

**WHEN GARDEN CLUBS REVITALIZE  
NEIGHBORHOODS: SOCIAL DISLOCATIONS AND  
CIVIC REPERTOIRES**

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## **When Garden Clubs Revitalize Neighborhoods: Social Dislocations and Civic Repertoires**

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Researchers have identified a sea change in civic organizing in the US over last 60 years. Since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, an older model of civic organizing has steadily given way to a new one. Researchers ask: how have changing economic conditions driven this civic sea change? Recent answers emphasize the role of labor markets and their control over which segments of the population have the will and ability to participate in civic organizations. As those segments become smaller and more educated, they favor the more professionally run, new model of organizations. By contrast, I contend that market-driven social dislocations have inspired organizations to develop new civic repertoires. To develop these new repertoires, they have relied on the new model of civic organizing. To test these hypotheses, I use comparative historical analysis to examine a case of neighborhood decline in Pittsburgh's Central North Side between late 1960s and early 2000s. Two civic endeavors emerged to revitalize the neighborhood, and while one thrived the other struggled. My study asks whether we can better explain these organizations' different outcomes by considering the number and social background of available participants or by considering the effectiveness of different civic repertoires. My study finds strong support for my hypothesis that market-driven social dislocations have inspired organizations to develop new civic repertoires, and it also finds partial support but also partial complications for the rival hypothesis.

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

“The simple but beautiful geranium may prove to be a valuable weapon in the age-old war against slum housing.”<sup>1</sup> This statement opens an article from the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette in 1967. The author describes a garden club’s attempt to revitalize an economically depressed neighborhood with a civic beautification campaign. The article shows local residents smiling in front of window boxes brimming with blooming flowers. While the garden club campaign attracted many residents and lasted for decades, it was not the only attempt to revitalize the neighborhood. Just blocks away, other residents got involved in a non-profit organization. The non-profit aimed to revitalize the neighborhood by combined a program to enforce housing codes with a program to make mortgage and remodeling loans available for low-income residents. Students of civic engagement will recognize that these two civic endeavors belong to different generations of civic organizing and that they share an auspicious moment in civic history.

Researchers have documented a sea change in civic organizing in the US.<sup>2</sup> Over the last 60 years, a generation of *classic* civic organizations –locally based, nationally federated, mass membership voluntary associations – have been steadily replaced by a generation of *new-line* organizations, organizations run by professionals and experts, serving specialized and instrumental purposes, and with fewer roots in local communities. To explain this sea change, researchers have considered how the US has transformed in various ways since the 1960s. Undoubtedly, some transformations have been economic, including deindustrialization, growing economic inequality, the ascendance of free market economic policy, and more. These developments prompt the question: how and to what extent

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<sup>1</sup> Hritz, Thomas M. 1967. “Flowers Rejuvenate Manchester Streets: New Way to Fight Area Slum Blight.” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. August 26<sup>th</sup>, 1967: p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Wuthnow, Robert. 1998. *Loose Connections*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP; Putnam, Robert. 2000. *Bowling Alone*. New York: Simon & Schuster; Skocpol, Theda. 2002. *Diminished Democracy*. Norman, OK. Oklahoma UP.

have economic factors driven this civic sea change? Researchers have focused on shifts in labor markets, shifts that alter the pool of willing-and-able civic participants. They argue that over the last 60 years, this pool has become smaller, more highly educated and professionalized, and more upper-middle class.<sup>3</sup> They claim that new-line organizations - with their lack of mass membership and their upper-middle class managerial style - are in part a response to these labor market developments. In short, these authors argue that economic conditions, via the labor market, have affected civic organizing by acting as a gatekeeper that determines who has the ability and motivation to participate. Let's call this the gatekeeper hypothesis.

While shifts in the labor market do matter, I suspect that other economic factors affect civic organizing in other and possibly more serious ways. I'll advance the civic repertoire hypothesis: economic conditions, by creating social dislocations that civic organizers seek to redress, have moved civic organizations to develop new *civic repertoires*,<sup>4</sup> by which I mean an organization's toolkit for realizing particular goods and services. It's important to develop new repertoires because not all repertoires are effective at addressing the same problems, and here I measure effectiveness by the "predictable future benefits"<sup>5</sup> that participation offers to participants. For what purposes might organizers develop new repertoires? Economic historian Karl Polanyi documents how societies protect themselves from the destructiveness of unregulated market forces.<sup>6</sup> When market forces are dis-embedded from social relationships, they produce social dislocations: they can destroy labor, communities, natural resources, and more. Societies are not helpless, though. In response to these forces, they develop counter-movements that protect these elements of the social fabric from destruction. I suspect that the need to redress market-driven social dislocations animates a substantial

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<sup>3</sup> Wuthnow, Robert. 1998: pp. 4-5. Putnam, Robert. 2000. Chapter 11. Skocpol, Theda. 2002: pp. 211-219.

<sup>4</sup> This term is not completely new, but I'm using it in my own particular sense, defined in this paragraph and later on.

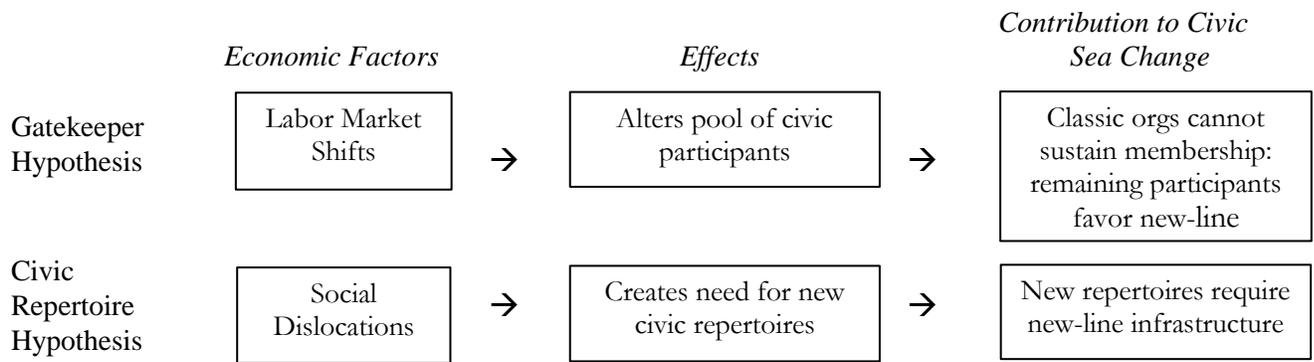
<sup>5</sup> Stinchcombe, Arthur. 1968. *Constructing Social Theories*. Chicago, IL: U Chicago Press: pp. 146-7

<sup>6</sup> Polanyi, Karl. 1944. *The Great Transformation: the Political and Economic Origins of Our Times*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

number of civic organizations, many of which do so through increasingly instrumental and specialized civic repertoires. If my hypothesis finds support, then it might suggest that economic transformations may play a larger role in the civic sea change than researchers currently suppose.

In order to empirically test these hypotheses, I bring them to bear on a comparative-historical case. This case take place in Pittsburgh's Central North Side neighborhood between the late 1960s and early 2000s. The Central North Side experienced market-driven social dislocations in the form of serious neighborhood decline. In order to revitalize the neighborhood, two civic organizations emerged: one a garden club, and the other a non-profit. Both organizations shared the same goal, but they met divergent outcomes: while the non-profit succeeded beyond expectations, the garden club struggled. My study asks: how and to what extent did these different economic factors contribute to these divergent outcomes?

I begin by refining my theoretical framework and introducing my study's neighborhood and civic endeavors. After explaining my methodology and case selection, I then conduct the empirical analysis and discuss the results. My findings provide strong support my hypothesis that market-based social dislocations inspire new civic repertoires. They provide partial support and a few complications for the hypothesis that labor market shifts altered the pool of available civic participants.



**Figure 1.0: How economic factors contribute to the civic sea change**

## 2.0 REVITALIZING PITTSBURGH'S NORTH SIDE

The civic sea change consists in the replacement of classic civic organizations by new-line civic organizations.<sup>7</sup> Classic civic organizations are characterized by their mass memberships, made up of volunteers working in non-professional capacities, who devote significant amounts of time and energy to their organization, who hold regular face-to-face meetings in local chapters, chapters which are linked up to regional and national federations. Think of ethnic and fraternal associations, veterans' associations, religious associations, and recreational clubs, among others. Researchers praise these organizations for providing their members and society with multiple benefits simultaneously: these organizations foster social connections among community members,<sup>8</sup> serve as grassroots platforms for political mobilization,<sup>9</sup> cultivate the virtues necessary for democratic citizenship,<sup>10</sup> and unite people across lines of social class (though typically not gender or race).<sup>11</sup> While these civic organizations have

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<sup>7</sup> Wuthnow 1998, Putnam 2000, and Skocpol 2002.

<sup>8</sup> Putnam 2000: Ch. 3.

<sup>9</sup> Skocpol 2002: Ch. 3.

<sup>10</sup> Skocpol 2002, Ch. 3.

<sup>11</sup> Skocpol 2002: p. 108.

been a feature of US civic life since the days of Tocqueville, researchers find a significant boom in classic civic engagement in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century followed by a steady decline through the last two-thirds of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>12</sup>

As classic organizations have declined, new-line organizations have been proliferating. Rather than mass memberships, these organizations combine small groups of experts, working in professional capacities, who organize and advocate on behalf “members” whose roles resemble not so much engaged citizens as much as donors or clients. Rather than developing the capacities of their members, these organizations focus on specialized and instrumental objectives. And rather than having chapters based in local communities, these organizations often have a single national headquarters, often in Washington D.C. Examples include Greenpeace, NOW, the NRA, and any number of NGOs, advocacy organizations, and non-profit organizations, especially those founded after the 1960s. Skocpol describes the civic sea change as a shift in organizational styles “from membership to management.”<sup>13</sup> Skocpol and Putnam worry that this civic sea change brings negative consequences for US democracy.<sup>14</sup>

In explaining this civic sea change, researchers have adduced many social, political, and economic factors. Their social and political explanations are important, and they work in conjunction with the economic factors under consideration, so I will return to them later in the essay. For now, I want to isolate these economic explanations. These explanations concern labor markets and the ways in which, for many Americans, they have become increasingly competitive and demanding. These changes have left many Americans with less free time,<sup>15</sup> brought into the workforce many women who were once pillars of community life,<sup>16</sup> reduced people’s attachments to communities, families,

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<sup>12</sup> Putnam 2000.

<sup>13</sup> Skocpol 2002: p. 127.

<sup>14</sup> Putnam 2000: Ch. 21; and Skocpol 2002: Ch. 6.

<sup>15</sup> Putnam 2000: p. 189; Wuthnow 1998: p. 30.

<sup>16</sup> Putnam 2000: p. 194; Wuthnow 1998: p. 76.

and workplaces,<sup>17</sup> required many to pursue higher levels of education and professional development,<sup>18</sup> and left many others in financial distress.<sup>19</sup> These labor market shifts alter civic life by determining the size and social composition of the pool of civic participants. In terms of size, that pool has shrunk: with less free time, more financial stress, and less attachment to their communities, many Americans simply opt out of civic life. In terms of social composition, that pool has become relatively educated, professionalized, and upper-middle class. These developments have undercut the membership necessary to sustain class civic organizations, but new-line organizations have adapted to them by requiring fewer hands-on participants and by reflecting the “expert-oriented and managerial stance”<sup>20</sup> of an educated upper-middle class.

I suspect that we can find more and deeper linkages between economic transformations and the civic sea change. I argue that economic factors shape not just *the who* but also *the what* of civic organizing. When Putnam and Skocpol examine classic civic organizations, they emphasize their ability to produce social capital and democratic virtues. However, these products are not the explicit objective of most classic civic organizations. Rather, they are often byproducts that emerge from dense and well-maintained networks that develop to serve very different purposes, or what Zeynep Tufekci calls “network internalities.”<sup>21</sup> If we consider organizations’ explicit objectives, we might find that numerous new-line organizations have set themselves the task of redressing market-driven social dislocations. We might also find that such tasks require a certain organizational capacity: the capacity to realize certain civic goods (often basic goods) within certain constraints (producing these goods in a reliable and timely manner and effectively leveraging limited resources toward solving complex

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<sup>17</sup> Wuthnow 1998: Ch. 3.

<sup>18</sup> Skocpol 2002: pp. 211-219; and Wuthnow 1998: p. 41.

<sup>19</sup> Putnam 2000: pp. 192-194.

<sup>20</sup> Skocpol 2002: p. 211; and Wuthnow 1998: p. 41.

<sup>21</sup> Tufekci, Zeynep. 2017. *Twitter and Tear Gas: The Power and Fragility of Networked Protest*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press: p. 75.

problems). An organization's capacity is determined partly by its civic repertoire, *i.e.*, the methods, activities, and tools it uses to turn its participants' contributions into desired civic goods and services. If organizers have been developing new civic repertoires, and these new repertoires encourage new-line organizational features, then these new repertoires may be driving the civic sea change. To put all of that back together, I propose that civic organizers are turning to new-line organizational features in order to develop the civic repertoires that can effectively redress market-driven social dislocations.

In order to test these hypotheses, I need a case that reveals the effects of economic conditions on the outcomes of different civic organizations. I have such a case in Pittsburgh's Central North Side neighborhood between the late 1960s and early 2000s. The market-produced social dislocation comes in the form of neighborhood decline and the "crisis situation"<sup>22</sup> that it produced. In the 1960s, the neighborhood experienced the sudden outmigration of its socially mobile residents, and this outmigration triggered a number of problems within the neighborhood, most notably financial institutions' disinvestment and capital flight. This disinvestment threatened the neighborhood with further decline that could result in the neighborhood's demolition. In the midst of this decline, the residents sought to revitalize their neighborhood, and two civic endeavors emerged to help: one led by a garden club, and one led by a non-profit, each of which met a different outcome. The question is this: how and to what extent is the divergence of these outcomes driven by (1) the number and social background of the available participants and/or (2) the effectiveness of the organizations' civic repertoires?

## *2.1 Central North Side*

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<sup>22</sup> Ahlbrandt and Brophy. 1975: p. 49.

The Central North Side is an urban neighborhood approximately 2 miles from Pittsburgh's downtown. Over the decades, this neighborhood has gone from mostly white, to mixed-race, to mostly black. Throughout the 1950s and 60s, this neighborhood transformed. As part of urban renewal efforts in the 1950s, developers cleared parts of nearby low-income communities, including Manchester, Allegheny Center, and East Street Valley, in order to make space for an arena, highways, and other urban renewal projects.<sup>23</sup> As these communities changed, so the Central North Side's racial and class composition changed too. The neighborhood's socially mobile residents – including white, middle-, and professional-class residents – left the neighborhood, taking skills, resources, and connections with them.<sup>24</sup> This exodus set in motion self-regulating market forces, in the form of “significant neighborhood decline,”<sup>25</sup> financial disinvestment, and capital flight, that produced numerous social dislocations, from violence, to rising poverty, to the threat of neighborhood demolition.<sup>26</sup> Amid these changes and problems, two civic endeavors emerged. Both aimed to revitalize the Central North Side, but each met its own outcome.

## *2.2 The Neighborhood Gardens Project (NGP)*

The first endeavor started in 1967, launched by the Garden Club of Allegheny County (GCAC). Garden clubs can be serious civic organizations. Many garden clubs, like the GCAC, were formed as part of a broader women's club movement in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. They engage in both projects of self-improvement and civic improvement. Their civic projects range from planting Victory gardens, to establishing and maintaining green spaces, to educational programs for school children. Like other

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<sup>23</sup> Ahlbrandt, Roger and Paul Brophy. 1975. *An Evaluation of Pittsburgh's Neighborhood Housing Services Program*. Public domain: p. 49

<sup>24</sup> Carlin, Margaret. 1969. “Mrs. Richardson,” in *The Pittsburgh Press*, February 16<sup>th</sup>, 1969. page 5

<sup>25</sup> Ahlbrandt and Brophy. 1975: p. 2.

<sup>26</sup> Ahlbrandt and Brophy. 1975: p. 49.

garden clubs, the GCAC consists in a small army of educated, well-connected, upper-class white women, the same demographic responsible for much of the Suffrage, Temperance, and Settlement movements. Over the period of interest, the GCAC had 100-140 members, and an annual budget between \$40,000 and \$99,000. Garden clubs exhibit many of the features of classic civic organizations: each club is rooted in a local community, composed of local volunteer members, and members' duties include regular meetings, holding and rotating club offices, and deliberating about club operations.

The GCAC's attempt to revitalize the Central North Side was called the Neighborhood Gardens Project (NGP). The NGP consisted in the GCAC working with local community residents organized in Block Clubs, whose most visible members were middle-class black women. The core of the NGP was an annual window-box sale. On a Spring day, the garden club would travel to the Central North Side, where they would sell wooden window-boxes, blooming flowers, fertilizer, and top soil, at discount prices to the residents. The residents would buy the boxes, install them on the outside of their homes, plant the flowers, thereby beautifying the neighborhood. This core was complemented by numerous spin-off projects where garden club members worked with the local YWCA, established neighborhood parklets, and made improvements to the local church, Brown Chapel AME.

Like many garden club projects, the window-box sale combined aesthetic and moral aspects. Aesthetically, the window-box sale improved the look of the neighborhood. The beautification started with blooming flowers, but then spread as residents were inspired to clean the streets and make minor home repairs and improvements. Studies suggest that aesthetic improvements, including the construction of green spaces in particular, can improve attitudes and relationships within a neighborhood's population.<sup>27</sup> Linked to the aesthetic aspect was the moral aspect. The garden club expected residents to be transformed through their experience with the NGP. For one, the residents

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<sup>27</sup> Ahlbrandt and Brophy 1975: p. 32; Sharkey et. al. 2017. "Community and the Crime Decline: The Causal Effect of Local Nonprofits on Violent Crime." *American Sociological Review*. Vol. 82 (6): 1218.

were supposed to get to know each other better by working together. Further, the residents were supposed to realize “new values” in daily life.<sup>28</sup> by participating in the NGP, residents would experience increased “self-reliance,” “pride in property,” and alleviation from “hopelessness,”<sup>29</sup> and these new values would inspire and enable the residents to tackle bigger problems in their community. In fact, the original plan was for the residents to use their experience in the NGP to start their own garden clubs and run a window-box sale as fundraising activity.<sup>30</sup>

The NGP lasted until the early 2000s. It fostered meaningful and lasting connections, and the garden club members believed their project contributed to the stability of the blocks in which it operated.<sup>31</sup> Despite these positive results, the ultimate outcome was little success. My criterion for success is developmental: civic endeavors are successful to the extent that they can attract the participants and other forms of support necessary to expand the scope of their operations, and the most successful can inspire other organizations to emulate them. It’s fair to apply this developmental criterion to the NGP because the garden club had clear ambitions to expand the NGP, and the NGP itself aimed to emulate a similar but thriving project from Philadelphia in the 1950s. According to this developmental criterion, the NGP’s outcome was little success because it failed to grow beyond a few-block radius and several dozen participants (at most) in one corner of the Central North Side, despite the garden club’s explicit attempts to expand. The data suggest that the garden club itself recognized the NGP’s limits, for while the club continued its concern with revitalizing depressed neighborhoods, it never repeated the window-box campaign.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Standish, Dorothy. 1974. “Expansion of Central North Side.” [Internal Document]. Garden Club of Allegheny County Collection,

<sup>29</sup> Cheever, Mrs. Sargent, Mrs. James Childs, and Mrs. Dorothy Standish. 1970. Garden Club Federation of Pennsylvania Award Application. Garden Club of Allegheny County Collection,

<sup>30</sup> Hoffstodt, Barbara. 1968. “Notes from the lecture of Mrs. Bush-Brown.”

<sup>31</sup> Nevin, Eliza. 1989. NGP Annual Report: p. 2

<sup>32</sup> GCAC. 1976. “A History of the Garden Club of Allegheny County.”

### 2.3 *The Neighborhood Housing Services, Inc. (NHS)*

The second civic endeavor began one year later, in 1968, just 5 blocks away from the NGP's main hub of activity. This is the Neighborhood Housing Services, Inc. (NHS). The NHS was a non-profit organization where City authorities, bankers, housing contractors, and Central North Side residents worked together to stem neighborhood decline. The NHS's strategy had a three-pronged approach: enforce housing codes, to prevent property owners from letting their buildings fall into disrepair; provide grants and loans to residents on flexible terms, so that residents who are "too risky" for conventional banks can afford to repair and purchase their homes; and provide connections to banks, so that residents who qualify for conventional lending activities can access them.<sup>33</sup> Over the decades, the NHS tried other strategies - marketing vacant buildings, lobbying City government, providing financial counseling for home buyers - but the code enforcement and loan and grant funds remained the core of NHS's strategy.

The NHS's strategy is informed by an understanding of the distinct processes involved in neighborhood decline, a term that gained popularity only in the 1960s and 70s. Neighborhood decline begins when a viable, healthy neighborhood begins to show signs of wear, like aging housing stock and deferred maintenance. These signs of wear ward off more well-to-do residents and prospective residents. As the housing market weakens, the neighborhood becomes more attractive to prospective residents who have lower incomes and fewer options for housing. As the neighborhood attracts more low-income residents, both public and private investors lose confidence in the neighborhood, and so they disinvest; financial institutions make loans and mortgages more difficult to obtain, if not cutting the neighborhood off altogether; and the public sector may cut back on public services. In the face of

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<sup>33</sup> NHS. 1971. "NHS Annual Report 70-71." [Internal Document]; Duncan, Marcia, Edwin T. Hood, and James L. Neet. 1975. "Redlining Practices, Racial Resegregation, and Urban Decay: Neighborhood Housing Services as a Viable Alternative." *Urban Lawyer*. Vol No. 7: pp 534-535.

disinvestment and capital flight, the neighborhood deteriorates further until it attracts only those residents with no other housing options, the buildings are dilapidated or abandoned, and residents can no longer repair, sell, or buy their homes.<sup>34</sup> The NHS aims to stem this process of decline by preventing the housing stock from further deteriorating and by bringing financial activity back into the neighborhood.

By my developmental criterion, the NHS found considerable success. Within its first two decades, the Pittsburgh office served over 3,500 clients,<sup>35</sup> and other organizations began to emulate the NHS, first in other economically depressed Pittsburgh neighborhoods,<sup>36</sup> then in cities around the country. By 1988, NHS had offices in more than 200 US cities and they channeled a combined \$3.2 billion into economically depressed neighborhoods.<sup>37</sup> Thus, the NHS succeeded in attracting the participants and support to expand its scope of operations, far beyond what its originators could have foreseen.

### 3.0 DATA

My data consists in archival records, secondary sources, and contemporaneous newspaper publications. The archival records were collected from the University of Pittsburgh's Archives & Special Collections between the fall of 2016 and the fall of 2017. For the NGP, I used primary sources from the Garden Club of Allegheny County Collection. These records include internal documents, correspondence, and annual reports among garden club members and between the garden club

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<sup>34</sup> Ahlbrandt and Brophy. 1975: pp. 36-40; and Duncan, Hood, and Neet 1975: pp. 516-521.

<sup>35</sup> NHS. 1988. *Neighborhood Housing Services*.

<sup>36</sup> NHS. 1971. "NHS Annual Report 70-71:" p. 14

<sup>37</sup> NHS. 1988. *NHS*. [Promotional Pamphlet].

members and the Central North Side residents. I complemented these archival records with related publications in local newspapers. For the NHS, I used primary sources from the GCAC archival records and also the James Ferlo Papers. These collections include internal documents, annual reports, and promotional materials. In addition, a number of researchers have evaluated and reviewed the NHS and its activities, and their findings have been published as policy studies and academic articles. Finally, I complemented these materials with related publications in local newspapers. Unfortunately, records from the North Side Block Clubs were not available, but the archival collections and newspapers allow us to reconstruct the residents' voices and agency.

#### **4.0 CASE SELECTION AND METHOD**

My case has advantageous substantive features. One is timing. The two civic endeavors emerged at the forefront of the civic sea change in the late 1960s, and continue into the early 2000s. Another advantage is the study's scale. By focusing on a single community, we get enough detail to see how neighborhood decline affects a community's civic life, what opportunities and motives drive people to organize in different ways, what obstacles different organizations face, and how each of these processes unfolds over time. Of course, the scale of the study also has a disadvantage: generalizability. If this case can speak to developments on a national scale, then we need to see this case as a microcosm of what happens at larger levels. I'll conclude the study with some reasons why we might see it this way.

Beyond substantive features, my case also allows for a contextualized comparison of civic organizations. Specifically, I can employ the logic of Mill's indirect method of difference.<sup>38</sup> These organizations share important similarities: they work in the same neighborhood, over the same period of time, even sharing some of the same personnel; they share the goal of neighborhood revitalization; and both involve collaboration between white, upper-class outsiders and local residents, the most prominent of whom are black middle-class women. This backdrop of similarities should bring into relief the "causally decisive differences"<sup>39</sup> that explain the organizations' divergent outcomes, or in other words, the features of the NHS that were crucial to its success which were absent from the NGP and responsible for its lack of success. My study asks how and to what extent either (1) the pool of available participants and/or (2) effective civic repertoires acted as such causally decisive differences.

Mill's comparative logic has its shortcomings, however. It is bad at detecting multiple and conjunctural causation.<sup>40</sup> To overcome this weakness, I complement the Millian methods with a carefully contextualized and chronologically sensitive analysis. Using counterfactual reasoning, I disaggregate each organization's trajectory into a series of junctures that were critical in determining each organization's outcome, and within each of these critical junctures, I search for the influence of each independent variable. Thus, to the extent that these junctures show the pool of available participants driving each organization to its outcome, then we find support for the gatekeeper hypothesis, and to the extent that they show civic repertoires' effectiveness driving each organization to its outcome, then we find support for the civic repertoire hypothesis.

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<sup>38</sup> Ragin, Charles. 1987. *The Comparative Method: Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press: p. 39.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.: p. 47.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.: pp. 40-41.

## 5.0 THE NON-PROFIT AND THE GARDEN CLUB

The Central North Side's decline began in the 1950s with urban renewal. Developers tore down deteriorating residential, commercial, and industrial property in numerous North Side neighborhoods surrounding the Central North Side. This "slum clearance" was undertaken in order to make way for a highways, an arena, and other urban renewal projects.<sup>41</sup> As a result of slum clearance, the affected neighborhoods' racial and class compositions began to change, and what happened in these neighborhoods spilled over into adjacent neighborhoods. The Central North Side "experienced significant decline during the decade of the 1960's."<sup>42</sup> A HUD-sponsored study measured that decline in the following terms: the population decreased from 10,495 to 7,303; the black percentage of the population increased from 31.5% to 47.4%; the percentage of owner-occupied residential units fell from 31.6% to 26.7%; and the number of vacant residential units rose from 7.1% to 12.6%. By 1970, the median family income was \$5,930 (67% of the city's median), and one quarter of the families lived below the poverty line.<sup>43</sup> The population was aging, the housing units were in disrepair, and attitudes were pessimistic.<sup>44</sup>

To see this decline in more concrete terms, consider this 1969 Pittsburgh Press interview that featured a long-time resident of the Central North Side. The journalist begins:

North Side's Charles Street winds along the hill from Perrysville avenue to Brighton Road, and in the last few years, the lower end of the street has gone from middle class to downright depressed housing. On a cold winter day, driving down the street can be a lesson in desolation. Some houses are boarded up, others sag in forlorn rows, and there are the hallmarks of poverty – rubbish, garbage, and trash.

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<sup>41</sup> Ahlbrandt and Brophy. 1975: p. 7.

<sup>42</sup> Ahlbrandt and Brophy 1975: p. 2.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.: p. 3.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.: p. 49.

Dorothy Richardson, a black resident who helped launch the NHS, continues:

When we moved here 21 years ago, it was mostly white. It was a nice neighborhood. Then they tore down houses to make room for the Arena, and some Negroes moved in. Maybe one family in a block, then all the whites moved out.<sup>45</sup>

Sociologists have documented well how such a social outmigration affects urban neighborhoods, especially those with large black populations.<sup>46</sup> These socially mobile classes provide a “stabilizing force”<sup>47</sup> in the neighborhood, and its outmigration deprives the neighborhood of connections to employment opportunities, tax bases for public institutions, and moral cohesion. As this literature would predict, this outmigration created various social problems in Central North Side. Dorothy Richardson continues: “Then the changes came. The streets weren’t kept clean, the sewers would stink – but then I was prejudiced myself. I thought I was too good for that rough element moving in...”<sup>48</sup> Richardson goes on to mention violent gangs, hungry children, deteriorating housing, and rodent problems. Further, the neighborhood also faced local financial institutions’ decision to disinvest in the neighborhood: after the outmigration, observers described the Central North Side as “for all purposes ... dead as far as financial institutions were concerned,”<sup>49</sup> and “a financial desert from a mortgage lender’s standpoint.”<sup>50</sup> Without these financial resources, the neighborhood likely faced further decline and could become the next community designated for slum clearance.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Carlin, Margaret. 1969. “Mrs. Richardson,” in *The Pittsburgh Press*, February 16<sup>th</sup>, 1969: pp. 4-5.

<sup>46</sup> Wilson, Julius, W. 1987. *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass, and Public Policy*. Chicago. Anderson, Elijah. 1990. *Streetwise; Race, Class, and Change in an Urban Community*.

<sup>47</sup> Anderson, Elijah. 1990: p. 57.

<sup>48</sup> Carlin, Margaret. 1969: pp 4-5.

<sup>49</sup> Duncan, Hood, and Neet. 1975: p. 535. See also Ahlbrandt and Brophy. 1975: pp. 105-110.

<sup>50</sup> *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. 1970. “Northside Resurgence Cited: Family Ownership, Restoration Linked.” September 12<sup>th</sup>, 1970: p. 7.

<sup>51</sup> Ahlbrandt and Brophy. 1975: p. 2.

Amid these circumstances, the Central North Side residents organized. At first, Dorothy Richardson mobilized other local women to teach “homemaking skills” to their new neighbors.<sup>52</sup> They cleaned floors, hauled away garbage, and fumigated houses. When this approach turned out to be enormous work for little payoff, Richardson and 120 other residents formed Citizens Against Slum Housing (CASH).<sup>53</sup> CASH and other local organizations met with City Hall and the Mayor to discuss their plight. The City offered the residents only promises and connections to other civic organizations. These connections were instrumental in directing important elements of both the non-profit and the garden club toward the Central North Side.<sup>54</sup> In what follows, I lay out each organization’s trajectory, disaggregated into critical junctures that reveal how either (1) the pool of available participants and/or (2) the effectiveness of a civic repertoire influences an organization’s outcome.

### *5.1 The Neighborhood Gardens Project*

The NGP was a collaboration between the GCAC, more specifically a subgroup of the GCAC, and Central North Side residents who were organized in block clubs. While these groups made up the core of the NGP, they occasionally worked with other classic civic organizations, like other block clubs, garden clubs, churches, and a Settlement House. These local organizations provided with NGP with particular resources: volunteers, labor power, (limited) finances, social networks, and skills. And the NGP’s civic repertoire made use of these resources primarily by involving them in the annual window-box sale, essentially a fundraiser, that required many hands but no professional skills. This window-box sale provided multiple civic goods: the most visible good was the beautification of the neighborhood, but more important were the various social and moral goods – the social connections,

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<sup>52</sup> Carlin, Margaret. 1969: p. 5.

<sup>53</sup> Carlin, Margaret. 1969: pp. 4-5.

<sup>54</sup> Ahlbrandt and Brophy. 1975: p. 49.

the moral transformations, the inspiration – that the sale encouraged. According to the GCAC, the participants’ moral transformations would revitalize the entire neighborhood. From the residents’ perspective, the NGP required one to buy (at discount rates) window-boxes, blooming flowers, and other gardening supplies, install these boxes on the outside of one’s home (the garden club provided help if necessary), and maintain these flowers throughout the spring and summer. By doing so, one develops skills, beautifies the neighborhood, works alongside one’s neighbors, and allegedly, develops morally. Over its history, the NGP met failures as well as successes. Here, I’ll break that history down into three critical junctures that reveal the influence of the available participants and civic repertoires.

The first critical juncture took place in Manchester, a neighborhood directly adjacent to the Central North Side. The garden club began the NGP here in 1967, but ultimately failed to keep the project going. Had they succeeded, they would have retained a significant number of supporters and participants. The garden club documents their initial contact with the community and the process of building trusting relationships with the residents.<sup>55</sup> In the Spring, they held the first annual window-box sale, selling 83 window-boxes. As the garden club hoped, the residents did not stop at planting the window-boxes but planted rose bushes, built fences, and made minor home repairs as well, and journalists featured this event in local newspapers.<sup>56</sup> Despite the promising start, the Manchester NGP was short-lived. Within a year, the GCAC began searching for new neighborhoods to work in. Data show different accounts of what went wrong in Manchester. On the one hand, garden club members describe scheduling issues: while the garden club was uncomfortable going into the neighborhood at night, residents with working schedules could not meet during the day.<sup>57</sup> On the other hand, Arthur Ziegler, president of Pittsburgh History and Landmarks Foundation, claims that

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<sup>55</sup> Standish, Dorothy. 1968. Annual NGP Address.

<sup>56</sup> Hritz, Thomas. 1967. “New Way to Fight Area Slum Blight.” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. August 26: p. 9.

<sup>57</sup> Standish, Dorothy. 1968. Annual NGP Address.

there was too high a “turnover rate” in residents,<sup>58</sup> suggesting that the neighborhood lacked a deeply rooted population. Either way, the garden club’s failure in Manchester appears to be partly due to economic factors, either the residents’ working schedules or the neighborhood’s lack of stable employment opportunities.

In 1968, the GCAC moved to the Central North Side, the second critical juncture. This neighborhood provided the NGP with the little success that it had. A few particular blocks would serve as the NGP’s anchor for decades to come. Like in Manchester, the garden club built trusting relationships with the residents, first by holding talks to pitch the NGP, then by exchanging support for each other’s community projects. Also like Manchester, the first window-box sale was a success: the garden club sold dozens of window-boxes, and the residents were inspired to beautify their streets in other ways, including making minor home repairs. Unlike Manchester, the NGP’s civic repertoire began to change after a few years. Its activities began to drift away from the original design of moral reform and toward a variety of other civic goods, including financial contributions and social networking. Records suggest that these activities were initiated by the residents: the residents used the garden club’s connections to reach out to the city and financial lenders, and this helped them establish the NHS;<sup>59</sup> they used the NGP’s publicity to raise awareness about the neighborhood’s infrastructural issues;<sup>60</sup> they employed the garden club members’ skills in preparing an open-house event and establishing parklets;<sup>61</sup> they used the garden club’s finances and connections to improve the Brown Chapel AME Church in numerous ways, including the establishment of a parking lot (costing \$1,000-\$2,000),<sup>62</sup> funds for restoring the church for its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary,<sup>63</sup> and having the church designated

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<sup>58</sup> Ziegler, Arthur. 1978. “Letter to the GCAC regarding NGP History.” June 1: p. 2.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.: p.1.

<sup>60</sup> Lichy, Diane. 1970: p. 11.

<sup>61</sup> Cheever, Mrs. Sargent, Mrs. James Childs, and Mrs. Dorothy Standish. 1970. Page 2.

<sup>62</sup> Oliver, Laura. 1971. [Letter to Dorothy Standish regarding Brown Chapel Parking Lot].

<sup>63</sup> Hagler, Ethel. 1987. Letter to GCAC regarding Brown Chapel’s 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

as a historical landmark.<sup>64</sup> Thus, the NGP's only lasting source of success was in the Central North Side, and some of this success is partly due to an evolution in the civic repertoire that allowed for more "predictable future benefits."

Finally, the last critical junctures consist in a series of failed attempts to expand the NGP throughout the late 60s and early-mid 70s. The GCAC tried to bring other organizations into the NGP: they invited nearby block clubs and churches to join them, but these organizations enter and disappear from the data within a year; and they invited other white garden clubs to join them, but these clubs would not commit due to "fear of racial disturbance."<sup>65</sup> By 1974, only the GCAC and the Central North Side block club remained. Further, the GCAC tried to spread the NGP to other economically depressed neighborhoods, including Homewood-Brushston,<sup>66</sup> the Hill District, and parts of Wilkinsburg.<sup>67</sup> However, the NGP failed to catch on. To explain this failure, the garden club again cited potential participants' working schedules: "Due to their [residents'] working hours it is hard to find good leaders. A healthy nucleus has to exist before any progress can be made."<sup>68</sup> Finally, the garden club originally intended to turn control of the NGP over to the residents after the first few years of operation. This transition never came to pass, and the garden club explains why not:

Each year we discuss the possibility of turning this program [the NGP] over to our black customer-friends, but their jobs prevent this from becoming a reality, so let's keep our involvement with Neighborhood Gardens going.<sup>69</sup>

In sum, the garden club's trajectory involved failures and successes, but very limited success in terms of attracting the participants and resources necessary to expand the scope of their operations. Data suggest that their success in the Central North Side was due partially to a change in their civic

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<sup>64</sup> Hagler, Ethel. 1989. Letter to GCAC thanking them for attending Brown Chapel's Commemoration.

<sup>65</sup> Oliver, Laura. 1974. "Neighborhood Gardens." [Annual NGP Report].

<sup>66</sup> Standish, Dorothy, and Laura Oliver. 1972. Annual Report of Neighborhood Gardens.

<sup>67</sup> GCAC. 1971. "Awards, Publicity, and Expansion." [Internal Document].

<sup>68</sup> Oliver, Laura. 1974. "Neighborhood Gardens." [Annual NGP Report].

<sup>69</sup> Oliver, Laura. 1976. [NGP Annual Report].

repertoire, changes that offered residents more material and financial benefits. Data also suggest that the garden club's failures were due to a lack of available participants: the most common obstacles to the NGP seemed to be race- and class-based anxieties and the residents' working schedules. The garden club itself seems to have acknowledged the limits of the NGP. Throughout the 1970s, they maintained their concern with revitalizing depressed neighborhoods, but they never repeated the window-box beautification campaign: instead, by 1976, they joined the board of a non-profit organization, Operation Better Block, Inc., where they could "act as a catalyst—that is to bring together groups of local residents with area employers and later with the Pittsburgh community at large"<sup>70</sup> rather than more hands-on projects, like engaging in fundraisers aimed at moral transformations.

### *5.2 Neighborhood Housing Services, Inc.*

The NHS also consisted in a collaboration between local resident-volunteers and white outsiders, but some of these outsiders were professionals. The NHS consisted in a number of boards and committees with tasks of distributing loan funds, creating new programs, and determining the future direction of the non-profit. These boards and committees involved both residents and professionals, and at least in the first few years, the majority of each boards and committee was made up of resident-volunteers. The NHS worked with other organizations, including charitable foundations, banks, architectural associations, and City government. These organizations gave the NHS access to certain resources: from the City, Code Enforcement officers for its enforcement program; from the foundation, charitable grants (starting at \$125,000, then growing) to establish a high risk revolving loan fund; from the architectural associations, access to readily-available contractors; from the banks and other professionals, the skills to design effective loan and grant programs; and from the resident-

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<sup>70</sup> GCAC. 1976. *A History of the Garden Club of Allegheny County*: p. 7.

volunteers, knowledge of the community's needs. The NHS put these resources into motion by regularly enforcing housing codes while simultaneously using a high-risk revolving loan fund to make mortgages and remodeling loans accessible to residents. From a residents' perspective, participating in the NHS could require substantial amounts of time: the process often involved submitting an application, attending an interview, having a pre-construction home-inspection, selecting contractors for the repair work, having a post-construction home-inspection, then follow-up paper work. However, at the end of the process, the calculable benefits included repairing or buying one's home. Unlike the NGP, the NHS brought resources into the community from outside, employed a repertoire that relied on specialized skill sets, and used a sharp division of labor to streamline its civic goods and services. The NHS's history is one of steady success.

The first critical juncture is NHS's early years. Success here was critical for attracting later participants and support. The NHS started off slowly, issuing loans to approximately 30 households in each of its first two years.<sup>71</sup> These residents were satisfied with the outcomes, though. In contemporaneous newspaper articles, residents explain that their new homeownership is the "greatest satisfaction," and far better than "paying high rents for deteriorated homes others own."<sup>72</sup> Residents also spread the word of NHS's services to other residents, especially through social networks surrounding local churches. In fact, most participants learned of NHS through word-of-mouth.<sup>73</sup> A few years later, a survey showed that more than 75% of residents rated the NHS as "very valuable in developing the North Side community."<sup>74</sup> Not only were residents satisfied, but loan delinquency rates remained very low.<sup>75</sup> As a result, NHS activity began to pick up, reaching 70 or 80 families a year in the next few years. This early success produced something critical for NHS's later expansion: concrete

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<sup>71</sup> Ahlbrandt and Brophy. 1975: p. 79.

<sup>72</sup> Spatter, Sam. 1972. "How to Recycle a Deteriorating Neighborhood." *Pittsburgh Press*. April 30<sup>th</sup>: p.16.

<sup>73</sup> Ahlbrandt and Brophy. 1975: p.59.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid: p. 6.

<sup>75</sup> NHS. 1971. "NHS Annual Report 70-71." [Internal Document]

results. By 1975, at least two observers credited the NHS with noticeably stemming neighborhood decline, one using quantitative social scientific measures.<sup>76</sup>

These concrete results ushered in a second critical juncture: they attracted participants and supporters that enabled the NHS to grow exponentially. The NHS attracted more contributions for the high-risk revolving loan fund: the Scaife Foundation continued giving \$125,000 grants;<sup>77</sup> and by the 1970s, the Hillman foundation began contributing, too;<sup>78</sup> and Pennsylvania housing agencies started contributing public funds by the 1990s.<sup>79</sup> With this increase in funds, the NHS could add on new programs, including programs to market vacant houses to low-income buyers by 1983,<sup>80</sup> and a homeownership marketing programs by the early 1989,<sup>81</sup> and a programs to sell tax-delinquent houses in the early 1990s.<sup>82</sup> Potentially more important, however, was the support of the federal government. As early as 1971, the NHS caught the attention of federal agencies related to housing. The Federal Home Loan Bank Board (FHLBB) studied the NHS for that year, evaluating it, and finding it to be replicable in other cities.<sup>83</sup> In 1974, FHLBB together with HUD created the Urban Reinvestment Task Force (URTF) to organize NHS offices in cities around the US.<sup>84</sup> Later, in 1978, the Carter administration created the Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation, a national entity that coordinated and facilitated the efforts of local NHS offices.<sup>85</sup>

Throughout this time, the Pittsburgh NHS offices increased its activities. By 1988, its loans had reached over 3,500 clients in total,<sup>86</sup> in and outside of the Central North Side. In addition, and

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<sup>76</sup> Ahlbrandt and Brophy. 1975: pp. 26-28; and Duncan, Hood, and Neet. 1975: pp. 534-538.

<sup>77</sup> NHS. 1971. "NHS Annual Report 70-71." [Internal Document]

<sup>78</sup> NHS. 1988. "Neighborhood Housing Services 1968-1988."

<sup>79</sup> Foster, Pamela. 1990. "North Side Offers Home Ownership Program at Low Cost." *Pittsburgh Courier*. March 24<sup>th</sup>, 1990. Vol 81 (24): p. A-1.

<sup>80</sup> NHS. 1988. "Neighborhood Housing Services 1968-1988."

<sup>81</sup> NHS. 1989. "NHS Community Marketer." [NHS internal document].

<sup>82</sup> NHS. 1990. "NHS Community Marketer." [NHS internal document].

<sup>83</sup> Duncan, Marcia, Edwin T. Hood, and James L. Neet. 1975: p. 535.

<sup>84</sup> Urban Systems Research and Engineering, Inc. 1980. *Creating Local Partnerships: the Role of the Urban Reinvestment Task Force in Developing Neighborhood Housing Services Organizations*. HathiTrust/Public Domain.

<sup>85</sup> Federal Home Loan Bank Board. 1979. "The Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation." *FHLBB Journal* March. N.p.

<sup>86</sup> NHS. 1988. Neighborhood Housing Services.

this marks the third critical juncture, the NHS was emulated by organizations across the country. This emulation started surprisingly early: in 1971, two other economically depressed Pittsburgh copied some aspects of the NHS, including the high-risk revolving loan fund.<sup>87</sup> Later, however, once the NHS received support from federal agencies, NHS offices spread to economically depressed communities across the country, many of which still operate today. By 1988, NHS offices emerged in more than 200 US cities, and together they channeled a combined \$3.2 billion into these neighborhoods.<sup>88</sup>

Thus, the NHS's trajectory hinges on a civic repertoire that offers the predictable future benefits that attract participants and the concrete results that attract supporters. As participants and supporters grow, the NHS is able to expand its operations to offer greater benefits and results, in turn, attracting more participants and support. The key to this story is an attractive and effective civic repertoire, one made possible by the NHS's new-line organizational features.

## 6.0 DISCUSSION

My study tries to explain the non-profit's and garden club's divergent outcomes, or in other words, why the NHS succeeded in attracting the support to exponentially expand its operations while the garden club attracted just enough support to sustain itself, despite its attempts to expand. In particular, my study asks how and to what extent either (1) the number and social background of participants or the (2) an effective civic repertoire plays a role in producing those divergent outcomes. What does the empirical analysis suggest about these two hypotheses?

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<sup>87</sup> NHS. 1971. "NHS Annual Report 70-71:" p. 14.

<sup>88</sup> NHS. 1988. NHS. Pamphlet. [NHS promotional material].

My findings provide strong support for the civic repertoire hypothesis. In the case of the NHS, data strongly suggest that its civic repertoire attracts two important groups, predictable future benefits draw in participants and also concrete results draw in potential supporters, and these attractions give the NHS the increased support it needs to expand the scope of its operations. In the case of the NGP, civic repertoires also mattered. Recall that the NGP met its greatest success when its repertoire shifted toward supplying the community with more material benefits, financial goods, and opportunities to raise awareness about the community's problems. From the data, it's unclear whether this shift in repertoire was a cause or consequence of the NGP's success there, but because it offered the residents predictable future benefits, it's more than likely that it contributed to any successes that came afterward. However, even though this new repertoire provided more benefits than the original one, the garden club simply did not have the organizational infrastructure to offer the kinds of benefits that the NHS did. Consequently, even at its best, the NGP drew fewer participants than the non-profit eventually would. Thus, in both cases, an organization's civic repertoire made an observable impact on its outcome.

My findings partially support and partially problematize the gatekeeper hypothesis. The findings provide two kinds of support. First, as this hypothesis would lead us to expect, the NHS relied on professionals who developed their skills and expertise through their occupations. For some of these professionals, it's unclear if these skills resulted from any recent shifts in the labor market, but for others, like housing experts who worked as the directors of the NHS, this is likely the case. Second, and also as the gatekeeper hypothesis would expect, the garden club struggled to expand the scope of its operations because of the residents' labor market situations: working schedules and unstable community populations were some of the most common obstacles to the NGP's growth. However, this piece of evidence becomes complicated when we juxtapose the NGP with the NHS: participating in either one required significant amounts of time, and success for either one required

broad-based support from the residents (even the NHS relied on an extensive number of residents' knowledge, know-how and social networks). So how is it that in the very same neighborhood, many residents had time for the NHS but not for the NGP? I suggest that the NHS's calculable benefits inspire residents to make time for it in ways that they would not for the NGP. This finding problematizes two assumptions of the gatekeeper hypothesis.

First, my study problematizes the assumption that economic distress suppresses civic engagement. Putnam finds evidence that economic distress does have this effect,<sup>89</sup> but my case study shows that the opposite effect is possible: economic distress can increase engagement. As the Central North Side declined, and demolition seemed more likely, residents actually become more civically engaged. To resolve these apparently contradictory findings, consider that economic distress does not simply suppress or galvanize engagement; rather, it changes a person's orientation to civic engagement. Under economic distress, one might turn to the civic sphere looking to secure basic goods, like secure housing, and they have few resources, especially time and money, to spare. It follows participants under economic distress will be attracted to those civic organizations that can provide the relevant civic goods in reliable and timely ways. Otherwise, becoming involved may not be worth the investment of time, money or other resources. Thus, economic distress does not simply suppress civic engagement, but instead, it reorients a person toward the kind of civic goods and repertoires that are often characteristic of new-line organizations.

Secondly, my study problematizes the assumption that establishing and running non-profits reflects the priorities and approaches of only upper-middle class professionals. Consider that both the residents and the garden club originally employed moralistic, grassroots approaches: Dorothy Richardson organized to teach homemaking skills to her new neighbors; and the garden club launched the NGP with its aim of moral transformation. Each group learned the limits of these approaches and

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<sup>89</sup> Putnam, Robert. 2000: pp. 192-193.

continued their efforts only through more specialized, professionalized, instrumental strategies: Dorothy Richardson and CASH spearheaded the NHS, and scores of residents - low-income, working-class, and middle class - supported and helped spread its activities; and the garden club decided the best way to continue its revitalization efforts was working through a non-profit organization. Thus, across class and race, people involved in revitalizing the Central North Side discovered the limits of grassroots moralistic approaches and the benefits of specialized and instrumental ones.

In sum, my study provides less support for the gatekeeper hypothesis than appearances suggest. While the NHS's success clearly required skills that resulted from specializing labor markets, the NGP's struggles were more complicated than just the residents' lack of time: it was a combination of that lack of time, the ways in which economic distress reorients one's approach to civic engagement, and the residents' preferences for the NHS. Thus, my study partially supports and partially problematize this hypothesis.

Of course, we cannot entirely explain the divergent outcomes with economic factors alone. Social dislocations, like poverty, displacement, and neighborhood decline are not new, but only in the 1960s and 70s did they inspire organizations to develop new civic repertoires. These facts suggest that economic forces drive the civic sea change only by working in conjunction with other non-economic factors. In this case, non-economic factors include changing social ideals and new political opportunities, both of which have been well-documented by other civic researchers.

First, both Wuthnow and Skocpol argued that civic organizing has been adapting to changing social ideals, especially ideals regarding race relations and marginalization. These developments began with the civil rights and women's movements of 1950s through the 70s. These movements had their impact on Pittsburgh: in response to Martin Luther King Jr's assassination in 1968, various Pittsburgh neighborhoods participated in uprisings, including the Central North Side. These movements shook

the social ideals of earlier eras, giving many Americans a “growing awareness of problems faced by people different from oneself”<sup>90</sup> and inspiring many Americans to reach across boundaries of race and gender.<sup>91</sup> Among those so inspired were the white elites of both the NGP and the NHS. They were motivated to help the area’s low-income and black residents: the Scaife Foundation agreed to fund the NHS partly because the non-profit’s goals was to help “minority groups and the elderly;”<sup>92</sup> and the garden club was attracted to the Central North Side in order “to heal this debilitating racial split in our country.”<sup>93</sup> While changing social ideals inspired both civic endeavors, they also presented serious obstacles for the garden club. The GCAC developed in a historical period when civic activities were often segregated by gender and race. As a result, working with residents of the Central North Side was a relatively new experience for garden club members, and it presented serious obstacles to the NGP’s success. While the GCAC was often able to build lasting relationships with the residents, we also the problems that their social distance created, as we saw in the NGP’s failure in Manchester and the GCAC’s failure to get other white garden clubs involved.

Secondly, my study also shows the importance of particular political developments. Skocpol writes that civic organizations have adapted to take advantage of new opportunities provided by the federal government.<sup>94</sup> She writes that in response to the upheavals of the 1960s, the US government increased its number of public undertakings, and it often relied on local nonprofit agencies to do this. As mentioned above, the NHS seriously benefited from having state support: from local government, it received help in the form of housing code enforcement officers; from state government, it received funding by the 1990s; and from federal government, it received assistance in spreading to cities across the US.

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<sup>90</sup> Wuthnow 1998: p. 39.

<sup>91</sup> Wuthnow 1998: pp. 39-40.

<sup>92</sup> Ahlbrandt and Brophy. 1975: p. 51.

<sup>93</sup> Standish, Dorothy. 1968. NGP Annual Report: p. 3.

<sup>94</sup> Skocpol. 2002: p. 199.

Thus, while economic factors played important roles in driving the divergent outcomes, they could not have done so alone: these economic factors worked in conjunction with changing social ideals, which changed how many Americans defined social problems, and new political opportunities, opportunities that made it possible to redress these problems.

## **7.0 CONCLUSION**

My study asked the question how have economic factors been driving the civic sea change. Researchers have pointed out that shifts in labor markets affect the pool of available civic participants, in this case shrinking and professionalizing that pool, and these effects undermine classic civic organizations while giving rise to the new-line ones. By contrast, I argue that market-driven social dislocations have inspired civic organizations to develop new civic repertoires, repertoires that can only be sustained by new-line organizational infrastructure. My case study provides strong support for the civic repertoire hypothesis and partial support, but also partial complication, for the gatekeeper hypothesis. Of course, these two hypotheses are not mutually exclusive, and my study suggests how we might try to synthesize them. On one hand, labor markets create the necessary preconditions for new-line organizations: for the affluent, markets develops skills and other professional capacities; for low-income people, markets change their orientation to civic engagement, making calculable benefits more of a priority than they would be otherwise. On the other hand, these disparate pieces are not brought together until civic organizers develop civic repertoires for the purposes of redressing market-driven social dislocations. This synthesis suggests that economic factors may play a larger role in the civic sea change than currently acknowledged.

At this point, my study faces questions about generalizability. To what extent can my findings explain national-level developments and the entire civic sea change? To begin, my findings cannot speak to all new-line organizations. Instead, they only speak to a sub-group of those organizations: locally based non-profits. While these non-profits are a significant portion of new-line developments, the principles by which they operate may not apply to advocacy organizations or various NGOs. To this end, my study may be a useful exercise in “splitting” the category of new-line organizations into useful subgroups, each of which has its own characteristic dynamics.

Still, even for locally based non-profits, how far can we generalize my study’s findings? It’s not difficult to find other examples of organizations developing civic repertoires that allow them to effectively redress market-driven social dislocations. For one, from the NHS’s spread across the country, it’s apparent that hundreds of US communities, at the same time, faced similar problems with decline and disinvestment. However, other market-driven social dislocations have inspired other organizations to develop other sophisticated civic repertoires: in another economically depressed Pittsburgh neighborhood, organizers formed a non-profit to address problems of unemployment; in a deindustrialized suburb of Ohio, civically minded people created organizations to handle the effects of drug abuse;<sup>95</sup> in hundreds of cities across the US, organizers have created non-profits to stem violent crime;<sup>96</sup> and in a low-income community of color, organizers created a non-profit to provide childcare services for working mothers.<sup>97</sup> Thus, in each of these cases, organizers are turning to new-line organizational features to support civic repertoires that can effectively redress market-based social dislocations. While the civic repertoire hypothesis does not account for the entire civic sea change, it

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<sup>95</sup> Alexander, Brian. 2017. *Glass House: the 1% Economy and the Shattering of the All-American Town*. NY: St. Martins.

<sup>96</sup> Sharkey, Patrick, Gerard Torrats-Espinoza, and Delaram Takyar. 2017. “Community and the Crime Decline: The Causal Effect of Local Nonprofits on Violent Crime.” *American Sociological Review*. Vol. 82 (6) pp. 1214-40.

<sup>97</sup> Lopez and Stack. 2001. “Social Capital and the Culture of Power: Lessons from the Field,” Chapter 2 in *Social Capital and Poor Communities*, edited by Saeger, Thompson, and Warren. Russell Sage Foundation: pp 31-59.

appears to account for a substantial number of organizations making up the subgroup of locally based non-profits.

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