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Abstract

Critical urban research arising from the 'new urban politics' rich heritage has conventionally privileged the politics of accumulation and the city's downtown over the politics of social reproduction and everyday, residential spaces. This paper focuses on residential spaces and the politics involved in recasting everyday practices of social reproduction through private neighbourhood governance. Focusing on the masterplanned estates increasingly prevalent across Sydney's residential landscape, it explores the material practices and subjectivities shaped by these estates' contractual governance and the contours and limits to the formation of self-governing middle-class consumer citizens. The paper highlights a granular fabric to urban politics produced as residents engage with meeting the demands of daily urban life and providing the means of middle-class social reproduction in a neo-liberalised context. Finally, it points to opportunities for a more complete grammar of contemporary urban politics provided by this expanded focus.

Keywords

estates, social, masterplanned, governing, reproduction, sydney, life, everyday, politics, urban

Disciplines

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Rethinking urban politics: new directions in governing social reproduction and everyday life in the city

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ABSTRACT

The rich heritage of the 'new urban politics' has sustained a brand of critical urban research and theorisation that has conventionally focused on the politics of accumulation and the city's downtown over the politics of social reproduction and its everyday, residential spaces. This paper uses the lens of social reproduction and its changing governance in the everyday living spaces of the city to raise questions about the politics of the urban and its theorisation. We consider the material practices and subjectivities sustained in everyday practices of social reproduction enacted in new forms of residential governance. Focusing on Sydney, and the masterplanned estates now increasingly prevalent across the city's residential landscape, we explore these estates' governance and its role in the formation of self-governing, self-regulating middle-class consumer citizens. In undertaking a detailed investigation of the contours of and limits to the realisation of consumer-citizen identities and the contractual management of behaviour, we highlight a complex and granular fabric to urban politics that is produced as residents both adopt and contest new material practices and subjectivities concerned with meeting the demands of daily urban life and providing the means of middle class social reproduction. Finally, we point to the need for an expanded focus in studies of urban politics to incorporate social production and residential life and, additionally, to engage with both structural-contextual shifts and with the material practices and experiences of residents.

Introduction: the New Urban Politics, urban social reproduction and beyond

The 'new urban politics' (NUP) literature has sustained a rich vein of critical urban research and theorisation: one particularly attuned to identifying the neoliberalisation of urban politics and the effect on urban political processes of harnessing states' public capacities to securing market competitiveness and accumulation. In this literature the formation of business-oriented policy regimes, the local politics of enabling competitive global exchange-relations and the (re)generation of urban spaces of production are at the forefront. The dominant drivers of urban governance and governmental rationalities, of urban politics and of urban landscape transformation are taken, primarily, to be the logics of global capitalist production, spatial competition for mobile investment flows and the economic-functional needs of a globally competitive city (McCann 2004, Purcell 2002, Ward and Jonas 2004, Jonas and Ward 2007). Consequently, this literature has had a more limited contribution to make on matters of urban social reproduction and the social relations of urban collective consumption and on the local politics of urban living spaces (Gough 2002, Ward and Jonas 2004, Mansvelt 2008)¹. Urban social reproduction—a set of material practices deeply related to the everyday living spaces of the city, the management of collective provision and consumption, and related strategies and struggles—is relegated, and its positioning in the restructuring of urban spaces, urban governance and indeed urban subjectivities, fades from view.

One result is that the NUP framework and its dominance in the critical urban literature has contributed towards a lack of in-depth understanding of; first, the strategies and material practices that urban households and individuals adopt in their everyday lives to meet the conditions for social reproduction; second, the subjectivities that are generated in relation to these strategies and practices; and third, an understanding of the urban politics these strategies, practices and subjectivities sustain. In this paper, we argue for an

¹ In terms of engagement with social reproduction, the wider literature on urban neoliberalism has tracked urban dimensions of the crisis of the welfare state (Jessop 2002), general tendencies of privatisation/individualization of elements of social reproduction (Katz 2008), and the shaping of the consumer citizen (Raco 2009, Clarke 2004).

engagement with politics and practices of social reproduction and everyday living spaces (Ward and Jonas 2004, Jonas and Ward 2007) as drivers in reshaping urban landscapes, urban governance and urban subjectivities. This view seems likely to point to a more complex and granular fabric to urban politics than the traditional emphases of the NUP have been able to capture. And this may require greater recognition that the nature of urban politics may well be in the process of being redefined and rescaled as people manoeuvre to meet the demands of daily urban life (Amin and Graham 1997, Jonas and Ward 2007).

In this paper, we argue from the position that analyses of urban politics demand greater attention to the politics of social production, expressed in and around the spaces of everyday life: around everyday living, recreating and meeting infrastructural needs and demands. Our argument draws on a distinctive and now dominant form of residential provision across Australia's cities: planned, integrated residential developments with varying degrees of private service provision, community-title (or common-interest/commonhold) communal space, and private neighbourhood governance structures. Using fine-grained empirical work in four such estates, we explore new modalities of governing social reproduction, and related practices, subjectivities and politics. We ask what material social practices and meanings of social reproduction are operationalised around the (private) governance of residential life. To what extent do they produce subjectifications of the self-regulating consumer-citizen? And what is the nature of urban politics that this governance induces and sustains? We argue firstly that responsibilised consumer-citizens, envisaged in neoliberal rationalities as the ideal subject for post-welfare social reproduction, are never fully formed. Secondly, we argue that a complex politics of behaviour is emerging in these residential environments, as residents differentially embrace, reject or show ambivalence towards the codified regulation of behaviour aimed at middle class social reproduction. These entry points suggest the need to incorporate this 'new' aspect into an understanding of urban politics, beyond the tradition emphasis of the NUP.

We begin with connections between new urban politics, neoliberalism and social reproduction. We sketch the political-economic context through which the new modalities of residential life and its governance have emerged in Sydney. We then elaborate the practices of consumer-citizen and self-governing residents before returning to the implications of our argument for a recast new urban politics.

The politics of social reproduction and the self-regulating consumer citizen

Katz (2001:709) usefully defines social reproduction as ‘the material social practices through which people reproduce themselves on a daily and generational basis and through which the social relations and material bases of capitalism are renewed’. Her definition captures both social reproduction’s dialectical relationship with production *and* its grounded location in ‘the fleshy, messy and indeterminate stuff of everyday life’ (711) which is integrated and lived across multiple sites and spaces such as homes, service spaces, infrastructural and recreational spaces. The neighbourhood, as a site of everyday residential life, is central to social reproduction and is our focus here. In neighbourhoods and the houses within them, labour power is reproduced, children socialized, recreational activities undertaken, and social interaction performed.

Notwithstanding the NUP literature’s minimal engagement with matters of social reproduction, the wider critical neoliberal literature, in both its neo-Marxian and Foucauldian variations, has produced effective analyses of the neoliberal project’s aspirations to transform the structures, practices and subjectivities aligned with social reproduction. The neo-Marxian literature effectively traces the decline of a post-war welfare state which, flanked by corporate capital, had absorbed the rising costs of supplying the means of social reproduction, including public infrastructure, education, health and the wider goods and services of the welfare state (Gerometta et al 2005).

Since the 1970s, both states' and corporations' retreat from social provisioning was related, on the one hand, to a crisis of expanding demands, rising costs, shrinking revenue, and the pressure of global markets for reduced cost structures. On the other hand, public and corporate disinvestment in the social wage was driven by an expanding neoliberal commitment to the market form and the related aspiration, to extend the commodity form and bring monetized exchange to as many social practices as possible (Jessop 2002). Likewise disinvestment was driven by an ideological turn against state intervention and the 'dependency' argued to be nurtured by public welfare and investment in collective consumption, as opposed to the 'enterprise' values nurtured by markets and the broad individualization of social and economic life (Ferge 1997, Geronometta et al 2005). The favoured arrangements in the contemporary era of neoliberal capitalism and the post-welfare state have been those which transfer responsibility for the means of social reproduction from the state and capital to households and individuals. In what Katz (2008) describes as 'hostile privatism', we see encouragement of 'family, neighbourhood, informal or market-based and market-sustaining solutions to the problems of social reproduction' (Jessop 2002: 465). This privatization and marketisation of the means of social reproduction in turn results in the emergence of the consumer-citizen as the imagined ideal-type political subject at the heart of the post-welfare state (Jamrozik 2009, Lipsitz 2006, Jessop 2002).

The implications of a transition to the post-welfare governance of social reproduction for political subjectivity and citizenship have been more fully explored in parallel post-Foucauldian literature on neoliberal governmentalities. Relevant to our argument here are the treatments in this literature of, first, the shaping of new subjectivities of the citizen-consumer (Rose 1999, Clarke 2006) and, second, a new politics of behaviour around the self-regulation of individuals and communities (Flint and Nixon 2006, Field 2003). Theorising from the UK context of New Labour's agenda to modernise government, Raco (2009) characterises this as a shift from welfare-based 'expectational citizenship'—in which citizen well-being (and social reproduction) was secured through

the consumption of social goods and public services—to entrepreneurial ‘aspirational citizenship’ in which well-being is secured through the enhanced consumption of commodities and private services: the consumer-citizen. Thus, the middle class consumer is centred as the ideal-type for contemporary citizenship in the post-welfare state (Clarke 2004, Lipsitz 2006). The governmental rationality at work aligns citizenship, and the appropriate citizen subjectivity, with private social provisioning, rewriting state-citizenship dependency to citizen-market relations. Indeed public social provisioning—such as that which had underpinned social reproduction in the era of the welfare state—is residualised by the alignment of appropriate citizenship with norms of individualised ownership of resources, accumulation, privatization and conspicuous material consumption (Raco 2009, p4, and see Mansvelt 2008). Middle-class consumer-citizenship, associated with responsabilisation and active engagement and thus liberal freedoms from the oppressive potential of the state, becomes the naturalized model (Rose 1999). In regard to the distribution of responsibility for the means of social reproduction, the boundary between what can legitimately be left to the household and what must be publicly provided has been shifted (Clarke 2004).

The rationalities of the consumer-citizen are framed by particular conceptions of rights, especially property rights, and responsibilities, especially for self-provisioning. A distinctive politics of conduct is central to rationalities of the consumer-citizen, centred on the rationale of self-regulation of behaviour, the obligation to adhere to norms of civility and respect and the practice of participatory subjectivities (Raco 2007, Flint and Nixon 2006, Staheli and Mitchell 2006). This involves the extension of governance into new forms of behaviour and, importantly, to new sites and scales: the practice of ‘good’, ‘engaged’ civil behaviours by the responsabilised individual and community (see Rose 2001, Raco 2007, Field 2003). The moral and aesthetic policing of behaviour in middle-class neighbourhoods and the enactment of obligations to neighbours and communities thus becomes an expectation of how everyday residential life, in a diversity of contexts, should occur.

Consumer-citizenship and the self-regulation of civic behaviour are connected by the technologies of contractual governance through which they are mobilised (Crawford 2003, Clarke 2006). The self-reliant consumer-citizen is enrolled in a contractual relation with (often private sector) provider of desired goods and services (Raco 2007). Likewise there is a contractual basis to the widening array of governmental practices involved in the regulation of behavior: such as the socio-legal covenants associated with ownership and residence in master-planned estates. A rich vein of governmentality studies has analysed the contractual regulation of anti-social behaviour at the community level (Jacobs 2008, Raco 2007, Flint and Nixon 2006, Nixon and Parr 2006). Showing strong parallels to the context of MPRES, these studies have highlighted the contractual arrangements which formalise behavioural responsibilities and build reciprocity and mutual obligation between individuals in a community (thus responsabilising the citizen). Moreover their contractual basis reinforces the consumer-citizen ideal by premising arrangements on the rational, consumerist choice of citizens to engage in self-regulating mechanisms, generating closer engagement and ownership of community regulation (Crawford 2003, Raco 2007).

Researching the politics of urban social reproduction

The neo-Marxian and governmentality analyses drawn on above can work complementarily and be productively put in conversation in analysis of the shifting politics and practices of urban social reproduction. They shed a revealing light on transformations of everyday social reproduction, foregrounding both relevant structural shifts in the distribution of responsibilities and the critical importance of the neighbourhood and community as a site/scale through which self-provisioning, self-regulating consumer citizens might be socialized (Rose 2001, Raco 2007). Yet each tradition has the tendency to read off outcomes for urban politics with insufficient attention to their actual substance. Much neo-marxian writing is shadowed by the propensity to read off these politics as falling out from the logic of exchange-relations and spatial competition, such that the

other priorities that need to be sustained and managed (such as actually securing social reproduction) are too easily written out (Ward and Jonas 2004). In its turn, the neoliberal governmentality literature has a propensity to assume the internalization of consumer- and self-regulating citizen identities and social practices. Because the extent to which particular subjectifications succeed has not been a priority of governmentality research, outcomes are too readily generalized and read from strategy, such that 'subjection is a presumed effect....rather than being treated as a problematic ambition which may or may not be achieved in practice' (Clarke 2006, 97, and see Barnett 2005, Raco 2009, Mansvelt 2007).

If we are to better grasp the urban politics of social reproduction, to be sure we need to observe broad structural and contextual shifts and observe the deployment of governmental technologies to produce new forms of responsabilised citizenry. Yet we also need to engage with the material practices associated with relevant governmental technologies as well as the experiences of governmental subjects so as to interrogate to extent to which imagined consumer-citizen-subjects 'come when they are called' (Clarke 2004, 33). We take this approach in what follows as we engage the MPRE—as neighbourhoods in which social reproduction itself is potentially being transformed through new forms of regulation, ordering and governance and through the mobilisation of self-regulating citizen-subjectivities—as a field in which to explore contemporary urban social reproduction and its politics. We outline the structural context in which MPREs have emerged in Sydney, we investigate the transformations of social reproduction around MPREs' everyday living spaces, interrogate the practices and subjectivities that are emerging and we highlight the implications for urban politics.

Sydney's MPREs, social reproduction and a new urban politics of everyday living spaces?

Our interrogation of social reproduction in the everyday living spaces of MPREs demands some understanding of the wider political-economic context in which they are embedded. First, in line with international trends in the re-scaling of economic governance, since the

late 1980s Sydney has been a key terrain in a national economic project oriented towards global integration of the Australian space economy. This favoured Sydney's metropolitan 'new' economy and saw the politics of Sydney's urban policy re-shaped by the drive for urban competitiveness, by the institutional embedding of business and development interests and their incorporation into partnerships to deliver major urban regeneration and infrastructure projects (M^cGuirk 2004). The combined implications for Sydney's economic prosperity and for households connected to Sydney labour and property markets have been profound (for detailed discussion see O'Neill and M^cGuirk 2005). By 2007 asset-owning Sydney-siders had benefitted to such an extent by booming share prices, rising incomes and accumulated property price gains that they were 48% better off than in 1996 (compared to 10% better off for those without share or property assets) (Burrell 2007)².

Second, over the same period and in line with international trends in social governance, broadly neoliberalist institutional and ideological reforms were extended across the welfare state and social investment systems underpinning social reproduction. Under the Hawke-Keating Labor federal government (1983-1996), privatization of public service delivery commenced under an 'efficiency and effectiveness' agenda yet social and collective interventions largely persisted, though their universal basis was undercut by closer targeting and surveillance (Smyth and Cass 1998). Under Howard's liberal federal government (1996-2007), however, a strident ideological critique of state-based collective provision was launched and a harsher retrenchment of welfare and collective social provisioning was instituted (Harris and McDonald 2000, Stilwell 2000). While the basic social safety net was maintained³ (Hoggett 2001), neoliberal social values and

² The Sydney Prosperity Index was developed by the Sydney Morning Herald and the chief equities economist of Commsec (Commonwealth Bank Securities) to measure the material well-being of Sydney's population. It includes measures of home affordability, the nine most commonly held shares in Australia, ratio of petrol prices to average wages, an index of car prices to average wages, a measure of consumer spending, quarterly state final demand per person (a state level equivalent to GDP), and rate of joblessness.

³ Despite marketisation, privatization, conditionality and individualization, between 1996 and 2007-8, social expenditure as a proportion of the federal budget declined by just 0.4%, expenditure on social security and welfare remained the highest spending item in social expenditure budget (58.4%) (Jamrozik 2009). However, the infusion of neoliberal ideological priorities has created something akin to a market welfare state, reflected in the fact that public

subjectivities around enterprising individuals, mutual obligation, and self-responsible citizens and communities were infused across the governmental technologies for delivering collective welfare and the responsibility for social provision costs were more extensively individualised (Voyce 2003/04, Green 2002, Adams and Hess 2001, Jamrozik 2009).

Against this national backdrop of recalibrated social investment, and in a era in which public debt financing has been politically unsavoury, investment in Sydney's infrastructure and social provisioning has failed to keep pace with population growth, rising costs and rising expectations (see NSW Treasury 2008, Jamrozik 2009). One result has been a crisis of growth management, producing spatially differentiated provision gaps with major deficits in collective consumption and collective provision for social reproduction in communities and neighbourhoods across the city (Randolph 2004). Meanwhile, at local government level, collective provision of local services and facilities (including open space and recreation) has become increasingly strained as a result of declining state financial support and downward cost shifting, capped revenues arising from a rates cap and state government pressure to reduce mandated developer contributions, and growing community expectations (Searle 2009)⁴. Certainly, since the early 2000s, public discussion around the elements of Sydney's social reproduction was captured by a widespread sense of malaise, intense contestation over the distribution of the social product (McGuirk 2007), and of a crisis of confidence in public collective social provisioning (Gleeson 2006). And this has produced a *spatial* politics as much concerned with everyday living spaces and the distribution of material goods, services and infrastructure that underpin social reproduction, as with global competitiveness. These concerns around everyday living spaces make up much of the substance of urban politics (see Jonas and Ward 2007).

expenditure (as a % of GDP) on 'middle-class welfare' domains (health and education) has remained broadly stable since the late 1990s—though often through state subsidization of privatized provision—while investment in the redistributive 'working-class welfare' domain of public housing expenditure has plummeted (AIHW 2009, Jacobs et al 2009).

⁴ Fourteen Sydney councils are identified to be financially unsustainable and there is a \$6b backlog in NSW in local government asset maintenance (Grennan 2008).

The growing residential preference for MPREs can be understood in one respect, then, as a response to the gaps and deficits in the material conditions of social reproduction left by the 'crisis of welfare and collective consumption' as the basis for social provisioning. But this must be coupled with new needs, demands and definitions of adequacy around social reproduction induced, in this case, by Sydney's trajectory of unprecedented prosperity since the 1990s (see Katz 2001). Sydney's booming economy made it the most expensive housing market in Australia⁵. The city's wealth and escalating house prices has produced what some have interpreted as an embourgeoisment of city's residential spaces with 'aspirational' households demanding designed estates with 'lifestyle' amenities as visible status signifiers (Gwyther 2005, and see Pow 2009). The turn to masterplanned estates has been a development industry response to prospering householders' desires to secure the value of their substantial investment by demanding amenity, services and design quality uncharacteristic of prior development standards and certainly uncharacteristic of service levels produced in Sydney's crisis of social reproduction. While, as we have explored elsewhere (M^cGuirk and Dowling 2009), caution is needed in reading spaces *a priori* as comprehensively neoliberalised, MPREs are urban spaces in which traditional public goods and services have been commodified and privatized in support of, largely, middle class residential and aesthetic preferences. They are associated with a shift in the basis of everyday social reproduction and its institutional orchestration to more privatized forms of governance at the neighbourhood scale.

In sum, MPRES can be understood as an expression of the politics of social reproduction, collective provision and collective consumption. As Katz (2008) makes clear, responsibility for providing the material basis for social reproduction involves states, capital, civil society and households in historically and geographically varying balances. Contemporary MPREs represent spaces in which a lesser role is taken on by states and capital, while the responsibility has been substantially absorbed by households and individuals and, in turn,

⁵ The median house price at the peak of the boom sitting at A\$518 000 by the end of 2006, 8.5 times the average Sydney household income (\$70 000), even as this average far exceeds that of the remainder of NSW (\$50 000) (Demographia International Housing Affordability Survey 2006, ABS 2006 Household Expenditure Survey).

commodified and governed through micro-governance mechanisms associated with private neighbourhoods (Low 2008). They represent a new space of governance through which social reproduction is collectively managed at the scale of the neighbourhood and in the context of new demands for a quality and array of conditions of social reproduction related to a growing middle class consumption and aesthetic demands, preferences and expectations (Walks 2008, Pow 2009). The evolution of MPREs as a 'new genre of modern urban habitat' (Webster *et al* 2002) engaging new modalities of governing social reproduction, and potentially producing new related practices, subjectivities and politics makes them an intriguing ground in which to explore the everyday politics of the urban.

Case study estates

In the rest of this paper we develop a detailed understanding of consumer-citizens and self-regulating residents on the basis of a detailed investigation of four case study MPREs. Sydney's MPREs are very diverse in size (ranging in size from 15 to 3 000 dwellings); urban form (high, medium and low density); location (inner-city, brownfield and greenfield); and in the degree of privatisation involved in their collective spaces and social infrastructure (McGuirk and Dowling 2007). We undertook detailed quantitative and qualitative investigation of a series of case study estates that straddle much of this diversity. The characteristics of the four case study estates on which this paper is based are summarized in Table 1 and described here. The first we term *Paradise Gates*, which is a gated community on the outer fringe of Sydney. Located in a largely low to middle income region, *Paradise Gates* is occupied predominantly by retirees who have comparatively few financial resources but considerable time resources. They were attracted to the neighbourhood by the sense of security it offered, rather than its multiple community title spaces and resident committees. Residents were collectively responsible for numerous communal spaces including a shopping precinct. *Professional Cove* lies at the opposite end of the socio-economic spectrum, being an inner city, predominantly high-

rise development where inhabitants include a high proportion of wealthy retirees or older professionals. It too incorporates overlapping community title schemes, which in this case are responsible for gyms, gardens, landscaping and a number of meeting spaces. Our third estate, *Brownfield Park*, is an inner suburban, medium- and high-density development. Its proximity to 'edgier' more socio-economically mixed parts of the city cements its appeal to young urban professionals, and a proportionately higher tenant population than the other three sites. Our fourth case study, *Familyville*, is a development of detached houses in the outer suburbs of Sydney. Residents are nuclear families on average incomes attracted to the controlled aesthetics of the neighbourhood and its offering of 'like-minded' families as neighbours. *Familyville* residents are less familiar and less comfortable with neighbourhood governance, both financially and culturally. In what follows we do not use these demographic and socio-economic differences as explicit points of comparison. Rather, we are interested in exploring the commonalities across these differences in terms of neighbourhood governance and politics.

Our analysis is derived from in-depth interviews conducted with residents in each of these case studies, on the basis that such qualitative engagement is best able to capture the governance of social reproduction and related material practices in these estates, and the related contours and subtleties of self-regulating consumer-citizenry. Interviews were focused on practices and perceptions of living in an MPRE, conducted with between 10 and 15 households in each of four estates. Interview participants were recruited through a request for volunteers included as a final question on a questionnaire administered as part of a broader investigation of MPRE governance. Topics covered in the interviews ranged across motivations for moving to the neighbourhood, the extent and nature of social interactions with neighbours, and perceptions and experiences of community governance mechanisms. Interviews were around one hour in length, in participants' homes, and women made up a larger proportion of interviewees than men. Transcribed interviews were thematically coded. In this paper, we present and analyse themes that emerge around experiences of governance and regulation of everyday life.

Table 1: Case Study Characteristics

	Paradise Gates	Brownfield Park	Familyville	Professional Cove
Total population	c1200	c2000	c4200	c2000
Locational context	Fringe suburban	Inner suburban	Outer suburban	Inner city
Dominant demographic and tenure	Retirees Owner occupiers	Young professionals Owners and renters	Nuclear families Owners	Professionals and wealthy retirees Owners and renters
Urban form	Detached dwellings	High rise	Detached dwellings	
Facilities	Pool, commercial areas landscaped parks and ponds	Pools, gyms, open space, landscaped parks	Pools, community centres, walking/jogging areas, landscaped parklands	Pools, gyms, , tennis courts, community centre, landscaped parks
Services	Security, grounds maintenance	Grounds and building maintenance	Security, grounds maintenance	Security, grounds maintenance

Source: Authors' questionnaire conducted 2009

Residents as Consumer Citizens

The urban design and governance structures of these four Sydney neighbourhoods entailed strong expectations of participation in the management of the built and social fabric of the estate: its infrastructure for social reproduction. Each had common property – such as gyms, pools, gardens, community centres – and services – such as security, surveillance, grounds maintenance and cleaning – that were the collective responsibility of all owners (not all of whom were residents).⁶ In addition Body Corporates or Owners

⁶ Owners, not tenants, were eligible to participate in neighbourhood governance. All residents interviewed in this project were owner occupiers, not tenants

Corporations⁷ and subsidiary Management Committees were constituted to carry out management responsibilities, and it is through these committees that most owners engaged with estate management. The various committees held regular meetings, at intervals varying from monthly through to quarterly. Any owner could attend and participate in meetings, and owners were also eligible to be an elected office holder of such committees (e.g. Chair, Treasurer, Secretary). In all four MPREs there were multiple committees, though it was rare for residents to be significantly active in more than one. There were precinct committees comprised of 50-100 houses/apartments (e.g. all the apartments in one apartment block) that were responsible for the immediate surroundings and small facilities. Estate-wide committees – some consisting of representatives from precincts, others constituted separately from precincts – were responsible for facilities and services that serviced the entire estate, like security or centrally-available community centres. These operational details provide background for our initial concern here: what citizen subjectivities are presumed and enacted in the process of being both resident and manager? And, what do these experiences and identities say to understandings of consumer citizenship. In exploring the dual subjectivities of resident and responsible neighbour in this section, we highlight the uneven infusion of economic logics underpinning consumer-citizenship through residential life, including negotiations of work-life balance, and the dialectical interplay of individualized and collectivized dimensions of everyday life as it contributes to social reproduction.

These governance structures centrally revolved around consumer-citizen identities in which residents must manage economic transactions involved in the self-provisioning and maintenance of everyday services and facilities on the estates. Residents were both purchasers and providers of services and facilities which meant that everyday neighbouring activities and subjectivities were necessarily economic. For example, in all four estates, residents engaged strata and/or property management firms to manage the

⁷ The formation of a Body Corporate/Owners Corporation is a legal requirement for any development incorporating community title holdings.

contracting of day-to-day maintenance, administer meetings and ensure that committees fulfilled their legal obligations. And indeed, the complexity of private neighbourhood management has meant that the use of property and strata management firms is becoming widespread (Chen and Webster 2006, Easthope and Randolph 2007).

The functions of these neighbourhood governance organizations bring economic logics to the fore. They are charged with maintaining buildings and common properties, and as such enter myriad economic relations, especially through the outsourcing of maintenance and other work to property or strata management companies. The financial resources of these organizations are collected through owners levies, and owners' overwhelming desire is to keep their levies as low as possible. Participation in estate governance is by definition, then, economic, and resident subjectivities are defined at least in part through economic logics that encompass but are not confined to the characteristics of consumers.

As explained by one woman in *Paradise Gates*:

... we pay levies in here. And if you're not paid up, if you don't pay your levies, you haven't got the right to complain sort of thing. You can voice your opinion but you can't vote at your neighbourhood meeting because you're not paid up'.

Residents did not have a voice—were not considered citizens—unless they had completed this economic transaction.

Relatedly, the logics and language of business, especially as it pertains to management, pervaded residents' understandings of their roles in these neighbourhoods and how they describe their practices. Several people interviewed played active roles in management committees or had participated in some way during their time in the MPRE. They overwhelmingly used economic language and business-oriented rhetoric to describe their activities. As one woman in *Brownfield Park* recounted:

so we got a new strata manager and then we sat down and we wrote the job descriptions and no one had written a description before so it was a good learning experience. And we wrote the job descriptions for lawn mowing, garden maintenance, for the cleaning, and all that stuff. ... and based on those job descriptions we were able to revise our scheduled fees down

Accounts of other committee work are littered with discussions of meetings, agendas, administrative bureaucracy, negotiations with developers, strategic attempts to minimise costs, debt recovery of unpaid owners' levies and so on. Knowledge of residents' jobs (either former or current) and related skill set became part of exchanges amongst neighbours. For instance, one interviewee described how neighbours heard about his experience in occupational health and safety and encouraged him to join the committee. In sum, resident subjectivities in relation to these committees can be interpreted as those of business managers. In participating in estate governance, residents were actively engaged not only in taking responsibility for the maintenance of their immediate surroundings, but were also managing risks and finances and negotiating contracts.

Economic metaphors and understandings similarly permeated resident recollections and descriptions of their daily lives. Consumer calculations were used to assess the value of community facilities. This occurred often in *Familyville* where few residents had no prior experience of paying levies. One interviewee in *Familyville* explicitly used a cost-benefit framework to evaluate his estate's facilities:

... look at the cost and benefit. I am not making use, like you know, the investment I have done on that community property okay as opposed to many others, I'm not getting value, but some others are. So I am investing in something, but I am not getting any benefit but someone else is (*Familyville*)

Another interviewee used cost-benefit logic to come to a different conclusion. Her family had weighed up the cost of putting in their own swimming pool, and calculated that it would cost the equivalent of twenty years of community title levies. Living in *Familyville* with access to a communal pool hence made economic sense to them.

We can see, then, consumer citizen identities being expressed in the most quotidian of contexts, echoing Walks (2008) findings of the primacy of 'value-for-money' evaluations for residents of private residential neighbourhoods. Yet, as Mansvelt (2008) reminds us, people slip in and out of consumer identities. This same *Familyville* household also valued

the pool for its ability to facilitate 'family time'. Having to explicitly plan a visit to the pool, and accompany children there, meant that the function of a swimming pool was 'not something to keep the kids busy while you're trying to do something else'. They understood the value of their investment in the community title facilities of their estate both economically and in terms of enhancing their family life. Similarly, privately provided facilities were sometimes evaluated in a collective frame. Again in *Familyville*, another household liked the pool because:

It's more like a little private complex, which has to be good because it takes the pressure then, off the other public facilities in the area.

The tenor of these comments highlights the inherent fracturing of the 'resident- as- consumer'. The logics of value for money and cost-competitiveness are present, yet they do not expunge the presence of other logics or of qualities that cannot be economically valorized (see Clarke 2006). Rather, social, material and discursive practices around consumption and citizenship intersect in ambivalent ways (Garon and Maclachan 2006). We explore some of these ambivalences in the next section.

Limitations of Residents as Consumer Citizens

Notwithstanding the formation of MPRE residents as consumer citizens, it is clear too that consumer citizenship was unevenly achieved in these estates not least because of residents' limited capacities in terms of financial and business management, knowledge base and time. In essence, expectations of managerial practices and presumed knowledge of legal and other processes were far greater than those able to be invoked by residents. Whilst this occurred across the four case studies, this mismatch between the demands of self-provisioning and resident capacities is best illustrated through the example of *Paradise Gates*. Community title in this estate included a commercial area that incorporated a number of small shops and a childcare centre as well as a swimming pool that the owners were 'deemed' to be responsible for, though they did not own it. The management committee found itself in a myriad of legal and economic relations – managing footpaths and signage for businesses, maintaining a commercial car park, and

being a legal party to a contract that ensured delivery of natural gas to each house. More significantly, residents were engaged in a legal dispute about the extent of their responsibility for the commercial areas. However, they felt unprepared to navigate such a dispute, and disgruntled with the contracts signed by parties other than residents whilst the estate was being constructed. Feelings of helplessness, and of being in situations beyond their capacities, were commonly expressed by the residents interviewed. They felt keenly the absence of a dispute-resolution mechanism that was mindful of their position as 'simply residents', and unknowing ones at that. Residents in *Brownfield Park* felt similarly out of their depth in a complex legal process involving one of their buildings. As explained by an interviewee:

'I counted seven different contractors involved. There's our strata management company. And the lawyer is giving advice. There's an engineer who's giving advice. There's a project manager company giving advice. And then they're going to have a builder, the main builder and a subcontractor, who want the body corporate to sign the contract and actually do all the... take all the responsibility'

In *Professional Cove*, on the other hand, where a similar dispute was also occurring, the considerable 'in-house' expertise of residents was invaluable to feelings of control. There, a resident subcommittee consisting of 'four or five lawyers ... and a couple of engineers', were seen to be handling a potentially messy dispute very capably. In each of these examples, the expectations and limitations of consumer citizens are clear, and generally far exceed the capacities of ordinary residents. In a not surprising contrast, it was the more affluent, professional residents of *Professional Cove* where the middle-class consumer citizen ideal was realized more seamlessly and in a less fraught manner.

These limited capacities are also evident in residents' widespread experience of poor service provision. In *Brownfield Park*, one resident reported significant problems with the contracted strata services firm:

'Even though there was money in the account, they just wouldn't pay a single bill. And then so we would get tradesmen phoning up, and saying you're now

eight months behind the payment of bills. And it was very, very difficult to get him out. And it was quite difficult to get another company in'.

This was far from isolated, as the following description of the effort and process involved in changing management firms suggests.

'It had to be a physical vote and we had to present why. And then he had to respond which (let to an) extremely uncomfortable situation because you had to say why you don't want this company, without being rude about it. ... so trying to get the evidence in a concrete manner and then get the majority of the shareholders to agree. I don't know how we did it. And we we did all those things, it's a lot of work. And an extremely stressful time.

The practicalities of self-governance of the everyday sites of social reproduction and the demands this placed on residents met with distinct capacity limits. For this reason alone, the grasp of consumer citizen identities and their related social practices were far from complete.

But beyond this, residents' acceptance of the demands and responsibilities imposed by self-provisioning was also far from universal or unquestioned. Many argued that these responsibilities were beyond the capacities of 'ordinary people' for myriad other reasons. One reason was time constraints. People had moved to these neighbourhoods, with their manicured landscapes and communal rather than private facilities, because they wanted to minimize the time and domestic labour associated with the material practices of social reproduction. In *Familyville*, busy lifestyles underpinned a desire to take advantage of the 'resort style living' advertised as available there, whilst in *Paradise Gates* retirees commented that 'it is nice knowing that the roads are kept clean, the gutters are kept clean, the gardens are nice'. The implication in both of these instances is an assumption that the responsibilities for cleaning and maintenance work would not fall to residents. Residents soon found, however, that more rather than less work was required, because of the activities of self governing described above. As a result, all interviewees discussed the difficulties of attracting and maintaining residents' active engagement in estate governance. Residents expressed a clear sense of obligation that they 'should' participate,

and respect for the people who did get involved . Yet equally prominent were their reasons for not getting involved. This included too little time, partially related to perceptions of the administrative load of self-management : ‘we have far too many meetings. We have a monthly meeting for our group and then we go on to the executive meeting. ... I’ve had enough of [meetings] that’s why I retired’. Others noted simple apathy: ‘there is a broad section of the community that just doesn’t care. They’re not interested’. More resisted the banalities of self-management tasks:

‘I want to spend my time writing and reading, not sitting and sort of, in meetings which deal with a lot of kind of mundane business in a not terribly efficient way’ (*Professional Cove*)

I think one of the downsides of living in the estate is that you live in an estate and there’s more than one person. And so you get people moaning and groaning over the stupidest little things you know. (*Familyville*)

And more still resisted the inevitable need to deal with everyday neighbourhood politics as part of management responsibility;

‘I just don’t want to get involved in any politics, or any organizing. I didn’t come here for the community. I came here for this apartment’ (*Professional Cove*)

In sum, the demands of responsabilised citizenry were continually deferred. The ideal of the actively-engaged entrepreneurial consumer citizen was not smoothly realised and certainly never completely achieved.

The politics of behaviour: self-regulation through neighbourhood contractual rules

Though studies of the contractual regulation of community conduct have predominantly concentrated on the regulation of social housing and low-income communities, private community governance in MPRE clearly present a contractual arena for regulating middle-class conduct and ordering social interactions (Blandy and Lister 2005, Lister 2004). Life in these estates is micro-managed, principally but not exclusively by rules laid down in covenants and by-laws that are legally attached to an individual’s title to their dwelling

and/or land. In buying dwellings in these four MPREs, residents were also agreeing to abide by diverse rules governing built form and behaviour around individual and common property. Table 2 displays a list of indicative covenants. The surveillance and regulation of behaviour was also a strong theme in interviews across all four sites, though they were enacted in both expected and unexpected ways, as we explain here.

Table 2 Indicative Range of Covenants in the Case Study Estates

Built Form	Conduct
House colours	Use of car spaces
House materials	Use of front yards
Colour of window coverings	Noise
Materials for floor coverings	Use of common property
Structures in back yard (e.g. pergola)	Number of people allowed to use swimming pool at one time
Planting species and heights	Allowable size and number of pets
Fence height and materials	Display of laundry

Source: Interviews with residents, 2009

Consistent with the literature on the governing of residential conduct through anti-social behaviour orders (Flint and Nixon 2006, Field 2003), living within and enacting such rules in these middle-class environments was seen to be common-sensical and a reflection of a natural order. Rules were seen to be obvious, uncontestable, and reflective of what to expect from respectable middle class citizens. For example,

And I think if you're considerate of your neighbours regardless of whether there's a bylaw or not, it's not going to hurt because you're within the structure of the laws anyway. ... I think it really boils down to being considerate to one another because you live close together so you have to be considerate to one another. I mean it's just good manners as far as I can see (*Professional Code*)

'As I said, it's everyday life rules really. But I do think you need to have some sort of structure. People need to know what behaviour is expected of them and what their rights are' (*Brownville Park*)

'It's just like basic common sense things which they make laws about. You know, maintaining your gardens, keeping the lawns mowed and, you know, weeding' (*Familyville*)

As found in research on middle-class neighbourhoods in other contexts, covenants and by-laws were understood to codify the material and behavioural elements of respectability (Pow 2009), which included 'common sense' practices such as being considerate of others, maintaining one's house and yard to sanctioned standards, and respectful of communal space (Walks 2006).

It is also the case that these rules, and their enforcement of aesthetic and behavioural norms, were socially exclusionary (Duncan and Duncan 2004, Gwyther 2005). For instance, renters had a strong presence in *Paradise Gates*, *Professional Cove* and *Brownfield Park*, and covenants were explicitly connected to both deterring the presence of renters and the management of tenant behaviour. The education of local real estate agents responsible for letting properties about the rules was perceived to be an important activity for involved residents, especially in *Paradise Gates*. In these three estates, failure to abide by rules was frequently brought to the attention of both landlords and tenants. In *Paradise Gates*, one interviewee suggested that the ultimate outcome was not the modification of behavior but the preservation of the property-owning majority. Instead, as he says

'And if the renters are not much chop, they don't hang around because in time they get worn down by 'why haven't you put your garbage away, you can't park on the street, you can't do this, you can't do that''

However, consistent with our general argument that the enactment of self-governance is necessarily contradictory and incomplete, it is also the case that rules and their contractual enforcement of self-regulation were often contested or rejected and never simply internalised.

'In fact, I was a bit put out when we settled on this place and we were promptly handed a manual. With, I mean, instructions on what we were to do.

This should be cleaned every three months. And we were, “mind your own business” (*Professional Cove*)

There’s different rules about what you can and cannot do with the look of the house. And the colours and the plants and things here. [Interviewer: was that something that was important to you?] Um, no. It didn’t matter at all. In fact I’m just against that. If it’s your property you should be able to do any damn bloody thing within your house. (*Familyville*)

For one woman in *Professional Cove*, the degree of control was stifling, describing the estate as ‘over regimented’, ‘bossy’ and ‘authoritarian’. And, connecting back to our earlier point about the ‘work’ of self governance, the effort involved simply became too much, with the covenants described as ‘just a pain’ and ‘aggravating’ by different households in *Familyville* (see Atkinson et al 2004). Whilst used to announce and enforce middle class norms of respectability, the contractual governance of built form and the politics of behavior associated with MPRE living also produced responses ranging from ambivalence to outright rejection.

The Contractualisation of Neighbourhood Interaction

In spite of these misgivings, the contractual governance of resident behavior was nonetheless pervasive in these case studies and consciously mobilised by residents to enforce norms of middle social reproduction. Studies of neighbouring and internal neighbourhood politics invariably point out the conflicts, disagreements and negotiations entailed in living in close proximity (e.g. Laurier et.al. 2002, Clarke 2009). Contractual citizenship in these estates involved a deferral or distancing away from the individual and the personal in the politics of neighbouring. In other words, the regulation of conduct through covenants had the effect of shifting responsibility from residents toward anonymous rules and strata bodies. Interviewees across all four estates reported instances of ‘ringing the strata’ or contacting members of the management committee when behavior or appearance was not what was expected by them or according to covenants. The contrasts between this mode of governance and modes in other places were made starkly by one woman in *ProfessionalCove*:

If your neighbour is loud at what you think is an unreasonable time, do you sort of go and knock on someone's door and say look you know it's 3 in the morning'? 'Here you don't, you phone security'.

As another more tellingly put it:

'(In other places) if my neighbour offends me it's up to me to use my human skills to go and say look it's noisy on Saturday night I don't mind it, but would you mind if you told the teenagers (to quieten down), that sort of thing. Doesn't happen here'

Practices around managing everyday neighbourhood conflicts entailed minimising personal confrontation, with residential relations instead being mediated contractually. In *Familyville*, unauthorized or unacceptable external building works were sometimes an issue. Whilst in other places this would be the purview of the local authority, here neither resident nor local authority were involved. Instead, when one interviewee's neighbour erected a pergola without permission, she was 'appreciative of the fact that I could ring the strata and that the strata did deal with it straight away'. In *Brownfield Park* pets were the source of tension, which was again resolved contractually. As one woman explained:

'I have had a couple of issues with neighbours and a couple of issues with pets in that they haven't really been taking care of the droppings and I will contact the strata manager and get them to send a letter to the tenant or the owner

Contractual mediation of neighbourhood politics extended beyond non-conforming or anti-social behavior. Covenants, especially around the use of common spaces like garages, parks, gyms and gardens, were enforced similarly. Regulation of cars and car spaces was especially problematic and regulating resulted in residents' mobilizing the full force of the covenant structure. For example:

And the problem can exist where you get conflict in that neighbourhood because someone doesn't like being told that you can't park your car on the grass verge, that they can't park their car on the kerb, and someone has to go and tell them that they can't do it.

[Interviewer: And does that process seem to work generally?]

Well it only works when it gets down to the legal thing because then it goes through our management company that we have. So we have a management company that manages all the financial affairs. So we enter a complaint, they

get a letter in writing that they've got to obey the by-laws. Then if they didn't do it, then it goes back to them, and they fine them. So it's all legally enforceable. But then you've got neighbours versus neighbours. (*Paradise Gates*)

Similarly, in *Familyville*, use of the communal pool and barbecue facilities were the focus of contractual enforcement. There had been many debates about how many people could use the facilities at the one time, whether they could be booked, and whether residents could bring visitors. These debates had been resolved (somewhat acrimoniously) through the issuance of time-limited swipe cards to provide residents with access to the facilities. Active contractual enforcement of these rules ensued. As one resident explained:

'They'll [strata managers] come around randomly while you're up there, check your pass, make sure you've got only six people there.'

At times, though, effective behavioural governance occurred through an ensemble of human and contractual technologies. For example, the management committee in *Brownfield Park*, dissatisfied with the behavior of one residents' dog first 'installed a camera to see what the dogs did' and then used this as evidence in a discussion with the owners. These conversations meant that eventually the owners 'shipped (the dogs) off to have some education' and residents were happy.

This intense degree of behavioural governance in MPREs is made possible by these estates' contractual structure and by its conscious mobilization by residents. While we have noted ambivalence and resistance to aspects of the contractual regulation of behaviours in the everyday living space, there is nonetheless evidence of its embrace. In this respect MPREs can be thought of in terms of mobilizing moral citizenship and creating self-regulating consumers, whilst removing disruptive possibilities (Voyce 2006). Yet, this is hardly achieved through active engagement but rather through deferral, made possible by the contractual regulation of behaviour. The tensions between ambivalence, rejection and embrace suggest the need for more thorough investigation of these and other

everyday spaces of social reproduction and their role in shaping the fine-grained politics of the urban.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have drawn on our observations of the governance of everyday life in middle-class residential environments to argue for a greater engagement with the material practices, subjectivities and politics of social reproduction in studies of urban politics (see Ward and Jonas 2004, Jonas and Ward 2007). Our approach, drawing from neo-Marxian traditions in urban political analysis, has maintained engagement with the political-economic context reshaping urban social reproduction. We have traced Australia's enactment of the 'crisis of collective consumption' and the prosperity-fuelled transformation of demands around middle class social reproduction in Sydney, driving the growing popularity of self-governing MPREs. Yet, drawing from a governmentality approach, we also attend to changing material practices and subjectivities around the governance of self-provisioning, middle-class social reproduction. In doing so, we draw attention to domains, spaces and scales of urban politics outside the conventional emphases of the NUP.

Widening the remit of the NUP to the domain of social reproduction, the spaces of residential life and the scale of the neighbourhood enables additional insights into the character and dimensions of contemporary urban politics in several key respects. First, it reminds that the substance of much urban politics revolves around the demands of daily urban life, neighbourhood residence and its governance. In these spheres, the main actors of urban politics are configured differently, with, for example, the actions of capital, or 'the state', remaining in the background or engaged with tangentially. The personalization of urban politics is foregrounded, as is the enforcement of moral codes. A

focus on social reproduction hence underlines the importance of emotions, cultures and identifications across all modes of political engagement, including those of the NUP.

Second, it attends to the complexities that inhere in urban political transformations; in this case transformations in political subjectivity to that of the consumer-citizen and the related contractual governance of behaviour. Our analysis confirms Clarke's (2006) warniness of over-reading empirical instances wherein rationalities and practices of the self-governing, self-regulating consumer citizen are enacted, such that their completeness is assumed. While MPRE governance structures might nurture new practices, behavioural codifications and subjectivities in line with achieving middle-class social reproduction, our analysis highlights the practical limits these encounter including time and income constraints, an unwillingness to engage actively and the persistence of other-than-economic valorizations of the means of social reproduction. It highlights a contradictory embrace, ambivalence and outright rejection of consumer-citizen practices and subjectivities, particularly where they intersect with the social relations of everyday residence and daily life. A more comprehensive incorporation of social reproduction and residential life into treatments of urban politics hence also needs to be attuned to these complexities.

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