The Politics of Urban Sustainability:
Preservation, Redevelopment, and Landscape on the High Line

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/ Abstract /

In this thesis, I focus on the preservation and reuse of the High Line in New York City. The High Line is a 1.45-mile long elevated railway running through two New York City neighborhoods: the West Village and Chelsea. Following its abandonment for industrial use in the 1980s, the structure became the focus of two significant preservation and reuse debates. The first, led by small citizen activism groups, was primarily articulated in the terms of urban preservation, anti-demolition, and slowing real estate development. The second, led by Friends of the High Line, which now manages the High Line, was primarily articulated in the terms of reuse and public access. Friends of the High Line succeeded in that they stopped the remainder of the structure from being demolished and eventually supported a comprehensive reuse plan, rendering the structure as a publicly accessible elevated park. My analysis focuses first on analyzing the second preservation and reuse effort as a case of ecogentrification, which combines discourses of ecological modernization, sustainability, and urban growth. From there, I move to a critical analysis of landscape urbanism, an approach to development and park design embraced and promoted by James Corner Field Operations, the lead of the High Line redesign team. Using a combination of Lefebvrian spatial theory and Gilles Clément's notion of the third landscape as a space of indecision, I call for a critical reevaluation of the meaning of sustainability as embraced by the High Line.

/ Keywords /

sustainability // gentrification // New York City // landscape urbanism // spatial theory // Gilles Clément

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Hudson River Park	HRP
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Preparing the Path:
Plan of the present research, method, and conceptual context

The High Line in Three Stages

This thesis traces the development of the High Line (HL) in New York City in three chapters. The HL is an unfinished adaptive reuse project which is developing an abandoned elevated railway into publicly accessible open space. The structure traverses two Manhattan neighborhoods: the West Village and Chelsea (Fig. 1). Throughout the paper, I articulate a threefold analysis of the HL as a space for nature, an urban redevelopment project, and, perhaps most importantly, as an unfinished preservation and reuse effort. The remainder of this chapter describes my research method, and presents a compact review of relevant literature on spatial theory, urban political ecology, gentrification, and landscape theory.

In the second chapter, "Walk the Line," I establish the neighborhood and development context for the project. I start with a brief analysis of an earlier, but related, park development: the Hudson River Park (HRP). Looking at the HRP helps me to situate two dimensions of the HL. First, it establishes a context-specific baseline for discourses and tactics of community preservation and historic preservation. Second, it situates environmental advocacy with respect to the development of public open space on Manhattan's West side. From here, I trace the evolution of both dimensions over the course of the HL preservation and development.

The latter part of the second chapter focuses on two HL preservation battles. The first, led by community and historic preservation activists in the Far West Village, is more accurately characterized as an *anti-demolition* effort seeking to curb the

development aspirations of a particular private real estate developer, the Rockrose Corporation. The second, spearheaded by a group called Friends of the High Line (FoHL), sought both preservation and reuse of the HL as a public open space. The majority of "Walk the Line" traces the efforts of FoHL up to their successful opening of the space to the public in 2009.

In the second chapter, "Down in the Hole," I analyze the FoHL preservation and reuse effort in terms of the fusion of development and sustainability, making the case that the HL is an example of *ecogentrification*. This is a bridge to my final analysis, where I focus on the unfinished portion of the park as a third preservation battle in which the very logic of the HL is at stake. In this instance, I critically examine the unfinished park in the terms of spatial and landscape theory and the professional field of landscape urbanism. This analysis articulates and specifies the political potential of sustainability and preservation in the present moment.

Method

This paper builds on my previous research on the HRP, conducted between 2007 and 2008 in connection with my BA (Metropolitan Studies) and on a period of private-sector employment with HR&A Advisors, a consulting firm deeply involved in the HL development. The field research on which the present work is based was undertaken during April 2011 in New York City. The primary method I employed during my field research was the semi-structured interview (Appendix A). Each interview was between 45 and 120 minutes, with an average length of 60 minutes. All interviews were one-on-one with the exceptions of Interviews 14 and 15, which were conducted jointly. Further, all interviews were conducted in-person, by the author in New York City, with the exceptions of Interviews 12 and 16, which were

conducted by phone. Finally, all interviews were recorded and partially transcribed, with the exception of Interview 16, which was not recorded.

My respondents come from a variety of professional design disciplines, civic organizations, private sector firms, and public agencies. Many of my respondents have overlapping affiliations between and among these fields. The complex nature of development projects in New York requires a variety of viewpoints and areas of expertise in order to understand both the technical processes and the politics of development. Accordingly, in each of my interviews, I attempted to exploit the specific knowledge(s) of the respondent. I did not use a standardized set of questions, but instead circulated the "Research Statement for Interviewees" prior to each interview to establish guidelines for discussion and questioning (Appendix B).

In addition to interviews, I also spent a substantial portion of my field research period gathering and reviewing archival information and primary source materials. These include Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) for the HL and HRP, official planning documents, legislative documents, and zoning applications and materials. Many of the documents which are not directly referenced or cited in this thesis have been used to substantiate dates, facts, and claims made by interviewees. I have also incorporated and relied on popular media and marketing materials. Most notable among these are *The Villager*, a local paper focused on the West Village; The New York *Times*; and the FoHL website and newsletter. Additionally, I photographed both the HL and HRP on three occasions during my field research. Unless otherwise noted, all photos are my own (Appendix C).

Finally, it is worth noting that I initially intended this thesis to present a dual, and relatively symmetrical, analysis of both the HL and the HRP. However, it became clear throughout the course of my data analysis that space and time

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limitations rendered a complete, thorough, and detailed analysis of both spaces impossible. Because of my previous work on the HRP and the more contemporary nature of the HL, I opted to focus on the HL as a 'fresh' case.

Literature Review and Conceptual Context

The 'freshness' which led me to focus primarily on the HL has two characteristics. First, the HL is nearly unique among urban open space projects, with the exception of the Promenade Plantée in Paris.[1] In this sense the HL has great potential to become a model for similar adaptive reuse projects and is claimed to have inspired at least four similar projects to date in the U.S.[2] Second, the HL presents an opportunity to bring together literatures of spatial theory, urban political ecology, gentrification, and landscape theory. While these fields have much in common, they have not been deployed together to analyze an adaptive reuse project such as the HL. In the remainder of this chapter, I outline key arguments and debates within and across these literatures to establish the conceptual context of my thesis.

Building on foundational work by French theorist Henri Lefebvre(1991[1974]; 2003[1970]), scholars concerned with problems of urban political economy and social justice (Harvey 1993; Swyngedouw and Merrifield 1997) identify cities as a critical site for analysis and intervention. This work has developed a number of important concepts through a forceful interpretation of marxist theory. Work on

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[1] The Promenade Plantée (PP) came up several times during my interviews. Respondents who had been involved early in the HL process (Interview 1) mentioned that the PP was often cited by the FoHL founders as a clear example of what could be done with old railways. Those who were involved in later stages, including the West Chelsea Rezoning (Interview 4) also mentioned the referent of the PP. The Design Trust for Public Space (2002) cited both the PP and the Stone Arch Bridge (Minneapolis, MN) as examples of "adaptive reuse plans" (20).

[2] According to a recent Op-Ed by Witold Rybczynski in the New York *Times*, "High Line-type projects are being discussed for Chicago (the Bloomingdale Trail), Philadelphia (the Reading Viaduct), Jersey City [NJ] (the Sixth Street Embankment) and St. Louis (the Iron Horse Trestle)" (http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/15/opinion/15Rybczynski.html).

'uneven development' (Smith 1984) and marxist theories of nature and the production of space (Harvey 1996) has gone far in developing sophisticated macro-scale analysis of the global dynamics of contemporary neoliberal capitalism. Related work critiquing and analyzing political economy and environmental injustice (Burkett 1999; Foster 2000; O'Connor 1994) has brought out a more explicit narrative of sustainability in the context of marxist theory and critiques of capitalism.

Such work stands in counterposition to dominant notions of sustainability, defined by the UN Bruntland Report in the following terms: "Humanity has the ability to make development sustainable, to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (World Commission on Environment and Development 1987:24). Invoking this notion, a dominant narrative of sustainability as the "second industrial revolution" emerged (Hawken, Lovins, and Lovins 1999; McDonough and Braungart 2002). To some extent, mainstream sustainability also reflects interdisciplinary developments in the natural sciences. This is particularly evident in literature on urban ecology, which seeks integrative approaches to the connection between human systems and natural processes (Dove 2002; Dove 2006; Parlange 1998; Pickett, et al. 1997).

An additional development in critical geography, namely urban political ecology, unites concerns for urban sustainability with both spatial theory and ecological science. Such literature subverts the idea that nature and society are separable categories for analysis and political intervention. Heynen, Kaika, and Swyngedouw (2006) situate urban political ecology across scales when they explain that, "...urban socio-ecological conditions are intimately related to the socio-ecological processes that operate over a much larger, often global, space" (7). Broadly, urban political ecologists use a marxist approach to address the socio-

natural production of urban environments in the language of spatial theory and the politics of scale (Swyngedouw and Heynen 2003). Urban political ecologists also place a strong emphasis on the provision of metabolic functions - like water, sewerage, and green space - in cities (Gandy 2002; Kaika 2005; Swyngedouw 2004). Recent work in urban political ecology takes aim at neoliberalism and unequal distribution of core metabolic functions, including green space, in the new urban governance of the entrepreneurial city (Bakker 2010; Gandy 2005; Desfor and Keil 2004; Harvey 1989; Heynen 2006; Heynen, Perkins, and Roy 2006).

The latest turn in urban political ecology has generated a fruitful connection between the analysis of gentrification and the increase in discourses of sustainability in the contemporary city (Brownlow 2006; Bunce 2004; Bunce 2009; Quastel 2009; While, Jonas, and Gibbs 2004). Inquiries into *ecogentrification,* a concept which Quastel (2009) credits Sarah Dooling for defining as "'the displacement of vulnerable human inhabitants resulting from the implementation of an environmental agenda driven by an environmental ethic,'" emphasizes political *ecologies* of gentrification over and through the political *economy* approaches (697). Political economic approaches to gentrification are generally structural, focusing on the movement of capital as a prime mover in the process (Hackworth and Smith 2001; Smith 1987; Smith 1996; Smith and Williams 1986). In my analysis, I focus more on the displacement of particular configurations of nature and on the rebranding of Chelsea. This reflects the specific conditions and impacts of the HL development on Chelsea and connects third wave gentrification to discourses and practices of sustainability manifest on the HL.

Alternative theories of gentrification emphasize agentive and cultural factors. Sharon Zukin makes the case that "cultural symbols have material consequences as

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cities become less dependent on traditional resources and technologies of material production" (1995:268). Zukin also looks at the concept of "authenticity" as a qualifier which "has migrated from a quality of people to a quality of things, and most recently to a quality of experiences" (2009:3). In my analysis, I borrow from each of these interpretations, political economic, ecological, and cultural, as they are manifest in the production of the HL as an urban space.

Along with Mitchell (2003), Zukin's work also connects gentrification explicitly to the reorganization of public space, especially noting the tendency toward increased security and the emphasis on financial logics in public spatial management. Such work is more critically oriented than historical analyses of particular public spaces like Central Park (Rosenzweig and Blackmar 1992) and investigations of socio-environmental movements (Taylor 2009). Low, Taplin, and Scheld are less concerned about gentrification per se, but connect analysis of public parks to the notion of sustainability when they argue that "social sustainability" should be viewed as "a subset of cultural sustainability; it includes the maintenance and preservation of social relations and meanings that reinforce cultural systems" (2005:5). As noted, my emphasis is on the more recent literature of *ecogentrification*, as it tends to integrate considerations of sustainability, in both discursive and material dimensions, public space, and redevelopment.

Thusfar, I have traced interrelated developments in spatial theory, urban political ecology, and gentrification, including the intersection of urban political ecology and gentrification in recent literature regarding *ecogentrification*. This work establishes much of the context for understanding the HL preservation and development effort, as a political process of spatial contestation, and as a naturalized driver of gentrification. What I will add to this literature is a nuanced and

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somewhat speculative analysis of a particular unfinished open space object driving *ecogentrification*. I will accomplish this through use of both spatial theory and landscape urbanism. The latter draws not only on key developments in previously discussed literature, it also presents a set of theoretical tools for looking at the material, symbolic, and political dimensions of *ecogentrification* projects, such as the HL, in a way which critically reassess both the meaning and the practice of urban sustainability and preservation.

While the literature in urban spatial theory has focused broadly on political economy and, in certain instances, on the materiality of nature, there is also a significant articulation of symbolic power with respect to space. Some explorations of space (Bachelard 1994 [1958]; Bourdieu 1989; Bourdieu 2003 [1979]) have tended to focus more on the meanings and strategies of spatial contestation (Isin 2002) in social practice than on large-scale dynamics of global capitalism. To address this important contribution in the context of preserving and developing the HL, I look to landscape urbanism and landscape theory, which functions as both a strategic locus for the preservation of the structure and as a professional articulation of the 'intent' of the HL. Landscape urbanism (Waldheim 2006; Corner 2006) is a relatively recent innovation which forms an explicit basis for the design program of the HL. Despite its theoretical bent, landscape urbanism is primarily a professional field that blends discourses of gentrification, urban design, and sustainability. Corner (2006) sees landscape urbanism as a way to deal with "all forces and agents working in the urban field and considers them as continuous networks of inter-relationships" (30). In Chapter 3, "Down in the Hole," I argue, following Isin (2002), that this ambitious claim functions as a strategy and technology of citizenship which uses space as its defining characteristic (41-42). I also critically evaluate the

sustainability aspirations of landscape urbanism and the HL in particular through a close reading of the work of French landscape architect and theorist Gilles Clément (2011) and recent interpretations of his work (Gandy 2009; Skinner 2011).

Clément's dynamic conceptual vocabulary has yet to diffuse widely into either spatial theory or gentrification literature. I rely on a few key concepts to articulate a notion of sustainability which is critical of the *ecogentrification* manifest in the HL redevelopment. First, I use the concept of *third landscape* (*tiers paysage*),[3] which Skinner (2011) describes as a "space of indecision where humanity steps back from the evolutionary process - the Third Landscape includes abandoned terrain, transitional zones, wastelands, swamps, moors, bogs, but also the edges of roads, shores, railway embankments" (264). It exists in relation to *first landscape*, which is a preserve of 'untouched' nature, and the *second landscape*, which is the space of cultivation (264). Skinner's provocative reading of Clément and his related questions form the basis of my critique of *ecogentrification* and sustainability on the HL:

> What are our responsibilities in the production of space? Is it possible to resist this production (and consumption) by producing works? Or do the emphases then shift from the production of consumables to the production of eco-social spaces? What can poets, for instance, do by *not writing*? Like Clément's "planetary gardener," should we observe more and plant less? (2011:270)

Such questions connect to one of Clément's (2011) fully translated essays, "In Praise of Vagabonds," in which the author develops a conceptual vocabulary which incorporates and has the potential to influence spatial theory, state theory, and ecology.

Specifying the *first landscape* of preservation, Clément argues that it is "defined as an ideal territory, without political belonging...only tourists are allowed in: they pay" (278). Edging toward a notion of the *third landscape*, Clément describes abandoned areas as "undocumented" but notes that "the area is not abandoned for

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[3] The *Manifest du Tiers Paysage*, is still not fully translated into English from French. I rely here on Clément's (2011) essay "In Praise of Vagabonds," and secondary scholarly accounts, as cited.

everyone; this term, the height of anthropocentrism, discards whatever is not linked to human activity" (278). Blurring the *second* and *third landscapes*, Clément refers to "secondary environments...Second nature includes the global sum of abandoned area but also the so-called 'anthropogenic' territory" (280). More squarely identifying the role of *third landscape*, the author describes "the landscape object," which "can be divided into three plastic categories...the wild landscape; another, subject to profit, is turned over to agricultural, industrial, timber exploitation; the last, entrusted to the 'artist,' produces the city, works of art, various installations" (287).

I have taken care here to lay out some of Clément's ideas in detail because, like Lefebvre's, they form an interconnected understanding of a dynamic process of spatial production, but with an ecosocial specificity. I will attempt to bring the operative method of Lefebvre's spatial trialectic, outlined in greater detail in "Down in the Hole," to bear on the HL through Clément's rich formulations of landscape. As Soja (1996) argued of Lefebvre's triadic approach "Lefebvre's trialectics are infused with increasing power in this galaxy of triads, each with its strategic preference for the third term but always as a transcending inclusion of the other two" (70). Lefebvrian trialectics form the basis for my interpretation of Clément, as I detail further in my analysis.

My intent in "Down in the Hole" is not necessarily a straightforward Lefebvrian analysis of Clément. Nor is it to fit Clément into Lefebvre. Instead, I position Clément's heterodox approach to landscape alongside more conventional spatial and professional aspirations of the landscape urbanists responsible for the HL design. In essence, through the landscape urbanists, Clément, and Lefebvre, I develop two differently emphasized readings of the HL: one dominant, the other critical; one *second landscape*, the other *third*. In short, "Down in the Hole" is a

strategic attempt to move through the relations manifest in "Walk the Line" in order to

draw out the contours of a more radical urban sustainability.

Walk the Line:
Abandonment, preservation, and redevelopment on Manhattan's West Side

I keep a close watch on this heart of mine
I keep my eyes wide open all the time
I keep the ends out for the tie that binds
Because you're mine, I walk the line

-- Johnny Cash

Neighborhood and public space context

The HL is a 1.45-mile long elevated railway structure running through two New York neighborhoods: the West Village and Chelsea (Fig. 1). The majority of the structure is situated in Chelsea, a former industrial manufacturing neighborhood which, throughout the 90s, was becoming home to both the art market and New York's gay scene. The New York Times described the transformation of Chelsea:

> There is an artistic Chelsea. There is a gay Chelsea. There is soon to be - improbable though it sounds at the moment - a recreational Chelsea, following the reconstruction of the Chelsea Piers as an enormous sports center (Dunlap 1994).

The threefold makeover of Chelsea - as a center of art, as a center of gay life, and as an increasingly amenitized neighborhood - is deeply connected to the transformation of both the HL and the West side waterfront. Projects such as the Chelsea Piers, which is constructed on a massive site in the Hudson River, were launched as part of the redevelopment of the West side waterfront as the Hudson River Park (HRP). The HRP was created through the Hudson River Park Act (HRPA), passed in 1998 by the New York State (NYS) legislature and signed by Republican Governor George Pataki. The HRP - billed as the largest park

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development project in New York since Central Park[4] - is not a part of the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation (NYC DPR). Further, is required by the HRPA to generate revenue for its continued operations from profit-generating activities, like leases and concessions, located in the park. HRP cannot be ignored in the development context of the HL, particularly because of the involvement of both community and environmental activists, but also because of the development model it embraces and the activist response to that model.

The HRP was the outcome of a major debate over the Westway proposal. Westway was a federally funded highway development project, led by the Urban Development Corporation/Empire State Development Corporation (UDC/ESDC),[5] which would have submerged the elevated West Side Highway in newly created land in the Hudson River with high-rise development dominating the surface. The UDC/ESDC plan called for dredging and filling in the Hudson River. The project was put forward in the midst of dramatic decline of the industrial waterfront and the infrastructural decay of the West Side Highway. The road was closed south of 46th Street after a section collapsed in 1973 under the weight of a truck carrying asphalt intended to repair part of the structure (Gandy 2002:144). The defeat of Westway at the hands of a broad coalition of environmental lawyers, advocates, and community activists was achieved in 1985 in a U.S. Circuit Court decision rendered on the basis of the impact the dredge-and-fill operation would have had on a population of Hudson River Striped Bass.

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[4] HRPA established a boundary for the park which includes the inboard section of the waterfront, the historically designated bulkhead, the piers and pile fields of collapsed or demolished piers, and also the water of the Hudson River. Taken together, this comprises 550-acres of managed space. The inclusion of water in a designation is not unprecedented in the city. A leading waterfront preservation activist cited the historic designation of water at the South Street Seaport as an important precedent for counter-Westway and HRP arguments (Interview 3).
[5] The presence of the UDC/ESDC is significant. As Hackworth and Smith (2001) point out in another case of residential and waterfront development in Queens in the 1990s, "The entry of the UDC substantially undermined the ability of Hunter's Point Community Coalition to resist the project and its impact" (473). This also contextualizes the significance of the defeat of Westway with respect to comparably sized projects.

Two aspects of the Westway and HRP debates are worth discussing before delving into the development history of the HL. First, both Westway and HRP were targets for a river-focused environmental advocacy. And second, the HRP development has been a target for neighborhood-focused community and historic preservation activism rooted in the principles of Jane Jacobs.

During Westway, professionalized advocates, especially environmental lawyers, successfully derailed the state-led process of redevelopment, supported "by every tier of government from City Hall to the White House" (Gandy 2002:144). The monetary outcome of the defeat of Westway was that the funds - approximately $1.7 billion were split between mass transit and an alternative transportation and park process. "It is ironic," notes Gandy, "that Westway, the most bitterly fought of the major highways schemes, sought to address the earlier concerns over the Cross Bronx Expressway, the Cross Brooklyn Expressway, and the Lower Manhattan Expressway" (147). In many senses, the battle over Westway, decided on the basis of a specific ecological impact, showcased the ability of environmental arguments "to encompass a generalized indictment of the expansion of car ownership, consumerism, materialism, militarism, and the perceived misuse of public money" (145).

Despite cohesion during the process, the defeat of Westway witnessed a deep fissure between environmentalists over the 'compromise solution' of the HRP. Some, like the founder of the Clean Air Campaign, continue to oppose the HRP, on the basis that the authority which controls the development - the Hudson River Park Trust (HRPT) - continues to build in the Hudson River (Interview 16). Others, who had been more explicitly focused on aligning community organizations against the development authority-led process, have scaled back their active opposition as the

park has 'come online' due to the lack of materialized impacts - like high rise development *in* the park - which had been a galvanizing prediction earlier in the process (Interview 3).

Nevertheless, interests of environmental groups have continued to be a critical voice in the phased construction of the HRP. A longtime official and current acting president of the HRPT affirmed that early support of environmental organizations was both critical and divisive. In her view, community opposition on the basis of a "so-called unaccountable [public] authority" is not commensurate with environmental opposition (Interview 11). Instead, it represents continued anxiety about the scope and scale of development driven by the park.

Community and historic preservation activists invoked a broader definition of 'environment' to oppose what they tended to frame as the potential for unchecked large-scale development at the edge of the island and the edge of their neighborhoods. The park spans several neighborhoods, with Segment Four, adjacent to Christopher Street[6] in the West Village, being the first section constructed (Fig 1.1). The West Village, home to legendary urbanist and community activist Jane Jacobs, became the center of community-based activism surrounding the development of the waterfront. Jacobs was a champion of "a neighborhood's right, against the decisions of the state, to determine the conditions of its own survival" (Zukin 2009:13).

To this end, several groups formed to advocate for a variety of goals, including landmarking of inland neighborhoods, landmarking of the historic bulkhead and piers, zoning changes, and low-scale development, all classic tools for Jacobs-era activists. Through the combined activities of three groups which Zukin (2009)

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[6] Christopher Street is the site of The Stonewall Inn, the flashpoint of the 1969 Stonewall Rebellion, which is the symbolic beginning of the gay rights movement in the United States.

identifies as frequently intersecting, namely historic preservationists, community preservationists, and gentrifiers, the replacement of Westway by the HRP became, in part, a milestone victory in the history of public space development in New York City (11-12).

But, in another sense, the rise of HRP marked the end of a particular style of community-led activism rooted in an argument about historical and community differences. Longtime Village activists and Jacobs acolytes are well aware that the loss of a clear target, whether Robert Moses or Westway, has fundamentally changed the tactics of community and historic preservation (Interview 13). If we read community and historic preservation through Holston and Appadurai (2003) we see that "groups organized around specific identities...[based on] prior differences...affirm the right to difference as an integral part of the foundation of citizenship" linked to "equal opportunity" (300-301). In this case, the 'difference' refracts historically articulated preservation aims into spatial strategies for contemporary development debates. For community and historic preservationists, to be a 'Villager' was to embrace the historical specificity of the Village as an "American place" where, as a leading opponent of the development of the HRP put it, "authority was questioned and somewhat overturned" (Interview 3).

For the Jacobs generation, the key to acknowledging and fighting for this difference was rooted in historic preservation. This tactic materialized a desire "to have an outward and visible sign of what [questioning authority] meant" by preserving "the context within which it took place" (Interview 3). For community and historic preservationists, the struggle for power in the Westway-HRP debate derived its most potent claims from the notion of authenticity and the will to shape that

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perceived authenticity though the limitation of material transformation of an historic urban landscape.

The dual contestation of the redevelopment of the waterfront by environmental advocates and community and historic preservation groups not only shaped the neighborhoods implicated in the HL redevelopment, it also heightened the political acuity of the pro-development and pro-construction interests. The Westway-HRP process puts into sharper relief the evolution of real estate development with respect to both community activism and environmental advocacy in New York. The differing combination of state authority, activist tactics, and real estate interests implicated in the preservation and reuse of the HL points to the blurring of pro-community, pro-development, and pro-environment positions. While the use of parks developments to anchor real estate development and neighborhood gentrification is far from atypical (Bunce 2009; Zukin 1995), my argument in the remainder of this chapter is that the HL has served both a preservation and a development cause, voicing divergent responses to the "emerging tension between the public nature of nineteenth-century urbanism and the privatized nature emerging from the car-oriented Fordist era of mass consumption and new middle-class aspirations" (Gandy 2002:151).

Preserving the High Line

My aim for the rest of this chapter is to trace the particulars of the HL development on two levels. One might be called the 'high level', highlighting the material transformation of the elevated structure and the entrepreneurial politics that elevated the HL as a both a political and a popular *cause célèbre*. The other might be called 'street level', highlighting the role of the HL in reshaping development

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debates in the surrounding neighborhoods, particularly West Chelsea. This aspect also refers to the role of the HL in reshaping a community-led development plan under the direction of Community Board 4 (CB4).[7] My goal here is not to treat the two levels separately, but to narrate the relational development of both across the period of preservation and reuse debates, emphasizing how HL preservationists mobilized resources and successfully shaped a community development debate to suit both their stated interest in opening the HL to the public and their interest in stimulating real estate development and gentrification in Chelsea.

These two development layers also connect two discrete periods of the history of the HL. The first historical period, discussed in this chapter, is comprised of two debates: one was an unsuccessful preservation attempt primarily aimed at anti-demolition and opposed to development, the other is a successful reuse effort promoting preservation, but foregrounding public access and economic growth. The second period, discussed in the following chapter, relates to the present status of the HL as urban open space. This present moment is a point of departure for my analysis in the next chapter, where I unpack the meaning of 'sustainability' with reference to both the ecological materiality of the park, embedded in its design, and the relation of this materiality to a broad program of landscape urbanism outlined by the principal designer of the HL (Corner 2006).

As New York's most recent urban open space development project, the HL is often championed as a '2.0' version of public space development in the City, promoted by a new generation of civic activists. I will explore this claim in more detail in the next chapter. Much of the boosterism focuses on the efforts of FoHL,

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[7] There are 59 Community Boards in the five boroughs of New York City, one for each administrative district. Formed in 1963, these bodies are "autonomous city agencies" whose Board Members are appointed by Borough Presidents; at least half are nominated by City Council representatives. The Community Board system is non-binding, meaning that it serves an advisory role to the law making and enforcing agencies in city government. (See brief details of CBs at (http://www.nyc.gov/html/cau/html/cb/main.shtml)

formed in 1999 by Joshua David and Robert Hammond,[8] two well-connected residents of Chelsea. The current Chairman of the FoHL Board of Directors describes David and Hammond as coming "from a generation of activism that wasn't seared by the pro/anti development context of the West side" (Interview 8). I return to David and Hammond later in this section, but, in order to understand the scale of their accomplishment in preserving the HL for reuse, I will first consider the life of the structure itself and the earlier effort to prevent its demolition.

Fighting demolition, fighting development (Round One)

The New York Viaduct, as it was originally called, was constructed by the New York Central Railroad between 1929 to 1934 (Fig. 2; Fig. 2.1) as a response to an overwhelming number of railroad accidents occurring on the West side of Manhattan, where rail traffic crossing at ground level represented a significant threat to pedestrians. At this time, the area of the High Line and West side waterfront was a nexus of industrial production in New York. In 1934, when the structure first opened to trains, the transfer of material goods was lifted off the street; incoming materials were now delivered directly to factories and warehouses connected to and sometimes penetrated by the structure itself (Fig. 2.2).

The peculiar architectural and zoning conditions of the HL were established by a public easement, though the structure itself would be privately owned. As the FoHL Board Chairman described it, "The HL itself owns no dirt. It's a boxed easement flowing through the sky. So, all abutting property owners own land under the HL. Or, put it this way, all land under the HL is owned by an abutting property

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[8] The considerable mythos surrounding David and Hammond is a source for triumphalist narratives of the HL. From the Jane Jacobs Medal to numerous honors and accolades, David and Hammond are celebrated for the speed and vision with which they turned the HL into publicly accessible open space. Publicly voiced opposition to the HL remains both discursively and politically separated from concerns over gentrification and neighborhood transformation along the corridor that the HL occupies. This tendency toward insulation of the HL as a virtuous space of post-industrial reclamation has its roots in the careful networking, management, and inside political knowledge of the well-connected founders of FoHL.

owner" (Interview 8). Granting further specificity, the New York City Department of City Planning (NYC DCP) explains that the High Line itself is encased in the associated easement which, "extends generally from the underside of the structure to a point approximately 20 feet above the existing track surface" (NYC DCP 2005a:30).

By the 1960s, shifts in the organization of productive networks, most notably the gradual rise of containerization, were slowly rendering the West side infrastructure network obsolete. The existence of the HL owed as much to the flourishing port district on the West side piers as it did to the public safety concerns which catalyzed its construction. Consequently, as the West side fell out of use as a working waterfront, the fallowing of HL followed. But where the waterfront, a relatively accessible, if isolated, abandoned landscape was marked by informal uses ranging from a gay cruising space to a space of artistic production, the HL had controlled access points linked to privately owned buildings, rendering it considerably more difficult to access.

This condition made the abandoned High Line a *de facto* open space; a space which, by virtue of its encasement in a floating zone of protection above the street level, would remain largely inaccessible for a period of nearly two decades after rail traffic stopped flowing on the structure. Where waterfront activists perceived the dereliction of the piers as an intentional pretext to development on the part of the state (Interview 3; Interview 5), early HL preservationists tended to see the structure as an impediment to development. One couple residing in a building adjacent to the southernmost portion of the original structure explained that this condition ameliorated their concerns about the fact that their apartment, located in a converted spice warehouse adjacent to the HL, was outside of the West Village Historic District,

because they considered the public easement extraordinarily difficult to remove (Interview 14; Interview 15).

By 1980, when the structure was said to have received its final rail traffic of three train cars carrying a load of frozen turkeys,[9] residents of adjacent neighborhoods were coping with the presence of the HL through "simultaneously quaint and forward-thinking" Jacobs-era strategies primarily opposing demolition, but also advocating potential reuse including, significantly, its potential reuse as a transportation corridor (Herman 2009). Their interests were countered by Rockrose Development Corporation, which targeted the structure for demolition.

These interests fueled the first of two key battles in the HL preservation debate. The first HL preservation battle became localized in what is referred to as the Far West Village, a strip of former industrial land between Washington and West Streets at the very edge of the island.[10] The primary players - West Villagers for Responsible Development (WVRD), the Greenwich Village Community Task Force (GVCTF), and Rockrose Development Corporation - engaged in what was largely a head-to-head debate over a particular portion of the structure that limited Rockrose's ability to develop several parcels of land which they owned. As the former President of GVCTF explained:

> [The battle with Rockrose] was long before the Friends of the High Line got going...quite a number of years before...we didn't have the resources at the time - we had the hope that it could be turned into a publicly accessible park at some time, it was certainly part of the vision, but we were completely involved in just trying to stop the demolition (Interview 6).

Two important points can be gleaned from this quote. First, the tendency of early HL preservation efforts is perhaps more accurately described as anti-demolition, as I have already noted. Such a disposition tracks with the tendency expressed in the

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[9] A fact which one preservation activist labels "almost certainly apocryphal" but which was promulgated by Peter Obletz, a longtime High Line and rail transportation enthusiast, and is now enshrined in the FoHL timeline of the space (Interview 14).
[10] Residents of the Far West Village had also been actively involved in the HRP development debates.

Westway-HRP debate to focus on a clear target whose development aspirations embody the concerns and anxieties of local residents. In this case, the target was a single private developer, and not a state-led development proposal. Second, by framing the HL as "a little bit of parkland in the middle of New York," anti-demolition groups counterposed private development and preservation of the structure, in part, through the circulation of environment and landscape discourses (Interview 6). This becomes particularly significant in the second, successful round of preservation and reuse efforts, which I will address shortly.

Despite the sustained efforts of WVRD and GVCTF, in January 1991, Rockrose succeeded in obtaining permission from the Interstate Commerce Commission, the federal entity which oversees railroad activity, to 'bifurcate' the HL by tearing down a five block portion of the structure between Bank Street and Gansevoort Street. This was a critical prerequisite to redeveloping lots adjacent to and previously underneath the structure, for which Rockrose eventually obtained permission. This shows the primary slow-growth, low-growth ethos of the anti-demolition effort. Further, this action served as a strong indication that many of the property owners who opposed the continued presence of the 'derelict' structure might be able to convince the City and Conrail/CSX,[11] the private owner of the structure, to demolish it completely.

Promoting reuse through public access and development (Round Two)

This possibility set the stage for the second round of HL debates, this time implicating a considerably wider array of community organizations, political interests,

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[11] Conrail merged with CSX in 1998, making CSX the owner of the High Line. I will refer to the companies as CSX/Conrail to reflect the continuity of ownership prior to the Certificate of Interim Trail Use issued by the Surface Transportation Board in 2005 ("Railroad and City hook up High Line transfer deal," http://www.thevillager.com/villager_134/railroadandcityhookup.html).

and property owners. In a presentation at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, MN, Robert Hammond described his reaction to being labeled a preservationist:

> Someone called me a preservationist and I don't even really like that term. Because, to me, preservation is just about stopping. Maybe stopping demolition or stopping decay. And what we wanted to do was we wanted to stop it from being demolished *and* create a new use ("New York's High Line" 2010).

Hammond, a private citizen, assembled the non-profit corporation FoHL to coordinate the navigation of several levels of both state authority and community interest. The group relied on both powerful symbolic tactics aimed at creating an imagination of the HL and material strategies for linking the preservation of the structure to the gentrification of West Chelsea.

The primary pro-demolition voices were represented by a group called Chelsea Property Owners (CPO),[12] formed by some of the most powerful and entrenched private real estate interests owning land abutting the HL, and the City of New York under the Mayoral administrations of David Dinkins (1990 - 1993) and Rudy Giuliani (1994 - 2001). A former FoHL Board Member, who is both a land use attorney and the current Vice Chair of the Board of Standards and Appeals (BSA),[13] described the CPO as, "...very very formidable. They had resources, they had money, they had experience, and for a brief period of time they had...the entire government of the City of New York on their side" (Interview 10). He is referring to the fact that the Giuliani Administration had announced its support for and intention to demolish the HL. In the last days of his Administration in 2001, Giuliani signed a

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[12] CPO was primarily financed and directed by Jerry Gottesman, owner of Edison Properties, which had significant holdings along the HL in addition to a large array of properties in New York and New Jersey.
[13] BSA is "An integral part of the City's system for regulation of land use, development and construction, the Board of Standards and Appeals was established as an independent board to grant "relief" from the zoning code" (http://www.nyc.gov/html/bsa/html/mission/mission.shtml). The BSA consists of five mayoral appointees and can only issue decisions based on specific actions brought by particular property owners. During my interviews, the BSA was often referred to as being overzealous in granting 'relief' during the Giuliani administration, but was generally considered to have been substantially more restrained during the Bloomberg administration (Interview 6). This may reflect that Bloomberg administration has had great success in bringing about wholesale neighborhood transformations through zoning code 'reform', the establishment of special development districts, such as the one associated with the HL and West Chelsea Rezoning, and in generally using the Department of City Planning under the direction of Amanda Burden as a source of significant pro-development intervention.

demolition order, which had been initially issued through the Office of Environmental Coordination in 1992 during the administration of Mayor David Dinkins ("Future of the Highline," 2001:2). It wasn't until the latter two years of this lengthy interval that FoHL began to achieve its first major successes in the reuse effort. Between 1999 and 2001, the group combined legal action, astute media representation, professional design, and a major reuse study in order both to halt the demolition and to make the case that the HL was worthy preservation cause.

The first step was to delay the demolition of the HL. In 2001, following a resolution by the City Council which called on the Governor, the Mayor, and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) "to take all necessary steps to obtain a Certificate of Interim Trail Use (CITU) from the U.S. Surface Transportation Board (STB)," FoHL jointly filed a lawsuit against the Giuliani administration (New York City Council 2001).[14] Initially the NYS Supreme Court[15] ruled in favor of FoHL, and, though the decision was overturned by the Court of Appeals in 2004, the lawsuit both created time and signaled the turn of key NYC government allies toward preservation and reuse (Friends of the High Line 2004).[16]

Once political support for preservation had been secured, the results of a developed plan for reuse were coordinated and released publicly. The document, "Reclaiming the High Line," framed by a forward written by Mayor Bloomberg and a postscript by Elizabeth Barlow Rogers, who is widely credited with the rejuvenation of Central Park, created significant political and symbolic capital for David and Hammond (Design Trust for Public Space 2002). It was released in conjunction with

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[14] The co-filers of the lawsuit were: The New York City Council, the Manhattan Borough President, and "six neighborhood residents and business owners." They filed on the basis that "the City officials who are preparing to commit New York City to demolition are bypassing ULURP..." (Design Trust for Public Space 2001:55).

[15] Despite the name, this is the lowest level court in the New York State.

[16] The major turn in political support between the Giuliani and Bloomberg administrations, is often cited as deeply dependent on the long-term relationship between Gifford Miller, who became speaker of the City Council in 2002, and Robert Hammond; they were roommates at Princeton. The are a litany of important relationships, including powerful real estate developers like Philip Aarons, the head of Millennium Development Partners (Interview 10).

the creation of a fellowship at Design Trust for Public Space specifically focused on the HL reuse.

The involvement of an established civic advocacy organization is one significant factor in the shift of attitudes about the feasibility of reuse. But, a major conceptual hurdle remained because, as the current Chairman of the FoHL Board put it, "They were trying to save a space that nobody had experienced; you couldn't get there, you couldn't walk it. Unlike the Brooklyn piers, unlike the West side, you couldn't get to this site, you couldn't see it" (Interview 8). This challenge prompted Hammond to contact Joel Sternfeld, a renowned landscape photographer, to document the abandoned HL. Sternfeld's images, taken over the period of one year, project a visual and imaginative power at least as important as any official affiliation (Fig. 3; Fig. 3.1).

Among others, these tactics helped to shape the nascent political and community alliances which were necessary for successful preservation and reuse of the HL. They also help to account for the ability of FoHL to assemble a pro-HL public which largely lacked a concrete experience of the space. While the 'high level' effort to preserve the HL focused on creating political alliances and obtaining a CITU from the STB, the 'street level' effort cannot be separated from the CB4 197-a Plan, also known as the Chelsea Plan (adopted in May 1996) and the following rezoning of West Chelsea. The origin of David and Hammond's relationship and their mutual interest in the HL itself are often connected to the CB4 effort.[17] The Chelsea Plan represented ten years of work "in response to rezoning and

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[17] In this sense, David and Hammond are not so different from the previous generation of anti-demolition advocates. Hammond himself attended - by his own reporting - around 100 Community Board meetings ("New York's High Line" 2010). FoHL also organized a series of "Community Input" forums throughout the reuse effort. This parallel civic process has not continued since the opening of the HL to the public in 2009. And, despite the effort, two first wave preservationists expressed their surprise that FoHL never contacted them or their group for input during the second wave effort (Interview 14; Interview 15). Taken together, this suggests that Hammond and FoHL, while active in the Community Board process, did not see it alone as being capable of sustaining their vision for reuse.

development pressures that threatened significant displacement and loss of neighborhood character" (The Municipal Arts Society 1998:6). As in many cases, the 197-a plan was widely considered by the community to be a prerequisite to a more binding[18] 197-c rezoning process, which ostensibly interprets 197-a plans primarily concerned with zoning into force-of-law rezoning determinations.

The final, and most complex, stages of the second HL preservation and reuse effort related to both the CB4 and City Planning Commission's (CPC) considerations of the West Chelsea Rezoning (WCR). The final approval of the rezoning required both an EIS and approval by the City Council. Three major issues were brought forward in the WCR: affordable housing, height and bulk restrictions on new construction, and the transfer of 'air rights' within a special district anchored by the HL. I will deal with each in turn.

First, affordable housing had been a significant issue throughout the Chelsea Plan process and the WCR effort. The original 197-a plan called for 30% permanent affordable housing, mixing low and moderate income units in an effort to preserve and support income diversity in the neighborhood (Interview 4, confirmed). As one local newspaper described a meeting of between Amanda Burden of the CPC and members of CB4:

> "Central to the plan is preservation of the High Line, one of the most unique parks in the world," said Burden. However, the audience at the O. Henry Learning Center on W. 17th St. treated the hearing as a rally for low- and moderate-income housing.

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[18] The Municipal Arts Society of New York points out that, "The Community Planning Coalition, a group of citywide organizations committed to ensuring greater community control over land use and zoning under the revised Charter, claimed that the *'Rules for the Processing of Plans Pursuant to Charter Section 197-a,'* adopted in 1991, rendered 197-a plans powerless" (The Municipal Arts Society 1998:7). Further, the NYC DCP points obtusely to the merely advisory role of 197-a plans in overall land use transformations in the city, stating that, "Recently the city's growing population and strong real estate market have created interest in private or institutional redevelopment of under-utilized areas. In cases where rezoning is required, these proposals may be in conflict with community plans in various stages of development. Wherever possible, DCP encourages local stakeholders to find common ground regarding their different visions. In cases where there is a 197-a plan and a conflicting rezoning proposal, DCP seeks to ensure that the competing plans are reviewed in a manner that guarantees equal consideration of each" (http://www.nyc.gov/html/dcp/html/community_planning/197a.shtml). This reveals that the DCP and Mayoral agenda will continue to have the power to take precedence over community-based planning processes.

> Many residents carried paper fans with "Affordable Housing" written on them — someone even presented a fan to Burden (Amateau 2004:n.p.).

The divide in priorities signals an important reorientation of traditional community concerns of the Jacobs-era. The very implication that the HL and the percentage of affordable housing were *separate* issues suggests that the HL preservation was seen as an add-on to existing negotiations, rather than a key factor in the transformation of those negotiations into how best to drive development.

David and Hammond's handling of the issue through FoHL, which was active in the WCR process, was coached by their Board:

> So we had to look at some other rezonings that had taken place in the City [which] had affordable housing mechanisms in them and to try to find a way to explain to the folks at [CB4] that [they] may not get the exact same mechanism or the exact same percentage of units of affordable housing in Manhattan then you would get in Greenpoint-Williamsburg for any number of reasons. But that was sort of the potential for a battle between two social goods that we were concerned about. It was walking a fine line (Interview 10).

This is a clear example of both state-led and policy-led gentrification. Bunce (2009) points to "the ways in which urban revitalisation policies serve as discursive guises for gentrification practices, through the use of seemingly progressive policy concepts such as urban regeneration, residential mixing, and urban sustainability" (655). In other words, not only does the affordable housing issue itself become implicated in gentrification, but also the HL becomes a sophisticated 'regeneration vehicle' for combating community opposition to policy-led gentrification.

The use of the HL to guide the rezoning and redevelopment of Chelsea was technically enabled through the second and third issues of the rezoning debate, namely height and bulk restrictions on buildings and the creation of a special mechanism for the transfer of air rights. Through a combination of tactics, the FoHL and development interests succeeded in crafting a mechanism by which the mid-block sections of the Special West Chelsea District (Fig. 4), home to most of Chelsea's art galleries, would be left unchanged, while the areas along the 10th and

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11th Avenues would be rezoned to permit for greater height and bulk and residential uses. This approach allowed for the transfer for air rights, which specify height and bulk according to zoning designation, from the High Line Transfer Corridor (Fig. 4.1).[19] This mechanism, while not unprecedented in the City's zoning history,[20] was the first below 14th Street and the first in a neighborhood with traditionally low to medium-scale development.

These exceptions were justified primarily by making reference to the HL open space development. As the spelled out in legally-required EIS (NYC DCP 2005b) the "purpose and need" of the rezoning, in addition to preserving the HL, was to drive "the development of West Chelsea as a dynamic mixed use neighborhood;" to promote increased residential construction in a former manufacturing district; and to "encourage and support the growth of arts-related uses" (Ch. 1, Pg. 3). To this end, the final EIS endorsed all three elements of the WCR, including the affordable housing element, though at a lower percentage (27%) and a different income mix than had been advocated by CB4. Among the most notable aspects of the EIS was that its complexity - which was a direct result of the inclusion of the HL - obscured the extent to which height, bulk, and market-rate residential uses would be permitted. As the former Co-Chair CB4's Land Use & Landmarks Committee, noted:

> We managed to get concessions...it was a very elaborate set of negotiations...Lee Compton, who was the co-chair at that time, he was a great friend [of the HL] at the time, and I was not. In fact...I said and I still say, "Chelsea is paying a high price for the HL." I mean, *literally* high because of the too [tall] buildings.

He continued:

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[19] Air rights are typically transferred in one of two ways. The first, called a Zoning Lot Merger, allows for the combination of two adjacent lots and the resulting combination of their "as of right" height and bulk restrictions. In other words, it requires no special permission and is handled through normal channels of private property acquisition and construction permitting. The second, more liberal, mechanism was established in 1976 and amended in 2001. This allows for the transfer of air rights form landmarked properties across the street or down the block of the relevant property, provided a common chain of ownership. This process requires a special permit and a public review (Interview 10, confirmed).
[20] The Vice Chairman of the BSA cited the Grand Central Subdistrict and the Broadway Theater District, both located in the Midtown high-rise business core of Manhattan, as comparable (Interview 10).

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> We weren't focused so much on the means as trying to get a reasonable scale. We had thought there was a deal, but now we're seeing that we just hadn't looked that closely [at the deal]...what's there is there, but to expand it, it's breaking the deal [and] will have so much impression, impact on residential southern Chelsea (Interview 4).

Significantly, at the time that the WCR was adopted by the City Council in mid-2005, the City and FoHL were still awaiting final approval from the STB to transfer ownership of the structure.

The final step in the successful preservation of the HL was achieved on the heels of the adoption of the WCR, when the STB issued a CITU and the structure was officially 'rail-banked' under the well-established Rails-to-Trails program, allowing transition into a public open space.[21] The deference of the Federal authority to the municipal planning process marks a clear departure from the Westway-HRP era, when federally controlled funding and approval was instrumental, thereby opening the process more widely to contestation on the basis of nationally significant environmental concerns. Adrian While, Andrew Jonas, and David Gibbs (2004) discuss "entrepreneurial and competitive urban governance" as "the new urban politics" which is "inextricably linked to the rolling back of national state regulation, the cutting loose of localities from centralized fiscal resources and controls, and the triumph of a neoliberal 'growth first' ideology" (551). The best evidence for the triumph of such an ideology in this case is reflected not only in the convergence of the WCR and the second HL preservation effort, but also in the current ownership and management of the HL.

Following the CITU, the HL's private owner donated the structure south of 30th Street, which was put under the jurisdiction of the NYC DPR. The remaining portion of the HL, from 30th to 34th Streets is still owned by CSX/Conrail owing to

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[21] However, in a very interesting preservation twist, the current Vice Chairman of the BSA, former FoHL Board Member and NYC zoning expert points out that "If the MTA took action and the HL would be severed - we would no longer have a connection to the national rail system and wouldn't qualify for rails-to-trails" (Interview 10). This becomes particularly significant in the third round of preservation efforts.

the continued rezoning and redevelopment efforts surrounding the Hudson Yards. There are significant public property owners with land abutting the HL. These include the MTA, which owns the Hudson Rail Yards at the north end of the structure. In early 2005, ten Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP) modifications of zoning were approved for the Hudson Yards, clearing the way for an estimated 24 million sq. feet of new office space, 13,500 new housing units, 1 million sq. feet of new retail space, 2 million sq. feet of new hotel and event space, including an expansion of the Javits Convention Center (Fig. 5; Hudson Yards Development Corporation 2011). In terms of square feet, the proposed development is roughly twice the size of downtown Seattle ("New York's High Line" 2010).

It is as yet unclear how the Hudson Yards project will impact the northernmost section of the HL, but the Hudson Yards Development Corporation has vowed to allow the "public to decide with full knowledge of the cost" of either preservation or demolition (Oxfeld and Idov 2007). The public review process sets the stage for a third phase of HL preservation battles. This third round of preservation is, I argue in the next chapter, connected to both the HL as a case of *ecogentrification* and to the present management and sustainability agenda of the HL.

Down in the Hole:
Ecogentrification, landscape, and indecision
on the unfinished High Line

When you walk through the garden
You gotta watch your back
Well I beg your pardon
Walk the straight and narrow track

-- Tom Waits

In "Walk the Line," I articulated a context for the preservation of the HL through a brief analysis of the community and environmental activism and advocacy surrounding the HRP. I then traced the changing tactics and meanings of preservation and community activism through two generations of HL-focused advocacy. In the final section of "Walk the Line," I pointed to the potential for a third preservation battle focused on the third segment of the HL. I also began to open present tense questions rooted in the ecological design and sustainable management of the park. The present and future HL forms the basis of this chapter, where I develop an analysis of the HL as an urban nature space and as a *space of indecision* (Skinner 2011).

First, I make the argument that the HL is a distinct case of *ecogentrification* (Quastel 2009). This argument is supported and specified through references to "third wave" gentrification literature (Bunce 2009; Smith and Hackworth 2001) and a close analysis of the management and sustainability language surrounding the HL. From this analysis, I move toward the symbolic dimensions of advocating for the unfinished park. This analysis connects the historical preservation aspects of the HL to undergirding ideologies of landscape urbanism put forward by the HL's principal landscape designer (Corner 2006). Discussing the design program not only affirms the HL's status as a driver of *ecogentrification*, it also opens the door for a more

speculative and critical take on the 'unfinished park' and the politics of urban sustainability.

Ecogentrification

Following my argument in the previous chapter, the gentrification of both the West Village and Chelsea is inseparable from related park and open space development projects, namely HRP and the HL. In both cases, the development of new parks from former industrial areas became a significant political space for expressing the anxieties and aspirations of historic preservationists, community preservationists, and gentrifiers (Zukin 2009:11-12). I agree with Zukin (1995), that "Real cities are both material constructions, with human strengths and weaknesses, and symbolic projects developed by social representations" (46). But I want to go further than she does in her critical case study of Bryant Park, in which she primarily indexes the transformation of existing public space against the 'classic' of Central Park, creating an 'ideal type' park in which "the two basic principles: public stewardship and open access" serve as the defining language for a public park(32).

According to these two principles, the HL should satisfy even harsh critics. On the one hand, FoHL took a privately owned and inaccessible structure and opened it to the public as a park. On the other hand, the HL was placed under the management of the NYC DPR and was constructed with a combination of public and private monies.[22] Added to this 'win-win' is the fact that over 70% of its operational budget is provided by FoHL (2011a), easing budgetary pressures on the municipality. Further, the final EIS for the WCR included a 27% affordable housing requirement because of the pressure exerted by CB4. This is what While, Jonas,

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[22] The capital costs of the HL construction to date are: $110 million from the City of New York; $20 million from the Federal Government; and $50 million in funds raised by FoHL ("New York's High Line" 2010)

and Gibbs (2004) call "a value-free vision of 'win-win-wins' between economic growth, social development, and ecological protection" (554).

However, as I began to show in "Walk the Line," the successful preservation of the HL simultaneously shielded and relied upon the broader intention of gentrifying Chelsea. My argument is that, functionally, the HL is *not a park*. Instead, it is a rebranding effort linked to ecological modernization through the language of landscape urbanism, which I address in the next section of this chapter. As the FoHL Board Chairman put it:

> The emergence of West Chelsea as an exciting new neighborhood is something that everybody was looking for. I think everybody understood the power of the High Line to do three things. We understood two of them pretty well, the third has come as a substantial surprise to me. What three things did we know it could do? [O]ne, we knew at a basic level, an apartment or a house that has greater access to light and air is valuable. So just by preserving an open space corridor you increase value...Secondly, being near a park adds value. So if your open space corridor happens to be Duane Park, Madison Park, obviously Central Park, it adds something. The third thing, that we talked about at the time, but dramatically underestimated, was the ability to create a brand and to create a way of thinking about a neighborhood. And the HL has become a brand - and a much more powerful brand and way of defining a neighborhood - than certainly I ever thought it would be. Robert [Hammond] and Josh [David] had an idea of the force of the idea. And part of that comes from a remarkably brilliant execution from [the architects and landscape designer]. Just the force of that design brilliance (Interview 8).

In the long run, the political preservation fight had much less to do with use and access than it does with reconfiguring gentrification processes in a less contestable manner. Confirming this interpretation, Robert Hammond points out that "[FoHL] were very pro business...even though we were sometimes fighting developers, we didn't feel anti-development and we always promoted the economic benefits" ("New York's High Line" 2010). If we consider the first HL battle, which was articulated in terms explicitly seeking to curb development, it is clear that preservation which primarily opposed development could not save the HL. We see this in the reconfiguration of preservation as 'value added' in the quotes above. But to understand the relation of recycling an industrial relic to gentrification more clearly, we need to look to third wave and *ecogentrification* arguments.

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Following Hackworth and Smith (2001), whose analysis is based in NYC, first wave gentrification (1968-1978) was typified by "sporadic and state-led" efforts; second wave gentrification (1978-1993) was characterized by "expansion and resistance" to the first wave, with expansion being marked by extension of gentrification into "frontier" neighborhoods and often being associated with cultural dynamics, like the art market. Chelsea fits partially into the second-wave; in the early 1990s it was already becoming home to many of the City's galleries. However, the wholesale reinvention of the area, necessarily involving residential development and upscale consumption, required lifting zoning restrictions imposed by the previous industrial character of the neighborhood, to promote 'mixed-use' (Quastel 2009:703). This expansion was clearly a point of resistance in the Chelsea Plan process, which sought to make mixed *income*, not mixed *use*, a deliberate target for development (Interview 4; Zukin 2009:25). As the EIS for the WCR made clear, "...the no-action alternative would fall far short of the objectives of the proposed action in encouraging and guiding the development of West Chelsea as a dynamic mixed use neighborhood anchored by a unique, new open space on the High Line" (NYC DCP 2005b:Executive Summary S-47).

Such objectives connect clearly with the third wave (1994-?) of gentrification, which Hackworth and Smith define along four lines: First, a turn to central city neighborhoods, often previously excluded because of restrictive zoning; second, the ability to attract bigger capital interests and real estate developers in a more targeted way; third, the eclipsing of "effective resistance to gentrification" on the basis of class change; and fourth, the increased involvement of the state (2001:468). While each of these dimensions fits the Chelsea/HL case, there is an additional dimension which has become relevant in the years leading up to and including the collapse of the real

estate market in NYC and the U.S. more broadly: ecological sustainability. Articulating the notion of "ecological rent gap," Quastel (2009) points out that "shifts in the costs and valuation of resources can accelerate gentrification" (706). In other words, the extension of large scale development through 'value added' by recycling the abandoned HL refracted a broad notion of sustainability into the new urban development and management strategies of third wave gentrification.

If *ecogentrification* is representative of a growing affinity between municipally directed 'smart growth' plans, including plans for infrastructure and public or open space, and neighborhood scale development plans, then we need to consider the specific discourses of sustainability present in the HL. The FoHL says of their commitment to sustainability: "We like to think of the High Line as a mile-and-a-half-long recycling project. A former industrial structure given new life as a public green space, the High Line takes the idea of reuse to another level" (FoHL 2011b). The language of recycling, regeneration, and the elevation of 'reuse to another level' are directly relatable to well-established discourses of gentrification in both popular and policy contexts (Brownlow 2006; Bunce 2009; Smith 1996:30).

Sustainability is also considered by FoHL in terms of both design and management. FoHL bills the structure as "the world's longest green roof," points to the creation of habitat, the use of native plants, and even the reproduction of the 'micro climate' established by wild-seeded plants which spontaneously took hold on the HL during abandonment, as sustainable characteristics of the project. Each dimension suggests connection to natural science understandings of ecology in urban contexts (Dove 2002; Dove 2006; Parlange 1998; Pickett 1997). The FoHL Chairman pushes it further though:

> [W]hat I mean by the sustainability of the HL is its continued, perpetual utility as a great piece of open space that is available to the public...that's its most important meaning. You know, my generation lived through the near death of Central Park.

> The near death of Bryant Park. We've seen that great parks can come close to dying. So, I don't take for granted and never will that an open space naturally and easily can be sustained as a democratic, accessible, enjoyable place...And it ultimately means its economic sustainability. We worry a great deal about creating an endowment, a long term means of providing financial support for the HL and the economic sustainability. [S]ustainability is both the underlying economics [and] the sustainability of the management of these spaces, so they remain open and accessible, democratic, and an exalting urban experience. That takes money, it takes vision, it takes political accountability, it takes an embracing of a mission (Interview 8).

This complex understanding of the long-term implications of sustainability, taken in the context of his previous insight regarding the rebranding power of the HL for the broader neighborhood, lays the groundwork for an analysis of the symbolic and material spatialities of the HL and the potential for revived resistance to third wave gentrification on an ecological basis. Such analysis also responds to the present reality that the third segment of the HL remains under private ownership. Despite the fact that the CPC voted in June 2010 to approve the City's application for acquisition of the final section in accordance with the ULURP process underway for the development of the Hudson Yards, the successful completion of the park remains uncertain (Epeneter 2010).

The unfinished HL, a cause for speculation

Casting the HL as a driver of *ecogentrification* provides a strong basis for understanding the economic and material significance of the discourse and practice of sustainability. Paying close attention to the landscape design of the space invites a more nuanced and specific understanding of the political potential of sustainability and preservation in the present moment. Following a public design competition, FoHL chose a team of architects and designers led by noted firm James Corner Field Operations. Corner is a strong proponent of landscape urbanism. Where dominant narratives of sustainability turn to a reinvention of industry (Hawken, Lovins, and Lovins 1999; McDonough and Braungart 2002), landscape urbanists see

the "context of global capital, post-Fordist models of flexible production, and informal labor relations" as a situation in which "architecture...becomes commodified as a cultural product, ironically rendering many cities less and less distinguishable from one another" (Waldheim 2006:15). In an ostensible alternative to this tendency, Corner (2006) argues that "landscape drives the process of city formation" (24). As evidence of this ability, Corner offers landscape urbanism's flexibility and lack of explicitly defined professional practices (28).

From this quote, it is clear that landscape urbanists are seeking to define their profession as focused on the very fabric of urban space, and not just particular buildings or singular projects within the city. To situate the significance of this ambition, we need consider Lefebvre's trialectical theory of the production of space. Lefebvre's trialectics are best understood as a series of three connected "moments:" The first is "material social practice;" which contradicts the second, "knowledge, language, and the written word," manifest as "abstraction" and "concrete power;" and is "sublated" through "poesy and desire as forms of transcendence that help becoming prevail over death" (Schmid 2008:33). These three moments relate to Lefebvre's two triadic models of the production of space. In this analysis, I mobilize the first triad, which relates *spatial practice*, *representation of space*, and *spaces of representation*.[23] I situate these terms first in relation to the HL and then, more indirectly, in relation to Clément's landscape theory.

I begin with *spatial practice*, which is the realm of the everyday in which both material and symbolic elements are combined in "networks of interaction and communication" (Schmid 2008:36). Corner offers landscape urbanism as a "space-

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[23] The second triad focuses on *lived*, *perceived*, and *conceived* spaces. Again, according to Schmid (2008): *Perceived space* is not symbolic, but material in that it reflects the "'elements' that constitute 'space'."*Conceived space* is the integration of *perceived space* into a "whole," putting at stake the "production of knowledge." Finally, *lived space* is the realm of practice and, as such, is beyond the reach of theorization. It is in *lived space* that we find an opening for political struggle, which, for Lefebvre is "expressed only through artistic means" (Schmid 2008:40).

time ecology that treats all forces and agents working in the urban field and considers them as continuous networks of inter-relationships" (2006:30). This aspiration reflects a tendency of urban professionals "like the guilds" to "develop spatial strategies and technologies to realize themselves in material space" (Isin 2002:249). The choice of ecology is significant in light of another of Isin's points about professional strategy. He argues that the professions use the city as a "'natural' habitat" through which they "seek their rights to the city not only as their market and jurisdiction, but also as their habitat in the sense that they appropriate spaces in the city for the accumulation of economic, symbolic, and cultural capital" (2002:250). This brings the second term in Lefebvre's spatial trialectic into view. By seeking to define a professional language of landscape urbanism, Corner is aiming for power over the *representation of spaces,* a set of discursive practices - speech acts - which "comprise verbalized forms such as descriptions, definitions, and especially (scientific) theories of space" (Schmid 2008:37).

It is not until Corner puts forth his final ambition for landscape urbanism that the full trialectic comes into view. Despite the obvious connection, Corner's final claim avoids any reference to Lefebvre:

> Materiality, representation, and imagination are not separate worlds; political change through practices of place construction owes as much to the representation and symbolic realms as to material activities. And so it seems that landscape urbanism is first and last an imaginative project, a speculative thickening of the world of possibilities (2006:32).

On face, this is an unproblematic inclusion of the third-term in Lefebvre's three dimensional theory: *spaces of representation*, which are the "(terminological) inversion of 'representations of space'" comprising the "symbolic dimension of space" (Schmid 2008:37). On the one hand, this merely shows that landscape urbanists, like urban planners before them, are engaged in both a discourse and a practice aimed at the production of space. But, on the other hand, when this

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ambition is situated in the context of the HL as *ecogentrification*, an opportunity for critical reflection arises.

The very fact of the HL's abandonment, and therefore of its symbolic and then material reinvention as a driver of development, invites a critical reading on the basis of *indecision* and *inaction* in the context of sustainability. Such a reading tracks both the practical and terminological asymmetry of the preservation and reuse battles, and responds to the unknown outcome of the rezoning and redevelopment process connected to the Hudson Yards. Currently on hold due to a variety of economic and political uncertainties, the Hudson Yards development, and therefore the fate of the third section of the HL, maintains the HL, at least partially, as a *space of indecision*. This term was put forward by Skinner (2011) to specify Clément's notion of the *third landscape*. The *third landscape* exists in relation to the *first landscape*, a space "off limits" to development and slow to grow or change (Clément 2011:281), and the *second landscape*, that of cultivation (Skinner 2011:264). The *third landscape*, developed in the context of 'third estate,' "underlies Clément's interest in landscapes of resistance against either neglect or utilitarian erasure" (Gandy 2009:112).

With the introduction of Clément's landscape triad, we begin to see how HL's mystique and appeal is bound up in what Skinner identifies as the "paradox" of its status as a "*designed* third landscape" (2011:265). In the first preservation battle, there was an implicit, though limited and unconscious, embrace *third landscape* in that preservationists sought primarily to maintain the HL as a tactical resistance to development pressures. But the second preservation and reuse battle inverted this aspiration, seeking to package the HL as a cause for ecological modernization and an anchor of a new approach to gentrification. Clément describes this process:

> Landscape thus funds itself mapped in time and space in a technocratic, and profitable, manner. The planet, object of art and leisure, offers as many playgrounds as we want. We plan a route, install road markers, organize the logistics of

reconception and staffing, alert the insurance agencies. And then launch a publicity campaign. Any territorial fragment will do. One need only detect in it some emblematic feature to reduce it to a logo. Landscape is not a territory of life, it's a slogan (2011:289)

This wry critique presents an opportunity to use the *third landscape* as the basis of a critical response to *ecogentrification*.

As I have shown, *ecogentrification* relies on a notion of sustainability as a form of growth. But in Clément's notion of the *third landscape* we confront sustainability through a different logic: "do as much as possible with, the least possible against" (2011:294). We need not look further than the potential of Hudson Yards to overdevelop - or even destroy - part of the HL to understand that *ecogentrification* may work against the 'success' of the HL in the long run. Before it was developed, the HL was a proper *third landscape*; an object lesson in *finitude écologique*; or, a "metaphor for natural limits." First wave preservationists engaged in "a form of stewardship" which saw the unused HL as a prohibition against further development (Gandy 2009:113). But FoHL and developmentalists deployed symbolic and material capital through professional networks of designers, celebrity endorsements, and growth-first politicians in order to refashion the HL as a brand and an asset to be put to use in an alternative redevelopment.

Regardless of David and Hammond's awareness of the centrality of the HL as a real estate development vehicle, it is clear that both their networking in the fashion and design world and their political connections were held together by the powerful imaginative potential of a lush sidewalk in the sky above Manhattan. But it is precisely the non-human activity[24] against a backdrop of human *indecision* and *inactivity* during the period following industrial fallowing that created the 'wild' urban landscape later exploited by David and Hammond to capture the imaginations of a

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[24]Though sometimes it was human aided. One of the founders of WVRD, described a slingshot device he used to launch packets of wildflower seed from his apartment window overlooking the now demolished southern portion of the space (Interview 6).

public jaded by years of development battles and the exhaustion of Community Board politics. The problem is that designers, for all their vision and potent professional theorization, remain beholden to the growth interests of the capital which finances them. Caught in the growth first mentality, urban professionals are, like the HL itself, in the aporic position of being both pro-growth and pro-sustainability. So far, the solution to this dilemma has been to make sustainability a program of growth. But as this effort betrays its asymptotical limits, is it possible to push landscape urbanism toward a more radical program of socio-ecological sustainability? A program which embraces "socio-ecological 'sustainability'... achieved by means of a democratically controlled and organized process of socio-environmental (re)construction?" (Heynen, Kaika, and Swyngedouw 2006:12). One which is not, as Gandy claims of landscape design of the nineteenth century, in a "complicit relationship with the underlying dynamics of capitalist urbanization" (2009:113).

As of now, all signs point to FoHL defending the longevity of their project under the veil of 'value added.' The third preservation effort, mirroring the success of the second, is being waged on the basis of the brand. Rather than invoking a notion of sustainability which counters, or at least hems in, massive development, the third preservation battle seems likely to become locked in the logic of amenitizing real estate. What will this completed HL become as it gently dips into the West side's newest high-rise, mixed-use, residential and commercial core (Fig. 5)? Predictions of this flavor are decidedly risky, but the more that the HL becomes a model for *ecogentrification* the more it may become a self-congratulatory scheme which glosses the development failures of the past with the moribund language of 'wild nature'.

As a particular species of urban development in the NYC context - which is distinctly lacking innocence - we cannot ignore that the HL reuse embraces some important dimensions of Clément's approach to sustainability. First, it does not waste the capital and energy put into developing the structure in the first place, thereby not trying to work against the structure. Second, it involved significant site-specific systems for energy conservation, water conservation, and generally limited energy use ("New York's High Line" 2010). Third, it creates a space for encounter and spontaneity in a previously inaccessible location. Nevertheless, each of these interventions is overshadowed by the fact that the long term meaning of sustainability for the HL is primarily economic. This is justified through the complexity of the political process; FoHL was pressed to make an economic case in order to achieve support for reuse. One might rightly argue that FoHL, as a vehicle for civic engagement and spatial advocacy, did the best they could, given the exigencies of the production of space and the logic of capitalist urban development. But such an argument sidesteps the tension between crafting a unique space *with* urban nature and driving development *through* the management of urban nature.

Seeking a different framing, we might ask what happens when we think of alternatives to the FoHL reuse strategy in terms of *cultivation* of the *third landscape*. If we follow Clément, the more we take the opportunity to cultivate a space of indecision and to celebrate the unaided development which occurs there, the more we may be able to develop a political language of sustainability which comes to terms with the limits to growth. These are not the limits imagined of an external nature, one which ostensibly is full of 'self-regulating' mechanisms that can be incorporated into technocratic urban management. These are the limits exposed by our own designs. These are the wild-seeded grasslands of the abandoned HL.

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Indeed, it is difficult to imagine that something like the HL would be allowed 'to go to waste'. But can we imagine that an effort as sustained and dedicated as the FoHL might have grown around the long-term sustainability of allowing the HL 'to go to seed'? Before its reuse, the HL was a natural developer. Now, under the imperative of growing sustainably, the publicly accessible HL requires the support of an entire suite of professional managers and the direction of some of the highest paid non-profit directors in the City.[25] Dependent on the private dollars of real estate developers, fashion designers, and new Chelsea residents seeking to solidify their green credentials, the HL is a speculative investment, albeit one backed by a City agency, subject to the whims of its patrons and the winds of the market. Should the economic sustainability of the HL prove to be short lived, what will happen to the well-intentioned and well-maintained surface of the park itself?

The previous generation of privately driven parks projects applied neoliberal management techniques, in part, by moving parks and public spaces away from the oversight of public and relatively democratic city agencies. The new generation is reforming from within. The FoHL mounted a campaign to acquire the park from its private owners through a combination of private-sector growth logic and public authority, making 'the people' more of a 'capital partner' in a joint venture than a beneficiary in a civic project. The abandoned HL amply demonstrated its ability to grow without intervention. The new HL ironically references that wild growth through what Clément (quoted in Skinner) calls "a perverse investment of energy 'entirely direct against its own biological basis'" (2011:262). In part foreclosing more nature-focused alternatives, the HL reuse effort directs enormous resources into the

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[25] Just after the first segment of the HL opened, the New York *Times* ran an article on the compensation of Robert Hammond. The article pointed to the fact that Hammond earned dual compensation for his work for a period of time. On the one hand, he was paid as a private consultant advising the HL on fundraising efforts. On the other, he was paid as an employee of FoHL with a compensation package larger than that of Adrian Benepe, the City Parks Commissioner, who is responsible for 1,700 parks citywide (http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/26/nyregion/26hiline.html?pagewanted=2).

maintenance of a seemingly wild condition where previously no maintenance was required.

I realize here that I am vulnerable to accusations of naiveté. Pro-HL voices might rightly criticize my analysis as avoiding the imperative to reinvent, to stay competitive, to innovate, and to progress incrementally toward the sustainable future without subverting growth. I would not counter with the apocalyptic visions of sea level rise or decimation of populations, as some anti-development advocates have (Interview 3; Interview 16). Nor would I seek a return to the halcyon neighborhoods of old. I would suggest that we turn, as Clément does, to the inveterate nomadism of the vagabond as a basis for a political discussion surrounding sustainability as a global project which grows from the most obvious local situations. Situations like the abandoned HL.

In his notion of "The Planetary Garden" Clément argues that "it is easier - and, above all, more profitable - to identify an enemy against which to direct one's energy than to launch a politics of environmental decontamination" (2011:293-294). In the history of the HL, that 'enemy' has shifted from the individual developer, to the collected property owners, to the 'waste' of an urban infrastructural asset. The reuse of the HL as an anchor of *ecogentrification* sets it on a straight and narrow track for economic growth. This approach backgrounds "the power of vagabonds," those industrious wandering plants whose growth inspired the spatial (re)imagination and material reuse of the structure itself (Clément 2011:295). Clément says of vagabonds:

> I owe it to them to never predict anything that is "understood." The unpredictable nature of their behavior reveals the futility of stopped projects; more generally, it illustrates the biological action by which the everyday unveils a surprise (2011:295).

This space of imagination - of surprise - is a vital dimension of the transformation of the practice and the process of urban (re)development. While the HL reuse has

provided much to celebrate and, in certain moments, has even surprised, the more it succeeds *as development*, the more it will tend to close a space for critical reflection on the meaning of urban sustainability. Particularly a version of sustainability which elevates the support of life itself, even and especially when it is more-than-human, over the imperative of economic growth. Challenging this imperative, I advocate a critical analysis and strategic embrace of indecision through cultivation to envision a space in which more radical discourses and practices of sustainability might obtain. The contours of a practice and discourse of radical sustainability à la Clément are partially evident in the abandoned and unfinished HL. The futility of trying to repackage this socio-ecological opportunity as an economic engine may yet be revealed if all that the project has sought to grow erases that which was already flourishing.

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#	Date	Name	Organization or Affiliation	Position
1	4/5/2011	Simeon Bankoff	Historic Districts Council	Executive Director
2	4/6/2011	Jared Della Valle	Della Valle Bernheimer	Partner
3	4/10/2011	Ben Green	Federation to Preserve the Greenwich Village Waterfront and Great Port	Founder
4	4/11/2011	Ed Kirkland	Mahnattan Community Board 4	Co-Chair (former)
5	4/11/2011	Stu Waldman	Federation to Preserve the Greenwich Village Waterfront and Great Port	President (former)
6	4/12/2011	Zack Winestine	West Villagers for Responsible Development; Greenwich Village Community Task Force	Co-chair; President
7	4/15/2011	Matt Urbanski	Michael van Valkenburgh& Associates (Landscape Design)	Principal
8	4/18/2011	John Alschuler	HR&A Advisors; Friends of the High Line	Chairman; Chairman
9	4/19/2011	AJ Pietrantone	Friends of the Hudson River Park	Executive Director

| #	Date	Name	Organization or Affiliation	Position
10	4/19/2011	Chris Collins	Board of Standards and Appeals; Friends of the High Line	Vice Chairman; Board Member (former)
11	4/25/2011	Noreen Doyle	Hudson River Park Trust	Acting President
12	4/25/2011	Rob Pirani	Regional Plan Association	Vice President for Environmental Programs
13	4/26/2011	Katy Bordonaro	West Village Houses Tenants Association; Greenwich Village Community Task Force	President; organizer
14	4/28/2011	Michele Herman	West Villagers for Responsible Development; Far West Village resident	Member/ organizer (former)
15	4/28/2011	Jonathan Kuhn	West Villagers for Responsible Development; NYC Department of Parks and Recreation; Far West Village resident	Member/ organizer (former)
16	5/4/2011	Marcy Benstock	Clean Air Campaign	Founder

The general focus of this research project is the politics of urban public space (re)development, with a specific focus on the Hudson River Park and the High Line as two important examples of so-called adaptive reuse parks. My aim is to gather a range of perspectives and detailed information on the social, political, economic, and architectural/planning dimensions of realizing both spaces. I am also interested in the extent to which these parks can be described in terms of urban 'sustainability', which has become a widely used term among academics, policymakers, design professionals, and activists. Despite its ubiquity, there is not broad consensus on how to render a sustainable city or what role, if any, parks can and should play in that process. What is certain is that urban public space, and parks in particular, continue to be at the center of debates regarding neighborhood transformation, real estate development, and quality of life issues; my hope is to understand how those debates have been staged, by whom, and to what ends.

Potential scope/focus of interview

Naturally, interviews will vary according to the specific knowledge of the interviewee. Below are points of interest and general topics for discussion. Diversions and expansions are welcome.

> Perceptions and constructions of nature and environment in development debates
> Planning and design process, competitions, and implementation
> Economic and political structures/vehicles for redevelopment
> The role of infrastructure and/or perceptions of nature in development
> Alliances among advocates, activists, and/or planners
> Perceptions and awareness of uses of abandoned waterfront/High Line
> Alternative and artistic use of waterfront/High Line
> The waterfront/High Line as a space/driver for real estate development
> First-hand accounts of social justice organizing on the waterfront
> The relationship between public housing and newly developed housing in the High Line district
> Challenges to the completion of the Hudson River Park/High Line
> The architectural imagination of the waterfront/High Line in New York City
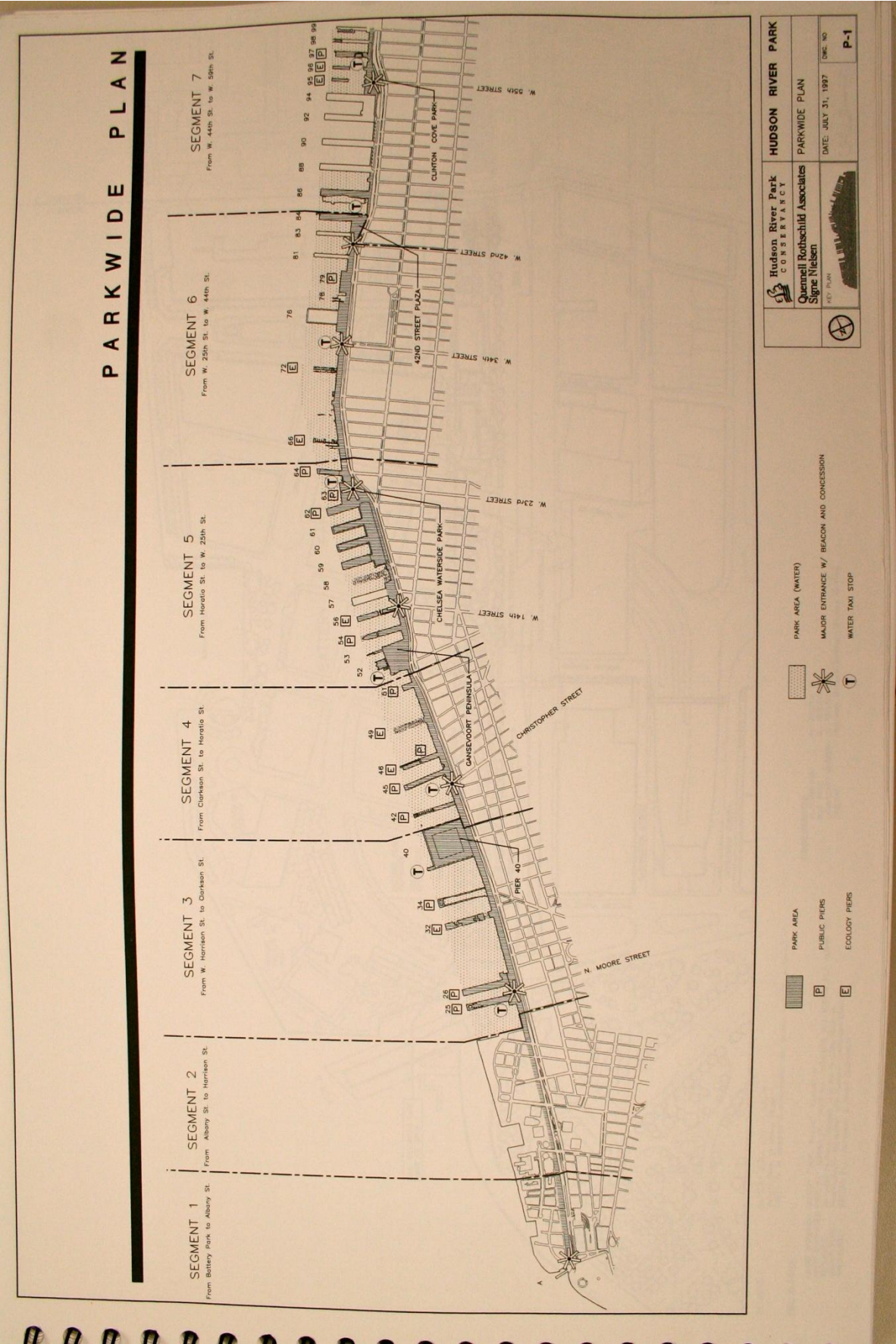
Figure 1 Map of High Line and surrounding area
(Source: Friends of the High Line)
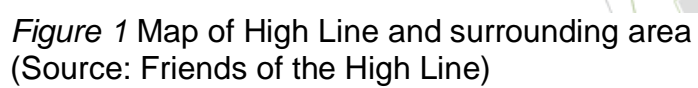
Figure 1.1 Planning Map of Hudson River Park
(Source: Hudson River Park Trust, photo by the author)

Figure 2 Construction photo of High Line, 1933
(Source: Friends of the High Line)

Figure 2.1 Construction photo of High Line, 1933
(Source: Friends of the High Line)

Figure 2.2 A train passing through Bell Labs on the HL, circa 1940
(Source: Friends of the High Line)

Figure 3 "A Railroad Artifact, 30th Street, May 2000," Joel Sternfeld
(Source: Friends of the High Line)

Figure 3.1 "Looking South on a May Evening (Starrett-Lehigh Building), May 2000,"
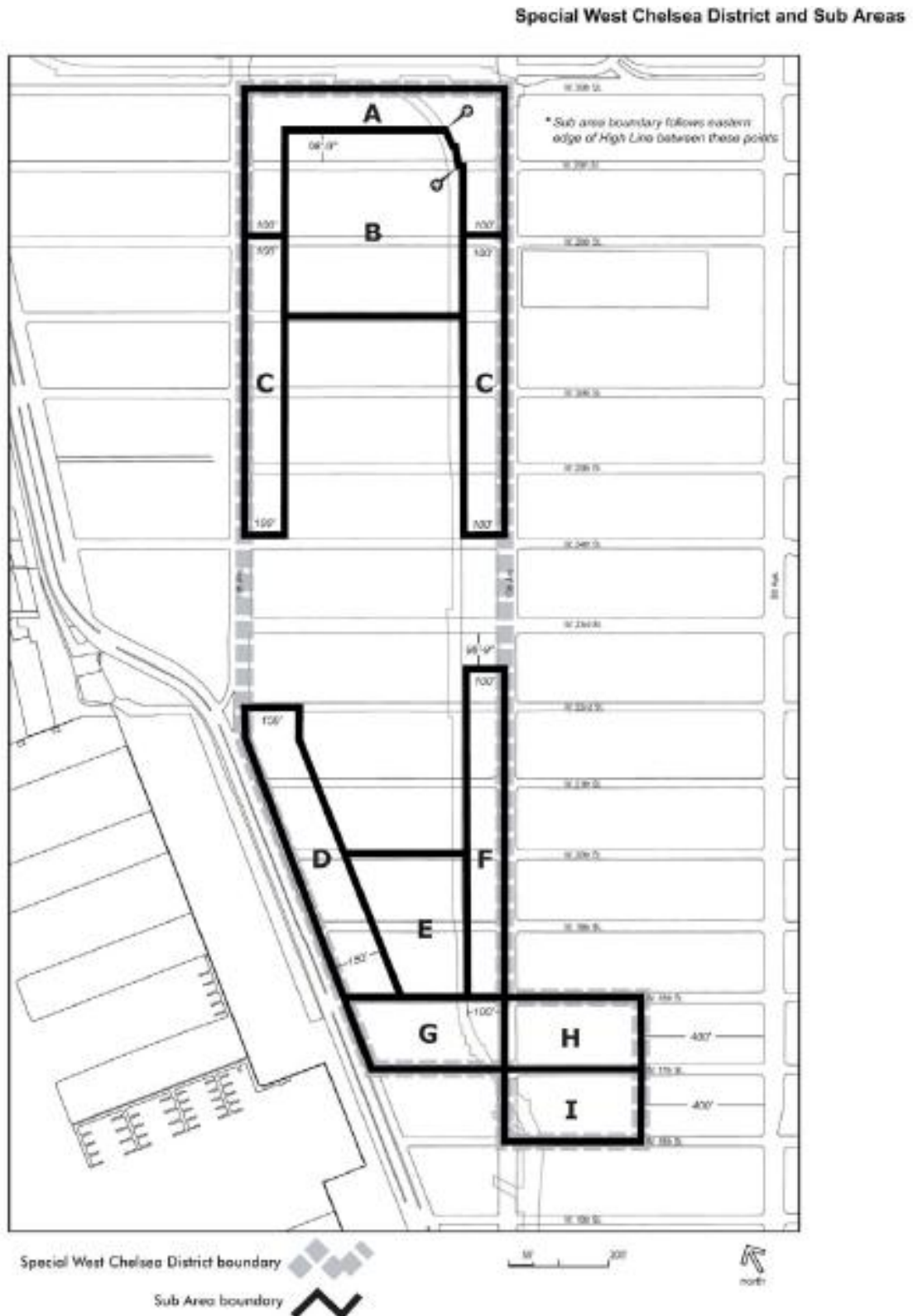Joel Sternfeld (Source: Friends of the High Line)

Figure 4 The Special West Chelsea District, with sub area boundaries
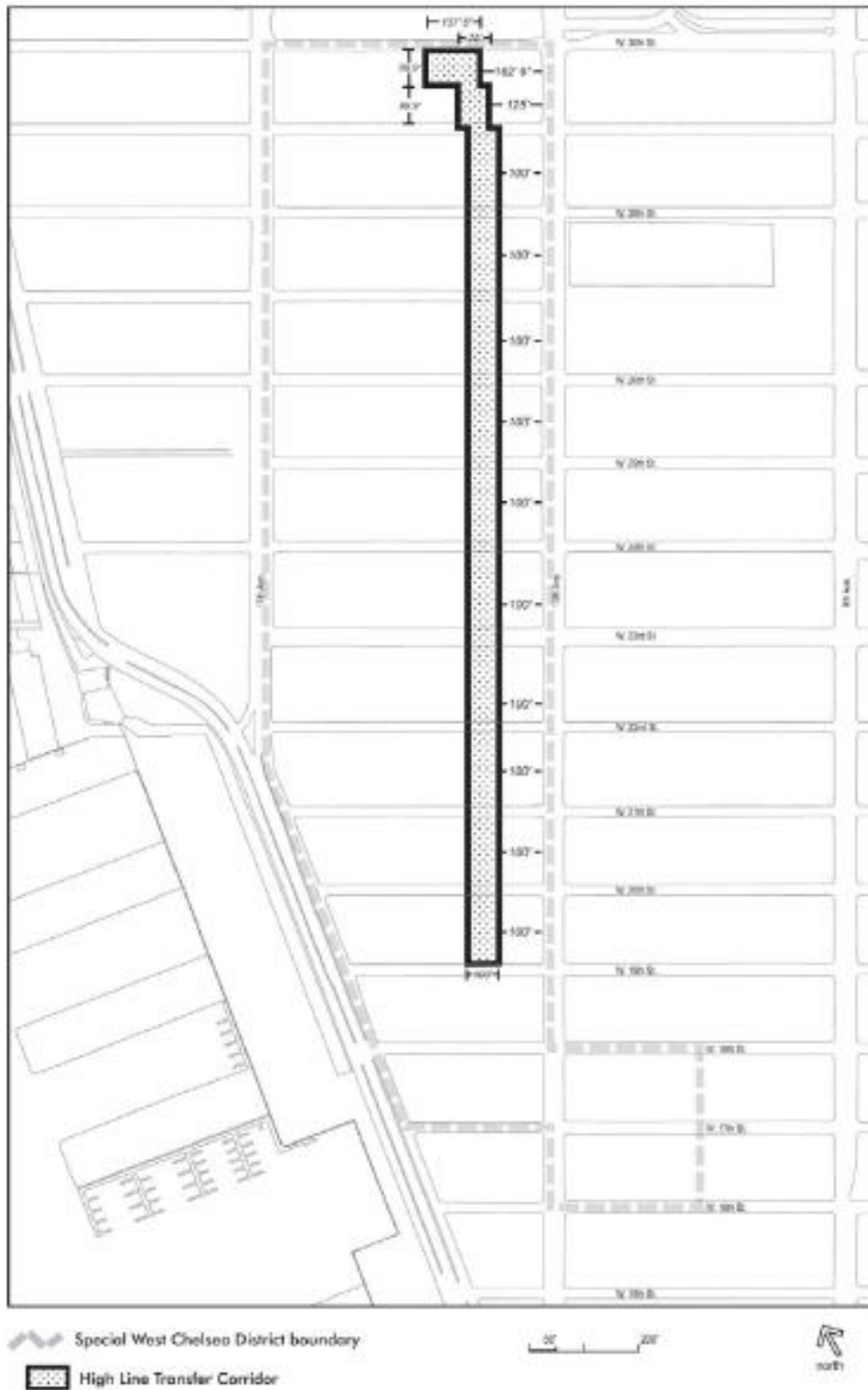(Source: Final HL EIS, excerpted by author)

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Figure 4.1 The High Line Transfer Corridor, showing Special District boundary
(Source: Final HL EIS, excerpted by the author)

Figure 5 Segment Three of the HL seen from the HRP