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A Lefebvrean Approach to Power in South Central Farm

Abstract: This paper examines the case study of South Central Farm in Los Angeles, and the contestation over what Henri Lefebvre called the “Right to the City”. Examining the case study in its context of widespread political, economic and judicial corruption, the paper questions why only a Neoliberal approach to urban gardens is considered legitimate in urban planning. It further interrogates this situation by applying Steven Lukes’ three levels of power, and thus attempts to understand the abuse of power in this situation. By building on Karl Marx’s work on use and exchange value, the paper argues that pure exchange (monetary) value of land cannot be considered outside of the social, cultural and citizen use value of that land. The author utilizes Sharon Zukin’s work, as well as other studies to bring use and exchange values back into a dialectic, and argue that the use value of the garden is actually far more financially profitable than the pure sale price of the land.

When a group of low income, mainly Latino immigrants were given plots on a waste-strewn land in the industrial ghetto of South Central Los Angeles in 1992, they were not seeking a three-year political battle. For eleven years, the farmers grew traditional subsistence crops otherwise impossible to obtain in the region, and developed a community space for physical safety, food security and Latino culture. However, when the land suddenly became economically valuable in 2003, it transformed South Central Farm (SCF) from an immigrant community space into a political contestation over the “Right to the City”.¹ Relying on the philosophy of Henri Lefebvre and attempting to bring exchange value back into dialectical relation with use value, I argue that the use of the land the labor of the citizens who work there, and its value as a social good are just as “concrete” and legitimate and valuable as the economic price of the one time sale.² SCF thus represents an example of and argument for the legitimate “use value” of citizens as a space of resistance against the purely monetary “exchange value” of the city’s neoliberal paradigm.

The entire history of the SCF can be considered a microcosm of this struggle between neoliberal “exchange value” and citizen “use value”.³ To summarize, in 1985 the City of Los Angeles exercised eminent domain to purchase the land for $4,786,372 from the Alameda-Barbara Investment Company. This was initially for the “development of a trash-to-energy incinerator called the Los Angeles City Energy Recovery (Lancer) Project.”⁴ However, after extensive community protest, public hearings, and “and a health-risk assessment...the City

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² Henri Lefebvre, Dialectical Materialism, John Sturrock, trans., (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1968), 77.
³ Karl Marx, A Contribution to the Critique of Pure Economy, 41-3, translated in David Harvey, Social Justice and the City, (London: Edward Arnold, 1976), 155. Use and Exchange Value will be examined in greater detail shortly.
Council and mayor agreed to terminate the incinerator project” in 1987. In 1992, amidst great racial and civil unrest, the city responded to the Rodney King riots in part by offering fourteen acres of land for immigrant use as a community garden, to be administered by the Regional Food Bank. As one elected “farm organizer” Tezozomoc explains, “in 1992, after the uprising, [then-mayor] Bradley mitigated the slant of the community in a symbolic way by saying, ‘Yeah, there’s a lot of inequities in the community, so let’s see what you guys can do with this [land].’” The result was a “14-acre urban farm divided into over 350 family-maintained plots that grew an extensive variety of produce and medicinal plants unique to the region.” At least two thousand local people living at or below the poverty level derived their daily subsistence from the farm. The farm provided food security in what has been called a “food desert”- an industrialized or urban ghetto where groceries are difficult or impossible to locate, but which are typically “oversaturated with unhealthy food outlets”. Tezozomoc refers to the garden as his “temple” and his “way of life”, for it also provided community, safety, and a place to preserve immigrant culture in a predominantly industrial, violent and incredibly poor section of the city. While these are not exchange values, they were significantly more important to residents and improved their quality of life much more than the monetary cost of the land or a trash incinerator.

Despite three failed attempts by Ralph Horowitz, a partner in the former Alameda-Barbara Investment Company, to sue for breach of contract and thus return of the land, the courts deemed that a fair price had been paid, and the land was being used for public purposes as stipulated in the 1986 seizure by eminent domain. In 1994 the city sold the land for thirteen million to the Harbor Department for continued farm use. However, when “the Alameda Corridor, a rail-cargo expressway linking the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach to the inland transcontinental rail” was planned to run alongside the South Central Farm, the land became much more valuable for “commercial or industrial development, pitting the environmental and social value of the community garden against the profit potential of developing the land for global-trade use.” Soon after, and despite the three court rulings against his suit, a surprise 2003 closed negotiation, led by ward Councilor Jan Perry, suddenly sold the land back to Horowitz for just “over $5 million – less than half the amount for which the land was sold to the Harbor Department in 1994” and still less than “the $6.6 million” the City Council described as “less than fair-market value”. In this seemingly innocuous trade it is important to consider

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5 Ibid.
7 Note that roles within the farm were elected democratically, with no single or hierarchical leadership. However, some elected members, such as Tezozomoc, were more active as media spokespeople, and thus are often mistakenly cited as “leaders”. Jessica Hoffman and Christine Petit, “14 Acres Conversations Across Chasms in South Central Los Angeles,” Clamor Magazine, Spring 2006, 3, http://clamormagazine.org/issues/36/people.php.
9 Ibid. The qualification for allotment of a farm plot was an income no greater than 150% of the local poverty level, as determined by the Emergency Food Assistance Program, which “helps supplement the diets of low-income needy people”. See Irazabal and Punja, fn 3.
11 Hamilton Kennedy, The Garden.
12 Hoffman, “History of the South Central Farm”, 1.
13 Ibid. Note the amount was $5,050,000.
several factors. First, the city no longer owned the land, as it had been sold to the Harbor Department in 1994, and the sale of such land was supposed to follow extensive public-consultation procedures, which were ignored. In addition, the land was worth more than twice that amount, as reflected in the 1994 sale. Finally, Horowitz’s case had been rejected in court three times, leaving the city with no need to settle this “meritless lawsuit” out of court.\footnote{Hoffman, “History of the South Central Farm”, 2.}

In addition to, and perhaps explaining these factors, there was also extensive corruption in the sale of the land. The ward councilor Jan Perry was tied to a prominent activist Juanita Tate. Together they promised to create a soccer field on the land, which was one of the city’s predominant discursive arguments for selling the land to Horowitz, who had also offered to give three acres of the land for a soccer field. However, Tate and Perry’s four previously planned soccer fields had involved almost five million dollars of city investment, while only about five thousand dollars were spent on each field, and no fields matched the promised eight hundred person seating capacity or development. In fact, no grass was even planted, and the fields were described by community members as merely patches of “dirt with a few white lines”\footnote{Hamilton Kennedy, The Garden.}. “Community space” and “soccer fields open to everyone” seemed to be a discursive way to disguise financial corruption. For example, Tate’s son was soon under investigation for fraud and corruption in the handling of funds for these fields, as well as for his own personal “real estate expertise fee of $250,000.”\footnote{Ibid.} The city issued at least three requests for the return of this money, while auditors searched for over two million in missing funds from the project. Hamilton’s 2008 documentary “The Garden” further explains how Tate quite aggressively pushed for the sale of the land to Horowitz, contingent upon her personal involvement in the development, even after the city had rejected his suit three times. While the city celebrated the values of an “objective” court settlement and the creation of “community space” for soccer fields, the farmers rightly pointed out that these “neutral” decisions of the legal and political system were anything but.

Horowitz planned to sell the land to Forever 21, a company that proposed to build a 643,000-square-foot warehouse on the site of the farm. As evidence of further corruption, the August 18, 2008 Los Angeles Times reported that the Mayor simultaneously “negotiated on behalf of the Farmers with the developer of a Forever 21 distribution center” while also accepting $1.3 million “from the company that stood to gain the most if he lost that negotiation to promote his pet projects.”\footnote{Dakota Smith, “South Central Farm Battle Continues: Farmers Call for Investigation”, Monday August 18, 2008, in “Curbed Los Angeles”. Accessible via http://la.curbed.com/archives/2008/08} Do Won (Don W.) Chang, the founder of Forever 21 was a

It would be extremely beneficial here to trace out the race politics between the African-American Jan Perry, representing a constituency of 9% African Americans, and the over 70% Latino (unrepresented) population of the ward. However, for purposes of brevity, I unfortunately cannot engage with this aspect. I would refer readers to Hamilton’s 2008 The Garden documentary for a more in depth study. I would also suggest engaging with Talja Blokland’s study “Gardening with a little help from your (Middle Class) friends”, in Networked Urbanism: Social Capital in the City. Furthermore, see Irazabal and Punja’s assertion that “today, in a neighborhood in demographic transition from majority black to majority Hispanic, many African Americans, including members of the CCSCLA (all blacks), perceive the growth of Latina/os in their neighborhood as a threat that displaces them and brings about less access to jobs and services.” Irazabal and Punja, 14. Finally, Sharon Zukin’s Naked City also explores the cultural and racial elements of urban gardens. Overall, while racial tensions in urban gardens would provide an excellent continuation of this research, it is unfortunately not within the scope of this examination.
“registered City Hall lobbyist”, at that time, and Councilwoman Jan Perry is also on “record as receiving contributions from Forever 21 and its founder” during this time. Farm leader Rufina Juarez laments this corruption, explaining that the mayor “used the Farm as a backdrop for his mayoral campaign, he promised $5M to help purchase the Farm, he took over negotiations between Horowitz and the Annenberg Foundation. And he used the Forever 21 money to advance his political agenda and his political future.” A 2008 report by “City Controller Laura Chick chastised the Mayor, the City Attorney, and the City Council for not using of $129M in fees, (QUIMBY Fees), collected from developers for parks and recreation, monies that could have saved the South Central Farm if the Mayor and City Council had chosen to do so.” For these reasons, in 2008 the farmers requested an ethics inquiry into Jan Perry and the mayor, who they believe had “collude[d] to throw the land transfer to Horowitz”.

Aligned with civil rights lawyer Dan Stormer, the farmers sought injunctions and legal measures to challenge the sale of the land. While two courts ruled in their favor, and the city’s lawyer admitting to the judge that the sale was in fact “a secret”, and did not follow standard procedures for the sale of public land, Horowitz’s appeal to the Farmer’s injunction was approved in June 2006. Even though Dan Stormer explained that it was “very rare” for the city to renege on previous rulings, especially considering that “we have the law on our side, we have moral righteousness on our side”, the court of appeals nonetheless “reversed the trial court’s order”. What is particularly notable here is that, as Stormer explains,

one of the indicators that they knew their opinion was not correct was that they chose it to be not published. You cannot go to the law books to find this decision. As a precedent to be followed in other cases, this case does not exist.

Furthermore, attorney Patrick Dunlevy explains that, “despite repeated requests, he has never seen documents detailing the negotiations that led up to the signed settlement agreement.” Despite the city’s dismissal of Horowitz’s three suits, and the two judges who ruled in favor of the farmers against the “secret” sale of the land, which “does not pass the smell test”, and did not follow city procedure, the sale went ahead, undocumented and against standard public and legal procedure. Horowitz later agreed to sell the land to the farmers for $16.3million (three times what he paid for it), but once the money was raised by the farmers, in conjunction with the Trust for Public Land, he refused to sell, citing racist remarks against himself. On June 14, 2006, over “250 LAPD and Sheriff Dept officers flooded the surrounding area outfitted in riot gear and

sweh centra battle continues farmers call for investigation.php. See Also The Los Angeles Times, “Forever 21 development on South Central Farm site is protested,” August 18, 2008.

18 Ibid.
19 Ibid.
20 Ibid.
21 Stormer, Civil Rights Lawyer, in Hamilton Kennedy, The Garden.
22 Hoffman, “History of the South Central Farm”, 2.
23 Hamilton Kennedy, The Garden. Sources indicate that Jan Perry influenced this decision, while others suggest the Mayor was involved, but the documents remain unavailable. It is interesting to note that the Mayor stood to profit over $1.3million from the company whose warehouse Horowitz was planning to develop. Furthermore, in 2008 the city’s Planning Department approved the use of the land for this Forever 21 warehouse, “claiming that the 635,000 square foot project, with 2500 trips from diesel-spewing big rigs, would have no environmental impact on local residents”. See also Smith, 2008.
Forty farmers and local activists standing vigil were beaten and arrested, and the land was bulldozed. To this date it sits unused.

To analyze this historical case study, I utilize Henri Lefebvre’s concepts of use value as applied to the citizens’ Right to the City. Lefebvre builds upon Marx, who explains

use value and exchange value—have been examined, but each one separately. The commodity, however, is the direct unity of use value and exchange value, and at the same time it is a commodity only in relation to other commodities. The exchange process of commodities is the real relation that exists between them…The commodity is a use value for its owner only so far as it is an exchange value. 

Note here the dialectical relation in which monetary cost must be tied to the “unity” between use and exchange values. In neoliberal capitalism, “commodity, money, or capital more generally, end up ‘weighing down on human relations’”, however Marx explains that these supposedly external values are themselves “the expression of these very relations”.

Lefebvre argues that to examine only the cost of the land and the “objectivity of the commodity, of the market and of money” is a typical but misdirected “Fetishism, which is attached to the products of labour” when “produced as commodities”. However, as he clarifies, “the duplication of value into use-value and exchange-value therefore develops into a complex dialectic”, and “these two aspects of value are never completely separate”. Instead, the exchange value can only be considered only in relation to use value. To separate these values creates a situation of “contradiction”, which we see in the sale of land against what I shall argue is the infinitely greater value of the garden. In contrast to the discourses used by the state in justifying the sale of “private property”, I will attempt to trace out the interrelated use and exchange values dialectically in the following pages.

However, the following analysis will not be merely focused upon this clash of paradigms. While it is tempting to view the conflict only in these simple terms, one must take into account the multiple effects of power. Even while Lefebvre “imagines inhabitants as the majority and hegemonic voice”, the “current regime” is still a situation “in which capital and state elites control the decisions that produce urban space”. To perform an in-depth analysis of the conflict in SCF, we must focus upon those power relations.

Stephen Lukes’ presents a three-
dimensional model of power.\textsuperscript{32} The first level is a “visible”, active, coercive power, such as police, legal decisions, and the policy decisions made by states. The second is a “hidden” form whereby “certain powerful people and institutions maintain their influence by controlling who gets to the decision making table and what gets on the agenda”. It determines which discussions are possible and legitimate in society, and which groups are valued or devalued as a force in decision making. The third is an insidious and invisible power, more reminiscent of governmentality, which shapes “the psychological and ideological boundaries of participation.” It influences how people think about their place in society, their social standing, and their acceptance of the status quo.\textsuperscript{33} Rather than insisting that power is merely one of these aspects, I would argue that the city was able to utilize the first two levels of power, by providing the legal and institutional framework to judge the case and sell the land and by dictating whose voice was heard. While they attempted to control the third level, by reinforcing legitimizing norms of industrial and economic progress as the only a legitimate good, the farmers refused this normalization and struggled for their own notion of a Right to the City and the use value of space.

However, this third order of power was ubiquitous in the planning norms of urban space. Lefebvre explains, “capitalism seizes the whole space... it dominates it and modifies it for exchange”.\textsuperscript{34} In this colonial paradigm, social space must become a product of capitalist production, and “the place of the reproduction of the relations of production...it is the occasion for and the instrument of a form of planning (land development), of a logic of growth.”\textsuperscript{35} For the city to relinquish control of space to such subversive individuals and their values would be to release control and power over not only the city, but also the entire rhetoric and “logic of growth”. It would effectively be the acknowledgement of defeat of neoliberalism as a value in this social space.

SCF thus constituted a “trial by space”, wherein a group is given legitimacy and constituency by their control of a space. “Groups... cannot constitute themselves, or recognize one another, as ‘subjects’ unless they generate (or produce) a space”.\textsuperscript{36} Hence, denying certain people the right to public space is instrumental in controlling their discourse. Consequently, the subversive use of space was not only a motion against power, but was the basis of legitimacy for the farmers. To remove that space from them was to remove their power base. As Deputy Mayor Larry Frank explained on camera,

“[Councilwoman] Jan Perry ...really truly does not want the folks that remain here at the farm to be vindicated in their rights. She really knows that these are people that will not ever be supportive of her, and she doesn’t want to empower them.”\textsuperscript{37}

and unjust deals. Hence, I rely instead upon Lukes, whose broader conception of power includes Foucault’s governmentality, while also allowing a more widespread study and application of the concept.

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 236.
\textsuperscript{36} Henri Lefebvre, \textit{Production of Space}, (Malden: Blackwell, 1991), 416.
\textsuperscript{37} Hamilton Kennedy, \textit{The Garden}. 
Thus the city exercised all three levels power to eliminate the SCF as a space of subversion, and to undermine the farmers as a powerful group of minority but threatening political actors who propounded a paradigm incompatible with neoliberalism.

As the Farmers reacted to what they perceived to be a rampantly corrupt misuse of power, the land came to represent subversion against the dominant culture of the city. As farm organizer Tezozomoc explains,

[it] speaks very much to the nature of Los Angeles politics... People addressing their own needs in an autonomous way has created a kind of a subversive situation where we are challenging the fundamentals of consumerism.\(^{38}\)

As one farmer explains, “all of a sudden, people feeding themselves has become very political. People didn’t set out to become political; what they’re doing became political. Those are the best struggles because they’re not artificial. People are saying, ‘I just wanna feed my family. I wanna grow healthy food’.”\(^{39}\) Tezozomoc, who once simply wanted healthy food, instead began to view the farm as an act “against the current” of values in industrialized ghettos, and explains that “[he] think[s] that the struggle is really to change the perspective and the ideas about land use. … Can we make policy that is within the realms of sustainability? Can we fit these ideas that accommodate the needs of a community?”\(^{40}\) The heart of the struggle over SCF began to represent a moral issue about whether the state prioritized its citizens and their wellbeing, lives, and right to a home or only the short term monetary amount of a private land sale. In this paradigm the value of a sustainable city unfortunately became a subversive position, set politically and violently against a state guided only by one legitimate conception of worth.

However, to resist this conception of pure exchange value, Sharon Zukin presents the historical activist concept of “sweat equity”, whereby citizen residence and physical work on garden land should be considered as equally legitimate of a claim as monetary ownership. Standing outside of a traditional conception of legitimacy as determined only by monetary contribution, Zukin argues the alternative use value that those who work land should have a say in its future. Citing the example set by New York City, which used “sidewalk improvements” and “trees planted” as part of its own calculated monetary contribution to matching state funds, activists similarly argued that their work creating topsoil, clearing vacant lots, planting, as well as the “economic value of the debris they had recycled and the compost they had made” was equally legitimate.\(^{41}\) Similarly, while the SCF did not own the land upon which they had worked, their transformation of it from a debris strewn field into a viable urban community, as well as their decade of sweat equity should be considered an alternative but equally viable case for a legitimate voice in this contestation.

Zukin’s study of New York presents a powerful parallel to this case for sustainability in urban citizenship. She argues that in order for a city to sustain its “soul”, it must allow citizens to “put down roots”. This could be possible through democratic “public-private stewardships”, for example, which would sustain what she calls the “authenticity”, charm, or Jacob’s so-called

\(^{38}\) Hoffman and Petit, “14 Acres Conversations Across Chasms in South Central Los Angeles,” 3.
\(^{39}\) Ibid.
“character” of a city by giving residents a legitimate voice in planning decisions. State-led initiatives would then need to focus not only on economic growth from above, or at encouraging corporate investment, but also at ensuring that citizens are able to maintain life within the city, thereby preserving that same character that city-branding campaigns capitalize upon. Similarly, the Farmers in SCF are asking for a Right to the City, which would be made possible by policies that reflect the perspectives of sustainability, food rights, and communities, rather than simply for individual economic profit and growth. Such a perspective would cease to alienate those citizens who themselves originated the “roots” of a city’s character, atmosphere, and livability.

One might argue that such a conception of the use value of space is utopian and impractical, and such a criticism does seem to resonate. However, it is useful to remember Geographers Jamie Peck and Adam Tickell’s explanation that Neoliberalism also began as a “starkly utopian intellectual movement” that was nonetheless “aggressively politicized by Reagan and Thatcher in the 1980s”. This “new religion of neoliberalism combines a commitment to the extension of markets and a logic of competitiveness with a profound antipathy to all kinds of Keynesian and/or collectivist strategies.” Aggressive state downsizing, an emphasis on free market globalization and economic expansion and the prioritization of industrial growth and private profit characterized an entirely new form of economic organization. Furthermore, the model disproportionally and unrealistically targeted only one small segment of society, to the detriment of considering the majority of citizens who must also pay taxes and reside in city space. Lefebvre thus merely presents the other side of a very unbalanced current perspective, reminding us that neoliberalism, as a recent, limited, and “starkly utopian” historical invention was not always the only unquestionable and “legitimate” voice in power struggles.

Indeed, far from being idealistic, by considering use and exchange values in Lefebvre’s dialectical way, we can see that the economic value of keeping the garden was far higher than the one-time monetary sale price of the land. Voicu and Been’s 2008 study is one example of a growing body of research indicating the rapidly increasing land values of neighborhoods near community gardens. They found “that community gardens have, on average, significant positive effects on surrounding property values, and that those effects are driven by the poorest of host neighborhoods (where a garden raises neighboring property values by as much as 9.4 percentage points within five years of the garden’s opening).” Furthermore, “the impact [of gardens in a neighborhood] increases over time” and “gardens have the greatest impact in the most disadvantaged neighborhoods”. To put this into more concrete terms, in New York City, Voicu and Been calculate the benefits of both tax revenue and increase in land prices “generated in the 1,000-foot ring [around a garden] total… $2 million per garden” per year. It is important to note that these findings are based on small community gardens, with a median size of six thousand square feet, or less than one quarter of an acre. At fourteen acres, SCF would have resulted in more than one hundred twelve million dollars per year in tax revenue and land price increases, which is more than twenty two times the one-time sale price of the land.

42 Zukin, 246.
43 Lefebvre, Writings on Cities, 34.
45 Ibid.
47 Ibid., 276.
48 Ibid., 244.
Zukin also argues that post-industrial cities have to market their individual “terroirs”, capitalized upon citizen initiatives as possibilities for “authentic” and “destination culture” tourism.\(^49\) Such branding often relies on working class and thus inexpensive neighbourhoods, where the presence and activities of artists create an atmosphere that attracts tourist seeking an “authentic” urban experience.\(^50\) However, as soon as these small nooks become popular, they are rapidly gentrified, with the consequential price increases causing homogenization, as large chain stores replace the original “mom and pop” bastions of authenticity.\(^51\) Zukin argues that rent controls are needed to maintain the chic nature of working class neighbourhoods as “authentic” tourist attractions, and to allow the citizens who created them to remain in their homes, which also retains the marketable character of a community. The presence of these citizens must be considered as economically valuable as the purchasing price of the now more-valuable land they live on. Similarly, in order to capitalize upon the character of a truly unique city space such as SCF, the city should have maintained that space as culturally invaluable, rather than destroying it for a fraction of its potential worth. In a largely post-industrial era where cities are scrambling to brand themselves as tourist attractions, to remove a free source of “character” in favour of a one-time economic profit ironically eliminates the city’s most viable source of future income.

In addition to taxes and tourists, this quantitative argument can also be made in terms of city services. Irazabal and Punja’s fieldwork claims that gardens not only “increase the value of adjacent properties”, but also “provide stabilization for neighbourhoods”, replace the maintenance costs of city parks, provide exercise and therapy for residents, reduce police costs due to less crime, adaptive reuse empty lots, provide “greater rates of home ownership”, purify air and water, control noise and temperature, and cleanse brownfields, all of which would otherwise be on the city’s budget.\(^52\) To calculate only one of these examples, one elected Farmer-Organizer Albert Tlatoa explains that all the other local parks were off limits due to rampant drugs, alcohol—all the violence that occurs here in South Central. Basically, this environment has provided, for my family and for many other families, safety. A lot of families, this is the only safe environment they actually know of. Here, parents will be working on their crops and allowing their kids to run off and not worry about them.\(^53\)

In a city where the annual state cost of an inmate is $47,102, and in a garden located in the poorest and one of the most violent areas of the city, should even ten of the estimated two thousand people who benefitted from the safety of the farm avoid jail time, the city would be saving $471,020 yearly.\(^54\) Assuming only crime prevention and no other tax, environmental or social good, the garden would have saved the city its monetary price in only ten years. In terms of city maintenance and preventing costs to social services, urban gardens are thus highly desirable cheap long-term alternatives.

\(^49\) Zukin, 207, 237.  
\(^50\) Zukin, 220-237.  
\(^52\) Irazabal and Punja, 9.  
However, the treatment of South Central Farm demonstrates the pure exchange value of space as a material commodity, to the detriment of any use value. Manuel Castells explains, “space is a material product, in relation with other material elements…dominated by capitalist industrialization entirely governed by the logic of profit”\textsuperscript{55} Lefebvre also criticizes the planning approach governed only by this “logic of profit”, which “insists on exchanges and places of exchange; it emphasizes the quantity of economic exchanges and leaves aside quality, the essential difference between use value and exchange value”.\textsuperscript{56} However, ignoring the infinitely greater use value, the value of the SCF land was purely understood in terms of this fetishized capitalist “logic of profit.” That use value was disregarded and considered illegitimate in the face of this dominant paradigm of industry and growth, despite its greater cultural and financial worth, demonstrates the “contradictions” Marx warned of as inherent to such a one-sided ideology.

However, whether explicitly or implicitly, urban elites nonetheless maintain their control over all three levels of power by implementing otherwise neutral mechanisms against those who “deviate from the ethos” of state power.\textsuperscript{57} Indeed, “these trends are so commonplace and unapologetically pursued in some cities that Mitchell has called this the era of the ’post-justice city’…in which citizenship rights are taken away from the ones who cannot partake in the neoliberal economy.”\textsuperscript{58} In the case of SCF, a group of minority actors producing a social, economic, and cultural good were nonetheless eliminated under the guise of “neutral and objective treatment”.\textsuperscript{59} The corruption inherent in the sale of this land should immediately call into question that “neutral” state apparatus that declares neoliberalism as the only legitimate measure of value. Furthermore, it stands as argument for why we must consider a dialectical relation between use and exchange values. Indeed, the financially and socially greater value of the land as a farm should serve as a call to question why a fetishized and isolated exchange value is still accepted as the only possible measure for urban spaces. In a time where a corrupt state prioritizes only a one-time exchange value by disregarding the use value and social good of thousands of citizens, perhaps Lefebvre’s dialectical notion of our consideration of value, and his argument for a citizen’s Right to the City is not so utopian after all.

\textsuperscript{55} Manuel Castells, \textit{The Urban Question: A Marxist Approach} (London: Edward Arnold, 1977), 115-116.
\textsuperscript{57} Irazabal and Punja, 4.
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., 4. See also Don Mitchell, \textit{The Right to the City: Social Justice and the Fight for Public Space}, (New York: Guilford Press, 2003).
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., 5.
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