Inhabitance, place-making and the right to the city: public housing redevelopment in Sydney

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Inhabitance, place-making and the right to the city: public housing redevelopment in Sydney

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This article brings Lefebvre's *Right to the City* thesis into conversation with Bauman's notion of the flawed consumer to account for the neoliberal colonisation of public tenant organising in urban redevelopment. Drawing on a case study of public housing redevelopment from Sydney, Australia, we show that neoliberal community building and the emergence of professional community builders obviate the self-organising efforts of tenants. In this case tenants' rights were attenuated when the housing authority invited private capital to not only rebuild the physical fabric but also remake the social relations around public tenancy within the trope of consumerism. We argue for a revival of tenant self-organising as a collective political project that might counteract the individualisation of tenants' rights under neoliberal community building regimes. Such a political project needs to be extended beyond the boundaries of the local neighbourhood or 'housing estate' to expose the strategies at work in public housing redevelopment projects. Drawing on *Right to the City* we argue that *inhabitance* should confer the right to participate in place-making. We conclude that tenant self-organising is one way that tenants imagine, collectively construct and inhabit lived space; it is a process of meaning- and place-making amongst a community with a shared experience of contemporary urban transformation.

Keywords: public housing; deconcentration; tenants; right to the city; mixed tenure; tenant participation; citizenship

Introduction

The reworking of the Right to the City (RTC) thesis over the last decade has moved Lefebvre's (1996) ideas in several, at times diverse, theoretical trajectories. Harvey (2003, 2008) evokes RTC as a political agenda and Purcell (2002) is concerned with whether RTC could displace property rights as the basis of an alternative political system. Lepofsky and Fraser (2003) and Swyngedouw (2011) consider RTC's utility for reorganising participatory practices and citizen action at different urban scales. Irrespective of how RTC is theoretically conceived the neoliberalisation of

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urban governance runs counter to RTC ideals. For public tenants living in clearly circumscribed urban places neither formal liberal citizenship nor property rights provide effective access to place-making or even continued occupancy. Neoliberal regimes of urban governance are imbued with the idea that the right to urban life should be secured and protected through the market, so that urban citizenship is exercised through 'performance as a consumer' (Rogers & Darcy, 2014). Implicit in this notion is its obverse, identified by Bauman (1998) as 'flawed consumers' and conceptualised as 'failed' because they do not participate in markets − in this case the housing market − and thus have given up their RTC. Neoliberal logic and market-mediated forms of participation in urban redevelopment are thus a serious impediment to theorising public tenant organising using an RTC framework. Drawing together Bauman's (1998) insight and Lefebvre's foundational concept of 'lived space' we argue for an RTC theorisation that might better compete with, or at least account for, market-mediated forms of civic participation in urban redevelopment (Lepofsky & Fraser, 2003).

The Bonnyrigg Living Communities Project (BLCP) in Sydney, the first public housing estate redevelopment by public−private partnership in the state of New South Wales (NSW), Australia, forms the case study for this analysis. This example illustrates that even local self-organising by public tenants is threatened and colonised by the neoliberal urban governance regime. After 10 years of the BLCP we argue that the neoliberalisation of tenant organising in large-scale redevelopment projects has serious implications for considering public tenants' ongoing rights to the city in Australia.

In late December 2004, the New South Wales state government announced the state's first redevelopment of a public housing estate to be undertaken through a formal public−private partnership. The BLCP covered an 81-hectare estate in southwest Sydney including 828 public housing and 99 privately owned dwellings, with a population of approximately 3100 (NSW Department of Housing, 2005). The state housing authority had originally developed the green field site as public housing in the late 1970s, using the 'Radburn' design principle (Birch, 1980). 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 BLCP project announcement. Unlike a number of poorly located urban fringe estates where the housing authority had previously experienced difficulties recruiting private partners, Bonnyrigg is in a middle ring suburban location with good public transport and well-developed retail and commercial facilities. There is generally strong demand for owner occupied housing in surrounding neighbourhoods suggesting a viable development proposition for private investors.

The BLCP public−private partnership is a single contract arrangement between the state housing authority and a private sector consortium company for a 30-year period that covers the delivery of physical infrastructure as well as a range of social objectives (see Rogers, 2012, 2013). The suite of social deliverables includes tenancy management, 'community building' and 'community consultation'. The contract is managed under a performance-based fee structure that is intended to increase the net housing stock across the estate from about 900 to 2330 dwellings over 15 years. In pursuit of policy objectives to deconcentrate public housing and create a 'social mix', the ratio of public to privately owned housing stock in the neighbourhood will be reduced from about 90% public and 10% private to about 30% public and 70% private. A non-profit housing manager, under contract to the private sector 'partner', is managing the public tenancies for the 30-year contract term (NSW Department of Housing, 2007).

The analysis presented here draws on data from interviews and focus groups collected through three studies conducted between 2006 and 2011. The first study was conducted in 2005 and comprised approximately 30 interviews with local community leaders, service providers and local government officials. The second study was conducted in 2006 and involved four focus groups with tenant representatives. The focus groups considered tenant organising in the lead-up to the selection of the private sector contractor and involved six to eight tenants in each focus group. The third study was conducted between 2007 and 2011. The data collection for this study, which is relevant to this analysis, focused specifically on tenant organising under private sector contractor management of the public−private partnership. This part of the study included 15 interviews with members of the private sector contractors and a focus group with tenant representatives. Furthermore, one of the authors attended over 50 public events, community consultations events and community meetings in Bonnyrigg as a participant observer between 2006 and 2010.

The remainder of this article is organised in three substantive parts. The following section brings Lefebvre's RTC thesis into conversation with Bauman's notion of the flawed consumer to account for the neoliberal colonisation of public tenant organising in urban redevelopment. Then we outline the approach to place-making in the BLCP redevelopment project before moving onto an analysis of one specific element of this, the Bonnyrigg Independent Tenant Advocate. The politics surrounding, and changing institutional practices of, the Bonnyrigg tenant advocate is a poignant case of the neoliberalisation of public tenant organising. We conclude that the self-organising efforts of tenants should be thought of as a collective political effort deployed to (re)imagine and (re)construct their right to urban life. Such a political project needs to extend beyond the boundaries of the local neighbourhood or 'housing estate' to expose the neoliberal strategies at work in public housing redevelopment projects.

Reconstructing the right to public tenant organising

Lefebvre wrote *Le Droit a La Ville* (The Right to the City) to celebrate the centenary of Marx's *Das Kapital* and argued:

> [T]he right to the city cannot be conceived of as a simple visiting right or as a return to traditional cities. It can only be formulated as a transformed and renewed right to urban life. (Lefebvre, 1996, p. 158)

Central to Lefebvre's vision is the idea that *inhabitance* itself should confer the right to participate in place-making, or in his terms the construction of *lived space*. While Marxists, such as Harvey (2003, 2008) and Brenner, Marcuse, and Mayer (2010), have championed Lefebvre's RTC as a rallying cry, other scholars have sought to assess its viability as a principle for the future recasting of democratic processes which would replace liberal citizenship. Purcell (2002), e.g., extrapolates Levebvre's concepts of *participation* and *appropriation* to argue that the realisation of an RTC would represent a 'profound re-working both of the social relations of capitalism and the current structure of liberal democratic citizenship' (p. 101) where a politics of *inhabitance* (Lefebvre, 1996) would compete with and ultimately displace property rights. This vision might be utopian or dystopian depending upon the direction in which urban inhabitants drove such a politics. Just as historically city-states and later nation-states represent essentially territorial claims — rights of citizenship have traditionally been conceived as spatially bound — citizenship is enabled and constrained by geographic boundaries and concerns access to particular places and spaces as well as the right to act in particular ways within those spaces (Rogers & Darcy, 2014). Property rights have always trumped (liberal) democratic rights, but democratic discourse nonetheless continues to play a key role in the legitimation of regulatory regimes which in turn reinforce property (Harvey, 2003). Formal citizenship is a poor substitute for property when it comes to deploying political power; however, the need of states' to maintain order and productive social relations within their borders led to regulatory regimes which sought to mediate this conflict and allowed citizens to participate in urban politics. Contemporary concern about disenfranchisement under global neoliberalism has arisen as the locus and balance of power and decision-making regarding urban spaces has expanded beyond the scale and scope of national territorial regimes, and access to place-making relies increasingly on property rights/economic power (Purcell, 2002). In this context, the protection of property rights, and their mediation through local planning systems, is the dominant mechanism through which territorial states recognise inhabitance, defend their legitimacy and proffer rights to the city (Brenner et al., 2010).

Public housing tenants in Australia have no property rights. Their inhabitance of the streets and buildings in which they live is protected only by the forbearance of the state, which can be withdrawn at any time without reference to any overarching

legal framework. Even though they pay rent, their tenure is not determined by any commercial contract in respect to a particular property or dwelling, but rather by a politically determined right to 'housing assistance' which in turn is conditional upon continued demonstration of their ongoing incapacity to access property rights through the commercial market. Until recently this was nominally codified as 'security of tenure' and guaranteed occupancy of a particular dwelling so long as rent and other obligations of the tenancy agreement were met (Fitzpatrick & Pawson, 2013). Nonetheless, the state reserved the right to relocate individual households at any time for 'operational reasons' (NSW Government, 2011). Over the last decade, however, this has reverted to 'security of assistance' which is not tied to a particular dwelling and is 'renewable' which in practical terms means 'reviewable' in light of changes in a tenant's circumstances (Fitzpatrick & Pawson, 2013). This can mean relocation to a different dwelling or different neighbourhood, or termination of the tenancy, based on the Housing Authority's assessment of tenant households' current needs (NSW Department of Housing, 2006).

Access to the politics of place-making for public tenants has historically relied, in a formal sense, on citizenship rights and liberal democratic processes (i.e., electoral politics) through which the decisions of state housing managers and Ministers might be called to account. Through political representation based on place of residence, historically neighbourhoods with high proportions of public tenants have often returned local representatives who have spoken up for their interests. Informally, tenants frequently engaged (and continue to engage) in more active place-making through investment in their own living space and participation in the development of local culture and community life, either despite or because of inattention by housing authorities. Indeed the place-making efforts of many tenant participants in our research were most often driven by their status as members of a community which they frequently conceive of as *defined* by tenure. The following example, which is worth quoting at some length, illustrates the way in which inhabitance-based rights are experienced and expressed at a local level. It is taken from a public speech by a long-term public tenant from Bonnyrigg in 2008:

> I would like to talk to you about how a redevelopment project has affected and changed life in Bonnyrigg... I am a tenant in community housing and I have lived in Bonnyrigg for just over 20 years. I lived first in the family home with my mother and brother, and now I am raising my three children with my husband. For those of you who don't know Bonnyrigg I am not one of a kind, many of us have lived on the estate for a great number of years. Some of the residents of Bonnyrigg have even been there since the first conception of Bonnyrigg and helped build Bonnyrigg to what it is today...we have built life long friendships. As a community we have gone to school and work, played, lived, loved and lost together. If we were to have been asked 4 years ago if we thought our life was lacking or needed improving then I feel the answer would have been no. On 20th December 2004 life as we knew it changed with the announcement of the Bonnyrigg redevelopment. Our lives have been like a roller coaster since the...The vision we had was of loss - loss of our homes, our community

and our security. The reason for this is that when people moved here we where told to treat our home like we owned it, so we put down roots and made improvements with our hard earned money. (Arnfield, 2008, p. 1)

Furthermore, tenant groups provide a space and purpose for social interaction with other people (especially in the absence of paid work) and form a significant part of 'social life'. Public housing redevelopment projects, such as the Bonnyrigg project, which are financed and managed through a complex array of land swaps, service fees and private housing sales encompassed under the rubric of 'public−private partnership', have been presented to tenants and the general public by Australian housing authorities as 'building new stronger and more sustainable communities' (NSW Department of Housing, 2004). However, adding empirical weight to the tenant's claims above is a 2005 study conducted by the University of NSW which indicates that Bonnyrigg was a strong and sustainable community prior to the announcement of the BLCP:

The study finds 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. More than three-quarters of respondents felt 'positive' or 'very positive' about life in Bonnyrigg, whilst certain groups within the community are even more positive... They also value the sense of community and friendships that Bonnyrigg offers. The issue of 'good neighbours' or 'neighbours who are more like family' also came up frequently in respondents' comments about their future neighbourhood. The desire to retain such neighbours was expressed frequently. (Stubbs, Randolph, & Judd, 2005b, p. 11)

As in other countries such redevelopment projects are explicitly aimed at 'de-concentrating' public housing and dispersing public tenants amongst mortgage-paying, or at least private rent-paying, neighbours. This, it is claimed, is aimed at improving tenants' lives and circumstances through greater social inclusion (NSW Department of Housing, 2004; NSW Government, 2011; NSW Land and Housing Corporation, 2007). However, as housing authorities actively pursue a program of demolition and redevelopment of neighbourhoods where public housing has histori-cally been the dominant tenure, public tenants' ability to construct their 'lived space' (Lefebvre, 1996), and their opportunities to call authorities to account through formal political processes are seriously diminished (Rogers & Darcy, 2014).

The neoliberal state is increasingly implicated in the global politics of neoliberal economic restructuring and local redevelopment projects must be understood in this light (Lepofsky & Fraser, 2003; Marcuse, 2010; Rogers & Darcy, 2014; Samara, Sinha, & Brady, 2012). While the state retains its historical capacity to constitute housing policy and drive changes in the urban landscape, a range of non-govern-ment and market actors are now afforded 'rights' (by virtue of their market power) to reconfigure the urban and social fabric, shareholder rights to share in the financial

benefits that are produced for some actors through neoliberal economic restructuring, and technocratic rights to produce knowledge that will inform urban and social policy (Swyngedouw, 2011). The 'rights' afforded to these non-government and market actors simultaneously erode both the formal and informal inhabitance-based 'rights' previously exercised by tenants when the state was their landlord (Rogers & Darcy, 2014).

Harvey (2008, p. 1) argues that Lefebvre's 'The right to the city is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city'. Harvey's RTC would see public tenant organising as a collective tenant-driven project aimed at reshaping the urbanisation process and revitalising tenant subjectivities. However, under neoliberal regimes public tenants occupy a difficult and contradictory position when asked to participate in formal state sponsored community building events. Because public housing is provided outside the market − that it is subsidised and allocated according to need and public tenants' ongoing housing tenure depends in large measure on their perceived incapacity to participate in the market or to improve their own circumstances. Contrasting with Harvey's RTC, under neoliberal urbanism public tenants are conceptualised as 'flawed consumers' (Bauman, 1998) and thus failed citizens who do not participate in markets, yet if they do may lose their tenuous access to housing and right to place:

> . . .individuals unable or unwilling to undertake these 'normalized' acts of consumption become conceptualized as flawed consumers, with a particular focus on the deficiency of those reliant on allocated, as opposed to chosen, goods. (Bauman, 1998, p. 614)

Public housing presents two distinct problems for the neoliberal state: the first is concerned with the political economy of urban land, while the second goes to the question of consumerist culture. Large public housing projects or estates, developed half a century ago to stimulate urban development, effectively removed what is now valuable land from the market and are viewed as distorting urban land values and preventing opportunities for investment (Logan & Molotch, 1987). Tenants who do not pay market rent cannot be relocated away from increasingly valuable urban areas by the normal market forces which produce gentrification in privately owned and rented property. Their housing security thus comes at the cost of lost opportunities for reinvestment and value capture, especially in emerging global cities. Just as importantly, the culture and household economies of public tenants threaten the incentive structure of labour markets and the capitalist culture of self-reliance through work. Public tenants by definition are not wealth-building homeowners or debt-paying mortgage holders. They do not contribute to capital accumulation through paying market rent and often do not participate in the labour market either − albeit for reason of age, disability or caring responsibilities. The fact that public tenants have been housed by processes outside the market is taken as evidence of

'exclusion', and the identifiable spatial separateness of estates /projects in the urban landscape serves to reinforce this metaphor. 'Inclusion' thus refers not only to physical relocation, but also integration into the social relations of consumerism. In the next section, we use the BLCP case study to demonstrate the attenuation of tenants' rights as housing authorities invite private capital to not only rebuild the physical fabric, but also remake the social relations around public tenancy within the trope of consumerism.

Bonnyrigg living communities project: private interests and public objectives

In Bonnyrigg, the state housing authority, Housing NSW, developed an explicit program of 'community building' designed to involve public housing tenants in the redevelopment project. This program was structured around a suite of tightly controlled 'community capacity building' and 'community consultation' processes. The discursive roots of this community building paradigm, in the context of neoliberal approaches to urban redevelopment, can be traced to the political uptake of notions of social capital (DeFilippis, 2007). 'Community building' flags an attempt to de-emphasise interest-based activism in favour of consensus building within neoliberal urban governance (DeFilippis, 2001).

Lepofsky and Fraser (2003) offer a critique of 'community-building' as both a discursive and political strategy which recasts RTC as a question about who holds the technocratic and political rights to create knowledge in and about the city. In the current context, this is question about who has the right to create knowledge about public housing neighbourhoods and communities:

> [C]urrent community-building efforts' place particular reliance on citizenship. . .but also justifies the status of community-builders over local residents in the struggle to improve impoverished neighbourhoods, privileging the professional over the local and reifying neighbourhood residents as lacking the ability to change their situation. (Lepofsky & Fraser, 2003, p. 133)

(Cooke & Kothari, 2001; Cornwall, Schattan, & Coelho, 2007; Hickey & Mohan, 2004) and others argue that concepts, such as 'capacity building', 'community building' and 'community participation', are not the problem. Instead it is the context in which they have become practices that requires critical attention. Shragge (2003) agrees, stating:

> 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. (p. 123)

It is to these two contextual questions that we now turn. (1) How did the context of the redevelopment project shape the practices for community building and community participation? (2) How did these practices authorise or curtail particular

actors' rights to create knowledge about this public housing neighbourhood and redevelopment? While not well defined or understood at the time, a retrospective analysis of the 'community engagement' strategy of the BLCP reveals a clear hierarchy of interconnected community building and community participation spaces in relation to the management of the BLCP (see Table 1 and Figure 1).

In the lead-up to the 2004 BLCP announcement, a dedicated team, created from internal and external public−private partnership experts, urban planners, housing managers and other housing professionals, were brought together within the estate redevelopment division of state housing authority (Housing NSW), known as Strategic Projects, to scope and manage the BLCP. For about 6 months, the Strategic Projects team outsourced community participation to a community engagement consultancy company (Sarkissian & Cook, 2000). By mid-2005 they had decided to bring community engagement back 'in-house' and they set up the Bonnyrigg-based Community Building Team. The state housing authority (Housing NSW), described The Community Building Team as 'a local multi-skilled engagement team. . .made up of seconded Housing NSW staff, contractors, consultants and staff from other agencies' (Coates, Kavanagh, Judd, & Unsworth, 2008, p. 23). The state housing authority (Housing NSW) built the team from existing Housing NSW staff, by employing community engagement professionals on short-term contracts and by funding the local government authority (Fairfield City Council) to employ a community worker.

In conjunction with the local state housing authority (Housing NSW) client service team, the Community Building Team was responsible for the local delivery of the community engagement strategy developed by state housing authority (Housing NSW). The strategy including communication, consultation, tenant liaison, capacity building and community development targets (Coates et al., 2008). While the Community Building Team appeared like a local-state government partnership, it was funded by, and largely under the direction of, state housing authority (Housing NSW). The explicit objective of the team was to 'create a strong community in Bonnyrigg. . .through partnerships, with tenants and other residents. . .[and the] private and community sectors' (NSW Department of Housing, 2004, p. 1). In the complex landscape of community building through public−private partnership, residents' legal position as tenants and their right to self-organise to construct and express their interests collectively were encapsulated in the notion that they were 'partners' with the state and the developer, or 'stakeholders' along with the range of local property owners, businesses and service providers (Bonnyrigg Partnerships, 2007a, 2007b; NSW Department of Housing, 2004). These terms effectively removed any sense of particular rights associated with inhabitance, while also obscuring the powerful economic and technocratic rights of other players.

In cases, such as the BLCP, professionals and consultants are often contracted to 'manage stakeholder involvement' and 'partnerships with local communities', especially where the interests of particular groups, such as residents, might pose a challenge to the project. For example, one of the leading 'Stakeholder Engagement'

Table 1.   Summary of organisations, social groups and government agencies involved in the BLCP.

Name	Acronym	Overview
Housing New South Wales	Housing NSW	State government housing authority of the Australian state of New South Wales.
Fairfield City Council	FCC	Local government authority within the Australian state of New South Wales.
Community Building Team	CBT	A locally based 'community engagement' team made up of seconded state housing authority and local government authority staff, contractors, consultants and staff from other government agencies.
Bonnyrigg Public Tenants Group	BPTC	A formal group of public tenants from Bonnyrigg.
Private homeowners group	POG	A formal group of private homeowners from Bonnyrigg.
Community Reference Group	CRG	A formal meeting of state housing authority, local government authority, private sector organisations, public tenants, private homeowners and non-government organisations.
Bonnyrigg Tenants' Support and Advocacy Service	BTSAS	An advocacy service funded by the state government and then the private sector partner but provided through a local non-government organisation.
Bonnyrigg Independent Tenant Advocacy Service	BITAS	An advocacy service funded by the state government and /or the private sector partner but provided by a local non-government organisation.
Bonnyrigg Management Pty Ltd.	BM	A special purpose organisation created to manage the PPP contracts and contractors.
Fairfield Migrant Resource Centre	FMRC	Local non-government organisation based in southwest Sydney.
South Western Regional Tenants Association	SWRTA	Non-government organisation based in southwest Sydney.
St George Community Housing	SGCH	Non-government housing manager under public−private partnership (PPP) contract to the private sector developer consortium to manage the public housing tenancies for the PPP contract period.

Note: For a detailed analysis of the BLCP management structure, see Rogers (2012, p. 254).
Source: Authors from Rogers (2012).
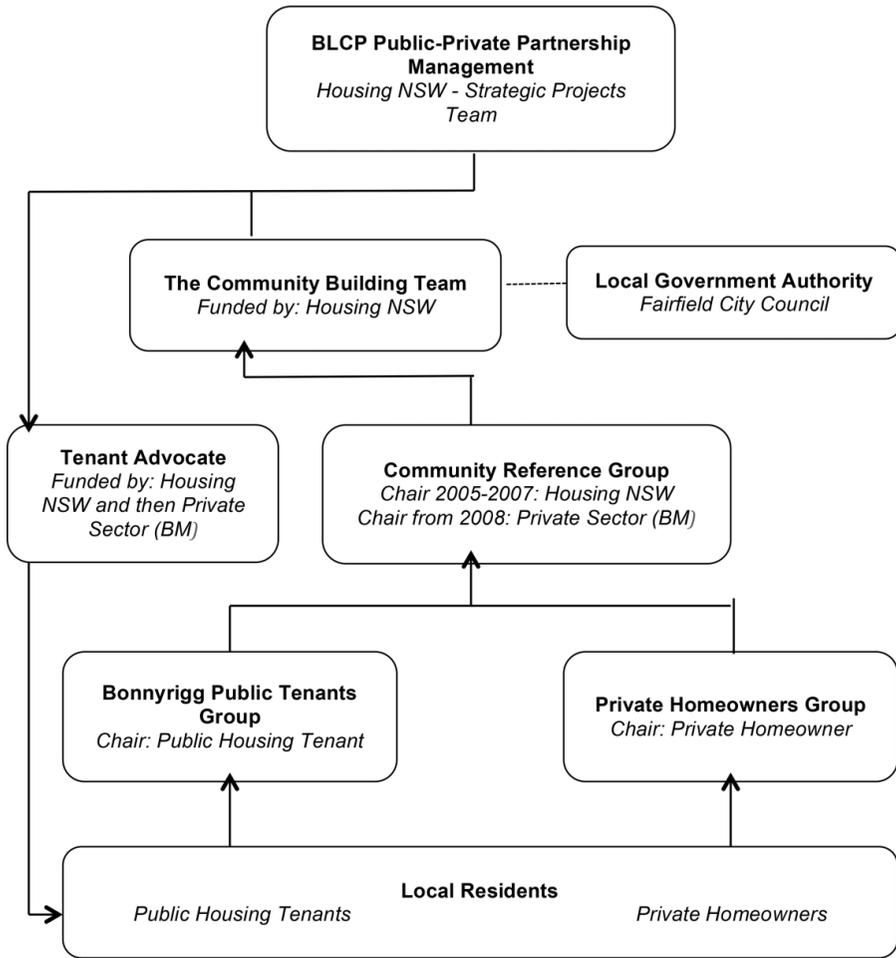
Figure 1.   Hierarchy of resident groups in relation to the management of the BLCP. Source: Authors from Rogers (2012).

training companies in Australia advertises their core business as training profes-sional community builders (Twyfords, 2012, p. 1). Their promotional material asked the rhetorical question, is your project:

> at risk of fanning community outrage…[we] provide new ways to avoid or manage potential challenges and the non-technical risk to your projects such as: political inter-ference; legal challenges; constant and comprehensive scrutiny of data and decisions by experts and stakeholders; negative media attention; community angst, outrage and emotion; public protest; activists blockades…This workshop is especially designed

for project managers, experienced stakeholder engagement professionals...You will benefit from this program if you...Are affected by major project decisions and would like to increase your influence.... (Twyfords, 2012, pp. 1−2)

Community engagement professionals are in the business of managing risk for those who employ them. They undertake this work by directing local resident action into carefully crafted community engagement spaces (Cornwall et al., 2007), within which 'outrage and emotion' might be mitigated and brought inline with the broader objectives of a project. In Bonnyrigg, the state government's Community Building Team (with initial assistance from their community consultation consultants) formulated an informal hierarchy of community engagement groups through which tenant opposition and emotion could be stewarded. These groups included the Community Reference Group and Bonnyrigg tenant advocate service (see Table 1 and Figure 1). It was the positioning of 'tenants as partners' that underwrote the Community Building Team's decision to establish a Community Reference Group. However, tenants had already started to self-organise in the form of a Bonnyrigg Public Housing Tenants Group (see Table 1). The community engagement professionals were quick to formally acknowledge this group by locating it within their broader community engagement strategy (see Figure 1).

As 'partners' in the BLCP, tenants were encouraged to take their concerns about the project to the Bonnyrigg Public Housing Tenants Group, who in turn, could mediate these concerns through the Community Reference Group to the state housing authority (Housing NSW). While a public housing tenant chaired the Bonnyrigg Public Housing Tenants Group, a member of the Community Building Team chaired the Community Reference Group between 2005 and 2007. After 2007, an employee of the private partner organisation (Bonnyrigg Management Pty Ltd. (BM)) chaired the Community Reference Group. Local tenant and resident concerns about the BLCP were carefully managed away from the organising practices that have proved successful for other tenant groups in the recent past such as going to the media, lobbying politicians, producing independent research and challenging government reports, and securing funding for independent tenant advocate services (see Stubbs, Foreman, Goodwin, Storer, & Smith, 2005a).

The Bonnyrigg independent tenant advocate

In a previous redevelopment project in southwest Sydney in 2002, in the absence of formal consultation and professional community building, tenants had successfully self-organised and demanded the funding of an independent tenant advocate. The tenant advocate was employed by a local non-government organisation (South Western Regional Tenants Association (SWRTA)) to articulate the rights and interests of tenants as individuals and collectively (see Stubbs et al., 2005a). In this case, tenant organising included a tenant-driven project that restored tenants'

collective identity in relation to this urban space. In other words, the tenants and their advocates used *inhabitance* as the context to argue for the right to participate in place-making and, furthermore, to remain in this urban space.

Soon after in Bonnyrigg in 2006, the Bonnyrigg Tenants' Support and Advocacy Service (BTSAS) was established. The stated aim of BTSAS was to provide tenancy information and advocacy for public housing tenants 'affected by the redevelopment project' (Coates et al., 2008). As in the previous project, State housing authority (Housing NSW) funded a local non-government organisation (Fairfield Migrant Resource Centre (FMRC)) to provide the service until responsibility for the redevelopment project was passed to the private partner organisation (BM). However, tensions quickly arose between the two stakeholders around the capacity of the service to 'advocate' on behalf of tenants (Cultural Perspectives, 2007; Fairfield Migrant Resource Centre, 2007, 2008). Moreover, after responsibility for funding of the advocate service passed to the private partner organisation (BM), the private sector consortium renegotiated the scope of the service with the non-government organisation (FMRC) and the state housing authority (Housing NSW) on the basis that their 'in-house' community development team were resourced and funded, indeed required by the contract, to provide the 'support' component of the service. Following this negotiation the private partner organisation (BM) offering the local non-government organisation (FMRC) the 'independent advocacy' component only. Tenants, on whose behalf the service was ostensibly established, were not involved in the negotiation. The local non-government organisation (FMRC) continued the service under a new name, Bonnyrigg Independent Tenant Advocacy Services (BITAS), but also under a new funding agreement, which cut the funding from a full-time employee (37 hours per week) to a part-time (21 hours per week). A senior member of the private partner organisation (BM) stated:

> Now when we took over, that groundwork had already been done, we were going to be, we were already starting to move Stage One people, so the focus [of the tenant advocate] really had to be on them, the rehousing of those people. Because there are other services like SWRTA [South Western Regional Tenants Association] and what not that do the generalist sort of stuff for tenants. (Private-sector employee A, 2009)

Thus general advocacy was constructed as another organisation's responsibility, while the tenant advocate service in Bonnyrigg was repositioned to focus solely on 'rehousing' and BLCP functions contracted to the private sector. Further, the organisation, SWRTA, suggested in the quote above as an alternative tenant support service for 'generalist sort of stuff' received no resources to provide an advocacy service in Bonnyrigg. As a result, 'support' was dropped from the title of the service and 'independent' was added. As such, the BTSAS became the BITAS. Included in this name change was a budget restructure for the advocacy service which saw the previous state housing authority (Housing NSW) annual

budget of over A\$130,000 revised by the private partner organisation (BM) to an annual budget of A\$46,000 (Fairfield Migrant Resource Centre, 2007, 2008). In late 2009, a different non-government organisation, Macarthur Legal Service, was contracted to provide BITAS under the revised annual budget. The senior member of the private partner organisation (BM) stated:

> [T]he Tenant Advocate. Now that was a really, in terms of the set up process, and get-
> ting an understanding around that, it was quite a fraught process . . . but what I was
> alluding to before around the troubles that we had in setting it up. There are very . . .
> few service providers in that area . . . when we did the process to try and get a, this
> new model funded and a service up and running . . . there was a lack of understanding
> around this change, this shift, and it was seen as defunding so, it caused a fair bit of
> difficulty I suppose, in trying to get that one back up and running. (Private-sector
> employee A, 2009)

The BLCP Deeds negotiated between the government and the private partner were clearly guiding the reframing of the advocate service (NSW Land and Housing Corporation, 2007). This reframing also introduced new reporting requirements that were linked to the contract requirements of the private partner organisation (BM). BITAS was required to report individual cases to the private partner organisation (BM); it was actively discouraged from collective organising around specific tenant concerns and contracted to run 'capacity building' programs as determined by private partner organisation (BM) (Fairfield Migrant Resource Centre, 2007, 2008). Thus any RTC vision − that *inhabitance* might confer on tenants the right to participate in collective place-making and a right to change themselves by changing the city − was seriously challenged by the neoliberal imperative to individualise tenant concerns and to economically rationalise the funding of the advocacy service. One tenant advocate talked about the individualisation of tenant concerns in 2009 as follows:

> BITAS' strong but independent partnership with Newleaf Communities [private part-
> ner] has benefited tenants through the development and delivery of the Tenants' Rights
> and Responsibilities workshops. Tenants were able to attend workshops delivered in
> community languages (Khmer, Lao, Spanish and Vietnamese), which led to a greater
> understanding of their rights and responsibilities, as well as gaining an overview of
> Newleaf Communities. BITAS designed and facilitated the workshops and an average
> of 10 participants attended each workshop, as well as representatives of St George
> Community Housing [non-government housing manager]. (Fairfield Migrant Resource
> Centre, 2009, p. 62)

A neoliberalised discourse of individualised 'rights and responsibilities' is pervasive in the BLCP, but so too the language of the various contractors infiltrated the advocate service. The following quote from a senior member of the private partner organisation (BM) draws attention to the aims of the Tenants' Rights and

Responsibilities workshops, which focused more on tenants' individual responsibilities than their individual or collective rights (e.g., to place):

> And so what we did in that long period, was we asked the tenant advocate service to um, to provide some rights and responsibilities workshops so tenants were more fully armed about what was expected of them and what they could expect from us. We thought that that was a good way to use their time…. (Private-sector employee B, 2009)

One tenant felt that the private sector funding mechanisms worked against their understanding of advocacy:

> 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 [NSW] … and now BP [private partner organisation] so they're told you do this, you do that …. (Tenant A, 2009 focus group)

Another tenant felt these reporting requirements conflicted the tenant advocates:

> But the ones [tenant advocates] that try to stick up for us, they get rid of… [tenant advocates] used to get howled down [in the Community Reference Group] 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"… Yeah, you get that all the time… We weren't supposed to hear it. (Tenant B, 2009 focus group)

Another tenant commented more broadly on the scope of the advocacy service:

> … 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. (Tenant C, 2009 focus group)

Place-making as a political project

The Bonnyrigg tenant advocate case is an example of the commodification and the 'state-sanctioning' of tenants' performative civic rights (Rogers & Darcy, 2014). This is combined with direction for tenants from the state about the correct performance of 'community', as defined through social mix and social exclusion policy discourses. The neoliberal state, through its public−private partnership arrangement, has sought to redefine and shape how tenants deploy both their constitutional and their substantive rights. Their constitutional rights were reshaped through contractual arrangements with the private sector and through tenancy transfers to non-government housing managers. These state-driven political moves change the citizen-state (state-as-landlord) relationship. While tenants' substantive rights, how they perform citizenship through civil society, were colonised when the

state invited them into 'community-building' programmes that clearly defined how they should act or perform 'community' and 'civil society'. For tenants who choose to perform 'citizenship' differently, such as acting outside the state-sanctioned 'community-building' processes by collectively organising independently, their substantive rights as citizens are discredited and /or eroded. In state housing authority (Housing NSW) discourse, tenants are not members (citizens) of communities or places, instead they have to perform 'community' or 'place' as directed by the state (and as informed by neoliberal social and economic discourses) to be granted the status of 'citizen' of the community. This neoliberal performance, often framed within the discourses of social inclusion and community-building, also requires them to get a job, get on with their neighbours and to get off welfare.

In Bonnyrigg the neoliberalisation of community-building was integrated into the public−private partnership model, outsourced to the non-government sector and reinforced through programmes such as the Tenants' Rights and Responsibilities workshops. Tenants' participation in state sanctioned and commercially operated community-building activities was offered as a kind of corrective therapy for 'flawed consumers' and 'failed citizens' which would assist them to overcome their exclusion from the new neoliberal democracy. Ironically, while the redevelopment of the state was ostensibly aimed at achieving a greater 'social mix' the project's success depends upon tenants becoming more like their new consumer neighbours. DeFilippis (2007, p. 272) shows that community building theory and practice thus creates a framework where the logical and unsurprising outcome of community development is the removal of inhabitance-based rights and ultimately the displacement of the target community. Along a similar line of inquiry, Lepofsky and Fraser (2003) show the ideological specificity of notions of citizenship within the discourses of community-building and urban regeneration. They pose the proposition that there has been a shift from citizenship understood as a status a social subject can obtain, either through birthright or naturalisation, towards 'flexible citizenship' that is based on performative acts (or substantive rights whereby tenants must perform citizenship through civic action to be included in place-making processes).

Lepofsky and Fraser warn that 'flexible citizenship', which state housing authorities suggest provides new opportunities for resident-driven political engagement within the city conceptualised as a marketplace, masks powerful discursive forces operating within our cities (Harvey, 2008; Sassen, 2006). 'One is not a member of a community *per se*; one participates in community' (Lepofsky & Fraser, 2003, p. 134), and when tenants resist or do not participate in the 'community' of professional state-sanctioned place-makers their rights as legitimate knowledge-holders about their homes are eroded. Further, this 'flexibility' of citizenship means that external and international 'stakeholders' now have the 'right', often assigned to them by the state, to assist the state to design and implement local place-making projects. This creates a tension between *state-managed* or *state-sponsored* and *resident- (or inhabitant)driven*place-making as a performance of citizenship. If

community engagement is about practising political and civic actions, then who should manage the process? State- or private sector-driven place-making means these players control:

(1) who is invited into the place-making processes;
(2) the performative rules − e.g., the rights and responsibilities of tenants, the process, and the scope of action (collective and /or individual);
(3) what is on and off the agenda;
(4) what is recorded and reported.

This reconceptualisation of citizenship limits the political options available to public tenants while simultaneously increasing the capacity for political action of various nonresident market and knowledge-producing actors (Lepofsky & Fraser, 2003). Policy-makers, academics and researchers, as well as state sponsored, and increasingly private-sector, 'community-builders' are implicated in this process when positioned as legitimate knowledge producers; for the rights of these actors to make claims about the city undermine the rights of tenants to make knowledge claims about their spaces. Non-resident place-makers as knowledge producers favour experimental over experiential knowledge (Fischer, 2000) and view the locale from the privileged 'outsider' position of 'neoliberal citizenship' within so-called 'global cities' like Sydney (Sassen, 2006). Tenants can view the city from the 'inside', from the locale, and this vantage point is shaped in part by their tenancy status and inhabitance of an urban space.

With the move to a more performative conceptualisation of citizenship, tenants' rights to participate in the knowledge-production about urban spaces, such as their home and neighbourhoods, are now explicitly co-opted into the community-building programmes of the state and a globalised and marketised sense of place (Harvey, 2008; Sassen, 2006). These community-building discourses legitimate various utopian ideals about 'community-building' as well as positioning the concept of 'place-making' as both a professional occupation and a site for further social research and development. The ideological and discursive move here is that place-making, understood as a state-defined bounded (purposely limited) socio-political space that rules out other forms of civic /political action, has become 'normalised' within urban redevelopment. Even tenants in some locations now accept these boundaries for action, assuming it is only *within* the place-making spaces created by the state and private interests that they can mount political challenges to urban politics.

Conclusion

For Lefebvre, 'lived space' is 'not just a passive stage on which life unfolds, but represents a constituent element of social life' (Purcell, 2002, p. 102) and is a complex interaction between shared physical and relatively objective 'perceived space'

on one hand, and ideas about mental constructions and representations, or 'conceived space' on the other. Thus the RTC also rests in the right, and the capacity, to generate and validate one's conceptions (ideas, representations) in such a way that impacts on the spaces in which they live. Unlike the neoliberal performance of citizenship outlined in the case study above, this performance is not directed at influencing or changing decisions or actions of others, but about meaning making and place-making amongst a community with shared experience of contemporary urban transformations. Tenant self-organising is one way that tenants imagine, collectively construct and inhabit lived space. Professional community building (and builders) and discourses of inclusion and consensus appropriates this imagination and obviate RTC possibilities. Only tenant self-organising, as a collective political project, can counteract the individualisation and responsibilisation of tenants' experiences that is implicit to neoliberal community building. Furthermore, tenant self-organising needs to be conceptualised and undertaken on a much wider geo-political scale than the local 'housing estate' to expose the strategies at work in these projects. We argue that tenants need to draw on their substantive rights (i.e., how they perform citizenship through collective tenant activism) and their lived experience as a political (i.e., democratic) project, to reinstate their right to place through their right to produce knowledge about their neighbourhood and city. This has to be a collective political act that operates beyond the boundaries of the 'housing estate' and is aimed at reclaiming the city.

As the forces and discourses transforming local lived space are globalised, so too the framework of resident knowledge production and action need to be national and transnational. Our case study demonstrates that a central concern of tenants living in areas targeted for redevelopment is their severely limited choice, or voice, in key debates and decisions affecting their living environments. Moreover, conventional policy-driven research on neighbourhood social conditions has effectively devalorised the situated knowledge of public housing tenants, compounding their relative powerlessness. Meanwhile, as explained above, the political rhetoric associated with deconcentration has added to the stigma of public housing and the cultural exclusion of tenants. Despite being 'resourceful and knowledgeable about the conditions of housing in which they live' (Marcuse, 2010, p. iii) the experience of residents is systematically devalued or excluded from the so-called 'evidence' deployed to justify redevelopment of public housing and sometimes destruction of communities.

As the dynamics of citizenship change, such as the growing distance between the citizen and the state (constitutional rights), so to the conditions by which social subjects engage with civil society are changing (substantive rights). The implications of this dynamism − the erosion or expansion in the constitutional and substantive constructions of citizenship and rights − are threefold for public tenants. First, public tenants' rights that were established through national citizenship in relationship to the state-as-landlord have shifted considerably over the last two decades. The move from 'public' (state managed) to 'social' (not-for-profit managed)

housing reflects the broader neoliberal political and economic restructuring of Australian cities. These shifts are changing the dynamics of citizenship and reshaping how low-income citizens might secure and maintain their housing and their right to place. Second, the internal transformation of the state to meet the demands of a globalised project of neoliberalisation has created new 'rights' for political action for powerful, often transnational, actors. Sassen (2006, p. 468) reminds us that the state is not necessarily weakened by globalisation and remains central to the privatisation, deregulation and marketisation of public functions. Third, new types of (global) civil society projects aimed at (re)constructing citizenship subjectivities are challenging, at times head on, the 'rights' of neoliberal actors constructed through discourses of free market liberalism. Sassen suggest these include:

> cross-border networks of activists engaged in specific localized struggles with an explicit or implicit global agenda and noncosmopolitan forms of global politics and imaginaries attached to local issues and struggles that are part of global horizontal networks containing multiple other such localized efforts. . . it enables even the disadvantaged to develop transnational strategies and subjectivities. . . it is not always a new social form as such but rather a subjective, self-reflexive repositioning of an old social practice or condition in a transnational framing. (2006, p. 512)

Given the active retrenchment of public housing underway in many countries, we suggest that public tenants should be seen as key contributors to such a transnational project as a process for claiming rights to the city. The BLCP case shows how the social and urban transformation of our cities has appropriated citizenship rights from tenants and thus exposed the failings of neoliberal democratic governance. Neoliberal political efforts cannot offer solutions to the social and urban crises that these political projects have created through the global capitalist order. A dynamic view of rights, as a dialectic including constitutional to performative rights, requires us to locate these rights with the technocratic and capitalist ideology that is driving the urban policy agenda, while inviting us to imagine a different and alternative urban reality. Lefebvre's conception of the RTC is a call to question the establishment and maintenance of rights, 'because it is defined specifically as a challenge to the dominant order' (Gilbert & Phillips, 2003, p. 327); a challenge to question the dominant forms of discrimination and marginalisation in the urban landscape as natural. Urban poverty and marginalisation are constituted and reconstituted through systems of neoliberal urban governance, rather than being addressed by them.

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