2) who seek to "problematize the application of Northern theories uncritically to Southern contexts to highlight that UPE tends to overlook the situated understandings of the environment, knowledge and power..."

As Lawhon, Ernstson and Silver (2014) show, Southern theory starts from the idea that a reorientation is necessary such that analytical concepts generated within socio-spatial contexts of the "global North" are not simply applied to the "global South" (Connell 2007; Comaroff and Comaroff 2012). Southern theoretical discussion within UPE and beyond is deliberately working not to create competing factions across theory, but rather to create wider, further reaching understandings of urbanizing nature. This move has been associated with others who are developing similar ways to better articulate the effect of uneven racial development and the metabolization of racialized urban natures (Myers 1994; Robinson 2006; Roy 2009; Robinson and Parnell 2011).

Southern theory, with its decentring effects, has much to offer notions of abolitionist politics given the ways white supremacist ideology has oppressed, and forever changed, African-American identity, ideology, and political action through enslavement. New political theorizing and organizing that led to the Second American Revolution through abolitionists like Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglas, Sojourner Truth, William Lloyd Garrison, Harriet Beecher Stowe, and others were long ago made possible by harnessing these impulses we talk about today in more theoretical terms. The historic lack of attention to uneven racial development in US urban history can benefit greatly from recognizing Black Geographies within the US and offer similar spatial relationships to those as theorized at the interstices of the metropole and colony within postcolonial theorizations of empire. Abolition ecologies offer sources of theory building and explanation for world historical events in ways that are not limited to their spatial position in the "north" because in reality, slavery, Emancipation, Reconstruction after the Civil War, Jim Crow, and

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many other black geographic processes have produced spaces much more akin to the "global South" than "North" for many African-Americans.

We can better articulate these spatial relations through understanding how the logic of US inner cities maintains and reinforces the metropole to colonial spatial logics through the creation of internal colonies, that is, spaces of political economic exclusion, oppression, and disciplining, that have long been central undercurrents to Black Power narratives. While there are long and varied discussions about internal colonialism that initiated out of South African and Latin American contexts (Marquard 1957; Casanova 1965; Wolpe 1975) these relations have clearly extended to the "global North" (Hechter 1975; Peckham 2004). To this end, in a provocative essay simply entitled "Community Imperialism," which was used as a political education pamphlet in the late 1960s, Black Panther Party Minister of Education Eldridge Cleaver wrote (n.d):

> In our struggle for national liberation, we are now in the phase of community liberation, to free black communities from the imperialistic control exercised over them by the racist exploiting cliques within white communities, to free our people, locked up as they are in Urban Dungeons, from the imperialism of the white suburbs.

He continued:

> Our's is a struggle against Community Imperialism. Our black communities are colonised and controlled from the outside… We have been "organised" into the poverty. We must "organise" ourselves out of it. We are cut off, blocked from the sources of wealth. We have no control over the land and that contains the natural resources out of which goods and products are manufactured.

Just as Cleaver worked to raise the consciousness of people living in Oakland and other US inner city communities, he also offers scholars of urban theory and UPE critical insights into the thought categories we can use to better articulate a politics of race and space, of abolition ecology.

As such I put forward the idea of abolition ecology as a way of thinking through the emancipatory metabolization of racialized urban nature and as a theoretical effort that is implicitly concerned with the subaltern strategies to revolt against the oppressions inherent in the metabolization of racialized urban nature (Heynen 2016). Abolition ecology seizes and builds upon the growth of scholarship at the intersection of urban and environmental history and geography (Smith 2008; Nixon 2011) as it is increasingly informed by theories of racial capitalism (Robinson 1983; Gilmore 2002; Pulido 2015; 2016). Building abolition ecology necessitates exposing the deep history of urban nature from the vantage point of the unrealized objectives of the abolitionists who not only fought to end slavery, but fought to have a more egalitarian form of US democracy and society writ

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large, including an urban environment that would conform to contemporary narratives of "sustainability."

The theoretical impetus from this idea is rooted directly in W.E.B. Du Bois' (1998 [1935]) discussion of "abolition democracy." In *Black Reconstruction in America* Du Bois illustrates how the dreams of freedom underlying African-Americans' fighting against the Confederacy were dashed through the collective recognition that the self-determination they sought would be implausible if the very democratic fabric of the US was not also simultaneously abolished along with slavery given its inherently white supremacist logics and traditions. Du Bois calls this political vision "abolition democracy" (Foner 1990; Lipsitz 2004; Davis 2005). Du Bois is in part motivated to think about the urban environmental history of Atlanta from 1865 to today by Shulman's (2008, 27) jarring assertion in his book *American Prophecy: Race and Redemption in American Political Culture* when he says:

> It is strange really: Theorists read Agamben or Arendt on a genocide that Americans did not cause or experience directly, but do not read [Frederick] Douglass [2000], W.E.B. Du Bois, [James] Baldwin, or [Toni] Morrison, who draw on prophetic idioms to address the racial holocaust that Americans caused and experienced directly, whose legacy still grips the life of each and all.

Building on Du Bois for thinking explicitly about the uneven racial development of Atlanta leads to my efforts to build up and historically embody the notion of abolition ecology. How can abolitionist ideals inform contemporary urban political ecological struggles around air quality, soil quality, water pollution, inadequate shelter, food insecurity, and hunger that continue to ravage communities of colour? How has this protracted struggle around abolishing white supremacist logics that have produced the fabric of US urban space intersected with the possibility of creating urban environments that allow people of colour, and others, to thrive? This task takes stock of the important ideas related to "environmental justice," but without the privileging of liberal notions of private property rights so often found with this literature given these rights' connection to white supremacist logics and histories (Pulido 2000). Taylor (2008) proclaims:

> to get the full intention of Du Bois requires closer reading. His clarity on the dialectic of race and class in capitalist economy is unmatched. He sees clearly that the context for the development of the vitriolic racism that then underpinned all of American politics was the scramble for unprecedented wealth.

Du Bois shows just how important it is for contemporarily theorizing the political possibilities of urban nature by showing the steps through which the political rights of African-Americans were articulated and implemented. One of the most important results of this, as Taylor helps to bring into focus, was the Fourteenth Amendment to the US Constitution, which was created to establish the political rights of freed African-Americans as citizens (Perry 2001; Epps 2006). The

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Fourteenth Amendment was one of three amendments to the Constitution adopted after the Civil War to guarantee African-American rights. The Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery, the Fourteenth granted citizenship to people once enslaved, and the Fifteenth guaranteed black men the right to vote. The Fourteenth Amendment was passed by Congress in June 1866 and ratified by the states in 1868. The Fourteenth Amendment worked in theory by granting citizenship to anyone born in the US and it barred states from denying or curtailing the rights or protections of citizens of the US. As Taylor (2008) discusses, this was necessary since the 1857 Dred Scott decision determined African-American were "property not people." As Taylor details, without the fundamental rights of citizenship, African-Americans would not be able to protect themselves from the violence enacted by white-supremacist governments.

Another crucial step Du Bois puts in this context of abolition democracy is that the US Congress approved the Civil Rights Act of 1866. This act legislated that former slaves were entitled to "the full and equal benefits of all laws." Importantly, all Civil Rights legislation that would follow the Act of 1866 empowered federal courts to intervene when the state, municipal, and other forms of local governments failed to grant these rights to African-American citizens (Lipsitz 2004; Olson 2004; Balfour 2011).

An essential element of abolition ecology builds on direct action traditions that began in the abolitionist movement, but were also core tactics during the civil rights movement, and continue to be important today amidst Black Lives Matter. As human history shows, rights are rarely just granted; they are won through struggle. Nowhere have the collective spatial tactics of direct action and community organizing been better acknowledged than in Mississippi during the early stages of the Civil Rights Movement (Zinn 1964; Payne 2007). The legitimacy of the political discourse, as demonstrated through these tactics, was almost universally recognized, except within the US South where white supremacist ideology continued to have a tight grip on status quo consciousness. The legitimacy of direct action methods was controversial, precisely because it was being used to prefigure emancipatory practices that had not yet taken root. Sit-ins and the freedom rides, that many say helped transform collective consciousness, were largely seen as controversial and overly adversarial. Just like abolitionist struggles against slavery, sit-ins, freedom rides, and non-violent forms of civil disobedience during the Civil Rights movement was the ongoing struggle of the long Second American Revolution, the effort to abolish racial capitalism and uneven racial development.

C.L.R James (1992) helps us in UPE to connect the interdependencies and interconnectedness of these ongoing abolitionist politics in an essay titled "Black People in Urban Areas of the United States" in which he wrote (James 1992, 375):

> The people who dominate the inner cities numerically cannot possibly work out a plan or have any programme by which they can improve their own situation which does not take into consideration the city as a whole.

James discussed those who he thought had contributed most to politically theorizing urban politics in the preceding decades, including Martin Luther King Jr, Malcolm X, Eldridge Cleaver, Angela Davis, The Black Panther Party, and specifically George Jackson. James (1992, 376) then wrote:

> there is evidence that in those urban areas there are today being developed political persons, not of the literary type of which Du Bois is the most notable example; but rather there are black people who living in the midst of one of the most developed societies of the world, develop an understanding and penetration into the fundamental realities of their own particular situation and of the world in general.

He then goes on to say that, whereas Marx and Lenin were key to thinking about freedom and emancipation at an earlier time in history, political theory of the city in the US was benefiting from these other new theorists. The reason for his assertion is clearly related to the way African-American political theorists were better integrating the uneven power relations of racial capitalism and "plantation futures" within their understanding of what we can consider revolutionary metabolism within UPE and the forms of direct action necessary to prefigure revolutionary change and abolitionist consciousness raising.

Conclusions

In the spirit of Swyngedouw's (1996, 66) early articulation of urban political ecology, 150 years after Atlanta was largely burned to the ground in the effort to abolish slavery in the US, "this hybrid socionatural 'thing' called city is [still] full of contradictions, tensions and conflicts." This becomes strikingly clear by overlaying just a handful of interconnected, racialized, socionatural processes that help us think about the city through UPE. Take, for instance that Atlanta, now the ninth largest metro in the US, not only has the largest urban forest of any major city in the US (Miller, Hauer and Werner 2015), but also has the highest income inequality of any US metro, rivalled only by New Orleans (Bannon 2014) and it is punctuated by race. At the same time 88% of Atlanta's poor live in the suburbs (Kneebone and Berube 2013), which simultaneously houses one of the US's largest concentrations of the African-American middle-classes (Semuels 2015), which has long led to it being referenced as "a Black Mecca" (Sjoquist 2000; Pooley 2015). And because Atlanta has long been one of the most sprawling US metros (Bullard, Johnson and Torres 2000), this expansive urban landscape now contributes to its own urban induced climatological patterns and hydrological cycling (Dixon and Mote 2003; Shepherd 2005) which simultaneously both contribute to disastrous flooding events (Shepherd et al. 2011) and exist within a region that increasingly experiences pronounced cycles of drought (Dixon and Mote 2003), and a time when projected population will exceed water availability. If the Phoenix has indeed risen out of the ashes it has done so very much in line with the logics of uneven racial development.

Agyeman and McEntee (2014, 217) suggest, "race, class, and gender are already established parameters of UPE." I agree with this sentiment. At the same time, I agree with the sentiment that this broader framing of UPE is more implicit than explicit. The rich traditions of Marxist urban theory have contributed important insights into characterizing difficult and oppressive problems many people face in their lives connected to the uneven production of urban environments. Much of this literature has also highlighted many of the political stakes that are worth fighting for. However, there remain important issues from this body of work that have not yet adequately been internalized and taken up. Take for instance how Smith (1996, 77) suggests: "uneven development should be conceived as a quite specific process that is both unique to capitalist societies and rooted directly in the fundamental social relations of this mode of production." At the same time, Smith did not engage in the ways slavery and Jim Crow are still the underlying "social relations of this mode of production." This is not a critique, rather an effort to stage a conversation between this body of theory, Robinson's (1983) discussion of racial capitalism, and McKittrick's notion of plantation futures in order to better inform UPE and abolition ecology. Smith's implicit, as opposed to explicit understanding of racial capitalism still requires the kind of shifting that Marx deliberately made toward emancipation as steeped in abolitionist struggles.

To better articulate the ineffable contradictions of uneven racial development, I have argued that because urban nature and urban society do not, that is cannot, exist independently of each other, discussions of urban nature in the US that do not deliberately engage with racial capitalism and uneven racial development are narrow and will miss crucial dynamics. UPE has evolved toward expanding the political possibilities of a more comprehensive appreciation of how processes of racialization and colonialism come together in cities to both facilitate and impede the creativity central to metabolization of urban nature at many different levels. To this end, in 1966 Meier and Rudwick, writing in what was considered at the time a progressive manner, suggested (1976, 356–57):

> The plantation system has all but disappeared [and] it will vanish completely in the next few years. In cities, North and South, the political strength of the black ghetto is growing stronger, as is evident in the rising number of Negro officeholders […] Will the ghetto, like the plantation, disappear as the focus of Negro life? Or will it remain as a cohesive community, at the core of the nation's largest cities […]?

In response, McKittrick (2013) shows us that the plantation has indeed not disappeared. Likewise, within the US's largest cities like Atlanta, urban environmental inequality as is often conveyed in the shorthand of the ghetto, continues to proliferate unabated.

While scholars working within urban political ecology have talked about the importance of focusing on what or who needs to be sustained, in this chapter I have made the case that more can be made of this through paying attention to what's at stake in the Fourteenth Amendment of the US Constitution. This I hope could bring

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in the prefigurative abolitionist logics of direct action and analysis as another lens through which to work toward urban democratic and urban ecological goals. Given the socio-ecological process at play within the metabolization of racialized nature and uneven racial development of Atlanta as I have developed here, it seems necessary not only to build upon the traditional logics of human geographers to think through these issues, but also to go beyond. What we need is an extension of UPE to include a wider array of thinkers and experiences; drawing on scholars as those I have made room for here. My reframing of Du Bois' notion of abolition democracy toward abolition ecology is thus an effort in this regard. It seeks to take abolitionist ideas created through hard-fought struggles as contemporary tools to better frame the racialized questions of who gains from and who pays for, who benefits from and who suffers from particular processes of urban socio-environmental change.

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