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Accessing racial privilege through property: Geographies of racial capitalism

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines racial capitalism through the lens of housing and urban development. We compare two disparate places Kabul, Afghanistan and Boulder, Colorado in order to illustrate the commonalities of property rights regimes, and the (ill)logics of economic development that reinforce racial-economic privilege. By exploring housing specifically, this paper explicates the ways in which availability, affordability, and desirability are intertwined with racialized conceptualizations of space. Both Kabul and Boulder are dominated by legacies and contemporary practices of white privilege and economic inequality based on neoliberal racial capitalism. Housing in Kabul has been a key part of international and national economic development programs, while the influx of international funds and workers included a form of gentrification that significantly marginalized local-Afghans from several spaces in the capital city. In Boulder, property values have increased exponentially in recent decades due to the growth of information technology jobs and influx of wealth. The racial and economic marginalization of nonwhite and low-income persons in Boulder remains consistent within housing and work sectors. The racialization of Afghans by international development workers in Kabul, and the racialization of poverty and marginalization of nonwhite minorities in Boulder explicate the tensions and conflicts between property rights regimes and the "right" to be housed. This paper examines the ways in which discursive representations of wealth and poverty become geopolitical and geo-economic tools of racialized socioeconomic ostracism. Analyzing these disparate places through the lens of racial capitalism explicates the common forms of reductionism used to reinforce market privilege over the lives and livelihoods of bodies racialized as "other". While the specific histories of domination differ by location, the effects of racial capitalism are visible in each, particularly through relations of private property.

1. Introduction

In this article we examine the enduring legacies of racialized and racist housing policies and the relationship between property values and privileged whiteness. Our analyses focus on privileged white spaces in Boulder, Colorado, USA and housing marginalization in Kabul, Afghanistan by way of US-led development. We begin with an overview of historical racist and uneven economic housing policies in the US and how they have been imported through economic development programs in Afghanistan. We argue that whiteness operates as an essential framework for understanding Boulder's self-representation as a healthy, socially inclusive, and liberal environment as well as a site of wealth and wealth generation (particularly in the housing market). Drawing on Melamed (2006) we illustrate the ways in which white privilege is performed to meet the neoliberal expectations of "proper" economic behavior. Performances of white privilege in Boulder mirror those of international workers in Kabul, Afghanistan, particularly when focusing on the ability to access affordable housing. Through both cases, we trace the (ill)logics of racial capitalism that structure inequality along multiple axes including race and class in contingent, context-based ways. We demonstrate how complex and varied the landscapes of racial capitalism are, yet they share common attributes of wealth and poverty through the issues of economic access. This access is governed by intersecting racial capitalist logics of property, ownership, and occupation.

2. Racialized structures of property and privilege

Scholars have established race and racism as a means for the production of difference and inequality that exist independently of class relations (Omi and Winant, 1994; Pulido, 1996), but that interact with capitalism in significant and variable ways (Robinson, 2000). Cedric Robinson (2000: 66) argues that racism (or "racialism" as he phrases it), in variable forms (including the delineation of some peoples of Europe from others) predates capitalism. Capitalism picked up and expanded on racial inequalities differently in various times and places, "adapt

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[ing] to the political and material exigencies of the moment" (Robinson, 2000: 66). Though contingent, these adaptations to contextual inequalities are fundamental to the structure of capitalism (Pulido, 2016). "Racial difference…creates a variegated landscape that cultures and capital can exploit to create enhanced power and profits" (Pulido, 2016: 7, citing McIntryre and Nast, 2011). Capitalism traces and expands social and political inequalities within a society and locality. Racial liberalism splintered skin-color categorizations into privileged and stigmatized forms of cultural appropriateness (Melamed, 2006). Therefore, racial neoliberalism naturalizes both privilege and inequality while renewing white privilege as a social, cultural, and economic "norm" (Melamed, 2006: 7).

By examining the relations of property and privilege in two disparate sites we explore how capitalism layers onto and reinforces racial and ethnic marginalization in urban settings in the twenty-first century. Racial capitalism reinforces white supremacy in settler colonial, post-colonial, and neo-colonial societies. We recognize white privilege in the contexts of white supremacy and settler colonialism, both of which fundamentally structure US society (Bonds and Inwood, 2016; Pulido, 2015). White supremacy extends socio-spatial exclusion in these places by denying bodies constructed as "other" (or performing outside normative expectations of neoliberalism) access to housing, property, and social spaces of privilege. Social spaces of privilege are sites that covertly and overtly marginalize (or prevent) individuals identified as undesirable "others" from accessing these spaces. This delineation and marking of individuals (apart from a collective) facilitate racial capitalism (Melamed, 2015). Thus, our analyses highlight the temporal and spatial complexity of capitalism within racialized societies. Rather than examining a set pattern of racial or ethnic inequality based on a universal logic, we contrast Boulder and Kabul to illustrate the contingent and adaptive properties of capitalist practice that expand racial fault lines and compound social, political and economic inequalities.

Racialized structures of property and privilege exist in many different forms across the globe. Brenna Bhandar (2018) shows how settler colonial states used property law to accumulate capital in their establishment. While settler colonialism applies only partially to these cases, Bhandar's argument provides a useful framework for analyzing the relationship between racism and capitalism, particularly through housing and property rights regimes. Through the political economic and legal construction of private property, property can be a tool of marginalization. Using the concept of racial regimes of ownership, Bhandar argues that "property laws and racial subjectivity developed in relation to one another" (2018: 2). These regimes continue to discipline racialized bodies and the organization of land by valuing some people and places over others (Bhandar, 2018). Like Robinson, Bhandar emphasizes that the conceptual frameworks of ownership and the racial subjectification did not develop in linear ways but took up different ideas about race over time (2018: 103). We position these processes of marginalization through access to housing and property in different histories of domination, including settler colonialism, genocide, slavery, and other forms of colonialism within the rubric of conquest (King, 2016: n.p.) and domination through development programs.

We see racial regimes of ownership in Boulder in the naturalization of private property, including the possession and dispossession of land (Bhandar, 2018: 2). In Kabul, racial regimes of ownership and access based on neoliberal property rights generate spatial and legal changes through economic development, occupation, and performances of white privilege. The regularization and privatization of land in Kabul exemplifies how property regimes "reflect and consolidate language, ways of seeing, and modes of subjectivity that render indigenous and colonized populations as outside history, lacking the requisite cultural practices, habits of thought, and economic organization to be considered as sovereign, rational economic subjects" (Bhandar, 2018: 3). Property rights logics have been imported through US-led international interventions such as economic development projects. These projects are steeped in racialized forms of capitalism that include categorizing, sorting, and deciding which persons/bodies "belong" in certain spaces and can subsequently have access to housing and property rights.

Additionally, development practices in spaces marked as "violent" associated with the post-September 11, 2001 Global War on Terror included a dichotomization of Muslim bodies as either acceptable-allies or pathologized-enemies (Mamdani, 2004; Melamed 2006). The racialization of Muslim bodies relies on skin color, clothing, and comportment in order to identify a subject as accepting of liberal ideologies and neoliberal economics. By initiating and implementing capitalist property rights regimes in Afghanistan, US-led development attempted to rationalize a specific form of land ownership and housing configuration that was recognizable and fit within the global capitalist economy. The economically and politically weak government in Afghanistan has both been predisposed to influence by international powers (such as the US) and perpetuates inconsistent property laws and haphazard enforcement of these laws, particularly in the capital city, Kabul (Habib, 2011).

In Kabul, international governmental and non-governmental aid, development, security, and logistics agencies exemplify racial capitalism through the reorganization of territory and initiating new forms of private property. As described further in section five, international workers expanded capitalist markets in Kabul (including housing) through the imagined progress of international development and local dispossession. These dispossessions are carried out through global networks and discourses of development and aid. The racialization of bodies, subjectivities, knowledges, and practices are based on rubrics of culture, civilization, history, regularization, and possession. Boulder has a history of settler colonial dispossession beginning in the 1800s and contemporary examples of racial capitalism through housing and property rights regimes (discussed in section four).

Racial capitalism is a territorial project manifested through property rights regimes as well as racial-cultural norms. Racial capitalism in the US has a long history of targeting specific non-white people to extract value, while preventing their ability to access value-producing sites (Lipsitz, 2006; Rothstein, 2017). Whiteness is spatialized in Boulder through the capital-driven housing market as well as through the establishment of open space and the cultural practice of environmentalism in the city. White privilege is materially enacted through reinforcement and intensification of capitalist real estate value production, which multiplies wealth among the already wealthy and actively excludes the non-wealthy. Real estate is the spatialization of this wealth inequality, itself embedded in racial regimes of segregation and exclusion (Lipsitz, 2006). Beeman et al. (2010) take Lipsitz's analysis a step further by arguing that "whiteness itself is property that has been and can continue to be traded for further advantage because wealth is accumulated over generations" (42, see also Harris, 1993).

In a racial capitalist society, identities are often embodied through performances of consumption and leisure. Thus, practices of leisure and consumption are embedded within racialized meanings and norms. In the sections below, we look at the lived experience of racial capitalism through access to consumptive spaces. We trace racial and class dynamics of inclusion and exclusion. Whiteness is a particularly powerful analytical tool in this study of leisure (Arai and Kivel, 2009). As Cheryl Harris argues, whiteness is based in a hierarchy of white supremacy and carries with it the "right to exclude" (Harris, 1993: 1714). Whiteness acts as property when people make claims to space or activities based on white privilege (Harris, 1993). In the context of outdoor activity or environmentalism, cultural norms and practices have excluded people of color for more than a century (DeLuca and Demo, 2001; Finney, 2014). These norms are constitutive of white environmental subjects (Hickcox, 2018). The racialization of nature and outdoor recreation can enact a white territorial entitlement that affects conceptualizations of the nation and of who belongs in the country or in the countryside (Baldwin, 2009; Cronon, 1996).

This qualitative examination of the racialization of leisure spaces outlines a "white socio-spatial epistemology" (Dwyer and Jones, 2000: 209) that regulates actions and desires in relation to spatialized

capitalist practices of consumptive leisure. The white socio-spatial epistemology reinforces concepts of racial identity of "self" and "other" that pivot on white identity and non-relational conceptions of space (Dwyer and Jones, 2000). These socio-spatial conceptions rely on and reproduce "discrete categorizations of space—nation, public/private and neighborhood—which provide significant discursive resources for the cohesion and maintenance of white identities" (Dwyer and Jones, 2000: 210). These white identities, or identities most proximate to whiteness, are performed in spaces of leisure consumption. As part of the white socio-spatial epistemology, this performance of whiteness through leisure reinforces conceptions of land as bounded and alienable, that is, as property (Bhandar, 2018). Claims to land and recreational spaces in Boulder are reinforced by environmental ideologies of conservation and recreation landscapes that naturalize the preservation of nature around the city (Hickcox, 2007).

White privilege in both Boulder and Kabul is expressed through place-based consumption practices (shopping, restaurants, bars, and other sites of leisure). These sites exemplify additional forms of capitalist spatial exclusion. Examples include spaces that are only accessible to individuals who can afford to purchase goods/services and therefore "be in" these sites. These sites represent the performance of economic and racial privilege in both case studies, which will be discussed in more detail. First, we provide a historical overview of the racialization of US housing policies and practices to underscore the enduring legacies of racism within federal (and local) housing and urban development.

3. Historical overview of racial capitalism through US Housing Policies

Housing segregation is the hallmark of urban spatial inequality in US history. Rather than some by-product of class relations, racial capitalism frames this racial inequality as fundamental to capitalism (Pulido, 2016; Robinson, 2000). The framework of racial capitalism fuses the insights of Marxist materialist analysis with the understanding that racism is produced independently of class relations (Omi and Winant, 1994; Pulido, 1996). Racial capitalism structures societies such that some people bear the costs so that others may accumulate wealth and power, while the marginalized are treated as disposable (Pulido, 2016: 8). This designation justifies their systematic deprivation, including widespread instances of environmental racism (Pulido, 2016). The history of urban racial segregation in the US exemplifies racial capitalism in a settler colonial society.

Building on a long history of racial inequality and segregation in the United States, the US Supreme Court codified racial segregation in the US in 1896 in the Plessy v. Ferguson ruling. This case effectively prevented African Americans from accumulating wealth (Beeman et al., 2010: 33). In the housing sector this form of legal racism was further entrenched during the 1930s through the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) (Beeman et al., 2010: 33). Both housing policies and an endemic culture of racism have entrenched racial segregation (even after its legal rebuke in 1954), facilitated gentrification, and further marginalized people with lower socioeconomic status (Crump, 2002; Massey and Denton, 1993; Newman and Ashton, 2004).

In 1933, The Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC) was created by the FHA to assist its mission in guaranteeing mortgages to first time home buyers and individuals who had difficulty qualifying for loans. HOLC, in an effort to appraise property and identify economic risk, enlisted local real estate agents, who explicitly identified race (and foreign-born status) as significant factors in determining a buyer's acceptability to particular neighborhoods (Hillier, 2003). Neighborhoods with significant black or immigrant populations were automatically assigned the highest risk, which were identified on HOLC maps with a red color. HOLC's redlined maps remain historical examples of de jure segregation (Rothstein, 2017; Vale and Freemark, 2012). Segregation was further enforced through many legal mechanisms, including neighborhood covenants, real estate agents' professional "ethical code" that mandated segregation, police actions and criminalization, as well as extra-legal/de facto mechanisms, including white harassment and terrorism, social mores, and individual prejudice. Hiding such practices behind claims of fairness and colorblind markets is an important component of racial neoliberalism (Pulido, 2015). The marginalization of non-whites from home ownership for 20 years leading up to, and then through, the post-war housing boom has had long-lasting effects. By the time civil rights and greater equality were won through legislation and court cases, the rapid increase in property values had slowed (Rothstein, 2017).

Public housing policies and programs exemplify one suite of methods used in the US to assist low-income individuals. However, because of the (ill)logics of racial capitalism, public housing transformations in the US have been deeply linked to systemic racism, white supremacy, and legacies of discrimination and segregation in the United States.

As suburban development boomed, and housing options increased for whites throughout the 1950s and 1960s, racial minorities were excluded from homeownership opportunities, especially those provided by the U.S. government for veterans through mortgage redlining, or "the practice of refusing to give mortgage loans to African Americans or extracting unusually severe terms from them with subprime loans" (Rothstein, 2017: vii). Although the 1968 passage of the Fair Housing Act was effective for eliminating many formal practices of segregation, racial segregation remained widespread through real estate practices and racial violence, which ensured certain neighborhoods remained white (Beeman et al., 2010; Goetz, 2013; Rothstein, 2017).

In the 1980s the growth of neoliberal economics took hold of the housing sector. During the Reagan administration public low-income housing programs were supplanted by market-driven policies that disincentivized builders, lenders, and realtors from engaging with federal public housing programs (Harvey 2005, 2008; Jacobs, 1985; Smith, 2005). Veiled by a supposedly colorblind discourse of community revitalization, increased choice, and the de-concentration of poverty, public housing redevelopment was further fueled by HUD's HOPE VI plan (developed in 1992). This initiative facilitated the large-scale dispossession of low-income whites and racial minorities and focused on profitable transformation of American cities through mixed income developments and gentrification (Arena, 2012; Goetz, 2013; Smith, 2005).

The Housing Act of 1990 further strengthened private control over housing aid and housing vouchers to the benefit of white, heterosexual families. Specifically, "source of income" is not protected under the Federal Housing Act. In a key move that reveals the intersection of labor and housing markets with racial hierarchies, this legislation allows landlords to discriminate against people based on their work and income (Fritz, 2009). Tax breaks and market incentives fund the private development of single-family homes (mortgage interest deductions, for example), while underfunding subsidies for rent and public housing that are reserved for the poor. Therefore, housing subsidies are provided without significant public outrage to middle- and upper-income individuals through housing tax credits while federal programs to assist the working poor and jobless are stigmatized (Denning, 2010; Fritz, 2009). These housing policies underscore Melamed's (2006) argument that race remains a technology of power that is not always reducible to "biology, identity, or ontology" (20).

The history of housing policies in the US explicates the ways in which the growth of racial capitalism continually produced racial and economic marginalization in the housing sector. African Americans were systematically restricted from property ownership through law, policy, and cultural mores (Beeman et al. 2010). Additionally, racial minorities were disproportionality targeted for subprime mortgages associated with the 2008 housing and financial crisis in the US (Beeman et al., 2010). In times of crisis, people of color are often positioned to bear the brunt of and the blame for crises. In the 2008 financial crisis, "the predatory targeting of economically dispossessed communities and

the subsequent bailout of the nation's largest investment banks, instantly and volubly, [was] recast as a problem caused by the racial other" (Chakravartty and da Silva, 2012: 364). This positioning builds on the damaging cultural characterization that African Americans and Latinx immigrants are "unsuitable economic subjects" incapable of participating in neoliberal property regimes (Chakravartty and da Silva, 2012: 365).

Within and beyond housing, racism structures the larger political economic context. Rather than a separate force that acts on the economy, racism can be analyzed as a fundamental logic through which capitalism operates (Pulido, 1996; Woods, 2007). Thus, racial and class dynamics can best be understood as relational, always interacting with each other (Pulido, Sidawi, and Vos, 1996). In the following sections we analyze how the (ill)logics of racism and capitalism operate through socio-spatial property relations to privilege some and marginalize others in Boulder and Kabul.

4. Boulder: spatializing inequality through housing and land

The racial logics of differentiation that undergird capitalist commodification of land are visible in Boulder's history and are magnified in its contemporary exclusionary racial, class, and cultural housing environment. In this section, we demonstrate how access to property in Boulder—both land and housing—has been and continues to be defined by race and class through differential valuation of bodies and spaces. This disparate access outlines the topography of racial differentiation and inequality of racial capitalism through property.

The research for this section includes three years of data collected through the Boulder Affordable Housing Research Initiative (BAHRI). BAHRI is an outreach-based service research project focused on collecting information and qualitative data about affordable housing from the perspective of individuals and groups living in, working on, or caring about low and middle-income housing availability. This research includes analyses of primary and secondary source data on Boulder County and the city of Boulder. The research team has conducted 50 interviews, 6 oral histories, and 250 surveys of residents living in affordable housing in Boulder as well as interviews and partnerships with several organizations working with low- and middle-income individuals to secure housing. Archival data from Boulder's formative environmental conservation planning years provides a historical and cultural context for the contemporary housing data.

As described above, settler colonialism is predicated on racialized displacement and/or eradication of Native people, and property law is a central component of this process (Bhandar, 2018). Boulder is located in the traditional territory of the Ute, Cheyenne, and Arapaho peoples. Europeans first settled in the area in 1858 seeking gold in the mountains and grazing land in the plains (Davis, 1965). The town was established in 1859 by 56 shareholders, who platted 1240 acres of land for sale along Boulder Creek (Davis, 1965). One of the earliest residents of the town was David H. Nichols, who was a US Army Captain in the 1860s and played a leadership role in the 1864 Sand Creek Massacre (Limerick, 1987). Patricia Limerick describes displacement taking place in Boulder at the time: "The project was to 'bring civilization' to Colorado, and to most nineteenth century Anglo-Americans, that meant displacing the natives, establishing and allocating property claims, installing territorial, county, and town government, and setting up schools, colleges, and churches" (Limerick, 1987: 5-6). Those involved in settlement of the city, like Nichols, took up the mantle of "civilization" at the cost of Native displacement and genocide.

Building on its settler colonial context, the territorial nature of racial capitalism is highlighted by the problem of access to housing and by the cultural discourses of belonging in Boulder. Housing in the end of the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century was racially segregated in Boulder, then a small town, with people of color (including Chinese American, Japanese American, Latinx, and African American residents) primarily being restricted to the Goss-Grove area closest to the Boulder Creek and most susceptible to periodic and often catastrophic floods (Brunton, 1948). Structural availability and accessibility to affordable housing in Boulder has diminished since property values began to rise in the 1950s (City of Boulder City Manager, 1968b). This rise was reinforced by city government acquisition and protection of open space property surrounding the city through direct purchase and through conservation easement, beginning in the 1960s (City of Boulder City Manager, 1968a; CMACOS, 1973).

The city continued to grow spatially and in population size through the end of the twentieth century because of multiple factors, including establishment of federal research centers (e.g. NIST, NCAR, UCAR), location of aerospace and other technological industry companies (e.g. Ball Aerospace, IBM), expansion of the University of Colorado, and developers/boosters investing in the city as a tourist destination and service and consumption based economy (Allen et al., 1976; Delgado and Stefancic, 1999). In the twenty-first century, the city's technology sector has expanded even more, culminating with the establishment of a Google campus in 2017. The growth of high-paying industry in the city has put pressure on the existing housing stock and raised housing prices leading to an increase in high-end real estate development.

While the city of Boulder is small (just over 100,000 people), housing access has changed drastically in the course of 30 years, creating a nearly impenetrable market for middle and low-income residents. There has been an outmigration of households earning less than $50,000 and an influx of households earning more than $150,000, and the median home price has risen from $133,210 in 1980 to $501,800 in 2011, cresting to nearly one million dollars in 2018 (according to the 1980 Census and 2011 American Community Survey; Castle, 2018). Most affordable housing is attached housing (apartments or condominiums), and a Boulder Housing Market Analysis conducted for the City of Boulder in 2013 noted that families seeking detached single family homes have more options in the neighboring city of Longmont (BBC Research and Consulting, 2013). While home ownership is out of the question for over 40% of Boulder's residents, access to affordable rentals is also severely limited. The average monthly rent for a one-bedroom apartment in Boulder in 2017 was $1596 (High, 2018). There are a number of organizations, both governmental and non-governmental, working to expand affordable housing infrastructure and improve access to affordable housing, including Thistle Communities, Boulder Housing Partners, and the city of Boulder's office of Housing and Human Services.

Racial minority residents of Boulder are overrepresented in affordable housing. Hispanics comprise 16.5% and African Americans comprise 3.3% of heads of households in affordable housing, compared with city populations of 8.7% and 0.9%, respectively (City of Boulder, 2019). Further, racial minority experiences of Boulder's low-income housing clearly encapsulate a wide gap in access and experiences, between low-income people of color and white people, as burdensome paperwork, de facto redlining, and racist practices continue to exclude racial minorities with considerably fewer sources of support in comparison to white counterparts. For example, Beth, an African-American single mother of three living in a Section 8 apartment managed by Boulder's private-public housing authority, fell behind on rent because she was not aware of a rate increase. She had reported that her elder son had moved back in with her, which, unbeknownst to her, raised the rent on the apartment. When the bill came for the difference in rent she had paid and the new amount due, she could not afford the balance. The police were called to evict her, and they also searched her house for drugs. She was ultimately evicted (no drugs were found).

Beth is convinced that her harsh treatment was significantly motivated by racial bias against Black single mothers. While this treatment can be construed as following protocol in rent payment and eviction policy, that construal hides anti-black dynamics at work in the city. Boulder's twentieth-century history of racial segregation in spaces of housing (neighborhoods such as Goss-Grove) and consumption (proprietors refusing to serve African Americans) continues in the form of

everyday practices of anti-black stereotyping as well as police targeting and hate crimes against African Americans and people of color (Byars, 2019, expanded on below). Treatment understood as "colorblind," such as that Beth received, denies a history of anti-black racism, ignores its long existence in the context of American conquest (King, 2016), and prevents redress of past or prevention of present harms. It refuses to recognize blackness and denies black subjectivity (hooks, 1992).

Similar discussions about racism were identified by African American and Latinx participants in Boulder's Maria Rogers Oral History Project, all of which identified various forms of discrimination in Boulder from traversing public space to education and housing, as exemplified in the following quote:

There are [housing] projects in Boulder. You have to know where they are. There are a lot of poor people in Boulder. But by design, you don't see diversity, poverty, struggle in Boulder. It looks very clean, very healthy, very white, very thin, and very rich. So those of us who don't look anything like any of that are invisible here. (Female, born c. 1950, Oral History Recorded, 2003, African Americans in Boulder, CO).

While these interviews were conducted in 2003 and reflect memories about past racism, they are similar to findings from our more recent research on affordable housing in Boulder. Additionally, the expected "invisibility" of nonwhite and low-income persons in Boulder further underscores the aesthetics of Boulder and its spatial desirability (Ghertner, 2015). Therefore, the aesthetics of Boulder as a place has extended to the types of bodies (i.e., white, healthy, thin, rich) that are identified as valued, normative, and suitable for this space. In this case, aesthetics are performative of the cultural norm of whiteness, wealth, and health in Boulder, and they have material effects on access to housing for people who fall outside the norm.

The city's first development plan was created in 1977 around "core values" of environmental preservation, compact sustainable development, and open space preservation, among others (City of Boulder, 2018). These core values also mention a desire for diversity in home pricing and availability. However, the city's rigid boundaries, building height restrictions, and open space policies prevent expansion upward and outward into surrounding areas and have developed into an incredibly tight housing market. The city's increasing exclusivity surrounding homeownership has not gone unnoticed by local journalists and community activists who have criticized planning sessions and affordable housing for being "Trojan horses" for private development (Boulder Daily Camera, 2017). Private development has produced a disproportionate number of luxury housing units. In 2018 alone, 18 homes sold for more than $2 million, pegging the top 3% of home sales at an average of $2.5 million and bringing the city's average home sale price up to $1.2 million (Castle, 2018). This high-end housing meets the desires of workers in high-paying employment as well as investors drawn to Boulder by its culture of technological innovation and entrepreneurialism and outdoor enthusiasts.

While the city has an affordable housing plan, the policies fail to address underlying issues driving spatial segregation or dynamics of culturally enforced exclusion in the city. The need for affordable housing in the city was identified in the 1960s, and racialized discourses of difference were embedded in the discussion from the beginning. In 1968, the city manager warned that affordable housing ought to "be placed throughout the community in an attempt to fragment, as much as possible, the natural inclination for the establishment of 'newly built ghettos.' The sociological and psychological interaction which will result from such scatterization will do much in reducing and limiting, to a considerable extent, the upsetting impact of ghetto-type living" (City of Boulder City Manager, 1968b: 8-9). The city manager framed the problem of housing at a national scale as a direct cause of riots such as those in US cities in 1967, saying that the riots were "preceded by an accumulation of unresolved grievances by ghetto residents against local authorities" (City of Boulder City Manager, 1968b: 2-3). The memo's invocation of riots and ghettoes demonstrates the racialized understandings and anxieties surrounding establishment of affordable housing in Boulder.

Low to middle income residents in Boulder remain concerned about the social and economic stigma associated with affordable housing. The following quotes illustrate their experiences of marginalization and frustrations with stigma.

> "I would like other people to know that just because we live in affordable housing doesn't mean we are not good people. I remember a comment on a [local newspaper] article about how people who live in affordable housing are the sort of 'riff raff' we don't need in Boulder. I am a hardworking, kind, and highly educated person… I wish that Boulder residents would not be so quick to judge others who do not have the same opportunities."
>
> "We are not low lifes. We are educated, working people who need low rent housing."
>
> "Just because I live in a mobile [home] does not mean that I am 'trailer trash' or a person who has no concern about where I live, what is happening in Boulder, etc. Many people in Boulder seem to think that all people that live in mobile homes are so poor, they just do not care."
>
> "Poor and middle class have as much right to live in Boulder as the upper class though we don't always have the resources to advocate for ourselves. We are important for the local economy too, just as the upper-class."
>
> "Just because I live in an affordable community, doesn't mean I don't care about my home and environment. I care deeply and I am passionate about living in an environment that allows me to be an individual and create a space that is healthy, beautiful and loving."
>
> "Being poor and needing affordable housing has nothing to do with laziness. The situations of our lives don't make us less human, or less deserving of respect."

These residents express frustration with portrayals of affordable housing residents as lazy, uncaring, uninvolved, and not valuable to the Boulder community. By focusing on being "educated", "hardworking", "environmentally conscious", and able to appreciate Boulder's aesthetic value, they are attempting to incorporate rather than marginalize themselves in the dominant discourses of socio-spatial desirability in Boulder. Such cultural characterizations discursively define "worth" in ways that are often, though not always, explicitly racialized, echoing the dynamics of racial capitalism in housing.

Another differential valuation of residents reinforced by racial capitalism is the value of single-family households compared with communal living. Individuation in capitalist systems distances the individual from communal structures by way of paid services, technologies, and objects of desire (Melamed, 2015). Community and communal forms of living are therefore viewed as problematic, and capitalist housing regimes privilege nuclear and single-family dwellings over communal living arrangements. This valuation is most evident in Boulder through the city's occupancy limits that prevent more than three (or four depending on location) unrelated individuals from living in the same household. In surveys and interviews conducted by BAHRI, several cooperative housing residents reported coops to be a safer and more inclusive environment in terms of gender identity and race. Residents of cooperative housing in Boulder have struggled to assert their rights to live in a non-traditional household that provides affordable housing. Straying from the norm of single-family living has brought the disciplinary power of the city to bear in the form of threats of fines and evictions, as well as intense monitoring of housing cooperatives.

Residents of color in Boulder have been harassed by fellow residents and by police (Miller and Meltzer, 2011; Spina, 2019b). In 2019 a police officer detained an African American resident of Boulder while picking up trash outside the entrance of his own residence (Byars, 2019). Eight officers were called to assist in the detainment with guns drawn (Spina, 2019b). Further, Boulder police are twice as likely to stop an African American resident than white resident, and twice as likely to arrest the African American resident (Spina, 2019a). Latinx

residents face similar patterns of disproportionate policing by Boulder police (Spina, 2019a).

Because racial capitalism is comprised of a complex network of economic and racial logics, it operates through a variety of ideologies and discourses. Racial meanings tend to get attached to other meanings, interacting in complex ways with discourses of socioeconomic status, gender, culture, and place. These connections are visible in the examples offered above. In Boulder, the specific meaning of "whiteness" is connected to wealth as well as environmental behaviors as disparate as recycling and skiing (Hickcox, 2018). Thus, in Boulder, enforcement of racial inclusion and exclusion operates through enforcement of cultural norms around environmentalism (Hickcox, 2018, see also Finney, 2014).

This particular assemblage of white racial meaning is spatialized and formed through the class dynamics of racial capitalism. The establishment of open space in and around the city of Boulder reinforced the unequal dynamics of racial capitalism in two ways: through concentration of housing demand (raising prices) and through promoting cultural norms attached to environmentalism. The former has been explored above. The cultural norms manifested spatially in open space in Boulder include: appreciation of nature, respect for ecological processes, value of outdoor recreation (especially hiking, rock climbing, and bicycling) for physical and mental health, and need for natural environments impacted relatively little by humans. Yet, according to some white Boulder residents, Latin American immigrants living in Boulder do not share such environmental values and are seen as out-of-place in open space (Hickcox, 2018). Further, the beauty of Boulder's natural landscape is often attributed agency, as though the cliffs that tower over the city themselves dictate the prioritization of environmental values (Hickcox, 2007). Thus, the cultural norms of environmentalism are naturalized spatially, through conservation-driven protection of the material natural landscape. This valuation then reinforces and justifies the rising housing prices in part caused by concentration of housing demand. The unequal access to housing in the city is naturalized by reference to the beauty, majesty, and value of the landscape itself.

The cultural exclusions performed through environmental practice in Boulder are not limited to time spent engaged in outdoor activities such as hiking, bicycling, and skiing. Many of these activities are expensive to partake in, requiring specialized equipment. Further, the consumption of outdoor recreation related products, such as clothing, shoes, water bottles, and even stickers reinforces a cultural performance of white environmental subjectivity (Hickcox, 2018). These consumptive practices of whiteness in Boulder are embedded in capitalist market structures and enabled by class privilege accrued by white people in the United States through its history of conquest, settler colonialism, and racism, as described above, and as expanded on in the context of Afghanistan below.

5. Kabul: spatializing inequality through economic development and housing

Boulder, Colorado, USA and Kabul, Afghanistan are two distinct and significantly different places. However, the following overview of changing housing policies and procedures in Afghanistan (Kabul, specifically) provides a window into the exportation of racialized capitalism through aid/development to Afghanistan (2012–2012). In this section, we provide an overview of twentieth and early twenty-first century land tenure reforms in Afghanistan, followed by an examination of the ways in which housing and spatial reorganization of Kabul (by international government and organizations) exemplifies racial capitalism through housing, economic development, and the paired processes of segregation and marginalization. Here we see the contingent nature of racial capitalism in adapting to local historical contexts of domination, including land tenure restructuring, Cold War destruction and territorialization, state and extra-state violence, and international development privatization.

Analysis in this section draws on fieldwork conducted in Kabul between 2006 and 2012 (summer 2006, winter 2007, summer 2008, winter 2010, winter 2012). Interviews with over 200 international workers and Afghans working in international offices were conducted over this time period. Interviews focused on international development and international and local-Afghan workers' spatial and situational interactions. Additional research included observations of mobility and differential experiences of work and housing in Kabul city.

In Afghanistan, land tenure, home occupancy, and land ownership remain contentious issues intersected by local and international politics and economic development. Land tenure in Afghanistan was predominantly feudal and had little influence from European powers prior to governmental efforts to introduce land tenure reform policies in the mid-1970s (Wily, 2003). Power and material wealth were concentrated among powerful landowning families predominantly among Pashtuns. In 1975 the President of Afghanistan, Daoud, introduced a Land Reform Law that sought to "transfer land to the landless peasants," but left riparian rights with the former owners (O'Ballance, 1993: 80). These land reform efforts were not, however, economically radical as they did little to disrupt the power and influence of land-owning elites. In 1978 a communist coup was initiated against the Daoud government by The People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA). The PDPA was a Soviet sponsored socialist organization. The coup resulted in Daoud's death and the installation of a communist government in Kabul. The PDPA initiated several decrees that sought to restructure the social, political, and economic structure of Afghan societies. Decree #8 sought to eliminate feudalism "by establishing a land ceiling of about fifteen acres for first-quality land or the equivalent for each family" (Rubin, 2002: 117). This decree along with Decree #7 (which initiated marriage reforms that redefined the "family" as husband, wife, and unmarried children), sought to eliminate "joint family and large kinship units… as economic entities" (Rubin, 2002: 117). While these decrees were initiated by the Soviet-influenced communist government, similar to capitalist housing reforms in the US, there was an orchestrated attempt to move the concept of family housing from multi-family and multi-generational dwellings to nuclear family configurations.

These reforms were poorly implemented and, in many instances, increased peasants' hardships rather than alleviating them, a pattern of land governance repeated through the end of the century (Rubin, 2002). Additionally, the government in Kabul was not recognized as legitimate by many leaders and communities in rural areas. The administrative distance between the State (concentrated in Kabul) and rural Afghanistan was so great that local systems of governance were viewed as paramount to state influence and intrusion, particularly on deciding or "defining property relations" (Rubin, 2002: 119). Soviet influence and occupation mirrored these practices by attempting to radically redesign individual and collective relationships to property. Additionally, the PDPA did not have adequate resources, beyond the use of violence, to implement these reforms. Thus, local opposition in provincial/rural areas resisted the federal government with violence. These groups were further influenced by international actors, the Soviet Union (for the PDPA) and the US (supporting the Mujahideen-resistance).

In 1979 the Soviet Union aided/invaded Afghanistan and militarily occupied the country until 1989. A Soviet backed government remained in Kabul until the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. From 1992 to 1996 a civil war raged between the various Mujahideen-resistance groups. The civil war was predominantly fought in Kabul in an effort to gain control of the capital city. Over the course of this civil conflict much of the city was destroyed and left in ruins. In 1996, the Taliban took control of Kabul and ruled over 90% of the country until the US-led invasion in 2001. During the Taliban era, the state monopolized land and resources through violence (Kolhatkar and Ingalls, 2006). Additionally, the Taliban did not provide adequate economic opportunities or resources for its citizens and little to no effort was made to repair or reconstruct

Kabul.

After the civil war and Taliban era, Afghanistan was a country beset upon by extreme and endemic poverty, drought, and lack of basic resources. It has had some of the worst health and economic indicators according to the World Health Organization, the United Nations, and Physicians for Human Rights (Hansen et al., 2008). After the US-led invasion, the US military and CIA sought to build allegiances and allies among the former Mujahideen resistance to fight against and remove the Taliban from power over the central government. Part of seeking allegiances included providing cash payments to commanders (also known as warlords by US officials and media outlets). Many savvy commanders used these funds to purchase property in central Kabul. These properties were then rented to international organizations at exorbitant prices (Fluri and Lehr, 2017).

The massive influx of international assistance funds and workers to manage the distribution of funds and reconstruction of the city included a bidding war among well-funded international governmental and non-governmental organizations for prime real estate in central Kabul (also see Esser, 2013). The dominance of wealthy international organizations willing and able to pay high rents generated the spatial marginalization and displacement of local (and mostly poor) residents from these areas. Many Afghans moved farther from the city center in an effort to find affordable rental housing. Additionally, many families began to expand the squatter settlements on the mountainside throughout Kabul (Muzhary, 2017). These housing settlements grew without access to water and sanitation. In some areas water pumps were available and paid water services were provided. Therefore, while the land was not purchased in these locations, water services were commodified (Kazemi 2018).

With the withdrawal of many foreign workers and agencies from 2015 onward, there remains a lasting imprint on the housing market, with few Afghans able to afford to live in compounds built and designed for foreigners (Foschini, 2017). Additionally, increased income inequalities combined with spatial and security barriers have been identified as responsible for turning Kabul "into an apartheid city in which the privileged and the underprivileged live together, yet in estranged spaces" (quoted in Foschini, 2017: 17). US aid and development exacerbated the existing wealth disparities in Kabul by building political-economic and socio-spatial structures of racial capitalism. During the height of US-led economic interventions (2002–2014), the enormous difference in funding between international and local government and NGOs was so stark that municipal development agencies suffered from a lack of qualified employees, because educated staff were choosing to work for much higher salaries with international aid/development organizations (Dittmann, 2007).

US-funded aid/development efforts in Afghanistan were further dominated by geopolitical ideology and extensive funds that required quick spending. Many projects were initiated without coordination and without oversight because in the early intervention period (2002–2010) projects occurred without rules, oversight, or influence from the central government in Kabul, or international regulatory agencies. Additionally, US efforts were rooted in the misconception that "security, economic growth and democratic governance are mutually reinforcing" (Esser, 2013: 3095). Much of US-led aid/development efforts drew upon racial capitalism rather than governmental logics for reconstruction and related projects. Further, the racialization of Afghans into a category of "other" included identifications of vulnerability as potential security risks. Thus, international organizations bolstered their security through the built environment (barriers, surveillance, guards) further widening the spaces between international workers and the local population. The spatial segregation of the city can be further viewed through the extensive barrier walls that government agencies and ministries surround embassies, and other governmental and non-governmental international compounds. Racialized othering can be observed by the hierarchical ordering of bodies and the ability of those bodies to access or be barred from entering certain spaces. Additionally, Afghan civilians are vulnerable to injury or death when these compounds are attacked as they traverse the unprotected streets along the walls while traveling from home to work or the marketplace.

We argue that the property rights logics of racial capitalism in the US were transferred through economic development programs/projects to Afghanistan, which have manifested in Kabul through various mechanisms of spatial exclusion. Kabul has been beset upon by international workers needing space for offices and housing, while seeking to transform the city into a recognizable space for global capitalist investment. As mentioned above, Kabul experienced extensive destruction during the civil war in Afghanistan (1992–1996) with continued violence and lack of reconstruction during the Taliban era (1996–2001). After the US-led invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, Kabul was viewed as a post-conflict terra nullius, which could be completely reimagined and reconstructed through the ideological, political, and economic lens of international governmental and non-governmental organizations. Terra nullius development assumes that post-conflict spaces are "blank slates" of development opportunity in order to create acceptable and recognizable economic policies and geopolitical relations (Brown, 2015: 6). The ideology of terra nullius paved the way for the regularization and commodification of land in Kabul in accordance with racial capitalism (also see Davis, 2015).

In Kabul, many businesses that catered to international workers (i.e., restaurants, bars, shops) ensured spatial exclusion based on racialized security logics. Purposeful segregation drew on assumptions about Muslims generally and Afghans specifically. This segregation was particularly pronounced in spaces that served alcohol (which is illegal in Afghanistan). These establishments bore signs stating, "Foreign Passport Only", to purposely exclude Afghan citizens from these locations (Fluri, 2009). Many international workers, when questioned about this overt form of segregation, responded with expressed desires to "escape" or be "relieved" from the conservative cultural mores of Afghanistan that frowned upon unrelated men and women socializing, consuming alcohol, and engaging in extramarital sex. Through this desire for escape, Afghans who did not adequately perform white privileged socioeconomic liberalism were pathologized as other in their own society (also see Melamed, 2006). US-led development in Afghanistan included an exportation of racialized spatial-segregation through various forms of securitization to ensure the safety of the privileged, white, and well-educated professional international workforce.

In Kabul, racial capitalist development combined with government corruption has produced a system where the individual (or family) with the most funds and influence can more easily secure property than those without access to these resources. Therefore, in many cases individuals have been displaced from their homes because another family (often returning from abroad) lays claim to the property. In cases of corruption, the family who can pay the "best bribe" will be given legal rights to the property. The inability to prove ownership of a property or to pay the judiciary to secure a deed, has left many poor Afghans internally displaced or living in squatter settlements. Kabul is known for ethnic diversity as it draws individuals from various parts of the country, while some ethnic groups are concentrated into specific districts. Additionally, a lack of consistent policies and implementation of laws, particularly with regard to refugee returnees and internally displaced persons is significantly contributing to landlessness among Afghans (Bjelica, 2016). Internationally influenced property rights in Kabul developed into a toxic mix of corruption, capitalism, and consumption, mapping capitalist inequality onto existing inequalities and reshaping it through aid/development practices. Thus, property rights, similar to Robinson's (2000) poignant reminder about democracy, remain "illusory for most" (30).

For international workers and local elites, the massive influx of international government and non-governmental funds has led to extensive wealth generation, particularly for property owners in Kabul. Attempts to address housing needs have been slow and inadequate particularly for marginalized and racialized groups that also lack

economic wealth. Corruption by way of both international aid/development and the Afghanistan central government perpetuate racial capitalism in the housing sector. Thus, through capital, Kabul illustrates what Melamed (2006) identifies as "new racism" which "extends racializing practices beyond the color line, recreating … new privileged and stigmatized racial formations semi-detached from conventional racial categories" (16). Development in Kabul continues through international assistance, along with Afghan and foreign investment. Housing inequalities continue to increase in Kabul with regular influx of individuals (and families) seeking employment. Insecure housing can be seen in the squatter settlements on the mountains and internally displaced persons camps at the edges of the city. Uneven, unequal housing access and availability is a byproduct of both local and international sentiments on race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic class, endemic poverty, government corruption, and continual and cyclical displacement, replacement, marginalization of the poor and disenfranchised.

As argued in Krijnen's (2018) article on rent gaps in Beirut, similar processes can be seen in both Boulder and Kabul: rent gaps are created by state-legitimizing power and agents of racial capitalism; informal and illegal practices often create additional gaps in rents and forced displacement. Spatial dominance by white and economically privileged persons are further identified by consumption of/in leisure spaces that explicitly cater to the needs, wants, and desires of the racially and economically privileged while overtly or covertly restricting access to bodies that appear or perform as unable to afford or "properly enjoy" these spaces. Service delivery exemplifies inequalities and the growth of business and leisure spaces for economic and racial elites. Racism, while predating capitalism (Robinson, 2000), is endemic to its structure and expressions of power, authority, influence, and arrogance.

6. Summary and conclusions

Economic and racial/ethnic privilege is expressed by way of performances of whiteness and dominance of economic privilege in Boulder and Kabul. Through racialized performances and material possession certain individuals or groups claim the "most desirable" and valuable housing stock. The predominance of white-economic privilege is further performed through various acts and forms of consumption, which cater to the needs, wants, and desires of the landed racial and economic elites.

Practices of racial capitalism in Boulder and Kabul categorize marginalized, poor, and racialized bodies in an effort to create, improve, or ensure security for the majority white population in the US, and white international workers and elite Afghans in Kabul. Racialized capitalism in Kabul reinforces performing whiteness and economic privilege as a method for accessing exclusive spaces, simultaneously displacing local-Afghans and marginalizing them from certain spaces. Similarly, in Boulder, spaces of consumption and leisure are mitigated by one's ability to economically and culturally access these spaces. While individuals in Boulder are no longer barred entry by race or phenotype, there is a long and continued history of excessive surveillance of non-white bodies and reinforcement of wealthy white cultural norms (Hickcox, 2018). Whiteness articulates a claim to space and resources, an enactment of white privilege onto and through property. In Kabul, whiteness, and the privilege it is expected to afford, must be continually performed through expressions of internationalism worn on and performed through the body (skin color, clothing, and comportment) and further expressed through capital (i.e., the ability to pay for goods or services catering to international workers and elite Afghans).

In this paper, we have used two disparate case studies (Boulder, Colorado, USA and Kabul, Afghanistan) to explicate the adaptability of racial capitalism within property rights regimes expressed through uneven and unequal housing accessibility and affordability. These two places, while significantly different in their historical contexts of oppression, operate under similar (ill)logics of racial capitalism. In both cases racial capitalism effectively operates through property rights regimes that intersect with racial and economic privilege to determine how spaces are valued (or devalued) in relation to the bodies living in those spaces, which perpetuate corporeal and performative whiteness as a socioeconomic norm. Capitalist development adapts to local racial and economic power hierarchies, which are further perpetuated through social and political processes.

As we have demonstrated, the landless, unhoused, foreclosed on, informally housed, and residents of subsidized or cooperative housing are discursively represented as individuals who have failed capitalism rather than examples of the social failures of capitalism. Therefore, the vulnerability of the landless, unhoused, and displaced are recalibrated through racialized social discourses, spatial barriers, and political policy as persons without socioeconomic value and therefore a risk to those with socioeconomic value. Thus, within the racialized capitalism of these disparate property rights regimes, the socioeconomically vulnerable are continually racialized as potential threats to society.

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