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WORKER-OWNED COOPERATIVES AS URBAN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

By

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B.A., Western Kentucky University, 2013

MPA., Western Kentucky University, 2015

A Dissertation

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University of Louisville

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A Dissertation Approved on

September 20, 2019

by the following Dissertation Committee:

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Dr. Cynthia Negrey

Dr. Steven Koven

Dr. Lisa Markowitz

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my grandparents and my mother

Mr. Murrell Conder

Mrs. Cleo Conder

and

Ms. Melissa Conder

whose hard work allowed me to dream

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my dissertation chair, Dr. David Imbroscio, for his assistance throughout the graduate program. I would also like to thank the other committee members, Dr. Cynthia Negrey, Dr. Steven Koven, and Dr. Lisa Markowitz, for their assistance in this process. I cannot thank my husband, Justin, enough for enduring the last few years alongside me. He supported me and encouraged me to keep working when I struggled. Also, many thanks to my aunts, uncles, cousins, and friends who have provided amazing support throughout the dissertation writing process and been gentle with me throughout. I could not have done this without all of you.

ABSTRACT

WORKER-OWNED COOPERATIVES AS URBAN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Nick Conder

September 20, 2019

This dissertation explores the topic of urban policies relating to worker-owned cooperatives, and the political conditions surrounding worker-owned cooperatives in American cities. The topic is studied through a comparison between two case study cities: Cleveland, Ohio and Jackson, Mississippi. Through the collection of public records and interviews with policymakers, analysts, and community activists, this study details the current policy status towards worker-owned cooperatives and the political context for the worker-ownership movement in each city. The study also offers preliminary assessments of existing worker-owned cooperatives and explores the obstacles facing worker-owned enterprises in the selected cities.

The findings of the case study in Cleveland are that the city's government supported the establishment of the Evergreen Cooperatives in the form of loans, grants, and tax incentives, but has not adopted an economic development strategy focused on worker-ownership. The study in Cleveland also finds that no strong political movement yet exists for a shift towards worker-ownership. The Evergreen Cooperatives have made some progress towards building community wealth, but it is limited until they grow further; the progress towards self-determination is more limited.

In Jackson, the city's government has voiced support for pro-cooperative policies and still is working to implement policies favorable towards worker-ownership—but has not successfully done so yet. Worker-ownership became a relevant part of the political discourse in Jackson thanks to a movement which produced mayors Chokwe Lumumba and Chokwe Antar Lumumba. The movement also helped spawn Cooperation Jackson, which split with the latter Lumumba's mayoral administration.

More time is needed to get a complete assessment of both cases, and cooperatives in each city will need to continue growing before it can be determined whether they fully achieve their intended results. The results of the dissertation fill gaps in scholarly knowledge about the details of pro-cooperative policies in Cleveland and Jackson and furthers understanding of the political climate relating to worker-ownership in each city. The cases can be used by researchers and cooperative advocates to understand what more needs to be done to successfully see pro-cooperative policies implemented in those cities and what challenges face other cities interested in worker-ownership.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Cities play an incredibly important role in the modern capitalist economy, serving as sites of urban agglomeration and essential nerve centers for a now global economic system which expects the physical reality of our world to be made and re-shaped according to the current needs of capital. The unfortunate reality for many American cities is that they were built during a bygone economic era, where a large manufacturing industry and dense urban populations demanded cities built to specifications which quickly became obsolete as the economy changed and resources shifted to other locations. The remains of those earlier eras include not only the physical environment, but large populations of people who are often dispossessed and impoverished (Wilson 1996). In recent decades, urban policymakers have sought varying strategies of “economic development” to rebuild their cities’ economies and increase the power and utility of the cities themselves. The goals of economic development quickly became top priorities as the new globalized economy found new roles for cities to play in the global order. Urban governments began using their cities’ resources to attract large corporations to locate in their cities, even going so far to rebuild infrastructure and restructure entire neighborhoods with the singular focus of creating jobs provided by large businesses (Imbroscio, 2010; Peterson 1981; Molotch 1976). The outcomes of these policies have been mixed, with urban residents increasingly concerned with problems such as housing affordability, displacement, and economic inequality.

Many urban scholars, policymakers, and political activists have sought to solve the problems created by currently dominant models of economic development. One idea that has risen to popularity in recent years is a city stimulating economic development through enterprises which are directly owned by communities and the workers within them. This alternative model of development would retain many of the tools used by cities to stimulate business growth (regulatory assistance, tax incentives, financial transfers in the ways of loans and grants) but will instead direct those resources towards worker-owned or community-owned firms instead of those built upon the need for privately held profits. This alternative is meant to be most beneficial in urban areas where economic deprivation is sporadic and concentrated in certain neighborhoods; as jobs and resources have left many inner-city neighborhoods for the sake of their own profits, the alternative model hopes to establish community-based economies which significantly harder to uproot and move to another area. Local community activists and organizers find themselves pursuing cooperative economics in the hopes of rebuilding their neighborhoods and fostering sustainable change that does not run the risk of displacing current residents in favor of more affluent new residents. Policymakers have an interest in these projects because sustainable development in impoverished neighborhoods have eluded cities for decades as they have continued to see poverty rates increase and their own tax bases decline. This situation has led many urban scholars interested in addressing issues of economic inequality to propose cities pursue cooperative development as a means of alternative economic development (Alperovitz, 2011; Imbroscio, 2010; Wolff, 2012).

This dissertation is an attempt to engage in some limited study of projects which may fit into this model of cooperative economic development. The first chapter serves as an introduction to the rest of the study and does so by defining what I mean by a cooperative and what I mean by economic development; I will then proceed to outline the two case studies that lie at the heart of the research project that will be explained and analyzed in the remainder of the dissertation. The final section of this introductory chapter will summarize and explain what the subsequent chapters of this dissertation will do and serve to guide the reader in assessing the work. This project is not meant to be a definitive last word on economic development, nor does it serve as an expert guide on cooperative formation—the simple task that will be accomplished here is explaining how city governments approach cooperative development in two cities and what lessons can be drawn from those cases to the broader academic discourse surrounding economic development within urban studies.

What are cooperatives?

Before I develop a study of “cooperative economic development,” it is important to define cooperatives. One way to look at cooperatives are as manifestations of a movement for shared economic benefit that stretches across the world. Existing cooperative organizations boast “800 million members in 85 countries” and a movement centered on building “enterprises that are collectively owned and democratically controlled by their members for their mutual benefit” (Restakis, 2010, pg. 3). All enterprises are meant to benefit somebody (typically their owners) but in Restakis’ definition the defining features that separate cooperatives from other forms of organization are collective ownership and democratic control. Collective ownership can

refer to more than one type of collective, such as a producers' cooperative or a consumers' cooperative. Many scholars do not shy away from including all forms of cooperative in one category, expanding their examples to also include community ownership of enterprises like professional sports teams (Alperovitz, 2011; Imbroscio, 2010; Restakis, 2010). The important factor in collective ownership is that a large, defined group of people with a stake in the health of an enterprise share ownership in it. While many corporations are owned by a wide set of shareholders, in most cases the workers, community members, and other important stakeholders are excluded from ownership and therefore do not derive profit from the enterprise.

The other defining feature of a cooperative is democratic control. Democracy is a value that is, at least rhetorically, important in American politics; however, most workplaces are not democratically managed institutions. Richard Wolff (2012, pgs. 1-2) argues that "production works best when performed by a community that collectively designs and carries out shared labor." The principles of democracy are behind Wolff's (2012) development of Worker Self-Directed Enterprises, which are meant to go beyond currently existing cooperatives and serve as a model of ownership and production that would form the building blocks of a democratic socialist economy. The goal of democratic self-determination for workers and communities is a widely cited reason for building a "solidarity economy" based on cooperative enterprises (Akuno & Nangwaya, 2017; Satgar, 2014). For a society in which democratic engagement is often uneven based on class and race, gaining power in the workplace is posed as a model which can not only strengthen the power of workers but have broader sociopolitical benefits as well (Wolff, 2012). The importance of a cooperative for workers is that they are meant to shed the

domination found in traditional business models, not only gaining agency for themselves, but influencing decision-making so that enterprises serve the needs of the workers and their communities rather over the needs of profit-seeking shareholders' and owners.

The focus on democracy means that some forms of enterprises, while perhaps adjacent to cooperatives, must be separated and cannot be included in the same category. Employee Stock Ownership Plans (ESOPs) are enterprise structures where workers are granted collective ownership by becoming shareholders, however the management model is not significantly altered, and they are considered palatable enough that even figures like Ronald Reagan have expressed support for them (Alperovitz, 2011; Imbroscio, 2010). If cooperatives are meant to provide an alternative to a neoliberal capitalist model—where corporate can dictate what individuals do through the power of compulsion at work—then ESOPs and similar models do not feature the degree of democratic control expected in cooperatives. Proponents of alternative models point to examples which are not worker-owned, including producer-cooperatives and models like the Green Bay Packers, which is essentially a nonprofit in which shares are owned by members of a community (Alperovitz, 2011; Imbroscio, 1995; Restakis, 2010). These models are interesting, and deserve further exploration, but cannot be easily combined with other types of cooperatives for a couple important reasons. Other forms of cooperative ownership can include a different model of internal management, but a group of producers or community stakeholders can still exercise significant domination if workers are excluded from ownership. The benefits of using cooperatives to create stable jobs and rebuild community economies necessitates a transfer of profits to workers—who form the great majority of society. Considering all of these factors, this dissertation will

focus on cooperatives that are collectively owned and democratically managed by their workers.

Local Economic Development

Cities have entered the 21st century struggling to deal with impacts that economic changes have wrought on their populations and environments. Struggling economies have led to job loss, poverty, and a slew of exacerbated problems such as higher crime, a lack of affordable housing, and failing schools (Wilson, 1996; Imbroscio, 2010). Workers in the current economic paradigm find themselves constricted at work, and their quality of life suffers due both to the conditions found in the workplace and the broader conditions created by low wages and poverty (Wolff, 2012; Gibson-Graham, Cameron, & Healy, 2013). Dealing with the current economic situation leads cities to pursue several economic development strategies focused on growth at all costs (Molotch, 1976; Peterson, 1981, Imbroscio, 1995). However, the focus on growth reinforces a neoliberal capitalist status quo and the problems of poverty and associated effects are only worsened by policies that continue to distribute wealth to people at the top rather than the broader working class (Alperovitz, 2011; Imbroscio, 1995). The economic status quo is one that does not serve most people, and workers find themselves longing for alternatives to the current model of economic development. Continued focus on economic growth, and the outcome of cities funneling public money into the pockets of large-project developers who move capital around the globe rather than invest it in communities leaves an opening for efforts that seek to build wealth from the bottom-up instead.

The problems caused by the dominant model of urban economic development has led many community activists, political organizers, and urban scholars to call for

alternatives. A market-based economic system based on stimulating economic growth has left cities hollowed out; many urban areas feature large areas of concentrated poverty, which is often racialized through a pattern of residential segregation. (Wilson 1996; Imbroscio, 2010; Imbroscio, 1995). Cooperative economics has a history within the African American community that stretches back to the 19th century, and there have been some arguments to re-connect to these histories and explore community-based approaches to rebuild largely black urban economies (Nembhard, 2014; Akuno & Nangwaya, 2017). The prospect of an economic agenda to particularly aid black urban communities has seemed politically impossible in American politics, but community wealth building approaches are “less likely to generate the severe racial conflict often associated with more traditional approaches” (Imbroscio, 1995, pg. 839). Moving toward cooperative-based economics is also suggested as a route to improving a suffering American democracy and building up a common sense of civil society (Swaine, 1993; Alperovitz, 2011; Wolff, 2010). The call for an alternative model of economic development—one that can reshape the American economy to put people over profits and rebuild communities suffering from the effects of neoliberalism—is widespread and reflected in the desire of communities to try anything to fix a long-broken economy. However, isolated approaches are difficult to build and can fail quickly. The need to build something larger shapes many of the proposed alternatives.

The changes necessary to build an alternative economic model must be able to change fundamentally important facts that form the basis of the current model. To build an economy that “contributes to the well-being of people and the planet, we need to look more closely at who makes decisions about producing and distributing new wealth”

(Gibson-Graham, Cameron, & Healy, 2013, pg. 51). It has been suggested that the real utility of building a cooperative-based economy is not simply the amelioration of capitalism's worst effects, but the wholesale replacement of capitalism as an economic system (Wolff, 2012; Alperovitz, 2011; Ranis 2016). The proposed replacement is a "solidarity economy," built upon the principles of shared wealth, democratic decision-making, and community-focused development (Satgar, 2014; Restakis, 2010; Akuno & Nangwaya, 2017). Whether the creation of a solidarity economy in one city really necessitates the replacement of capitalism may not be a settled question, but the creation of such an economy would likely require a political movement rooted in the desire for democracy and equity. The formation of a solidarity economy built upon cooperative economics, even using municipal policy to help promote this kind of development in lieu of traditional methods, is an intriguing model that would significantly break with urban politics as usual in the United States.

Project Design

With a definition of cooperatives in hand and an understanding of what they could mean to a movement for an alternative pattern of urban economic development, I embarked on this research project with a long set of open-ended questions about cooperatives in American cities. I decided to compare two cases where city officials and activists had publicly spoken of the need to create worker-owned cooperatives to create community-based wealth and chose two cases where existing institutions were forming to accomplish those goals. My chosen cases were Jackson, MS and Cleveland, OH, two cities with some similar challenges (urban poverty, white flight, declining schools) and major differences (Cleveland is a large Midwestern city with a declining industrial

economy, Jackson is a midsize Southern city in a largely agrarian state). I decided upon five research questions to explore in both cities:

RQ1: What specific policies are selected cities implementing to help people form cooperatives?

RQ2: Do the selected cities provide material or financial support for cooperative development?

RQ3: What political relationships form between those in the cooperative movement and those in the selected cities' governments?

RQ4: Are pro-cooperative policies in the selected cities making progress toward goals of building wealth and power for marginalized and working-class communities?

RQ5: What obstacles and opposition to pro-cooperative policies exist in the selected cities?

The methods for the study will be explored in a more in-depth manner in Chapter 3. In a more concise explanation, each case study required field research designed to gather (and subsequently analyze) qualitative data. The project required travel to each city, the gathering of archival data from public sources and cooperative enterprises, and site visits. Much of the project was also able to be accomplished remotely, through web research and phone interviews. The core of the project's data gathering were 15 interviews conducted in Cleveland and 13 interviews in Jackson, many of which were conducted in person, but others were done remotely by phone. By speaking with people connected to the cooperative movement, the city government, local politics, the local media, and academia, I was able to gather a diverse set of perspectives to answer these questions—or at least determine whether answers can be attained quite yet. Along with

the review of archival data and news reports, I was able to gain a clear picture of the strength of the cooperative movement in each city, the political and policy situation surrounding the issues of economic development, and the relationships between politicians, activists, and city officials. What follows is a very brief overview of the selected cities for each case.

	Cleveland	Cuyahoga County, OH	Jackson	Hinds County, MS
Population (2018)	383,793	1,243,857	164,422	237,085
Population (2010)	396,815	1,280,115	173,590	245,365
Population (1990)	505,616	1,412,140	196,637	254,441
White, not Hispanic %	33.80%	58.80%	16.40%	24.20%
African-American %	50.40%	50.40%	81.70%	72.70%
Median Household Income	\$27,854	\$46,720	\$35,308	\$41,011
Poverty Rate	35.20%	18.10%	28.90%	20.20%
Labor Force Participation Rate	58.90%	63.20%	62.20%	62.10%

Figure 1.1: Demographic Data for Cleveland, Jackson, and associated counties (Sources: United States Census Bureau, 2019; U.S Department of Commerce, 1990a, U.S. Department of Commerce, 1990b)

Cleveland, Ohio

Cleveland is a strong choice for research in this project because existing cooperative development projects have attracted significant attention in existing academic literature (Alperovitz, 2011; Song, 2016; Zingale, Samanta, & West, 2017). More specifically, the proposed “Cleveland Model” surrounding the development of the Evergreen Cooperatives has been cited in both academic discourse and media coverage as a unique alternative form of economic development (Alperovitz, 2011; Alperovitz, Howard, & Williamson, 2010; Song, 2016). The attraction of exploring the Evergreen example is strong because not only has this drawn significant attention, this attention has been used to raise questions about how these developments could be replicated in other cities. By examining an example of urban policy which is meant to achieve more equitable outcomes than traditional models, I will be determining what mechanisms of

policy implementation are being used in Cleveland to actively facilitate these alternatives. Building upon existing understandings of a potential model, further research based on understanding of the impact of the project in the media, political community, and among policymakers can help reveal not only the extent of government action but the success of the cooperative project in changing its communities and the city as a whole.

The economic situation in Cleveland is, to put it mildly, not particularly strong. The city has seen about half of its population move outside its jurisdiction since the mid-20th century, and inner-city neighborhoods such as Glenville have *median* incomes that fall into poverty range (Alperovitz, Howard, & Williamson, 2010). The goal of the Evergreen Cooperatives project is to rebuild failing communities and ensure shared wealth among people who are currently dispossessed by the capitalist system. Creating cooperatives in Cleveland links established pillars of the local economy with “a new local economic entity...that ‘democratizes’ ownership and is deeply anchored in the community” (Alperovitz, Howard, & Williamson, 2010). Evergreen is built upon well-funded community “anchors” which cannot move away and have a vested interest in a strong and equitable local economy (Alperovitz, Howard, & Williamson, 2010; Song, 2016; Camou, 2016; Causey, 2017). The anchor model means support for the project is widespread, not only securing the backing of progressive activists, community organizers, and local government but also the business and nonprofit sectors. Therefore, not only can Evergreen be described as an example of a cooperative that has drawn community support, but it is being pitched as a model of urban economic development that uses cooperatives to build an alternative economy—all the while bridging divides

between progressives and the economic and political establishment in a liberal city in service of a shared goal of socioeconomic equity.

The scale of the Evergreen Cooperatives project, the attention it has received from academics, media figures, government officials, and the private sector, as well as the decade of development it has in its history, make it a case which must receive further study. While an initial burst of excitement greeted the project in the early part of the 2010s, recent research has focused on very specific questions and widespread attention still largely refers to the announced intentions of the project from several years ago. However, the situation that Evergreen exists in has changed significantly. Interest in progressive policy solutions—and even socialist economics—has only risen since the Great Recession. Evergreen has now had a decade to expand its reach and begin making impacts on the community. In my visits to Cleveland I interviewed people who were able to discuss and analyze exactly how those impacts are being felt by ordinary working people in Cleveland, as well as describe what the current economic development strategy of the city government looks like. In addition to this, I was able to reach people from across the political sphere, who had their own opinions about the city’s economic policies and Evergreen’s role in the community. By further examining the model and bringing information up to date, this dissertation will play an important role in advancing understanding of how the “Cleveland model” works in practice and what lessons can be learned as initial excitement fades into a consistent effort to build an institution that challenges the dominant economic and political models that surround it.

Jackson, Mississippi

The case being studied in Jackson is different from Cleveland in a few significant ways. Mississippi is a state with a substantial African American population and a painful history of slavery, segregation, and racism; its unique people and history make it an intriguing setting for a radical cooperative based economy (Nembhard, 2014). Jackson is a city with a very large majority African American population, surrounded by more affluent (and whiter) suburbs; this is not completely unlike Cleveland, and the city also struggles with poverty, underfunded government, and crumbling public services (Mitchner, 2017). The political situation is perhaps more unique and fascinating, with a strong radical movement having been built over the last few decades and peaking in the last ten years with the mayoral elections—on a platform of solidarity economics—of Chokwe Lumumba and Chokwe Antar Lumumba in 2013 and 2017 (Gilbert, 2017; Moskowitz, 2017). Gilbert (2017) summarized the Lumumba vision of cooperative economics as one where “long-marginalized black communities could build a new economy for themselves, a democratic and fair society, a foundation for good lives to grow from.” City officials and politicians, and the movement they have emerged from, have plans for Jackson that see cooperative economics as a transformative vehicle in a failing city. The Jackson project is one that has proven electorally successful, at least in terms of articulating a platform that voters would like, but the actual building of a government-backed cooperative economy is another task altogether.

The project of Cooperation Jackson does not exist within the confines of government—it is an important step in a long-term strategy known as the Jackson-Kush Plan which means to build democratically managed, collectively owned enterprises in

Jackson with or without government support (Akuno, 2017). The cooperative enterprises and the associated political and social movements are meant to achieve four radical goals:

1. To place the ownership and control over the primary means of production directly in the hands of the Black working class of Jackson;
2. To build and advance the development of the ecologically regenerative force of production in Jackson, Mississippi;
3. To democratically transform the political economy of the city of Jackson, the state of Mississippi, and the southeastern region; and
4. To advance the aims and objectives of the Jackson-Kush Plan, which are to attain self-determination for people of African descent and the radical, democratic transformation of the state of Mississippi (which we see as a prelude to the radical decolonization and transformation of the United States itself) (Akuno, 2017, pgs. 3-4).

The broader plans of the activists involved with Cooperation Jackson are explicitly socialist in nature—seeing cooperatives as a way to own and control the means of production—and require not just working within the current political system but overturning established norms and building something radically different (Akuno, 2017; Moskowitz, 2017; Gilbert, 2017). The existing cooperative movement is still small, and the plans are bigger than its real-world footprint, although existing efforts are underway to create cooperatives in several industries ranging from urban farming to food service (Akuno, 2017; Akuno & Nangwaya, 2017; Moskowitz, 2017). While the plans may be much newer and harder to achieve than the model in Cleveland, such a grand vision has invited plenty of attention in the media and on the Left. It is interesting enough that urban scholars should examine the situation—not just to understand the unique political terrain that now exists in Jackson, but also to examine whether policy experiments are starting to take place.

The ideas that made up Chokwe Antar Lumumba’s pre-election platform, and the plans set for Cooperation Jackson, suggest that recent developments are only the

beginning of what could be a significant departure for American politics and urban governance in one city. The selection of Jackson as a case study works for these reasons, but also because the recency of these efforts also mean that they are presently unfolding and will take on new characteristics in a very short time. The initial interest in the projects that come periodically with an election is of course fascinating, but urban scholars must now turn our eyes to Jackson and study how these ideas translate into government. Not only does this raise significant new policy questions, the political situation in Jackson will now respond differently once radicals are in government rather than agitating from the outside. Because the project is so new, urban scholars have not devoted significant study to what has happened in Jackson, and this dissertation hopes to fill those gaps. We must seek to better understand what has led to the rise of these unique developments. By examining a wide variety of perspectives in government, local politics, the cooperative movement, the media, and various communities within Jackson, I can synthesize an understanding of what exactly the Lumumba administration is doing in power, where Cooperation Jackson is going now that a pro-cooperative politician has taken power, and how (or if) all of these efforts are making an impact on the people and economy of the city.

Finding Answers

The point of this dissertation is, at its most base level, to answer the research questions posed here. Of course, those research questions are grounded in things that I think are yet to be fully understood about the cases I have selected and topic of cooperative economic development. Existing information and research provide a solid ground upon which to explore these ideas, but the recency of these cases leaves some

hope that new insights can be learned from study of the experiments in Cleveland and Jackson. The exploratory methods of my project, rooted in qualitative study design and interviews of individuals who can offer unique insights to the politics and economy of each city, allow for basic information to be gained from my results. However, I have also been able to gain data that can be used to compare those cases, place them into the context of what we already know about urban politics and urban policy, and inform new understandings of these things when applied to future cases in other cities. I have used Chapter 1 to introduce the conception of cooperative economics that I have studied and how it relates to urban economic development. I have also outlined what the study entailed and a brief explanation of the two cities chose for case studies.

Chapter 2 provides a literature review to ground the dissertation in the existing body of research. I explore literature which defines cooperatives, especially works that explain the history of the cooperative movement and works that give examples of cooperatives and similar enterprises. I will then explain why cooperatives are important, first by drawing upon theories of capitalism and urban economic development to provide enough explanation for why cooperatives are the basis of an alternative economic model which could be used to build socialism. The chapter will also cite examples of pro-cooperative policies which exist across the globe at local, subnational, and national levels; this will include reviewing literature that discusses specific polities which have implemented policies to encourage cooperative development as well as examination of those policies and their impact upon communities. The last section of Chapter 2 will focus on the cases themselves by examining the academic writing that currently exists on the Cleveland and Jackson situations, and helping place my dissertation in context. The

literature review of the cases will also address the non-academic and quasi-academic writing, much of which has been published through journalistic and opinion outlets, on the projects in Cleveland and Jackson.

After the literature review, Chapter 3 will serve as the methods section for this dissertation. In this section I will describe why I chose to do a comparative study of two cases and explain more in-depth why each city was selected for a case study. This section will also include discussion on why I decided to focus on qualitative research rather than something else, and particularly why I felt it was important to do exploratory research that was open-ended enough to allow data collection which could answer a large number of questions. The case studies include site visits and archival research, as well as an analysis of media sources; Chapter 3 will explain how these methods help strengthen the cases and provide necessary data to draw conclusions. The interview method used was based on a model known as responsive interviewing, which will be explained further in this section; there will also be an explanation for why interviews were considered so important and how they were prepared for and conducted. Chapter 3 will also include an assessment of how well these case studies did in accomplishing my initial goals, including discussion of obstacles to collection—a prime example being the difficulty in identifying potential research subjects and contacting them with no prior relationship. The final part of the methods section will include limitations of the study as it was conducted, with some suggestions for how future studies may be conducted differently.

The remainder of the dissertation will be devoted to analysis of the data collected in the case studies. The theme of the fourth chapter will be in understanding and explaining the existing or proposed pro-cooperative policies in both Cleveland and

Jackson. Chapter 4 will primarily focus on answering the first two research questions. The first research question seeks to understand what policies that city governments are implementing (or plan to implement) to help form cooperatives and encourage cooperative economic development. This will require analysis of government documents collected in cities that detail their approach to existing cooperative projects, as well as the interviews conducted with people both on the government or political side as well as those involved with cooperative projects. The other major question explored in Chapter 4 is whether the cities in the two case studies provide any material or financial support for cooperatives, either directly to specific enterprises or generally as a means of encouraging development. The interview responses provide direct answers in many cases to how seriously the cities take cooperative development and detail what type of resources (or lack thereof) are available to people who want to start a cooperative in each city.

Chapter 5 will feature a focus on the urban politics insights which can be drawn from the two case studies. The content of this chapter will seek to answer the third research question as well as approach the fifth research question from an urban politics paradigm. The chapter will explore the politics of those who support the establishment of cooperatives, whether they are activists from outside the government, large institutions in the community economic establishment, or urban policymakers seeking to stimulate economic development in their city. Not only will I detail the motivations of the different groups with a stake in cooperative development, I will also compare the differing motivations and focus on how relationships can form between unlikely partners in service of a shared goal. This chapter will also focus on the tensions that can form when people

with different motivations and political goals are working towards cooperative development, contrasting the different visions for a cooperative-based economy as well as the tenuous relationship that always exists between Left political activists skeptical of the establishment and politicians who gain power with the intent to carry out a program that may include cooperative development. There are obstacles to creating cooperatives, and the political climate in each city provides interesting lessons for how obstacles can form unexpectedly, how various groups may try to resolve those obstacles, and what opposition can develop to the plans of those who support cooperative development.

Chapter 6 will shift focus towards attempting to assess the impact of cooperatives upon their communities. I will explore how successful advocates have been in encouraging city governments to adopt pro-cooperative policies in Cleveland and Jackson, as well as taking a more policy-focused approach to questions about the obstacles to implementation of pro-cooperative policies in each city. Based on the interviews done with people representing several different backgrounds, I will assess the relative attention each project is getting in their community and determine if they are becoming a well-known part of the city economy. The interviews will also provide assessments from various perspectives on how successful current pro-cooperative initiatives are and help build to a more comprehensive assessment of whether cooperative projects are making progress towards either their goals or the goals of the scholars and activists who have touted the model in each city. The chapter will accomplish these tasks by focusing on the fifth research question from a policy and community angle but will primarily seek to answer Research Question 4. Chapter 6 will use interview data to explore differing perceptions of success and discuss and determine whether any successes

or failures cited by one set of stakeholders is contradicted by others who have different goals.

Chapter 7 will be the final chapter of the dissertation and serve as a conclusion to the project. Not only will I recap some of the main findings discussed in earlier chapters, I will place those findings into the larger scholarly context to make them relevant in the ongoing discourse surrounding worker-owned cooperatives and economic development. Furthermore, Chapter 7 will provide a set of uses for this research that could lead to further study in the future; not only is more research needed for each of the cases studied in this dissertation, applying the lessons from Cleveland and Jackson to approaches taken in other cities around the world can be helpful to scholars, activists, and policymakers. The final chapter will also further explore the limitations of the project and use those to suggest avenues for future research that can provide further clarity to any unresolved or unconfirmed inquiries raised in this dissertation. Chapter 7 will also place the work studied in this dissertation, and the theoretical and practical assertions made within, into the broader discourse around worker-owned cooperatives. The goal of the final chapter will be to advance my own conclusions based on the evidence gathered in the hope that it will inspire assessments of those conclusions in the future and application of them in future research and policy formation at the urban government level.

The use of this dissertation depends on the perspective of the person reading it. For urban scholars, I hope this brings much needed insight to the topic of cooperative economic development, helping define a specific form of alternative economic development and draw conclusions about the politics and policy implications of pursuing pro-cooperative policies in each city. I also hope this dissertation can serve as an

objective assessment and explanation of the projects covered in the case studies, furthering understanding (even among the public) about what exactly is happening in Cleveland and Jackson, which are unique situations that are sure to continue drawing significant attention in the years to come. I also believe this dissertation will have significant policy implications. The examples discussed in this dissertation are interesting and will likely be replicated by other cities—therefore I hope the information that I have collected and analyzed will help cities avoid pitfalls and identify strengths of the cooperative development approach so that their policies are as strong as possible.

The economic conditions which have made cooperative economic development so attractive to urban scholars, politicians, and progressive activists do not seem likely to disappear any time soon. As the system of global capitalism continues leaving cities desperate for jobs and economic wealth, especially when large areas of their cities are overly deprived even compared to other neighborhoods, models like those pursued in Cleveland and Jackson will seem less radical and less impossible to achieve. The approaching crisis of climate change is forcing cities to examine radically altering their local economies, and the sustainable, environmentally friendly approaches of the Evergreen Cooperatives and Cooperation Jackson will serve as an appealing contrast to carbon-intensive enterprises who must disappear to prevent a global catastrophe. The ideas may be new, and they may even seem radical, but urban scholars understand that experiments are the best way to solve larger problems. The worker-owned cooperatives in Cleveland and Jackson, and their supporters in the political and economic sectors, are exploring these problems in new, exciting ways that are not yet fully understood. I believe this dissertation is an important next step in making sure that all the necessary

audiences pay more attention to the cases at hand and learn something important about urban development in the process.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This dissertation is not without precedent in academic literature, as the topic of cooperatives has interested many writers across several disciplines. The literature that currently exists falls in a nexus of political science, economics, anthropology, history, and public policy; that is, it resembles the field of urban studies. Much of the literature reviewed in this chapter can be read divorced from the urban context, analyzing cooperatives as a tool that could be applied in any sort of community (Restakis, 2010; Satgar, 2014). However, some of the literature also places cooperatives squarely in the urban policy framework—either by suggesting they have use as a tool of local urban governance or examining the policy approaches being used to bolster cooperative development in individual cities (Imbroscio, 2010; Camou, 2016). I cannot claim cooperatives for the urban any more than I could claim any other form of enterprise or policy tool, I will simply be examining examples of cooperatives as urban policy in the context of ongoing discussions about urban economic development. A primary goal of this dissertation will be to move the state of the existing literature from the potential for urban cooperative development towards understanding the existing elements of these policy approaches in two specific cities. By analyzing the current literature and reviewing the body of knowledge which this dissertation is being built upon, I hope to situate my study into the broader academic frameworks which currently exists and provide a justification for why further research as conducted in this dissertation is so valuable to the field of urban studies.

The second chapter of this dissertation will thus function as a literature review. Over the course of the following pages I will be examining dozens of works which provide crucial context for the study which I conducted about cooperatives in Cleveland and Jackson. The literature reviewed here will serve as a basic guide to current academic understanding of cooperative development and the discourse which surrounds these ideas within urban and public policy disciplines. The first section of this literature review will seek to answer the question “What are cooperatives?” by reviewing how various scholars define cooperatives and from which angles they examine their development, as well as reviewing literature which documents and analyzes the history and current extent of the cooperative movement as it has existed in terms of tangibly extant places and enterprises. The second portion of this literature review will provide more of a justification for the study and use of cooperatives as opposed to other economic models and other models of development. This section will analyze the justifications for an alternative mode of urban economic development as well as the literature which poses cooperative development to combat neoliberalism and the capitalist system. From there the review will move on to a review of literature that focuses on government policy surrounding cooperatives, specifically examining those works which have suggested types of policies or frameworks which could be pursued, and existing case studies of these ideas being applied by cities, states, and countries around the world. This chapter will conclude after reviewing the existing literature about each of the case studies, not only reviewing the academic work on Cleveland and Jackson but as well as non-scholarly sources such as journalistic accounts and analysis of major cooperative efforts in each city.

What are cooperatives?

The first chapter of this dissertation examined John Restakis' (2010) definition of cooperatives as enterprises characterized by ownership by a collective (in the cases presented here, the workers) and democratic management by that collective. That definition is not particularly disputed, with much of the literature focusing even more widely on definitions of any worker-owned or collective-owned enterprises comprising a solidarity-based economy (Satgar, 2014; Alperovitz, 2011). One suggested defining feature of worker-owned firms is that "they not only change the ownership of wealth but are far more anchored in local communities by virtue of the simple fact that worker-owners live in the community" (Alperovitz, 2011, pg. 49). While this community principle is inclusive of non-cooperative forms such as ESOPs, it is an important part of defining cooperatives as rooted in communities such as those urban neighborhoods that the cases studied in this dissertation are part of. Nembhard (2014) argues that worker-owned cooperatives "offer economic security, income and wealth generation, and democratic economic participation to employees, as well as provide communities with meaningful and decent jobs and promote environmental sustainability" (pg. 4). This definition expands the role of cooperatives beyond just shared wealth, community stability, and democracy, but also adds the element of environmental protection. In many ways, cooperatives are established by these definitions as proving invaluable not just to the immediate owners (the workers themselves) but having a much greater role for community economics, local democracy, and the health of the planet.

Some theorists have focused on the democratic potential of cooperatives, arguing that they can reinvigorate the principles of democracy in communities and workplaces and

lead a transformation of individual agents as more powerful actors (Wolff, 2012; Song 2016; Swaine, 1993). Other works place cooperatives within the greater goal of transforming towards a community-based or solidarity-based economy, bringing the principles of shared wealth and democracy to a wider transformation of the economy (Gibson-Graham, Cameron, & Healy, 2013; Satgar, 2014; DeFilippis, 2004). The prospect of using cooperatives as tools of policy examine cooperatives for their potential to create specific improvements to impoverished communities and the economic health of depressed local economies (Camou, 2016; Imbroscio, 2010; Adeler, 2014). Ranis (2016) places cooperatives into the Marxist tradition and argues they are “the emancipatory germ that can counter capitalist monopoly over the means of production and societal hegemony” (pg. 16). Much of the literature of cooperatives fundamentally poses them in an anti-capitalist context—not just merely a type of firm but *the* type which could represent a rupture with the capitalist economic system (Ranis, 2016; Wolff, 2012; Alperovitz, 2011; Akuno & Nangwaya, 2017). It must also be understood that scholars have placed cooperatives into the economic fabric of the black community in America and have traditionally been a tool for addressing material inequality and a lack of power and self-determination (Nembhard, 2014; Akuno 2017a; Ransby, 2003). The cases studied in this dissertation address elements of all these dimensions. Considering the variety of uses that are assigned to cooperatives, not just each in case but for cooperatives collectively, much of the existing literature has focused on the development of cooperatives both historically and (especially) contemporaneously to develop theories of cooperative development and their place in the economy and society.

Cooperatives emerged in the age of the Industrial Revolution as a reaction to many of the inequities produced by the model of capitalism which was at that point developing in Europe and North America (Restakis, 2010; Ranis, 2016). The interplay between early cooperative developments and other revolutionary critiques of capitalism was strong, as “Karl Marx and Mikhail Bakunin saw cooperative economics and labor self-management as useful tools in the struggle for socialism and the undermining of capitalism” (Akuno & Nangwaya, 2017, pg. 49). The divisions between many of these cooperative efforts and the socialist movement were great however, with the utopian vision laid out by early socialists such as Robert Owen being dismissed in favor of a model of class struggle by Marxists (Restakis, 2010; Ranis, 2016). These divisions did not foreclose the usefulness of cooperatives in the eyes of Marx or his ideological heirs, and indeed further developments in approaches to cooperative economics did occur from a Marxist perspective (Ranis, 2016; Akuno & Nangwaya, 2017). The cooperative movement did evolve away from Marxian socialists in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, however, as more social democratic approaches took hold (Restakis, 2010). The early development of cooperatives in the 19th century had its roots not just in challenges to capitalism but a desire to build a better society that could in many ways be prefigured and eventually expanded as a proven alternative to industrial capitalism. These efforts struggled not only because of the skepticism of other socialists, but because economic realities forced the cooperative movement to adapt to conditions in which their institutions could survive.

The further evolution of cooperatives required “a shift from the ideal to the pragmatic and [a] successful application of the cooperative idea directly to the market” (Restakis, 2010, pg. 52). The adaptation of the cooperative ideal from small, autonomous

utopian communities into the larger capitalist economy meant forming institutions who retained the same principles of common ownership and democratic governance while still engaging in market economics and building firms which could engage in production and compete with more dominant models (Ranis, 2016; Nembhard, 2014; Restakis, 2010). It was during this period, leading up through World War II, that extant forms of cooperatives developed in communities around the world; the cooperative model became an invaluable form of organization among African Americans, while cooperative formations developed into powerful forces in Italy, Spain, and Canada (Adeler, 2014; Ransby, 2003; Nembhard, 2014). Dozens of plywood lumber cooperatives were established in the Pacific Northwest of the United States throughout the 20th century, with most of them employing 100-300 workers (Lill, 1984; Craig & Pencavel, 1992). With the shift in the experience of cooperatives into practical experiments which could amass wealth, build power for their institutional formations, and develop into vibrant communities of workers, these institutions became more embedded into public policy recognition and were regarded as an integral part of many local and national economies (Adeler, 2014; Nembhard, 2014). As capitalism developed into a global force which dominated the economic life of the planet, contained within this system were cooperatives which operated upon principles that stretch back to initial resistance to capitalism. The continued development of these principles saw them further integrated into mainstream political economy and allowed for an evolution of the concepts underlying concepts into formations which embrace their role in capitalism even more strongly.

In the last century, the principles of worker ownership have stretched beyond the traditional cooperative model even if cooperatives themselves continue to exist within the

modern economy. In the United States, much of the attention on worker ownership has come in the form of more robustly market-based firms like ESOPs, with serious considerations for how these could play a role in democratizing the economy (Whyte & Blasi, 1982; Swaine, 1993; Alperovitz, 2011). The emerging role of ESOPs has been hailed as interesting and unique by Americans looking for alternative models of economic development, and for good reason; despite their distinctions from cooperatives, ESOPs expand the loose ideals of democratic worker-ownership into a much broader section of the economy than cooperatives have managed to do (Imbroscio, 2010; Alperovitz, 2011). The development of cooperatives has also continued in Canada and Europe, with large-scale formations in these areas becoming irreplaceable economic engines which can dominate entire regions of the country (Adeler, 2014; Restakis, 2010). South America has also seen a significant increase of cooperative activity since the beginning of the 21st century, as bottom-up community efforts for economic democracy dovetailed with a left turn in Latin American politics and a strong relationship between these progressive governments and cooperative formations formed as a result (Caruana & Srnc, 2013). These historical developments have led to a global economy that, while capitalist in nature, contains a cooperative element (or cooperative-influenced) in many significant firms and networks across the planet. Scholars have made it an important task to document this history, how cooperatives developed in relation to the capitalist economic system, and how the movement for cooperative economics developed in relation to anti-capitalist movements. The transformation of the cooperative ideal is important to understand the modern context that existing cooperatives exist in, which can be examined through currently extant examples of cooperative firms and institutions.

Perhaps the most well-known cooperative formation in the world is the Mondragon Group in Spain, an impressive economic entity regardless of model:

Mondragon Group is a third-tier co-operative business group made up of 281 companies (mostly co-operatives) organized into sectors: financial, industrial, distribution, and research and training. The sectoral groups are independent entities, yet they function within a comprehensive strategy coordinated by the MCC. In 2011, the group consisted of 83,569 worker-owners; 43.6 percent of the workforce were women; total assets were 32.4 billion euros; and total revenue was 14.83 billion euros (Adeler, 2014, pg. 552).

The scale and import of Mondragon in the Spanish economy is seen as aspirational for many newer collectives, such as Cooperation Jackson, and is cited throughout literature on cooperative development as an example of what a successful cooperative ecosystem looks like (Whyte & Whyte, 1991; Akuno & Nangwaya, 2017; Alperovitz, 2011). Scholars have also begun focusing on cooperative developments in Argentina, Venezuela, and Chile where governments have begun focusing on fostering the development of cooperatives and there has been an explosion in a lot of individual firms that are collectively owned and managed by workers in cities and rural areas across South America (Ranis, 2016; Caruana & Srnc, 2013). Cooperatives also have a particularly strong base in some Canadian provinces, with the attention paid towards social economy approaches in Quebec as a model where government support and regional federations of cooperatives have made it possible for the cooperative sector to establish itself (Adeler, 2014; Restakis, 2010). The global examples are important and reflect inspirational examples that Americans can point to as similar efforts are attempted in this country. However, models cannot be simply adopted wholesale in the American economy but must be adapted for this country's history—including that of existing cooperative efforts.

The cooperative movement as it developed manifested itself in several significantly different ways, both on a country-by-country basis and in the various forms the cooperatives took. In countries like Venezuela, Cuba, and Yugoslavia, cooperatives have existed within the context of socialist and communist governance to ensure the worker ownership of the means of production (Ranis, 2016; Whyte & Blasi, 1982). However, in much of Europe and Canada, cooperatives have been part of a social democratic movement that wanted to create more equitable worker-owned structures despite a still largely capitalist economy (Restakis, 2010; Whyte & Whyte, 1991). The worker-owned cooperatives in capitalist countries existed alongside cooperative movements which then pivoted away from just worker-ownership; in the United States and Canada, for instance, large numbers of cooperatives are consumer-cooperatives or producer-cooperatives (Wolff, 2012; Restakis, 2010). It is hard not to see the imprints of this history on the developments in Cleveland and Jackson, which are trying to create structures in an economy which is still firmly capitalist. However, the influence of other models outside the United States (especially Mondragon in Spain) is helping shape efforts in places like Cleveland as well.

Much of the focus on American examples have lumped worker-owned cooperatives in with ESOPs and other community-focused institutions as potential alternative economic models (Alperovitz, 2011; Imbroscio, 2010). Despite this relatively loose definition, these writings represent an important element of scholarly thought which has thus far focused on establishing theoretical defenses of the worker ownership model and advocacy for its adoption as a tool of public policy. The basic fact is that “more Americans now work in firms that are partly or wholly owned by the employees than are members of unions in the

private sector” (Alperovitz, 2011, pg. 81). While this may say more about the pitiful state of private sector unionism in the United States, it does represent a growing cultural and economic reality in which worker-ownership is well-situated. The development of full-blown worker-owned cooperatives in places like Cleveland, New York, Berkeley, Chicago and Madison represent real efforts in terms of economic organizing as well as public policy adaptations to encourage these developments (Camou, 2016; Alperovitz, 2011; Alperovitz, Howard, & Williamson, 2010). The primacy of Cleveland in terms of a Mondragon-like ecosystem effort, which is extant in much of the globe is relatively unknown in American terms, heavily influenced the selection of that city as a case study for this dissertation. The role of these examples alongside efforts to advocate for replication of these models and the implementation of policies to aid in cooperative development is noteworthy—the existing literature has thus far focused less on what the cooperatives look like in practice than on advocating for their existence.

Why is an alternative needed?

The authors, scholars, activists who have produced most of the material arguing in favor of cooperative economics share a perspective that the economy is failing people in some way or another. For many people, the economic inequality seen across the world and in local contexts is an indictment for the global economy and the system of capitalism (Wolff, 2012; Ranis, 2016; Alperovitz, 2011; Akuno & Nangwaya, 2017). The argument is not particularly new and rests upon a classically Marxist perspective that the exploitation by labor by a separate ownership class is a critical element of capitalism; the poverty and suffering endured by the working class is not an unfortunate byproduct of capitalism, it helps uphold a system whose reliance relies on exploitation (Akuno & Nangwaya, 2017;

Ranis, 2016). Wolff (2012) sees Worker Self-Directed Enterprises as a complete replacement tool to cure a broken system:

This cure involves, first, replacing the current capitalist organization of production inside offices, factories, stores, and other workplaces in modern societies. In short, exploitation—the production of a surplus appropriated and distributed by those other than its producers—would stop (pgs. 11-12).

The problem being diagnosed by these scholars, mostly Marxists but also including non-Marxist socialists and anarchists, is capitalism itself. While much of political and economic theory revolves around the effects caused by capitalism (poverty, disinvestment, etc.) these scholars and associated leftist activists seek to address the root causes through a structural transformation.

The critique of capitalism advanced by some scholars also includes discussions of how class-based exploitation intersects with race-based oppression. Akuno & Nangwaya (2017) write that “white supremacy, settler colonialism, capitalist exploitation, and patriarchal domination have prevented the Black working class from exercising substantive control over their lives for centuries (pg. 46). The focus of building cooperatives to help build community wealth and power for black Americans is not new, and advocacy for embracing cooperatives as a tool often ties modern efforts to historical cooperative efforts during the Civil Rights era in the South (Williams & Walker, 2017; Nembhard, 2014; Ransby, 2003). The rebuke of colonialism as a race-based oppression that exists within capitalism is echoed in the global cooperative movement who see cooperatives as a way for building strong local economies which can resist an economic imperialism forced on the Global South by neoliberal capitalism (Satgar, 2014). The cooperative movement is thus not just a resistance to the class-based exploitation experienced by all people but is seen by many as a tool for national liberation and racial justice. The intertwined nature of

capitalism, racism, and colonialism is a relevant theme for critiques of the capitalist economy—and advocates see an alternative as necessary to liberate oppressed peoples and give them the tools needed for freedom and self-determination.

The oppression of people based on race, and the exploitation of people outside imperial powers, leaves local effects which cooperative advocates seek to address. The stated goal of cooperative economics is not always simply just to bring down the global system of capitalism but focus on small-scale efforts to strengthen specific communities and give them more wealth and power to fight back against monied interests (Gibson-Graham, Cameron, & Healy, 2013; Cummings, 2001; Restakis, 2010). This is interrelated with concerns about cities, not least of which because many of the impacted communities are urban, but also because the tools we have for rebuilding communities can most obviously be applied in inner-city neighborhoods like those found in Jackson (Williams & Walker, 2017; Akuno, 2017). One of the most obvious threats to communities (both urban and rural) are threats to environments—while economic health is a vital sign for the health of a community, so is ecological health, and a lack of environmental sustainability will either lead to or exacerbate poor economic conditions for individuals and communities (Akuno, 2017; Song, 2016). There are themes in existing literature that focus on very particular concerns that might not always seem generalizable—these viewpoints argue the economic system is harming the land, the people, and ripping apart communities at the ground level. For obvious reasons this is of interest to urban scholars, and the economic health of a city and its communities can be read as an assessment of the viability of certain urban policies.

Urban economic development is usually seen through the framework of inducing growth—the goal of city governments in this approach is to continue making the city bigger and better by enticing the private sector to invest (Molotch, 1976). The reality for much of the last few decades has been that cities have been caught at the whims of capital, left to chase after business dollars for the good of their economies (Peterson, 1981). However, many urban scholars have pushed back against the idea that the realities of the economy are destiny for cities and have indeed argued for the development of alternative policies which increase self-reliance and explore alternative economic forms as a means to build permanent economic bases in neighborhoods frequently abandoned by capitalism (Imbroscio, 2010; Imbroscio, 1995; Williams & Walker, 2017). The reliance on an urban economic strategy reliant on the investment decisions of capital has meant that in neighborhoods (and even entire cities) where capital has fled, the people who remain have suffered immensely (Wilson, 1997; Akuno, 2017). As the black working class has been concentrated in poor, severely underdeveloped urban areas, alternatives are being explored because “there is nowhere to go to the grocery store, to get a loan that doesn’t take advantage of you for generations to come, and no place to get healthcare” (Williams & Walker, 2017, pg. 187). The economic situation in cities is widely documented, by cooperative proponents but also by people who have no general interest in worker-ownership or challenges to capitalism. The need for an alternative economic strategy has been argued for in existing literature on the basis that no alternative exists in the current system but the continuation of suffering and a collapse of the left-behind cities’ and communities’ viability.

How Cooperatives Can Help

If people advocating for cooperative economics think the economy is broken, it makes sense that they would be looking for an alternative. Traditionally cooperatives have indeed been used by black Americans to create community-owned economic institutions that were free from racist exploitation as well as organized on the equitable principles of the cooperative movement to share wealth and power on a community basis (Nembhard, 2014; Williams & Walker, 2017). In several cities in the South, activists have reconnected with these past struggles in the past few decades and re-started efforts to bring cooperatives to majority-black cities such as Birmingham and Jackson (Williams & Walker, 2017; Akuno, 2017). In a globalized economy, cooperative formations in places like Brazil, Argentina, and Venezuela are used to help the exploited underclass in those countries build against neoliberalism in their own countries, secure political power at times, and fight back against the capitalist system (Ranis, 2016; Satgar, 2014; Caruana & Srnc, 2013). These examples are deployed by scholars to not just document the uses of cooperatives in real-world examples, but to make a point about how many people are already doing the work of resisting economic coercion. These examples are placed into context of pieces arguing for a new economy or at least a significantly transformed economic system, and therefore must read as examples to emulate in other contexts even if perhaps they would need to be adapted from situation to situation.

Those studying and documenting the history of cooperative economics among black Americans during civil rights battles is meant to highlight how these formations are an integral part of a liberation struggle:

History has shown that cooperatives are an important strategy for economic collaboration, racial economic independence, and community well-being. They develop leadership capacity and promote civic participation. Combining Du Bois's concept that through economic racial segregation African

Americans could create, and position themselves at the cutting edge of, new economic relationships and formations, with the notion of a solidarity economic among subaltern populations creates a powerful tool for analyzing the accomplishments of African American cooperatives and their potential for future growth (Nembhard, 2014, pg. 235).

The crucial point that Nembhard is making rests upon the tie between cooperative economics and the power built in the black community—it is not just the ability to be free from discrimination that is suggested as a benefit, but also the ability to retain (in a shared capacity) the created wealth and capacity that comes from owning and successfully managing enterprises. These justifications are echoed by others who wish to see black communities in the United States use cooperatives as tool to develop individuals and community concurrently (Akuno, 2017; Akuno & Nangwaya, 2017). The process of forming and maintaining these cooperatives is suggested to have important benefits which help strengthen communities—and having the ability to continue building on success over generations (and having that success shared among many instead of concentrated in an elite sector of a community) is part of cooperative advocates' argument for the need for cooperatives in future long-term struggles for freedom and equality.

Cooperatives in the American South have been used by black communities as an economic cornerstone for larger efforts. After the Civil War, cooperatives were useful for the purposes of organizing the now free but economically disempowered population of former slaves, who needed to pool their resources and work together to build their own community institutions in the segregated South (Nembhard, 2014; White, 2018). Leaders in the Civil Rights Movements such as Fannie Lou Hamer advocated for the use of agricultural cooperatives as a self-sufficient means to build wealth for poor black people; similar efforts have survived in recent decades through organizations like the Federation

of Southern Cooperatives (White, 2018; Nembhard, 2014). Cooperation Jackson points to the history of agricultural cooperatives in Mississippi as vital both to the black radical tradition they grew from and the broader financial well-being of black Southerners as a revolutionary force (Akuno, 2017; Akuno & Nangwaya, 2017). Organizers with Cooperative Jackson have nodded to this history, and the example of Fannie Lou Hamer specifically, by including in their developments a community supported agricultural program also known as Freedom Farms Cooperative (Cooperation Jackson, 2018). While much of the history (and even current practice) of agricultural cooperatives has been forgotten by most people, drawing upon these traditions and reinvigorating them is a significant part of what Cooperation Jackson seeks to accomplish. The efforts in Jackson should not only be placed into context of the cooperative movement and the broader left, but also with the specific nature of the Civil Rights Movement in the South and the history of black people in the Southern United States.

The benefits of cooperatives are not just positioned as an important building block for the black community, but also to build nearly any community. The expectation is that worker-ownership can help spread wealth and decision-making to such a wide body of people that the gains from these firms are invested in long-term improvements for community economies (Cummings, 2001; Gibson-Graham, Cameron, & Healy, 2013). A focus on building local economies which embrace a spirit of self-reliance and self-determination has loomed large for scholars advocating a new approach to urban economic development—whether that includes cooperatives or other localized structures such as community land trusts and community development corporations (Imbroscio, 1995; Alperovitz, 2011; Imbroscio, 2010). The suggested benefits for cooperative development

also extend to the political sphere, with theorists arguing that democratic institutions can help create better democratic actors outside the workplace and strengthen community governance as well (Wolff, 2012; Whyte & Blasi, 1982; Swaine, 1993). These types of arguments are still based on hope in many cases, but they also point to a philosophical justification for cooperatives beyond the immediate economic benefits of providing good paying jobs in depressed neighborhoods. The impacts that are being proposed would revolutionize communities, empower individuals to act in new and more powerful manners, and lead towards long-term change on larger scales.

Building communities centered around institutions such as worker-owned cooperatives could potentially have an impact on political movements. It should be stated up front that in the case of Jackson this clearly has been proven, with the relationship between Cooperation Jackson and the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement helping to see associated figures elected to high office in Jackson (Akuno, 2017; Gilbert, 2017). The possibility of a progressive, community-oriented coalition to oppose traditional growth-oriented urban politics was speculated about by Molotch (1976), who suggested such a coalition would have to include people who were involved with community institutions who did not directly rely on growth and the derivation of profit. The existence of cooperatives alongside worker-owned firms such as ESOPS, community land trusts, municipal enterprises and similar community-controlled formations leaves open the possibility that when “linked together and united in a common purpose via umbrella organizations and the new oppositional ideology, they could form the nucleus of an emergent (and potentially formidable) political movement” (Imbroscio, 2010; pg. 177). These types of radical political movements underlie an important theme in existing

literature and raises questions about how urban politics works vis a vis cooperative institution, which this dissertation hopes to begin answering. There does exist a potential for progressive urban political formations based on alternative economic institutions, who could then use state power (even at the local level) to expand such formations and remake the economy. This leaves open a question of how far these coalitions could potentially go and whether this would remain a localized phenomenon or challenge a seemingly impenetrable global system.

One thing that scholars who advocate cooperatives tend to agree on is the need to combat the current particularly awful impacts of neoliberal capitalism. The current status quo, both in terms of urban economic development policies and the economy writ large, is that wealth is concentrated in the hands of the few (very wealthy people and multinational corporations) while everybody else is left struggling and in many cases impoverished and forgotten (Alperovitz, 2011; Gibson-Graham, Cameron, & Healy, 2013; DeFilippis, 2004; Wolff, 2012). The evolution of the neoliberal capitalist economy in recent decades has reduced worker control and popular democracy and taking back basic factors of day-to-day economic life is important for re-asserting shared prosperity as a value worth taking seriously (Gibson-Graham, Cameron, & Healy, 2013; Wolff, 2012; DeFilippis, 2004). The economic stress and disempowerment of neoliberalism has led scholars to examine currently existing structures in the hopes that they can help re-start progressive political movements and create small-scale versions of a better world in the present (Wright, 2013; Imbroscio, 2010; Alperovitz, 2011). This is where cooperatives play an important role—whereas they may find them only to be an incremental step towards a larger movement, the large-scale economic and political restructuring occurring in the 21st century have also led

scholars to consider that just getting these initial institutions built may have impacts not-yet-anticipated. The economic realities of 21st century neoliberalism make a network of cooperatives seem revolutionary in comparison to the dominant model of rapacious profit-taking and exploitation of labor.

If the economy is to evolve into something new, differences are more likely to emerge over what that might look like once it takes place. The structure of this future economy is defined in looser terms than might be expected; the literature frequently focuses on defining an alternative that is not connected to the capitalism and socialism which dominated the 20th century, a “solidarity economy” which is based on locally centered and loosely affiliated networks of cooperatives and community institutions (Satgar, 2014; Kawano, 2018). The aspects of a solidarity economy are relatively untethered to the history of socialism and most state-based approaches:

Various solidarity economy initiatives are coming to the fore in response to the crisis of capitalism. They are counter-hegemonic alternatives that seek to contest the global development consensus from below. As such, solidarity economy initiatives are referred to variously in this volume as a component of a new politics of production, a commons of labour creativity, a new embeddedness, the political economy of the working class, a new mode of production, the ethical alternative of living well, emancipatory utopian practice, and even a collective humanist response to the civilizational crisis of capitalism” (Satgar, 2014; pgs. 16-17).

The post-capitalist future envisioned by Alperovitz (2011) is similar in its resistance to an explicit embrace of socialism, instead referring to building a “pluralist commonwealth.” Many scholars advocating for a cooperative economy are unlikely to outwardly praise Marxist or socialist politics and offer alternatives that they argue would be different than previous examples of left policy (Restakis, 2010; Alperovitz, 2011). How to judge these approaches is not altogether clear—they are explicitly anti-capitalist and contain elements

which are undeniably socialist, but they rhetorically eschew socialism and contain utopian or market-based mechanisms which differentiate them from the most well-known examples of socialist governance.

It must be noted that regardless of their approach for a replacement, many of these scholars do believe that cooperatives will directly challenge capitalism and are an integral part of a movement against the economic system (Wolff, 2012; Alperovitz, 2011; Ranis, 2016). Some of the approaches explicitly embrace Marxism in combination with other influences based on anarchism, social democracy, and anti-oppression frameworks that also are important parts of left political thought (Akuno, 2017; Akuno & Nangwaya, 2017; Restakis, 2010). Ranis (2016) offers Cuba as an example that could “establish an exemplary model for supporting and developing cooperatives in both the governmental and non-state sectors of society, led by a working class that evaluates state policies from a non-bureaucratic and non-capitalist perspective” (pg. 138). While many Marxists are concerned about the overreaches of state socialism in the 20th century, they do contend that state power continues to matter and that socialists should engage in politics (Gindin, 2016; Wright, 2013). The goal would be for socialists to capture elements of the state, using pressure from below and the tools of state policy to continue developing institutions like cooperatives, which can grow and sustain the working class in a prolonged struggle against capitalism (Gindin, 2016; Wright, 2013). The Marxist approach to cooperative development is one that engages with the state as an important force in building working class power and winning the fight against the capitalist system. While perhaps different in theoretical background, there are similarities to be found with calls to use urban governance and public policy to help cooperatives develop in cities.

What are pro-cooperative policies?

Consideration of the role of the state in achieving socialism requires an examination of literature that engages with cooperative economic development at both the national and local/urban levels. Due to the lack of available financing and the existence of (sometimes anti-competitive) market forces that put cooperative firms at a disadvantage, the role of government is important:

Symbiotic strategies directed at public policy could address all of these issues. Given the potential for worker owned cooperatives to help solve problems of unemployment and deteriorating tax bases, new rules of the game to support cooperatives could gain political traction. Even within the logic of market economies, the positive externalities of worker cooperatives provide a justification for public subsidies and insurance schemes to increase their viability. Such policies could, over time, expand the weight of a cooperative market economy within the broader capitalist economic hybrid (Wright, 2013, pg. 23).

The unfortunate reality for worker-owned firms is that the dominant economy is not overly friendly to building an alternative, but public policy can be used as a tool that determines whether these models will survive (Adeler, 2014; Wright, 2013; Gindin, 2016). These authors have not just advocated for alternative modes of economic organization, they have argued that policy environments must be created to enable them to exist successfully. These arguments lend themselves not just to a defense of one type of firm but also to suggestions that governments act in certain ways and implement specific policies which enable cooperative formation in their polities.

Public policy can provide an institutional bulwark in terms of financing, education, regulatory action, and other tools that provide the necessary support for worker-owned firms to thrive (Adeler, 2014; Caruana & Srnc, 2013). Cooperative organizers thus have an incentive to try and influence government policy in a way that will assist in the formation

of cooperatives and achieve the goals for which they are established (Akuno, 2017; Ranis, 2016). The success of cooperatives and a solidarity-based economic sector is “partially correlated to the nature of the supportive environment, the strength of the sector infrastructure, and government commitment toward enabling the development of this environment and infrastructure through policy, programming, and funding” (Adeler, 2014, pg. 557). The findings of existing case studies, combined with the arguments put forth about the best strategies for enabling successful cooperative development, form a strong academic consensus for the importance of government’s role in bringing cooperatives into existence and keeping them alive. The level of public support for a cooperative shows a commitment to the model and the goals which it seeks to achieve, and it is important to recognize the interrelated nature of the public and private sector (even social forms of private enterprise) in economic development. Governments are likely to support cooperatives when a case can be made that the public sector’s goals align with those of the cooperative.

The incentive for cooperatives to influence public policy has the potential to coincide with policy goals of progressive governance. Governments, especially outside the United States, have used cooperative formations to build economic strength and create wealth in an equitable, shared manner to combat extreme poverty and disempowerment (Adeler, 2014; Caruana & Srnec, 2013; Satgar, 2014). The devolution of economic development to more grassroots and local level participation has been a strategy to achieve more shared prosperity—a shift in resources to these more localized efforts (with a high level of participatory democracy) are methods through which more progressive economic outcomes can be achieved (Caruana & Srnec, 2013; Alperovitz, 2011; Imbroscio, 2010).

Therefore, public policy has a role not simply in helping along the establishment of productive firms or causing one sector of the private economy to succeed—these policy interventions must also be justified through the achievement of equitable societal development as well. In this way, cooperative economic development is simply a means to achieve a better quality of life, economic fairness, and a strengthened democracy. When cooperative advocates and policymakers share these goals, governments act to achieve them in a variety of ways. The structure and appearance of these public policies can differ and do not take one common form.

Literature provides justifications for pro-cooperative policies at national, subnational, and local levels of governance—because the economy functions on a large scale, policies to build alternatives also will eventually need to scale more widely as well (Adeler, 2014; Caruana & Srnec, 2013; Akuno, 2017; Alperovitz, 2011). However, the difficulty of achieving progressive policy change does tend to encourage efforts to initiate on a local level. The role of cities in the economy and the unique challenges facing urban governments inspire urban based approaches to local economic development (Imbroscio, 2010; Imbroscio, 1995; Akuno, 2017). It is within this context that existing cooperative economic development efforts in places like Cleveland and Jackson are considered local governance experiments that could help rebuild a struggling economy and plot a path forward for other cities to emulate (Alperovitz, Howard, & Williamson, 2010; Casey, 2017, Mitchner, 2017). These arguments rest upon real-world policies and policy proposals, with the justification being that strategies implemented in one city can be replicated as an alternative form of economic development which achieves progressive policy goals and builds a stronger local economy. By encouraging the spread of cooperative development

policies, existing literature must focus on specific actions and tools used by governments in the hopes they can be adapted into the legal framework of other cities, states, provinces, and national governments.

Some of the existing literature focuses on the general approach towards building an economic model based on common ownership. There are cases, such as Cuba in the 21st century and Yugoslavia during the 1970s and 1980s, where communist governance has fostered grassroots cooperative development in a way that is used as an example worth exploring (Ranis, 2016; Whyte & Blasi, 1982). There is also discussion of a Quebec’s “social economy” model which consists of not only different types of cooperatives but other community-focused institutions such as credit unions and has created a council of related institutions which govern themselves collectively (Wright, 2013; Adeler, 2014). Quebec now boasts a “strong and influential social economy sector that included government funding for operations, as well as government-seeded investment funds controlled by the sector for long-term investment, providing continuity to co-operatives and social economy organizations” (Adeler, 2014, pg. 555). This is further extended into the solidarity economy model that intentionally challenges dominant economic systems and builds and community power and self-determination (Satgar, 2014; Akuno & Nangwaya, 2017; Kawano, 2018). Scholars and advocates have thus far typified a model for what an alternative economic network looks like and have examples they can point to which show these networks in action. The cooperative sector is currently more advanced in places like Canada and South America than it is in the United States.

The relative lack of a cooperative sector in the United States does not mean there are not efforts underway to change that, and there are different forms of policy experiments

which have been discussed and classified thus far. While cooperatives may be less common in the United States, support for ESOPs has stretched across the political spectrum, and many workers are employed in these kinds of worker-owned firms (Alperovitz, 2011; Imbroscio, 2010). However, there have also been concerns raised about the suitability of the current ESOP model; workers do not always have a significant amount of democracy and autonomy in their workplace and the current legal structure does not render them particularly challenging to the economic status quo (Swaine, 1993; Gindin, 2016). Cities have also turned an eye to developing cooperatives, with three dominant frameworks dominating the policy landscape: an “anchor approach” where cities use loans to support an organizational network of cooperatives and arrange for them to receive funding through anchor institutions such as hospitals, universities, and nonprofits, an “ecosystem approach” that focuses on creating educational programs and technical assistance to help people in the community start their own cooperatives, and a “preference approach” which encourages cooperative business structures by giving preferences in city business and contracts to cooperative firms (Camou, 2016). These models of worker ownership provide the context through which governments in the United States are pursuing efforts within the sector, and literature has thus far mostly focused on explaining the different approaches rather than weighing them against one another. The exception of course remains that some scholars have distinguished ESOPs in their current form from pure worker-owned cooperatives, which informed the case selection for this dissertation of two cities where efforts focus on cooperatively managed firms rather than ESOPs.

The examples which existing literature draws upon are varied, providing a plethora of potential approaches within the frameworks in which governments could implement

pro-cooperative policies. National governments have directed attention towards cooperative development in much of Latin America, with primary examples in Cuba, Venezuela, Argentina, Brazil, and Ecuador (Caruana & Srnec, 2013; Ranis, 2016). In some cases, the existence and promotion of cooperatives is written into the constitution of the country, and in many countries the efforts see a shift of government resources to local departments who can provide more direct assistance to cooperatives (Caruana & Srnec, 2013; Ranis, 2016). The assistance provided to the cooperatives by the national and subnational governments in Canada and Spain include changes in tax laws and the establishment of reserve funds to ensure the financial viability of the enterprises and the people who risk losing money if they fail (Adeler, 2014). Local governments in the United States have taken up the development of cooperatives in Cleveland, Oakland, Minneapolis, and several other cities (Camou, 2016; Alperovitz, Howard, & Williamson, 2010). The literature has made it clear that cooperative development could be driven at higher levels of government, and the large amount of resources present make this an attractive option. It may be the case that future efforts expand towards the implementation of pro-cooperative policies at the state and federal level in the United States, although at the current moment of focus on urban policy will remain most common.

There are a couple major types of policies which governments can implement to foster the development of cooperative firms. One type is using statutory changes and regulatory mechanisms to provide a better legal environment for cooperatives that makes them easy to form, persist, and thrive, even if that means workers taking over existing firms and sites of production. Ranis (2016) argues that “worker cooperatives require the public policy support of eminent domain on behalf of workers for the clear benefit of authentic

economic development and the critical defense against unemployment and poverty” (pg. 33). There are also cities that make it easier to form cooperatives by providing technical assistance and a favorable environment for people trying to navigate the legal process necessary to create a worker-owned enterprise (Song, 2016; Adeler, 2014; Camou, 2016). Some governments also offer preferences to worker-owned enterprises when it comes to securing contracts (Camou, 2016; Caruana & Srnec, 2013; Adeler, 2014). These changes represent something in line with an improved “rules of the game” that cooperative advocates such as Erik Olin Wright (2014) have suggested is necessary. However, by also using tools of public policy that already exist, governments can make changes in their economic development strategy without drastically shifting resources or departing too much from existing processes. These policies can be folded into broader strategies that focus on small business or local enterprise and does not necessarily need to come from a radical perspective. Cooperative advocates who wish to place the model of worker ownership comfortably within the existing economy can do so without provoking extraordinary political pushback, but it is possible that such efforts could be too small to have an appreciable impact in the short-term.

If the goal of cooperative economic development is to move money into the hands of who need it the most, an unfortunate reality is that some money must come from an outside source at some point. Governments can play a role in providing funds for projects which can improve a local economy and incorporating cooperatives into those allocations is where public policy and the cooperative movement most logically intersect (Gindin, 2016; Ranis, 2016; Camou, 2016). Tax breaks are a primary method that the government can help people establish ESOPs, along with some investments in existing loan programs

(Swaine, 1993; Alperovitz, 2011). There are quite a few examples of governments extending direct financial support, initial capital for cooperative development, and reserve financing in case the cooperative sector struggles or an enterprise is at risk of failing (Adeler, 2014; Camou, 2016; Sutton, 2019). While these examples of direct financial support to the cooperative sector are not always explicitly highlighted throughout the literature, it is a tacit understanding that if government can play a role it is in directing its massive resources towards the formation of cooperatives and should do so to reduce poverty and strengthen local economies. This is seen as an alternative to traditional economic development strategies or even a more politically feasible strategy to transfer wealth to people and communities who are impoverished. This requires a commitment on behalf of policymakers to take the step from supporting the establishment of cooperatives in theory to taking tangible steps towards making sure cooperatives are formed in their local economies. The examples explored in literature thus far are numerous, but Cleveland and Jackson have their own unique details which frame the case studies for this dissertation.

Literature on Cleveland

The efforts underway to create a network of cooperatives in Cleveland has attracted the attention of some scholars so far, most likely because the project was able to receive a lot of attention roughly a decade ago during the Great Recession. One reason that it has received so much attention is that academics associated with supporting the Evergreen Cooperatives have written about the project (Alperovitz, Williamson & Howard, 2010; Alperovitz, 2011). Not only have these writings explained what the cooperatives are, but also has advanced an argument for why they are necessary:

What's especially promising about the Cleveland model is that it could be applied in hard-hit industries and working-class communities around the

nation. The model takes us beyond both traditional capitalism and traditional socialism. The key link is between national sectors of expanding public activity and procurement, on the one hand, and a new local economic entity, on the other, that "democratizes" ownership and is deeply anchored in the community (Alperovitz, Williamson, & Howard, 2011).

These outward defenses of the model raise awareness of what is happening in Cleveland and contextualizes Evergreen's efforts, which is important for understanding the project. However, it also serves as an ideological defense for the project. For Alperovitz and others like him, cooperatives are not just *a* model for urban economic development, they are *the* model—and the specific method for fostering cooperative development in Cleveland is pitched as the best.

The Evergreen Cooperatives development has drawn attention from other corners of academia as well. Scholars have noted the existence of the Evergreen Cooperatives as being a potential lynchpin for a community-focused urban development strategy that brings together different types of democratic institutions (Imbroscio, 2010; Casper-Futtermann, 2011). Cleveland is regularly listed as not just an example of a city pursuing cooperative development, but a prominent example whose anchor-based approach could be potentially replicated in other cities (Camou, 2016; Iuvienne, Stitely, & Hoyt, 2010). The appeal of Cleveland as a conceptual model includes an examination of how it could be used as a tool for equitable economic development, especially in terms of rebuilding a city that has struggled economically in recent decades (Iuvienne, Stitely, & Hoyt, 2010; Casper-Futtermann, 2011). The attention paid to Cleveland in the literature makes it attractive for a case study, because much of the literature is several years old (based more on what was planned than what now exists) and the project has advanced in recent years. While the Cleveland case seemed very interesting when it was brand new, especially considering the

economic conditions of the early 2010s, the economy has changed quite a bit in the last decade. Existing research is useful in describing how the Cleveland model is supposed to work and lays out the basics in terms of what types of enterprises make up the model and who the stakeholders are in the community. The political and policy implications of the Cleveland case are related, but also attract their own form of attention.

The political implications of the Evergreen Cooperatives example in Cleveland are hard to ignore. Arguments that fostering cooperative development could be a politically feasible way to pursue equitable and democratic cooperative development are an important part of the literature (Alperovitz, 2011; Imbroscio, 2010; Sutton, 2019). For a number of scholars, the efforts underway in Cleveland are examples of cities doing exactly that—experimenting with policymaking approaches in new, exciting ways to achieve progressive policy goals that traditional approaches may not achieve (Song, 2016; Zingale, Samanta, & West, 2017; Casper-Futterman, 2011). The approach by government officials in Cleveland is seen as unique, with policymakers “engaging within networked governance to help citizens uncover and bridge resources so that they may pursue new ideas in an equitable, democratic, and socially beneficial way” (Zingale, Samanta, & West, 2017, pg. 53). This section of the literature suggests that not only is the Cleveland model a new form of economic development but has lessons for policymakers and could be presenting new forms of urban governance. The relationships that form between the public sector, nonprofit anchor institutions, and a cooperative-focused private sector could take a different shape than traditional public-private sector relations—and the policymaking process could be ingesting some desire for democracy and equity as well.

The academic scholarship focused on Cleveland is significant and important, and there are many lessons to be learned from existing scholarly work on the project. However, it is important to also understand how the Evergreen Cooperatives has translated into popular media. Journalists have been drawn to the Evergreen project for a variety of reasons. A major reason being that the idea of a project providing jobs for the less fortunate and creating economic activity in an area where little existed before is a unique story that is seen as a potential new model for economic activity (Sheffield, 2019; Causey, 2017). The potential expansion of the model inside Cleveland, and even the spread of the worker-ownership model to other businesses, attracts attention as a potential form of economic restructuring that would empower much of the local community (Grzegorek, 2018; Causey, 2017). The replication of the Cleveland model in other cities also attracts a lot of attention, especially in similar cities like Milwaukee who see Cleveland's economic development as a path forward for their cities as well (Causey, 2017; Alperovitz, Williamson & Howard, 2010). This media attention is important because it shows the Evergreen Cooperatives can manifest their presence beyond the realm of theory and scholarship—it suggests that they are having enough of a tangible impact on a local economy that the public is noticing their efforts and want to learn more. The attention paid to the Evergreen Cooperatives means that they deserve greater study than what journalists—who often focus on many stories briefly rather than one in an exhaustive manner—can do. That attention will also impact their real work, both politically and economically, and shape their continued evolution.

Literature in Jackson

The case study in Jackson has less prior literature to review for a few reasons. One is that the most important developments are more recent, yet another being the fact that

Jackson is a much smaller city than Cleveland and perhaps less tied into academic and media attention as a result. Some of the most relevant literature about the cooperative movement in Jackson (and the South in general) is not about the current efforts, but about the history of cooperative development in the South which is largely forgotten now (Nembhard, 2014; Williams & Walker, 2017). One of the most important frameworks provided by the literature around either current or historical efforts in the South is that they are closely tied into the struggle for economic equity and self-determination for African Americans (Nembhard, 2014; Akuno, 2017; Williams & Walker, 2017). This literature offers a helpful context for people seeking to understand why cooperatives are developing in Jackson and why they appear to have some traction politically. However, this perspective does not offer a substantial amount of information about the efforts of Cooperation Jackson or the current mayoral administration, nor does it say much about what current cooperative efforts look like and how they may be organized going forward.

While the academic attention paid to the efforts in Jackson has thus far not materialized in significant terms, the theoretical output of those connected to the project itself has been worth reading. Akuno (2017) lays out the political and economic goals of the Cooperation Jackson project quite clearly:

In the Jackson context, it is only through the mass self-organization of the working class, the construction of a new democratic culture, and the development of a movement from below to transform the social structures that shape and define our relations, particularly the state (i.e. government), that we can conceive of serving as a counter-hegemonic force with the capacity to democratically transform the economy. (pgs. 6-7).

The writings connected to the cooperative advocates in Jackson describe a clear theoretical understanding of Marxist economics, a political program to build power in their city, and outlines for a system of worker-owned cooperatives (including urban farms, cafes, and a

production lab) which could then grow into a massive subsector of the economy similar to the Mondragon Cooperatives (Akuno, 2017; Akuno & Nangwaya, 2017). This section of the literature serves a vital purpose in terms of informing readers about the goals of the organizers in Jackson. These writings also provide an important source of information about which cooperatives are being developed currently and how they are tied to local political movements. However, they are not a complete substitute for academic study from an outside perspective—not only have a couple years passed since much of the literature was written, but there are not existing attempts to view the project from a critical lens, nor do they focus on actual policies in place to help development. There is a strong need for further exploration of the case to fully document what is happening in Jackson, understand the role of city government in these efforts, and assess whether the project is proceeding as expected.

An important similarity between the Jackson and Cleveland cases is that both have received some amount of outside media attention. The most significant amount of attention revolves around the election of Chokwe Antar Lumumba as mayor of Jackson in 2017, especially considering his statements that he was going to be a radical—even socialist—mayor (Gilbert, 2017; Mitchner, 2017). The journalists who have covered this election see a significant potential for Lumumba to implement pro-cooperative economic development policies and perhaps even provide a template for an alternative, progressive strategy for reviving a poverty-stricken southern city (Mitchner, 2017). While much of the attention naturally falls on the electoral developments, there have also been articles published that provided more information about the Cooperation Jackson movement itself, focusing on the people involved with the worker cooperatives and how they are using the

long, slow work involved with establishing these enterprises to accomplish their long-term political goals beyond any one election (Moskowitz, 2017; Gilbert, 2017). It is not surprising that the media would be drawn to the election of a potentially radical mayor, but the relative lack of attention on existing policies in the two following years suggests that either this attention has not been sustained or conditions have changed on the ground which are being missed currently. The most important aspect of the Jackson case is that, especially in comparison to Cleveland, it is a very new project and is likely still changing rapidly. Cooperatives are certainly being formed, and a government now exists which is ideologically inclined to help support their formation, but whether this is happening and what form that is taking is a completely unanswered question in the existing body of literature.

Conclusion

The existing literature on cooperative economic development is rich and varied. A large amount of the literature focuses on what cooperatives are, focusing on the history of the cooperative movement and existing examples of worker-ownership in the modern economy. There is also a large body of literature on why cooperatives are important, along with justifications for what they can play an alternate role in economic development and help create an alternative for the exploitative economic practices of neoliberal capitalism. Many scholars and advocates even see cooperatives as the nucleus for a new, radical political movement that could remake urban politics and potentially challenge the system of capitalism and provide a replacement economic framework for human society. There have been several important experiments in using public policy as a tool to help people form worker-owned cooperatives, and there does exist some literature dedicated to

understanding and analyzing the existing policies. There is also a small amount of literature about the existing experiments in Cleveland and Jackson, which are the case studies for this dissertation, but the literature currently leaves important gaps that can only be answered with more study and the passage of time. This dissertation is built upon existing literature with the goal of providing important knowledge of two existing situations in American cities, while also beginning to assess how these developments play out politically and determine what impact they are having on local urban economies.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

With an understanding of the existing literature on worker-owned cooperatives and related public policy in hand, designing and conducting a study to further this knowledge is the primary task recorded in this dissertation. The relatively underdeveloped attention to the cooperative sector in public policy literature suggests that currently the primary need for any study is to provide more detailed understandings of real-world examples of cooperative enterprises and pro-cooperative policy frameworks. However, the primary reason for this lack of scholarly information is that many of the experiments worth studying are very small-scale and/or extremely new—it is very difficult to conduct academic research for something that barely exists. This fact limits some of the methods that could be used for this dissertation, but also opens the way for the qualitative, case-study based exploratory research that this study became. The methods used for this study are not meant to revolutionize the field, but they do offer a blueprint for further study on this topic and other areas of experimental urban policy. It is my hope that after the completion of this study, urban scholars continue examining the specific details of cooperative projects and particularly examine the state of pro-cooperative policies when and where they exist—and even examine cases where such policies do not exist.

This chapter is meant to summarize and describe the methods of research that were embodied by this dissertation. I will begin by explaining my justification for exploratory research compared to other kinds of research, and then proceed to describing

the research questions which form the basis of the study and analysis of its results. The next portion of the chapter will discuss the reasoning for using comparative case studies, along with a detailed description of what was considered as part of the case study data and which types of information were sought for in each city. Because the case studies rely so heavily on interviews with individuals in each city, I will also use this chapter to explain why interviews were important, describe the style of interviews that were conducted, and explain how questions were formatted for general use in interview settings. This chapter will also explain the categories used for participant selection, detail the process for selecting people to participate, and discuss how participant interview data was recorded. The final section of this chapter will offer my understanding of the limitations of this study and discuss how future research could adjust for these limitations and overcome them.

Exploratory Research

The justification for exploratory research is grounded in the reality of the cases being studied and the existing literature on the topic of worker-owned cooperatives. Community-owned institutions are widely cited as the basis for a potential urban progressive movement that challenges the economic and political status quo, but these arguments often just mention a variety of examples rather than giving in-depth explanation of each case (Imbroscio, 2010; Alperovitz, 2011). Some literature goes more in-depth into cases, but many of the most detailed studies focus on cases in contexts outside the United States where a different political terrain and a stronger history of cooperative development has led to different outcomes (Ranis, 2016; Restakis, 2010; Adeler, 2014). The study of cooperatives and policies meant to assist in their formation

has been touched upon in the United States, but some of the studies offer only brief explanations of many individual examples (Camou, 2016). In all these examples, the questions underlying this dissertation are not explored in Cleveland or Jackson—partially because of the recency of the attempts in Jackson, but also because their role has been one of advocacy, to lay the theoretical groundwork for further exploration. The justification for an alternative form of economic development, or indeed the need for an alternative to capitalism, is not a settled question in the field. These are contested spaces and debate will continue for many years, but outside of the academy these forays into cooperative-based economic development are beginning to manifest and should be studied for what they are.

The existing literature does not abandon the cases completely—there are case studies of the projects in Cleveland that focus on questions of governance or planning, but they only provide limited details about policies or the contextual political climate in the city (Song, 2016; Zingale, Samanta, & West, 2017). In existing literature, the Evergreen Cooperatives example is used to explain a larger concept of governance strategies but leaves some major unanswered questions about the motivation behind the city government's involvement, the perspectives of people knowledgeable about the project, and the political impact of these initiatives. Jackson has different gaps due to the project there having formed more recently, and the existing literature mostly focuses on the ideological argument and discussion of goals put forth by people supportive of the cooperative movement (Akuno, 2017; Akuno & Nangwaya, 2017). Little is known about what actual strategies the city government would pursue, or even what the cooperative advocates in Jackson want them to pursue; the impact of the cooperative movement on

politics is much more important in Jackson and deserves further study of the quickly evolving situation. In each case there has not yet been done an in-depth study of the cooperatives in the city and their relationship to the city government—the cooperatives have only thus far been used as examples for other arguments. There has yet to be an effort to place these two cases into comparison, but they are likely the most high-profile examples of cooperative development in the United States and represent different approaches based in distinct political alignments.

The justification therefore exists for further exploration of these two cases, although the question of which specific methods should be used was an open-ended question even as the project was being designed. I decided to explore these two cases as if the record was relatively empty—providing initial information which could then be built upon for further research, as well as providing examples of existing policies which could be adapted (but perhaps not identically replicated) in different urban environments. Exploratory research fits the topic because this dissertation will not be the definitive word on worker-owned cooperatives but will provide details about two cases to help scholars study them and explore their political impact. This type of research is often used for “exploring an area where little is known” (Kumar, 2014, pg. 13). The case studies that make up this dissertation are more advanced than pilot studies and could be the basis of an analytical urban politics text, or perhaps several articles that explore the two cases both independently and comparatively. Scholars could place the two cases in comparison and discusses the potential for these approaches to be the basis for new, radical urban political movements for progressive economic development which builds community power for poor and marginalized people. Pursuing an exploratory method for this

dissertation begins a conversation that is necessary to move from the question of the necessity of an alternative economic development framework towards determining what that would look like.

Research Questions

This dissertation is meant to explore the topic through two selected cases, not simply to describe the basic facts of each case but to answer specific questions which are relevant to the academic understanding of cooperative economic development. The gaps in the existing set of knowledge about these cases inform the selection of questions to consider in this dissertation, and each question was chosen to provide several fruitful avenues for research that can provide a full understanding of the cases. The following research questions help form the contours of each case study and the course of the data collection and analysis in both cases.

RQ1: What specific policies are selected cities implementing to help people form cooperatives?

The existing literature details some types of policies being pursued in specific cases, especially in countries such as Spain, Venezuela, Argentina, and Canada (Adeler, 2014; Ranis, 2016; Caruana & Srnc, 2013). The discussion of different frameworks for pro-cooperative in cities in the United States has been briefly discussed as well (Camou, 2016). However, there is not a full understanding of how exactly the city government in Cleveland has provided support (if any) for the Evergreen Cooperatives and whether this is part of a wider scheme of pro-cooperative policies which the city hopes to replicate in other projects and achieve specific goals through. The recency of the project in Jackson has also left a significant gap in understanding of how the current mayor's administration

has translated campaign rhetoric about worker-owned cooperatives into any tangible policies which can be pointed to. Currently we know that Cleveland has a cooperative project that is flourishing, and that Jackson wants to foster the development of cooperatives, but we do not know the full picture in either case. RQ1 is designed to point my research in a direction that through archival research and interviews with policymakers and other stakeholders will provide a description of any tangible policies which can be identified and analyzed.

RQ2: Do the selected cities provide material or financial support for cooperative development?

In some cases that have been described in the literature, there exists government support in the form of loans, grants, or other financial backing provided by governments for worker-owned cooperatives (Caruana & Srnec, 2013; Ranis, 2016; Adeler, 2014). Arguments in favor of worker ownership and cooperative economics suggest that adopting policies in favor of these initiatives will lead to a more equitable distribution of resources and are a more politically practical way of using government resources to combat poverty (Alperovitz, 2011; Imbroscio, 2010). RQ2 is meant to determine whether similar types of financial backing exist in the policy regimes in Cleveland and Jackson, and whether any such policies exist as part of an effort to reduce poverty within these cities. To put it more succinctly: are city governments investing in worker-owned cooperatives through government spending? While there are different ways that city governments could help foster the development of cooperatives, the context with which they seem most intriguing within urban policy is in how they could improve local economies in cities and neighborhoods that have struggled. Considering the government

attention paid to such problems in most cities, it is worth discovering whether Cleveland and Jackson are directing tax dollars towards worker ownership programs.

RQ3: What political relationships form between those in the cooperative movement and those in the selected cities' governments?

The necessity to form coalitions to overcome dominant forces who favor neoliberal economic policies which foster poverty in American cities is a consistent theme in urban studies literature (Molotch, 1976; Alperovitz, 2011; Imbroscio, 2010). An important argument for worker-ownership is that cooperatives can play a role in a political coalition that would challenge political power structures and the capitalist economic system (Gindin, 2017; Ranis, 2016; Imbroscio, 2010). RQ3 is meant to discover whether anything like this is happening in Cleveland or Jackson. Are existing cooperatives part of a progressive political movement in their city? Do pro-cooperative policymakers have relationships with advocates for cooperatives and other progressive activists? The case in Jackson begs for further research considering the election of a mayor on a pro-cooperative policy platform. Now that a mayoral administration is attempting to govern on an agenda which should be favorable to the cooperative movement, it is important to test how those relationships have held up and how they have evolved since the mayor has taken office. While there has been research about the Evergreen Cooperatives in Cleveland there is little understanding of their place in the local political landscape and whether there is a significant connection between pro-cooperative activists and organizers and politicians and government officials helping support and expand cooperative enterprises in the city.

RQ4: Are pro-cooperative policies in the selected cities making progress toward goals of building wealth and power for marginalized and working-class communities?

The justifications for worker-owned cooperatives and policies to support them are prominent within the literature; it is expected that cooperatives will help cities reduce poverty, build wealth that is retained in and strengthens existing communities, and will help those communities achieve political power and self-determination (Alperovitz, 2011; Ranis, 2016; Akuno, 2017). Those who advocate for worker ownership argue that it is the key to a radically different world in which the marginalized people are empowered (Akuno & Nangwaya, 2017; Wolff, 2012; Ranis, 2016). RQ4 is designed as a framework for the preliminary assessment of whether the selected cities are achieving any of these goals, and whether the existing projects are aligned with these broad goals. Conversations with stakeholders and analysts in each city are crucial to determining whether people feel that such progress is being made, or if they cannot tell whether this will happen yet, whether they see potential in the extant projects to achieve these lofty goals. I understand that RQ4 will likely remain largely unanswered after this dissertation and may remain unanswered for a long time, but it is important to begin analyzing this question in the hopes that better forms of examination (and the passage of time) will allow researchers in the future to more completely analyze the success of worker-owned cooperatives and any government policies intended to help their development in cities.

RQ5: What obstacles and opposition to pro-cooperative policies exist in the selected cities?

The general political climate for progressive—perhaps even radical—alternatives to dominant approaches to urban economic development is not particularly great.

Coalitions of economic forces intervene in politics to prevent significant changes in policies, and any alternative would require organizing people to directly combat those forces and win concessions in the form of policies which empower and direct resources to those who do not currently have them (Molotch, 1976; Imbroscio, 2010; Alperovitz, 2011). Considering the significant political barrier to policies which challenge the economic and political status quo, and the suggestion that pro-cooperative policies would be part of such challenges, then it is worth understanding whether these policies face political opposition. Furthermore, there are likely obstacles created by a market-based economy which privileges profit seeking firms and discourages broad distribution of profits and decision-making. RQ5 is meant to examine the two selected cases and identify any obstacles, especially any forms of political opposition, which could prevent cooperative advocates from achieving their policy goals.

Case Studies

The use of case studies to conduct the research in this dissertation is based on decisions about the best methodological tools to answer the research questions as well as understandings about what the existing literature on the topic of worker ownership has set precedents for. Using case studies as a method is useful for the complex questions I am attempting to answer in this dissertation, as the “method allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events—such as individual life cycles, small group behavior, organizational and managerial processes, neighborhood change, school performance, international relations, and the maturation of industries” (Yin, 2009, pg. 4). While these are mostly examples of what case studies could be covered, arguments for using case studies to conduct exploratory research rely on deploying them

for researching ongoing processes which are continuously evolving and cannot be meaningfully separated from broader forces with less involved research methods (Yin, 2009; Kumar, 2014). Understanding what case studies are as a method is helpful for the design of such a project to use in this dissertation. The distinction of case study research from other tools—for example, surveys—was an important and intentional choice that was based on the context found in existing literature and the open-ended nature of research questions trying to examine policy in specific cities which has been implemented relatively recently and is continuing to change.

Once I understood what a case study could accomplish, I needed to determine whether it fit the needs for the study in terms of filling in gaps in existing literature. Case studies are common within the niche of academic research focusing on worker-owned cooperatives, and precedent certainly existed for pursuing in-depth exploration of specific cases (Ranis, 2016; Zingale, Samanta, & West, 2017; Adeler, 2014). To really answer the research questions posed in the previous section, a qualitative method which could respond to answers dependent on the shifting reality and variety of perspectives likely to be found among any pool of participants was necessary. Quantitative measures did not fit for several reasons, not least of which because small scale of the major cooperative projects in Cleveland and Jackson do not appear to have the kind of impact on those cities that economic datasets would detect. Even more important, these are basically new experiments and are still evolving even today—it would be difficult to detect any major changes before the full vision could even be realized. That does not mean, of course, that no study is warranted—but the research questions that this dissertation seeks to answer

accept these realities and therefore need to base their data collection on in-depth perspectives given by people who are knowledgeable about the examples being studied.

Previous studies show clear evidence of differing approaches to implementing pro-cooperative policies, and there exists a variety of policy models which could be pursued by any given city government (Camou, 2016; Adeler, 2014; Ranis, 2016). The existence of these different models raises questions about more than just the details of pro-cooperative policies in general, but also demands an understanding of competing approaches. I am interested in exploring multiple cases because not only are the similarities important but so are the differences. Are these different approaches driven by the economic context of the cities which they are pursued in? Do they reveal important lessons about the ideologies of those designing the policies? Is one approach proving to be more successful than the others? These questions are largely unanswered based on existing literature, and the development of different approaches in different American cities provides ample opportunity for urban scholars to pursue research which answer them. Because the case in Jackson is so comparatively new, it has not been fully comprehended and not been fully compared with more established approaches like the one in Cleveland and considering the apparently unique political situation in Jackson compared with other cities, these two cases deserve to be placed in context alongside one another. Moreover, the differences in political and economic situations within American cities provides a rationale for exploring multiple cases to provide divergent models that could be assessed alongside one another by policymakers and activists determining which to pursue in their city.

There are numerous suggestions by advocates, scholars, and journalists that the model of cooperative economic development being pursued in Cleveland could be replicated and pursued in other cities (Alperovitz, Howard, & Williamson, 2010; Alperovitz, 2011; Causey, 2017). The cooperative movement in Jackson has also been suggested as a model which should be linked with similar movements across the globe, with advocates proposing that activists in other cities pursue similar economic experiments and forge mutual bonds of solidarity with those in Jackson (Akuno, 2017; Williams & Walker, 2017; Moskowitz, 2017). It is clear from the existing literature surrounding both Cleveland and Jackson that both advocates and outside analysts see potential for the spread of these models beyond the cities, initiating an urban political phenomenon which deserves study. While this may not be far enough along to warrant significant study yet, it does place these two cases as paramount for further exploration and study. It is likely that the media attention afforded to the cooperative efforts in Cleveland and Jackson rival, if not exceed, the attention given to all other cases of urban cooperative economic development in the United States. However, there has yet to be any literature which has placed these two models alongside each other for comparison. The different political realities in each city—bluntly, Cleveland being a city whose politics seems relatively unchanged while Jackson has elected a self-proclaimed radical mayor—suggest there are major differences in the cases which should be identified and analyzed. This study will accomplish that in some capacity.

The cornerstone of the case studies in each city rests upon interviews, but I should first acknowledge the importance of other forms of data collection to the study. Archival research provides important historical context for exploratory research and can provide

information which could be overlooked or even not known by the group of interview participants who are part of any study (Yin, 2009; Kumar, 2014). During my time in each city I also conducted reviews of two types of documents which are important for the case study: any documented interactions between city governments and the worker-owned cooperatives in their cities, and the published literature associated with cooperatives and their political allies in each city. These documents provided important information that was vital to answering some of the research questions, and even included some information that could only be vaguely answered through interviews. The documentary review provided hard figures about how policies are implemented as well as the political, social, and economic context that the cooperatives existed in. While the interviews provided the bulk of the data used to answer the research questions in the following chapters, I will be using information from archival analysis to augment that data in an important and revelatory ways.

Interview Methods

Using interviews to shape the case studies is a decision meant to provide the detail necessary to answer the research questions in this case study. Interviews bring out new insights that may be overlooked by other methods, and in comparison, to something like archival research has the benefit of collective the most current information (Rubin & Rubin, 2011; Ortiz, 2015; Kumar, 2014). The rapidly changing nature of the cooperative sector in Cleveland and Jackson, as the experiments continue unfolding and are still clearly in the phase of building institutions that have yet to achieve their full potential, means that interviews can discuss information that is not yet fully realized in any documented evidence. Interviews in these cases also have the significant benefit of

revealing details that are crucial for comparison between the two cases—by asking similar questions in each case, the differences in economic, social, and political context are highlighted by respondents and shape their answers both implicitly and in their explicit statements. In exploratory studies like this one, it is also important to remain open to adjusting data collection as the study unfolds and new information is revealed, and interviews allowed me to explore different types of questions with people who are particularly suited to provide one type of perspective. When participants answer questions in certain ways, they can sometimes open new avenues for research that would have been otherwise neglected—especially in future studies.

The research questions that I am answering through this study require the perspectives of people who are informed about the topic of worker-owned cooperatives or the topic of urban economic development. Seeking the opinions of such people is not an uncommon tactic in qualitative case studies and was an important method used in the Song (2016) study which included the Evergreen Cooperatives. The reality is that the average person is not strongly aware of the cooperative projects being studied in this dissertation—in fact, some of the people (especially in the analyst category) that I contacted for interviews declined to participate because they felt they did not have enough information or interest to have a conversation about the topic. Because these projects are small and not particularly well known in an in-depth fashion, other forms of methodological instruments such as survey would risk not receiving significant participation and would fail to yield data that was relevant to answering the research questions. Soliciting the contextual data from people who are knowledgeable about the topic is a difficult task, but interviews have the benefit of building trust with participants

in a study (Ortiz, 2015; Rubin & Rubin, 2011). Once a rapport is built between researcher and participant, either in a personal setting or through a phone conversation, participants are much more likely to feel comfortable providing information than they would to somebody they do not have such a connection with.

Another important factor to consider in a research study is soliciting participation from a wide variety of voices representing different perspectives, especially in cases that are studying programs that are meant to represent often underrepresented communities (Stoecker, 2013; Yin, 2009). Interviews have the benefit of allowing researchers to “discern themes and patterns that represent collective understandings that include diverse perspectives” (Ortiz, 2015, pg. 49). Research for urban studies must carefully address the important questions of class, race, and other categories to ensure that all voices are heard and that an accurate understanding of how the studied phenomena are impacting both individual communities and cities. This necessity for diverse representation is magnified by the fact that the study in this dissertation concerns projects which are explicitly meant to reduce poverty and further self-determination for black Americans. It is also important to include enough perspectives so that a variety of opinions about how the projects should be undertaken, why they are (or are not) necessary, and what the goals of these initiatives are for various stakeholders and affected people. There are also different groups of people who will provide different forms of information that are each important to answer various aspects of the research questions, and not every participant has the information necessary to answer every question in full. This reality is why there were three categories of participants in each city, each of whom consisted of different groups of stakeholders who provided important and distinct information for the study.

Not every interview method is the same, and different studies require different types of interviews with their participants to acquire the necessary data. In some studies, a more structured format is necessary wherein researchers come into an interview with a set of questions that are predetermined in order to get definitive answers about specific topics; other studies can benefit from completely unstructured interviews where participants are able to provide their perspectives without significant direction from the researcher who is primarily interested in providing the full context of those participants' information (Rubin & Rubin, 2011; Kumar, 2014). There are also interview methods that contain elements of both interview styles, and "semistructured" interviews allow researchers to construct a framework of potential questions for participants while also leaving the researchers with enough flexibility to adjust the set of questions to the knowledge of the participant and explore exactly what information they can provide (Ortiz, 2015; Rubin & Rubin, 2011). For this dissertation, semistructured interviews are important because the nature of the research is highly exploratory, and the cases are volatile enough that the answers given in an interview by any specific participant may vary from person to person. While it is important to provide some flexibility for the interview to ensure that all relevant information is collected from all participants, some amount of structure does need to exist considering the specificity of the research topic and the research questions that this dissertation is answering. By establishing a connection with a participant and allowing the conversation to unfold in a way that fills in known gaps in information as well as soliciting information that I may not have known I needed.

Qualitative interviews are necessary to complete the study detailed in this dissertation, and the semistructured interview style provides a framework that works better than either more or less structured forms of interviews do for this type of project. However, the tenuous task of soliciting information from participants and collecting the data to answer my research questions requires interviews that provide a specific kind of flexibility. Rubin & Rubin (2011) detail the style of “responsive interviewing” which was used for this dissertation study, wherein I was able to use a conversational style that entered the interview with some structure but also adjusted questions based on the information gleaned from the respondents. This style of interviewing also has the benefit of allowing me to follow-up on questions by identifying interesting statements in the answers to existing questions and then asking respondents to elaborate on these topics and provide important context for the case study. Each city has a sociopolitical environment which impacts the lives of the participants as well as the ongoing realities of the cooperative projects and the government in those cities. By using the responsive interviewing style in conducting the case studies in this dissertation, I was able to get the most out of each individual interview and build the type of relationship with respondents that allowed them to gain trust in me and provide important and vital information to me as a researcher. Having this style in place I then conducted interviews in each city with participants, for a period of 30-60 minutes each, and used this data to provide most of the information necessary to answer the research questions in relation to each case study in the dissertation.

The format of responsive interview provided the necessary flexibility to conduct interviews which would provide holistic information and answers to the research

questions. However, some structure was needed to push the conversation in a direction that would provide the specific elements of information that I needed to answer the research questions. Appendix 1 consists of a preliminary interview questionnaire that was created prior to the undertaking of any interviews for this study, and interviews for the most part adhered to asking forms of these questions to individual respondents, with adjustments as necessary. There are two major forms of question that each respondent had to answer: factual-based questions and opinion-based questions. The factual-based questions were important to provide, in conjunction with archival research, tangible answers to RQ1 and RQ2 about policies being pursued or proposed in these cities, as well as providing important context for the case study. The opinion-based questions were more open-ended and invited discussion of goals for these projects from various stakeholders, assessments of the political climate in these cities, and personal opinions on the projects and how they are unfolding in each city; these questions were needed to answer the other three research questions. The questions are varied in nature, and no individual respondent could possibly answer them all—it is important though to construct enough questions to guide conversations with people from different perspectives, both in terms of comparing the two cities and collecting information from people in different categories.

Participant Selection

The necessity of including a diverse set of perspectives shaped the people that I selected to participate in the study. Rather than just interviewing anybody, I decided to define three specific categories of people who would have relevant information that would be used as data for the study. The designed selection process is detailed in Figure

3.1. For the sake of balancing these perspectives, I sought to interview 5 people in each of these categories for each case study. The first category that I chose for participants is broadly termed as “Policymakers.” The policymaker category consists of several important groups of people. The first group is employees of the city government in Jackson and Cleveland who are informed about the political context of economic development policy and have some relevant connection to governmental tasks which could be focused towards cooperatives in a city that chose to do so. The second group is politicians in each city, especially those holding elected office now, in positions who have direct interest in economic development; this includes members of the city council in each city, especially those on committees tasked with various economic priorities. The policymaker category included people who have information that is important for answering RQ1 and RQ2 because they can give information about what the government has done to foster cooperative development, or what they are considering doing. This category is also important for the other three research questions because government officials and politician exist at the behest of public and are highly aware of the political climate surrounding the policymaking process in their city.

The second category of participants that I interviewed for each case study can be termed as “Analysts.” The analyst category includes two groups of people who have important perspectives on cooperatives and economic development that are relatively independent from the projects and the city government. The first group that is included in this category are academics located in each city, who have relevant research and community interests in understanding the economic situation and policy environment in their city. These academics are largely concentrated in public policy, political science,

and urban studies fields, and effort was made to contact individuals at different types of institutions. The second group included in the analyst category are journalists and writers who have provided some amount of coverage or analysis about the projects underway in Cleveland and Jackson. By talking to people who have been engaged in similar, albeit not always explicitly academic, study of the people and institutions involved in these cases, I was able to gain information about the projects, understand the policy frameworks that do or could support cooperative development, and hear opinions about the success of these projects and their futures. Information from these participants will help answer RQ3, RQ4, and RQ5 by drawing out some of the more analytical and assessment-based opinions of the participants, as well as providing data which is useful for the complete understanding of the answers to RQ1 and RQ2.

The third and final category of participants was somewhat harder to define but is broadly termed as “Community” for the purposes of this study. Originally, I had expected this category to potentially be two separate categories—one involving people directly tied to the cooperative enterprises, and one involving political activists and community stakeholders who support the cooperative enterprises. However, I quickly discovered that these two groups overlapped in many ways; the small number of any of the constituent groups would make it difficult to provide a meaningful sample worthy of separate categories. Therefore, the community category includes people involved in political organizing in the communities, people involved in the nonprofit and charitable sectors in the cities, and those directly tied to the cooperative institutions including those employed by cooperatives. This category provides vital information about the receiving end of any policy assistance (or lack thereof) from the city government in each city, and therefore

can provide information relevant to RQ1 and RQ2. In addition, they can provide important perspectives about the political climate for the cooperative projects, the difficulties faced by the cooperative movement, and the amount of political and economic power acquired or anticipated for those involved in the cooperative movement—thus answering RQ3, RQ4, and RQ5. This category provides a diverse set of perspectives that helps draw out the distinctions between what city government may want from cooperatives and what communities and activists want from them.

Figure 3.1: Categories of Participants in the Study

The attempted selection of the 15 participants in each case study (detailed in Figure 3.1) was done by a very specific process. The first step was to define the categories, and then begin building lists of people who could fit into each category. These lists generally came to be roughly 20 people in each category in each city, with the goal of selecting 5 participants from those 20 people. The potential participants were mostly identified via basic web research of relevant individuals who fell into each category based on their professional or political backgrounds. However, some were identified once I did site visits in each city and met people involved with institutions and organizations who were relevant to the topic. In some instances, people were contacted for interviews and they suggested

other people who could be selected. This was not a completely random sample because there was a need to identify specific perspectives and build a list of participants that met all the criteria necessary to conduct a study that would holistically answer the research questions. After lists of potential participants were prepared, I randomized these lists to ensure that the selection of specific individuals was not biased by my own knowledge, relationships, or convenience. I then proceeded to contact people in order of their randomized position on each list; after each round of attempted contacts and subsequent responses or non-responses, I slowly worked in subsequent people from the lists. An unfortunately low response rate in some categories meant that all members of some lists were contacted. The first five people to affirmatively agree to and schedule an interview were to be selected as participants in each category, totaling 15 interview participants in each city and 30 for the complete study. Unfortunately, low response rates in Jackson meant that in two categories only four people responded and were interviewed, amounting to a total of 13 participants in that case study and 28 for the complete study.

Recording and Storing Data

The archival research portions of the case studies required site visits to the Evergreen Cooperatives in Cleveland, Cooperation Jackson in Mississippi, and city government offices in both cities. In the case of Cleveland, I filed a public records request to receive all documented evidence of city government interactions with the Evergreen Cooperatives. In Jackson, I was able to collect literature published by the Cooperation Jackson employees that was distributed to visitors at their headquarters. I also photographed several important locations related to the cooperatives, which in each city now own property and operate out of several buildings. Web research was also

beneficial as well, as several official statements by both city governments and the cooperatives enterprises provide important information about the cooperative efforts in each city. This portion of the research is important but only makes up a minority of the gathered data, and much of the information is public information which was easy to access. The most difficult information to access were the public records in Cleveland, but these were sent to me by email after a wait of several weeks and the documents were downloaded onto my computer. Brief, informal conversations with individuals in city government and attached to the cooperatives were important in collecting this archival data and helped contextualize some of the data gathered and analyzed both through archival research and formal interviews with participants.

The bulk of the data collected in each case study is from interviews with 28 respondents. After contact was made with a participant, they were informed of the purpose of the study and assured of the confidential nature of their participation. No inducements were offered to those who participated, and all participants consented to have the data from their interviews used in this dissertation on the condition of confidentiality. Interviews were arranged either in-person in Cleveland or Jackson, or by phone when in-person meetings were not possible due to scheduling conflicts. In-person interviews were conducted in locations chosen as suitably private by participants, while all phone interviews were conducted in environments where nobody could overhear my conversation with participants. Participants were invited to answer 6-10 questions from the prepared questionnaire, with follow-up questions coming in a responsive style based on answers given by the respondents. Each interview was meant to conclude in less than one hour, although in a few cases respondents voluntarily continued the conversation past

the one-hour mark. No participant aborted the interview prematurely, nor did anybody withdraw consent for the interview during or after it was conducted. The interviews were recorded using a voice recorder and notes were recorded by hand during each interview. The answers provided by participants will be used in the analysis in chapters 4-7 in this dissertation, with direct quotes being attributed to code terms and no names mentioned.

The importance of confidentiality was that it allowed these interviews to provide uncensored information where participants had no concerns about being honest in their opinions and assessments and were willing to reveal information that they may not have been were the interviews not kept confidential. Therefore, the storage of data is meant to protect that confidential to the highest standard possible. All recorded data that is not digital (such as handwritten notes) are kept in a secure location with no identifying markers. Digital recording and transcripts are coded so that participants are referred to in these files with names like “Cleveland Analyst 2” or “Jackson Community 5” rather than identifying information. These digital files are kept on a password-protected device and will not be shared publicly. The list of participants is also only kept on a password-protected device and will not be retained permanently nor shared in any circumstance. All digital files are also backed up on a reserve drive which is also password-protected. The goal of storing this data is to preserve it for the completion of the study and any subsequent publications that may come from this study, but after a period when the information has either been published in studies or such research has been abandoned, it will not be retained permanently.

After the collection of the data, identifying the relevant answers to answer the research questions was an important step in the analysis process. Because the questions

asked in each interview came from a broad pool of potential questions, I was able to identify whether participant answers addressed specific portions of the research questions as related to the topic of the dissertation. For example, in a broad sense answers could be categorized as to whether the provided information about specific details of a public policy or the respondent's opinion about the efficacy of cooperative development. Within these broader categorizations, answers are related to specific portions of the research questions; for example, answers about the politics of Cleveland must be categorized based on whether respondents were giving a general analysis the city's political climate, their personal stance on particular issues, or their assessment of the direction of the city's progressive movement. Through the analysis of interview data several themes began to surface that throughout the findings, including the importance of economic conditions in dictating both the appeal and the effectiveness of pro-cooperative policies, the differences in support (or lack thereof) for the worker ownership model inside the cities' policy establishment and progressive left political movements, and the impact of the projects' recency in driving the respondents' enthusiasm or hesitancy towards cooperative development's potential.

Limitations

The study conducted in this dissertation is not without limitations. It is my hope that further research, either conducted by me after the defense of this dissertation, or by other scholars based upon the findings of the studies based upon this data, will fill in the gaps in knowledge left by the limited nature of this study. There are three primary limitations that I would like to identify and discuss in this section of the methods chapter:

Lack of Time and Resources

The nature of an academic study done in a dissertation is that it is being conducted by a graduate student (myself) whose program has a time limit and whose funding is not endless. There are aspects to the study, that I would have augmented with more research and data collection were time and resources not finite. For example, the number of interviews could be increased significantly in each case. A researcher could spend years talking to dozens of people in each city and gain a significantly stronger understanding of the answers to the research questions posed in this study. Moreover, more time and resources would have allowed me to spend a much longer period in each city instead of the roughly 2 weeks that was spent in Jackson and 3 weeks spent in Cleveland. It is not hard to imagine a research study being conducted by somebody who embedded themselves into the cooperative projects studied in each case for a period of several weeks or months and developed longer-term relationships with potential participants that would yield more interesting and in-depth data in the form of multiple interviews. The study in this dissertation even took longer to complete than I anticipated, and delays in developing the necessary contacts meant that completion and defense of the dissertation was delayed beyond the expected timeframe. A longer period could have also facilitated a study which incorporated more assessment methods and observed the case studies over multiple years to track their evolution.

Cooperative Examples Scale

This study was also limited by the fact that the cooperative sectors in both Cleveland and Jackson, while notable for many reasons, are still not particularly large. Neither example contains worker-owned cooperative that have existed for more than

several years, and none are major employers or profitable to the extent that they have a major impact on the local economy. This prevents a more detailed economic study of their impact in each city and makes it difficult to assess their progress. These two case studies are very important and worthy of study, and in fact may be the best-case studies present in the United States currently on the topic of relationships between city governments and worker-owned cooperatives. However, being relatively large does not mean that they are yet at a major scale in the American economy. This dictated the style of research to a large extent but can be solved by future research of these cases or any case that develops in a more significant fashion in the future. It is very likely that some researchers, perhaps even me, will revisit these case studies in five or ten years once some of the current plans are brought to full fruition.

Poor Response Rate

Another major limitation on this study was the poor response rate exhibited by those contacted as potential participants in the study. The interview selection process involved me advertising the study by email on multiple occasions, and some people had to be contacted many times before they responded. Some prospective participants never responded in a positive or negative fashion, while some others declined to participate for a variety of reasons related to lack of interest. This caused the study to take longer to complete than expected and magnified the first limitation discussed in this section. The low response rate also meant that I eventually contacted nearly every prospective interviewee in most categories, which removed some of the random element that was designed in the study format. Eventually the prospective participant lists were exhausted in Jackson and only 13 participants were interviewed instead of the intended 15. A better

form of study advertisement would be needed in the future, either more informative emails or perhaps attempts to reach participants through more involved means that do not require them to respond to an email from an unknown person. It is my hope that further research on this topic does a better job of identifying potential participants who are engaged in the study prior to attempting to contact any participants. This problem could also potentially be solved with more formal partnerships with community stakeholders who would provide access to potential participants rather than having a researcher like myself contact them unprompted.

Conclusion

This chapter has served as the methods section for my dissertation. Within this chapter, I have justified my use of exploratory methods, described the case study format that was used and why I chose to do comparisons of two case studies in Cleveland and Jackson. I have also detailed the form of interviewing—qualitative, semistructured, responsive interviewing—and offered my justifications for using these interviews for the bulk of data collection in the dissertation. The basic outline of my study was that I selected two cities to perform case studies, and across the two cities I interviewed 28 participants broken down into three categories; each interview lasted roughly an hour or less, and the data from these interviews was used in conjunction with archival research to answer five research questions which are detailed in this chapter. The following chapters of this dissertation will be the results of my analysis of the data collected and provide answers to each of those research questions and offer implications for these results in future academic research and the design of urban economic development policies related to worker-owned cooperatives.

CHAPTER 4: CITY GOVERNMENT POLICY ENVIRONMENTS

Introduction

The case studies revealed a wealth of information about the policy environments for economic development in both Cleveland and Jackson. This chapter will explore the details of specific policies as they relate to cooperatives and will also include a more general examination of economic development policy for both cities. Each city considers economic development to be an important priority, but the approaches are different in each case and ideas about how cities can best foster economic development differ significantly depending on the perspective of any given person. This chapter will devote time to understanding what these cities are doing to foster economic growth, what that looks like in terms of tangible interactions between city government and outside enterprises, and how this is adapted specifically toward cooperative economic enterprises. While this more general view is important contextually, specifics are required to more adequately answer the research questions that will primarily be addressed in this chapter. This chapter will use interviews with policymakers to understand what they have offered to specific cooperatives such as the Evergreen Cooperatives and analyze what kind of relationship exists between city governments and worker-owned cooperatives in the selected cities.

This chapter will consider Research Question #1 in both cities by reviewing documents obtained from the cities' economic development offices and interviews with city officials in each city. The interviews revealed interesting information about what

individuals and collectives attempting to start a business would experience were they to reach out to their city government for assistance. For example, one respondent supplemented our interview with a walkthrough of several city government offices in Jackson, explaining what I would be doing were I to start a business. The process included applying for quite a few licenses and securing approvals for doing business legally in the city, but notably did not offer much in the way of material incentives (Jackson Policymaker 1, personal communication, January 30, 2019). This chapter will further examine what policies government business formation in each city and how exactly economic development and related offices in each city's government work to make the process easier and advantageous with the goal of seeing more businesses developed in their city.

This chapter will also seek to answer Research Question #2. RQ2 is related to the first, but has a more focused angle: Do the selected cities provide material or financial support for cooperative development? A primary barrier to the formation any enterprise, but especially a community-focused (or even radical) enterprise like a worker-owned cooperative, is the lack of access to capital funds (Williams & Walker, 2017; Alperovitz, 2011). Economic development when it comes to public policy often has to consider the ability to leverage public funds in a way that can incentivize entrepreneurial activity—and this can include transfers of funds directly to enterprises. What RQ2 means in tangible terms for these cities is whether Cleveland and Jackson are offering funds to groups trying to form worker-owned cooperatives, either as part of more general development policies or actively in the hopes of achieving equitable outcomes like those promised by cooperative advocates. Not only will this chapter review city records and

determine if such support has existed in the two selected cities, but will rely upon interviews with city officials to determine how any such support has developed and whether it will be a priority in the future—and will also rely upon the words of community members who provided information on what role they perceived the city to have played and what they hope to see from their city governments in the future.

Urban Economic Development

The next section of this chapter will examine each city's general approach to economic development and compare how they approach this aspect of urban policy. None of the policymaker respondents discounted the importance of economic development in their city, but there were differences between each city when it comes to the specific policies being pursued. It is important to note that in both cases the feeling was that economic development was a necessity because economic changes in the past few decades had badly damaged the local economy—and community respondents also saw their work as addressing the effects of those changes. The economic situation in the two cities does differ, because Cleveland is a much larger city with a historical background in manufacturing and now has rebounded by focusing on core services like healthcare and education, whereas Jackson is a small Southern city that has suffered significantly due to white flight (and capital flight) and a resultant population loss in recent decades. As Wilson (1997) discusses, urban areas where industries leave often become severely depressed and this leads to further societal problems. It would not be a unique revelation of this study to point out that both cities exhibit uneven economic development, with some neighborhoods being particularly economically disadvantaged. Cooperative advocates often point to these areas as needing the most help and having the

most to gain from stable, community-controlled institutions—and unsurprisingly these neighborhoods are where entities like the Evergreen Cooperatives and Cooperation Jackson have focused on.

Economic development as it has existed in most American cities for the past few decades has often included granting large transfers of capital in the form of loans, grants, and tax incentives to large, profitable corporations seeking to maximize investment (Petersen, 1981; Molotch, 1976; Imbroscio, 2010). An alternative to the dominant economic policy framework could contain policies intended to direct such funds towards worker-owned enterprises, and urban scholars have thus far pointed towards cases like Cleveland and similar cities as examples which could be expanded upon to build an alternative urban economic paradigm (Imbroscio, 2010; Alperovitz, 2011). The point of the research questions being answered by this chapter, RQ1 and RQ2, is to begin assessments about whether these cases are demonstrating evidence that such an alternative exists. However, this section of the chapter finds its focus in a broader contextual understanding of the cities’ policies—what are the city governments in Cleveland and Jackson doing to assist *any enterprise* in the name of economic development? To more fully assess whether the approach to cooperatives is a unique alternative, there must be an answer to the contextual question “an alternative to what?” While there may be a dominant economic development paradigm for urban policy writ large, its existence in the case cities should be established to fully understand how policy approaches to cooperatives differ.

Cleveland and Jackson have offices within their city government devoted to economic development, as well as related offices such as workforce development, and

those offices direct the administration of the city's priorities when it comes to increasing investment and creating jobs for residents (Cleveland Policymaker 3, personal communication, October 25, 2018; Cleveland Policymaker 2, personal communication, October 23, 2018; Jackson Policymaker 1, personal communication, January 29, 2019). These offices exist based upon the authority of political leadership in each city, with each city's mayor and city council considering the tasks assigned to economic development offices to be a high priority (Cleveland Analyst 3, personal communication, December 19, 2018; Jackson Policymaker 2, personal communication, January 30, 2019). This section of the chapter will begin by exploring the economic approaches in Cleveland, drawn from interviews with policymakers with an understanding of economic development policies in that city. The same information will be discussed in Jackson, and this section will then conclude with a comparison of the two cities' approaches and analysis of why differences may exist.

Cleveland

Cleveland has undergone significant changes in its economy since the heyday of American manufacturing, as many cities have, but wants to project an image of moving in a different direction in the 21st century. Development has accelerated in Cleveland in the past 10-15 years, with efforts especially focused in the downtown area with big attention-grabbing projects like an arena renovation, construction of apartments and office space, and developments in the Playhouse Square Arts District (Cleveland Policymaker 1, personal communication, October 22, 2018; Cleveland Analyst 1, personal communication, October 22, 2018). Amidst this upsurge in development, some economic problems have persisted in the city, but have been unevenly felt. Poverty is

concentrated in primarily minority neighborhoods, which combined with struggling schools and persistent problems such as high unemployment rates for black youth, create a pattern of uneven economic activity which policymakers are tasked with addressing (Cleveland Analyst 1, personal communication, October 22, 2018; Cleveland Policymaker 5, personal communication, June 5, 2019). The gaps in economic prosperity in Cleveland drive criticism of some of the current focuses of the economic development strategy in Cleveland, which is where support for an alternative could take root (Cleveland Analyst 4, personal communication, January 15, 2019; Cleveland Policymaker 5, personal communication, June 5, 2019). Considering these ongoing problems with inequality, policymakers both must increase overall investment while focusing particularly on creating jobs for those who do not have them and bringing wealth into communities which do not have access to it.

As reviewed in Chapter 2, cities often focus their economic development strategies on providing support to firms in the hopes they will increase investment and create jobs. In many ways support for cooperatives is a derivative of that, simply ideologically bent towards focusing that support on community-owned institutions as a rule. The downtown development projects did include a substantial investment in private developers who promised significant economic impacts for the city and long-term growth (Cleveland Policymaker 1, personal communication, October 22, 2018; Cleveland Analyst 4, personal communication, January 15, 2019). Policymakers also report programs designed to foster the creation of small businesses and businesses owned by minorities, with a general attention to supporting anything which can promise economic growth (Cleveland Policymaker 4, personal communication, March 28, 2019). Cleveland

Policymaker 3 (personal communication, October 25, 2018) reported that the city government has a “substantial small business program focused on repopulating our main streets and creating retail opportunities.” These programs show that diverting public funds and city resources towards outside enterprises is an important element of Cleveland’s economic development policies. Cleveland’s policies mirror the dominant economic development paradigm of investing in private projects with the hope that the resulting economic growth will create jobs and improve the city’s economy.

The city of Cleveland has several other initiatives which, while not out of the ordinary for a large city’s economic development strategy, does show some attention to the issues that cooperative advocates think worker ownership could help solve. The ability to help develop a workforce with the skills necessary to hold jobs which Cleveland hopes to create is an important focus for economic development policymakers (Cleveland Policymaker 2, personal communication, October 23, 2018). The rationale for workforce development is twofold, in that it helps firms find employees that can fill their positions; however this development also helps strengthen the position of potential employees and can be used in concert with programs to specifically place less privileged people into positions (Cleveland Policymaker 2, personal communication, October 23, 2018; Cleveland Policymaker 5, personal communication, June 5, 2019). The significant economic disadvantages for racial minorities in Cleveland contribute to poor neighborhood economies and a cycle of poverty which leads to significant inequality (Cleveland Analyst 1, personal communication, October 22, 2018; Cleveland Policymaker 5, personal communication, June 5, 2019). The economic development policymakers in Cleveland report programs existing specifically to encourage the

development of minority-owned businesses and help close the racial wealth gap (Cleveland Policymaker 5, personal communication, June 5, 2019; Cleveland Policymaker 1, personal communication, October 22, 2018). These more targeted programs reveal an ability for policymakers to implement policies which assist individuals and groups by offering them assistance to enter the economy and share in hoped-for local economic growth.

Policymakers have also focused on community initiatives that target specific places or neighborhoods (Cleveland Analyst 5, personal communication, January 25, 2019). In that spirit, economic development policymakers have undertaken efforts to improve specific neighborhoods and locations through programs such as the Neighborhood Transformation Initiative and the Brownfields Economic Development Initiative (Cleveland Policymaker 1, personal communication, October 22, 2018; Cleveland Policymaker 3, personal communication, October 25, 2018). Beyond just efforts contained completely within government, much of local development in neighborhoods is being done in conjunction with nonprofit institutions such as Community Development Corporations, who are technically independent of the city but have financial and political ties which make them a central part of any economic development strategy (Cleveland Analyst 3, personal communication, December 19, 2018; Cleveland Policymaker 1, personal communication, October 22, 2018). The inclusion of community institutions such as nonprofits into economic development policy does suggest potential in Cleveland for a LEADS-focused strategy such as the one that Imbroscio (2010) lays out—and other community efforts outside the traditional for-profit sector are being explored as well:

Political leaders have to learn how to use their wealth, and the wealth of a community is the people and the land [...] we are in the process of creating a community land trust, which will always be an economic engine for the community. (Cleveland Policymaker 4, personal communication, March 28, 2019)

While policymakers do seem largely focused on the traditional economic development paradigm of support for private industry and economic growth, the community focused programs do show an appetite for alternative methods. Combining these efforts with increased support for cooperatives could constitute a potential alternative, although it would not be accurate to say the city government has intentionally pursued such a strategy yet.

Jackson

The economic context for Jackson is, like the situation in Cleveland, the driving force behind the desire for economic development in the city. However, the problems facing the city's economy are severe enough that they have an impact on the city government even pursuing a full-fledged economic development strategy in the way that perhaps they would hope. White flight in the late 20th century left the city primarily black, but accompanied with the emigration of middle and upper-class black Jacksonians also led to a severe population decline and much of the remaining population living in poverty (Jackson Policymaker 4, personal communication, February 7, 2019; Jackson Analyst 3, personal communication, January 31, 2019; Jackson Policymaker 1, personal communication, January 29, 2019). With the population in decline and the tax base leaving the city, businesses also fled Jackson and moved to neighboring suburbs, other businesses struggled to remain open while larger companies no longer saw the city as attractive (Jackson Community 3, personal communication, January 31, 2019). This

decline in economic activity is compounded by the fact that without a tax base, the city struggles to fund infrastructure, schools, and other essential public services (Jackson Analyst 3, personal communication, January 31, 2019; Jackson Policymaker 4, personal communication, February 7, 2019). The economic situation facing the city is incredibly poor, with residents disproportionately in poverty and economic wealth concentrated in the suburbs. The lack of nearby job opportunities leaves much of the city struggling with concentrated poverty.

Since many city services are underfunded, this is often cited as a pressing priority for the city if it wishes to reverse its economic decline (Jackson Analyst 3, personal communication, January 31, 2019). Respondents report a diverse set of problems facing the city: failing schools, issues with water billing, increased crime and violence—and crumbling roads highlighted by a bizarre incident last year when a young woman was killed after hitting a manhole and flipping her car (Jackson Analyst 3, personal communication, January 31, 2019; Jackson Analyst 4, personal communication, June 4, 2019). Jackson Community 3 (personal communication, January 31, 2019) noted that the city is simply not appealing to businesses because there is not a positive answer to the question “what do you have to offer that says ‘here’s why you ought to move to town?’” The severity of basic infrastructure and governance problems has led to a desire to prioritize solving them as an integral first step of any public policy:

We’re failing in our basic services, we’re failing in providing public safety, we’re failing in providing adequate and clean water and access to it that’s affordable, and we’re failing because our citizens are having to pay [...] just for basic transportation because our streets are not adequate to travel on (Jackson Policymaker 2, personal communication, January 30, 2019).

City government in Jackson is faced with the unfortunate reality that with a poor economy and low revenues, they are unable to provide even the most basic functions of government which voters expect—leaving them with limited ability to pursue proactive economic development policies. However, while the city may have less funds for economic development than they would like, they do have programs for the purpose.

The economic development division of Jackson city government focuses largely on programs that create an environment for business to function, with respondents noting workforce development programs as a major priority due to concerns about the education and skills level of most residents (Jackson Policymaker 4, personal communication, February 7, 2019; Jackson Policymaker 1, personal communication, January 29, 2019). These programs also go towards educating people who want to start businesses and helping them navigate the process of forming a legal enterprise: “We still have to teach them the fundamentals [...] it’s more than just the business licensing aspect of it, they would also be educated upon credit counseling and budgeting counseling.” (Jackson Policymaker 1, personal communication, January 29, 2019). Policymakers cite the need to create an environment in which people living in the city can start small businesses, have city departments which are open, accessible, and helpful to prospective entrepreneurs, and helping educate people about the resources available to them (Jackson Policymaker 5, personal communication, May 22, 2019; Jackson Policymaker 1, personal communication, January 29, 2019). This kind of attention to individuals seems to be meant to spur business development where it currently does not exist, in the hopes that an economy can get started by making people more able to run a business. Providing

tangible resources to spur economic development is a separate part of the economic development project and targeted differently.

Securing access to funds for individuals and small businesses is a part of the economic development strategy, but is relatively minor and is mostly directed through linking people with outside lenders and programs at the federal and state level (Jackson Policymaker 4, personal communication, February 7, 2019; Jackson Policymaker 1, personal communication, January 29, 2019). Larger scale tax incentives are offered to corporations, reminiscent of dominant paradigms of urban economic development; these incentives are somewhat limited in nature, still in the planning stages, and rely heavily on partnerships with other governmental and non-governmental partners (Jackson Analyst 2, personal communication, January 29, 2019). Two respondents note that the use of public money to lure businesses to Jackson is a more traditional route for economic development that clashes with the image Mayor Lumumba had tried to establish earlier—and suggest that rumored efforts like an attempt to invite Amazon to locate its HQ2 in the city could be evident of a shift towards a more corporate-friendly approach (Jackson Analyst 1, personal communication, October 11, 2018; Jackson Community 2, personal communication, January 30, 2019). The existence of material resources on offer does not appear to be the primary focus for policymakers in Jackson, but this is perhaps due to the lack of public funds and less due to a reluctance to offer any such funds if they were available. The amount of incentives currently being offered, especially when it comes to tax breaks for corporations seeking to move to the city, is a retained influence of the dominant urban economic development paradigm despite suggestions that alternatives are necessary.

Comparison

The primary difference between the economic development strategy in Cleveland and that in Jackson is not necessarily a difference in goals, but a difference in the ability to leverage current resources. The economy of Cleveland is strong enough that public investment can be directed towards projects that policymakers expect to have long-term payoffs for the city, with Cleveland Policymaker 1 (personal communication, October 22, 2018) suggesting the economy of the city could be measured by the current amount of “cranes in the sky” when looking at downtown Cleveland. Jackson’s economy is having a severe impact on the city’s budget. Policymakers in Jackson feel constrained by the lack of public funds, and also feel the economic situation is so poor for average residents that the provision of basic services must come first (Jackson Policymaker 2, personal communication, January 30, 2019; Jackson Community 3, personal communication, January 31, 2019). Cleveland’s economic activity is not equitably promising, with some neighborhoods and communities in the city feeling left behind, but the economy of the city as a whole allows the economic development strategy to focus on proactively solving problems like lack of community wealth and long-term poverty and unemployment (Cleveland Analyst 1, personal communication, October 22, 2019; Cleveland Policymaker 4, personal communication, March 28, 2019). The differences in the local economy and public budgeting leads to a situation where Cleveland’s economic development office can use more funds to directly impact business creation and foster economic activity.

The specific policy outcome most impacted by these differences in capability between Cleveland and Jackson is the amount of funding on offer to incentivize

investment. Jackson is able to offer some funds, especially tax financing to large corporations, but overall must try to leverage outside funds and agreements with lenders to help people start small businesses (Jackson Policymaker 2, personal communication, January 30, 2019; Jackson Policymaker 1, personal communication, January 29, 2019). Cleveland has a much more robust program to direct loans, grants, other incentives directly to enterprises that are forming in the city (Cleveland Policymaker 3, personal communication, October 25, 2018; Cleveland Analyst 3, personal communication, December 19, 2018). There is a similarity in the interest in offering tax incentives to large corporations to spur major development projects, especially in the cities' downtown areas (Cleveland Policymaker 1, personal communication, October 22; 2018; Jackson Analyst 2, personal communication, January 29, 2019). The scale of what Cleveland can offer in corporate tax breaks seems to be much larger and therefore much more of a priority than it is in Jackson. Because more money is available for policymakers to use on direct financial support, Cleveland is simply able to offer types of financial backing to businesses that economic development policymakers in Jackson are not able to.

With a general lack of economic activity prevalent in some communities in Cleveland and in much of Jackson, both cities do share some economic development goals and strategies when it comes to creating a better environment for business formation. The desire to focus on workforce development along with programs for education, trainings, and other skills provision in an effort to create better employees and move regular people into starting their own business is shared by policymakers in both Cleveland and Jackson (Cleveland Policymaker 2, personal communication, October 23, 2018; Jackson Policymaker 1, personal communication, January 28, 2019). Both cities

include a focus on directing non-financial resources towards individuals from less wealthy backgrounds in the hopes that economic activity can be developed in areas left behind and benefit people from communities who are most impoverished (Cleveland Policymaker 5, personal communication, June 5, 2019; Jackson Policymaker 4, personal communication, February 7, 2019). The similarities between the two cities economic development programs seem to be driven by two major factors. The first factor is that some overlap exists in the needs of the cities—both have residents that are impoverished and communities with almost no economic activity. The second major factor is that because these resources are largely non-financial and directed towards empowering individuals, they serve the strategy of using public policy tools intended to push people into developing their own activity rather than transferring funds to them directly. These programs are much easier to justify even in cities with tighter budgets for economic development.

Cleveland: Municipal Support for the Evergreen Cooperatives

Origins of the Model

The idea for a large scale cooperative network in Cleveland's poorest neighborhoods originated in 2005, and began to be discussed in community and philanthropic networks for the remainder of the decade (Cleveland Community 1, personal communication, December 13, 2018) The model for the Evergreen Cooperatives was adapted from the Mondragon group in Spain, meant to be an interconnected series of firms which were employee owned and economically viable—even dominant—within their region (Cleveland Community 5, personal communication, May 30, 2019; Cleveland Policymaker 3, personal communication, October 25, 2018). The formation of

the Greater University Circle Initiative in 2005 was meant to spur development in distressed neighborhoods on the east side of Cleveland; inspired by the presence of ESOPs in the region and the Ohio Employee Ownership Institute, stakeholders such as the Cleveland Foundation invited Democracy Collaborative to collaborate with the initiative on a potential cooperative network (Cleveland Community 1, personal communication, December 13, 2018). The primary early enterprise within Evergreen was the cooperatively owned laundry, already with a customer base due to investments from anchor institutions such as the Cleveland Clinic (Cleveland Analyst 5, personal communication, January 25, 2019; Cleveland Analyst 2, personal communication, December 13, 2018). In addition to the laundry, the Evergreen Cooperatives also include Green City Growers (an urban farming cooperative) and Ohio Cooperative Solar (which installs solar panels), who link the cooperative project to the need for environmental sustainability (Alperovitz, Howard, & Williamson, 2010). Large community institutions like the anchors, and especially the nonprofit Cleveland Foundation, helped secure initial funds, bring in collaborators such as the Ohio Employee Ownership Center and Democracy Collaborative, and bring city government to the table as well (Cleveland Community 5, personal communication, May 30, 2019; Cleveland Community 1, personal communication, December 13, 2018). With a model in place that stakeholders felt was worthwhile and a plan for implementing a network of employee owned cooperatives in Cleveland, a space was opened for policymakers to take an interest in this type of model.

The worker ownership model did have some supporters within city government out of the hope that not only would Evergreen create jobs, but that it would create wealth

in underserved communities and transform neighborhoods (Cleveland Policymaker 5, personal communication, June 5, 2019). City government provided very tactical support at the beginning of Evergreen's startup, directing funds towards them as an interesting project but refraining from making the model a larger centerpiece of their economic development strategy (Cleveland Analyst 5, personal communication, January 25, 2019; Cleveland Policymaker 3, personal communication, October 25, 2018).

City government was a very important part of launching the Evergreen network and getting them off the ground. [Economic development officials] did all kinds of stuff to help the initiative like finding sources of financing maybe through federal sources of financing that go through the city that they could qualify for, to helping identify land they could develop and use to locate the co-op. They were a really important partner (Cleveland Community 1, personal communication, December 13, 2018).

The contributions from the city may not have been the centerpiece of public economic development strategy, but they were extremely important to the people trying to launch the Evergreen Cooperatives. The support from the city proved to be materially and financially vital to the success of the project.

Once the city government became involved in helping start the Evergreen Cooperatives, soon followed agreements between the city and the cooperatives that provided funds for important parts of the project (Cleveland Policymaker 3, personal communication, October 25, 2018; Cleveland Community 1, personal communication, December 13, 2018). In 2009 the city provided funds for both the Evergreen Laundry and Ohio Cooperative Solar, specifically with the intention of helping them find residents in their neighborhood to hire, screen them for suitability, and train them to be successful employee-owners (Cleveland Department of Economic Development, 2009a, Cleveland Department of Economic Development, 2009b). The same year as funds were provided

for bringing in employees, the city also provided a loan of \$1.5 million to finance the Evergreen Laundry operation, as well as offering participation in a tax credit program (Cleveland Department of Economic Development, 2010; Cleveland Department of Economic Development, 2009c). These loans and related forms of support from the city for the cooperative project show some amount of interest in making the project a success and directing funds towards projects promising wealth creation and attention to impoverished communities was likely very enticing amid the Great Recession. The support from the city would not end in 2009 but was the start of a time period in which the cooperatives and the city would repeatedly make agreements.

Partnership with the City

Evergreen was now tied to the city by 2010, with public policymakers having a vested interest in the success of the project. Economic development policymakers remained interested in the project but may have considered it interesting mostly because of its ability to bring together anchor institutions and leverage funds from both the public and nonprofit sectors to create economic activity of any kind (Cleveland Analyst 3, personal communication, December 19, 2018). Cooperatives struggle to attain capital, so the \$1.5 million loan to fund startup expenses for the laundry appears to have been crucial to the success of the project (Cleveland Department of Economic Development, 2009c). The cooperatives also showed an interest in securing small amounts of grant funds for specific tasks like employee screening and job training which provided a visible public benefit (Cleveland Department of Economic Development, 2009a, Cleveland Department of Economic Development, 2009b). All the funds that were provided to the cooperatives in 2009 are credited by community members as being necessary for the

project to succeed and establishing a good partnership with policymakers (Cleveland Community 1, personal communication, December 13, 2018). The combination of support from nonprofits and local anchor institutions and the support of city government in the form of loans and grants embedded Evergreen into the fabric of Cleveland and made important city powers become stakeholders in its continued success.

The projects pursued by the Evergreen Cooperatives required a lot of funding and attention from the city and the nonprofit sector, and when the projects found themselves struggling, it required further support (Cleveland Analyst 3, personal communication, December 19, 2018; Cleveland Policymaker 3, personal communication, October 25, 2018). Ohio Cooperative Solar received further investment in 2012 in the form of \$200,000 loan from the city, in addition to \$400,000 secured in outside equity (Cleveland Department of Economic Development, 2012c). Similar loans (and a tax credit) were secured for Green City Growers and the Evergreen Real Estate Corporation to provide for the purchase of equipment necessary to establish the greenhouse facility for Green City Growers (Cleveland Department of Economic Development, 2012a, Cleveland Department of Economic Development, 2012b). The continued investments in 2012 show a persistent interest on the part of the economic development policymakers after the initial partnership in 2009, partially because Evergreen expanded into other enterprises but also because the city needed to keep investing what they could to make the project a success and not have their earlier investments wasted.

A major reason the city was interested in helping Evergreen succeed was the belief that these projects could create jobs in communities where employment is scarce (Cleveland Policymaker 5, personal communication, June 5, 2019; Cleveland

Policymaker 3, personal communication, October 25, 2018). The initial agreement with Evergreen for over a million dollars in 2009 stipulated that Evergreen would use the funds for projects that would create 35 jobs, with those jobs targeted especially towards employing residents of Cleveland and underrepresented minorities (Cleveland Department of Economic Development, 2009c). The continued support for the cooperatives agreed to by the city government in 2012 was intended to create 42 additional jobs at Green City Growers, but the loan to sustain the solar cooperative was also stated to be necessary for the retention of 17 jobs in addition to more jobs that could be added with continued activity (Cleveland Department of Economic Development, 2012b, Cleveland Department of Economic Development, 2012c). The use of these funds provisions to create jobs is not an out of the ordinary function of city government when it comes to economic development, but does demonstrate the viability of cooperatives relies upon their ability to prove to policymakers that funding them can create jobs—especially jobs for people who may struggle to find them otherwise.

City Supports Multiple Cooperatives

Figure 4.1: Green City Growers facility in Cleveland, OH

The creation of Evergreen Laundry was supported by the city by a series of grants and loans in the late 2000s and early 2010s (Cleveland Department of Economic Development, 2009c; Cleveland Community 1, personal communication, December 13, 2018). The laundry's success was made possible by its relationship with the Cleveland Foundation and the Cleveland Clinic, as anchor institutions in the city provided both financial support and existing contracts that provided an ongoing customer base (Cleveland Analyst 3, personal communication, December 19, 2018). At the same time the laundry was being supported, Evergreen was also attempting to form a cooperative solar energy company in the same neighborhood, which was also supported by city funds (Cleveland Department of Economic Development, 2012c). The city cited the laundry as a major project that would create jobs, operate as a green enterprise, and bring attention as a unique, innovative form of economic development (Cleveland Department of Economic Development, 2010). These projects formed the initial base of the Evergreen Cooperatives, and the laundry is the largest portion of the project that has seemingly provided a long-term stable enterprise. The city has also directed its attention towards other aspects of the Evergreen project as the cooperatives have expanded and new facilities were proposed, constructed, and began operation.

Another crucial portion of the Evergreen Cooperatives is Green City Growers, an urban greenhouse project that is meant to supply large amounts of produce to local food vendors while providing relatively low-barrier-to-entry jobs in underserved communities (Cleveland Community 1, personal communication, December 13, 2018; Cleveland Community 5, personal communication, May 30, 2019). The startup costs for the

greenhouse project were very high, and the city felt it needed to play a substantial role to make it successful (Cleveland Policymaker 3, personal communication, October 25, 2018). The support from policymakers for Green City Growers is the most significant piece of assistance given to a cooperative in the city:

The City applied for and received a HUD 108 Loan and BEDI Grant in the total amount of \$10 million for the \$16 million project. The HUD funds will leverage \$4.4 million in NMTC. The Evergreen Fund will provide the remaining \$1.5 million funding to create a greenhouse to grow lettuce and basil. [...] The City worked with the local community development corporation to acquire and assemble the 10-acre site. (Cleveland Department of Economic Development, 2012d, pg. 5).

The transfer of funds to Green City Growers was meant to serve the purposes of business development and job creation, much like the laundry, but also had the benefit of redeveloping a vacant property and allowing the city to use the project to rehabilitate depleted portions of its neighborhood environment (Cleveland Brownfields Economic Development Initiative, 2011; Cleveland Department of Economic Development, 2011). The city had become significantly invested in both the creation of a laundry with major contracts and an urban farming project with a large space capable of producing large quantities of produce. By 2012 the city had established a productive partnership with Evergreen.

Some policymakers report a continued interest in cooperatives, both in Evergreen as it grows but also in the potential establishment of other similar projects where possible (Cleveland Policymaker 4, personal communication, March 28, 2019; Cleveland Policymaker 5, personal communication, June 5, 2019). The ongoing direct relationship between the city economic development administration and Evergreen has become more instrumental, with the city keeping a relationship with them because they have several

ongoing agreements, but not as part of establishing new projects and making worker ownership an important part of development policy (Cleveland Analyst 5, personal communication, January 25, 2019; Cleveland Policymaker 3, personal communication, October 25, 2018). The city did enter an additional agreement with the Green City Growers cooperative in 2015, loaning \$120,000 to assist with future utility payments and ensure the retention of jobs as the project continues its efforts to become profitable (Cleveland Department of Economic Development, 2015). The city has become less closely involved with the cooperatives since 2012, becoming more of a lender expecting repayment than an active partner and stakeholder in their success. While this may not bode well for expansion into a wider cooperative development strategy, this does keep the city tied closely enough to Evergreen to expect their relationship may remain in place as needed in the future.

Has the city lost interest in Evergreen?

Evergreen has not been without its share of struggles in its first years, needing a large amount of support to break even financially and relying heavily on contracts that might not be able to expand in the future (Cleveland Analyst 4, personal communication, January 15, 2019; Cleveland Analyst 5, personal communication, January 25, 2019). Policymakers report concerns about the amount of money necessary to make them work, whether the model can be replicated outside its niche, and whether the effects are large-scale enough to be worth the city's attention (Cleveland Policymaker 3, personal communication, October 25, 2018; Cleveland Policymaker 1, personal communication, October 22, 2018). Cleveland Analyst 3 (personal communication, December 19, 2018) indicated that the city government had not seemed to know or even care too much

whether the project succeeded, but mostly viewed it as a worthwhile investment that may or may not work out. While policymakers and analysts may not be completely sold on the model, the continued existence of Evergreen raises questions about whether their attention will once again be drawn in by the cooperatives or by people looking to start similar projects.

One reason that the city appears disinterested in Evergreen at the moment is their belief that the model is simply another project that is not quantifiably different than other business models—they just want to support anything that could create jobs (Cleveland Analyst 3, personal communication, December 19, 2018; Cleveland Policymaker 1, personal communication, October 22, 2018). The uniqueness of the worker ownership model is not exactly lost on policymakers, who see it as interesting but are skeptical that the economy is ready for a huge transition to worker ownership and do not see a role for the city in making sure such a transition would happen (Cleveland Policymaker 2, personal communication, October 23, 2018). Policymakers report that for them Evergreen is like any other business that the city has partnered with in the past, and they expect to maintain a relationship with them that is mostly programmatic and not particularly tied to any attachment to the goals of the project (Cleveland Policymaker 3, personal communication, October 25, 2018). If the city does not differentiate between providing support to worker-owned cooperatives and providing support to for-profit-small businesses or even corporations, then it is hard to see the government of Cleveland redirecting its strategy to focus on cooperatives soon.

Respondents report that while the city may have had more interest in pursuing cooperatives 5-10 years ago, the current economic development authorities of the city

government are markedly less interested (Cleveland Analyst 1, personal communication, October 22, 2018). The city is primarily taking a more detached approach to the development of Evergreen and leaving it to the Cleveland Foundation and anchor industries to continue support (Cleveland Analyst 5, personal communication, January 25, 2019). Some respondents feel that the city government is too attached to dominant economic policy paradigms to develop a strategy focused on worker-ownership and the progressive outcomes its advocates support (Cleveland Community 4, personal communication, May 22, 2019; Cleveland Analyst 4, personal communication, January 15, 2019). Community advocates for Evergreen and other cooperatives feel that the city could place worker-ownership at the center of its economic development strategy but currently does not want to: “I do not think at all that they have any interest, expertise or hunger for something like that. [...] They are looking for employing volume and bringing that into the city.” (Cleveland Community 5, personal communication, May 30, 2019). The city government has lost some interest in its partnership with Evergreen, and while it may work to strengthen those ties again in the future, it would not be accurate to say it is a focus of the economic development policymakers in Cleveland.

Jackson: More Talk than Action

Policymakers Suggest Cooperative Development

Jacksonians have a history of non-traditional business development to draw from, dating back to more community focused institutions in the black community during the 20th century (Jackson Policymaker 5, personal communication, May 22, 2019; Nembhard, 2014). Some cooperatives have existed in the city before, although not usually worker owned; a cooperatively owned grocery store known as Rainbow Foods

was present in Jackson for several decades and only closed recently (Jackson Policymaker 2, personal communication, January 30, 2019). Advocacy for self-determination from nationalist groups like the Republic of New Afrika led to cooperative proposals of current mayor's father, Chokwe Lumumba, who had been elected mayor in 2013 also proposing cooperative development (Jackson Analyst 1, personal communication, October 11, 2018; Jackson Community 2, personal communication, January 30, 2019). The movement around community self-determination has also been popular with people from out-of-state and people have moved to Jackson to organize for a cooperative-based economy (Jackson Community 2, personal communication, January 30, 2019; Jackson Community 1, personal communication, January 28, 2019). The idea of using cooperatives as economic development was able to take hold in community advocacy groups and has been tied closely to movements for racial justice and self-determination. With a history in the community and justification on ideological grounds, policymakers have been able to point to the model as one that is both an alternative and with enough tradition behind it to work for Jackson.

The primary catalyst for the idea of cooperative development in modern Jackson politics was the career of Chokwe Lumumba, who had been part of the Republic of New Afrika and had proposed an alternative economic strategy during his career and his brief tenure as mayor before passing away (Jackson Analyst 1, personal communication, October 11, 2018). The same movement that produced Lumumba as mayor began working to actually form cooperatives, and Cooperation Jackson was born with the eye towards organizing cooperative enterprises in a city that could potentially be favorable due to community support and potential political success (Jackson Community 2,

personal communication, January 30, 2019; Jackson Community 1, personal communication, January 28, 2019). Several respondents pointed out that much of the energy behind Cooperation Jackson was actually drawn in from out-of-state by people who moved to Jackson with an eye towards experimenting with cooperative development there (Jackson Analyst 3, personal communication, January 31, 2019; Jackson Community 1, personal communication, January 28, 2019; Jackson Policymaker 2, personal communication, January 30, 2019). The development of a strong non-governmental engine for cooperative development has been key to raising awareness of the model both inside the city and outside Jackson, although it remains to be seen whether they will be able to develop ties with more long-established communities who could be wary of outside interests. However, the organizing between the death of Chokwe Lumumba and the next mayoral election was able to pay off in the form of electoral success in 2017.

Chokwe Antar Lumumba easily won the mayoral office in 2017 while running on a platform that provided explicit and bold support for worker-owned cooperatives as part of a new economic development strategy (Jackson Analyst 1, personal communication, October 11, 2018; Jackson Policymaker 4, personal communication, February 7, 2019). The younger Lumumba suggested that cooperatives could be used to create enterprises in Jackson that the market would prefer to locate in the suburbs, such as a movie theater, and cited successful community-ownership examples such as cooperatives developed in other cities and the Green Bay Packers (Jackson Analyst 2, personal communication, January 29, 2019). The idea of cooperative development is identified with the mayor, although other local politicians are not necessarily opposed (Jackson Policymaker 2,

personal communication, January 30, 2019). The widespread support for the mayor in the primary provides hope for his ability to sell the idea to the community, but respondents also noted that the community also had other priorities and short-term problems they elected him to solve (Jackson Policymaker 4, personal communication, February 7, 2019; Jackson Policymaker 2, personal communication, January 30, 2019). By the time that Chokwe Antar Lumumba was elected mayor, cooperatives were clearly established in the imagination of many Jacksonians, and suggestions that his administration could help foster the development of community-owned and worker-owned enterprises were well-founded based on the political climate and the words of the mayor himself.

Waiting for Cooperatives

Respondents noted that currently none of the proposed cooperatives have come to fruition, and that it does not appear to be an overly pressing issue for either the mayor's administration or the political community at the current time (Jackson Analyst 4, personal communication, June 4, 2019; Jackson Policymaker 5, personal communication, May 22, 2019). Policymakers express support for the idea of helping cooperatives get established, but still cite the need to solve more immediate problems like infrastructure and crime before moving on to more experimental economic development policies (Jackson Policymaker 5, personal communication, May 22, 2019; Jackson Policymaker 2, personal communication, January 30, 2019). The support for cooperatives has not necessarily disappeared, but there are also legal obstacles that policymakers are still trying to navigate while planning:

The laws in the state of Mississippi right now have limitations, I think the only cooperatives that can actually be incorporated within the state or established within the state are agriculturally based. We're looking at and interested in legislation that would change that, so that you could have

other types of cooperatives established within the state, as well as looking for ways we'd have to establish our cooperatives outside but still have locations in Jackson. (Jackson Policymaker 4, personal communication, February 7, 2019).

Chokwe Antar Lumumba is less than two years into his term as mayor, and with immediate problems requiring his attention and difficulties in establishing cooperatives in the state, his administration has not yet moved to foster the development of worker-owned cooperatives.

There are signs that the mayor's administration and other policymakers still support the concept of cooperative development. As the mayor continues to address policy problems and explore new policies, it is possible that the administration will revisit the idea and that cooperative development may just be a longer-term plan (Jackson Analyst 2, personal communication, January 29, 2019). None of the policymakers interviewed responded negatively to the idea that cooperatives could be an important part of Jackson's economy in the future, and some policymakers expressed hope that the city could take more supportive policies in the medium and long-term (Jackson Policymaker 5, personal communication, May 22, 2019; Jackson Policymaker 4, personal communication, February 7, 2019). Because political power comes and goes, it could be the case that good plans for cooperative development from the city will only come to fruition if Lumumba is able to stay in office for more than one term, which is still an open question (Jackson Community 3, personal communication, January 31, 2019; Jackson Analyst 1, personal communication, October 11, 2018). Support for cooperatives still exists within the policy structures that could help facilitate their development, but the ability and willingness to actively work to put the city into partnership with cooperative enterprises does not exist yet. The process takes several years to develop and if Lumumba

can stay in office for several years, he may be able to start introducing robust pro-cooperative development policies in the future.

While Mayor Lumumba has focused on the basics of governing in his short time in office, activists such as those involved with Cooperation Jackson have developed into critics of his administration due to anger at some of his decisions and impatience with the pace of his reforms (Jackson Analyst 3, personal communication, January 31, 2019). Activists are currently divided on whether to support the mayor, but many of his former supporters in the cooperative community have become disillusioned and feel that his efforts at reform are too tied to the political and economic establishment to be useful for revolutionary change (Jackson Community 2, personal communication, January 30, 2019; Jackson Community 1, personal communication, January 28, 2019). Former supporters argue that no action has been taken towards developing cooperatives and have focused more on building the enterprises outside the state without any government help (Jackson Community 1, personal communication, January 28, 2019; Jackson Analyst 1, personal communication, October 11, 2018). It remains to be seen whether these political divides will cause significant trouble for the mayor if he does attempt to enact a more pro-cooperative agenda in the future, or if they could prevent his further election. These divides do raise questions about whether the pace of change can move fast enough to reunify activists and cooperative advocates who had formerly supported the mayor, who may need to show action soon to please them.

Comparison in Policy Environments

The primary difference between the economic development policies as they relate to cooperatives in each city is that Cleveland has simply done more to support them so

far. Cleveland has directed financial resources and significant effort towards assisting the Evergreen Cooperatives, and policymakers kept an interest for several years in making sure that project succeeds (Cleveland Policymaker 3, personal communication, October 25, 2018). The economic development office in Cleveland was able to highlight their support for Evergreen as a major project on par with any support given to other non-worker-owned enterprises in the same time frame (Cleveland Department of Economic Development, 2010; Cleveland Department of Economic Development, 2012d). The financial support and partnership between the city administration and Evergreen were crucial to the success of Evergreen and suggest it was possible for government to play a role in fostering the successful development of worker-owned firms (Cleveland Community 1, personal communication, December 13, 2018). Compared to this, Jackson has yet to act in any tangible way towards establishing pro-cooperative policies, and this leaves cooperative advocates wondering when the city is going to start doing so (Jackson Community 2, personal communication, January 30, 2019; Jackson Analyst 1, personal communication, October 11, 2018). While neither city has turned their economic development strategy upside down and promoted worker-ownership explicitly, Cleveland has provided more material support in one specific project. The political landscape on the issue is different in each city however, and there could be potential for more support in Jackson in the future.

A significant difference between the two cities, and the primary reason that Jackson could see an increase in pro-cooperative policies in the future, is that Jackson's policy establishment and the general public are more aware of and supportive of encouraging cooperative formation. Policymakers remain positive towards cooperatives

and indicate a willingness to pursue economic development policies which include them in the future (Jackson Policymaker 4, personal communication, February 7, 2019; Jackson Policymaker 5, personal communication, May 22, 2019). There also remains support within the community for exploring cooperatives, and having policymakers even aware of existing efforts and thinking about how to form cooperatives in the long term is a major step forward compared to not knowing what they are (Jackson Analyst 1, personal communication, October 11, 2018; Jackson Analyst 2, personal communication, January 29, 2019). When compared with Jackson, the situation in Cleveland is much less positive. There is a feeling that city government has lost interest in cooperatives as compared to several years ago, and members of the community do not see economic development policymakers making a push to include worker-ownership in their strategies for the future (Cleveland Analyst 1, personal communication, October 22, 2018; Cleveland Community 4, personal communication, May 22, 2019). The continued interest in Jackson and declining interest in Cleveland is a major difference between the cities' policy environments which could reverse the current arrangement of Cleveland being ahead of Jackson on partnerships with worker-owned enterprises.

The cases in the two cities are not completely different from one another. Policymakers in both cities suggest that cooperatives are able to take advantage of existing policies offered to all firms, such as applications to loans when possible, training services, workforce development, and similar programs (Cleveland Policymaker 3, personal communication, October 25, 2018; Jackson Policymaker 1, personal communication, January 29, 2019). Both cities are able to incorporate tactical support for cooperatives into their overall policy environment, but neither city is particularly

pursuing a strategy that focuses on worker ownership and seeks to direct development towards cooperatives specifically (Cleveland Analyst 5, personal communication, January 25, 2019; Jackson Analyst 2, personal communication, January 29, 2019). The gaps in strategic focus in both cities leaves advocates for cooperatives in both communities impatient with city government, and gives rise to critiques that policymakers are not actually interested in pursuing the goals shared by cooperative advocates (Jackson Community 2, personal communication, January 30, 2019; Cleveland Community 5, personal communication, May 30, 2019). The unfortunate reality for progressive activists and other advocates for worker ownership is that there are limits to what the cities are offering in terms of policy. Cleveland is tangibly further ahead, but Jackson seems ideologically primed to explore similar tactics in the future. However, making worker ownership a central portion of a community-focused strategy is not yet on the table in either city.

Conclusion

The policy environments for worker-owned cooperatives in Cleveland and Jackson may be limited, and there are significant differences between the cities. This chapter has explored the details of the economic development policies in each city with the goal of answering Research Question #1 and Research Question #2 for the study that was conducted. For the first question, the answer differs by city. In Cleveland the simplest answer may be that there are not cooperative-specific policies within the economic development framework, but there are important examples of city government using existing economic development policies to aid in the formation of the Evergreen Cooperatives. Cooperatives in Cleveland can expect that applications for grants, loans,

tax credits, and other forms of financial assistance typically offered to local small businesses could be on the table were they to pursue starting a new worker-owned enterprise in the city. The policies in Jackson are more limited; as in Cleveland there is nothing specifically for cooperatives, but the economic development strategy is more limited which means that access to funding opportunities (while not non-existent) is limited for people starting cooperatives. However, there may be more opportunities for counseling, training, and other forms of education and skills development for prospective worker-owners in Jackson.

The second research question focuses on whether material or financial support is available to people who seek to form worker-owned cooperatives in Cleveland or Jackson. The answer in Cleveland's case is yes and has been evidenced by the amount of money obtained by Evergreen in the form of loans, grants, and tax credits in the last decade. However, there are limits to the funds provided, and many are loans or offered through programs designed for any enterprise, which means these are not specifically meant to put capital into the hands of community-owned enterprises for the purposes of securing equity and self-determination that cooperative advocates seek. The answer in Jackson now appears to be no. There are limited funds for incentives to any business, and there does not seem to be an active push to make sure those funds go towards worker-owned cooperatives even if there is an ideological and rhetorical argument to do so. However as budgetary conditions change and long-term plans are set in place by pro-cooperative policymakers, the answer in Jackson could very well change.

CHAPTER 5: URBAN COOPERATIVE POLITICS

Introduction

Cooperatives are definitionally meant to challenge traditional answers to important questions of political economy such as “Who owns what?” and “Who receives the benefits of enterprise?” When they are considered in a policy context, their purpose must be justified based on political grounds. For a city to seriously consider worker-owned cooperatives, the benefits promised by their advocates would have to align with goals about equity and fairness that ultimately are tied to political values. Most advocates for worker-owned cooperatives do have political reasoning behind their support for these institutions, and advocacy for public policies favoring worker-owned cooperatives serve an ideological purpose (Akuno, 2017; Wolff, 2012). Not all cooperatives understand the political nature of their efforts, and debate still exists about how explicitly these institutions should approach the tasks of popular movement building and contesting for state power to secure favorable conditions and public resources (Gindin, 2017). Despite those debates, there are clear goals for worker ownership which distinguish these models from profit-seeking, privately held firms, and the choice of one model over another can reflect something more than apolitical judgments about prospects of success.

The concept of worker ownership is posed in urban studies literature as a potentially paradigm-shifting model for economic development policies. The idea behind the promotion of worker-ownership for development is fairly simple: by directing resources and capital towards community collectives of underprivileged people, and

away from large corporations and wealthy developers, policymakers can change patterns of economic growth and help determine a more equitable distribution of wealth (Imbroscio, 2010; Alperovitz, 2011). Cooperative advocates are even willing to suggest these institutions are integral parts of a movement to challenge and overcome the capitalist system as it exists in the United States and worldwide (Ranis, 2017; Alperovitz, 2011). For cooperatives to play such a disruptive role—whether that means the world overturning capitalism or simply city governments breaking free from neoliberalism—they would have to be explicitly chosen to do so. The task of using cooperatives in a radical way therefore goes beyond simply adjusting within existing policy frameworks. Policymakers may or may not decide to support worker-owned firms based on how they are presented when seeking existing resources designed for all businesses, but these more radical ambitions depend on policymakers (or more friendly replacements) making a conscious decision to re-design programs and intentionally provide assistance to cooperatives above less collective models.

The difference between adjustments to policy and upheavals to the policymaking process is determined by politics. If Jackson truly decides to embrace worker-ownership as a means to build their economy and solve the problems of income inequality and lack of self-determination for marginalized communities, they will do so because a movement was built to accomplish these goals and policymakers were elected and appointed with the intention to carry out these plans (Jackson Analyst 1, personal communication, October 11, 2018). For Cleveland to further embrace cooperatives beyond their tactical support for the Evergreen projects, this will require a move towards progressive policy either by existing policymakers or organized progressives who contest for power and win

control of city government (Cleveland Analyst 4, personal communication, January 15, 2019). Urban policy is not determined by the cold, impersonal nature of technocratic decision-making, but is created at the behest of policymakers who are chosen for their positions as the result of popular demands that are placed on the agenda through community organizing and the outcomes of elections. This chapter will examine the political context in both cities and determine where support exists (or does not exist) for cooperatives, how different sets of actors in each city relate to one another, and whether there currently exists a likelihood for cooperatives to be embraced due to political choice. This chapter will conclude after comparing the two cities' situations.

Cleveland

Political Context

The economic situation in Cleveland has changed substantially over the last several decades, and respondents note that decisions in Cleveland are often framed in the context of how to address the 40-year decline in economic stability as much of the manufacturing left the city (Cleveland Analyst 3, personal communication, December 19, 2018). The current economic conditions in the city are uneven, with many people in underprivileged communities feeling left behind and unable to better their lives despite any improvements in the economics of downtown or other neighborhoods (Cleveland Policymaker 4, personal communication, March 28, 2019; Cleveland Analyst 1, personal communication, October 22, 2018). Residents are concerned about further decline as local companies get older and wind down operations, corporations shift operations outside of Cleveland, schools decline in quality, and the population declines when people move to the suburbs (Cleveland Analyst 4, personal communication, January 15, 2019;

Cleveland Analyst 3, personal communication, December 19, 2018). Material conditions for residents of Cleveland are uneven, and in many communities, they are outright poor; the potential for further job loss when employment is already scarce in many neighborhoods this situation leaves open a strong desire for new ideas.

Cleveland does have some history of progressive politics, including the election of reform-minded mayor Tom Johnson in the early 20th century, who left a legacy of collaborative decision-making that influenced the civic philosophy of the city's elites (Stromquist, 1997). During the industrial heyday of the 20th century, labor unions such as the United Steel Workers and United Auto Workers had large memberships and were influential in the city's politics (Harrison, 1996). These legacies remain to an extent, although shifts in the economy have caused the influence of the labor left to wane in recent decades (Harrison, 1996). The left edge of the city's political landscape consists of a progressive movement largely driven by new organizational energy, much of which became organized this decade surrounding Bernie Sanders' run for President in 2016 (Cleveland Community 2, personal communication, January 10, 2019). Progressives in Cleveland have formed the Cuyahoga County Progressive Caucus and a Cleveland chapter of the Democratic Socialists of America; these groups work with other organizations on issues like the presence of lead paint in the city's housing stock (Cleveland Community 4, personal communication, May 22, 2019; Cleveland Analyst 4, personal communication, January 15, 2019; Cleveland Community 3, personal communication, January 14, 2019). Cleveland has a progressive movement, and organizers on the left can point towards historical victories for politicians like Johnson or labor unions, but the left does not dominate city politics. The largest organizations in the

city's progressive movement have also not taken up worker-ownership as a major priority.

Despite the potential for new approaches in policymaking, there is an existing political establishment that basically dominates city politics and has not shifted policy in a substantially different direction (Cleveland Analyst 4, personal communication, January 15, 2019). Progressives and cooperative advocates express frustration with the political status quo, and these groups feel like the city government is more interested in maintaining entrenched power for wealthy interests than policies to address income inequality or in developing cooperatives (Cleveland Community 2, personal communication, January 10, 2019; Cleveland Community 5, personal communication, May 30, 2019). The political left in Cleveland is oppositional to what they feel is a force which restrains progress on a variety of issues ranging from corporate assistance to efforts to address lead poisoning in the city (Cleveland Community 3, personal communication, January 14, 2019; Cleveland Community 2, personal communication, January 10, 2019). The political dynamics in Cleveland are not terribly unique from the perspective of progressives; the city government is worried about economic growth and keeping powerful interests happy—the exact kind of dominant policy frameworks and styles of politics that cooperative advocates both inside and outside academia are critical of.

With the economic struggles that Cleveland has faced over the years, especially as they affect the most-impacted neighborhoods and communities, the desire for jobs for working class residents provides an important context for all economic development decision-making. Not only has city government received scrutiny for the inequality

among city residents and neighborhoods, but wealthy community institutions such as the Cleveland Clinic and Cleveland Foundation have been criticized for amassing large amounts of money when so many community members are struggling (Cleveland Analyst 2, personal communication, December 13, 2018). This pressure has led to both demands for job creation and long-term wealth building for impoverished communities and has inspired action towards investing in neighborhoods from these community institutions (Cleveland Policymaker 5, personal communication, June 5, 2019; Cleveland Community 5, personal communication, May 30, 2019). Support for Evergreen has been a part of these initiatives, and both the Cleveland Clinic and Cleveland Foundation seem specifically interested in creating long-term growth in communities that not only provide jobs but allows people to have jobs that stay in the city and help employees build wealth (Cleveland Analyst 4, personal communication, January 15, 2019). The power afforded to these large, resource-rich institutions (even if they are nonprofits) make them serious players in what projects are pursued in the city, and the pressure for the wealthy power-brokers in the city to find ways to give back creates openings for more innovative projects like cooperative development.

Political Support for Cooperatives

Progressives are skeptical that the city government in Cleveland is interested in alternatives to traditional forms of economic development. While the left does not see much of city council as leading on worker-ownership or any other issue, some individual members are better than others (Cleveland Community 2, personal communication, January 10, 2019). Cooperative advocates note that some council members have been in favor of the Evergreen project, with one speaking at a recent expansion launch event, if

only because they see the project having a positive impact on their own constituents and are happy to be tied to a positive job creation project (Cleveland Community 1, personal communication, December 13, 2018). Policymakers also point out that support exists from individual members of city council, who are not only interested in job creation, but see the Evergreen project as a form of community wealth building that could have long-term positive impacts (Cleveland Policymaker 5, personal communication, June 5, 2019; Cleveland Policymaker 4, personal communication, March 28, 2019). The consensus from respondents is that while the city council had not enthusiastically taken up cooperatives as a cause, and that even the most supportive members of the council were more interested in Evergreen as an economic growth engine than a paradigm-shifting model. Despite those limitations on their support, the involvement and positive attention from individual members of the council is very helpful in getting support for individual projects like Evergreen and cannot be downplayed. It remains to be seen whether council members will take up the cause of using employee ownership as an intentional alternative to other forms of economic development; that is not happening now.

Even if more individual council members shifted towards a strong pro-cooperative stance, changes in council composition might be required to attain real policy changes. Private developers are very influential in Cleveland city politics and are usually able to successfully lobby politicians to support projects based on private rather than community ownership (Cleveland Analyst 4, personal communication, January 15, 2019; Cleveland Analyst 2, personal communication, December 13, 2018). Progressive activists argue that corporations and wealthy individuals have an outsized influence on city government and that leaders are more responsive to the needs of those with money than

low-income residents (Cleveland Community 3, personal communication, January 14, 2019). Respondents feel that a shift in economic development strategy towards one that centers worker-ownership would not be possible with the current political balance in City Hall, as only a few progressives are currently in city government (Cleveland Community 2, personal communication, January 10, 2019; Cleveland Analyst 4, personal communication, January 15, 2019). While there certainly does seem to be open minds about cooperatives as one tool towards economic development from some policymakers, the kind of cooperative-focused strategy outlined by urban scholars and cooperative advocates does not have support from the current political establishment. Such a strategy would require intentionally shifting resources away from corporations and developers towards worker-owned enterprises, and even the most positive politicians do not seem to be advocating for that currently.

Unfortunately for cooperative advocates, policymakers report that no significant movement has materialized to demand a strategic focus on worker-ownership or cooperative development (Cleveland Policymaker 1, personal communication, October 22, 2018; Cleveland Policymaker 3, personal communication, October 25, 2018). The political left in Cleveland expresses some interest in worker ownership but has so far remained focused on traditional issues such as housing, schools, and policing rather than prioritizing advocacy for cooperatives (Cleveland Analyst 4, personal communication, January 15, 2019; Cleveland Community 4, personal communication, May 22, 2019). Respondents from progressive organizations do not consider cooperative development a high priority:

I really think that cooperatives are a great model, but we don't really hear much talk about it though. [...] Right now a lot of our focus is really

fighting the injustices here, especially with what's happening with the county and the state. Not so much of a focus on economic battles. (Cleveland Community 3, personal communication, January 14, 2019).

The lack of a particularly strong progressive movement for pro-cooperative policies makes it very unlikely that a major shift in strategy will appear soon, and unless policymakers can identify pressure for a community-focused economic development strategy (or be replaced by people with that priority) then the status quo will remain in place.

Community Support for Cooperatives

Cooperative advocates may not have a popular movement for pro-cooperative policies yet, but they are working on building more widespread support. Some progressives have decided to form organizations which seek to establish more cooperatives in the city beyond Evergreen, in the hopes that having more people involved and educated about the cooperative sector will increase support for shifting towards community-focused local economic development (Cleveland Community 4, personal communication, May 22, 2019). Interest in more equitable alternatives to development focused on luring corporations and funding expensive developments does exist in the community and harnessing these complaints towards supporting cooperatives could be possible with intentional organizing (Cleveland Analyst 4, personal communication, January 15, 2019; Cleveland Analyst 2, personal communication, December 13, 2018). Cooperative advocates in Cleveland believe that it could be possible for efforts like Evergreen to help employee-owners become stronger advocates for their communities and have their institutions become a platform that a movement coalesced around (Cleveland Community 1, personal communication, December 13, 2018). There are

elements of community opinion which could be molded into popular, grassroots support for cooperative development—they simply have not been yet. It is possible that pro-cooperative efforts that are small-scale and relatively unknown now could become more successful in building community support in the future.

The most important community partners for the Evergreen Cooperatives have been in the nonprofit sector. Respondents all note the importance played by the Cleveland Foundation, with the foundation's funding, technical support, and help in forming partnerships with other community anchors extremely vital to the formation and ongoing existence of Evergreen (Cleveland Community 1, personal communication, December 13, 2018; Cleveland Community 5, personal communication, May 30, 2019). In response to criticisms about lack of attention to problems like income inequality, large anchor institutions such as the Cleveland Clinic have been interested in supporting a worker-ownership project that could be pointed to as an example of job creation and (more importantly) long-term community wealth building (Cleveland Analyst 2, personal communication, December 13, 2018). Once anchor institutions became interested in equitable development, they started studying how they could leverage their purchasing powers to support cooperatives: "That led them to this worker-owned model, and they did an analysis and looked for opportunities. What are the anchors buying that if there was a worker-owned cooperative that they could basically have a pipeline of business to that?" (Cleveland Analyst 3, personal communication, December 19, 2018). The economic reliance of Evergreen on nonprofits and anchor institutions does raise questions about whether cooperatives in Cleveland could exist without their support, but as long as interest continues from these monied power-brokers, worker-ownership has a set of

community partners that is able to provide the startup capital and stable market for cooperatives to succeed.

While some powerful institutions are invested in projects like Evergreen, and some on the political left in Cleveland could become interested in pursuing cooperative development, the ideas around worker-ownership have not successfully been introduced to most regular residents yet. Some individual cases could help raise awareness of Evergreen and the benefits of cooperative ownership, as respondents note that the cooperatives are hiring more people (especially targeting marginalized groups like ex-offenders) and paying out more in dividends to employee-owners (Cleveland Policymaker 4, personal communication, March 28, 2019; Cleveland Community 5, personal communication, May 30, 2019). Most people, including progressive activists that could become advocates for Evergreen, are not in contact with the cooperatives and have very little awareness of what they do or who is involved (Cleveland Community 2, personal communication, January 10, 2019). Some community respondents even suggest that the Evergreen Cooperatives are too closed-off in nature and have developed a bad reputation for being top-down instead of equitable (Cleveland Community 4, personal communication, May 22, 2019). Developing widespread buy-in for cooperative development would seemingly be an important task for any movement to lobby for pro-cooperative urban policies in Cleveland. The Evergreen Cooperatives and any other worker-ownership experiment in Cleveland will have to build a base of support if worker-ownership is going to become an important issue in the city's policy discussions.

Relationships and Tensions Between Groups

The relationship between the Evergreen Cooperatives and the Cleveland city government was established through basic economic development partnerships, and while this made the city invested in the success of Evergreen, its interest in the cooperatives has declined in recent years (Cleveland Community 5, personal communication, May 30, 2019; Cleveland Analyst 3, personal communication, December 19, 2018). Policymakers are intrigued by cooperatives but are also skeptical that they are a uniquely successful model and more interested in traditional forms of development (Cleveland Policymaker 1, personal communication, October 22, 2018). Not only has city government been increasingly hands-off towards Evergreen, they have yet to get involved in supporting the expansions of Evergreen's operations in recent years (Cleveland Analyst 5, personal communication, January 25, 2019). There does not appear to be a significant political relationship between Evergreen and city government, and the cooperative movement in Cleveland is not able to apply significant pressure that would result in cooperatives having influence and power when it comes to policymaking. The existing cooperatives in Cleveland have limited political power even with policymakers who are aware of their history with the city's economic development department.

The progressive movement in Cleveland also does not have a major impact in Cleveland, and in recent decades any ideas about investing in worker-ownership or challenging the capitalist model have been relegated to the margins of city politics (Cleveland Analyst 1, personal communication, October 22, 2018). Progressive activists remain skeptical of city government and often outright oppositional to the mayor and city council; respondents note that progressives consider most politicians in Cleveland to be moderate, establishment focused Democrats rather than Democrats more aligned with the

left (Cleveland Community 3, personal communication, January 14, 2019; Cleveland Analyst 4, personal communication, January 15, 2019). Some members of city government, including some members of the city council, are open to more cooperative development—but the interest is not universal and not enough progressives are in power to further that agenda (Cleveland Policymaker 5, personal communication, June 5, 2019; Cleveland Community 2, personal communication, January 10, 2019). City government seems relatively unfazed by the priorities of the progressive movement in Cleveland, and with the current political balance the left in Cleveland is oppositional to the policymakers currently in power. If cooperative development is going to be part of a progressive economic development strategy, the decision-makers would probably have to be progressives or at least more responsive to their demands.

Relations between the Evergreen Cooperatives and the community, including with other progressive activists, have also not been very good at times. Evergreen has faced criticisms for being too top-down and separated from groups of people that could potentially be allies or part of a base for expanding cooperative development (Cleveland Community 1, personal communication, December 13, 2018; Cleveland Community 4 personal communication, May 22, 2019). The fact that Evergreen has not formed ties with progressive political groups leaves them on unclear footing when it comes to any future alliances or shared goals (Cleveland Community 2, personal communication, January 10, 2019; Cleveland Community 3, personal communication, January 14, 2019). Community respondents felt like Evergreen was not open and accessible to them in a way they should be:

I think if they really aspire to follow the principles of democratic participation, they would have a more transparent way of operating, a

more transparent way of organizing their business structure, and it would look different. [...] They were very closed off [...] and that garnered a lot of mistrust in the community. (Cleveland Community 4, personal communication, May 22, 2019).

Many of the criticisms faced by Evergreen could be explained by growing pains, since the enterprise is very new, and they have had to sustain themselves in tough circumstances. However, these community and political relationships would have to be built or repaired for Evergreen to be a crucial part in organizing in support of more pro-cooperative policies at the governmental level.

Obstacles

One major barrier to success for any cooperative enterprise is the need to make money and become self-sustaining financially after startup. Policymakers have expressed some concern about supporting worker-owned firms because the capital investments required to establish them are high and Evergreen struggled to make money at first (Cleveland Policymaker 3, personal communication, October 25, 2018). Evergreen has been moving in a positive direction in recent years, but has relied heavily on support from anchor institutions and respondents were not convinced that firms without this support would be able to succeed when faced with financial challenges like those Evergreen had experienced (Cleveland Analyst 1, personal communication, October 22, 2018). Even though the existing cooperatives in Cleveland appear to be on surer footing at the moment, respondents also suggested that their impact could be limited in the future and be confined to niches where the model could succeed, rather than as a transformative economic force (Cleveland Analyst 3, personal communication, December 19, 2018; Cleveland Analyst 5, personal communication, January 25, 2019). The economic challenges faced by Evergreen are instructive—worker-owned firms are trying to build

an enterprise that goes against some common assumptions of the market and will always have a harder time accessing capital than traditional large investment-focused models. Building more successful cooperatives an associated movement would require consistently overcoming the economic limitations placed on these enterprises by the capitalist system.

Outright political opposition to the establishment of cooperatives does not appear to exist, but one obstacle is that there appears to be no appetite for (and therefore tacit opposition to) redirecting Cleveland's economic development strategy away from incentivizing developers and large corporations (Cleveland Analyst 4, personal communication, January 15, 2019; Cleveland Community 5, personal communication, May 30, 2019). City government appears content to only relate to cooperatives such as Evergreen instrumentally and have shown absolutely no interest in exploring worker-ownership as a model unto itself (Cleveland Analyst 5, personal communication, January 25, 2019). Policymakers are interested in economic growth under any model that could provide it, and the purported benefits of worker-ownership are not yet accepted strongly enough to redirect energy away from more traditional economic development methods (Cleveland Policymaker 4, personal communication, March 28, 2019). Political change, either from grassroots pressure or changes in personnel, would likely have to preface any real shifts in economic development strategy necessary to stimulate cooperative growth.

Grassroots pressure to encourage the city to invest in worker-owned cooperatives has not materialized on a widespread basis, and respondents suggest that more people would have to become educated about the model for such a movement to form (Cleveland Policymaker 4, personal communication, March 28, 2019; Cleveland

Community 4, personal communication, May 22, 2019). Efforts to organize on the political left do exist in Cleveland, but attempts to encourage a focus on worker-ownership have thus far not been very successful and remain in small-scale efforts that would have to educate activists and community members over a period of time before a stronger movement emerges (Cleveland Community 4, personal communication, May 22, 2019). Respondents do report some optimism that if people were to organize around promoting worker-owned cooperatives, the cause could become more popular and be successful in gaining community support—but this has not happened yet (Cleveland Analyst 2, personal communication, December 13, 2018; Cleveland Community 2, personal communication, January 10, 2019). These obstacles to success for the cooperative movement in Cleveland are not insurmountable; they all follow a similar pattern—politicians, community members, and activists are not opposed to worker ownership, but they also are not sufficiently interested in it currently. Existing efforts, whether they come from the Evergreen Cooperatives or other activists, could change these conditions but only with time and consistent organizing.

Jackson

Political Context

The city of Jackson has undergone a significant shift in population in the last 30 years, with the city now over 80% black and wealth concentrated either in the smaller white community in the city or the larger, more affluent suburbs (Jackson Analyst 1, personal communication, October 11, 2018; Jackson Policymaker 1, personal communication, January 29, 2019). The primary phenomenon behind this shift in population was a period of “white flight” in the 1990s, wherein many homeowners and

businesses left the city and built in formerly rural suburbs (Jackson Policymaker 1, personal communication, January 29, 2019; Jackson Community 1, personal communication, January 28, 2019). Not only did the city experience problems with white flight, many middle-class black Jacksonians also left the city (Jackson Policymaker 3, personal communication, January 31, 2019). Disinvestment, loss of population, and the decrease of a successful tax base has left the inner-city economy depleted and accelerated problems of spatial inequality between communities. These problems are not unique to Jackson, but the scale of the population change and its resulting impact on the material conditions of the community is a significant contextual factor for any attempt at economic or political analysis of the city.

With an economic situation so dire and ongoing problems with economic inequality, the current mayoral administration has attempted to jumpstart development, create jobs, and generally pursue an active approach towards solving these issues (Jackson Community 4, personal communication, May 30, 2019). City residents are struggling, and city government has faced significant challenges as they attempt to boost the local economy; the pressing scale of immediate problems, alongside the need for access to capital which has been inaccessible in recent decades, means that policymakers feel difficult to address problems and achieve their goals for the city (Jackson Policymaker 5, personal communication, May 22, 2019; Jackson Policymaker 4, personal communication, February 7, 2019). Activists have also become disillusioned about the economic struggles that limit their abilities to change the economy, with some respondents going so far to question whether the goals of the cooperative movement are possible in Jackson without a significant political and economic system change beyond

the city (Jackson Community 1, personal communication, January 28, 2019; Jackson Community 2, personal communication, January 30, 2019). The state of the local economy, especially as it pertains to the largely black working class which remains alienated from capital and the economic growth present in the suburbs, is a constant factor which nobody has found an easy solution for. As problems persist for years or decades, Jacksonians have become desperate for change and open to new ideas, but so far have found nothing to break their city out of its economic constraints.

While Jackson has struggled with economic decline, the political leadership of the city has not been able to successfully address economic problems. Previous administrations have focused on pursuing large projects to rejuvenate the city, but they ultimately failed to bring about positive results (Jackson Community 3, personal communication, January 31, 2019; Jackson Analyst 1, personal communication, October 11, 2018). The mayors prior to Chokwe Antar Lumumba (excluding his father) became unpopular due to perceptions of ineffective and hands-off management of the city (Jackson Analyst 3, personal communication, January 31, 2019). As the current mayor has become alienated from political activists which previously supported him, concerns have developed among those groups that he will be too attached to traditional political and economic approaches to pursue the radical change they feel is necessary (Jackson Community 2, personal communication, January 30, 2019; Jackson Analyst 1, personal communication, October 11, 2018). There are legitimate reasons for Jacksonians to be worried about the prospects of political projects succeeding—there are not many success stories to point to in the last few decades. As the current mayor implements his strategies to develop the city's economy, regardless of whether that includes worker ownership at

the center, he will have to handle skepticism that anybody can successfully navigate the challenges that previous mayors failed to overcome.

Political Support for Cooperatives

It was out of a radical milieu traced back to the Republic of New Afrika that Chokwe Lumumba emerged in the 2000s and entered Jackson city politics with the support of activists who eventually helped found the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement and Cooperation Jackson (Cleveland Analyst 1, personal communication, October 11, 2018; Cleveland Analyst 2, personal communication, January 29, 2019). The elder Lumumba won the mayoral election in 2013 before seeing his term cut short upon his death, but his son Chokwe Antar Lumumba was able to keep his movement together and become mayor in 2017 carrying forward his father's platform of solidarity economics and economic self-determination for the black community in Jackson (Jackson Analyst 1, personal communication, October 11, 2018). Policymakers note that while the younger Lumumba has not yet moved towards cooperative development, it has been part of his platform and there is a widespread belief that the mayor and his top advisers will take up the cause in the future (Jackson Policymaker 4, personal communication, February 7, 2019; Jackson Policymaker 2, personal communication, January 30, 2019). Even if action has not come as quickly as cooperative advocates may have hoped, Lumumba (and his father before him) are unique in American urban politics for having an ideological and rhetorical record of support for cooperatives. The potential of cooperative development to address issues of inequality were central to their political campaigns in a way that is missing in other cases, including Cleveland.

The current process of implementing any focus or even minor attention to cooperatives has been slow, although policymakers both in the administration and on the Jackson City Council are open to cooperatives and willing to incorporate them into economic development if they are able to—but maybe not as a priority (Jackson Policymaker 2, personal communication, January 30, 2019; Jackson Policymaker 1, personal communication, January 29, 2019). The mayor’s administration has also not completely abandoned the idea, having explored how cooperatives could be structured, weighed options on what the city government could do to support cooperatives, and confronted legal hurdles due to state laws that limit the ability of Mississippians to form legally recognized cooperatives (Jackson Policymaker 4, personal communication, February 7, 2019). However, not every policymaker in Jackson is convinced it is worth having the city pursue cooperative development: “I just don’t see that being the focus right now. [...] It’s not a clear enough economic boon like vocational education is to us to make it worth our while to put our limited resources into [cooperatives]” (Jackson Policymaker 5, personal communication, May 22, 2019). The current support for cooperative development in Jackson city government appears to be mixed, and partly the amount of support depends on who is being asked. The mayor’s administration still seems interested but has moved cooperatives down the list of priorities compared to what some had expected, and administrative officials and council members are skeptical that the city should turn its attention to cooperatives yet.

The lack of movement towards cooperative development has brought some problems for the mayor’s administration, and drawn criticism from community members who worry that Lumumba will now focus towards pleasing the political and economic

establishment rather than living up to his stated goal of creating a radical economy (Jackson Community 2, personal communication, January 30, 2019; Jackson Community 1, personal communication, January 28, 2019). The left activists in the city are more focused on moving on with or without the mayor, but respondents note that even if the mayor embraced cooperative development aggressively it would still take a long time to make a real impact (Jackson Analyst 1, personal communication, October 11, 2018). Political analysts noted in their responses that cooperative development would need such long-term planning that Lumumba would have to retain political support for a long period of time, and noted it is possible he would either lose an election or choose to run for higher office before building Jackson into a radically different economy (Jackson Analyst 3, personal communication, January 31, 2019; Jackson Analyst 1, personal communication, October 11, 2018). Cooperative advocates in Jackson now have to wait to hope that the mayor will re-embrace his campaign promises about a cooperative-based economy, lay groundwork for plans and carefully implement them over a long period of time, and either remain in office or have his projects carried forward by successors until they can pay off. Such an achievement would likely require a sustained political movement with broad community support to succeed.

Community Support for Cooperatives

Figure 5.1: Former Location for Rainbow Natural Grocery Cooperative in Jackson, MS

Regardless of government support, cooperative advocates in Jackson do have the benefit of existing organizations formed to advocate for cooperative economics—the most well-known example being Cooperation Jackson, which describes itself in this way:

Cooperation Jackson is a vehicle built to serve a primary interest of the Jackson-Kush Plan, which is to help build and advance an economy based on social solidarity of working class people and the development and harvesting of our collective or ‘common’ goods and resources to meet the material needs of the community (Cooperation Jackson, 2018, pg. 1).

The goals of Cooperation Jackson include forming cooperatives such as employee-owned lawn maintenance, urban farming, and digital fabrication enterprises, but also to organize working class communities in West Jackson to challenge powerful economic and political interests in the city (Jackson Community 1, personal communication, January 28, 2019; Cooperation Jackson, 2018). Activists involved with Cooperation Jackson also organize around opposition to police brutality and gentrification, linking them with other members of the community with different interests (Jackson Community 2, personal communication, January 30, 2019; Jackson Community 1, personal communication, January 28, 2019). Perhaps in contrast with the case study in Cleveland, Cooperation Jackson sees their activities as explicitly political and organize as such—although they

are skeptical in engagement with electoral politics as a means of change (Jackson Community 2, personal communication, January 30, 2019; Jackson Analyst 1, personal communication, October 11, 2018). In many ways the concept of a popular movement which centers cooperative economics already exists in Jackson, both in the efforts of Cooperation Jackson and the more electoral-focused campaigns which elected the Lumumbas as mayor. Cooperation Jackson plays a role in the communities it hopes to serve, but the project is still small, and it may need deeper community support to become a priority for most residents.

Other cooperative enterprises have also formed in the city, including the Cooperative Community of New West Jackson, although the scale of these projects is still small now (Jackson Community 1, personal communication, January 28, 2019). Rainbow Natural Grocery Cooperative (pictured in Figure 5.1) is a consumer-cooperative that operated for several decades before closing last summer but plans to re-open in a new space soon (Jackson Community 4, personal communication, May 30, 2019; Jackson Policymaker 5, personal communication, May 22, 2019). Nonprofit organizations are actively exploring the feasibility of supporting these projects and forming other cooperatives in the city, with the potential support of the city government (Jackson Policymaker 4, personal communication, February 7, 2019). The existence and potential future existence of several cooperatives of different types does make it possible for these enterprises to work together to make cooperative economics a centerpiece of the city's economy. However, there is not much evidence that these projects do work so closely to facilitate that type of movement—which would rely on interest from people not connected to the cooperatives to succeed anyway.

Some respondents indicated that cooperatives were a popular idea among those who knew about it—but it is questionable whether that support filtered out of the activist and nonprofit communities to most ordinary people (Jackson Analyst 2, personal communication, January 29, 2019; Jackson Analyst 1, personal communication, October 11, 2018). Respondents suggested that most people had more immediate problems and concerns and did not view being involved in a cooperative as a priority (Jackson Policymaker 5, personal communication, May 22, 2019; Jackson Analyst 3, personal communication, January 31, 2019). A potential problem for Cooperation Jackson's community support is a perception that the organization is closed-off and difficult to aid or become involved with (Jackson Community 4, personal communication, May 30, 2019). During a visit to Jackson, I attended a block party that Cooperation Jackson hosted alongside a local neighborhood association, which was a demonstration of their commitment to organizing in communities alongside residents. While there are always struggles in reaching and organizing working class people, Cooperation Jackson is attempting to do that. Not all residents know about the cooperatives or understand their intended purpose, and it may take a long time to overcome that lack of awareness.

Relationships and Tensions Between Groups

While Cooperation Jackson does have some community support, there have also been struggles in connecting the project and its goals to Jacksonians' wants and needs. A large portion of the members of Cooperation Jackson have moved to the city from another area, while participation of those who have lived in Jackson for a long time lags; this leaves even some cooperative advocates questioning whether the project is really serving the community in the way it is intended (Jackson Community 1, personal

communication, January 28, 2019). One respondent stated that the project felt like a “lab experiment” where people moved from out-of-state to test their economic approach on an unsuspecting community of people desperate for any opportunities (Jackson Analyst 3, personal communication, January 31, 2019). Policymakers also note that the constituents that they serve also have concerns about the feeling that cooperative advocates are outsiders: “It’s insulting when you come in here and you try to force a philosophy on someone without becoming a part of the fabric of the community” (Jackson Policymaker 2, personal communication, January 30, 2019). These sentiments are harsh and far from universal, but they do represent an undercurrent of concerns and fears which can create splits between cooperatives and the base they need to survive. The community may become more comfortable as they get involved in the efforts, or as cooperative advocates remain in the city for many years.

If the cooperatives in Jackson had closer ties to the democratically elected government, perhaps some of the community’s concerns would fade away. Despite initial enthusiasm for Chokwe Antar Lumumba’s election on a platform of building a cooperative-focused economy, Cooperation Jackson has completely severed ties with the mayor’s administration—going so far to rename a building which had been named after the mayor’s father and openly questioning whether Lumumba had abandoned radical politics for the Democratic Party’s support (Jackson Community 2, personal communication, January 30, 2019; Jackson Analyst 1, personal communication, October 11, 2018). The cooperatives and the activists involved have sharply critiqued the mayor’s decisions on everything from economic development to policing, with advocates considering the administration hostile to the point of harassment since the split (Jackson

Community 1, personal communication, January 28, 2019). Policymakers are reluctant to express too much negativity about Cooperation Jackson, but instead suggest the split is due to impatience on the part of activists who do not understand the need for careful governance (Jackson Policymaker 4, personal communication, February 7, 2019). The relationship between Cooperation Jackson and its former allies in the mayor's administration has deteriorated sharply since I started writing this dissertation. With one side firmly entrenched in government for now and the other skeptical of using state power for any reason, reconciliation seems unlikely soon.

The split between Cooperation Jackson and the mayor's administration reflects a difference in political visions, at least in terms of which values should be prioritized. Activists involved with Cooperation Jackson are skeptical of the use of government because they see the political tools of the state as irretrievably corrupted by the forces of capitalism (Jackson Community 2, personal communication, January 30, 2019; Jackson Community 1, personal communication, January 28, 2019). Cooperation Jackson is on a path intended to build a revolutionary socialist movement that overturns capitalism and white supremacy, while policymakers are more interested in reforms that can serve immediate purposes (Jackson Community 1, personal communication, January 28, 2019; Jackson Policymaker 4, personal communication, February 7, 2019). The tension between reformists and revolutionaries is very much not a new phenomenon on the political left, of course, but less radical policymakers are barely interested in challenging the capitalist economy at all (Jackson Policymaker 5, personal communication, May 22, 2019). The fights amongst those who at least nominally have similar goals are overshadowed by the fact that very little of the political spectrum or economic

establishment is particularly interested in building an alternative economic system. The mayor's administration is now trapped between opposition on both sides—radicals on his left critical of his reformist approach and both liberals and conservatives on his right interested in pursuing more traditional approaches to governance and economic development.

The divisions between the more revolutionary grouping around Cooperation Jackson and the mayor's administration goes beyond just the emphasis on cooperative economics and the speed with which those are pursued. At stake for Cooperation Jackson members such as Kali Akuno, who has publicly raised concerns about Lumumba's administration since the latter's election, is whether Jackson's city government can navigate a complicated political context and remain accountable to its base (Gordon-Farleigh, 2019; Themba, 2019). The main line of critique of the Lumumba administration from cooperative activists such as Akuno is that its responsibility to manage the city of Jackson has pushed many radicals towards cooperation with the Democratic Party rather than building an independent black workers party (Themba, 2019). In some respects the criticism from cooperative advocates is less about the principles held by the Lumumba administration and more about whether the political realities of governance are a worthy pursuit for radicals in Jackson—or if reform measures in government divert energy away from Cooperation Jackson's larger goals (Jackson Analyst 1, personal communication, October 11, 2018; Gordon-Farleigh, 2019; Jackson Community 2, personal communication, January 30, 2019). The tensions emerging between cooperative advocates and the Lumumba administration are therefore more about tactical choices than end goals, although concern about the latter can obviously be conflated with the former.

Continued divergence in approaches could represent re-assessments in the political goals of each camp, but it is also possible that events will force a resolution of sorts that will allow both sides of the divide to reflect on the value of each approach at some future point.

Obstacles

The prospect of building successful worker-owned cooperatives in Jackson has elicited some skepticism and light opposition, which was echoed by the mayor's opponents during the 2017 election, some of whom asserted that cooperatives were unlikely to work for Jackson and urged a focus on traditional development (Jackson Analyst 1, personal communication, October 11, 2018). The state of Mississippi tends towards political conservatism and much of the older economic establishment is hostile towards the prospect of moving towards cooperative economics and have no desire to upend the economic order (Jackson Community 3, personal communication, January 31, 2019; Jackson Analyst 3, personal communication, January 31, 2019). The state government has also proven to be a problem—there is not currently a legal mechanism to register a business as a cooperative in Mississippi, meaning cooperatives have to register as other forms of enterprise, and policymakers are worried that the state could preempt or legally challenge efforts to promote cooperative development (Jackson Policymaker 4, personal communication, February 7, 2019; Jackson Analyst 1, personal communication, October 11, 2018). It does not appear that much of this soft opposition to cooperative development is rooted in outright hostility or even active efforts to prevent success. The barrier is more rooted in establishment skepticism that an alternative approach is necessary and dismissal of the prospect that it could succeed. If cooperatives succeeded

in developing Jackson's economy many skeptics could be converted, although those most interested in preserving their economic and political power could become fiercer in their opposition.

Cooperatives are being considered, but other approaches are also being pursued, and city attention could be directed towards projects like downtown development or luring corporate investments (Jackson Analyst 2, personal communication, January 29, 2019). The need for political approval makes immediate concerns most important to policymakers, and they will be reluctant to expend much political capital on a project whose success is not assured (Jackson Policymaker 2, personal communication, January 30, 2019). The current mayor may leave his current position through either his own decision or the voters', and Lumumba may not need to focus on seriously implementing cooperatives if his aspiration is to move on to higher office (Jackson Analyst 3, personal communication, January 31, 2019). Cooperative advocates are also concerned that even well-built cooperatives would struggle to withstand the capitalist system—their optimism for the project lies more in its potential for movement-building than the potential of rejuvenating Jackson's economy (Jackson Community 1, personal communication, January 28, 2019; Jackson Community 2, personal communication, January 30, 2019). The momentum for cooperative development in Jackson could eventually burn out and fade away, and whether the concept succeeds may largely rest on whether a unity of support can be formed which builds lasting institutions.

Unfortunately for cooperative advocates hoping for lasting success in Jackson, the current split in the movement presents a very serious problem. Policymakers and activists are often so divided that their relationship is hostile and combative, making it difficult to

imagine the city government providing support for Cooperation Jackson's initiatives (Jackson Policymaker 2, personal communication, January 30, 2019; Jackson Analyst 3, personal communication, January 31, 2019). Cooperation Jackson itself is in some amount of turmoil, with divisions between those involved in the project leading some members to disaffiliate from the project (Jackson Community 1, personal communication, January 28, 2019). There has also been so far an inability for members of the community with similar interest in social and economic justice to successfully collaborate with Cooperation Jackson, and a stronger coalition may be necessary to keep the movement sustained (Jackson Community 4, personal communication, May 30, 2019). These obstacles are not insurmountable, but if divisions continue deepening there is a real potential for them to tear the movement apart and leave it powerless as it attempts to take on seriously difficult tasks like building cooperatives from scratch and challenging a powerful economic establishment. Jackson's economy is poor, and its residents want better lives—a failed effort to build a cooperative economy could damage the concept permanently in the minds of Jacksonians.

Comparison: Cleveland vs. Jackson

Politicians Have Different Interests

Policymakers in both Cleveland and Jackson have different relationships to and impressions of the cooperative movement. The city councils in the two cities have some important differences, although some similarity exists in that some members of both councils are interested in any projects that drive growth, are open to traditional development, and are not pursuing a deliberate focus on worker-ownership (Jackson Policymaker 5, personal communication, May 22, 2019; Cleveland Policymaker 1,

personal communication, October 22, 2019). The Cleveland City Council does include people who are aware of the Evergreen developments and interested in further exploring the model in situations where it can work, including their own districts (Cleveland Policymaker 4, personal communication, March 28, 2019). Members of the Jackson City Council are not necessarily less excited about the prospects of worker-ownership, but the lack of concrete plans allows them to articulate support for the concept without putting forth positions on specific proposals (Jackson Policymaker 2, personal communication, January 30, 2019). In Jackson the concept of worker-ownership seems to have more support based on its role in past election platforms, but this has not yet materialized into specific projects. In contrast, Cleveland council members are mixed on whether they care much about worker-ownership, but Evergreen can retain some interest and future projects could potentially point to that model when seeking support.

The influence of wealthy interests seems to be constant in urban politics, and Cleveland and Jackson are not exceptions to the rule. Economic conditions, plus a larger local economy, has given rise to stronger economic institutions in Cleveland (such as the Cleveland Clinic) who have been able to wield a very strong influence in the city's politics (Cleveland Analyst 2, personal communication, December 13, 2018). Both Cleveland and Jackson are finding wealthy developers interested in partnering with the city for significant investments in their downtowns and specific neighborhoods, which is reminiscent of dominant models of economic development in American cities (Cleveland Analyst 4, personal communication, January 15, 2019; Jackson Analyst 4, personal communication, June 4, 2019). Unique conditions in Jackson have helped alternative ideas to break through; past development failures have left residents eager for any

economic opportunities, and disinvestment by businesses has created a vacuum where proposals about worker ownership have become popular (Jackson Analyst 2, personal communication, January 29, 2019). While there are similarities in both cities with regards to how money shapes politics, Jackson has become alienated enough from the most powerful economic forces that it may be possible for movements to break through with support from people abandoned by neoliberalism.

The manifestation of Jackson's potential for cooperative advocates in comparison to Cleveland exists in the form of Chokwe Antar Lumumba. The mayor of Cleveland and the entire political establishment may be willing to help projects like the Evergreen Cooperatives become established—but the politicians are not attached to a radical movement and are frequently at odds with progressives who criticize their friendliness to corporations and developers (Cleveland Analyst 4, personal communication, January 15, 2019; Cleveland Community 3, personal communication, January 14, 2019). By contrast, both Lumumba and his father campaigned on a radical platform that embraced cooperative economics as a key element of a new, alternative economic system which would empower working class Jacksonians (Jackson Analyst 1, personal communication, October 11, 2018). Despite criticisms from some activists on the left and the potential that Lumumba's administration could be captured by forces closer to the political establishment, policymakers still project a strongly pro-cooperative message:

When you have worker-owned cooperatives, they don't pick up and leave just because the profit margin falls below what they consider to be their bottom line. They are typically the long haul. They give workers the opportunity to not just be employees but be owners and to create economic development within their own community. That's why we feel that the development of worker-owned cooperatives is a very important part of any strategy to create an economic boom here in Jackson (Jackson Policymaker 4, personal communication, February 7, 2019).

There is a belief by policymakers in Jackson, led by both mayors elected out of a movement focused on cooperative development, that worker-ownership has unique benefits for their city. If Jackson's leadership includes people who see cooperatives as a central part of their economic development strategy, and if they pursue goals which cooperatives share, there remains extraordinary potential for stronger government collaboration in building a cooperative economy.

Progressives in Cleveland vs. Radicals in Jackson

The left political movements in each city exist in different contexts and have different approaches that are significant. One important point is that progressives in Cleveland are largely alienated from the political establishment and are fighting an uphill battle to defeat politicians with ties to corporate donors (Cleveland Community 3, personal communication, January 14, 2019). The prospect of a movement organizing around worker-owned cooperatives seriously contesting for power would require the left to become more successful and currently even the progressive movement is not focused on cooperatives (Cleveland Analyst 1, personal communication, October 22, 2018). The situation in Jackson is quite different. While Jackson's political left may still seem alienated from an establishment, politicians such as the current mayor won office with large majorities based primarily on progressive platforms and support from left-wing sectors of the community (Jackson Analyst 1, personal communication, October 11, 2018; Jackson Analyst 2, personal communication, January 29, 2019). The left in Jackson has more access to political power than it does in Cleveland and has been much more successful in terms of electing individuals to specific offices. This should not necessarily be read to suggest that the left in Jackson is anything approaching hegemonic or even

dominant—it is not. However, progressives in Cleveland are a long way from being able to elect a mayor on a platform like the one Chokwe Antar Lumumba ran on.

The left in Jackson is also dealing with economic and political conditions that give it a firmer hold in an electoral base than what progressives experience in Cleveland. The failures of the economy have left openings for more radical ideas to take hold—as people experience continued disappointment with traditional capitalism and Jackson battles continued economic struggles, more voters have become comfortable with ideas that are more explicitly radical in their aims to empower the working class (Jackson Analyst 1, personal communication, October 11, 2018; Jackson Policymaker 4, personal communication, February 7, 2019). The residents of Jackson have a history tied to struggles for racial equality, and in a city that is over 80% black, the Lumumbas' history in the Republic of New Afrika and Malcolm X Grassroots Movement have proven to be more assets than liabilities (Jackson Analyst 1, personal communication, October 11, 2018). Cleveland progressives have a looser base, with some organizations only growing in size after the Bernie Sanders campaign in 2016; efforts like Evergreen are tied to older community organizing efforts from more than a decade ago, and these disparate groups are not often in close communication or coalition (Cleveland Community 1, personal communication, December 13, 2018; Cleveland Community 2, personal communication, January 10, 2019). The more successful left electoral efforts in Jackson have been able to rely on a popular understanding of their politics from an electorate more willing to accept a move towards alternative economic strategies in the face of traditional failures. Cleveland progressives have yet to align with cooperatives in a meaningful way and struggle to articulate an alternative economic vision beyond opposition to the status quo.

If such an alignment happened in Cleveland, perhaps progressives there could use the issue of cooperative development in a successful manner.

Explicitly progressive organizations in Cleveland are strongly focused on electoral efforts and issue advocacy but have not focused on cooperatives or adopted a revolutionary anti-capitalist strategy (Cleveland Community 2, personal communication, January 10, 2019; Cleveland Community 3, personal communication, January 14, 2019). The Evergreen Cooperatives have taken the route of courting policymakers and economic institutions for partnerships but have also faced some criticism for being top-down and uninterested in challenging capitalism in a systemic way (Cleveland Community 1, personal communication, December 13, 2018). The cooperative advocates aligned with Cooperation Jackson view even local government as too corrupt and tied to the capitalist order to meaningfully make change (Jackson Community 1, personal communication, January 28, 2019; Jackson Community 2, personal communication, January 30, 2019). Cooperative advocates in Jackson include some revolutionaries who are not interested in engaging existing institutions:

I would rather fail at trying to bring about a radical or revolutionary kind of change in a situation than be successful in a dominant paradigm that has people suffering every day. I would rather at least lose trying to play my strategy as opposed to trying to play into a game where the rules I can't control anyway, the only thing I can do is be subservient to those rules, I can only be a servant to the dictates capital when you try to play in this kind of a capitalist game (Jackson Community 2, personal communication, January 30, 2019).

While not all of those on the left in Jackson takes such a revolutionary stance, it does impact the structure and priorities of the city's politics. There are revolutionaries in Cleveland, but no organizations who have the same scale of support or history of successful involvement with community or political organizing as Cooperation Jackson.

Differences in Cooperative Support

A major difference in the political terrain for cooperatives in the two cities is the amount of interest and passion for worker-ownership, and where that support comes from. Many progressive activists and other leftists in Cleveland have not shown significant interest in cooperatives, instead choosing to focus more on other issues (Cleveland Community 3, personal communication, January 14, 2019). For organizers who are more interested in worker-ownership, frustration with more established multi-issue organizations has led some to begin forming advocacy organizations which specifically focuses on cooperative formation (Cleveland Community 4, personal communication, May 22, 2019). Jackson instead features a set of activists who are explicitly political and committed to building cooperatives, and their passion for using cooperative economics to challenge capitalism is distinct and has become popular among progressives active in city politics (Jackson Analyst 2, personal communication, January 29, 2019; Jackson Community 1, personal communication, January 28, 2019). The political left in Cleveland exists in a city where strong cooperatives have formed in the last decade, but progressives have barely been involved or interested in the developments. Meanwhile, Jackson's left movements have not just articulated support for cooperatives but developed two distinct tendencies who disagree on whether it is a priority to build cooperatives outside the purview of the state or a priority to capture the city government to develop a cooperative economy. The latter approach suggests much stronger and productive (even if not always positive) relationships are forming with other community leaders around cooperative economics in Jackson.

The level of support and passion for cooperatives from the left in Jackson may not be matched in Cleveland, but other segments of the city's community have provided support instead. Outside of the left in Jackson, more established political currents and much of the business community have expressed skepticism (and occasionally opposition) to proposals for re-focusing the city's economy around worker ownership (Jackson Community 3, personal communication, January 31, 2019; Jackson Analyst 1, personal communication, October 11, 2018). Cooperative advocates in Cleveland have instead found willing partners—complete with a lot of financial support—from major nonprofit institutions in the city such as the Cleveland Foundation and Cleveland Clinic (Cleveland Analyst 2, personal communication, December 13, 2018). The anchor institutions which have partnered with the Evergreen Cooperatives are powerful economic engines with the capability to influence decision-making— they have been vital to Evergreen's success and opened a lot of doors for cooperative members seeking support from city government and other sources of capital (Cleveland Community 5, personal communication, May 30, 2019; Cleveland Analyst 2, personal communication, December 13, 2018). It is hard to imagine the revolutionaries in Jackson finding much common cause with a large hospital company (even if it is nonprofit) in Cleveland. These relationships have developed in different ways because of the relative disinterest in corresponding groups in the other city—perhaps they would have taken different forms if progressives in Cleveland or economic institutions in Jackson had gotten involved.

There is an important similarity between the two case studies which warrants mention. Advocates for cooperative development in Jackson lament the limitation set by most ordinary residents not being aware of what cooperatives are or being educated about

their potential role in the community (Jackson Community 2, personal communication, January 30, 2019). Policymakers who are exploring ways that Jackson could assist in cooperative formation report that a top priority must be public education in what a cooperative would look like in communities who are involved (Jackson Policymaker 4, personal communication, February 7, 2019). Similar problems exist in Cleveland; policymakers suggest that residents need broader economic education and development for them to be successful in any business model, while cooperative advocates want to inform the public specifically about worker-ownership and help people learn the best way to form cooperative enterprises (Cleveland Policymaker 2, personal communication, October 23, 2018; Cleveland Community 4, personal communication, May 22, 2019). In both cities, cooperative advocates and anybody seeking to support cooperatives will need to inform workers about how the model would work for them. The cooperative model cannot work without community buy-in and the capacity for collective management—but any hopes of building a popular movement around them, especially one that impacts local politics, also rests on a wider base of people becoming informed and excited about the prospect of building a cooperative economy.

Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the political context surrounding worker-owned cooperatives in both case studies of the dissertation: Cleveland, OH and Jackson, MS. A primary focus of this chapter has been in answering RQ3 for the purposes of the study, specifically in terms of exploring the political relationships which form around cooperative ownership between policymakers, activists, and members of the community. This chapter details the bases of support and the qualities of that support in each city and

compares some of the important differences existing between Cleveland and Jackson. I have also reviewed the tensions which have developed between different groups with a potential stake in cooperative development in each city. Another focus of the chapter has been to approach RQ5 from a political angle, drawing upon information from interviews about obstacles faced by cooperative advocates and any forms of opposition that have developed towards the concept of pro-cooperative policies. Obstacles have formed due to difficulties in uniting disparate actors in each city, but opposition has been light and more likely to manifest itself in failure to act in support rather than attempts to stop people from pursuing cooperative development.

The information contained in this chapter can be dense at times, as it reports on extraordinary amounts of information gathered from respondents in both cities. The politics of any city can be complicated, but the politics surrounding cooperatives in Cleveland and Jackson are made even more complicated by differing patterns of relationships. In neither city does a unified progressive cooperative movement exist, where those pursuing the development of the enterprises and those hoping for progressive policy outcomes unite in an effort to demand city government assist these enterprises in the name of community wealth-building, reductions in poverty, and the granting of self-determination to marginalized communities. However, the potential for such a movement does still exist in both cities. If cooperative advocates in Cleveland are successfully able to politicize the model, especially drawing upon the now seemingly successful existence of the Evergreen Cooperatives, a stronger movement could form that unites with progressive organizations and community institutions to demand a fairer economic development model. Jackson also has immense potential as policymakers explore the

benefits of worker-ownership in rebuilding their city's economy—if they are able to embrace cooperative economics and direct the power and capital that comes with state office towards building these institutions, Chokwe Antar Lumumba could make progress towards his promise to make Jackson the most radical city on the planet. The movements in both cities will have to confront the challenges which currently face them and find a way forward. In doing so, they have a lot to show academics, policymakers, and political activists throughout the United States about the impact of worker-ownership on a city.

CHAPTER 6: ASSESSMENTS OF CLEVELAND AND JACKSON

Introduction

Determining the success of any public policy is difficult, and even more difficult is determining whether microeconomic interventions in local economies have measurable positive impacts. For this chapter, I will be assessing each of the case studies on a variety of measures in the hopes of determining just how well cooperatives are working in each city. The process is made more difficult by the fact that these case studies are not long-established enough (or have a large enough scale) for me to provide a definitive assessment about the long-term success of the projects. In both Jackson and Cleveland, it is reasonable to conclude that the final answer on whether cooperatives can achieve the goals laid out for them will not be completely understood for several more years or even longer. The case in Jackson is complicated as well by the recency of the developments, with public policies still largely in the exploration phase and the most well-organized cooperatives still struggling through formation and expansion into viable enterprises. However, despite the difficulties of assessment, some early signs of success or failure can be considered to determine the current direction of the project. This chapter will attempt to provide a prospective assessment of cooperatives' success in both Cleveland and Jackson, as well as a realistic discussion of how any policy interventions in each city (but especially in Cleveland) have worked so far.

An important factor in any assessment is the determination of what success looks like, and the establishment of a set of criteria on which a policy or enterprise's impact on

a city can be measured. One way to approach the task of assessment is to determine how cooperatives and the cities they are forming in are achieving the political goals of cooperative advocates, including scholars who have suggested that worker-owned enterprises could be part of political movements to reshape urban politics and the wider economic system (Imbroscio, 2010; Alperovitz, 2011; Ranis, 2016). The tangible impacts of successfully built cooperatives for communities they exist in are important as well. Cooperative advocates have argued that establishing worker-owned enterprises can help marginalized communities build wealth and political power, as well as attaining important forms of self-determination for largely disempowered workers (Akuno, 2017; Akuno & Nangwaya, 2017; Satgar, 2014). The goals of establishing cooperatives do not look the same to everybody invested in their existence—cooperative advocates at the scholarly and political level have their differences just as much as differences have developed in the case studies between stakeholders. This assessment will not attempt to settle debates about whether cooperatives are policy reform tools for better economic development or revolutionary tools for building movements to overthrow the established political and economic order.

The results of this assessment will serve as an answer to Research Question #4 by discussing in each city how the existing cooperatives and any related city government policies are advancing towards the stated goals of building wealth in poor community and self-determination for disenfranchised people and communities. This chapter will also complete the task of answering Research Question #5 by examining the obstacles that each city is facing in terms of implementing pro-cooperative policies. In addition to these assessments, the first section of the chapter will also include discussion about whether the

cooperatives and their supporters have been successful in advocating for their inclusion in economic development decision-making by policymakers. By examining these limited areas of inquiry, I hope to establish a basic set of criteria on what makes a city successful in pursuing cooperative economic development: attainment of strategic material support for worker-owned cooperatives from city government, implementation of public policies to aid worker-owned cooperatives, long-term wealth-building for lower-income communities, self-determination for marginalized urban communities. This chapter will examine each of these factors in both Cleveland and Jackson and conclude with overall assessments of the direction of worker-ownership in each case study.

Advocacy for Pro-Cooperative Policies

Cleveland

Cooperative advocates in Cleveland have managed a different kind of success than those in Jackson: the attainment of direct, material support for the Evergreen Cooperatives. The stakeholders in the Evergreen project were able to convince policymakers that the project was worth government investment, after cooperative advocates had been able to convince community institutions such as nonprofits of the benefits of the project as well (Cleveland Community 1, personal communication, December 13, 2018). The most positive momentum for Evergreen has likely been in securing the support of non-governmental institutions, and after a recently announced project, seem to be moving towards convincing other businesses to convert to the cooperative model (Cleveland Analyst 4, personal communication, January 15, 2019). Evergreen was a project that advocates were able to sell to city government as stable, and they continue to be interested in continued success even if their attitude for additional

material support is mixed (Cleveland Policymaker 4, personal communication, March 28, 2019; Cleveland Policymaker 3, personal communication, October 25, 2018). The major lesson about the success of cooperative advocacy in Cleveland has been that one project, the Evergreen Cooperatives, has attained the kind of support that most cooperatives would hope to receive from an accommodating city government.

The task of advocating for support for additional cooperative projects in Cleveland is more difficult. Not all policymakers are sold on the benefits of Evergreen or even aware of the arguments that it provides unique benefits to the neighborhoods and individuals involved (Cleveland Policymaker 1, personal communication, October 22, 2018). The general public has not largely become involved in Evergreen or any other project, and some respondents speculated that the markets may not exist to move beyond small-scale projects in uniquely good niches for worker-ownership (Cleveland Analyst 5, personal communication, January 25, 2019; Cleveland Analyst 1, personal communication, October 22, 2018). Not everybody sees the Evergreen Cooperatives as more than a single project and using them as a strategic model for future development is not currently on the horizon in Cleveland (Cleveland Analyst 3, personal communication, December 19, 2018). These pockets of skepticism are not universal—cooperative advocates should express excitement over what Evergreen has done so far—but overcoming them will require a defense of the project and the formation of a model that can convince policymakers, voters, or other community stakeholders before the city takes up the cause as its own.

There are positive indicators for the cooperative movement in Cleveland, but much of them exist outside government and absent a popular movement for pro-

cooperative policies. Evergreen seems likely to expand in the future, either with different partnerships with anchor institutions or by helping older businesses convert to the cooperative model (Cleveland Analyst 4, personal communication, January 15, 2019). Cooperative advocates and stakeholders in the Evergreen project are eager to point to its success, while other cooperative advocates more critical of Evergreen still see an opening to educate people about the possibility of forming cooperatives in their communities (Cleveland Community 5, personal communication, May 30, 2019; Cleveland Community 4, personal communication, May 22, 2019). However, respondents caution that the city likely will remain hands-off in the near future and do not expect the current policy establishment to adopt Evergreen as a model at the center of a wider strategy based on worker-ownership (Cleveland Analyst 5, personal communication, January 25, 2019; Cleveland Community 5, personal communication, May 30, 2019). Advocates have attained success for one specific enterprise who got initial support from city government but have yet to build a political movement capable of demanding more. If cooperatives continue to expand (in the case of Evergreen) and new cooperatives form, and these enterprises can link with the necessary political actors to advocate for more, then Cleveland could embrace the idea.

Jackson

The cooperative movement in Jackson has successfully done one important thing—they have managed to put cooperative formation on the city’s agenda and inserted the idea into political consideration via Chokwe Antar Lumumba’s mayoral campaign (Jackson Analyst 1, personal communication, October 11, 2018). The mayor mentioned

some broad ideas about community and worker-ownership during his campaign and early days in office, although so far respondents note the details have not followed

He has made references to the Green Bay Packers. Some of the big co-ops is something that he's interested in looking at. He's mentioned the possibility of a cooperatively owned movie theater here in town, but he hasn't offered any really specific plans on that particular subject yet (Jackson Analyst 2, personal communication, January 29, 2019).

Policymakers for their part admit that specific plans for pro-cooperative policies have not materialized in the first two years of the Lumumba administration, but suggest that they are still part of the long-term vision and will be implemented when conditions are better for success (Jackson Policymaker 4, personal communication, February 7, 2019; Jackson Policymaker 2, personal communication, January 30, 2019). While detailed policies are still being waited for by cooperative advocates, the initial burst of seeing a candidate argue for cooperative development, win office, and then appoint those with similar beliefs to government is something that would have to happen for the cooperative movement to attain real political power.

A victory by a cooperative advocate and the subsequent presence of cooperative development within Jackson political discourse is a step forward but keeping up the pressure has proven difficult. The compromises that come with governance have split the cooperative movement and led some advocates to give up on lobbying the Lumumba administration for positive policy developments (Jackson Community 2, personal communication, January 30, 2019). Community members who are aware of local political and economic developments know that the mayor has talked about cooperatives and know some cooperative advocates are active in the city, but suggest that most people are no longer talking about the issue and report hearing very little about cooperatives recently

(Jackson Community 4, personal communication, May 30, 2019; Jackson Analyst 4, personal communication, June 4, 2019). Policymakers are also skeptical that people are clamoring for cooperative development and feel more pressure to focus on immediate concerns like water billing and school quality before implementing pro-cooperative policies (Jackson Policymaker 2, personal communication, January 30, 2019). The movement that elected Chokwe Antar Lumumba may have had a focus on cooperatives, but the electorate cares about many issues, and it has been very hard for a unified demand around cooperatives to push Jackson policymakers so far. The momentum that appeared to be gathering in 2017 has stalled and popular pressure for cooperative development has faded some, although the issue has not completely disappeared and may stay relevant or become more so in the future.

Assessing much about Jackson is difficult because of the recency of some of the efforts studied in this case. There are definitely people in Jackson who have taken up the cause of cooperative development, and the mayor does have a rhetorical record to defend when it comes to actually implementing cooperatives (Jackson Analyst 1, personal communication, October 11, 2018; Jackson Analyst 2, personal communication, January 29, 2019). Some policymakers feel that more pressing problems must be dealt with before progress can be made on cooperatives, and that more tangible answers could be given in a few years (Jackson Policymaker 2, personal communication, January 30, 2019). Other policymakers with ties to the mayor's administration feel confident that cooperatives will exist in Jackson in the future and remain confident in their potential—but the variable involved remains time (Jackson Policymaker 4, personal communication, February 7, 2019). In terms of whether the cooperative movement has been successful in

advocating for government support in the form of pro-cooperative policies, there has been some political success, but it is too early to give a definitive answer. Once the Lumumba administration has been in office for several years and been able to implement any plans surrounding cooperative development currently under consideration, cooperative advocates will have to continue arguing for pro-cooperative policies and keep the movement for them active.

Implementation Obstacles

Cleveland

A primary obstacle to the implementation of pro-cooperative policies in Cleveland is securing the funding to make sure projects like the Evergreen Cooperatives succeed. Large economic institutions such as the Cleveland Clinic were vital to the success of Evergreen, and the city invested because they saw the project as a partnership with people who had the resources to make it work (Cleveland Policymaker 5, personal communication, June 5, 2019; Cleveland Analyst 1, personal communication, October 22, 2018). There are still questions as to whether other cooperatives are worth supporting without the backing of an anchor institution; if not, the support will probably remain limited to projects the city can be confident about (Cleveland Analyst 5, personal communication, January 25, 2019). For their part, policymakers are also worried about the cost of establishing projects like Green City Growers and seem likely to only partner with cooperatives in the future who can keep down costs and prove they have sufficient non-public investment (Cleveland Policymaker 3, personal communication, October 25, 2018). Resources are not quite as scarce in Cleveland as they are in Jackson, but economic development officials still seem reluctant to take a change on non-traditional

models, and cooperatives will have to prove themselves in their eyes to receive tangible support.

The lack of a consistent model for what pro-cooperative policies would look like in Cleveland is an issue too. Some policymakers may want to pursue more community-focused economic development programs, including support for cooperative enterprises, but do not always find it easy to convince others these projects are uniquely positive for their neighborhoods and the city as a whole (Cleveland Policymaker 4, personal communication, March 28, 2019). Respondents noted that while cooperatives seem fine as an option among a diversity of approaches, the city is not ideologically committed to worker-ownership and will continue supporting anything they think can succeed (Cleveland Policymaker 1, personal communication, October 22, 2018; Cleveland Analyst 5, personal communication, January 25, 2019). The lack of unique focus on cooperatives is a major reason why cooperative advocates do not feel the city will be pursuing worker-ownership strategically in the future and that new people would have to come to power for that to happen (Cleveland Community 5, personal communication, May 30, 2019). The current reality in Cleveland is that without a unique argument for cooperatives as opposed to other, more traditional forms of economic development, city government does not believe they have any reason to implement a series of pro-cooperative policies.

A significant reason that the justification for cooperative development is currently lacking is that many people in Cleveland are concerned about the scale of the projects' impact. Some respondents argued that cooperative ownership could remain confined to niches in the city's economy, helping in specific cases but not having a major

macroeconomic effect in the way that other strategies do (Cleveland Analyst 5, personal communication, January 25, 2019; Cleveland Policymaker 2, personal communication, October 23, 2018). There are concerns that even in Evergreen's neighborhoods, it has been difficult to help everybody:

We have lifted up those hundreds of people that are in the cooperatives, but we still have the vast majority of these neighborhoods that continue to be left behind. We have created a class of individuals who in a way are guaranteed sustainable success. [...] It seems a little bit walled off from the rest of the life of these communities. To me it's about what's the buffer strategy for the people that didn't make the cut into the cooperative, what do we do for those folks? (Cleveland Analyst 3, personal communication, December 19, 2018).

The effects of the current projects associated with Evergreen are confined to certain neighborhoods and individuals right now, leaving policymakers skeptical about whether these models would be a positive development in every area of the city (Cleveland Policymaker 1, personal communication, October 22, 2018). Policymakers want to have large impacts on their local economy, and even people who share the goals of community wealth-building and reducing income inequality, implementing successful pro-cooperative policies must look more appealing than other policies that could accomplish the same things.

Jackson

Some of the difficulties that have held back the two selected cities are obstacles that have arisen during implementation of policy ideas, either during the policy formation stage or with issues that arise after projects are started. Jackson has found its struggles primarily in the stage of policy formation, as policymakers have been unwilling to justify investment in pro-cooperative policies due to serious budget shortfalls for the city government (Jackson Policymaker 2, personal communication, January 30, 2019).

Jackson's mayor and city council are faced with a budget crisis that for the most part they inherited from their predecessors, who left a mix of poor fiscal management and ongoing economic struggles due to larger trends related to the city's population decline (Jackson Analyst 3, personal communication, January 31, 2019; Jackson Community 3, personal communication, January 31, 2019). These budget struggles are a common theme in concerns from nearly all respondents in Jackson—policymakers see them as constraining for any new activities aside from preserving basic services, while pro-cooperative community members wonder if governance during the crisis will prevent any success. If the city had a more stable budget situation, the mayor may have already moved forward on cooperative development, and if more money appears in the budget in the future, the mayor will then make it known if cooperatives are truly a priority for his administration.

Another serious obstacle for the implementation of pro-cooperative policies in Jackson are the laws regarding local governance and business formation in Mississippi. Policymakers express concern that the city government may not be able to directly support cooperative enterprises and have suggested that some caution is necessary to determine the best way to pursue any such initiatives (Jackson Policymaker 2, personal communication, January 30, 2019; Jackson Policymaker 4, personal communication, February 7, 2019). City government has had a hard time working with the state government in the past, and there are concerns that more conservative state lawmakers are not going to allow the city to pass laws that change too much (Jackson Analyst 2, personal communication, January 29, 2019). One specific legal change being sought by cooperative advocates and city government is a state law that would allow enterprises to officially register with the state as cooperatives and be subject to common regulation in

accordance with the model, the alternatives now being either to establish firms as another form of business or incorporate in another state (Jackson Policymaker 4, personal communication, February 7, 2019; Jackson Analyst 1, personal communication, October 11, 2018). These issues are a potential hazard for cooperative advocates in Jackson, who could establish cooperatives and even attain support from a friendly city government, only to see these activities prevented by a conservative state government with little interest in the progressive ideals of racial and economic equity.

Another obstacle for implementation in Jackson is ensuring that the personnel and partnerships are in place to develop successful public support for cooperatives. The split between the mayor's administration and Cooperation Jackson means that some people who could provide assistance or be logical partners in the community are not eager to assist in the city's implementation of pro-cooperative policies (Jackson Analyst 1, personal communication, October 11, 2018; Jackson Community 1, personal communication, January 28, 2019). Policymakers also believe that ordinary residents need to be educated about their capability to pursue any entrepreneurial activity and are more focused on developing a workforce and community more likely to start projects the city could support (Jackson Policymaker 1, personal communication, January 29, 2019). Staffing the city's economic development department with people who have the expertise to develop and implement pro-cooperative policies is also a barrier that could delay any project for quite some time (Jackson Policymaker 5, personal communication, May 22, 2019). Many of these barriers are practical issues that can be solved with time, but the development of community partnerships with people who are wary of the city government is also a political problem which may require intentional efforts to repair.

Cleveland Assessment

Goals

There are several different goals for cooperative development held by stakeholders in Cleveland, some of which are shared between policymakers and community members. An important outcome for cooperative projects shared across different groups is the potential for hiring members of marginalized communities, especially people who are traditionally in poverty or likely to be (Cleveland Policymaker 5, personal communication, June 5, 2019; Cleveland Community 1, personal communication, December 13, 2018). The ability for cooperatives to create jobs in communities facing disinvestment and poverty is seen as a way for those communities to share in the benefits of economic growth, with non-traditional methods necessary to correct against traditional enterprises' tendency to leave some people and communities behind (Cleveland Analyst 1, personal communication, October 22, 2018). The Evergreen Cooperatives have hired many ex-offenders, which stakeholders say benefits the community significantly:

It helps with alleviating generational poverty. You're giving marginalized people an opportunity to get a second chance and working. I think that has an economic impact ultimately because it takes away from the amount of money you have to spend on jailing people. (Cleveland Policymaker 4, personal communication, March 28, 2019).

The benefit of projects like the Evergreen Cooperatives for many people are in creating jobs directly for people who tend not to have good, stable careers. Helping poor people and people with criminal backgrounds helps correct for inequities in the employment market, and pro-cooperative policies are one way to achieve those outcomes.

Another goal for cooperative development shared across different groups of stakeholders in Cleveland is the revitalization of poor neighborhoods in the city. Policymakers are interested in policies that help redevelop specific neighborhoods that have severe economic struggles, although they have pursued a variety of approaches in this pursuit (Cleveland Analyst 5, personal communication, January 25, 2019; Cleveland Policymaker 1, personal communication, October 22, 2018). The Evergreen Cooperatives have a goal of creating community wealth that grows long-term and creates stability for current residents, the city has shown interest in any projects that develop neighborhood economies in the wider University Circle area, and Evergreen is in the adjacent Glenville neighborhood (Cleveland Analyst 4, personal communication, January 15, 2019). Discussions between community stakeholders such as the Cleveland Foundation and local anchor institutions, and eventually city government and cooperative advocates, have focused on building wealth in this general area of Cleveland's East Side since the mid-2000s (Cleveland Community 5, personal communication, May 30, 2019). Because some neighborhoods in Cleveland (much like any American city) have faced significant disinvestment and concentrated poverty, efforts like Evergreen are one approach to solving the structural economic problems involved. Cooperative advocates believe in the unique capability of the community and worker-ownership approaches because they can help prevent the benefits going to people from outside the neighborhood or growth causing existing residents to be priced out. However, policymakers are open to any approach that can develop the economy.

The need for politicians to point to successful projects of any kind drives a lot of local decision-making. Some local politicians in the area surrounding the Evergreen

Cooperatives have touted their support for the project and gone so far to appear at events hosted by the cooperatives (Cleveland Community 1, personal communication, December 13, 2018). Respondents note that a number of city council members support the projects, although perhaps not all of them are interested in cooperatives as a model beyond occasional investment in proposals with a higher chance of success (Cleveland Policymaker 4, personal communication, March 28, 2019; Cleveland Policymaker 5, personal communication, June 5, 2019). The important caveat to this type of support from political figures is that they are also going to support traditional economic development initiatives and have not pursued a change in strategy towards favoring worker-ownership; investing in large developments by private companies is still a major part of the city's policy approach (Cleveland Policymaker 3, personal communication, October 25, 2018; Cleveland Policymaker 1, personal communication, October 22, 2018). The goals of politicians are somewhat at odds with other stakeholders, as policymakers end up making decisions for political reasons that may not square with the ideological or practical commitments of community groups and cooperative advocates. If cooperatives can establish their success in Cleveland and other cities, the need for political figures to show economic development achievements could attract further support.

Community Wealth-Building

A justification for cooperative development is that it can help communities build wealth through successful enterprise. There have been efforts to organize large economic institutions in Cleveland to fund enterprises like the Evergreen Cooperatives at least partially because this was seen as one way for those with resources to invest in spreading wealth more equitably (Cleveland Analyst 2, personal communication, December 13,

2018; Cleveland Community 5, personal communication, May 30, 2019). The results of this process included direct investments from the Cleveland Foundation, Cleveland Clinic, and the city government in the creation of Evergreen, meaning that money drawn primarily from wealthy people and institutions went towards creating jobs and wealth for those in poverty (Cleveland Community 1, personal communication, December 13, 2018). The transfers from city government included some significant capital investment, constituent parts of the Evergreen Cooperatives received multiple loans of \$200,000 from city government, as well as a \$2 million loan and \$8 million loan to purchase qualified properties for the purpose of brownfield redevelopment (Cleveland Department of Economic Development, 2012c; Cleveland Department of Economic Development 2012b; Cleveland Brownfields Economic Development Initiative, 2011; Cleveland Department of Economic Development, 2011). To the extent that the Evergreen Cooperatives provide any wealth payout in the form of wages, dividends, or community benefits, at least part of that money originated due to transfers from those with more money. In this way, the Evergreen Cooperatives has served as a form of wealth transfer, and the city government's assistance was a policy of redistribution. Cooperative advocates would argue that cooperatives' ability to turn that investment into shared profits and wages is a way to achieve the same level of monetary distribution as traditional redistributionary policies but is accomplished with fewer government expenditures.

For wealth to be built in communities, cooperative advocates believe that a crucial outcome of a worker-cooperative enterprise must be the creation of a significant number of stable, living-wage jobs for residents across skill levels (Cleveland Community 5,

personal communication, May 30, 2019). The creation of over 200 jobs is seen as a major part of the success of the Evergreen Cooperatives and is cited by advocates as evidence for the positive impact Evergreen has made in Cleveland (Cleveland Community 1, personal communication, December 13, 2018; Cleveland Community 5, personal communication, May 30, 2019). Policymakers and community members point to the continued existence of the cooperatives and their planned future expansion as a positive outcome that achieves the goals of public and private stakeholders (Cleveland Analyst 4, personal communication, January 15, 2019; Cleveland Policymaker 3, personal communication, October 25, 2018). Cooperative advocates are positive about Evergreen's job creation but want it to grow further:

I think that those goals have been achieved but everybody wants the scale to be bigger. Evergreen has got I believe 212 employees now, it has made a tremendous difference in the lives of 212 families. [...] It needs to be not 200 employees, but 1000. Or 5000. And then we'll start to see real momentum and real impact like in an area like the Mondragon region of Spain. (Cleveland Community 1, personal communication, December 13, 2018).

The policy support for Evergreen did help it succeed, and Evergreen has succeeded in creating jobs for some individuals, so in that sense the approach has been successful. However, to truly build lasting community wealth that corrects for economic inequality, Evergreen will need to become larger and more significant.

Evergreen has actively started planning for the expansion of its activities, having both expanded the operations of its cooperatives and started plans to create a network of businesses that convert to employee ownership (Cleveland Analyst 4, personal communication, January 15, 2019; Cleveland Community 1, personal communication, December 13, 2018). The cooperatives have also started programs to stimulate secondary

wealth-building effects in their neighborhoods; worker-owners now make higher wages closer to \$17/hour, receive increasing annual dividends, have access to low-barrier credit, and are part of a home ownership program reliant on payroll deduction, although not much data can be found on these impacts aside from respondent answers (Cleveland Community 5, personal communication, May 30, 2019). Respondents saw these programs as positive steps towards serious wealth-building, and felt that the neighborhoods where cooperative worker-owners lived now had more wealth, increased business activity, and increased home buying (Cleveland Policymaker 5, personal communication, June 5, 2019; Cleveland Community 1, personal communication, December 13, 2018). The most recent results for worker-owners saw them receive an average of \$2,523 in dividends in 2018 with jobs paying \$16-17 an hour, which is more than twice the minimum wage (Cleveland Community 5, personal communication, May 30, 2019). These outcomes are known to some respondents, but formal study (perhaps by the city government) needs to back up those results for a firmer argument that Evergreen is achieving its goals. These impacts go beyond simple job creation and are tangible steps towards building wealth, not only for employees but also for their families and neighborhoods. The reduction of income inequality could be compounded over many years if continued, leading to a reduction in generational poverty and stronger communities. The ability to sustain and expand the cooperatives over time will determine whether their stakeholders' wealth-building goals are met.

Community Self-Determination

The ability for cooperatives to increase self-determination for people of color and other marginalized communities in Cleveland is a goal held by their advocates, but what

form that takes is still an open question. Unlike in Jackson, there is no significant political movement fighting for using pro-cooperative policies as part of an inequality reduction strategy, and there are no real links between progressive political organizations and existing cooperatives like Evergreen (Cleveland Community 2, personal communication, January 10, 2019; Cleveland Community 3, personal communication, January 14, 2019). The cooperatives have had an impact for the people hired by Evergreen, but their still limited scale makes building political power difficult without serious expansion (Cleveland Analyst 3, personal communication, December 19, 2018). Communities and policymakers are also concerned about gentrification, and further cooperative development would have to be done in a way that does not come at the cost of driving out long-time residents (Cleveland Policymaker 1, personal communication, October 22, 2018). These issues have limited the impact that cooperative advocates have on politics in the city of Cleveland, and self-determination for those involved has not come through those avenues. It does not appear that the city government had much interest in ensuring that the cooperatives built up the capacity for self-governance in communities, which is a contrast to Jackson, and is not pursuing accompanying initiatives to ensure public participation in decision-making.

There are also concerns that the structure of the Evergreen Cooperatives and their reliance on powerful institutions can limit the increase in self-determination for marginalized people. The power of organizations like the Cleveland Clinic and the Cleveland Foundation has been criticized by progressives and community activists, and their support for cooperative efforts is seen as partially an attempt to deflect this criticism (Cleveland Analyst 2, personal communication, December 13, 2018; Cleveland

Community 3, personal communication, January 14, 2019). The way that the Evergreen Cooperatives is organized has also received criticism from some cooperative advocates who feel it is too top-down, having its base of support in large, wealthy institutions instead of grassroots, democratic organizing in communities (Cleveland Community 4, personal communication, May 22, 2019). Cooperative advocates with a more positive view of Evergreen's structure note that it is much more democratic than a shareholder model, and that most worker-owners are interested in having a stable job with a say in decision-making, but not as interested in day-to-day management (Cleveland Community 1, personal communication, December 13, 2019). A cooperative alienated from its community would be a poor development and would not fit with the principles of self-determination that cooperative advocates hold. However, it is hard to define a community and criticisms of Evergreen's model would have to be more prevalent among its workers before concrete problems are identified. It is possible that Evergreen's structure limits self-determination, but there is not enough evidence for that argument now.

A definite assessment of whether the Evergreen Cooperatives are helping to build self-determination for marginalized communities in Cleveland will be better understood after it expands in the coming years. Respondents expressed some optimism that Evergreen would allow people to control their own lives through increased economic power, and felt that could be a platform for increased political power as well if the project could scale up to something much larger (Cleveland Analyst 1, personal communication, October 22, 2018). Evergreen's potential could also be felt as an inspirational model for other people and communities to follow, leading to greater impact through separate efforts (Cleveland Analyst 4, personal communication, January 15, 2019). Many

cooperative advocates are very positive about the direction that Evergreen is moving in, suggesting that expansion could lead the way to stronger communities with more ability to organize themselves for further change if people have the power to do so (Cleveland Community 5, personal communication, May 30, 2019; Cleveland Community 1, personal communication, December 13, 2018). Even the most positive responses in relation to Evergreen do not suggest that it has achieved a large amount of self-determination for anything more than its workers in their workplaces, but there are positive signs that more progress towards that could come.

Jackson Assessment

Goals

Determining whether cooperative development in Jackson has been successful (or could be in the future) depends on how goals are defined, and not everybody has the same set of priorities. The state of the city's economy is poor and residents want any help they can get, and policymakers want to create an environment where businesses can thrive and jobs are created (Jackson Analyst 4, personal communication, June 4, 2019; Jackson Policymaker 5; personal communication, May 22, 2019). The need for a functioning government considering past struggles and the current budget crisis overrides most other priorities for policymakers (Jackson Policymaker 2, personal communication, January 30, 2019). The mayor's administration does see cooperatives as a potential solution as part of a broader strategy towards making the city work for working people, but is also open to any kind of business development if it can create long-term benefits for Jacksonians (Jackson Policymaker 4, personal communication, February 7, 2019). Jackson's city government has a set of problems facing it that leads them to be open to

any solution, including cooperatives. The administration's interest in cooperative development could be part of a wider strategy for significant economic restructuring, but they may not go as far as some cooperative advocates would like.

In contrast with some policymakers who predate Chokwe Antar Lumumba's administration, the mayor's current team does seem to have more radical ambitions about using cooperatives to build an economy that explicitly rejects the dominant economic order of capitalism (Jackson Policymaker 4, personal communication, February 7, 2019). Whereas the mayor is hopeful about building such an economy through governance and policy, activists surrounding Cooperation Jackson have very different goals—any activity including both electoral activity and cooperative formation must serve a larger strategy to organize a revolutionary movement which would topple capitalism and white supremacy (Jackson Community 1, personal communication, January 28, 2019; Jackson Community 2, personal communication, January 30, 2019). The different visions of success for the mayor's administration and radical cooperative advocates have been growing for some time and are rooted in differences in approach:

The priorities can be a little bit complicated or at odds and that happened in Chokwe Lumumba's very brief administration as well. Some of those early splits were already happening, and the kinda pure ideological faction is going to be disappointed with the more political faction and vice versa. (Jackson Analyst 1, personal communication, October 11, 2018).

Whether cooperatives are building wealth in communities or self-determination for black Jacksonians would be part of both the mayor and Cooperation Jackson's assessments of any pro-cooperative policies, but whether those are ends in and of themselves or steps towards a grander vision is an element of disagreement between the two groups.

The question of self-determination is important across perspectives in Jackson, but there are differences as to what that might look like. Some policymakers see self-determination as Jacksonians having the capability and resources to take of themselves and their communities and build a stronger city (Jackson Policymaker 5, personal communication, May 22, 2019). The mayor's administration also has set a goal of including people in the government decision-making process by making sure community members are able to give their input on decisions and (at least appearing to) be responsive to pressures from below (Jackson Policymaker 4, personal communication, February 7, 2019; Jackson Analyst 2, personal communication, January 29, 2019). Activists and cooperative advocates believe self-determination not only includes these elements but also goes further into allowing traditionally marginalized working-class communities to liberate themselves from the structural forces of capitalism by taking ownership and control of their economic and political decision-making (Jackson Community 2, personal communication, January 30, 2019). These differences in how to assess self-determination also stem from ideological clashes but are important because the elements required to make self-determination meaningful look different in each approach. The mayor's administration seems more interested in having their government be responsive to and interact with the electorate, whereas radicals are interested in removing the authority and power of the current structure of government altogether.

Cooperative Wealth-Building

The goal of building wealth for people who do not have it is a primary reason for cooperative development. While efforts like Cooperation Jackson do exist in the city, Jackson's city government has yet to take up the task of implementing specific economic

development policies to help form and sustain worker-owned cooperatives in the city (Jackson Policymaker 2, personal communication, January 30, 2019). Respondents indicated that they would be interested to know whether pro-cooperative policies were still the priority the mayor suggested they would be as a candidate, but also noted that he was only elected in 2017 and that it was too early to definitively say whether the policies would be implemented by his administration (Jackson Analyst 1, personal communication, October 11, 2018; Jackson Analyst 2, personal communication, January 29, 2019). Policymakers suggest that pro-cooperative policies are part of a strategy to build wealth in the city, but caution that even once policies are set in motion that any planning must be long-term and strategic, and results will not be obvious for quite some time (Jackson Policymaker 4, personal communication, February 7, 2019). The lack of currently implemented policies relating to cooperative development complicates assessment of Jackson—from a policy angle the only real assessment that could be given is incomplete. Understanding the potential for wealth-building requires examination of the impacts that existing cooperatives are having, with an eye towards possible expansion of their efforts if city government became involved.

The cooperative economy in Jackson is still quite limited, with the primary example most people point to still being Rainbow Natural Grocery Cooperative, which has managed to survive difficulties and is becoming re-established in a new location; however, it is not a worker-owned enterprise (Jackson Community 4, personal communication, May 30, 2019). Cooperation Jackson is attempting to start several small cooperatives such as a lawn service and a fabrication lab and has also been involved in urban farming and a café which split from the rest of the network (Jackson Community 1,

personal communication, January 28, 2019). These efforts are still very small, with the projects not having been scaled up to community level yet; access to capital is limited and so Cooperation Jackson will have to build slowly over a long period of time, and success may not be evident for many years (Jackson Analyst 1, personal communication, October 11, 2018; Jackson Community 2, personal communication, January 30, 2019). The small number of extant cooperatives and their microeconomic effects on the economy of Jackson is very hard to measure, because the enterprises may take several years to become established, make profits, and begin hiring people and turning them into owners of their workplaces.

Policymakers in Jackson argue that if pro-cooperative policies are implemented in the city, they must be designed to ensure that working class people in Jackson benefit the most (Jackson Policymaker 4, personal communication, February 7, 2019). There are concerns that not enough Jacksonians are part of the Cooperation Jackson project and may not share in any future success (Jackson Community 1, personal communication, January 28, 2019; Jackson Policymaker 2, personal communication, January 30, 2019). Few people have been hired to work for or become owners in the cooperative enterprises, and Cooperation Jackson is still highly reliant upon outside support for capital (Jackson Community 1, personal communication, January 28, 2019). Community members are concerned about whether Cooperation Jackson is meeting its goals:

I don't see a lot of money going into the hands of people from Jackson. I see a lot people from out of town who are able to make a pretty decent living [...] but in reality, we are paying ourselves and buying up a bunch of land and we have two people out of ten that are from here. I don't see a whole lot of money going back into the community. (Jackson Community 1, personal communication, January 28, 2019).

If Cooperation Jackson grows and generates wealth, then a wider share of resources should be expected. Concerns about who is involved and whether the cooperatives are sufficiently tied into the larger community are valid and will be worth watching.

Cooperation Jackson is small, and it is too early to assess whether it equitably builds community wealth, but it must be integrated into local and neighborhood economies when it grows to make that happen.

Community Self-Determination

Figure 6.1: Mural of Chokwe Lumumba in West Jackson

Efforts to foster self-determination for marginalized communities in Jackson are intrinsically tied to the movement towards pro-cooperative policies. The mayor's administration is currently trying to use community forums and assemblies open to Jacksonians to include them in decision-making (Jackson Policymaker 4, personal communication, February 7, 2019). The combination of community assemblies and experiments with participatory budgeting appear to be first signs of government opening up to community self-governance in a way that would probably accompany cooperative development if pro-cooperative policies are implemented (Jackson Analyst 2, personal communication, January 29, 2019; Jackson Analyst 1, personal communication, October

11, 2018). One concern right now is that while the city is open to these strategies, attendance at public meetings is low and many residents are not participating at all (Jackson Analyst 4, personal communication, June 4, 2019). Public policies to create meaningful public participation in government can accompany any economic development strategy but would reasonably help policymakers implement pro-cooperative policies in an equitable way to meet their stated goals. It is too early to say whether these specific policies are going to allow marginalized communities to build self-determination, although there are some hopeful signs. If paired with direct support for cooperatives, a more comprehensive assessment of the city's efforts could be made in the future.

Cooperation Jackson sees self-determination for black Jacksonians as an important outcome of their work, and are hopeful that through political organizing and ownership of the economy, ordinary people will be able to take control over the forces which make decisions about their lives (Jackson Analyst 1, personal communication, October 11, 2018; Jackson Community 2, personal communication, January 30, 2019). Activists associated with Cooperation Jackson attend public meetings and participate in discussions relating to public policy, although often they find themselves in disagreement with politicians and other community members at these events (Jackson Policymaker 2, personal communication, January 30, 2019). As the cooperatives have struggled to grow to a large scale, Cooperation Jackson has also found it difficult to find ways to incorporate non-attached community members into their decisions (Jackson Community 1, personal communication, January 28, 2019). The cooperatives themselves have not grown to a scale where they can be assessed about their ability to ensure self-

determination for those involved. If more people become worker-owners and attain the resources and organization to fight for their priorities, then the cooperatives could perhaps help communities to secure more self-governance in the future.

Chokwe Antar Lumumba and his father came directly out of radical movements which date back to black nationalist groups in the 1960s and 1970s, ran for office on comparatively radical platforms, organized enough of a popular movement to win two mayoral elections, and the current mayor now governs the city as a fulfillment of those organizing efforts (Jackson Analyst 1, personal communication, October 11, 2018). The ability to win elections and take power in a city like Jackson is a remarkable feat, although not everybody believes Lumumba has radically departed from his predecessors in terms of policy or that the city's politics have moved left (Jackson Community 4, personal communication, May 30, 2019; Jackson Policymaker 2, personal communication, January 30, 2019). Policymakers in the mayor's administration are more positive that not only are they doing something different in Jackson, but that Jacksonians desired this substantial change and that is why they overwhelmingly elected Chokwe Antar Lumumba in 2017 (Jackson Policymaker 4, personal communication, February 7, 2019). The electoral outcomes in Jackson do show the potential for popular movements surrounding the cooperative movement to win elections and secure government power, at least at the local level. However, the subsequent struggles and what activists consider compromises of the Lumumba administration is a reminder of the limits and constraints of governance. Power structures do not exactly change with one election, and cooperative building may be key to securing the community-level and economic power necessary to secure real autonomy for marginalized communities.

Conclusion

The cooperatives that exist in Cleveland and Jackson have had some small-scale impacts on their cities, but neither have existed long enough to fully assess their outcomes. However, preliminary answers to Research Question #4 about the impact of the existing cooperatives can be determined from existing information. The efforts of Cooperation Jackson have had limited ability to help the people involved, but its scale is still way too small and alienated from the city at large to say the cooperatives have achieved their goals; it is also not yet a matter of public policy. More time will have to pass, the cooperatives will have to grow in scale, and the success be shared community-wide for the wealth-building in Jackson to be assessed as successful. The ongoing efforts of Cooperation Jackson and the city government to foster self-determination, while frequently at odds, do lay the groundwork for increased self-determination—but the efforts are still too small and new to determine their success. Cleveland’s support for Evergreen does tie the city’s policymakers to outcomes of that project. Evergreen has so far only provided limited increases in self-determination for worker-owners in the cooperatives but needs to fully become a project of its community instead of an investment opportunity for wealthy anchor institutions for the effects to complete. The wealth-building impacts are still small in Cleveland, but Evergreen has created some jobs and led to positive secondary effects in neighborhoods with its programs for employees. If Evergreen is successfully able to scale up its operations, it could generate a lot more wealth for poor Clevelanders.

This chapter has also discussed Research Question #5 through the angle of obstacles to the implementation of pro-cooperative policies. There are some significant

barriers to implementing cooperative development with government effort in Jackson, which is a partial explanation for why the Lumumba administration has been unable to put forward expected proposals. The obstacles are lower in Cleveland, as evidenced by the city having successfully assisted the Evergreen Cooperatives, but there are still concerns about the access to capital resources and the development of a consistent model of support which policymakers believe in. Overcoming the obstacles to implementing policies and helping cooperatives receive the support from city governments necessary to power economic development is a task that the cooperative movement must build popular support to overcome. Cooperative advocates in Jackson met some initial success that was able to elect a mayor who supported cooperatives, but keeping up the pressure has been difficult as the mayor deals with the problems of governance, and it may take some time to see the shift in strategy that advocates would hope for. The cooperative movement in Cleveland is politically weaker but did manage to secure support for the Evergreen Cooperatives. In both cases more meaningful connections need to be made between potential supporters for pro-cooperative policies. If such a movement is built with organic ties between cooperatives, activists, and community members—they could truly organize a force able to secure more favorable policy and achieve the scale necessary to meet the goals of cooperatives.

CHAPTER 7: THE FUTURE FOR COOPERATIVES

Case Study Findings

This dissertation has examined the cities of Cleveland and Jackson as case studies to answer several important research questions about the role of worker-owned cooperatives in urban economic development policy. The study found that Jackson has a few basic economic development policies based on assisting residents with navigating the bureaucratic process of starting a business, workforce development, and some limited incentives for traditional private development models. Jackson has begun exploring the possibility of incorporating worker-ownership into their economic development strategy, with policymakers expressing hope this can happen in the future, but economic and budgetary obstacles has meant that uniquely pro-cooperative policies have not been a focus of Jackson's city government yet. The help Jackson may give cooperatives in the future could include material or financial support, but such assistance is not available now. While Cleveland has faced its own struggles, Cleveland has a more robust economic development strategy than Jackson because it has a stronger economy and more stable budget situation than Jackson. The government in Cleveland focuses heavily on helping people start new businesses and preparing incentive packages to bring in large developments that promise to create jobs—a typical model for economic development in American cities. The city does not uniquely seek out worker-owned models, but does offer these opportunities to cooperatives, and provided some financial assistance to the Evergreen Cooperatives by helping them receive several loans, grants, and tax credits in

the late 2000s and early 2010s. In Jackson, the city has experienced a unique turn in local politics where cooperative development has become an important issue. A movement with roots in the Republic of New Afrika helped produce Chokwe Lumumba, who was elected mayor of Jackson in 2013, and his son Chokwe Antar Lumumba, who was elected mayor in 2017. The movement which produced the Lumumbas promote worker-owned cooperatives to build a commonly-owned economy and helped spawn Cooperation Jackson—a network of cooperatives which include advocates for a revolutionary, anti-capitalist vision. The radicals associated with Cooperation Jackson and supporters of Chokwe Antar Lumumba had worked together prior to the latter’s election, but since 2017 they have split and become oppositional. The political situation in Cleveland is different—no formal relationships exist between political groups that pursue electing progressive or socialist politicians and existing cooperatives. The Evergreen Cooperatives are mostly apolitical and have not built a movement to demand more pro-cooperative policies from city government. Progressives feel that city government mostly serves the interests of corporations and developers, which shapes Cleveland’s economic development strategy—which has no real interest in further developing worker ownership. The city has had a good relationship with Evergreen, but the partnership has cooled somewhat and is mostly centered on maintaining past agreements. Evergreen’s base of support mostly comes from wealthy anchor institutions like the Cleveland Foundation and Cleveland Clinic, and nonprofits have helped fund the cooperatives but not used their influence to demand more pro-cooperative policies than support for Evergreen.

Each city has faced obstacles to cooperative development. The structural obstacles are serious in Jackson, where a history of failed government attempts at economic development and population decline has left the city in a budgetary crisis that barely allows them to provide public services. The existence of a political movement that supports cooperative development is significant, but the split between Cooperation Jackson and Mayor Lumumba could allow the latter to shift his focus away from worker-ownership; the mayor's administration says this will not happen, but cites legal barriers and the economic situation as impediments to implementing pro-cooperative policies right away. Successfully overcoming these barriers and skepticism from the political and economic establishment probably requires a strong movement both inside and outside government that support cooperative development. Cleveland has faced fewer obstacles in the way of providing support for specific cooperatives, as the economic development office did help the Evergreen Cooperatives. However, the city government is not sold on worker-ownership and has struggled to justify the expense on focusing on a cooperative model they are unsure of. The non-existence of a serious political movement which unites cooperative advocates with political progressives means that little pressure is exerted to demand more full-throated support for worker-ownership from city government at this time.

Jackson is difficult to assess because the city has not been able to implement meaningful pro-cooperative policies during Chokwe Antar Lumumba's first years in office. Measuring the cooperatives' impact in Jackson must rely on what Cooperation Jackson has built, which is still very small in nature. There are some hopeful signs that Cooperation Jackson has created a few jobs for members and is building some wealth in

the form of land and capital, but the cooperatives have not yet expanded to a point where the impact is felt among ordinary Jacksonians and neighborhood economies. City government efforts to foster self-determination are promising and could lay the groundwork for future cooperative development being done in a way that allows marginalized Jacksonians the ability to govern their own lives, if the city follows through on their stated goals. Cleveland's city government is more tied to the success of the Evergreen Cooperatives due to its financial support for their foundation. Evergreen has created over 200 jobs that pay worker-owners an average of over \$16 per hour, and the cooperatives have also helped these workers purchase homes and stabilize their neighborhood economies to an extent. However, the scale of Evergreen is still way too small to fully assess how successful it has been in building community wealth. The cooperatives in Cleveland have helped individuals involved have more control over their lives in terms of their labor, but the small scale and general lack of a politicized movement for more community advocacy and control means that their impact on self-determination for marginalized communities has yet to come—although it could develop as Evergreen grows.

Placing the Study in Academic Context

Academics have turned their attention to worker-owned cooperatives for a variety of reasons. A major perceived benefit for worker-ownership is its potential to help workers build a political movement which challenges the capitalist system (Ranis, 2016; Wright, 2013). Worker-owned cooperatives are posited as institutions built on values which would be central to a transition away from capitalism, and that cooperatives could be expanded and democratized further during a transition towards a socialist economy

(Alperovitz, 2011; Wolff, 2012). Gindin (2016) argues for politicizing existing cooperatives along the lines of labor unions, to help build a socialist movement that could take power, gain pro-worker reforms, and stimulate a more powerful workers movement. The findings in Cleveland and Jackson are relevant to these discussions. The inability to politicize the Evergreen Cooperatives helps explain why pro-cooperatives policies receive only tepid support from city officials. Aligning cooperatives with the labor movement, as well as with socialist and progressive political organizations, could allow cooperative advocates to use what they have built to secure an expansion in support for both existing and worker-owned enterprises. The lessons in Jackson point to some positive outcomes for engaging in politics, but also highlight potential problems that could break coalitions apart once the stress of governance interferes with some of the goals of those involved.

The ability of community institutions to align for common goals and challenge traditional urban political establishments has been suggested by a few urban scholars. Molotch (1976) suggests that a progressive alliance could form in cities to challenge elites who focus obsessively on economic growth, while Alperovitz (2011) sees cooperatives of all kinds being a part of a strategy that focuses on community and municipal ownership to transcend the profit-seeking capitalist system. Worker-owned cooperatives aligning with nonprofits, community-owned organizations, and similar institutions could form a LEADS coalition that helps re-orient urban economic policy away from benefits for large corporations and instead direct support to local organizations who could build wealth among existing residents (Imbroscio, 2010). Jackson has shown limited ability for such a coalition to come into existence largely

because different portions of it are not substantially connected, but cooperative advocates do have enough capability in political organizing and ties to movements for black self-determination, which did remake the city's politics. Cleveland is a better example of this alignment coming together, as community economic institutions and nonprofits like The Cleveland Foundation have supported the formation of the Evergreen Cooperatives, and their support helped secure interest from the city. If this alignment was politicized it is possible that it could re-focus the city's economic development strategy entirely, although not all parts of the coalition may agree on how exactly that should be done.

Urban scholars have thus far focused most of its attention on cooperatives in regards to their use as a general concept, with academics forming theoretical approaches to understanding their potential and describing how they may be used to accomplish certain policy and political ends (Whyte & Blasi, 1982; Alperovitz, 2011). Academics have also explored the specifics of support for wide selections of worker-owned cooperatives both in the United States and other countries, even using examples of different cities to create typologies for different policy approaches (Caruana & Srnec, 2013; Camou, 2016). Researchers have turned their attention towards Cleveland to discuss how cooperatives represent specific policy approaches on topics like the relationship between government and the private sector, as well as building sustainable enterprises (Zingale, Samanta, & West, 2017; Song, 2016). This dissertation takes the existing knowledge of Cleveland much further, detailing specific policies of support for cooperatives including the details of what support has (and has not) been available to Evergreen and worker-owned firms in general. I have also placed these policies into the political context of the city and detailed the political relationships between the

cooperatives, city government, and progressives who could be potential cooperative advocates. The recency of Jackson has left the city unexplored for the most part, aside from work associated with Cooperation Jackson. This study advances knowledge of the economic policy process in Jackson and discusses the complicated political nature of the split between Cooperation Jackson and Chokwe Antar Lumumba, which has largely been unexplored.

Scholars have also argued that worker-owned cooperatives could be used as a form of economic development, especially with the goal of building sustainable wealth in communities and reducing poverty and economic inequality (Casper-Futtermann, 2011; Imbroscio, 2010). The other suggested primary benefit of worker-owned cooperatives is their ability to foster self-determination for marginalized people and communities who have traditionally had less power (Akuno & Nangywaya, 2017; Song, 2016). The findings in these case studies examine claims about the benefits of cooperative development and offer preliminary assessments on progress towards them in Cleveland and Jackson. While the policy impacts in Jackson have been limited due to the inability of the city government to implement pro-cooperative policies, examining the economic impact of Cooperation Jackson finds that it needs to scale up; examining the impact of the city's and cooperatives' attempts to empower the community finds that it is too early to tell if these efforts will increase self-determination. This dissertation furthers the knowledge about how cooperative development might work in Jackson and lays the groundwork for further assessment as both the cooperatives and the city government shift focus and increase the share of worker-ownership in the city's economy.

The results in Cleveland have the major difference of the city government being invested in one cooperative development—the Evergreen Cooperatives. The amount of money invested by government stakeholders, as well as that gathered from large institutions like the Cleveland Foundation, represents a transfer of a significant amount of money and economic activity. That the profits from Evergreen’s activity are shared by worker-owners, most of whom are from marginalized backgrounds and poor communities, represents a chance at wealth-building. The effects so far have been confined mostly to those employed by Evergreen, although some positive indications have arisen about the impact on neighborhoods involved. Once Evergreen can scale up, a better assessment can be made of its wealth-building ability. The assessment of the self-determination built by the Evergreen Cooperatives finds that it is also very limited to the involved workers, and that the structure of the cooperatives and their reliance on capital-wealthy institutions with motivations of their own could prove limiting to their ability to allow people to organize and govern the city in a way that benefits the working class. However, with increased scale and further development of workers as individuals with the security to think about larger governance matters, self-organization could arise in a way that does not exist now. While literature has existed on Cleveland’s cooperatives before now, this study furthers the understanding of what impacts the cooperatives could have, offers preliminary assessments of their prospects for meeting the goals of cooperative advocates, and offers a template upon which further assessments can be made on the impact on individuals and the eventual larger impact on the city’s economy.

How to Build on this Research

Next Steps for Study

The understanding of the two cases studied in this dissertation has been increased by the research, but there are quite a few more questions unresolved in each city. In Jackson, scholars should seek to better understand the political conditions which led to the rise of Chokwe Antar Lumumba and an organized cooperative movement. While this study details the basic facts of the political landscape in Jackson and the movement which spawned Lumumba and Cooperation Jackson, the situation is quite unique compared to the standard development of American politics. A relatively large American city is currently governed by a self-proclaimed radical who won landslide election on a platform of challenging corporate power and building an economy based on solidarity—the study of urban politics would be furthered significantly by understanding why he was successful and what that means for politics in all cities. Scholars should also gain a better understanding of just how much ordinary Jacksonians know about worker-owned cooperatives, what residents think should be done to help establish cooperatives, and whether residents think cooperatives are likely to succeed in rebuilding Jackson’s economy. More research should also be conducted as Jackson conclusively moves towards pursuing cooperative development policies, or if they abandon the project. The potential for unique policy approaches exists in Jackson, but whether government follows through or not, lessons will be learned about their application in cities everywhere.

The study in this dissertation has also revealed a significant amount of information about Cleveland, but there are also many unanswered questions. Researchers should further examine the politics of economic development in the city—both in terms of the existing political status quo that appears to dominate city government, and the progressive movement hoping to challenge entrenched corporate and political power.

Perhaps the most interesting avenue for further research in Cleveland is a better understanding of the impacts that the Evergreen Cooperatives are having for individuals and the neighborhoods they live in. Respondents give us a basic understanding of the impacts for those connected to Evergreen: over 200 jobs created at \$16-17 per hour, \$2,523 in dividends for member-owners in 2018, and potential for wider impacts with announced expansions, community investment funds, and home-buying programs (Cleveland Community 5, personal communication, May 30, 2019; Cleveland Community 1, personal communication, December 13, 2018). Understanding the real change in economic circumstances for worker-owners in comparison to before their employment at Evergreen is an important next step. Further measuring how economic activity has changed on a hyper-local level, if at all, is the first step towards understanding impacts on community wealth. Researchers can also develop a way to understand whether worker-owners at the Evergreen Cooperatives are finding ways to develop their own organizational abilities to determine not only their workplaces' governance but in terms of self-determination in their community as well. Finally, a major unresolved area of research is general public opinion towards worker-ownership and cooperatives among the residents of Cleveland. If the Evergreen Cooperatives were to become part of a relevant political movement, they would need to demonstrate capability of raising awareness and support of the cooperative model in the public.

This study focused on two case studies intentionally, but a full understanding of worker-owned cooperatives and policies towards them could not be developed through the study of two cities alone. Researchers should explore the same questions in other cities where possible, compare similar movements that arise in other cities, and determine

where cooperatives are becoming relevant to the political left in the United States. There are many other cities with some examples of support for cooperatives, and as the idea becomes more popular with activists and progressive policymakers, the number of cities offering pro-cooperative policies will likely grow. Respondents in both cities mentioned the potential for the situations in Cleveland and Jackson becoming models that cooperative advocates in other cities study and consider as inspirations. If other groups of people are attempting to implement a mirror of “The Cleveland Model” or anything resembling a “Jackson Model” in their cities, comparisons should be made between how it is done in those cities and in the cities researched in this dissertation. More work can also be done to compare examples of pro-cooperative policies and advance typologies of what kind of policies are implemented.

Correcting for Study Limitations

There are a few aspects to the study in this dissertation which are limitations that impacted the quality of information gathered. In future research, it would be possible to correct for these gaps in knowledge that are left by the case studies I conducted. Perhaps the most interesting avenue for future research is in-depth study of the cooperatives’ impacts on the worker-owners involved in the projects. Specifically, researchers should observe worker-owners in both the work setting and in the collective management of the cooperatives for a long enough period to gain more information. A study which focused only on the viewpoints of worker-owners could gain better information about their own perceptions of whether cooperatives are building wealth and self-determination for their communities. Worker-owners can also further explain the potential for politicizing their cooperative work and making an impact on urban policy through the practice of politics.

Researchers could spend more time in Cleveland and Jackson and build deeper relationships with worker-owners, not only conducting brief interviews as in this study, but speaking with people multiple times to get better information for the answer of research questions. For understandable reasons, worker-owners and those involved in cooperatives are less comfortable allowing full access to people they barely know. Building strong relationships that last months or even years could yield richer and more detailed information for the benefits of future academic study.

Other researchers could explore the topic, even in the selected case cities, by pursuing different methods and drawing upon different disciplines than urban politics. One potentially valuable augmentation to the data gained in this study is wider survey research of residents' opinions about cooperatives. Quantitative data could be collected regarding the economies of these cities, and it could prove interesting to research whether any measurable impacts are felt in communities after the introduction of a worker-owned cooperative. Comparative research could be done on the neighborhood level; if worker-owned cooperatives remain on a small enough scale for their impacts to be mostly local in nature. Researchers should study whether neighborhoods with worker-owned cooperatives have better economic outcomes compared to similar neighborhoods where cooperatives have not developed. A better understanding of how cooperatives effect individuals who are hired could be gained by comparing worker-owners to people with similar profiles who are not involved in cooperatives. For example, ex-offenders in Cleveland who receive jobs at the Evergreen Cooperatives could be compared to ex-offenders who do not receive such jobs or attempt to work at Evergreen but are not able to obtain a job there. If worker-ownership has the impact that cooperative advocates

suggest, people who become part of a worker-owned cooperative should make more money, have more stable financial situations, and be able to contribute more to their communities.

By far the major limitation of the study in this dissertation is time; not only could I have answered more questions after a longer period of research, but each case study found that many questions will have more clear answers in the future. This dissertation helps advance knowledge in Cleveland by revisiting a topic which had previously been mostly studied during the initial stages of the Evergreen Cooperatives. If Evergreen expands to the scale that it is hoping to, and has even more impacts on the city's economy, many of the same questions could be resolved more cleanly (Cleveland Community 5, personal communication, May 30, 2019). In Jackson, many of the expected pro-cooperative policies are still in the proposal stage, which means their impacts will not be fully known for at least a few years. Eventually researchers will be able to compare Jackson from a point before some of the significant changes mentioned in the case study (for example, Chokwe Antar Lumumba's election in 2017) with Jackson after cooperatives have grown to be a relevant part of the city's economy. Urban scholars should use the results from this dissertation to inform future research approaches which continue to contribute to academic knowledge of cooperatives in each city.

Recommendations for Urban Policy

Cooperative advocates argue that worker-owned enterprises can produce jobs for economically marginalized workers and give them more equitable economic power which will lead to stronger neighborhood economies. The outcomes that cooperative advocates predict could address issues of neighborhood development and income

inequality which progressive urban policymakers would be interested in solving. Too often, city governments are focused on any kind of economic growth but overlook whether that growth is being equitably shared among residents (Molotch, 1976; Imbroscio, 1995). By directing tax incentives and other economic development tactics towards already-wealthy corporations and developers, scarce city resources end up going to people who need less help while those who need significant help face ever-shrinking public services (Weaver, 2016). The lessons from Jackson show that a city's politics can shift in a completely new direction if voters perceive the failures of more traditional methods of economic development. Progressives in Cleveland, Jackson, and in cities across the world have argued against the dominant model of economic development with increasing frequency over the last 25 years, and policymakers should seriously consider whether their current strategies are working as intended. Entire neighborhoods and communities in every city are severely distressed, with their residents struggling to survive and their built environment crumbling into worthlessness and disrepair (Wilson, 1997; Weaver, 2016). Strengthening a city's economy is important and making sure that enough good jobs are available to people in those struggling neighborhoods is a valid goal for policymakers to pursue.

Addressing the problems facing dispossessed urban neighborhoods requires public policy designed to directly improve the lives of the people live there over the long-term. Creating jobs is an important part of neighborhood revitalization, but policymakers must ensure that those jobs are going to people who are struggling. Moreover, poor communities need long-lasting economic solutions that provide stable employment for residents that will not disappear once a company decides relocation would make them

more money (Imbroscio, 2010; Alperovitz, 2011; Wilson, 1997). By fostering stable economic development rooted in a neighborhood for the long-term, policymakers can make sure that residents accrue wealth over time and build up wealth in their communities, which resolves the structural forms of economic inequality that traditionally transcend generations. It is important that these initiatives to revitalize the economies of poor neighborhoods are designed to help those already living there, instead of relying upon market forces like gentrification to displace poor people and replace them with people who have more money. (Slater, 2009; Smith, 1996). Gentrification and displacement ultimately lead to the problem simply moving to a new area with the people who were failed by policies which did not assist them (Smith, 1996; Slater, 2009). While technically this improves the local economy of a place, it does not resolve the problem of economic inequality or even lead to a healthier city.

Worker-ownership provides a serious, compelling alternative to the problems of traditional economic development. The early evidence from the study in Cleveland suggests reasons for some cautious optimism about the power of worker-owned cooperatives to create the kind of wealth that allows people to rebuild their neighborhoods over a long period of time. The Evergreen Cooperatives have managed to create over 200 jobs that pay over twice the minimum wage, with many of those jobs going to working class people from marginalized backgrounds such as ex-offenders (Cleveland Community 1, personal communication, December 13, 2018; Cleveland Policymaker 4, personal communication, March 28, 2019). The cooperatives have overcome earlier struggles to become secure enough to expand their workload and hire more workers, provide annual dividends to worker-owners, and act as a financing engine

for individuals and other businesses exploring cooperative ownership (Cleveland Community 5, personal communication, June 5, 2019; Cleveland Analyst 4, personal communication, January 15, 2019). Cleveland has faced its own share of struggles however, including potential limitations to their growth based on which industries could sustain cooperatives and skepticism from policymakers about whether the model can be more widely adopted. (Cleveland Analyst 3, personal communication, December 19, 2018; Cleveland Analyst 5, personal communication, January 25, 2019). Policymakers should study what has happened in Cleveland and explore whether they could replicate the model in their own cities. The ability to create jobs and sustain long-term economic activity makes the model appealing for limited public support to rebuild distressed areas, but policymakers should proceed with some caution in the hopes of avoiding or combating the limitations found in the Cleveland model.

Advocates believe worker-owned cooperatives have the potential to provide long-term employment of the type that many economic development projects cannot promise and ensure that the profits and created wealth of enterprise stay in neighborhoods. Policymakers should recognize the political popularity of pro-cooperative policies in Jackson, with the city seeing a tangible movement for progressive economic policy with enough strength to win mayoral elections (Jackson Policymaker 4, personal communication, February 7, 2019; Jackson Analyst 1, personal communication, October 11, 2018). However, the lessons in Jackson are largely based in potential. The cautionary lessons from Jackson are important as well, as Jackson's policymakers have struggled to implement pro-cooperative policies with difficult economic conditions and trouble in their own electoral coalition (Jackson Analyst 1, personal communication, 2018; Jackson

Community 2, personal communication, January 30, 2019). The case of Jackson should teach policymakers about how to navigate the complexities of governance and implementation if they seek to foster worker-owned cooperative development in their cities. Progressive policymakers should investigate the political potency of cooperative development in their cities while also seeking to implement such an approach with care; the Lumumba administration in Jackson may still be providing a template for cooperative development, but as the length of the process alienates cooperative advocates, the case provides an important test for both pitfalls and strategies to overcome them.

Policymakers in cities who want to adapt the lessons from Jackson and Cleveland, and pursue cooperative economic development at home, could comfortably explore this option on a smaller scale at first. There are still many things to understand about worker-ownership as a form of economic development policy, but policymakers can try to foster cooperative development in individual cases now as was done in Cleveland. As time passes and better assessments are made of whether pro-cooperative policies are successful in building strong urban economies, cities should then use that success to argue for the adoption of a full strategic model and allow worker-ownership to take an important place in their policy structure. In particular, the lessons from Cleveland could be important when it comes to determining the viability of the anchor-institution model for cooperative development; however, there are more grassroots, bottom-up cooperative structures which some advocates believe would be even more successful. Cities should explore these other models in addition to what happens in Cleveland and Jackson, so that in the future a more comprehensive understanding can be gained about what works in some situations and what does not work in others. Even Chokwe Antar Lumumba does

not plan to completely reorient the economic approach of Jackson city government to an entire focus on cooperatives, and other cities would not need to do so either to credibly argue that they are pursuing cooperative development strategically.

An important element of why cooperative advocates believe cooperatives could work for cities, is their capability in building self-determination in disempowered communities. If policymakers are truly interested in revitalizing neighborhoods and reducing structural forms of inequality, they should strongly consider policies which do build self-determination. A populace that is better able to understand and govern its own affairs when possible can more successfully revitalize a neighborhood, and building stronger, more attentive citizens will create better cities and a healthier democracy (Panayotakis & Kovel, 2011; Dewey, 1903). When cities are exploring pro-cooperative policies, they should make sure that efforts to help form worker-owned cooperatives are rooted in community decision-making by devolving as much of the governance of the projects to residents as possible. By following the principles of public participation to create democratic institutions like worker-owned cooperatives, policymakers can empower individuals and communities to advocate for themselves and organize for stronger neighborhoods and cities. Policymakers should also not be reluctant to invest real material resources into community-driven development like worker-owned cooperatives, like Cleveland has in the Evergreen Cooperatives. Monetary investment in cooperative development helps raise the stakes of community decision-making in a way that will encourage accurate feedback about what neighborhoods need. Pro-cooperative policies tie the democratic political institutions of city government to the democratic economic institutions of the cooperatives, which will strengthen both in the long-term.

Recommendations for Urban Politics

The differences between Cleveland and Jackson are very politically interesting, and an inescapable conclusion is that cooperative advocates in each city have a lot to learn from the events unfolding in the other. The Evergreen Cooperatives have been successful cooperative project in Cleveland but have very few ties to the political left and are not pursuing a particularly radical political agenda through their operations. The findings in Jackson suggest there is a significant opening for both increased cooperative development and the election of pro-cooperative politicians if political movements set their minds to achieving those goals. Progressives in Cleveland should study the rise of both Chokwe Antar Lumumba and his father and try to learn lessons from their elections as they attempt to challenge the less progressive political establishment their city. A major lesson for Cleveland's progressives is the potential found in offering a radical economic platform that centers worker-ownership. People have lost faith in government to deliver real economic change in their communities and the Jackson example proves cooperatives could be a popular proposal if residents are made aware that policymakers are willing to pursue development them. The Evergreen Cooperatives should also consider the example of Cooperation Jackson and explore the possibility of becoming politically active and mobilizing their worker-owners, families, stakeholders, and allies to achieve more favorable policies for a stronger cooperative sector. Cooperatives and progressives have overlapping goals and would probably benefit from working in coalition with one another.

There are lessons that the left and cooperative advocates in Jackson can learn from the case in Cleveland as well. One lesson is the potential for alienation between

cooperatives and progressives could lead neither group to seriously advance a pro-cooperative political agenda. There are also lessons to be learned about how powerful local institutions like the Cleveland Foundation could help cooperatives win support and have the capital to succeed—although cooperative advocates in Jackson should heed warnings about the groups becoming too influential and diluting the impact of worker ownership. The left in Jackson should examine if a positive relationship between activists and city officials is possible across differences, and whether that can lead to better pro-cooperative policies from policymakers. The biggest lesson from Cleveland for cooperative advocates in Jackson is that direct support from city government is possible, but winning public investment requires building a coalition that can successfully pressure policymakers. The Evergreen Cooperatives are a great example of what cooperative advocates in many cities could win in the intermediate future, and Jacksonians should not be shy about emulating success stories like Evergreen. However, the relatively apolitical approach of Evergreen does provide limitations that radical cooperative advocates should not replicate if they want to achieve their long-term political goals.

Both cities provide lessons that confirm a key missing element for cooperative advocates in American politics—the lack of an organized political movement. Jackson provides a model for what a radical political movement could look like in an urban politics context, and if they continue succeeding in elections and manage to secure pro-cooperative policies from city government, cooperatives should take heed of the importance of winning power. Existing cooperatives should not shy away from political struggles in their neighborhoods and cities, because the success of the cooperative sector may ultimately depend on the support (or lack thereof) from government entities.

Corporations and other private profit-driven enterprises aggressively advocate for favorable public policy at all levels of government, and frequently get what they want at the expense of everybody else. Workers have historically been able to organize in labor unions and successfully advocate for favorable policies and the election of favorable candidates. Worker-owned cooperatives could play a similar role for their workers and communities—but only if they leverage their collective power and become political entities capable of organizing people to achieve common goals. Cooperative advocates should not only be lobbying governments for better policies, but also should be encouraging worker-owners to organize and encouraging cooperative formations to put their strength behind advocacy efforts.

If cooperatives are going to take politics seriously, they should not shy away from the radical roots and implications of worker-ownership. Cooperatives should be presented as an alternative model for economic policy, and advocates should be prepared and organized to challenge corporate power and come into direct conflict with existing political and economic establishments. To secure real gains in wealth and self-governance for marginalized and disenfranchised communities, cooperatives must significantly change the status quo in American urban politics. These efforts should go beyond lobbying for positive decisions, and instead examine who is making those decisions. The question of who is elected to which offices in American cities cannot be overlooked when putting forth an alternate economic development strategy. If wealthy interests decided that a shift to worker-ownership is bad for their profit-margin, they will mobilize their allies in city halls to oppose pro-cooperative policies. Cooperative advocates should have a movement ready to not only resist that opposition, but to fight

back against politicians who serve their opponents. A strong cooperative-based political movement must cultivate its own leadership, challenge those currently in office who are not sufficiently supportive of cooperative development and replace opponents with more favorable policymakers who can bring about the changes cooperative advocates seek.

Both cooperative advocates and progressive political movements should also consider the racial dynamics involved and work to build multiracial working-class coalitions that can win a majority for their priorities. The existing progressive movement in Cleveland has a social base not deeply connected to working class black communities like Glenville, where Evergreen is located, having so far found more success in suburban areas such as Lakewood (Cleveland Community 4, personal communication, May 22, 2019; Cleveland Community 2, personal communication, January 10, 2019). The combination of these two forces—which have overlapping goals—could provide the change to the balance of city government that progressives have hoped for. The situation in Jackson is somewhat different, but there still exists a whiter progressive community in the neighborhood of Fondren and a black-led cooperative in West Jackson (Jackson Community 1, personal communication, January 28, 2019). The left in the United States has long held the ideal of a multiracial, working class coalition as the necessary condition for significant political change—so engaging with the cooperative movement with its long history and current revitalization in black communities seems imperative for progressive organizers.

A cooperative-based political movement should not be alienated from potential allies and coalition partners. An important lesson from both Cleveland and Jackson is that divisions between those with common goals seriously imperil those goals. Without a

meaningful connection between existing progressive, socialist, and other left political movements with worker-owned cooperatives in a city, advocates cannot organize the united political forces necessary to overcome what is surely to be well-funded opposition. If cooperative advocates want their movement to succeed, they should avoid the pitfalls of sectarianism and infighting which could hamper their effectiveness. Cooperatives must link with political movements and the labor union movement to advance common platforms of pro-worker policy which includes worker-ownership as a central model for future urban economic development. The potential for these forces to be disconnected or even working against one another is threatening to the prospect of cities adopting pro-cooperative policies. To build the coalition necessary to succeed, it may be worth cooperative advocates and the various potential allies they should pursue to root themselves collectively in their communities, and allow organic, grassroots leadership from ordinary people steer the movement in a direction that will inspire popular participation. Cooperative advocates should use the lessons in Cleveland and Jackson to inform their strategies as they build more powerful movements—if these efforts are successful, worker-owned cooperatives could become a major policy tool for combating inequality in American cities.

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APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

Note: Not all questions will be asked for every subject. The wording of the questions may change as directed to people in different categories.

Cleveland

- When did Cleveland begin implementing cooperative development policies?
- What policies does Cleveland have in place to assist in the formation of cooperatives?
- Are there material or financial resources offered to people who want to start cooperatives in Cleveland?
- What assistance did Cleveland give to people trying to start the Evergreen Cooperatives?
- What continued resources and assistance is available to people who start cooperatives now?
- What is the relationship between the city government and cooperatives within the city of Cleveland?
- Why did Cleveland decide to pursue cooperative development policies?
- What made cooperative development policies an attractive alternative compared to other forms of economic development?
- What relationships exist between the city government and those who wish to see more cooperatives formed in Cleveland?
- What economic benefits have resulted from the cooperative development policies? For the city and/or for individuals and communities.
- What other forms of economic development are pursued by the city government, aside from cooperatives?
- Is cooperative economic development a major portion of Cleveland's economic development strategy or a small portion.
- How many people are employed in the cooperative sector in Cleveland? By the Evergreen Cooperatives specifically?
- How have city residents reacted to the implementation of cooperative economic development?
- Is there widespread support for the cooperative development policies? What opposition has existed and what forms has it taken?
- What are the short-term and long-term outcomes that you expect from cooperative economic development?
- How successful do you think the cooperative development policies have been in achieving their goals?
- Do you think that cooperatives in Cleveland (or the Evergreen Cooperatives specifically) have increased the economic power of the workers involved?

- What impacts have cooperatives in Cleveland (or the Evergreen Cooperatives specifically) had on the communities in which they are located?
- Has cooperative economic development helped reduce income inequality, even on a small-scale level?
- Has cooperative economic development helped reduce the racial wealth gap, even on a small-scale level?
- Do workers prefer working for a cooperative compared to working for a different business model? Do they notice a significant difference?
- What are the challenges that have resulted from implementing cooperative economic development in Cleveland?
- Have there been unexpected successes or failures related to cooperatives since these policies began being implemented?
- What is the future for the cooperative movement look like in Cleveland?
- Do you want more cooperatives to be formed in Cleveland in the future?
- Has cooperative economic development challenged the existing economic status quo in Cleveland?
- Do you think the existing economic system in Cleveland will be challenge by the cooperative movement in the future?
- Do you consider cooperatives to be a challenge to the system of capitalism?
- Do the pro-cooperative policies in Cleveland provide a template for socialists who wish to pursue an anti-capitalist urban policy?
- Have cooperatives helped achieve more community self-determination for people of color in Cleveland?
- Are cooperative economic policies a tool that can be used to build wealth and increase power for urban communities of color?

Jackson

- Has Jackson begun implementing cooperative development policies?
- What policies does Jackson have in place or planned to assist in the formation of cooperatives?
- Are there material or financial resources offered to people who want to start cooperatives in Jackson? Are there plans to offer these?
- What assistance has Jackson's government given to people working with Cooperation Jackson?
- What continued resources and assistance is available to people who start cooperatives now?
- What is the relationship between the city government and cooperatives within the city of Jackson?
- Why did Jackson political leaders decide to support cooperative development policies?
- What makes cooperative development policies an attractive alternative compared to other forms of economic development?
- What relationships exist between the city government and those who wish to see more cooperatives formed in Jackson?

- What economic benefits are expected to result from cooperative development policies? For the city and/or for individuals and communities.
- What other forms of economic development are pursued by the city government, aside from cooperatives?
- Is cooperative economic development a major portion of Jackson's economic development strategy going forward or only a small portion?
- How many people are employed in the cooperative sector in Jackson? How many could be in the future?
- How have city residents reacted to the proposal of cooperative economic development?
- Is there widespread support for cooperative development policies? What opposition has existed and what forms has it taken?
- What are the short-term and long-term outcomes that you expect from cooperative economic development?
- How successful do you think any existing cooperative development policies have been in achieving their goals?
- Do you think that cooperatives have increased the economic power of the workers involved?
- What impacts have cooperatives had on the communities in which they are located?
- Has cooperative economic development helped reduce income inequality, even on a small-scale level?
- Has cooperative economic development helped reduce the racial wealth gap, even on a small-scale level?
- Do workers prefer working for a cooperative compared to working for a different business model? Do they notice a significant difference?
- What are the challenges that have resulted from implementing cooperative economic development in Jackson?
- Have there been unexpected successes or failures related to cooperatives since these policies began being pursued?
- What is the future for the cooperative movement look like in Jackson?
- Do you expect more cooperatives to be formed in Jackson in the future?
- Has cooperative economic development challenged the existing economic status quo in Jackson?
- Do you think the existing economic system in Jackson will be challenged by the cooperative movement in the future?
- Do you consider cooperatives to be a challenge to the system of capitalism?
- Do the pro-cooperative policies in Jackson provide a template for socialists who wish to pursue an anti-capitalist urban policy?
- Has the cooperative movement helped achieve more community self-determination for people of color in Jackson?
- Are cooperative economic policies a tool that can be used to build wealth and increase power for urban communities of color?

CURRICULUM VITAE

Nick Conder

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EDUCATION

University of Louisville, Louisville, KY

PhD in Urban and Public Affairs

Expected Graduation: December 2019

Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, KY

Master's in Public Administration

August 2013-May 2015

Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, KY

Bachelor of Arts in History | Magna Cum Laude

August 2009-May 2013

PROFESSIONAL CAREER EXPERIENCE

Graduate Research Assistant

August 2015-Current

Department of Urban and Public Affairs, University of Louisville

- Assist with proofreading and citations for assigned faculty members
- Assist with data preparation and review for assigned faculty members
- Review and summarize literature for assigned faculty members

Graduate Assistant

August 2013-May 2015

Department of Political Science, Western Kentucky University

- Served as teaching assistant for two sections of American National Government (PS 110) in Fall 2013
- Served as teaching assistant for two sections of American National Government (PS 110) in Fall 2014
- Assisted with the operation of Social Science Research Center through survey creation, data entry, and supervised phonebanks
- Assisted students who entered the Political Science office with inquiries

Field Organizing Intern

May 2014-November 2014

Allison Lundergan Grimes for US Senate

- Completed internship as requirement for Western Kentucky University MPA program
- Assisted regional, local, and campus field organizers in western Kentucky
- Recruited and trained volunteers for phonebanking, canvassing, and data entry
- Organized campaign events and oversaw teams of volunteers to complete tasks

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

POLS 325 Public Administration

Fall 2018

Department of Political Science, University of Louisville

- Instructor of record for undergraduate course on the basics of public administration

- Taught a course of 35 students that met three times per week and led weekly class discussions
- Administered and graded multiple exams and written assignments, held weekly office hours for students
- Receive a “proficient” evaluation based on a student evaluation score of 3.94/5 as a first-time instructor of record

LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

Vice President University of Louisville Quiz Bowl	August 2016-July 2017
Departmental Student Representative University of Louisville Graduate Network in Arts and Sciences	September 2015-May 2016

TRAININGS AND CERTIFICATIONS

Alternative Dispute Resolution University of Louisville	July 2016
CITI Program Human Subjects Research Training University of Louisville	April 2016
Best Practices in College Teaching Western Kentucky University	November 2014