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Social Housing Renewal and the Private Sector: Tenant participation as an invited space (Refereed proceedings)

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Key Words

Public Housing – Social Housing – Neo-communitarian – Invited Space – Foucault –
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Abstract

This paper argues that place-based participation strategies, deployed by housing authorities as components of public housing estate redevelopment projects, are increasingly positioned within market-centric, technocratic and neo-communitarian (deFilippis, 2007) understandings of urban governance. This neoliberal understanding creates certain 'conditions of possibility' (Foucault, 1969) that shape and constrain the participation and consultation strategies deployed by housing authorities. These place-based participation strategies render invisible the ideological effects of neoliberalism, the market and the workings of capital by seeking to build a 'consensus seeking community' based on a functionalist approach to community building. To better understand these participation strategies a spatio-temporal research tool is put forward drawing on Cornwall's (2004) spatial metaphor of invited space. The research tool is deployed in this paper to investigate a public housing estate redevelopment project by public-private partnership in southwest Sydney. It calls into question participation strategies that consult public housing tenants *within*, and not *about*, place-based neoliberal redevelopment projects, suggesting this focus leaves aside broader questions of markets, capital and politics (deFilippis et al., 2006). The paper concludes by arguing if neoliberalism and market logic are going to continue to inform urban governance and policy, then public housing tenants should also have the opportunity to question and inform the ideological underpinnings of this urban logic (Shragge, 2003).

Introduction

While the political move toward the market in the provision and distribution of housing and housing assistance is going to be an inevitable part of urban governance, at least into the near future, the ideological project of neoliberalism is not monolithic. Instead it is politically adaptive and responsive (Larner, 2009). In the context of neoliberal urban governance, this paper argues that new forms of citizen participation need to be theorised to adapt and improve public housing tenant participation within neoliberal urban governance structures, by allowing citizens to call into question the ideological underpinnings and policy outcomes of public housing estate redevelopment strategies. This requires a rethink of place-based participation strategies that focus on defining tenants by place, under the term ‘community’, and consulting them *within*, and not *about*, place-based public housing estate redevelopment projects. ‘Community building’ approaches to urban governance structure tenant participation processes to focus on the redevelopment of place and aim to secure public housing tenant support for redevelopment projects. This focus leaves aside broader questions of markets, capital and politics (deFilippis et al., 2006). To argue this point, the paper draws on observations, document analysis and interview data from a three-year research project investigating public housing tenant participation as part of a large-scale public housing estate redevelopment (Bonnyrigg) in Sydney New South Wales. While the study used a variety of research methods, this paper is primarily focused on the document analysis and stakeholder interviews.

The first section suggests place-based participation strategies render invisible the ideological effects of neoliberalism, the market and the workings of capital. These strategies are constructed within a functionalist approach to community building based on a ‘consensus seeking community’ (Shragge, 2003; deFilippis, 2007). The second section of the paper applies a spatio-temporal research tool to investigate the Bonnyrigg public housing estate redevelopment project that will be completed by public-private partnership. The Bonnyrigg Living Communities Project (BLCP) represents a ‘shift in the system and logics’ (Peck and Tickell, 2002) in housing provision under the Australian political project of neoliberalism and is well placed for an analysis of public housing tenant participation strategies within market-centric, technocratic and neo-communitarian approaches to urban policy. The conclusion suggests the political project of neoliberalism is adaptive, responsive and contingent on time and space, and investigations into neoliberal urban governance structures should take note of these factors. It also argues that public housing participation efforts should be theorised to take note of the ideological context and conditions of possibility that structure these participation strategies. If neoliberalism and market logic are going to continue to inform urban policy and governance, then tenant participation strategies should also aim to question and inform the ideological underpinnings of this urban logic (Shragge, 2003).

Neoliberal Urban Governance: A Short History

Neoliberalism has come to mean a political move toward the ascendancy of the market in the provision and distribution of resources and increasingly social services. In short, neoliberalism is often characterised by deregulation, decentralisation and privatisation tendencies, and associated with the ‘roll-back’ of Keynesian welfare-state institutions (Gruis et al., 2009). However, as history shows, the project of neoliberalism is neither unified in ideological or political form, nor a stable or coherent response to social and economic reform (Larner, 2005). The development of neoliberal ideology has been well theorised from a range of epistemic positions and will not be rehearsed here (see Brenner and Theodore, 2002; Larner, 2009; Peck and Tickell, 2002). However, three historical shifts, each accompanied by new modes of economic and social policymaking, may best highlight the broad changes in the ideological project. From the 1970s the more abstract intellectual projects developed by the Chicago School (see Hayek, 1948; Milton, 1963) were politicised and transformed into the state-authored restructuring programs typical of what has become known in the UK as Thatcherism. Under the political project of so called ‘roll-back’ neoliberalism (Bondi and Laurie, 2005; Larner, 2009), Thatcherism, like

Reaganomics in the US and economic rationalism in Australia, advocated a small state, reduced public spending, free markets and privatisation. In other words, the first historical shift can be summarised as a shift from an intellectual project of free-market economics culminating in the 1970's to "an era of neoliberal conviction politics during the 1980s" (Peck and Tickell, 2002, p.389; Lerner, 2009).

Then from the beginning of 1990s, when the limits of Thatcherism and Reaganomics became difficult to dispute and the economic consequences of market-centric policy and social externalities became clearer in the UK and US, it seemed the political project of neoliberalism was set to implode. In a second shift, neoliberalism was re-theorised by the Washington Consensus and then Clinton and Blair reconstituted the political project to be more socially interventionist and ameliorative (Argent, 2005; Peck and Tickell, 2002). The Third Way positioned the 'community' as a site for greater democratic participation and Third Way policies were no longer solely concerned with the market or market logic (deFilippis et al., 2006). This reconstruction of neoliberalism was

increasingly associated with the political foregrounding of new modes of 'social' and penal policymaking, concerned specifically with the aggressive reregulation, disciplining, and containment of those marginalized or dispossessed by the neoliberalisation of the 1980s (Peck and Tickell, 2002, p.389).

Third Way policies in the UK and US re-conceptualised 'community' and the role of the individual in public affairs. The individual was seen as part of a "consensus-based community strategy" focused *inward*, seeking to ameliorate social concerns from the inside. However this approach paid little attention to external factors including, for instance, state intervention and capitalism (deFilippis et al., 2006; Jessop, 2002; Lerner, 2009). Civil society was viewed as an alternative to the state and market and the 'community' was positioned as the "site and solution to social problems with emphasis on associational bonds as the social glue upon which a democratic polity rests" (deFilippis et al., 2006, p.676). Social reform under 'roll-back' then 'roll-out' neoliberalism, while disparate in terms of the timing of policy deployment and the local context, was broadly united on two points. The first was a move towards more technocratic approaches for the assessment and management of economic and social 'concerns', and the second was an increasing move towards interventionist social policy within this framework (Peck and Tickell, 2002).

It is within the most recent form of so called 'roll-out' neoliberalism that new and disparate technologies of governance (Foucault, 1991) have been deployed, 'rolled-out' using different political mechanisms over the last decade in different countries (Dodson, 2006; Graefe, 2005; Hackworth, 2008). Examples of these social reforms include the establishment of Social Exclusion Units in the UK (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2004) or HOPE VI (Pokin et al., 2004) projects in the US. The metaphors of 'roll-out' and 'hardware' have been used to describe a suite of new or renewed discourses associated with social reform (i.e. the discursive (re)construction of community, welfare dependency, social capital/exclusion/inclusion or partnership). The social reforms are attached to, and accompany, the now normalised economic policies of an earlier neoliberal period. In the process, "new institutions and modes of delivery are being fashioned, and new social subjectivities are being fostered" (Peck and Tickell, 2002, p.389). A range of new technologies or institutional hardware has developed in countries that experienced dramatic state sector reform between 1970s and 1990s, most notably those of Latin America including Chile, Mexico, and Argentina, and the former liberal welfare states of United Kingdom, Canada, New Zealand and Australia (Lerner, 2009).

The above analysis of neoliberal policy and ideological development demonstrates that, while there has been a move towards the unitary logic of the market, the political project of neoliberalism is spatially and temporally variegated. The timing of policy 'roll-out' (temporal factors) and the site of intervention (spatial factors) are diverse as the political project of

neoliberalism is neither monolithic nor unified. Peck and Tickell (2002, p.387-388) suggest assessments and comparisons of neoliberal processes should take notice of “scale and scope of state intervention, forms of capital and labor market regulation, the constitution of institutions of social regulation, patterns of political resistance and political incorporation, and so forth”.

Broadly, in terms of urban governance, the most recent political manifestation of neoliberalism can be described as the normalisation of neoliberal economic policy – market-centric policy – with an increasingly technocratic approach to economic and social policy formation and the deployment of increasingly interventionist social policy. Further, deFillippis et al (2006) suggest new configurations of neoliberal approaches to urban governance also position ‘communities’ at the centre of political economics, but note

[b]ecause community efforts and theories about them are always specific to a particular time and place, analysis of theory and practice must situate the work in the varied economic, political, social and cultural sites which generate it. This is as true for political economy at the national and global levels as it is for political culture and opportunity structures at the local level. Of course there is always a dialectical interaction between larger ‘forces of history’ and often localized ‘agents of change’ (deFilippis et al., 2006, p.674).

This has led to the rediscovery of the ideal of ‘community’, calling for the “rebuilding of ‘social capital’ as a means of recreating civil society” (deFilippis et al., 2006, p.677). Under this ideological shift towards neoliberal urban governance, the market is viewed as the appropriate vehicle for social service provision, with service needs increasingly met by public–private partnerships and the not-for-profit sector. This ideological shift, combined with the ‘consensus seeking community’ proposed by new communitarians including Putnam (1993, 1995, 1996), has attracted critics. Jessop (2002) uses the construct ‘neo-liberal communitarianism’ or deFilippis (2007) uses ‘neo-communitarianism’ to describe the withdrawal of the public sector from social service provision across health, housing and workforce development, combined with the positioning of the community as both the site and vehicle for social reform (deFilippis et al., 2006, p.675).

This provides a good point of departure from the broader project of neoliberalism for the purpose of this paper. The next section turns to the development of social housing tenant participation strategies within neo-communitarian approaches to urban governance. It furthers the argument that neoliberal approaches to urban governance, and specifically social housing tenant participation strategies, are not monolithic. These approaches are contingent on time (history), space (institutional and social) and place (geographic and social) and should be conceptualised as the assemblage of these factors in the context of other discursive processes of governance (Jessop, 2002; deFilippis, 2007).

Public housing redevelopment under neo-communitarianism

Peck and Tickell (2002) use the term technocratic, in the context of ‘neoliberal spaces’, to draw attention to the more recent experience and theorisation of ‘normalised neoliberalism’ which has been associated with the “technocratic embedding of routines of neoliberal governance” (Peck and Tickell, 2002, p.384). They discuss economic and social policy development under a neoliberal agenda to describe the *technocratic* processes by which social and economic policy interventions are developed, managed and justified and to suggest these policies are increasingly mobile, “lubricated by technocratic elites, think tanks, opinion-formers, consultants, and policy networks” (Peck and Tickell, 2002, p.398).

Foucault’s (1969, 1963) governmentality thesis is useful here for it draws attention to the role of social interventionism within the project of liberalism. Foucault’s governmentality, “[t]he semantic linking of governing (‘gouverner’) and modes of thought (‘mentalité’), shows it is not possible to study the technologies of power without an analysis of the political rationality

underpinning them” (Lemke, 2001, p.191). In terms of social (and economic) interventionism, within the political project of neoliberalism, a governmentality approach provides the following insights.

The analysis demonstrates that neoliberal approaches to social reform delineate and draw borders around specific social or physical sites for intervention. In the case of public housing this could be the delineation of public housing tenants by tenure type or public housing estates from other urban categories. Then a range of concepts are borrowed, manipulated or developed to define the ‘objects’ of the intervention, giving currency to terms such as social exclusion, intergenerational disadvantage, social mix and public housing estates at the end of their economic life. Arguments and justifications are formulated based on both the delineation of these objects and sites of action and the concepts used to describe them. “In this manner, government enables a problem to be addressed and offers certain strategies for solving/handling the problem” (Lemke, 2001, p.191). In the case of urban governance, Dodson suggests the state remains central in two ways.

First, the state retains its dominant historical capacity to constitute, through discursive practices, the order of housing objects and subjects.... Secondly, government retains the capacity to effect the imagined order of housing through the institution of empirical practices of housing assistance and is the entity that is able through housing assistance practices to make “real” and apparent the abstract objects and subjects of housing discourse (Dodson, 2006, p.239).

In the context of the built environment, Rachel Weber (2002) uses the term ‘obsolescence’ to point to the way value in the built environment is appraised (and often devalued) under neoliberal approaches to urban ‘renewal’. “Obsolescence implies something out of date – a product, place, or concept displaced by modernization and progress” (Weber, 2002, p.522). Weber divides the concept into two categories: functional obsolescence, “results from changes in modern building practices and the manner in which buildings are utilized; and economic obsolescence, the factors outside of the property that reduce demand and negate its value” (Weber, 2002, p.522). Weber suggests the (re)discovery, by the state, by property developers, of obsolete places is linked to justifications for demolitions and redevelopments by the strategic stigmatising of *properties*. Further, by extending Weber’s concept of economic obsolescence, this paper argues that in the Bonnyrigg case there is also evidence of the strategic stigmatising of *place* (both physical and social).

However, it is not only the built environment that is constituted by housing policy.

Implicit in the discursive politics of housing policy are competing conceptions about what constitutes an ideal housing system. Every government programme presupposes an end of this kind – a type of person, community, organisation, society, or even world that is to be achieved (Marston, 2004, p.71)

Changes abound within social housing policy documents regarding the delineation of social subjects, physical space, their suggested pathologies and policy responses. Public housing tenants are being re-imagined as customers (NSW Department of Housing, 2004a), entire public housing estate populations are being re-imagined as socially excluded (Arthurson and Jacobs, 2003) or morally deficit (Levitas, 1998) through the deployment of concepts such as community building and new subjectivities are being propagated re-creating public housing estates as mixed communities (Galster and Zobel, 1998). As these policy metaphors are developed – to which social capital/exclusion/inclusion, social mix, community building/regeneration, disadvantage, partnership and participation belong – and various social interventions are deployed, so too have critical debates emerged regarding the contested nature of the constructs and their application in housing policy. Marston (2004, p.72) suggests the homogenising tendencies embedded within some of these discourses “denies political contestation, obscures the relations that create social

inequalities and clouds clear thinking about what could be done to create a more equitable housing system”.

There is no space here to rehearse all the policy manifestations alluded to above. However in the context of tenant participation under neo-communitarianism, the deployment of a functionalist approach to social capital theory is important to the increasing attention being paid to participation and consultation in urban renewal. While the broad boundaries of social capital theory in the context of neo-communitarianism are outlined below, it represents only a brief contextual account (for a more detailed review see Arthurson and Jacobs, 2003, 2004; Bourdieu, 1985; deFilippis, 2001, 2007).

Initial theories of social capital, including the work of Loury (1977) and Bourdieu (1985), were originally deployed to challenge the “narrowly individualistic and atomistic understanding of human capital in neoclassical economic theory” (deFilippis, 2001, p.783). However Robert Putnam (1993, 1995, 1996) is perhaps the most well known proponent of social capital (also see Coleman, 1988; Etzioni, 1997). The central tenet of Putman’s functionalist approach to social capital theory is that social contacts and networks have value. Social interactions and networks affect the productivity of individuals and groups, which is not only beneficial for those individuals directly involved, these networks are also suggested to benefit to an imagined ‘community’. However deFilippis (2007) argues concepts such as social capital have resulted in a powerful re-assertion of the ideal of community within neoliberal approaches to housing policy.

This communitarian framework is one that posits a belief that there are shared interests among individuals in a community, and thus community development should be about creating the social relationships which allow those mutual goals to be realized” (deFilippis, 2007, p.274).

Where housing policies seek, for instance, to create an ‘social mix’ of residents to build social capital, deFilippis (2007, p.272) argues these policies are premised on a move towards the market as an assumed necessity for addressing poverty and disadvantage (Arthurson, 2005; Chaskin and Joseph, 2010; Darcy, 2010b; de Souza Briggs, 2003; deFilippis, 2001; Galster and Zobel, 1998). As a result, housing policy is becoming “increasingly entrepreneurial and market-based in its understanding of urban problems and poverty, and logically, in its programmatic responses to that poverty” (deFilippis, 2007, p.272). In the US and Australia public housing tenants have been moved off public housing estates to implement various types of tenure mix strategies that are based on building social capital and community (deFilippis, 2007).

The other point deFillipis makes relates to consensus seeking and is particularly important to the deployment of tenant participation programs in public housing estate redevelopments like Bonnyrigg. Drawing on the work of McKnight (1995) and Putman (1995), housing authorities develop policies to *build shared norms* and *social networks* in poor urban settings and between diverse social subjects (and institutions) and assume these diverse groups can work towards mutual goals including *urban renewal* and *community building*. Despite the ambiguous and vague meanings applied to these terms, “[t]he basic goal is to mobilize assets to build community involving ‘virtually the entire community in the complex process of regeneration’ (Kretzmann and McKnight, 1993, p.345)” (deFilippis, 2007, p.274). This sidelining of conflict suggests these groups are not structured around or driven by interests, and “therefore do not contain a kernel of conflict... but rather are ‘features of social life – networks, norms, and trust – that enable participants to come together to pursue shared objectives’ (Putnam, 1996, p.43)” (deFilippis, 2007, p.274). In the Bonnyrigg case, the state housing authority expressed this neo-communitarian logic by calling for the creation of

a community that facilitates social interaction and neighbourhood support and makes it possible for residents to be involved in neighbourhood and volunteer activities... [that] actively promote social cohesion, the development of social networks and social interaction in the Estate (NSW Department of Housing, 2004a, p.11).

This rediscovery of the ideal of community, calling for the “rebuilding of ‘social capital’ as a means of recreating civil society” (deFilippis et al., 2006, p.677), represents an ideological shift towards neoliberal urban governance where the market is viewed as the appropriate vehicle for social services provision to be increasingly met by public–private partnerships and the not-for-profit sector. This ideological shift, combined with the consensus seeking community proposed by Putnam (1993, 1995, 1996) and others, has also provided the impetus for new forms of tenant participation strategies within urban governance. It is this conceptualisation of community – the concept of community as deployed within neoliberal urban governance – that is most relevant to the privatisation approaches in Australia and this study. In terms of ‘involving public housing tenants in the decisions that affect their lives’ (NSW Department of Housing, 2004a, 2004b), Jessop (2002), Shragge (2003) and others suggest these processes have stifled other forms of tenant activism and diverted attention away from the devolution of the state and the workings of capital(ism) under neoliberalism.

An emphasis on ‘the bottom line’, building ‘partnerships’ with local businesses and corporations, developing ‘relationships’ and focusing on ‘community assets’ has narrowed conceptions of community activism; for example, squeezing out conflict models from the community organizer’s arsenal of strategies and tactics. Moreover, most contemporary models of community building and development focus exclusively on the local internal community, not the economic, political and social decisions, which rest outside the community and create community needs and concerns (deFilippis et al., 2006, p.675).

Unsurprisingly, activism has become something of a dirty word within neoliberal (urban) governance (Jessop, 2002; Shragge, 2003). With housing authorities developing strategies and policies aimed, in part, at reducing tenant ‘opposition’ to, by promoting tenant ‘participation’ in, public housing redevelopments, as shown below. Activism is seen as an anachronistic response to addressing social problems and dealing with social change, and counter to the “focus on moderate strategies and tactics such as community building, asset and capacity building, or consensus organising (deFilippis et al., 2006, p.677). In other words, neo-communitarianism flags, in part, a move away from activism and toward consensus building within neoliberal urban governance. “This conception masks structural divisions, blurs political sides and interests, and eliminates dissenting voices” (deFilippis et al., 2006, p.676). This is important for

[w]hen mobilising participation, the discourse of neoliberalism does not necessarily prompt the creation of alternatives. Rather, the discussion and generation of knowledge about neoliberalism can stymie participants’ hopes for other worlds and strengthen neoliberal discourse (Roelvink, 2009, p.1).

The ‘conditions of possibility’ (Foucault, 1969) within the political project of neoliberalism constrain participation, and there is a growing body of literature (see Cornwell, 2004; Cooke and Kothari, 2001; Hickey and Mohan, 2004; Cornwall, 2004, 2008; Cornwall and Schattan P. Coelho, 2007) that suggests concepts such as capacity building, community development and participation are not the problem;

‘it is the context in which they are practices that is key’. It is that context which needs to be integrated into analyses and targeted by community efforts and theorists, not ignored or supported with adaptive theories about community intervention that implicitly adjust social change efforts to prevailing norms (Shragge, 2003, p.123).

Thus far this paper has argued that an analysis of neo-communitarian approaches to urban governance, and specifically an analysis of social housing tenant participation strategies using governmentality, draws attention to: spatial factors including the institutional, social and geographical sites of policy formation and deployment; and temporal factors including time/history. It also suggested the discursive processes of neo-communitarian governance

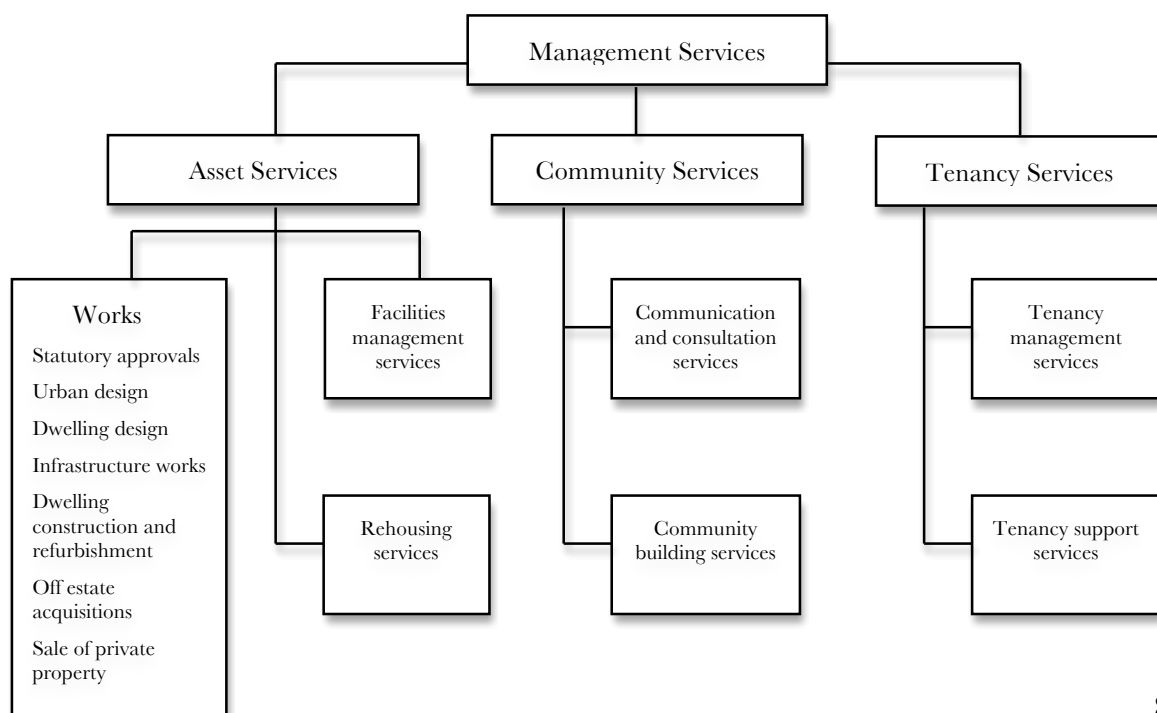
construct particular notions of community capacity building, community development and community participation that are based on consensus and mutual interest and research should also call into question the discursive processes that animate these constructs. For, as neo-Foucauldian theorists (Barry et al., 1996; Collier, 2009; Lazzarato, 2009; Lemke, 2001) suggest, these constructions may render invisible a broader exercise of power, albeit an exercise of power by the state *at-a-distance* (Foucault, 1969, 1963; Foucault, 1991). The next section will outline a spatio-temporal model for investigating public housing tenant participation, in the context of neo-communitarian approaches to urban governance and the ‘conditions of possibility’ within the political project of neoliberalism, using the case of the Bonnyrigg Living Communities Project (BLCP) in Sydney, Australia.

Bonnyrigg Living Communities Project

The Bonnyrigg Living Communities Project was announced in late December 2004. The 81-hectare Bonnyrigg Public Housing estate (Estate) is in southwest Sydney. When the redevelopment project was announced the Estate included 927 dwellings comprised of 812 public housing, 13 Indigenous Housing, 3 community housing and 99 privately owned dwellings. The estate population at the time of announcement was approximately 3100 (NSW Department of Housing, 2004a, p.16). With the exception of some individual dwellings sold to private investors by the state housing authority over the past 30-years, the private housing was predominantly located in a small enclave in the southwest corner of the Estate. The remaining public stock was owned and managed by the state housing authority until project announcement.

The state housing authority originally developed the green field site as public housing in the late 1970’s, using the ‘Radburn’ design principle. Over the last 30 years the estate has served as an entry point for refugees and other migrants and had a significant proportion of tenants from non-English speaking backgrounds at the time of announcement (Coates et al., 2008). The BLCP public-private partnership is a single contract arrangement between the state housing authority and a consortium company for a 30-year period that covers both the delivery of physical infrastructure and social objectives. The suite of social deliverables includes tenancy management, community building, consultation and communication. The contract is managed under a performance based fee structure and will see an increase in the net housing stock across the estate from about 900 to 2330 dwellings over the next 10-20 years. An overview of the services provided by the consortium company is outlined below.

Figure 1 – Services provided by the consortium company under the BLCP (Muilligan and Randolph, 2009, p.35)



Spatio-temporal investigation of tenant participation

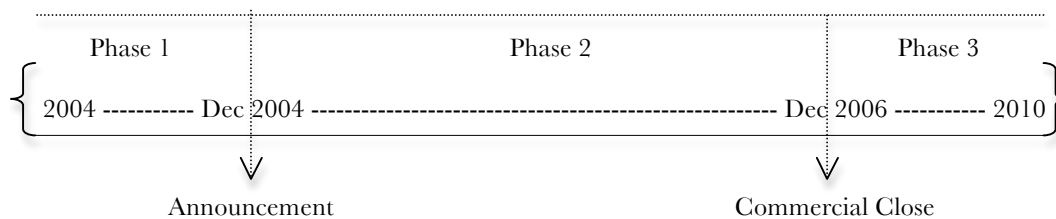
A spatio-temporal research tool was developed for this PhD study using a timeline taken from the BLCP public-private partnership and divided into three contractual phases. This was used as a broad temporal reference. The spatio-temporal research tool and methodology used Cornwall's (Cornwall, 2004, 2008; Cornwall and Schattan P. Coelho, 2007) 'invited space' to investigate the spatial factors. The delineation of temporal factors and creation of invited space by the state housing authority are outlined below.

The timeline for the research project and BLCP delineated three phases of public-private partnership contract deployment. These phases are aligned with the key phases identified in texts by the state housing authority. The three phases are:

- Phase 1:** The period preceding and including announcement of the BLCP public-private partnership (until December 2004)
- Phase 2:** The period from project announcement to commercial close of the BLCP public-private partnership (December 2004 – December 2006)
- Phase 3:** The period from commercial close of the BLCP public-private partnership and including transition to the private partner (from December 2006)

These three are represented as temporal phases below in Figure 2.

Figure 2 – Temporal Phases: Three phases of project deployment in BLCP



Cornwall's (2004) spatial metaphor of invited space was used to draw attention to the dynamics of 'power and difference' within and between the new participation and consultation spaces created in BLCP. The construct of invited space helped frame the analysis to look outside the BLCP to consider tenant participation in the context of the political project of neo-communitarianism and to show how each space was discursively constructed from a range of ideological or interest positions. Using invited space also focused the analysis on the type of activities tasked to specific spaces and to identify the social subjects invited into each space.

Talking in terms of spaces for participation conveys the situated nature of participation, the bounded yet permeable arenas in which participation is invited... It allows us to think about the ways in which particular sites come to be populated, appropriated or designed by particular actors for particular kinds of purposes; its metaphorical qualities allow attention to be paid to issues of discursive closure, ...to the absence of opportunity as well as to the dynamism of political agency in forging new possibilities for voice. By illuminating the dynamics of power, voice and agency... (Cornwell, 2004, p.292).

Therefore, Cornwell suggests the claims that are made about the transformational potential of one invited space – for example the capacity for a community consultation event to change a particular project directive – are contingent on the decisions taken in other sites and spaces. The conditions of possibility within neoliberal approaches to urban governance constrain the decisions to include or exclude particular social subjects. Including or excluding social subjects are interest laden decisions and can therefore be viewed as the exercise of power (Foucault, 1969), although

these decisions are also dialectally related to the institutional structures that discursively construct them. Cornwall (2004, p.292) suggests, drawing on the work of Lefebvre (1991),

...the boundaries between such spaces are unstable: those who participate in any given space are also, necessarily, participants in others; moving between domains of association, people carry with them experiences and expectations that influence how they make use of their agency when they are invited to participate, or when they create their own spaces.

The concept of invited space is used at two levels of abstraction in this research tool. At the macro level of the BLCP, it is used to delimit the broad redevelopment processes within three phases of redevelopment project deployment. These redevelopment processes include those outlined above; framing the redevelopment project; community consultation; selection of the private partner; and private sector management of the redevelopment project. Invited space is also deployed at the micro level of the BLCP to delimit specific ephemeral or long-term processes within these macro spaces and to investigate specific state, private sector or independent tenant initiatives (Cornwall, 2004). These include individual community consultation events, specific private partner selection processes or the activity of social housing tenant groups.

The deployment of invited space in this study also moves beyond the concept outlined by Cornwall. While Cornwall commonly uses the construct to discuss the spaces created by government departments and non-government organisations designed for formal and semi-formal participation by citizens, and Cornwall does draw attention to who is invited and not invited, little attention is paid to the construction of parallel spaces for *participation* by different social subjects within a *single* project. This study extends the concept of invited space to include processes that may not have been identified as consultation or participation spaces by the state housing authority, the private sector or social housing tenants, but represent important participation sites. The creation of parallel spaces within neoliberal urban governance, for public housing tenants and the private sector to engage independently with the state housing authority, are important sites for analysis as these are structured by the conditions of possibility within neoliberal urban governance.

Exploring whether social housing tenants requested involvement in these *uninvited* spaces or reflecting on their *nonparticipation* in these spaces became important research tasks. Therefore, while some spaces have been defined as invited in the study, they have been defined as such to draw attention to the invitees: outlining who was invited and who was not invited by focusing on who created and controlled these processes. But it was important to also show how the technocratic embedding of routines of neoliberal governance in urban policymaking (deFilippis et al., 2006) in Australia shaped the BLCP model, community building and tenant participation strategies. To outline these processes, four macro level invited spaces were identified and added to the temporal factors outlined above in Figure 2. These include:

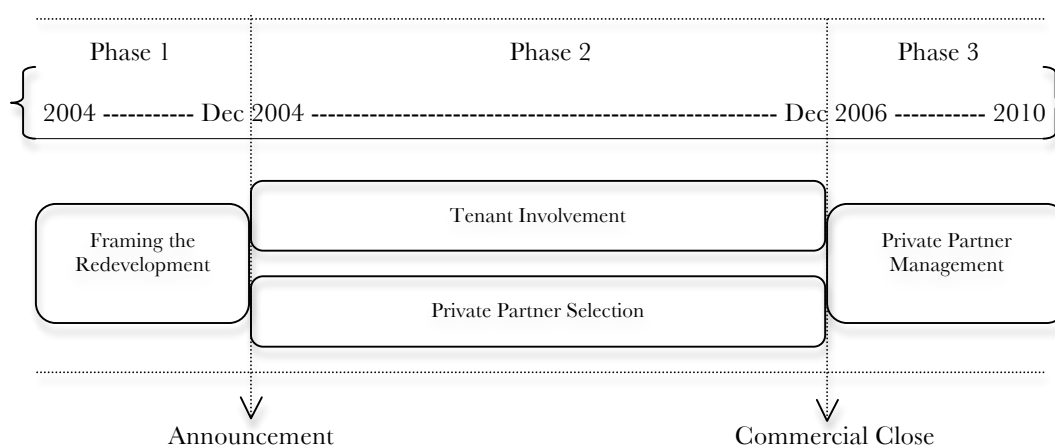
Invited Space 1:	Framing the Redevelopment Project
Temporal location:	Prior to and concluding in December 2004
Description:	‘Framing the Redevelopment Project’ focused on the period leading up to the announcement of the BLCP public-private partnership. In this space the state housing authority set many of the infrastructure and social objectives of the redevelopment project.
Invited Space 2:	Selection of the Private Partner
Temporal location:	December 2004 – December 2006
Description:	‘Selection of the Private Partner’ focused on the expression of interest, detailed proposals and selection of the preferred proponent for the BLCP public-private partnership. In this space the state housing authority invited the private sector to bid for the public-private partnership.

Invited Space 3: Community Consultation
 Temporal location: December 2004 – December 2006
 Description: ‘Community Consultation’ focused on the capacity building and consultation spaces the state housing authority created and invited public housing tenants to attend.

Invited Space 4: Private Sector Management
 Temporal location: From December 2006
 Description: ‘Private Sector Management’ focused on the ‘transition’ of responsibility for the public-private partnership from the state housing authority to the successful private proponent for 30 years.

These were represented on the spatio-temporal research tool as below.

Figure 3 – Macro spatio-temporal considerations

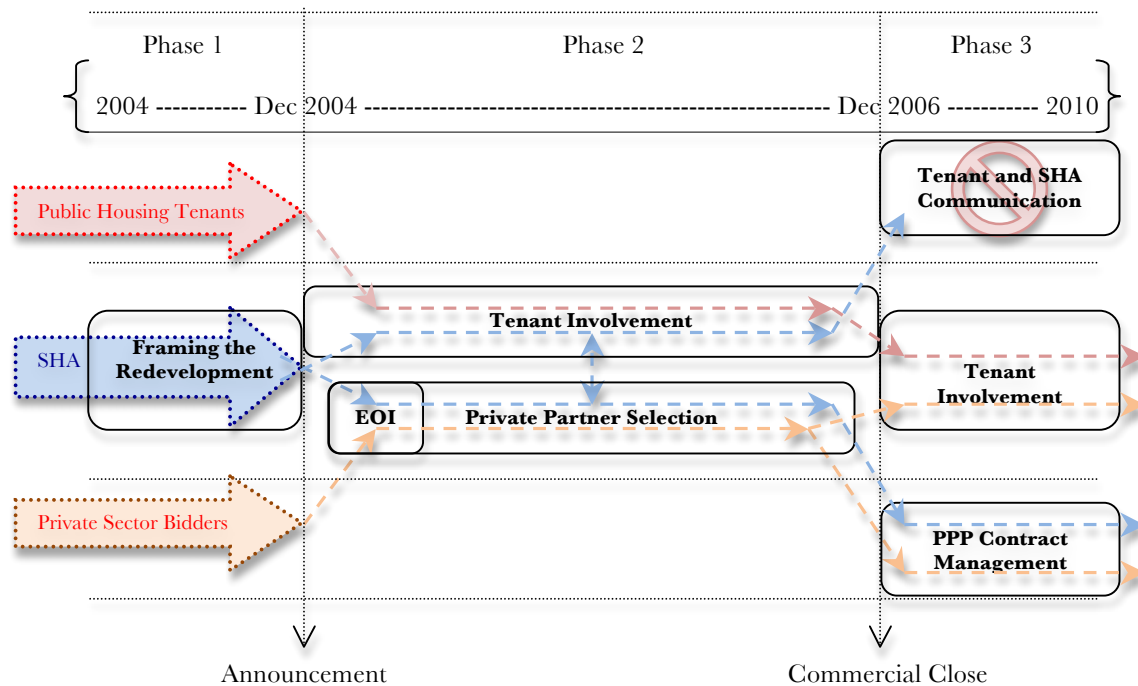


From the macro spatio-temporal construction of the BLCP outlined above, it was possible to identify, investigate and compare specific invited spaces over the first 5 years of the project. The study utilised a combination of action research with public housing tenants, including co-generation of research questions with tenants, and an informal research partnership with the private management company (PMC) selected to undertake the public-private partnership. The analysis included critical discourse analysis of texts (Fairclough, 1989, 1992, 2003), observations over a 2-year period between 2008-09 and 20 semi-structured interviews with PMC staff, public housing tenants and external consultants involved in the redevelopment project. However, the study also draws on the experiences of the researcher as an ‘insider’ (Braithwaite et al., 2007; Coghlan and Holian, 2007; Kalei Kanuha, 2000) while employed by the state housing authority within the Community Building Team between mid 2005 and the commencement of the action research project in 2007. The PMC informally supported the study leading to the author working closely with both the PMC and public housing tenants between early 2007 and late 2009. The documents selected for analysis included public-private partnership project and contract documents, visual images, promotional material, interview transcripts and research diary entries.

From this analysis, social subjects and entities were added to the spatio-temporal research tool to highlight which social subjects propagated each invited space. These included public housing tenants, the state housing authority and private sector bidders. Further, in the Figure 4 below, the *Expression of Interest* process for the public-private partnership was added to *Private Partner Selection*, and *Private Partner Management* in Phase 3 is divided into *Tenant and State Housing*

Authority (SHA) Communication, Tenant Involvement and Public-private Partnership (PPP) Contract Management.

Figure 4 – Macro spatio-temporal considerations with social subjects



At the macro level, a spatio-temporal analysis of the BCLP using Cornwall’s invited space offers several key insights, a selection of these are put forward below. In Phase 1 the state housing authority framed the redevelopment project and constructed the redevelopment model without inviting public housing tenants (or the private sector). There was no consultation with public housing tenants prior to the announcement of the project. When the public-private partnership Expression of Interest (NSW Department of Housing, 2004a) was issued the state housing authority had already decided on a public to private tenure ratio, housing density targets and to implement the project by public-private partnership with specific social objectives over 30 years. More importantly, the state housing authority had also broadly decided on the structures for tenant involvement in the project and how tenants would ‘engage’ with the state housing authority and the private sector. These strategies were clearly informed, as will become clearer in Phase 2 below, by a neo-communitarianism approach to community building. One community consultation consultant interviewed suggested their expertise ‘was used to develop engagement processes that fitted with the model prescribed by the state housing authority’ and the ‘engagement’ strategies they proposed. This consultant suggested, ‘had the scope been wider, they could have recommended different ‘engagement’ strategies or processes’. Therefore, the first spatio-temporal consideration in Phase 1 was the absence of public housing tenants in the framing of the redevelopment project. Tenants were unaware of any plans to redevelop their Estate until project announcement by which time many of the key infrastructure and social targets had been set.

Another important aspect of Phase 1, but to which there is little room to explore here, was the way the Estate and tenants were stigmatised (Weber, 2002; Arthurson, 2004) through the process of announcing and justifying the redevelopment project. For example, the Bonnyrigg baseline study suggested six months after announcement of BCLP

... that residents are generally very positive about life in Bonnyrigg, have a strong attachment to their community, and intend to remain long-term residents of their area (Stubbs et al., 2005b, p.11).

In spite of this, the BLCP project documents positioned public housing tenants as a community that required ‘community building’ living on an estate ‘at the end of its economic life’ (NSW Department of Housing, 2004a). While the media reported under the headline

Sydney’s hellhole estate to be bulldozed

Sydney's failed public housing experiments of the 1970s are set to be bulldozed in a NSW government plan to breathe new life into troubled suburbs... the 81ha Bonnyrigg estate... will be transformed, with the private sector invited to bulldoze large sections and replace them with public and private housing (Sydney Morning Herald, 2004).

In Phase 2 the state housing authority created two *parallel* invited spaces; one space to ‘involve’ public housing tenants in the redevelopment; and another space to ‘select’ the private partner. Due to a real or perceived requirement for distance between public housing tenants and the private sector, the state housing authority mandated distance between these two social entities and the two invited spaces. These requirements were ‘real’ in the sense that the conditions of possibility construct public-private partnerships in this way, requiring distance between various social entities and justifying these processes through the construction of commercial arrangements, public-private partnership probity requirements and private sector selection processes. The requirement for distance was ‘perceived’ in the sense that there are other possible redevelopment configurations and relationships to the market. The state housing authority (NSW Department of Housing, 2004a) did not permit the private sector to engage or consult public housing tenants during the bidding process. Instead in Phase 2, the state housing authority ‘involved’ and ‘consulted’ tenants under the broad schema of ‘community engagement’ (Coates et al., 2008). Under this schema, knowledge was fragmented, packaged and commodified (Fairclough, 1992). This framing fits well with neo-communitarian urban policy development and the technocratic defining of social ‘concerns’ and remedies outlining above. The schema is outlined briefly below.

Figure 4: Schema for ‘Community Engagement’ in BLCP

INFORMATION ⇒ CONSULTATION ⇒ PARTICIPATION ⇒ CAPACITY BUILDING

(Coates et al., 2008, p.3)

The re-assertion of the ideal of ‘community’, including the need to ‘build community’, and the suggested need to recreate civil society through ‘capacity building’ and ‘participation’ were clear drivers in this strategy. *Building a stronger community* was one of three BLCP objectives, as was assisting public housing tenants through community engagement to be “better able to meet the challenges which face it and work for common purposes” (Coates et al., 2008, p.3). In short, the community building strategy aspired to make tenants better citizens through the pursuit of a common goal, namely ‘community building’.

As the state housing authority suggests:

At each point, the project aims to build community capacity through the development of increased skills, confidence and leadership. These processes are designed to increase the capacity of the community to champion its own interests and speak on its own behalf... In

particular, capacity building was mostly achieved by leveraging off consultation or community project activity, rather than as stand alone activity (Coates et al., 2008, p.9).

In other excerpts community support for the physical changes is linked to “community participation in projects to implement those changes and build ownership, community pride and social cohesion - all critical to the success of new communities” (Coates et al., 2008, p.9).

On this point, it is important not to conflate the neo-communitarian ideological positioning and framing of community building and tenant participation with the *techniques* used for citizen participation. The former is concerned with the meaning of participation, and not just the practice, while the latter is concerned with how the participation practitioner operates or the specificities of the techniques and tools employed (Cooke and Kothari, 2001). Indeed, the state housing authority recently won two professional association awards for public participation innovation for work modeled on the BLCP community engagement approach. These awards may well speak to the success of the participation *techniques* and *tools* employed and suggest state housing authorities have the skills to conduct such activities, although the political will seems to fluctuate. Indeed there is a growing body of literature (Cooke and Kothari, 2001; Cornwall, 2008; Hickey and Mohan, 2004) that concludes the techniques and tools of participation, capacity building and community development are not the problem. Instead, as outlined above, it is the ideological “context in which they are practices that is key” (Shragge, 2003, p.123).

As Shragge (2003) suggests, the ideological context, in this case neo-communitarianism and market logic, are integrated into community efforts directed at social change, and needs to be explicated and questioned. If neo-communitarianism and market logic are going to continue to inform urban policy and governance, then tenant participation strategies should also aim to question and inform the ideological underpinnings of this urban logic. In the BLCP the ideological context of the redevelopment was off the consultation agenda and the state housing authority collected and collated (gate-kept) ‘data’ from the community consultations and presented it to the private sector in Phase 2. In short, ‘community’ and other ‘knowledge’ was fragmented, packaged and commodified.

A PMC staff member involved in the bidding process reflected:

There were hurdles along the way. The lack of community consultation till after the bid was closed made it very difficult. While there was community consultation done by housing [state housing authority], that information was limited to the changes that are coming. There wasn’t... it didn’t include – what do you think of things? How do we need to change things? What should we be doing? (Quote from semi structured interviews).

The other important point regarding Phase 2 was the ideological positioning towards a ‘consensus seeking community’ that provided the impetus for the community engagement strategy in the BLCP. Jessop (2002) and deFilippis (2007) suggest the emphasis on consensus seeking stifles other forms of tenant activism and rules out interest positions. A common message in project documents during Phase 2 was public housing tenants, the state housing authority and private sector needed to work in partnership towards common goals. Examples include those above or statements like “sustainable renewal of Public Housing estates... can only happen through partnership, with tenants and other residents, the private and community sectors, local councils and government departments all working together” (NSW Department of Housing, 2004a, p.9). Not only do consensus seeking approaches assume common interests are shared amongst diverse stakeholders they also, by way of process, work towards public tenant ‘buy-in’ to a particular deployment of neo-communitarianism, market logic and public housing estate redevelopment advocated, either implicitly or explicitly, by the state housing authority. Indeed it seems the logic and market orientation of neo-communitarianism requires tenant participation to be justified in these terms, as demonstrated by the following assertion by the state housing authority “[t]hat community engagement is an effective risk mitigation strategy” demonstrated by “[l]ow levels of

opposition to the project indicated by few negative media reports and no representations to the minister or local politicians opposing the project” (Coates et al., 2008, p.3).

In this way more traditional forms of independent tenant organising – often supported by formal or semi-formal tenant groups funded in part by housing authorities, but also through other non-government organisations and volunteer groups – are both seen as a threat and are threatened under neo-communitarian approaches to urban governance as the BLCP shows (see Phase 3 below). Certainly the state housing authority’s history with redevelopment projects like Minto, also in southwest Sydney, helped shore-up political support for ‘community engagement as an effective risk mitigation strategy’ in Bonnyrigg. In Minto, public housing tenants responded to claims made about their ‘estate’ and their ‘community’ – like the claims made about Bonnyrigg including ‘troubled estates’ and ‘dwellings at the end of its economic life’ that are linked, in parts, to neoliberal appraisals of urban space (Weber, 2002) – by challenging and providing their own accounts, narratives and research (Stubbs et al., 2005a). This contestation over meaning, by interested parties, should be seen as a normal, necessary and informative component of urban redevelopment.

In Phase 3 the state housing authority reconfigured the invited spaces again. The tenant involvement invited space, previously occupied by the state housing authority and public housing tenants in Phase 2, was reconfigured as a space for the private sector and public housing tenants in Phase 3. Public housing tenants, who had previously been involved in extensive community engagement activities with the state housing authority, with no access to the private sector bidders, were now in ‘transition’ from public to private management. This meant they could no longer *talk* to the state housing authority and instead were directed *to take their concerns* to the PMC (see Figure 4 – Macro spatio-temporal considerations with social subjects).

While the most immediate concern for the PMC through transition was to develop communication and management process between the four consortium entities and the PMC (Rogers, 2010), the four entities - a private developer, a major bank, a property maintenance company and a non-profit housing manager - had very different operational frameworks coming into the project. Additionally, the redevelopment project was now operating in the (housing) market and the PMC had to sell houses to part finance the project. As a result, all the consortium ‘partners’ were operating under a common contract, setting up processes to meet key performance indicators set by the PMC and public-private partnership contract.

A PMC staff member summarised this orientation to market- and community-centric urban policy by saying

... you know the bottom line, we’ve gotta sell homes. If we don’t sell homes, the project stops... You can waft around the outside as much as you like but what we’ve got there at the moment is we’ve got a community that generally we want to keep. We want to give them all new homes. To do that is a financial constraint. We need to bring the other community [private home-owners] in to pay for that financial constraint, and at the end of the day there’s a financial and commercial outcome. So, maintain the community, renew the infrastructure – the homes – bring the community [private home-owners] in to do that, and pay for it... Ideally we’d love to do it in two years, it takes thirteen, it’s long, it’s drawn out, but to maintain the community... that’s it, we need to maintain the community so there’s all those aims and constraints on that so we look after the community, we community consult, we work with them, we provide them with input on the homes, we bring them along for the ride... (Quote from semi structured interviews).

The spatio-temporal research tool was also used for more detailed microanalysis, again not explored here in any detail. The study looked at the construction of micro level invited spaces like one-off community consultation events or changes in the Independent Tenant Advocate Service

within each phase of BLCP deployment. The Independent Tenant Advocate Service provides a good illustration of the utility for micro level analysis within this research tool.

The tenant advocate position in Bonnyrigg, while not explicitly expressed in BLCP documents in Phase 1 was clearly swayed by the state housing authority's experience in Minto. The Minto redevelopment project announced in 2002 had a significant influence on tenant participation practices in Bonnyrigg. Like Bonnyrigg, the Minto redevelopment project in South-West Sydney employed a 'partnership' approach including the state housing authority, local council and a development corporation. However a significant proportion of social housing tenants were required to relocate off the estate permanently. There was limited, if any, communication with tenants prior to the announcement and many tenants reported learning of the redevelopment from news coverage (Darcy, 2010a; Stubbs et al., 2005a). As a result the Minto redevelopment raised considerable tenant opposition consolidated around the Minto Residents' Action Group, which was established in June 2002. The first homes were demolished in July 2002. Darcy (2010, p.17) citing (Stubbs 2005) suggests the lack of tenant involvement

...became a significant motivator in the initiation, by tenants, of the Leaving Minto study, which in turn forced the proponents of the redevelopment to dramatically modify their discursive strategy and practices. Consultation arrangements and mediating organisations were rapidly brought into being, and the Department of Housing funded the employment by a non-government organisation of an independent tenants' advocate.

Darcy (2010a, p.14), following Stubbs et al (2005a; 2005b), suggests in "Bonnyrigg, after public criticism of the Minto experience, an extensive program of community engagement was developed" which included a proposal for a tenant advocate service. The Bonnyrigg tenant advocate service is a good illustration of the way the market and neo-communitarianism reshaped tenant participation processes in this social housing public-private partnerships. As a brief overview, the Bonnyrigg Tenants' Support and Advocacy Service (BTSAS) was established in Phase 2 in June 2006. The stated aim of BTSAS was to provide tenancy information and advocacy to social housing tenants 'affected by the redevelopment project' (Coates et al., 2008). Therefore, the service was established to focus on place in the context of an existing redevelopment model. Although the scope and function of the role were clearly influenced by the state housing authority's experience in Minto and their engagement with the Minto tenant advocate service, the state housing authority reconfigured the role for Bonnyrigg and structured the advocate position to be more aligned with the broader aims of the redevelopment project. The state housing authority funded a non-government organisation to provide the service until transition to the private sector. However tensions developed around the capacity of the service to 'advocate' on behalf of tenants with the non-government organisation claiming the scope for advocacy was too narrow. In Phase 2 (2006) BTSAS employed one full time staff member (35 hrs per week) and 5 part time workers (7 –10 hrs per week each). Following transition the scope of the service was renegotiated (Rogers, 2010).

In Phase 3 following transition, the market orientation (contract) and ideological (neo-communitarian) framing had significant effects. First the PMC renegotiated the scope of the service with the non-government organisation and the state housing authority. Clearly the structure of the public-private partnership contract and the market orientation (see Figure 1 – Services provided by the consortium company under the BLCP on page 8) are important considerations here. In any case, the PMC suggested their 'in-house' community development team were resourced and funded, indeed required by the contract, to provide the 'support' component of the service, offering the non-government organisation the 'independent advocacy' component only. The non-government organisation continued the service under a new name, Bonnyrigg Independent Tenant Advocacy Service (BITAS), but also under a new funding agreement, which cut the funding to a part-time employee (21 hrs per week). At the conclusion of the funding agreement, in mid 2009, a new non-government organisation began running the service (Rogers, 2010).

While this type of service rationalisation is an expected and ‘normal’ part of private sector management, the tenant advocate service in Bonnyrigg has moved in a very different direction from the service in Minto. The reporting requirements attached to the funding agreement – for example the requirement to report the number of *individual* cases to the PMC, or the requirement to develop specific capacity building projects including a *Tenants Rights and Responsibilities Workshop* – demonstrate a connection to the broad redevelopment aims, ideological framing and orientation to meet market conditions under the private partnership contract (Rogers, 2010).

Leaving tenants to suggest:

But the ones [tenant advocates] that try to stick up for us, they get rid of... [tenant advocate] used to get howled down because [they’d] be trying to tell something what was important and they’d say – no, that’s not ready for this meeting.”... “Make it briefer, make it briefer, should report that at a separate meeting... Yes. Yeah, you get that all the time.”... “We weren’t supposed to hear it (Quote from semi structured interviews).

...it’s not strong. I don’t think advocacy is strong here at all... They only do individual stuff... Apart from that they had no big impact (Quote from semi structured interviews).

For tenants, the tenant advocate service should be able to represent the ‘collective’ concerns of tenants even if these concerns fall outside of, or even contradict, the broad redevelopment aims, contract and redevelopment model. Tenants feel the reporting requirements and funding mechanisms of the tenant advocacy service work against public housing tenant advocacy (Rogers, 2010).

Tenants suggest this is

partly because [tenant advocates are] being paid to do just that. They’ve got a role and they’re paid by... before they were paid by Housing [state housing authority]... and now BP [PMC] so they’re told you do this, you do that... (Quote from semi structured interviews).

In conclusion, the independence of the tenant advocate service is also directly linked to the funding and accountability structures necessitated by the public-private partnership contract. Tenants found it difficult to accept the service was ‘independent’ when the PMC were funding the service and the advocates were reporting to the PMC.

Conclusion

This paper argues the conditions of possibility within neoliberal urban governance, while contingent on time and space, structure public housing tenant participation strategies in particular ways. Therefore participation efforts should be theorised to take note of the ideological context, to question and inform the ideological underpinnings of this urban logic. It accepts the political project of neoliberalism will continue to inform urban governance, but points to some of the limits inherent to participation strategies within the political project. It suggests the participation of public housing tenants in redevelopment projects should be tenant led and directs participation efforts to challenge the ideological constructions of meaning attached to public housing tenants and public housing estates. To achieve this participation must, in the first instant, accept conflict as an inevitable but possibly productive, social reality. Participation must engage with the political project of neoliberalism and therefore question the use of the market, state devolution, ‘concentrated disadvantage’, ‘neighbourhood effects’ etc. Similarly, the review and assessment of participation strategies must not only focus on the technical *tools* of participation (Arnstein, 1969), but instead on the capacity to challenge the (mis)representations put forward by others. This is part of the inherent conflict of our society; the perpetual cycle of individuals and groups making claims of truth is always connected to issues of power. By definition and design public-

private partnerships will work to fulfill their stated aims and ruling out conflict also rules out the inherent power relations within neoliberalism (Foucault, 1969; deFilippis, 2007).

But how can this be achieved? To these questions I only have a few thoughts. First it requires a rethink of the role of the state and the private sector in citizen participation. In the Bonnyrigg case both the state and the private sector demonstrated a political and organisational commitment to undertake participation initiatives and developed the technical *skills* to involve public housing tenants. However, these participation initiatives were focused on the redevelopment of place and did not, or more correctly could not, question the neoliberal political economy of urban governance or the subjugating effects of these strategies. Public housing tenant participation needs to be theorised in the context of neo-communitarian conceptions of community and the decline of community organising and activism. As such, participation initiatives may be better focused if they: (1) embraced conflict; (2) worked outside the structures of the market and neoliberalism to call into question the ideological and political effects; (3) took note of spatio-temporal considerations but worked outside place-based participation models; and (4) brought public housing tenants together under issues-based participation models, possibly located in, but not specifically focused on, place. However these four factors are unlikely within, and would probably work to undermine, current approaches to neoliberal urban governance. Therefore other invited spaces might need to be theorised and created to accommodate these factors, involving new roles for the state, private sector and public housing tenants.

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