

UNIVERSIDAD COMPLUTENSE DE MADRID
FACULTAD DE CIENCIAS POLÍTICAS Y SOCIOLOGIA



TESIS DOCTORAL

**Ticking Boxes: Everyday Participation in the Urban
Redevelopment Planning of Waterloo, Sydney**

**Ticking Boxes: participación cotidiana en la renovación
urbana de Waterloo, Sydney**

MEMORIA PARA OPTAR AL GRADO DE DOCTOR

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Madrid

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Abstract

In December 2015, the New South Wales state government announced a massive urban renewal project for Waterloo Estate, one of the largest public housing estates in Australia, situated in Waterloo, a suburb located in inner-city Sydney. An essential component of this redevelopment proposal was a twelve-month participatory process that included a non-binding consultation process led by private consultancies, featuring capacity-building workshops and community engagement activities. As in different cities, this participatory process followed a larger trend in urban redevelopments that advocates for local community participation to decentralise power and support collaborative planning.

Nonetheless, in Waterloo, after several workshops, public meetings, and online consultations, residents remain unable to see their “needs” and “aspirations” – as announced by the program – reflected in the final masterplan. This contradiction raises the main question for this research project, which aimed to understand the apparent paradox of democratic initiatives constantly appearing in different contexts, and yet residents continuing to feel unheard, frustrated, demobilised, controlled, and threatened by a top-down process that was bringing ambiguous “improvement” to their lives.

The thesis draws on fourteen months of ethnographic fieldwork, to explore how Waterloo residents and government officers tried to make sense of the ideal of participation, and how political participation came into practice in their actual lives. By following this everyday approach to city-making and participation, the thesis is able to examine the continuities between local democratic practices and the wider political and economic dynamics shaping space production. The thesis approaches participation as a mode of governing but also as an experience, showing how urban dynamics and political participation became mutually constitutive in the daily life of Waterloo tenants in such a way as to induce participants to become accomplices in their own displacement. As it turned out in Waterloo, participatory methods were “just another box to tick”. They were appropriated by neoliberal forms of urban governance and articulated different forms of bureaucratic power and social control. During this process, local governments built on seemingly apolitical participatory practices to legitimise and depoliticise controversial urban renewals, finally perpetuating unequal rights to the city.

Resumen

En diciembre de 2015, el gobierno del estado de Nueva Gales del Sur anunció un proyecto de renovación urbana para el Waterloo Estate, uno de los mayores conjuntos de vivienda públicas de Australia, situada en Waterloo, un suburbio del centro de Sídney. Un componente esencial de esta propuesta fue un proceso participativo de doce meses, que incluyó una consulta no vinculante dirigido por consultorías privadas, además de talleres de capacitación. Al igual que en otras ciudades, este proceso participativo siguió una tendencia de reestructuración urbanas que aboga por la participación de la comunidad local para descentralizar el poder del Estado y apoyar la planificación colaborativa.

Sin embargo, en Waterloo, tras varios talleres, reuniones públicas y consultas online, los residentes siguen sin ver sus "necesidades" y "aspiraciones" — tal y como anunciaba el programa — reflejadas en el plan director final. Esta contradicción plantea la cuestión principal de este proyecto de investigación, cuyo objetivo es comprender la aparente paradoja donde las iniciativas democráticas parecen estar presente en diferentes contextos, a pesar de que residentes siguen sin sentirse escuchados. Al revés, se sienten frustrados, desmovilizados, controlados y amenazados por un proceso de “arriba-abajo” que aporta una ambigua "mejora" a sus vidas.

Esta tesis se basa en catorce meses de trabajo de campo etnográfico, para explorar cómo los residentes de Waterloo y los funcionarios del gobierno trataron de dar sentido al ideal de participación, y cómo la participación política se puso en práctica. Al seguir un enfoque cotidiano, la tesis es capaz de examinar las continuidades entre las prácticas democráticas locales y las dinámicas políticas y económicas más amplias que dan forma a la producción del espacio. La tesis aborda la participación como un modo de gobernanza, pero también como una experiencia, mostrando cómo las dinámicas urbanas y la participación política se volvieron mutuamente constitutivas en la vida cotidiana de Waterloo, de tal manera a convertir sus participantes en cómplices de su propio desplazamiento. En Waterloo, los métodos participativos fueron apropiados por las formas neoliberales de gobernanza urbana y articularon diferentes formas de poder burocrático y control social. Gobiernos locales se basaron en prácticas participativas aparentemente apolíticas para legitimar y despolitizar las polémicas renovaciones urbanas, perpetuando así la desigualdad de derechos sobre la ciudad.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

Note: Acronyms are avoided in the main-text of this thesis as a result of concerns among participants in the research that they constituted a government bureaucratic mechanism of exclusion. However, they are used for referencing purposes, and when they appear in formal documents and quotations.

CHA	Commonwealth Housing Agreement
CHC	Commonwealth Housing Commission
CHP	Community Housing Provider
CRA	Commonwealth Rent Assistance
DCJ	Department of Communities and Justice
FACS	Family and Community Services
FPC	Future Planning Centre
IAP2	International Association for Public Participation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
KJA	Kathy Jones Associates (Private Consultancy Firm)
LAHC	Land and Housing Corporation
NAB	Neighbourhood Advisory Board
NAHA	National Affordable Housing Agreement
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NSW	New South Wales
PB	Participatory Budgeting
RedWatch	Redfern Eveleigh Darlington Waterloo Watch
RWA	Redfern-Waterloo Authority
SHA	State Housing Authority
SSP	State Significant Precinct
UN	United Nations
UTS	University of Technology Sydney
WPHAG	Waterloo Public Housing Action Group
WRG	Waterloo Redevelopment Group
WTF	[an expletive indicating exasperation]

INTRODUCTION

Chapter One

Urban Renewals and Participation

“Come and have your say!” were the calls from the Waterloo Estate renewal project. “Let’s discuss the future of Waterloo!” announced an official invitation. “What future do you want?” asked the final report. Excited expressions like these were all over the neighbourhood of Waterloo after its redevelopment had been announced. However, despite the extensive effort to promote a participatory process, my field research with residents revealed a different story, starting with the controversial announcement of the initiative.

On 16 December 2015, tenants of Waterloo Estate received a government letter announcing a redevelopment for the biggest and one of the few remaining public housing estates in the inner-city of Sydney. At Christmas time, with no previous consultation, the New South Wales government informed residents that their neighbourhood would be demolished and rebuilt. During this process, some residents would have to be relocated, maintaining their right to return after the project’s completion – likely a few years later, or perhaps even decades.

The promises to improve this area were grounded on its historically negative reputation. Decades of systematic disinvestment had contributed to a persistent image of a neighbourhood with poor infrastructure maintenance, and relatively high rates of crime and poverty. Moreover, the announcement of the redevelopment followed an ongoing process of gentrification fuelled by state interventions such as the new Waterloo Metro Station. The promoters of the initiative claimed that the goal of the project was to “renew and grow the supply of social, affordable and private housing in accessible locations.” (NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment 2017). Accordingly, the new estate would follow a “social-mix” model, delivering a 70-to-30 ratio of private to state-owned and non-government organisation-managed housing. This development would increase the 2,000 households in the area at the time to around 6,800 residents over the next fifteen to twenty years. As part of this plan, the sell-off of public land would finance the redevelopment proposal. To conduct this controversial renewal, the government outlined a twelve-month participatory process to define the estate’s new masterplan, as shown in Figure 1.1.



Figure 1.1 The Process (Source: Communities Plus website)

The program commenced in October 2017 and was divided into three main stages: envisioning, options testing, and presentation of the preferred masterplan. The first stage, the “envisioning phase,” was undertaken by the private consultancy firm, Kathy Jones Associates (KJA). According to the final envisioning report, the team of urban planners and designers conducted different activities to “gain input” from the community, giving people the opportunity to “get involved” and “have their say” on the final masterplan (KJA 2018). The activities performed included workshops, pop-up information stalls, a “community day,” and an online survey. The “key findings” of this process – classified as Waterloo’s “needs,” “priorities” and “aspirations” – can be found in the report, organised according to five themes: culture and community life; transport, streets and connections; housing and neighbourhood design; community facilities, services and shops; and environment and open space.



Figure 1.2 Envisioning the Waterloo Estate Redevelopment (Source: Land and Housing Corporation <https://www.dpie.nsw.gov.au/land-and-housing-corporation/news/waterloo-redevelopment-moves-forward>).

After the envisioning stage, three masterplan options were presented: Waterloo Estate, Waterloo Village Green, and Waterloo Park. A different consultancy firm conducted similar activities and promoted a discussion of the three options. This consultation was a non-binding process. After the discussion, the consultancy team delivered a final report to assist the New South Wales Land and Housing Corporation to prepare the preferred masterplan. In April 2020, the preferred masterplan was released, triggering a wave of criticism and frustration in the community that, in general, claimed that resident demands were not reflected in the final proposal. Following the masterplan release, community engagement activities continued as well as public meetings between residents and the government, aimed at discussing the development of the final plan.

The Waterloo redevelopment's consultation process was embedded in a larger trend of participatory developments that claim community consultation as a feature of contemporary democracy and urban planning. In this model, the emphasis on local community participation explicitly aims to decentralise power and support collaborative planning instead of relying on centralised and vertical models. In this type of participatory process, participation discourses are supported by the justification that groups normally excluded from vertical decision-making processes should be included in decisions that will affect their lives. As observed in Waterloo, participation discourses also promote the "empowerment" of participants and investment in local knowledge as a way to access the needs and desires of local residents. Different participatory research tools are then used to grasp the complexity of the community and help the design of the project.

This thesis critically analyses this contemporary phenomenon, considering two main components: on the one hand, how representatives of the government of New South Wales resignified and reinterpreted the principle of "participatory democracy" in the estate of Waterloo; and on the other hand, how Waterloo residents engaged and perceived the process of deliberation and decision-making inside democratic institutions within an urban redevelopment context. The thesis provides an ethnography of an everyday participatory urban redevelopment, exploring the different forms of bureaucratic power and social control articulated with participatory methods — here perceived as a "box to tick" — as well as how people negotiated with forms of consultation. In short, this study rearticulates the analysis of democracy and space production, not so much as autonomous fields, but as

mutually constitutive. In doing so, it follows the argument that participatory practices and discourses in relation to the Waterloo Estate depoliticised the initiative and articulated extra-economic dynamics that sought to legitimise, pacify and build consensus around the controversial demolition of the biggest public housing estate in inner Sydney.

Everyday Democracy

Anthropologists have long engaged in political discussion and conflicts within society. In the last decades, researchers have made notable contributions to studies of social movements, civil society, citizenship, the state, bureaucracy, and power in general. Yet, democracy, as a matter in itself, has remained in the background, making what Julia Paley (2002) attempts to outline as an “anthropology of democracy” still an emergent field. While democracy scholarship has largely been shaped by political science, the particular approach of anthropology towards political dynamics has significant contributions to make. For Paley, anthropologists’ relationships outside formal and elite institutions, and their attention to non-hegemonic worldviews, enable them to understand politics beyond official discourses while remaining attentive to “local meanings, circulating discourses, multiple contestations, and changing forms of power” (Paley 2002, 469–470).

It is tempting to start a research project about democracy by reflecting on its definition and seeking to narrow down its multiple meanings. However, the potential of anthropological inquiry seems to lie, precisely, in the opening up of the concept. Instead of focusing on discussing specific mechanisms, or evaluating the intensity of democracy in particular countries, anthropology in general, and this thesis in particular, are more interested in how democracy is conceptualised *locally*, both in public discourse and in practice. Following Paley, in the following lines I briefly explore key areas of reflection in relation to democracy. While these reflections do not cover all the vast terrain of democracy, they outline some anthropological perspectives on democracy studies that have, in different ways, oriented my research questions.

The most common contribution of anthropological studies of democracy probably lies in its analysis of democracy’s cultural meanings and associated variances. Ethnographies have the potential to contribute to understanding the varied local meanings and political institutions, and how Western democracy is otherwise reinterpreted, reappropriated and conceptualised. This approach challenges the universal assumptions associated with the

concept of democracy with its strict links to Western, modern and liberal thinking. As David Nugent (2008) highlights, Western liberal democracy is just one political project among many, although it has largely been seen as the norm.

This acknowledgement provides another area of inquiry for democratic studies: the discourses produced and reproduced by different institutions – including the state – in order to maintain the legitimacy of its political system. It follows that the normativity and dominance of a particular form of democracy is not a given. Rather, it “emanates from and is reconfigured in particular places and times and through particular nexuses of institutions and power relations” (Paley 2008, 5). Anthropological studies remain mindful of such conditions, exploring the “temporalities, agencies and processual nature” of democracy’s normativity (Paley 2008, 5). The work of Fernando Coronil (1997) is a key contribution in this sense, insofar as it reveals how the term “democracy” has been strategically deployed across time by different actors in Venezuela.

Another area of anthropological inquiry has been the relation between democracy and citizenship-building. Caldeira and Holston (1998) contributed to this discussion by analysing how democracy and citizenship were unevenly distributed across a society, rather than being a uniform condition. They demonstrated that having the formal elements of contemporary democracy – a reliable electoral system, constitutions, and the division of power, among others – did not necessarily equal an effective citizenship. Instead, as the authors analysed in Brazil, a high proportion of the population may still be unable to rely on institutions such as the police or the courts to protect their rights and secure justice. Crucially, the work of Teresa Caldeira (2000) connected urban experiences to the practice of democracy, as this thesis similarly attempts to do in the case of Sydney. Specifically, Caldeira showed how the privatising of public spaces, violence and segregation affected the quality of the lived experience of citizenship.

The acknowledgement of differentiated citizenship also challenges the formal equality and universal condition of citizens assumed by normative democracies. Importantly, it highlights not only the implication that social inequality may be part of experiencing citizenship, but also gender and race (Mota 2012; Gal and Kligman 2000). In this context, contemporary transnationalism and multicultural ideologies also deeply transform ideals of citizenship and nation. In the Australian context, for example, Elizabeth Povinelli (2002)

has drawn attention to how liberal multicultural imaginaries work to reinforce liberal ideologies and perpetuate unequal power while they promote a vision of a unitary and cohesive nation in postcolonial countries.

A last concern commonly associated with anthropological studies of democracy is to do with democracy's relationship to neoliberal forms of governance and, in particular, its emphasis on civil society. Particularly related to international development organisations, civil society is often used almost as a synonym for democracy, invoking with it notions such as "empowerment," "participation," and "community development." In short, as I will further develop, those studies generally note the uses of democratic discourses, including participation, as a form of governing; that is, as a way to mould the conduct of subjects in a neoliberal context. Here, governments evoke those terms alongside claims of responsibility, autonomy and choice, in an attempt to shape individual freedom (Rose 1996). This process is particularly relevant to explaining the increasing mobilisation of the term "participation" in recent times.

The Rise of Participation

Participation seems to be everywhere: urban planning, heritage and environmental management, technological platforms, international development, and public administration, just to name a few fields where participation is often evoked. For Sanchez-Carretero and colleagues (2019), participation has become, in a troubling way, an imperative. In this diverse terrain, several authors have attempted to track the different uses of the term: its grammar (Kelty 2017); its different models (Cornwall 2008; Karsten 2011); as well as its varied techniques (Geilfus 2002; Red Cimas 2015). In development programs, scholars have also attempted to understand its controversial and depoliticising effects (White 1996; Mosse 2003). In the seminal work of Sherry Arnstein (1969), the concept of a "ladder of citizen participation," was probably one of the principal efforts to systematise the different approaches and pitfalls of participation. In this model, the author analyses different participation programs, organising participation into different degrees and levels.

In the urban context, Jordi Bonet i Martí (2012) has also organised and classified approaches to participation in five main areas. First, the normative approach focuses on improvements enabled by participation in public policies. Second, techno-methodological approaches emphasise the analysis of tools and techniques to improve the mechanisms of

participation. Third, an evaluative approach follows the objective of evaluating the quality of participation, attending to the rationalisation, objectification and measurement of engagement. Another common approach is the rational-strategic, primarily concerned with the efficiency and coordination of all the elements and institutions of participation. Last but not least, critical approaches focus, not so much on the participation process itself, but on the interrelation with its wider contexts.

Despite key contributions to better grasping this evasive and imprecise term, the works around participation in the urban context remain largely shaped by the will to define the term or typologies, to establish the best techniques and models, or to evaluate the degrees of participation. Discussions around participation are thus generally guided by its teleology, by its promises and failures, ideals and misgivings. In this light, as Kelty highlights, it often falls into either “a language of normative enthusiasm” or “to one of critiques of co-optation and bureaucratization” (Kelty 2017, S77).

The enthusiasm evoked by the concept can be partially attributed to the promise it holds out to overcome – and somehow “fix” – the limits of representative democracy. Following the demands of social movements for “real democracy” and direct citizen participation, participation has emerged as a promising solution to the growing scepticism in liberal democracies. While sharing a position that democracy without popular participation is a form of oligarchy, supporters of participation aim to renew a system fundamentally grounded on voting and elections, in which citizens’ demands are increasingly undermined by private interests and market forces. In this sense, participatory democracy counterposes what could be perceived as an elitist and hegemonic understanding of democracy, essentially represented by theorists like Schumpeter, Dahl and Norbert Bobbio.¹ For those twentieth-century theorists, citizens were too incapable and apathetic to take part continuously in decision-making processes. Against this assumption, the emphasis on direct democracy and the possibility of a bottom-up decision-making process seemed to provide hope and a way-out for an increasingly unpopular and technocratic system. Pateman’s (1976) work explicitly grounded such claims during the 1970s, challenging the assumptions of representative democracy. In doing so, she called for participatory

¹ See Alvriz and Boaventura de Souza (2003) for an extended review of the main hegemonic and non-hegemonic approaches to democracy, as well as the arguments for the supposedly impossibility of popular participation in democratic system.

democracy not only in formal political institutions, but as a wider decentralised system at home, school and workplace.

In contrast to the most optimistic visions of participation, however, increasingly more analysis reveals the pitfalls of the term. The most critical perspectives show how the concept of participation has been reappropriated by neoliberal governance, serving private interests, capital accumulation, and the perpetuation of social injustice. Dagnino (2004), for instance, names as a “perverse confluence” the process in which neoliberal projects use a similar grammar of democratic aspirations in welfare states, although serving opposite and conflicting interests. Moreover, Cooke and Kothari (2001) draw on a similar analysis to describe the current “tyranny of participation” as a top-down imposition. Generally, those critical perspectives are concerned with how participation functions as an instrument for governance in attempts by the state to regulate citizenship through diffuse power and a diverse network of actors beyond state officers (Shore and Wright 1997).

Critiques of participation also commonly contextualise these processes within a wider political milieu where conflicts are increasingly to be avoided, and consensus becomes the pervasive mode of politics. For Chantal Mouffe (2005), liberal democracy currently rejects the agonistic dimension of political life, consequently promoting an anti-political vision where consensus and agreement prevail. Crucially, this consensus-based approach is grounded on a post-political environment that asserts that fundamental societal antagonisms have been foreclosed or rendered obsolete. In this context, uncritical ideals of participation and deliberation emerge, and “participants in the discussion are not able to decide between clearly differentiated alternatives,” since “no real choice is at hand” (Mouffe 2005, 3).

In a wider view of this idea of a consensus-based approach, Laura Nader has discussed what she calls the “harmony ideology” and highlights the role of colonisation in propagating the Christian values of harmony, negotiation and agreement in an attempt to pacify colonised societies. Against this background, the emphasis on agreement becomes an instrument of colonisation: it functions as a form of justice that is less worried about the causes of disagreement such as structural inequalities or the violence of colonisation and dispossession itself than the ways in which disagreement manifests (Nader 1994). In Waterloo, such an understanding of what Nader calls “coercive harmony” is particularly

relevant to dealing with a postcolonial context. “Consensual” cities may not only be the result of a post-political context and a particular approach to liberal democracy, but may also hold close links to colonisation processes.

The concepts of post-politics and coercive harmony encourage fruitful ways to contextualise the rise of participation discourses in the wider political environment. They shed light on the depoliticising and legitimising effects of the process of participation in Waterloo. However, although such critical perspectives have gained attention in recent debates, mainly because of the proliferation and overuse of the “participation” concept, these critiques are not entirely new. From a Marxist perspective, Henri Lefebvre has long warned about the risks of the term in pacifying citizens and preventing political change:

In practice, the ideology of participation enables us to have the acquiescence of interested and concerned people at a small price. After a more or less elaborate pretence at information and social activity, they return to their tranquil passivity and retirement. Is it not clear that real and active participation already has a name? It is called self-management. Which poses other problems (Lefebvre 1996, 145).

Similar perspectives share a Marxist critique in which the concept of participation is intrinsically linked to other aspects of modern Western liberalism such as democracy, citizenship and republicanism. For instance, while assuming those terms are the result of bourgeois reformism, Gonzalez and colleagues claim that:

[P]articipation traverses the twofold-structure of capitalist states described by Marx: on the one hand, the illusion of representative democracy portraying citizens as equals despite overriding socioeconomic inequalities; on the other hand, the existence of a bureaucracy enforcing a hierarchy of knowledge (González, González-Álvarez, and Roura-Expósito 2018, 308).

Similarly, Manuel Delgado (2016) analyses the current claims of participation through the concept of *ciudadanismo* (“citizenism”), which he defines as a type of leftist liberalism that does not expect to overcome capitalism, but rather participates in it while simply preventing its most ruthless neoliberal version. Central to these critiques is the Marxist approach to liberal democracy that questions the tensions between this model of government and

capitalism. Essentially, this perspective states that under a capitalist system, it is impossible to democratise the fundamental basis for material production, the relation between capital and labour.

Following this argument, Jean-Pierre Garnier (2011) analyses how citizen participation is framed in urban planning. Drawing on Lefebvre's concept of the "right to the city," Garnier sees participation in this context as a form of "neutralizing popular claims that could contradict the interest of dominant classes" (Garnier 2011, 3). Effectively, participation gives the dominated the opportunity to participate in their own domination (Delgado 2016) or, as recent ethnographies show, the opportunity for participants to become complicit in governing power (Paley 2001). In this vein, Garnier defines participation as an "illusion" in which radical demands deemed "irresponsible" or "impossible" by experts are excluded from the process, thus paving the way to legitimating controversial projects. Following Lefebvre, he concludes that a genuine popular participation is impossible under current conditions of capitalist production.

Despite the persuasiveness of both sides of this debate, this thesis does not fall entirely into either an optimistic or pessimistic analysis of participation. Although the research resonates with most of the critical perspectives, it does not dismiss the politics of hope that the idea of participation generates. As Appadurai (2007) insists, democracy requires hope as a collective mobilising resource in order to reaffirm that its values are actually achievable. As such, hope stands against the dominance of the politics of pragmatism, prudence and technocratic solutions. Most importantly, this thesis does not embrace entirely one perspective or another because it is not fully guided by what participation could or should be, but rather by how it actually works locally (Goldman 2013). To a great extent, both critical and enthusiastic views miss an everyday perspective capable of approaching participation in a less pure and coherent form, incorporating the messy working of consultation, negotiation, and conflict, all occurring at the same time. Conversely, ethnographic accounts allow the analysis of democracy to hold the experience of participation among its own contradictions; it assumes the possibility to experience both hope and despair, excitement and suspicion, simultaneously, in everyday life.

Thus, the thesis is less interested in answering whether participation in Waterloo is good or bad, or if it works or not, in absolute, fixed or pure terms. Instead, the object of the study

is how people make sense of the ideal of participation, and how it comes into practice in their actual lives. The study seeks to connect this everyday life dimension with wider processes of space production, articulating urban experiences with democratic practices, and exploring how they become mutually constituted in daily life.

Conceptual Framework

Several fields of study support my analysis of participation, including geography, sociology, political science and urban planning. Moreover, this thesis draws on contributions provided by urban anthropology, and the anthropology of the state, planning, bureaucracy and policies. Generally, the concepts I mostly engage with in this thesis can be divided into two main areas: *City-Making* and *Participation*. The city-making literature explores space production and urban dynamics, while participation explores experience and forms of governance. Those two areas also organise the structure of the thesis, although I finally reconnect them as mutually shaped dimensions of urban democracy.

City-Making

Scholars such as Harvey (1982), Castells (1974) and Lefebvre (1991) offer a fruitful framework to understand space production, and in particular, the neoliberal ideologies informing current urban planning. In their work, cities are the main source for the reproduction and continuity of capital accumulation, and form part of a geography of capital. Rather than understanding urban space as an abstract container in which social relations and production occur, this approach states that urban space itself is *produced* by social and power relations, at the same time as it also shapes social relations. In other words, cities are simultaneously the outcomes of production, and the means of production. In this thesis, I approach the redevelopment of Waterloo as part of this geography of capital, in which the literature of global cities, neoliberal urbanism and gentrification intersect with participation.

Since at least 1970s, a vast literature has analysed the links between globalisation and the local level of cities, and in particular, how cities make globalising processes tangible. Different authors such as Hannerz (1996), Pujadas and Baptista (2001), Sassen (2001) and Cucó (2013) agree that wider political and economic changes such as market-driven urban

politics, increased inter-urban competitiveness for financial and human capital, and the growth of knowledge based economies (Florida 2002), have radically changed current processes of urbanisation. In particular, transnational cities have become increasingly oriented to the global flows of capital and people, drawn by a dominant discourse that calls for the renewal of economic activities in a post-industrial context.

In this process, urban renewals emerge as the driving force to change a city's economy, and as a key strategy to attract people, goods, knowledge and, most importantly, private capital. Accordingly, a global metropolis will seek to reinforce its image as a hospitable and welcoming city (Pujadas 2005), offering facilities and a shared infra-structure for cultural, financial, and tourist activities such as international conferences, exhibitions, festivals, sports events, the establishment of multinational companies in the city, etcetera. Massive urban renewals and mega-events, then, become strategic instruments for claiming the status of a global city, forming part of what Anna Tsing calls "the economy of appearance:" "a self-conscious making of a spectacle" necessary to attract international funds, in which "dramatic performance is the pre-requisite of economic performance" (Tsing 2000, 118)

Yet, global cities hardly ever follow this spectacle/performances economy and its promised improvements. Indeed, mega-events and redevelopments tend to exacerbate structural inequalities and underprivilege local demands in contrast to international investors and visitors. In other words, when the imagined global city meets local realities, it often clashes with multiple local interests and aspirations, and the long-term symbolical and spatial references that urban renewals seek to resignify. These conflicts reveal the tensions between the idea of urban spaces as an economic asset, and actual living cities, produced by daily social practices and uses (Certeau 1984; Jacobs 1961).

Different authors read the intersection of global cities and the proliferation of urban renewals as part of the neoliberalisation of urban planning (Brenner and Theodore 2002; Franquesa 2013; Hackworth 2013; Harvey 1973). This process began mainly after the crisis of Fordism-Keynesianism, between the late 1970s and early 1990s, and refers to several political and economic restructurings, including the growing integration of the global economy, deregulation measures, austerity, financialisation and the weakening of unions. Literature around neoliberal urbanism sheds light on how neoliberal politics have increasingly informed urban planning, putting capital accumulation at the centre of its

policies. Importantly, housing provision also suffered dramatic changes in this process towards the financialisation of housing. As Raquel Rolnik (2015) highlights, in the last decades, the primordial motor of financialised neoliberalism has been a real estate market that offers mortgages and shares of international funds as part of their finance products. This process radically changes the understanding of housing from a right to a financial commodity, while increasingly transferring local decision-making to global institutions.

Neoliberal urbanism, as observed in Waterloo, is also characterised by the active role of local government and urban policies. While neoliberal ideologies are underpinned by the ostensibly universal values of a free market, global dynamics are realised through particular and local dynamics. As a result, state and local governments emerge as key actors in this urban planning model. Rather than passive and external actors that unleash market forces, as official liberal rhetoric claims, local institutional frameworks, policy regimes, and regulatory practices become central to the neoliberal operation (Brenner and Theodore 2005). Some examples of these mechanisms are financial and tax support, deregulation, flexibility of planning controls, and the creation of mixed capital corporations and public/private partnerships. David Harvey (1989) characterises these mechanisms as the entrepreneurial turn of local government, in which the latter's fundamental function shifts from a redistributive role in space production to an effort to induce and facilitate private investments. A crucial example of this entrepreneurial role is urban renewals driven by local governments through ongoing and localised public investment such as metros, and other city infrastructure projects.

Importantly, those processes may also follow what can be understood as a state-led form of gentrification. Although city planners and other experts in the area struggle over a precise definition, the term "gentrification" usually refers to a specific change in post-industrial cities that shift from being industrial to corporate cities. During this process, the renewal of rundown housing, typically in working-class neighbourhoods or public housing estates like Waterloo, invites in newcomers who are able to realise the anticipated promises of profit after extensive private investments in the region. As a result, through public and private capital investment, and changing cultural meanings (Zukin 1995), new commercial shops and leisure activities start to open, bringing important changes to the social and

physical fabric of urban neighbourhoods, including the displacement of former low-income residents who can no longer afford to live in the area.

For Hackworth and Smith (2001), neoliberal urbanism generalises this process through planned gentrification, as observed in Waterloo. Infrastructure investments such as the new Waterloo Metro Station seek to widen the gap between the potential ground value and the actual ground rent capitalised. For Smith (1996), this process of devalorisation and revalorisation is precisely what allows gentrification and the production of surplus value. Following this approach, the value dynamic observed in Waterloo may also be understood as a process of “creative destruction” (Schumpeter 1976), defined as the process of incessant destruction and recreation to create surplus opportunities. To increase profit margins, certain areas of the city must be devalued and then re-made more valuable through, for example, state urban interventions.

Although offering a central contribution to urban studies, the analysis of neoliberalism through cities and gentrification often underscores the role of local dynamics and everyday practices. In particular, Magnani (2002) claims that a great number of urban studies tend to focus on the role cities play in the global system, and in doing so, run the risk of reproducing a model of urban life seen as a result, exclusively, of transnational economical forces, local elites, political lobbies, real estate interests, and other macrosocial forces in urban life. Far from diminishing these decisive elements, this thesis proposes to think how these processes are experienced and resignified in daily life. As such, Magnani advocates for ethnographic methods to reclaim social actors in urban studies, analysing processes that entangle them from an “insider and close-up view.” Essentially, what this approach proposes is to bring out the daily activities that create urban dynamics: work, leisure, religious practices, local festivities, meetings, and other social gatherings. Rather than approaching problems homogeneously as an immediate and direct answer to the impact of neoliberalism on cities, an ethnographic method, then, allows the highlighting of how cities are also made through everyday local practices.

Similarly, Brenner and Theodore (2002) call for an approach to “actually existing neoliberalism,” in which market forces do not follow universal and immutable laws. In this approach, authors claim to recentre:

[T]he contextual *embeddedness* of neoliberal restructuring projects insofar as they have been produced within national, regional, and local contexts defined by the legacies of inherited institutional frameworks, policy regimes, regulatory practices, and political struggles (Brenner and Theodore 2002, 351).

In this respect, and central to this thesis, Franquesa (2007) argues that neoliberal urbanism does not occur exclusively through mercantile processes. In doing so, he challenges the limits of the concept of creative destruction, arguing that the idea may lead to reading urban renewals as a mere value exchange dynamic. Instead, political economy dynamics, and in particular capital accumulation, must necessarily mobilise and engage with local social relations beyond their mercantile nature. In this vein, extra-economic dynamics such as participatory processes are not simply ornamental features of urban planning. They are central instruments to support and legitimate surplus generation, insofar they create the possibility to discipline and conduct local knowledge production. As result, in contrast to an abstract, universal and dematerialised analysis of economic processes, Franquesa reclaims the social dynamics associated with economic processes, not as separate spheres, but as mutually constitutive.

Participation as Governance

Following this approach, the thesis draws on everyday practices to reclaim the local social dynamics that are necessarily articulated with capital accumulation and space production. Specifically, the thesis explores how participatory practices and discourses, as extra-economic dynamics, become crucial features to legitimise controversial urban renewals through everyday activities. Following this day-to-day approach, the thesis examines how participation and community engagement function as citizenship technologies (Cruikshank 1999), while disciplining local knowledge production and conducting and affecting, in different ways, local demands and future aspirations.

The approach to participation as a form of neoliberal governance – drawing in particular on the Foucauldian concept of *governmentality* – offers a key contribution to this effort. Michel Foucault coined this term to refer to the diverse technologies, procedures, and rationalities through which governance is enabled. Starting from the question of the possibilities of governing without the sovereign and the divine right to rule (Foucault 1991),

Foucault proposed this neologism to explain the “arts” of governing free subjects. This “mentality of governing” – its rationalities – thus refers to the practices, institutions, regimes of truth, and calculations that create the possibility of governing.

Following this perspective, governance and power are enacted through a diverse network of institutions, material and methods that produce governing as a rational practice (Baptista 2018). In the words of Gordon, the rationalities of government are “a way of thinking about the nature of the practice of government” that is “capable of making that activity thinkable and practicable” both to practitioners and to those on whom it is practiced (Gordon 1991, 3). Similarly, for Baptista, “governmentality can then be seen as the plural regulatory webs of everyday practice, rule, and reasoning from which the ‘conduct of conduct’ is established” (Baptista 2018, 1). In this light, the concept of governmentality suggests an understanding of the state and governments, not as given, nor pre-established entities, but as organisations and realities *produced through* governing. In turn, neoliberalism could also be defined not solely as an ideology and a set of structural and economical changes, but as a particular rationality of government.

The concept of governmentality brings to attention the disciplinary power and coercion associated with the arts of governing, both in the practice of governing others, and in governing oneself. As Nikolas Rose (1999) highlights, in neoliberal modes of governance, the state does not weaken its “will to govern.” Instead, it enables governance through an extended and decentralised web of non-political actors that exceeds the formal state apparatus. It does so by promoting individualised self-regulation, and linking dispersed experts across different sites through calculation techniques, standardisation, and the objectification of subjects. Rather than issuing direct commands, authorities shape and regulate economic and social arrangements to respond to their own ends, and expect appropriate behaviours. In Rose’s own words, the government:

[C]reate[s] a distance between the decisions of formal political institutions and other social actors, and conceives of these new actors in new ways as subjects of responsibility, autonomy and seek[s] to act upon them through shaping and utilizing their freedom (Rose 1996, 54).

This approach to governing explains how participation can be embedded within neoliberal modes of urban governance. Specifically, the concept of governmentality explores how

government officers, alongside an extended web of social workers, urban planners, consultants and other actors, draw on democratic discourses as a way to motivate or conduct people's behaviours towards their own interests, in this case, the redevelopment of Waterloo and surplus production. Importantly, the concept draws attention to how governing is enacted through participation, insofar as participation is principally understood as an individual and autonomous contribution. For Barbara Cruikshank (1999), participation – or the “will to empower” – is less a solution than a strategy to govern those that participatory initiatives typically seek to redress. While not dismissing completely projects of self-government, she remains careful about government initiatives that seek to make subjects politically active and capable of self-government through what she defines as citizenship technologies. In her own words, such a democratic project both “enables and constrains the possibilities of political action” (Cruikshank 1999, 2).

Reliance on experts to undertake participatory processes evokes the regimes of power and knowledge production also examined by Foucault (1980). While acknowledging the diffuse ways power and social control are enacted in everyday life, Foucauldian analyses are useful to explore the problematic notion of expertise in participatory urban planning, especially when private consultants mediate between citizens and democratic institutions. In this vein, Uma Kothari (2001) conceptualises participatory methodologies as a form of knowledge production. In participatory processes, she argues, “experts” (such as designers, urban planners, policy makers, and others) are typically imbued with the authority to speak on behalf of a community, mediating and translating “the community’s perspective” to final decision-makers. In doing so, experts hold the power to produce knowledge about some groups while revealing their “real” problems, visions and aspirations. Importantly, they do so through the “codification, classification and control of information” (Kothari 2001, 143), potentially reinforcing unequal power relations.

Against this background, participatory urban planning emerges as an expert-led mode of governance underpinned by a technocratic rationale: as a “box to tick”, as residents often expressed. To approach this issue in the thesis, I engage with studies around discourses of development such as those by Li (2007), Scott (1998) and Escobar (1995). Specifically, I draw on the concept of the “anti-political machine” (Ferguson 1990) to understand the process of depoliticisation and bureaucratisation associated with participation in Waterloo.

For Ferguson, the anti-political development machine consists of a form of governance that assembles public, private and non-profit organisations under a highly bureaucratic working system that, as an effect, tends to depoliticise the wider context in which development programs occur. Ferguson elaborates this concept through his observation of the constant failure of international development projects. As he argues, the discourse and conceptual apparatus of development removes the political and historical backgrounds that generated the structural inequalities of underdeveloped countries in the first place. In this context, development programs not only do not solve the problems they are designed to address, but they also tend to strengthen the state's bureaucratic power through the growing paperwork generated to control, coordinate and manage all the stakeholders involved.

Despite the considerable differences of political, historical and economic conjuncture, scholars like Mike Raco and colleagues (2016) argue that similar phenomenon in urban redevelopments is currently evident, alongside a local and participatory discourse. In Waterloo, surveys, focus groups, online submissions, reports and a whole web of documentary infrastructure have become a way to legitimate, mediate and constrain citizens' relationships with public administration, reshaping significantly the meaning and practices of participation. The focus on formal aspects of the project means that the political and structural issues crucial to tackling Waterloo's social issues are made invisible, finally depoliticising the process.

According to Raco (2016), urban redevelopments now also outsource their main tasks, including consultation processes, and generate an urban politics mainly governed by private expert-led consultancies. As a result, in spite of the rhetoric of local and democratic control over urban decisions, on the ground, demands are perceived as mere inputs and data to be managed and shaped by private consultants who seek to "fast-track" developments and prevent any disruption or unpredictable political contestation. Fundamentally, consultations led by "experts" tend to convert local demands into "reasonable and deliverable units of activity" (Raco et al. 2016, 218), finally being instrumentalised to legitimate controversial redevelopments.

Building on Ferguson's work, Tania Li (2007) proposes the concept of "rendering technical" to explain a similar process in which development programs frame problems in ways to match an expert's previous repertoire. In this context, the definition of problems

become strictly linked and constrained by the availability of solutions already familiar to these experts. For Li, two main practices generally define development programs: problematisation, that is, identifying deficiencies that need to be rectified; and rendering such problems technical and within an intelligible field. In this light, Li also considers that development schemes tend to erase political-economic questions, that is, “questions about control over means of production, and the structures of law and force that support systemic inequalities” (Li 2007, 11).

In recent years anthropologists have drawn attention to how the common metaphor of the state functioning as a “machine” can lead to problematic analyses that perpetuate a mechanical idea of the state and of a “unitary system working in automation” (Mathur 2017). For this reason, while inspired by the concept, this thesis also considers anthropological contributions that show how “institutions of governance *actually* work” their culture of work, what effects they produce and how and why (Mathur 2017, 1). Drawing on this perspective, institutions are not so much abstract entities or machines, but rather are materialised by everyday routines and by the production and circulation of a variety of artefacts (Hull 2012).

There are thus two key contributions from development, governance and state anthropology that underpin this thesis. First, governmentality emerges as a key rationale sustaining the practice of participation. Second, the concept of an anti-political development machine also stresses the power regime of expert knowledge, the depoliticising effect of development programs, and the rendering of political issues as technical. Crucially, this framework foregrounds the mechanisms that generate participation as a bureaucratised, depoliticised and legitimising discourse.

Participation as Experience

In addition to the above approach to participation, the thesis also explores participation as a political experience. As such, it does not limit the analysis of participation to a form of governance. Rather, it approaches participation on two distinct levels, experience and governance, articulating in this way day-to-day experiences within wider power dynamics. Christopher Kely (2019) has argued that participation can be approached as a concept, a procedure, and/or an experience. And yet, current analysis seems to disproportionately

focus on the conceptual or procedural approaches, often failing to consider how it feels to participate.

Hence, this thesis approaches participation as an “affective experience of being part of a collective (or not)” (Kelty 2019, 22). More than a set of democratic techniques and procedures, it understands participation as the ongoing practice of engaging with the particular community of which we are a part. This approach holds the potential to explore why participation is increasingly perceived as an empty and meaningless experience, as I encountered in my fieldwork. An emphasis on the procedures and techniques may lead an analysis to miss, and eventually fail to understand, the experience of a participation charged with expectations and frustration. Participation holds out the promise of a collective sense of belonging and a transcendental dimension of moving beyond oneself, and yet, as my fieldwork illustrated, participants often felt frustrated by this promise, having realised its exact opposite: that they did not belong to decisions around their own community, and that participation was, in practice, “just another box to tick.” In Kelty’s words:

The power of participation, at its best, is to reveal ethical intuitions, make sense of different collective forms of life, and produce an experience beyond that of individual opinion, interest, or responsibility. But in the twenty-first century, participation is more often a formatted procedure by which autonomous individuals attempt to reach calculated consensus, or one in which they experience an attenuated, temporary feeling of personal contribution that ends almost as soon as it begins (Kelty 2019, 1).

In this light, approaching participation as a process of “embodied affects that represent a collective sense-making capacity” (Kelty 2019, 22) opens up a new perspective to explore participation beyond its conceptualisations and procedures. In doing so, the interest in participation shifts from its expected outcomes for which the individual participant makes some cost-benefit calculation before contributing, to its *process* as a collective activity. Essentially, it understands that when participation fails to meet its goals, this is not so much in terms of a measurable outcome, but in terms of the process failing to fulfil the promise for participants to engage in a collective experience of working together on a common project.

This emphasis on affective experience can offer insights into how and why, contrary to the individual cost-benefit calculation that liberal approaches to participation often seem to assume, participation so often goes beyond the individual and their contribution *to* a group, to being about working with others *as* a group. This approach brings into consideration the tensions between the improvised, creative, and transcendental dimensions of participation as a collective experience, and its necessity (or refusal) to be captured and formalised into a procedure involving discrete individuals. In Kelty's words, "when we format participation in particular ways, we contain, threaten, defuse, or transform this experience, causing participants to wonder: Am I part of this collective?" (Kelty 2019, 10). In acknowledging these tensions, participation as an experience can be explored for the ways in which it contrasts with and challenges its instrumental expressions and assumptions.

Understanding Participation Through Cities

The conceptual framework of this thesis combines literature on neoliberal urbanism and literature on political participation. In doing so, it attempts to reconnect two processes that are often analysed separately: urban dynamics and democratic practices, and space production and political participation. These processes cannot be understood fully as autonomous dynamics that can be analysed as strictly independent. If political economy analyses should take into consideration local social relations, then community engagement and political participation – as growing features in urban planning – should follow a similar perspective.

For this reason, the thesis limits its object of study to how both dynamics are articulate in daily life, and how they become mutually constituted. I explore the implications of seemingly participatory processes for space production and capital accumulation, and in turn, the implications of wider city dynamics in the experience of participation itself. Accordingly, this thesis strategically approaches participation as a node that enables the connection between global and local dynamics, between local social relations and wider political and economic processes. Although urban renewals are largely informed by the need to attract global investment, participatory features allow this effort to occur at a city level as they support the definition and regulation of local demands and future aspirations.

While the role of urban renewals in capital accumulation or gentrification is certainly not new, this thesis engages with a particular iteration of this process, in which participatory

discourses gain renewed prominence and generate new mechanisms of legitimisation. Indeed, it constitutes a contemporary phenomenon that may be understood as a “participatory gentrification.” In this process, local governments build on democratic discourses and practices that are seemingly apolitical, to serve highly controversial redevelopments that induce participants to become complicit in their own displacement. While examining this process through an everyday lens, the thesis exposes the continuities between local democratic projects and wider political economies.

The particular approach of the thesis offers two final differentiated perspectives to the studies of participatory urban planning. First, while many studies focus on a prescriptive, normative and instrumental notion of participation, this thesis follows participatory urban planning over an extended period of time. This strategy offers a *processual* and everyday approach to the *experience* of participation, rather than focusing on its outputs. Accordingly, it analyses “the actually existing participation,” beyond its discourses. Second, the thesis also explores how the concept of participation is understood and resignified locally. Instead of assuming the concept of participation as a given or universal, the thesis seeks to understand its multiple local meanings. This task seems especially relevant in a context where participation increasingly appears as an internationally exportable procedure and set of techniques, a toolkit of best practices, or a “box to tick”. Against this approach, I reclaim the daily experience of participating in cities.

Specific Objectives

Taking into consideration these particular approaches of the thesis, I unpacked the research underpinning the thesis’s general goals into five specific objectives that generally correspond to the chapters of the thesis.

1. An analysis of the social production of Waterloo to understand how it is embedded in the wider context of the city of Sydney from a historical perspective.

In undertaking this analysis, I departed from the hypothesis that the conditions of a former working-class neighbourhood are intimately related to the current imaginary of Waterloo including accusatory categories associated with deviance, poverty, crime and madness. I also contended that the urban imaginaries built over the last decades would be daily updated through different discourses and practices, informing and justifying the present intervention in the neighbourhood.

2. An understanding of the relationship between the urban intervention in Waterloo and the particular city logics mobilised in Sydney.

The analysis of the thesis started from the premise that the current urban intervention was embedded in both local and global dynamics, and sought to promote the image of a cosmopolitan and welcoming city, characterised by the intense flow of people and capital. This perspective was combined with neoliberal logics that mobilised spaces for economic purposes, and in the particular case of Waterloo, promote the sale of public properties as the driving force of urban renewal. Finally, I explored how the articulation of a transnational, post-industrial, post-colonial and neoliberal city model could be observed in different city plans, intersecting with the ways in which its neighbourhoods are transformed.

3. An analysis of the discourses of citizen participation and how New South Wales government officers reinterpret and resignify their meanings locally.

I suggest that official discourses of participation are typically grounded on the justification that groups excluded from vertical decision-making processes should be included in decisions that will affect their lives. However, on a daily basis, participatory methods function as tools to produce and control knowledge about local communities, potentially perpetuating unequal power relations. As a result, the search for a common and consensual vision rejects structural conflicts and wider political economy dynamics, ultimately functioning as a discourse to legitimise controversial urban renewal plans.

4. An exploration of the form of consultations and community engagement, seeking to understand the tactics and technologies capable of generating consensus or the facade of consensus around the urban planning project.

The thesis explored if the format of workshops, meetings, drop-in sessions, reports, minutes, petitions and surveys could be understood as forms of bureaucratic power and social control that perform the appearance of action while simultaneously concealing a fragile and limited decision-making power. Essentially, I questioned whether this form of making politics held the potential to depoliticise and demobilise local communities while defining, ordering and regulating the forms of collective action available.

5. An analysis of how the meaning of being a public housing tenant can establish a specific framework of interaction between citizens and the government officers.

The thesis started the analysis with the hypothesis that the social relations outside the formal consultation process – in other spaces and in other moments – would shape the participatory process itself. While Waterloo residents experience multiple forms of territorial stigmatisation, I explored whether the production of citizen-subjects in the structures of participation may be shaped by the meanings of being a resident of public housing and its associated moral economy. In doing so, I also explored how everyday urban dynamics intersect with democratic practices.

Final Notes: Waterloo and the Urban Development Proposal

Waterloo was an outstanding space through which to understand the processes I discuss in this chapter. It is the biggest public housing estate in the inner-Sydney, one that has persistently resisted growing pressure to realise its increasing land value in a global and post-Olympic city like Sydney. Several politicians and policy-makers have claimed its redevelopment as one of the most relevant projects of the state government, given its size, value and impact. Waterloo also appears to be one of the major sites of the state's Communities Plus program, a program exclusively dedicated to public housing renewals. This program claims community consultation as a key strategy for all its projects, making Waterloo a paradigmatic case of how participation has become a central feature through which to promote urban renewals.

The current public housing estate of Waterloo hosts 2012 units. It comprises several walk-up flats and seven high-rise buildings, including the iconic *Matavai* and *Turanga*, thirty-two storey towers (see composite Figure 1.3 below).



Figure 1.3: *Matavai and Turanga Towers and walk-up buildings, Waterloo* (Source: Dore 2019).

The estate represents approximately 15% of the whole suburb of Waterloo, and borders with the neighbourhood of Redfern, an area locally recognised for its active Aboriginal community. Although different suburbs, Waterloo and Redfern are commonly referred to as the same neighbourhood through the term Redfern-Waterloo. Today, this public housing estate hosts a diverse community of people from different nationalities, mostly Australians, Russians, and Chinese. Importantly, Waterloo-Redfern is home to a relatively high number of Aboriginal residents. The Estate is also characterised by an elderly and low-income population: 40% receive aged pensions as their primary source of income, 30% are on disability support, and 15% are on unemployment benefits (Land and Housing Corporation 2017).

Waterloo is centrally-located in Sydney. It is close to two of the main universities in New South Wales: the University of Technology of Sydney (UTS), and University of Sydney. It is also close to public transportation (Redfern Station), and only a short distance from the Central Business District and principal tourist sights of the city, as shown in Figure 1.4.



Figure 1.4: Waterloo in relation to the City of Sydney and Sydney landmarks (Source: map from City of Sydney; modified by author).

In the last decades, increased interest from homebuyers in the inner city has accelerated a significant change in its surrounding areas. Refurbishment of Victorian houses and warehouses, and the redevelopment of former industrial sites, have triggered a steady increase in property values, slowly changing the impoverished area into a mostly middle-class neighbourhood, as shown in Figure 1.5.



Figure 1.5: Victorian Terraces (Source: Dore 2019).

The initial proposal of redevelopment included six new high-rises ranging from thirty-two to forty storeys, nine between twenty and thirty-two storeys, and a number of seven-storey new flats. Significantly, the public housing estate renewal proposal followed the announcement of the new Waterloo Metro Station to support the increasing land value in the area (Figure 1.6).



Figure 1.6: Future Waterloo Metro Station (Source: Sydney Metro)

The developed site above the underground station, also called the Metro Quarter, was to include three high-rise towers and several retail properties (see Figure 1.7). Although integrated into the suburb of Waterloo and being a strategic site for the redevelopment, it has officially been presented as a separated plan, meaning that it follows a parallel rather

than an integrated process of submissions for planning controls. Because of this parallel process, the redevelopment proposal has triggered multiple conflicts that have revealed the relevance of the project, its conflicting interests, resistance, and different ways of understanding participation.

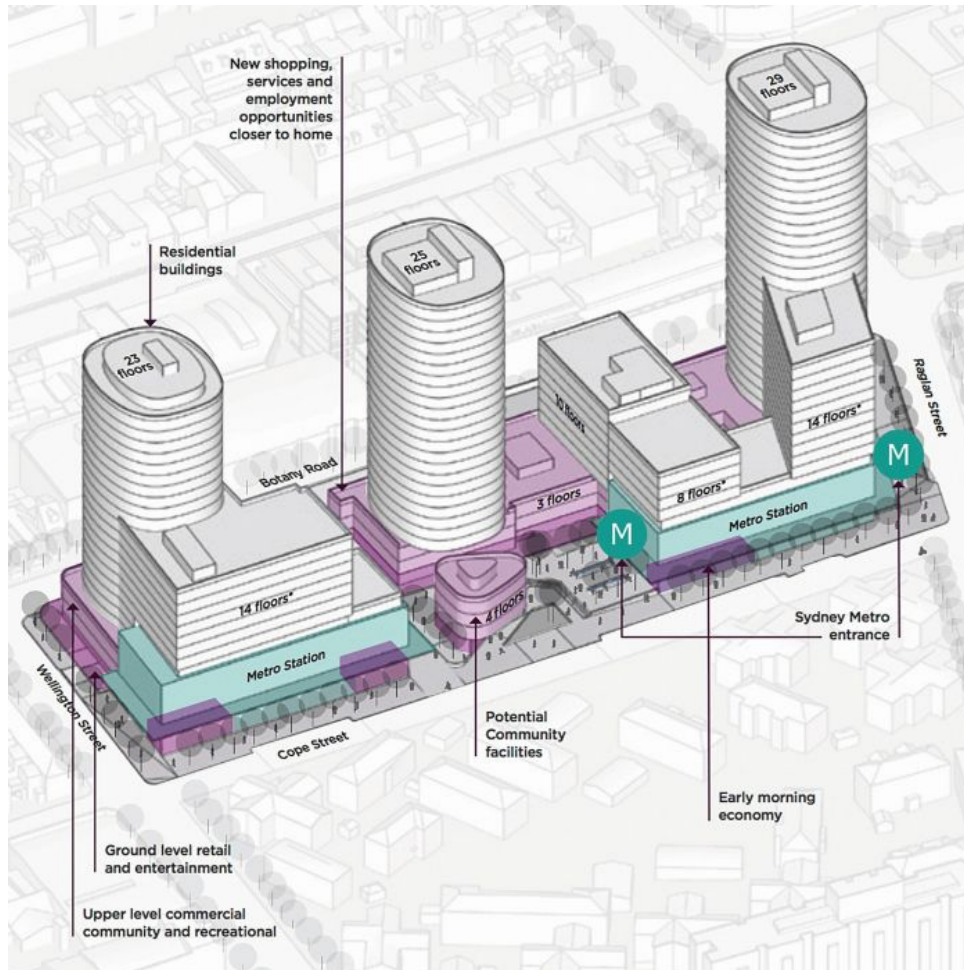


Figure 1.7: Metro Quarter Proposal (Source: Urban Growth NSW)

Implementing Plans

The redevelopment was announced in 2015, but its process has suffered subsequent delays that deserve attention. At the time of writing, work had begun on the new Waterloo Metro Station, however, planned demolitions and relocations had not yet started (see Figure 1.8 below). In part, these delays have been caused by intense opposition from a network of organisations and groups, including local residents, non-government organisations and

local government, all of which have made Waterloo such an important place to study the participatory aspect of redevelopment.



Figure 1.8: Construction Site of Waterloo Metro Station 2021 (Source: Dore 2019).

In March 2016, a tenants-led group was created to contest the Metro process: the Waterloo Public Housing Action Group (WPHAG). The group was formed mostly by public housing tenants, some private owners and renters, and scholars and professionals interested in supporting the organisation. The group was explicitly created to oppose the redevelopment and offer alternative directions. As one of the main leaders of the group explained, the group proposed to push for a “negotiation,” rather than a “consultation” process. Although the group inevitably suffered its own internal conflicts, during its most active period it generated significant influence on public opinion about the project.

In June 2016, the Waterloo Public Housing Action group organised the Waterloo Tent Embassy. Members strategically chose this name and tactic to refer to the well-known Aboriginal Tent Embassy that has occupied the lawns outside Old Parliament House in Canberra since 1972. This remarkable political occupation had prompted several other Tent Embassies, including the Redfern Tent Embassy formed to protest against the redevelopment of the Block in 2014. In Waterloo, the occupation was supported and mainly organised by Aunty Jenny Munro, a Wiradjuri elder and a central political leader in the local Aboriginal struggles. Although the Waterloo Public Housing Action Group was a space for public housing tenants in general, local Aboriginal knowledge and experience in social movements have been key for its strategic definition. During the occupation, tenants

raised tents on Waterloo Green, gathered around a pit fire, held meetings and collected the signatures necessary for a parliamentary petition presented by Jenny Leong, the local state Member of Parliament for Waterloo. Although the local community largely supported the occupation, subsequent tensions with other users of Waterloo Green led to the official end of the Embassy.²

This experience was captured in great detail in the 2016 documentary, *There Goes the Neighbourhood*, directed by local resident and home-owner, Clare Lewis, with Carolina Sorenson, and screened on the Australian public broadcaster, the ABC. The movie resulted from a wider initiative called #WeLiveHere. In 2017, Lewis organised an art project with other tenants that illuminated the windows of the *Matavai* and *Turanga* towers with multi-coloured LED lights (Figure 1.9).



Figure 1.9 *WeLiveHere* Art Project 2017 (Source: <https://www.welivehere2017.com.au/>)

The main purpose of the project was to share local stories that could challenge the disparaging and hegemonic imaginaries associated with Waterloo tenants, and is further discussed in Chapter Three. A media campaign supported the project in its attempt to promote alternative images of the neighbourhood: belonging, diversity, solidarity and hard-working people.

² For further discussion see Sisson (2020), Wynne (2019), and Chatterjee (2020).

Another initiative led by the Waterloo Redevelopment Group was the Future Planning Centre, set up in April 2017. Its purpose was to collectively generate alternative visions for the neighbourhood and undertake a parallel conversation to the official consultation within the community. The project attracted significant attention from local scholars, architecture students, and local residents. However, there were growing tensions within the group over strategies, leadership and priorities, including the crucial question of whether it was better to engage with the consultation to search for a better outcome, or to refuse to engage in the government's activities (the group's preferred approach). As described in Chapter Seven, these setbacks gradually slowed down the activities of the group and prevented further discussion and the realisation of the initiative as originally imagined.

The thesis does not extensively analyse these initiatives. They had occurred before the research project; moreover, the experiences had already been extensively analysed elsewhere, such as in Sisson (2020), Wynne (2019) and Chatterjee (2020). However, it is crucial to cite these initiatives as they undoubtedly affected general opinion about the redevelopment. For Sisson, these initiatives “contested territorial stigmatization” (Sisson 2020, 211). Similarly, for Wynne (2019), resistance in Waterloo was never only about stopping the redevelopment, but also about contesting dominant forms of knowledge, subjectivities and technologies; it represented a refusal to be conducted by others, and an effort to enable people to imagine otherwise.

In more pragmatic terms, though, ongoing forms of resistance played a crucial role in shifting the course of the redevelopment. Initially unplanned initiatives were undertaken by the government, included the funding of an Aboriginal Liaison Officer, acceleration on maintenance requests, and the refurbishment of Community Rooms in the Solander and Dobell buildings. More recently, the New South Wales Land and Housing Corporation (LAHC) agreed to consider a “Human Service Plan.” In this new plan, issues such as mental health support and long-term housing maintenance were to be addressed alongside the redevelopment masterplan and its plans for the built environment. Moreover, planning controls were also shifted to the local municipality. Crucially, these shifts were related to pressure not only from the community side, but also from an alliance with the local government, the City of Sydney council. The City of Sydney not only largely funded these

community initiatives, but also, as I explain below, it also created its own oppositional strategy through the power it held as a government institution.

In March 2019, before the state elections in New South Wales, the City of Sydney released an unofficial alternative redevelopment plan together with a massive media effort. In this alternative plan, building heights and density were lower, the overall target decreased from 6,800 to 5,300 dwellers. Private housing represented only 30% of the alternative redevelopment plan instead of 70%, and the *Matavai* and *Turanga* towers, two of the public housing towers, were not to be demolished, but rather were to be refurbished. The local government also called for direct investment, instead of following a “no-cost” project approach, and aimed to retain public ownership through leasehold provisions (City of Sydney 2019). In the morning after the announcement, the biggest newspapers in New South Wales released visually-appealing video simulations and illustrations of the proposed plan (Figure 1.10).



Figure 1.10: City of Sydney Waterloo Proposal 2019

The New South Wales government immediately stated that they had not been aware of the City of Sydney’s “unofficial” and alternative plan. Yet, the expectation among residents of another option had already been generated, and open conflict broke out between local and state governments.

Following this announcement, a long impasse between the city and state levels of government began and remains unresolved at the date of writing. In November 2019, the

state government unexpectedly announced the shift of the redevelopment planning authority to local government, meaning that the City of Sydney would be responsible for planning rules in its council area. While the exact reason for this sudden change is not clear, locally, residents and community organisers speculated that the New South Wales government wanted to accelerate the redevelopment, giving up some level of power in order to avoid too many constraints from local government.

However, plans were not accelerated: they continued to be delayed due to opposition. In May 2020, the New South Wales Land and Housing Corporation lodged a request with the City of Sydney to change the Waterloo South planning controls. After reviewing the application, the local council approved a revised proposal that included fewer towers (although the same number of residents) and mandatory minimums of 30% for social housing and 20% for affordable housing, from which 10% should be for Aboriginal Housing. Both levels of government – local and state – were unable to agree, leading the New South Wales Planning Minister to intervene. After accusing the council of “prologuing the stalemate,” he appointed an alternative planning authority for Waterloo South. In March 2021, the City of Sydney officially lost its authority over planning controls in the southern area of Waterloo, and the New South Wales Government established an Independent Advisory Group to advise on the City of Sydney proposal.

The redevelopment of Waterloo remains an open story. The reversals and conflicts between the state and city demonstrate a dynamic political terrain in which a massive redevelopment like Waterloo cannot occur in a straight-forward way. Despite proponents’ efforts, the plan struggles to gain full legitimacy and requires the various actors and institutions to undergo constant negotiation. The following chapters of this thesis analyse this unfinished story of Waterloo, showing how participation unfolded throughout this messy process.

Chapter Two

Methodological Approaches

I arrived in Sydney on 3 December 2018. It was summer, and Christmas time. Waterloo residents and local organisations were organising different events to celebrate the end of the year as regular meetings and activities were paused until 2019. The first person I spoke with in Waterloo was Tom, a community officer who later became a good friend and a key interlocutor for my fieldwork. We first met at the Counterpoint Community Centre in December 2018. At that time, after a long talk, he generously invited me to walk around Waterloo. He first showed me the Waterloo Connect: a point of information set up by the New South Wales State Government to provide residents with updates about the redevelopment. Then he showed me the Community Centre right next to it, where residents were having a Christmas party. Although unplanned, on 10 December, I was introduced to different residents, local political candidates, and key community organisation members. In that celebration, I started my long relationship with this welcoming community.

This thesis results from fourteen months of continuous fieldwork in Waterloo from December 2018 until January 2020. At the beginning of 2019, I moved into Redfern, the area neighbouring Waterloo to conduct the research. I could not live in the Waterloo Estate, as it was only for public housing tenants, so the best option was to live in Redfern, around ten minutes' walk from the estate. Living in this area provided me with valuable information. During my stay I experienced, for a prolonged period, the urban transformations in the neighbourhood and its daily life: the different local shops, markets, pubs, local medical centres, and who usually went to each place and at what time of the day. I frequently witnessed conflicts and street discussions among neighbours and residents, including the homeless, and local political campaigns. I also experienced the friendship among residents, the possibility of practicing urban gardening in the inner city, and living the vibrant life of this neighbourhood.

However, my presence in the community was not free of tension. As I explain in the thesis, Redfern and Waterloo had been undergoing gentrification, and my position in the community was conflicted. As a non-Aboriginal international student, and as a doctorate researcher who paid a relatively high rent to live in the area, I participated in the very structural trends that this neighbourhood was concerned about, and that my research was

to explore. Indirectly, my residence contributed to the broader trend of increasing rents and exclusionary ethnic whitening of the area (Shaw 2007). I benefited from the new shops opening, and from the privileged position of participating in almost every political event to discuss the future of Sydney. These tensions posed unresolvable ethical dilemmas that I dealt with by actively engaging in the local life of the community, avoiding an indifferent and temporary presence, and participating as much as I could. In this chapter I explain how I lived this immersive experience in the neighbourhood as part of the methodology and research strategies that ground this thesis.

Researching Participation in Waterloo

There are several entry-points from which political participation can be analysed. Following Julia Paley (2008), one way is to focus on political language and the common terms people use to describe political processes. The goal in this kind of approach is to examine how people use and interpret those vocabularies in public discourse. However, as Paley herself acknowledges, meaning-centred analysis might not grasp the complexity of democratic processes, requiring its intersection with the consideration of practices and institutions to capture “what is done with meaning, and how politics operate” (Paley 2008, 8). Accordingly, this thesis follows the everyday *activities* people engaged in to promote participation, while also observing how participation was actually enacted on a day-to-day basis.

The focus on practice – in combination with discourse – invites a closer look at participation as an institutionalised practice in itself. This approach has the benefit of capturing routines and stable practices. For Kelty (2019), analysing participation as an institution means focusing on the repeated routines of participation, the formalisation of those routines into specific procedures, and the possibility for those practices and routines to circulate and be transplanted into other contexts. However, focusing exclusively on institutions also creates important risks to research on participation: it conceives of participation as “solid” and made up of “more or less permanent” practices (Kelty 2019, 41), potentially missing how it may change. Importantly, for Kelty, this misapprehension is precisely the problem of recent participation analysis:

Participation is no doubt institutionalizing itself in some troubling ways today—but the tools of institutional analysis do not easily allow us to

explore why that is happening, or what resistances and recombination of participatory practices are occurring, and what new forms of life or practice are being created (Kelty 2019, 41).

Treating participation as an experience, however, may counter some of those risks. Analysing how participation is performed in particular situations, and in action, benefits from the possibility of recognising how it may be contested, transformed and affected by daily interactions.

Another entry-point to analysing participation is through its materialities. Noortje Marres (2015), for instance, advocates for scholars to re-centre *objects* as crucial for political participation. In her work on “material participation,” objects are not simply resources available to promote action, but things capable of affecting and orienting those actions in particular ways. In this thesis I consider those multiple elements of analysis – political language, practices, institutions, experiences, and materialities – sometimes paying more attention to one dimension over another, according to each discussion. Crucially, throughout my fieldwork, however, I explored the intersection of these perspectives through a combination of strategies.

In particular, I analysed social situations and public events to capture participation as an embodied experience, and to observe its practice in action. In addition, I gathered documents that allowed me to analyse how participation was conceived in public discourse, while simultaneously considering its materialities in shaping and affecting everyday activities. I also strategically followed the community activities that were unfolding outside the realms of institutional participation. This strategy prevented me from considering participation merely through the lens of stable routines with their consequent focus on procedures. Instead, wider research revealed participation as a dynamic, affective and contested experience. Finally, the analysis of policy documents supported the examination of the government’s rationalities and approach to participation as governance. While an overfocus on daily experience might have led the investigation to miss wider power dynamics, the strategy of analysing policy documents added to the research by revealing the different experiences and practices, not as isolated situations, but framed by wider political and economic dynamics.

Situations, Meetings and Social Events

Anthropologists have long drawn on social situations and events as a strategy to understand specific social phenomena and the interaction between different groups and social networks. The seminal work of Max Gluckman (1940) clearly illustrates this approach. Through his description of the Malungwana bridge inauguration in Zululand, Gluckman revealed how structuring power relations, key social institutions, conflicts and concrete behaviours unfolded in action. In this strategy, the contrasted analysis of different social situations emerges as a powerful method to apprehend particular social orders and systems of relations based on specific values and social norms. The approach enables society to be understood in dynamic and processual terms because it attends to how different individuals live through significant social transformations, such as the rapidly changing context of Waterloo. In my research, active participation in multiple events allowed me to better understand the experience of participation from a dynamic and embodied perspective, rather than in fixed and normative terms.

This situational approach also avoided the problem of an overly tight focus on either residents' experiences, or government discourses and performances. Instead, in this thesis I privilege the interaction between different actors observed in social events. During those meetings and social events, I considered how participation discourses were elaborated in the public space and how people performed such conceptualisations. Specifically, I observed different dimensions of public encounters: who participated and why; how the gathering was structured, organised and conducted; how participants spoke and presented themselves (including body language); what topics were addressed and what topics were ignored; which conflicts, disagreements and unplanned situations constituted or challenged the encounter. While maintaining the focus on public interactions, the foundational work of Goffman (1959) on social interactions, with its micro-sociological perspective, was a key inspiration for my fieldwork. Essentially, this localised approach allowed the research to combine wider political economy dynamics – as urban transformation and housing studies typically emphasise – with scrutiny of particular and situated relations.

The emphasis on events led to a field research characterised by fragmentation, participant rotation and the discontinuity of many intermittent encounters. Like urban life more generally, these meetings were occasional, fragile and ephemeral. While most activities

were undertaken in Waterloo, there was no delimited location, nor a particular base organisation, although some organisations that I followed were more relevant than others. Therefore, this research also required effort to keep track of and articulate such meetings, highlighting their silences, gaps and discontinuities, but also how they emerged as interconnected, often interdependent, and part of wider dynamics.

The uncountable number of public meetings, social events and forums organised in Waterloo surprised me from the very beginning of the fieldwork. Keeping track of all scheduled gatherings was not an easy task, but during my research, I gradually identified the most relevant meetings I should attend regularly, combined with other occasional events. During my fourteen months of fieldwork, I regularly went to the Waterloo Redevelopment Group (WRG) meeting once a month. This event comprised a two-hour encounter where representatives of different sectors of the community met to discuss the latest updates of the redevelopment project and other relevant issues for the group. The group typically gathered Waterloo tenants, New South Wales government representatives, City of Sydney officers, and representatives of local non-government organisations such as RedWatch (Redfern Eveleigh Darlington Waterloo Watch), CounterPoint Community Service, Inner Sydney Voice, Redfern Legal Centre, and the Tenants' Union, among others. REDWatch, Inner Sydney Voice and CounterPoint Community Service were locally-based organisations that monitored the government's activities, provided community information, and offered several community services. Both Redfern Legal Centre and the Tenants' Union of New South Wales offered free legal and general advice for the community, with the Tenants' Union specialising in tenancy agreements.

My follow-up with the Waterloo Redevelopment Group was a central part of my research as it allowed me not only to keep updated with recent announcements, but most importantly, to observe the interactions among tenants, government officers and local community groups over time: who spoke, what they said, how, and to whom. Undertaking participant observation with this group also allowed me to note the most pressing issues for the local community during the redevelopment and observe the emergence of recurring and unexpected conflicts. Observing these meetings facilitated my understanding of how governance was enacted, how collective action was locally understood, how politics was

practiced in action, and which material artefacts were employed (such as minutes, motions and agendas).

Besides these meetings, I also regularly participated in morning teas organised by Counterpoint Community Service every last Friday of the month. This social gathering was characterised by informal chats among tenants and did not have as its explicit purpose discussion of the redevelopment. Rather, the meeting sought to promote the gathering of local community and often received, not only tenants, but also local non-government organisation representatives.

At the beginning of my fieldwork, I also regularly attended the meetings of the Waterloo Public Housing Action Group, a tenant-led organisation critical of the redevelopment. However, by the time I began my fieldwork, this group had already more or less demobilised. Their meetings frequently attracted just two persons, and in the absence of explicit tasks or actions to take, were often cancelled, until their activities were finally paused. Yet, at the beginning, the meetings were still important as they fostered closer relations with other tenants critical of the redevelopment. Surprisingly, although few people attended, and there was no specific agenda to discuss, the informal and extended conversations with residents that resulted from these meetings were a rich research opportunity.

I also participated in other occasional meetings and events, such as two “capacity-building” workshops organised by Inner Sydney Voice. The first one was about how to navigate bureaucracy, and the other was about how to submit feedback to the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment during exhibition periods. In addition, I followed three political debates during the New South Wales state and federal elections. The first was organised by RedWatch and hosted state candidates from the Labor Party, Aunty Norma Ingram, and the Green Party, Jenny Leong. The other two debates, for the federal elections, were held by the Alexandria Residents’ Action Group and Glebe Society, and brought together several candidates, including the Liberal Party candidate, Jacqui Munro, Greens Party candidate, Matt Thompson, and Labor Party candidate, Tanya Plibersek, who was re-elected as the federal Member of Parliament for Sydney. Moreover, I attended three Lord Mayor Forums in Waterloo. In those meeting, the City of Sydney Mayor, Clover Moore, came personally to speak with tenants, providing a privileged opportunity to understand

other local demands beyond the consultation, such as concerns about garbage collection, trees and lighting issues. I also participated in two Summer on the Green events, organised every year on Waterloo Green by the Counterpoint Community Centre, supported by the City of Sydney. These were whole-day community celebrations that offered playgrounds and pets for children to play with, an Indigenous smoking ceremony, choirs, tenants' stalls (including for the Community Garden Association, and the Waterloo Redevelopment Group), anti-drugs police with horses engaging in community outreach and the distribution of flyers asking tenants to report illegal activities. Local politicians also spoke at these major gatherings.

Besides these meetings and community celebrations, I observed key events related to the redevelopment itself: the final masterplan release; the announcement of the alternative masterplan proposed by the City of Sydney; and the release of the final report produced by the Waterloo Public Housing Action Group. This report was supported by the City of Sydney and shared the group's critical perspective on the redevelopment. Finally, I also attended the 2019 Sydney Town Hall Assembly supporting affordable housing, organised by the St Vincent de Paul Society of New South Wales, Sydney Alliance and the Everybody's Home campaign. The Assembly gathered thousands of people and dozens of local associations supporting public housing in New South Wales, including religious groups, community groups, and tenants' associations like the one in Waterloo.

In short, I participated in over fifty meetings. These can be organised into five main categories: **regular meetings** related to the redevelopment, such as the Waterloo Redevelopment Group; occasional **community engagement activities** related to the redevelopment, like drop-in sessions; key **redevelopment events**, like the final masterplan release; **local political and electoral events**; and more **institutionalised forms of social gatherings**, such as the morning teas. Below I summarise the main activities:

Regular meetings (once a month)

Waterloo Redevelopment Group

Waterloo Redevelopment Group Subgroup

Waterloo Public Housing Action Group

Lord Mayor Forum

Community engagement activities

Drop-in sessions for the Metro Quarter

Capacity Building Workshops

Barbecue Information Session (Metro Quarter)

Redevelopment events

Final masterplan release

Announcement of the City of Sydney alternative masterplan

Release of Waterloo Public Housing Action Group final report

Public Housing Forum

Alexandria Resident' Action Group discussion about the redevelopment

Local Electoral debates

State elections debate: "Meet your candidates."

Federal elections debate

Institutional social gatherings

Morning teas (once a month)

Summer on the Green

There Goes the Neighbourhood Screening and round-table.

Documents

Document analysis was another central part of my research. Following the production of documents related to the redevelopment as well as their circulation in the meetings I observed, played an unexpected role in this thesis. Tracking documents allowed me, not only to analyse the official discourses of participation, but also how such artefacts (including minutes, agendas and motions) shaped and oriented political encounters in specific directions. In addition, the gathering of policy documents was crucial to understanding the government's rationalities and the political and economic framing of the redevelopment.

Essentially, this effort contributed to a research strategy that sought to comprehend participatory urban planning through the triangle of discourses, practices and documents. I

gathered government documents, media articles and residents' online submissions. This information was variously found in reports, factsheets, newsletter, brochures, websites, PowerPoint presentations, flyers, briefings and newspapers:

Government documents

- Housing Policy: *The Future Directions for Social Housing in NSW* (NSW Government 2016)
- Government Programs: Communities Plus Program information found on website, brochures and factsheets.
- Sydney Metropolitan Strategic Plans since 2005
- Government agency self-presentation on websites, including by the Land and Housing Corporation, formerly Urban Growth, and the Department of Community and Justice
- Government press releases

Government Consultation and community engagement materials

- Information on websites, factsheets, advertisements and schedules
- Consultation Reports: *Waterloo Redevelopment Visioning Report* (KJA 2018), *Options Testing Consultation Report Key Findings* (Elton Consulting 2019)
- Testing options for preferred masterplan
- Preferred masterplan

Community and local government critical materials

- Waterloo Public Housing Action Group Reports: Redevelopment Option Report, Waterloo Estate Community Gardens Research Report, Waterloo Visioning Report Initial Response
- Online submissions and official responses for Metro Quarter Exhibition (Department of Planning)

- The City of Sydney alternative masterplan information found on websites, media releases and videos.
- Parliamentary petitions related to Waterloo.

Media

- Newspaper articles related to the redevelopment.
- Historical media reporting of Waterloo and Redfern area.

Meeting outputs

- Agendas, minutes and eventual motions.

Beyond Institutions

Besides social situations and document analysis, another important part of my fieldwork involved joining in different community practices, such as urban gardening, a community choir, and a theatre group. First, as a foreigner researcher, I initially had to learn the political system of Australia. Being immersed in this environment and attending several different political activities supported my wider understanding of Australian politics. For instance, it was crucial to my analysis to follow the electoral campaign of Jenny Leong, the local State Member for Parliament from Waterloo. From January to March 2019, I joined political debates, distributed flyers, and knocked on doors – a community-based practice relatively new for me, as, coming from Brazil, I was previously more accustomed to mass political acts oriented towards thousands or even millions of people. Although these experiences may not be explicitly reflected on in the thesis, they grounded the research in meaningful ways, in particular through building relationships, and in the wider comprehension of the meanings and practices of doing politics in Australia.

Second, as soon as I started my fieldwork, I realised that if I limited my research to the meetings strictly related to the redevelopment or to community engagement, the research might suffer significant gaps. While social situations and documents were crucial to understanding the process of the redevelopment and its conflicts, I could not understand how people actually lived from these events alone. Essentially, I would have missed the everyday activities undertaken in the neighbourhood such as daily problem-solving and

other community problem-solving techniques. Therefore, during my fieldwork, I followed activities beyond the institutional framework of participation to prevent focusing too narrowly on formal meetings and their institutional perspectives. I chose which activities to participate in guided by the possibility of better understanding the links between everyday life and occasional public meetings. In other words, I chose activities that offered a better grasp of how ordinary life could be shaped by institutionalised participatory practices. I did not simply want to understand the everyday life of Waterloo in a general sense, so I tried to explore how different spaces – such as a community garden and the Waterloo Redevelopment Group – were connected in practice.

In relation to the urban gardening activities, I got involved in three “working bees” undertaken with the Botanic Garden Program in the community gardens of Waterloo and Redfern (Figure 2.1).



Figure 2.3: Community Garden participants (including author, far right)
(Source: *Counterpoint Community Service Facebook*)

I also joined two trips to visit community gardens in other public housing estates, and I volunteered to build the new gardening bed for the *Solander* Garden and *Cook* Garden (Figure 2.2).



Figure 2.4: Community Garden participants on a visit to other gardens (including author at right)
(Source: *Counterpoint Community Service Facebook*)

Moreover, I participated for several weeks in a small choir organised by local residents in the *Marton* building. Finally, from February until May 2019, I became a member of a theatre group that aimed to reflect on the redevelopment of Waterloo. The relevance of these activities – and in particular the theatre group – is discussed primarily in Chapter Nine, where I explore the experience of differentiated citizenship by drawing on experiences outside the institutional framework of participation.

Interviews

My fieldwork enhanced these participant-observation activities with some in-depth interviews. As I share in the next section, I gradually realised interviewing was a problematic strategy in Waterloo due to residents' fatigue and the saturation of researchers in the area. On top of that, my initial strategy was to conduct formal interviews during the final stages of my fieldwork. I believed that my interviews would be more productive if I could first gain more knowledge about the redevelopment and build more solid relationships. However, this strategy was affected by Covid-19, as strict restrictions were imposed in Sydney during the final stages of my research, and the university ceased all research activity. Although pandemic-related rules did not have a dramatic effect on my fieldwork as I was already in the final stages, with most of my collection already completed,

the outbreak affected the number of interviews I finally conducted. While I resorted to online interviews in very specific cases, most Waterloo residents did not feel comfortable with digital tools, or did not have easy access to the internet. Alternatively, in some cases I exchanged emails to resolve doubts and get further details about particular issues.

Still, during the days before the pandemic, I could interact with people from different backgrounds: New South Wales government officers, officials of the City of Sydney, leaders of local non-government organisations, leaders and members of the Waterloo Public Housing Action Group, local business owners, local politicians, residents who suffered mental health issues, private residents in Waterloo, and public housing tenants. The backgrounds of public housing tenants were equally diverse. I engaged with families, single women and men, couples, and people from different nationalities, especially Chinese, Russians, Ukrainians and Brazilians. Most residents with whom I engaged were over fifty years of age. The particular demography of the estate, with a relatively high proportion of dwellers above fifty years of age old, inevitably affected the network I slowly generated during my fieldwork. These diverse relations were maintained in a variety ways. With many residents I maintained continued, informal conversations over the period of fieldwork, while with others, I had a quick conversation. With some targeted individuals, I conducted scheduled and recorded interviews.

I conducted thirteen recorded interviews with eleven people (two interviews were repeated). The interviews can be organised as follows:

- Five interviews were conducted with tenants, two with community officers, one with a local business owner who supported the redevelopment, one with the local Member of Parliament and her cabinet officer, and a final one with a government officer responsible for the community garden programs.

The five tenants I interviewed had diverse nationalities, lived in different areas of the estate, and had a variety of levels of engagement with the redevelopment: Carla, a Brazilian woman, participated occasionally in the redevelopment activities, although I only saw her once in a meeting; Jessica, a Filipino woman, followed the redevelopment closely, but only attended key events; Richard was probably one of the most active tenants and was president of the Waterloo Public Housing Action Group; Kate was also active, but her central activity was acting as the vice-president of the community garden association; finally, Lisa actively

participated in the Waterloo Public Housing Action Group and was very critical of the redevelopment.¹

- With several other residents I sustained long-term relationships and countless informal conversations.

Carrie and Lisa, for example, were two women who joined the theatre group. As we frequently met not only in our theatre group, but also in different community meetings, we became close friends: these key residents also supported my understanding of the Waterloo redevelopment. Tom was another person who joined our group, and as an essential community officer, he was also of special relevance to developing my fieldwork. Finally, Pauline was the president of the *Marston* building representative body and the main organiser, with her husband, of the choir I joined. My close relations with these people, alongside a deep understanding of their life trajectories, were critical to shaping my understanding of the meanings of living in Waterloo as public housing tenants.

In the following table, I summarise the key activities of my research:

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH ACTIVITIES			
December 2018		January 2020	
Over 100h Meetings and Events	Aprox. 100h Community Activities	13 Interviews	Documents
Regular meetings	Community gardening (30h)	Residents	Policies
Community engagement	Choir (10h)	Community Officer	Metropolitan Plan
Redevelopment events	Community theater group (60h)	Local Business Owner	Official Consultation Documents
Political debates		Local Member of Parliament	Community responses
Institutional social gatherings		Government Officer	Media

Table 2.1: Summary of Research Activities, December 2018 – January 2020 (Source: Dore 2019)

Being a Researcher in Waterloo

My research privileged participant observation over extensive in-depth interviews. While this was not my initial research strategy (I expected to have a balance between both techniques), during my fieldwork it gradually became a methodological decision, motivated by ethical and political considerations. In my daily interactions I soon realised

¹ The names presented in this list are all pseudonyms.

that interviews were not the most adequate instrument for my objectives. Crucially, I perceived that in Waterloo, interviews could reinscribe in harmful ways hierarchies between residents and researchers.

Several occasions contributed to this perception. For example, at the beginning of my fieldwork, I tried to participate in an open gathering for Waterloo residents who did not speak English. The so-called “community outreach” was a government initiative that funded translators to explain the redevelopment process in Chinese and Russian. Yet, when I arrived at the meeting, I could not participate. The organisers asked me: Who are you? Why are you here? Who sent you here? Finally, they claimed that, as they did not know me, they preferred that I not participate in the gathering. They recalled that they already had many issues with journalists and thus preferred to remain careful. I understood their position, but my first “fieldwork rejection” warned me about the sensitivities in the area.

A few months later, I asked Tom if I could join the Waterloo Redevelopment Subgroup, created for tenants’ representatives only, for one of their meetings. He said he would first ask for residents’ permission, and five minutes later, I received his SMS apologising: the tenants did not want outsiders in the meeting. This day was a particularly sensitive one because the masterplan had been recently announced, and although there were no particularly confidential issues being discussed, residents chose to restrict the meeting to members only.

Although I eventually developed greater trust with the community, examples like these continued. One day, at the end of another meeting, someone noticed I had my cell phone in my hand and promptly asked me if I was recording. Although I was not, participants reminded me that “what happens in the meeting, stays in the meeting.” In addition, later on, while a resident was complaining about a community worker, she ironically questioned me: “She is a social worker, right?” She then mentioned how she “hated” social workers, as they showed an exaggerated concern with her, often in a paternalistic manner.

Suspicious were a constant presence in Waterloo. Residents were bombarded by researchers, social workers, and journalists. After the announcement of the redevelopment, local newspapers published dozens of articles about the area. Several academics undertook their research in Waterloo. Even a documentary that was crucial to providing critical perspectives about the redevelopment, *There Goes the Neighbourhood*, was recorded on

the estate. Yet, despite constantly, and generously, sharing their personal stories, nothing really seemed to change.

The rejections I experienced posed important methodological challenges, but also ethical questions. The situations exposed the power and knowledge regimes this thesis expected to highlight. The encounters with resistance revealed in an uncomfortable way that anthropologists, too, form part of this system, and that I was embedded in the same dynamics. My “PhD candidate” title positioned me in a place of power that residents recognised and consciously rejected. To use a resident’s expression, I held “the pen power” (Fieldnotes, January 2019). For this reason, subsequent situations made me review my position in a place where researchers, with social workers, community workers, politicians and bureaucrats, were framed as having “pen power.” After all, we, too, produce papers, theses and documents, similar to political and bureaucratic outcomes. Obviously, I could not simply erase my status as a researcher, but I could revisit practices considered suspicious, and that I also understood to be potentially harmful.

The choice to privilege participant-observation, thus, provided my personal fieldnotes an additional value. Throughout the thesis I indicate the expressions, sentences or ideas not sustained by recorded interviews, but by fieldnotes. In all cases I used pseudonyms to maintain people’s privacy. In the case of government officers, I avoided using real names and specific positions in the government to prevent the tendency to individualise structural issues or blame individuals for government policy. While I provide a critical perspective about the participatory process, I tried to emphasise those analyses in wider structural and governing terms, instead of treating them as an issue related to one or another government officer. Finally, I deliberately avoided, in most cases, the use of acronyms. As became clear during my fieldwork, acronyms were a mark of a bureaucratic language – of expert knowledge – that over-complicated communication between residents and government officers. To prevent such divisions and provide a fluid reading, with few exemptions, I adopted the full name of departments, government agencies, organisations and programs.

The After-life of Participation: Researching Boredom

When I started my fieldwork, the formal consultation process was in its final stage. Consultations were held from October 2017 until November 2018 in discontinuous events, and the preferred masterplan was released in April 2019. I started my fieldwork in

December 2018. Although I had initially planned to follow the complete consultation process, unplanned delays to the research led me to start my fieldwork during the final stages of the “options testing” and preferred masterplan.

This unexpected change invited me to revisit methodological choices, taking this issue as an opportunity to observe the after-life of participation and open up new research questions. First, I reinforced my initial assumptions that, in this research, participation would not hold a strict definition, limited to a specific time and space, and usually framed by institutional practices and knowledges. Rather, participation would be understood as ongoing political activity, interaction, and long-term experience. Following the consultation, residents continued to engage politically in different activities and maintained daily interactions with government officers. In this light, the end of the formal consultation itself was not necessarily a problem.

Still, to avoid potential gaps in the research and overcome that I could not *be there* during consultation, I counted on individual and collective memory. But as soon as I asked people about how they remembered the consultation, I encountered two significant issues. First, many residents did not participate. Reports show that around 1,570 people engaged in online and workshop activities, including both public and private residents, (KJA 2018). This represented less than 10% of Waterloo residents and explains why I encountered a high proportion of dwellers who had not participated. Yet, the perspectives of “absent dwellers” were also key to understanding participation and (non)participation as forms of political activity. Second, the memories of people who did participate also seemed vague rather than distinctive and emotionally charged retrospections. Generally, people did not take the opportunity to participate very seriously, and indeed, did not see examples of their demands reflected in the final results.

This perception made me realise what I had observed in other community engagement activities: how the practice of participation was often a boring and apparently meaningless activity. While participation is usually presented as a collective, exciting and entertaining experience – almost as a process of collective effervescence in Durkheim's terms – in my fieldwork I observed a context of exhaustion and frequent boredom because of the bureaucratisation of democracy. Participation was “a box to tick.” As a result, this thesis reflects in different ways on how the potential of collective participation is transformed into

a bureaucratised activity, lacking any collective meaning or emotional salience for most of its participants.

This perception made me understand meetings as a potential site to explore the processes of bureaucratising democracy. As Marilyn Strathern describes, meetings are, essentially, “miniaturizations of bureaucratic process” (2017, 198). As a result, rather than assuming that meetings were merely familiar routines and a ubiquitous presence, I took those spaces as productive for anthropological reflection. I interrogated their familiarity and attempted to learn from those everyday experiences (Sandler and Thedvall 2017). In other words, despite their seemingly tedious and boring nature, I approached the meetings methodologically as productive arenas where realities were negotiated, and where social and political dynamics were constituted and transformed daily (Brown, Reed, and Yarrow 2017).

From Brazil to Australia: Reflecting on the Civilisation of Democracy

As soon as I arrived in Australia, I quickly questioned some practices generally taken for granted: why were the walls in the university so white and clean? Where was all the graffiti in the corridors, the revolutionary and utopian phrases, the bad words written on students’ desks or toilet stall doors? Why did I rarely hear reference to the category of “social movement,” and instead, observed the use of words like “community organisation” or “residents’ action groups?” Why did participants in those groups hardly ever declare themselves to be “activists,” but rather called themselves “community organisers” or “community mobilisers?” The way participation, and politics in general, was discussed in the public sphere was different to what I was used to.

In the remainder of this chapter, I briefly reflect on how my background – born and raised in a so-called “under-developed” country – shaped my analysis, perceptions and understanding of politics in Australia. I do so, not just as an exercise in self-reflection, but as an attempt to highlight the “geographies of theories” (Roy 2016, 201) and their political implications. I thus draw on this rather personal account “to embody urban theory, to mark its location, to trace its biography” and, as Roy encourages us to do, to acknowledge the habitus that regulates academic knowledge (Roy 2016, 201).

In countries like Brazil – my home country – we are usually taught that the Global North is the best model of democracy to follow, and that we should learn democratic practices through the lens of Europe, the cradle of democracy, or North America. Resonating with this discourse, we have generally believed that Latin America was a region of “weak institutions” and corruption, a continent constantly enduring political chaos. Under this global imaginary, Latin America, alongside Africa, the Middle East, and other regions outside the Global North, are constituted as the places of violence as a form of doing politics, uncivilised societies – even “savages” – that live under the constant threat of dictatorships. However, during my fieldwork, those imaginaries were challenged daily as I encountered serious issues right in the heart of a “free,” “democratic,” and “developed country.” Such problematisation is a reminder of how democratic systems are rarely examined in their archetypical contexts (Paley 2002). More often than not, anthropological studies look at peripheral countries, societies undergoing democratic transitions or political disruptions. Some of the issues I experienced in my fieldwork seemed partially related to how Australian politics operated under logics of regulation, control and order, finally acting as a structure of power that imposed limits to the creative and conflictual exercise of democracy (Graeber 2015). From the bureaucratisation of democracy to the forms of meeting, organising, deciding and regulating the acceptable forms of participation in the political sphere, order had become a key organisational principle of political life.

Postcolonial perspectives enable the questioning of the dichotomies that often classify cities and democracies worldwide: order against disorder; regulation versus chaos; strong or weak institutions; democracy against authoritarianism. This thesis seeks to overcome those dichotomies by discussing an issue generally associated with the cities of the Global South: the lack of or weakness in democratic practices. The thesis therefore attempts to unpack and carefully analyse the great narrative about the civilised, free and liberal democratic states that organise the global political system into a contrast between democracies and non-democracies. In doing so, I engage with Ananya Roy’s provocation, in which postcolonial theories could be “a way of inhabiting, rather than discarding, the epistemological problem that is Eurocentrism” (Roy 2016, 205). In her words, “postcolonial theories are not so much a way of interpreting and narrating the postcolony as it is a method for interpreting and narrating the West.” Following Gregory (2004), Roy

argues that postcolonial studies should also be a method for understanding the stories that the West tells itself about itself.

To understand democracy as a Western narrative through a country like Australia is not a trivial issue that simply points to the risks faced by contemporary democracies: it holds profound identity implications. Jean Comaroff (2011) argues that crime and disorder are a crucial prism through which Western society comes to know itself. The argument echoes Durkheim's assertion that a society free of crime "would fall into chaos, since it would be bereft of the signs of its own existence as an authority order" (Durkheim 1938, xxviii). In Comaroff's words, a society without crime would lack the means to reflect on and govern itself.

The ideal of democracy – and the constant threat of non-democratic societies – similarly works as a fundamental foil with which Western societies build their own self-image. The always-imminent possibility of non-democratic, and thus dictatorial, chaotic, and anarchical societies works to delineate and reaffirm to rich countries their own liberal values. Although the definition of democracy, like crime itself, appears selective and self-interested, it works as a pillar ideal for self-legitimising and authority claiming. As a result, to question seemingly democratic practice in developed societies does more than pose uncomfortable questions about how institutions may better function. Even further, the reflection of the Global North's own democratic practices and failures – rather than the failures of others (like Brazilians) – poses deep ontological dilemmas, as it removes the means for the North's own definition.

I acknowledge the risks this claim may pose to the ideal we all seem to defend about democratic societies. Marcio Goldman (2010) raises this issue in response to critiques he received of potentially "relativising democracy." In response, Goldman argued about the critical methodological implications of analysing a political system of which anthropologists are more or less credulous. Accordingly, he states that the ethnographic method is one possible way to comprehend a phenomenon that analysts themselves seem to "believe," as it attempts to apprehend the issue from the perspective of those who retain a certain level of scepticism toward such a system (Goldman 2010, 159).

While I provide a critical perspective about Australian democratic practice in this thesis, I avoid falling into classifications of what "authentic democracies" are, or into evaluating

whether developed countries are more or less democratic than other countries. Instead, through an ethnographic approach, I attempt to provide intelligibility of the actual democratic processes named as democracy. In doing so, I do not intend to relativise democracy itself, but rather to challenge fixed schemas and dichotomies that serve the interests of current geopolitics and obscure global injustices.

Thesis Outline

The thesis is divided into two parts: *City-Making* and *Participation*. Given that one of the main objectives and contributions of this research is to rearticulate these two dimensions of redevelopment, I have organised the thesis to foreground these dimensions and their corresponding relationship. For this reason, the first part of the thesis focuses on urban dynamics, and the second part focuses on the participatory practice of democracy. Specifically, the first part explores the urban dynamics that shape and are shaped by participation. Here, questions related to space production, and how Waterloo is conceived, perceived and lived, are dealt with. In a nutshell, this part shows how the state's institutions have produced the redevelopment of Waterloo as a "necessary improvement" through three main strategies: urban imaginaries, strategic planning and policy-making.

Part One: City-Making

The first substantial chapter of the thesis, Chapter Three, situates the public estate of Waterloo historically. Specifically, Waterloo is contextualised as part of the wider socio-spatial organisation of Sydney. This contextualisation emphasises the shared urban imaginaries associated with this area, and how the area has been discursively constructed over time as a place that dramatically needs redevelopment. The processes of devaluation and territorial stigmatisation that have laid the foundation for the redevelopment of the biggest public housing estate in inner Sydney are discussed, highlighting the structural violence of urban redevelopments in postcolonial cities, and the ongoing Aboriginal dispossession that has been associated with the urban renewal of Waterloo.

While this chapter is primarily concerned with the devaluation discourses that have created the possibility of redevelopment, the following chapter analyses the strategies of revaluation for surplus production. In Chapter Four, the Metropolitan Strategic Plans of Sydney are analysed as key governance tools through which to perform future aspirations for a global, modern and democratic city. I argue that this extra-economic strategy works

to secure investments in the city and to sustain its self-image as a growing city, through a revaluation of spaces such as Waterloo. This serves to legitimise urban renewal as part of a broader city strategy for growth. This analysis unpacks the ideologies that currently inform urban interventions, showing how so-called participatory planning deals problematically with the imperatives of global capitalism and growth. The chapter concludes by exposing the tensions between a participatory ethic and global city aspirations.

The following two chapters, Chapters Five and Six, continue the analysis of the dynamics framing the possibilities of democratic participation in Waterloo, as well as the possibility of the redevelopment itself. The discussion moves from planning to policies, seeking to understand how certain political decisions come to be perceived as the “non-negotiables” of participation. Specifically, these chapters set out to analyse the policy framework – *Future Direction of Housing in New South Wales*, and the Communities Plus program – that orients the redevelopment of Waterloo and operates as a key political technology to limit and shape participation. Chapter Five focuses specifically on the non-negotiable principles underpinning the policy framework, especially the principle of social-mix, whereas Chapter Six looks at the narratives used by government officials to “sell” these principles as non-negotiable to a sceptical public. In doing so, I also stress the constitutive role of policy-making in the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion, and in the categorising of the negotiables and non-negotiables of urban citizenship and participation.

Part Two: Participation

While Part One of the thesis analyses how wider city dynamics such as urban imaginaries, planning and policies, frame and regulate participation, Part Two examines how participation, framed in a particular way, enables the redevelopment of Waterloo and the production and reproduction of capital through space, in spite of the involvement of those affected by the development.

Part Two begins with Chapter Seven, which explores the practices, things and spaces through which the state of New South Wales builds an official consensus narrative, and in turn, performs democratically. Through ethnographic accounts, I analyse the attempt by the state to perform its democratic ideals during the consultation process and render the Waterloo urban redevelopment “participatory.” Rather than taking democratic states as

given, the chapter is concerned with understanding the work required to shape and sustain representations of a participatory state, and its legitimacy and authority to build consensus. To do so, I analyse the final reports of the consultation process – the *Visioning* and *Option Testing* reports – and the failed interaction between residents and government officers during the official release of the preferred masterplan in a public meeting. Through the entanglements of discourses, public performances and erasures – or people, space and things – this chapter explores how the government of New South Wales has attempted to render the Waterloo urban redevelopment project as participatory, and although not without tensions, build a “vision” of Waterloo.

In the following chapter, Chapter Eight, I move from performances of democracy to its daily practices in Waterloo. The chapter trace some initiatives pursued by Waterloo residents to change the preferred masterplan after the end of an insufficient and highly constrained consultation process. Specifically, it analyses the role of bureaucratic meetings, petitions and motions in shaping collective action and organising political life in Waterloo. The meetings of the Waterloo Redevelopment Group, the voting on a motion, the submission of parliamentary petitions, and the creation of a new community group are examined. Finally, I show how the bureaucratic practices of the state, including parliamentary rules and protocols, framed Waterloo’s own political possibilities and became a key political grammar during the development. In short, this chapter contributes an ethnography of *meetings*, typically underprivileged in research on democracy. Essentially, the chapter explores meetings as both a political technology that controls epistemic production and enables governance, as well as a strategic mode through which to manage uncertainty and generate hope, find ways of claiming a group’s legitimacy, and make becoming to the state.

The last substantive chapter of the thesis turns to participation beyond institutions. While in previous chapters, the performance and everyday practices of democratic institutions were analysed, Chapter Nine shows how public housing tenants live the ideals of participation and citizenship through mundane and everyday experiences. Specifically, I draw on ethnographic accounts to analyse the everyday moralities that shape the experiences of public housing tenants during their attempts to maintain their homes: to fix a window; to repair a blocked toilet; to change a carpet. The chapter explores the

contradictions between the regime of deservingness that underpins current public housing systems and a participatory project that ideally seeks community autonomy and self-management. The analysis foregrounds underprivileged relations that both shape and contradict the ideals of political participation within a context of infrastructural violence, coercion, differentiated citizenship, and market-driven policies. The chapter clearly describes how the wider dynamics of city-making and the daily life of a neighbourhood can become enmeshed with democratic practices. It follows one of the main arguments of this thesis and reconnects those two dimensions of political life that here emerge as entangled with social, economic, moral and affective realms. In doing so, it lays the foundation for the concluding chapter of the thesis, Chapter 10, which argues that, on the one hand, urban dynamics – including political and economic dynamics – shape and limit participation, while on the other hand, participation facilitates space production and reproduction through limiting understanding and the regulation of power. In this way, city-making and participation become mutually shaped, both at the level of experience and at the level of governance.

PART I: *CITY-MAKING*

Chapter Three

Waterloo: a Public Housing Estate in Inner Sydney

In early September 2019, some residents of Waterloo invited me on a day trip. The purpose of the trip was to visit a community garden in Penrith, and since I was used to joining these residents in gardening activities, I immediately accepted the invitation. At 9am we gathered in front of the Counterpoint Community Centre, as we had agreed on the night before. The group consisted of around nine people, all of them residents of the estate of Waterloo, and members of the Community Garden Association. While we waited for the bus driver, we chatted with each other about our daily issues: some residents mentioned personal health issues; some were worried about their relatives; others complained about their efforts to fix simple housing problems with the government; most of them said they were excited to be visiting a new community garden.

We maintained this conversation for some minutes, until the bus driver arrived. We entered the bus one by one, and when we were all seated, Anna, the organiser of the trip, kindly asked us to say good morning to the driver: “Good morning, George!” we all said together. He smiled, looking back in the small bus at the mostly middle-aged participants of the excursion; he thanked us, and we started the trip.

As the bus move through the streets, we noticed through the windows the way the city changed from one area to another, and how the whole city itself was undergoing significant transformations. The bus trip was thus an opportunity to know the city from a different perspective. Moreover, as I later realised, it was an opportunity to know the city “as we moved” (Ingold, 2000). Rather than an external knowledge of the city, it was an opportunity – as I will show below – to gain a transitional knowledge of the city.

We left the Waterloo Estate with its distinctive towers and walk-up red-brick blocks.¹ We passed by old Sydney’s Victorian terraces through tree-lined streets of ancient paperbark, figs and jacarandas, to enter the CBD – the Central Business District – feeling immediately smaller underneath the skysrises and towers. What before was a residential inner-city neighbourhood, was now a business area with countless offices. Looking up, we could see

¹ Walk-up buildings are low rise buildings (three to four storeys) with only stairs for access, no lifts.

on the top of every tower different companies headquartered in the area: banks, consultancies, hotels. Towers were covered by brands.

We slowly left this image behind while crossing the ANZAC bridge. Looking back, we could see a remarkable panoramic view of the city centre, like looking at an internationally famous postcard of Sydney. There it was: Sydney Harbour and the landmark Opera House, with the Central Business District towers in the background.

This iconic image gradually disappeared to give place to other areas and realities of the city far from the harbourfront, as we headed west of Sydney, moving inland. The landscape abruptly changed to motorways, and what was even more impacting, construction sites. We observed various construction fences and heard the cacophony of machines as we passed. We saw tunnels, bridges, viaducts and various infrastructure projects under construction. One in particular bore a sign reading, “Building for the future,” indicating that it was part of WestConnex. This massive project is a controversial motorway that aims to connect inner Sydney with western areas of the city and thence the state. The project includes thirty-three kilometres of mostly underground motorways, the widening of current highways, and privatisation of some of the current roads. For some people, WestConnex is a “game changer” (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, 2013), whereas for others, it is “the biggest waste of public funds in Australian history” (*The Conversation*, 2018). Regardless of the polemic surrounding WestConnex, everyone on the bus agreed it was one of the main projects currently changing the landscape of the city.

Sitting next to me on the bus was my friend Clara. She had spent her childhood in Moscow and could not avoid noticing all of this massive construction on the way. “What is this? I feel like in Russia again, men working everywhere!” she commented ironically, drawing on her personal experience. She complained about the amount of work in the city, pointing to a massive construction site full of tractors in a cleared, orange-soiled plain. As the bus continued on, she said: “Have you noticed how many car shops we have here? Look!” She pointed through the window to a big car showroom full of advertisements and special offers.

The bus trip thus provided a direct chance to observe the changes going on all over the city. We noticed former industrial areas in the process of changing, warehouses and old factories next to looming new office buildings. On the roadside, real estate billboards, some of them

in languages other than English, announced new apartments and houses on offer, probably targeting foreign investment. Such images of growth are a daily presence for Sydneysiders. The landscape we were driving through reinforced this impression. It also made us aware of the multiple actors involved in this making of the city: residents, workers, tourists, real estate agencies, developers, government, banks. The short trip provided a dynamic and vivid sample of the living complexity of a global city like Sydney.

Around thirty minutes into the trip, my friend read a road sign on our left that said Blacktown. “I used to live here; this is one of the toughest places in the city,” she commented. Afterwards, she told me a shocking story, widely reported in the media during the 1990s, of a case of brutal violence against a woman, “a beauty queen,” my friend explained, horrified. She said maybe this area was not that dangerous anymore, but it certainly had a worrying past.

Similar comments in the bus indicated how different areas of the city had come to be associated with negative or positive meanings. These impressions gradually outlined what Velho (1989) called “social maps:” maps that organise the neighbourhoods of a city hierarchically, and work to define residents in accordance with where they live. As argued by Velho, shared meanings around neighbourhoods situate us within a city and within its broader society, revealing traits such as social status, prestige and social mobility. The images of Blacktown, like Waterloo, were thus put into a relationship with other regions of the city, including the affluent areas in the inner-city and along the waterfronts. Waterloo residents saw themselves – and were seen – through the lens of this wider social map and through the local representations I was beginning to understand during the trip.

As we approached our destination, Clara quickly drew my attention to the houses: “These are housing commission, so typical...” There were no signs, and no particular “estate” entrances – no indications of any kind – but still, she knew the houses were public properties. For many visitors, this landscape might have gone unnoticed. Clara also quickly identified public housing “flats” (blocks of units). Accordingly, when we arrived at our final destination, Penrith, the Waterloo residents looked positively surprised with the brand-new buildings in the redeveloped area: “Will Waterloo look like this?” they asked with hope. “Are these public buildings?” many asked curiously. However, the answer was what they already suspected: no, the brand-new buildings were not public housing. These

were private buildings. As a public housing estate, a redeveloped Waterloo would probably not look so attractive. Just by looking from the outside, observing the built environment, the materials, building design and the sophisticated gardens and trees in the entrance, residents could see that the buildings were not public housing. Thus, the social and spatial organisation of the city was *legible* from its built environment, its materials and construction, as well as its surrounding areas. A quick look could tell whether it was private or public housing, and an upper class or a low-income area.

On our way back to Waterloo, we continued to notice the new infrastructure projects in the city: train stations, metros, roads. Observing all the buildings under construction that looked so similar to the ones we had just seen in Penrith, we joked: “they are all the same!” My friend laughed, then, while she continued to look through the window, observing the vastness of the land, she quietly mumbled: “we don’t really fit here...” Looking out of the bus, she compared Australia with other countries and cities, especially in Europe: “they have a history, a tradition...But here...What is it?” she asked. “We are in Asia, Oceania, this is Indigenous land,” she said, almost as if confused. My friend was writing a book about her childhood, and she compared her reflections in the book to this mixed feeling she was experiencing on the bus: “this is what I am writing in my book, about belonging, you know....do we belong here?” She was uncertain about the answer. How we see each other as part, or not, of this broader city map, was also a crucial question to reflect on.

As we approached Waterloo on our way back, we noticed a particular change to the city that we had not noticed on our way out. There were several brand-new residential buildings in what was known as Green Square: a massive urban renewal project undertaken by the City of Sydney that included new offices, new homes, libraries and a metro station. This project was particularly worrying for many Waterloo residents, given that it was only fifteen minutes’ walk from the estate, and that it was built to accommodate an increase of over 13,000 residents (City of Sydney, 2013, p. 5). As one resident later said, “It was one redevelopment right next to the other.” It led them to worry about the density in the area, already one of the highest in Australia. Passing Green Square, it was striking to see all the colourful buildings with distinctive and modern designs, including iconic award-winning architecture. In spite of the positive aspects advertised by government agencies, such as the sustainable buildings, the new cultural centres, and the “placemaking” projects, my friend

personally did not like it. “There is no green here,” she said ironically, regarding the “Green Square” name. Another resident of Waterloo also said later: “there is no one in the street there.” She said that if we went to Waterloo on a Sunday, we would see people moving around and chatting everywhere, whereas Green Square would look like a “desert.” Though it is important to recognise that this image did not necessarily reflect general public opinion, and may have been exaggerated to express a point, these perceptions revealed that representations of Waterloo, like every other neighbourhood, are built in relation to other areas, through comparison or in opposition, thereby constructing a relational social map of the city.

Positive claims about Waterloo were typically echoed by local residents in their attempts to counter-balance the negative opinions and external perspectives on the neighbourhood that were supposedly legitimising its redevelopment. There were several reasons why my friend Clara enjoyed living in Waterloo rather than in other places like Green Square: “here you can see rabbits, birds, there is something unique about Waterloo, something wild!” she said. In this wider map of Sydney, she felt she belonged to this place: it was her home.

At the same time, Clara also considered some walk-up buildings as “tough” and did not like them. When we finally returned to Waterloo, she looked at a house with broken windows and an old mattress abandoned in front of the building, and commented: “look at this...I don’t like it. It must be someone that just went out of jail.” These conflicting ideas about Sydney and Waterloo were what was also under dispute in the new redevelopment. More than a single and homogeneous meaning, Waterloo projected multiple images, sometimes contradictory, sometimes conflicting, or complimentary. Waterloo could be seen as a place of solidarity with a strong sense of community, while being simultaneously perceived by others, and sometimes by the same person, as Clara’s comments indicated, as a place of intense internal conflicts between neighbours. The neighbourhood could also be regarded as an ageing community, composed of people with mental health issues, or those who had recently been released from prison. Waterloo was considered by some to be a place of birds and rabbits hopping around the lawn, but the same lawn could also be recognised as a destination for people gathering daily to drink alcohol on this same lawn, and engage in practices labelled “anti-social behaviours,” such as screaming and fighting

in public. All these overlapping and conflicting representations of Waterloo were also part of this unstable and contested social map of Sydney.

Internal and external meanings are usually used strategically and contextually, in order to challenge essentialist conceptions of a neighbourhood as a well-defined socio-spatial unity (Cordeiro and Costa, 1999). In practice, the physical limits of Waterloo were more fluid and permeable than any self-evident understanding of “neighbourhood.” It was not obvious where Waterloo started and where it ended, or what streets and shops were part of Waterloo, and what social networks and practices defined it as a neighbourhood. Given this absence of having a definitive boundary or image for Waterloo within Sydney, this bus trip had been an excellent opportunity to come to know the city from a dynamic perspective, in contrast to a fixed and stable map, as it basically traversed the city from east to west.

I chose to start this chapter with this experience in order to introduce Waterloo as part of the broader context of Sydney. Rather than introducing Sydney and Waterloo through the perspective of modern plans and maps – as I will do in the next chapter – I wanted to first pay attention to the lived and perceived dimensions of space production (Lefebvre, 1991), while moving through the city together with some Waterloo residents. While planners and cartographers claim to produce an objective representation of an external world, presenting plans from a single, fixed and universal bird’s-eye perspective, this bus trip recovered localised points of view and revealed the production of space as an embodied and dynamic practice. This trip of around two hours offered an opportunity to view the dramatic changes occurring around the city and to observe how the residents experienced this wider landscape of growth and redevelopment through sites like Green Square, Redfern, WestConnex, and many others, and came to see them as crucial to their understanding of Waterloo. The trip revealed how the city was organised, the hierarchical distributions of space, the meanings of suburban and inner-city neighbourhoods, public and private housing, inland or waterfront. Ultimately, the trip provided a glimpse into the social production of Waterloo as part of a wider social map, as well as an introduction for the residents to such a map, with its spaces, time, people, and forms of knowing and belonging to the city.

The Social Production of Waterloo

This chapter explores a central question that will permeate Part One of this thesis: why did Waterloo *need* to be “redeveloped?” Specifically, this chapter seeks to understand the space

production of the public estate of Waterloo through both synchronic and diachronic perspectives. In other words, it examines how Waterloo has been discursively constructed over time as a place that dramatically needed to be redeveloped.

To do so, the chapter first examines the shared urban imaginaries and the discourses that are being used to justify the urban intervention in Waterloo across time and space. While the introductory vignette of this chapter emphasised present perceptions, the following sections focus on the social production of Waterloo over time. After this historical overview, the chapter examines the challenges of urban redevelopments unfolding in postcolonial cities, and in particular, the ongoing Aboriginal dispossession that sustains the redevelopment of Waterloo. Finally, the last section contrasts current discourses to the historical development of Waterloo. In doing so, it highlights how present discourses resonate with previous narratives and events.

Accordingly, the chapter challenges the premise that diachrony and synchrony are opposed. Rather, it argues that the local revaluation of social events is subjected to previous structures, through an imbricated and dynamic relation between diachrony and synchrony (Sahlins, 1981). Thus, the analysis of historical development of Waterloo emerges as crucial to understanding its present and future-oriented claims. Moreover, Maurice Halbwachs' (1925, 1992) notion of the social frameworks of memories helps to explain the selective dynamics of remembering and how it is socially organised. Accordingly, collective memory plays a central role in shaping the present meanings and perceptions of spaces like Waterloo. Essentially, the following sections consider Waterloo as a neighbourhood that is historically situated, and shaped by colonial relations and a long-term process of *territorial stigmatisation*.

The concept of territorial stigmatisation was introduced by Loïc Wacquant (2008) to explain the process by which residence, in association with class and race, acts as a powerful stigma over low-income residents. Drawing on Goffman's (1963) work on stigma, Wacquant analyses the negative reputation attached to impoverished areas to explain how their inhabitants are increasingly seen as deviant from socially accepted normality. He does this not so much by focusing on interpersonal interactions, although these are also relevant, but on how this is done through institutional mechanisms and political and economic decisions. Bourdieu's (1991) studies on *symbolic power* are also

key contributions to the understanding of spatial stigmatisation, insofar as they bring out the central role of dominant classes in classifying and hierarchising various neighbourhoods in a given socio-spatial organisation. Finally, this process should not be taken as a dynamic in which negative meanings are attached to prefigured places. As I argue in this chapter, the social process of stigmatisation *produces* space, not simply reflects it. It is thus a constitutive process that combines different practices and discourses.

While this chapter's analysis is inspired by the notion of territorial stigmatisation, it is worth stressing that this concept is not a locally shared category, but an analytical one. A Waterloo resident told me, with frustration, that a previous researcher had once asked her how "she dealt with stigma." She had perceived the question as an insult and immediately answered that the stigma was "in *her* head," meaning in the mind of the researcher. Following this advice, I here respectfully note the limits of such a category and the risks this analysis runs in reproducing the "stigma" it wants to criticise and avoid in the first place. It is thus crucial to highlight the agency and active practices of resistance undertaken by residents. Accordingly, it is important to stress that in Wacquant's work stigma does not appear as a fixed category either, but as a social and relational process embedded in wider power dynamics.

Last but not least, the following sections also highlight Waterloo's territorial stigmatisation as an extra-economic process of devaluation. Drawing on the Schumpeterian ideals of creative destruction, Jaume Franquesa (2013) proposes the use of "to empty" and "to fill in" to capture the extra-economic processes necessary to justifying contested urban redevelopments. In doing so, Franquesa reclaims the social dynamics associated with the economic process, in contrast to the universal and dematerialised description of devaluation and revaluation. As I argue in this chapter, the redevelopment of Waterloo cannot be understood by exclusively analysing its urban financial dynamics. Crucially, the historical production of the area reinforces a process of devaluation through the local discourses, and symbolic and material relations, that feed into such financial dynamics.

From Slum to a Modern Public Housing Estate

Sydney's inner-city neighbourhoods were not always as they are known today. Ultimo and Pyrmont, the Central Business District, Woolloomooloo, Surry Hills, Erskineville, Redfern and Waterloo, all now, in parts, considered "upper-class" neighbourhoods of the city, were

seen solely as unwanted areas with substandard housing during the previous century. Apart from students renting around the universities, it was not until the 1960s that the middle class began to move from the suburbs to these previous neglected areas (Shaw, 2007). Before that, Sydney's Victorian or Federation style terraces were run-down, known as cheap spaces to rent, and as places for crime. In other words, they were seen as "an inherently bad form of housing that fostered slum attitudes, crime and immorality" (Fitzgerald and Keating, 1991, p. 80).

This negative view took hold during the early 1900s, with the explosion of the rat-borne bubonic plague. The increasingly undesirable image of inner-city areas was reaffirmed, leading to calls for direct intervention by local authorities. This triggered the first "slum clearance" programs for the city. These continued throughout the twentieth century, with a number of different initiatives to rid the inner-city of these areas. The areas of Waterloo and Redfern received discontinuous rehousing programs in 1950, but it was not until 1970 that the then Housing Commission of New South Wales announced the development of the current public housing estate. Jack Bourke, the chairman of the Housing Commission at that time, justified the demolition of the houses as an improvement to its "slum" condition. In an interview, he stated:

That is why Waterloo was chosen, because after examining all the areas in the city we found that it was the most rundown and debilitated. If you went back to where we now have buildings and saw how bad they were, you would be horrified at the shocking state of the ones that were demolished (...) not suitable for human living. (Zubrycki, 1981).

The Housing Commission called Waterloo's six towers project the Endeavour Project, in reference to Captain James Cook's ship, the HMS *Endeavour*. Every tower received a name relating to Cook's voyage during which he took possession of the east coast of Australia for England, and named it New South Wales: Marton was his birth town; Solander and Banks were the ship's two botanists; Matavai a harbor he visited; and so on. The nation-building imaginary anchored by Australia's colonial history spanned this whole project, building modernist towers named after its founder. Documents of the project explained that:

There was also the wish to convey a feeling of the continuity of “then” and now.” History gains meaning and grow in interest as the years go by (...). So, while honouring Captain Cook, the Commission has created a little world intended to be pleasing to those who will call it ‘home’ (Housing Commission of New South Wales, 1978, 1).



Figure 3.1: Monuments to Captain James Cook on the Waterloo Estate (Source: Dore 2019)

The buildings, nevertheless, reflected the modernist style of the period, in particular for public housing. As explained by Sisson (2020), during this period the government concentrated its efforts on the development of broadacre suburbs and remarkable high-density inner-city buildings, like the brutalist towers of Waterloo seen in Figures 1.3 (Chapter 1), 3.1 and 3.2. Consequently, today, inner-city public housing estates can be easily distinguished in the landscape by their morphology and signature design elements. The Waterloo project built its modernist towers as a promise to a new vibrant life, as its official documents declare:

‘Matavai’ and ‘Turanga,’ two pencil slim towers that have crowning place in the New South Wales Housing Commission’s Endeavour project at Waterloo, Sydney, represent the best and most modern thinking about the way elderly people should be housed (Housing Commission of New South Wales, 1978, 1).



Figure 3.2: *James Cook* building in Waterloo, New South Wales
(Source: Dore, 2019).

Nevertheless, recorded videos from early 1970 show that the development of Waterloo was a controversial project, rather than being conducted with the general consensus of local residents. In particular, the edited footage in Tom Zubrycki's documentary, *Waterloo* (1981), shows a conflicted neighbourhood struggling to keep its terraces after the announcement of the new public housing estate. The movie includes scenes of speeches by local authorities, police confrontations, and unions and residents' meetings, revealing the struggle behind what today is known as the Waterloo Estate. This struggle was remarkable for the mobilisation that occurred alongside the wider Green Bans campaign (Burgmann and Burgmann, 1998), which aimed to stop the eviction of working-class people and the so-called slum clearance. In this historical political movement, unions such as the Australian Builders Labourers Federation boycotted and refused to work on sites where the

local community had voted in open assembly against the development. In a reference to the historical “black bans” strikes of 1917 organised by unions to support transport workers in a dispute over working conditions, the Green Bans focused on urban projects that were environmentally destructive. They supported, through secondary boycotts, fights by working class communities to maintain open spaces, historical buildings, and entire neighbourhoods like Waterloo. Importantly, the presence of the Green Bans revealed that Waterloo’s history and social production is the unstable result of ongoing struggles and power dynamics.²

Nevertheless, in 1977, the Housing Commission of New South Wales delivered new buildings, including the iconic *Matavai* and *Turanga* towers, the two towers that today still maintain a monument in their front yard in memory of the visit of Queen Elizabeth II for their inauguration (see Figure 3.3). Proud of the brand new public housing estate, the magnitude of the event was such that it deserved the visit and recognition of the Queen. Different newspapers of the period celebrated the date as the “victory of Waterloo” (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, 2017).



Figure 3.5: The monument inaugurated during the visit of Queen Elizabeth in 1977, located in the centre of Waterloo (Source: Dore 2019).

² Secondary boycotts occur when a union goes on strike in sympathy with or in support of a struggle that would not normally involve them.

The anthropologist Margaret Mead was another important public figure who visited the new buildings and expressed her enthusiasm. Documents of the estate's project cited her support, saying that "the world-renowned anthropologist and sociologist" said she was "delighted" with the initiative.

After the inauguration, Waterloo's social and physical fabric changed dramatically. It now houses more than 2000 residents. However, despite the promises of progress and improvement, the image of the area as "impoverished" was never fully overcome, and Waterloo continues to be seen negatively, not so much as a slum anymore, but still as a place of violence, and a place increasingly marked by the commerce and use of illicit drugs.

Redfern-Waterloo and Aboriginal Struggles

Redfern and Waterloo are situated on the Gadigal land of the Eora Nation and represent a symbolical neighbourhood for the Aboriginal political movement in Australia. The Redfern-Waterloo area holds historical and political importance for Indigenous peoples as the focus of intense activism, and the cradle of a variety of self-managed organisations that emerged during the 1960s and 1970s, such as the Aboriginal Legal and Medical Service, and the Black Theatre. The Block, located just a few minutes' walk from the Waterloo Estate, is probably one of the most iconic sites of this struggle. The Block is an Aboriginal Housing Cooperative that was granted by the Federal Labor government in 1973 after a long struggle over housing (see Figure 3.4).



Figure 3.4: The Block site with Indigenous flag. (Source: Wikimedia Commons)

Often related to the black movement in the US, Redfern and neighbouring areas were simultaneously known as the stage of an active political life, of “black politics,” and of intense social conflicts. The Block is an unsettling place, a paradox for most non-Indigenous Australians accustomed to thinking that Aboriginal people lived in remote areas – an image radically different from urban political struggles (Shaw, 2007).

Since the end of the last century, an increasing interest of predominantly non-Indigenous homebuyers in the inner city has accelerated gentrification in this area. Refurbishment of Victorian houses and warehouses and the redevelopment of industrial sites have increased property values, gradually changing the Redfern-Waterloo area into a mostly middle-class neighbourhood (Figure 3.5). Between 1993 and 1996, unit or apartment prices increased by 24% (Daly 1998).



Figure 3.6: An example of refurbished terraces in Pitt Street, two minutes' walk from the Waterloo Estate (Source: Dore 2019)

Accordingly, during this period, The Block started to feel growing pressure for change, producing conflicted relationships between residents living in the increasingly affluent area of Redfern and Aboriginal residents living on The Block. For Wendy Shaw, this process revealed the “hegemony of Whiteness in place” expressed in different media discourses (Shaw, 2000, 293). Over several difficult decades, The Block became increasingly portrayed as a “failed human experiment” (Shaw, 2007, p. 48), mainly because of its Aboriginality. For instance, an article in *The Sydney Morning Herald* argued that: “For once, Aborigines can’t blame White Australia ... exhausted and in disgrace, Redfern is an Aboriginal failure, and they know it” (Cornford, 1997).

Waterloo also gradually came to be seen as a troubling and worrying part of inner Sydney, a perception essentially grounded on a racialised fear. In 2004, an Aboriginal boy named Thomas J. Hickey died during a police pursuit across Waterloo’s common lawn, Waterloo Green. The cause for his death was never clearly explained. Authorities presented at least two versions. Police alleged the boy fell from his bike in a fatal accident, however some local residents accused the police of having hit the bike, and Thomas, also known as TJ, being impaled on a fence. Confident of this last version, local residents became outraged, and during political demonstrations to demand justice, a riot exploded in Redfern’s streets. Images of that night show thousands of people surrounding the local police station and

screaming for justice. In the media, the episode was described primarily as a violent movement out of control, and is still known as the “Redfern Riot.”³

The riot mobilised an old desire to redevelop the area. The leader of the Opposition and head of the New South Wales Liberal Party, John Brogden, declared that “bulldozers should flatten the area” to stop “Aboriginal thugs” (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, 2004). The main political parties and media of the period uniformly condemned the event, leading to a significant call to intervene in the area. As a result, shortly after TJ’s death and the following riot, the Redfern-Waterloo Authority was formed to fulfil this aspiration to redevelop an area that was already increasingly giving way to affluent residents and non-Indigenous Australians.

The Redfern-Waterloo Authority had the goal to “revitalise” the area, create new planning controls, and identify opportunities for public investment. As stated in its documents, Redfern and Waterloo were at a strategic location that could support Sydney’s Economic Corridor and promote “economic and social revitalization” (Redfern-Waterloo Authority, 2006). The controversial death of the young Aboriginal man that had triggered the riot finally justified millions of dollars of investment and development, including the Australian Technology Park, the Channel Seven office complex, and various new multi-storey residential apartments. After seven years of active work, the Redfern-Waterloo Authority was dissolved, but while the organisation lasted, it accelerated the gentrification process in the area and laid the foundations for the current redevelopment of Waterloo.

During this period, the *Pemulwuy* Project also announced dramatic changes to The Block, owned by the Aboriginal Housing Company. The project is currently building private student accommodation, commercial facilities, and in a smaller proportion, affordable Aboriginal housing on the site (see Figure 3.6). These developments have triggered intense conflict within the local Aboriginal community, but the controversial plan demonstrates the central role that Aboriginal dispossession has played in the subsequent redevelopments of a gentrifying area.

³ For an extensive analysis of the media’s discourse during the riots, see Shaw (2007).



Figure 3.6: Still from a video promoting the Pemulwuy Project, in the current area of The Block.
The full video can be found at: <https://pemulwuyproject.org.au/video/>

Postcolonial Redevelopments

The historical trajectory of Waterloo redevelopment exposes the ongoing structures of colonial practices in the ways that postcolonial cities are currently planned and transformed. The Australian geographer Jane Jacobs (1996) stresses that expressions of imperialism not only occur in space, but mainly, through spaces. For her, this dimension of power is evident in historical buildings and memorials across the city, but most importantly, in the politics of contemporary urban redevelopment. While official discourse presents urban redevelopments as improvements to an area, in Waterloo this perception is also partially underpinned by the association of Aboriginal residents with threats to social order. The socio-spatial organisation of Waterloo in the city is thus heavily racialised, influencing daily interactions.

In February 2020, I joined a tenants' meeting about the latest redevelopment project. When participants were discussing residents' issues in the area, one man suggested that local Aboriginal people were the region's main problem: "They are too basic," he said. Following this essentialist opinion, he mentioned that "Aboriginals were welcomed," but that they "should be polite." His opinions were not unusual in this forum, evidence of a troubling sense of ownership and right in Australia and in Waterloo, specifically in relation to judgments about who had the right to welcome, or not welcome, other residents into the

neighbourhood and who had the right to live on the estate. This resident's remark illustrated a broader social perception that Aboriginal people embodied the social maladies of the area.

Australia was a white settler colony built on land previously occupied by different Aboriginal tribes and cultures. As elsewhere, establishing this colony included attempts at erasure of these cultures under the notion of *terra nullius*, the idea that Australia was an "empty land," and therefore available for acquisition. Surveys, land grants, mapping and of course planning were some of the spatial technologies of power applied during the process of colonisation in spite of constant contestation. As part of this strategy, towns were the first settlements created to establish administrative centres, and they facilitated the expansion of the colony towards the more remote areas. The foundation of Australian cities is thus profoundly linked to its colonial history, in particular to British forms of planning and occupation. Gridded urban planning was an imported model that connected Australian cities to imperial logics of spatial order that aimed to control new and unknown land. Planning was the precondition of territorial control: it was the matrix that promised to achieve a world with no disorder and no forms of living other than those brought by the white settlers.

This ideal process was, of course, never fully realised. Occupation and ordering were, and still are, constantly being contested, negotiated, and reinscribed. In Waterloo today, gentrification and state-led urban renewals are a forms of "whitening" the inner-city area (Shaw, 2007) and the continuation, in different ways, of settler colonialism (Survival Guide, 2018). Specifically, colonial structures continue in Waterloo in the extraction of wealth from land where thousands have built their lives. Colonialism is ongoing through the administration of space and in the bureaucratic logics of planning spatial order, in the constructs of difference, and in the tense existence of practices, values and people that challenge the foundation of Australia. Accordingly, structures of colonialism are implicit in the aspirational future of Sydney that, through the planning exercise, continues to imagine this community (Anderson, 2006) as a white country, and seek to secure its continuity. Finally, it is worth remarking that the first attempt to redevelop Waterloo occurred right after a riot led mainly by Aboriginal people, and that, ironically, the Waterloo project was once called the Endeavour Project in reference to Captain James Cook. Still today, on their walls, the buildings display the names and paintings of the

expedition responsible for founding what is today called Australia, in a sort of nostalgia and celebration of its colonial past.

Present Discourses

All the historical events leading up to the present – slum clearance, the creation of the Waterloo Estate, TJ’s death, the formation of the Redfern-Waterloo Authority, and the most recent redevelopment announcement – provide a story of a former working-class neighbourhood situated in a postcolonial city. This story reveals a space that hosts significant conflicts, demonstrating that the imagined future of Waterloo is intrinsically related to its past; that the “new Waterloo” is being built against the memories of the “old Waterloo.” The stigmatisation of Waterloo works as an extra-economic force to create wide differences of value and allow surplus production in the urban redevelopments (Franquesa 2007). As result, the devaluation and revaluation processes underlying the redevelopment of Waterloo mobilise and transform local social relations; more than just mercantile dynamics, then, they require the social dynamics associated with economic processes.

Through these historical events, Waterloo has been gradually defined as a place of deviance, supposedly incompatible with the normative patterns of behaviour, values, and codes. In the broader spatial distribution of the city, the area has been increasingly seen, externally and internally, as inhabited by urban outcasts (Wacquant, 2008) according to intersections between class, race, gender and age. This perception has triggered repeated attempts at control, labelling residents homogeneously with accusatory and stigmatising categories. As a result, whether this space is in fact still violent, or deteriorating, is not the fundamental concern. The strong belief in these socially constructed images and their social effects justify the state’s actions. The discourse that has emerged over the last decades continues to resonate – although not without resistance – in current daily interactions and narratives. The urban imaginaries associated with Waterloo framed the social map observed during the bus trip to the Penrith Community Garden, as it has in other daily conversations.

This framing was at work in February 2020, when I interviewed the owner of a local trailer coffee shop located outside the public housing estate, but still within Waterloo. David, the business owner, grew up in private apartments in Waterloo and supported the redevelopment without hesitation. Prior to opening his shop he worked in security in a local

hospital. Drawing on this personal and professional experience, David argued that he knew about the difficulties of the region firsthand. Working as a security guard meant he had witnessed injured people being brought into the hospital after street fights, and local residents acting aggressively due to mental health issues, and drugs and alcohol abuse. During the interview, David repeated more of the widespread stereotypes commonly associated with Waterloo, that had been built up over decades. He told stories of murder, robberies and thefts. For instance, in his narrative about Waterloo, he described horrifying cases of people who were supposedly thrown onto the train tracks at Redfern Station. Whether true or not, these stories circulated widely, sustaining the belief that the Waterloo-Redfern area was one of the most dangerous in Sydney.

Importantly, most of the stories that composed David's account of violence and insecurity were third-party stories from local newspapers or neighbourhood rumours and from a distant past. When I asked David if, today, he still felt insecure in his neighbourhood, he hesitated before saying only sometimes. Nevertheless, he continued to defend the redevelopment as necessary, using these past events to justify present interventions. This interplay between past and present reveals the social frameworks of memories and histories (Halbwachs, 1992) that continue to influence current perceptions of Waterloo, making an analysis of the social production of this neighbourhood as historically situated imperative.

During our talk, David provided two main arguments to support the redevelopment. First, he believed that the intervention could reduce the unsafe reputation of the area. Specifically, he argued that increasing the neighbourhood's density was a good strategy to prevent violence, since groups of people and urban movement could act as form of social deterrence. For him, the more people, the better. Second, he argued that the Waterloo Estate needed to share its economic wealth, that is, its current land value. This argument was starkly at odds with public housing dwellers that defended the opposite proposition. For many local residents, the Waterloo Estate was necessary, precisely, to promote social justice and counter-balance the unequal wealth distribution in the city.

Essentially, David's point of view was sustained by a moral belief that public housing dwellers were "selfish" and "lazy." For him, the violence of the area was caused, not only because of possible mental health issues, but also because some residents were simply "bad people" and behaved "nasty." This conviction also sustained his perspective that the social

conflicts of Waterloo could not be resolved: “You don’t solve it, you manage it,” he said to me. Underpinning such a position was the belief that certain people were inheritably “bad,” and that the redevelopment was an opportunity to “manage” these people. While obfuscating other social dynamics, individual responsibility was thus central to his support of the redevelopment.

Associated with this belief about managing some residents was the call to “share” the land value; he perceived Waterloo as detached geographically from the overall society. While emphasising the pronoun “they” in his discussion, David separated himself – a Waterloo private resident – from other public housing dwellers of the same neighbourhood. This frontier was both subjective and spatial. While the estate of Waterloo was perceived as an urban enclave, an autonomous area set off from the rest of Sydney (and even Waterloo), residents like David believed that the public housing residents did not share the potential of this public space, which was supposedly restricted for the private use of “selfish” people. Accordingly, maintaining the estate as it was, as he suggested, could be understood as “unfair” to other citizens. As a result, Waterloo was imaged as a place mostly inhabited by selfish, lazy and undeserving people, in contrast to private owners and renters who were also often referred to as “taxpayers.”

During a public meeting in April 2019, a Waterloo resident claimed differentiated land rights based on the argument that she was a private owner and she had paid for her property. While she was against the redevelopment, mainly because of the increased density and the new towers being close to her home, this resident publicly stressed that her disapproval should be considered more carefully than other citizens due to her ownership status. After this claim, perceived as an insult to many of the public housing residents who are renters, a public housing resident reminded me that not only did she also pay taxes as any other citizen did in their daily activities, but that she also paid a monthly rent to live in Waterloo. Situations like these revealed that the class dynamics shaping local representations were structured in part by an opposition between private and public: two constitutive categories that enabled differentiation and a symbolic demarcation of power. While ideals of deservingness and ownership have long been mobilised to define the poor and their spaces, recent neoliberal discourse has clarified this distinction. Alongside the increase of conditional welfare (Watts and Fitzpatrick, 2008), poverty has been increasingly portrayed

as an individual responsibility and failure. Moreover, consumption and the ability to own things have also been treated as criteria for social dignity and differentiated citizenship.

Similar narratives that link public housing to decaying lives are also produced by local media. For example, in 2015, a *Daily Telegraph* headline called attention to the “suicide towers,” also referring to the “dark past of Waterloo’s housing commission” (*The Daily Telegraph*, 2015). According to the article, “addicts coming out of ice stupors in hallways was a regular occurrence at Suicide Towers,” and “vandalism used to be rife in the blocks.” Following these words, pictures of bloody stairs, needles on the floor, and graffiti on walls represented the “darkness” and dereliction of an estate that demanded state intervention.

Outraged by such narratives, a Waterloo resident stressed to me that no other area of Sydney had been labelled as “Suicide Towers,” despite tragic episodes occurring in other neighbourhoods. Yet, Waterloo tended to be commonly referred to in those terms, reproducing the depoliticised image of an area in crisis not only physically, but also subjectively. I do not seek to underplay the dramatic challenges faced by different residents in an area that often receives scarce attention from government authorities, nor do I try to claim that individual mental health and collective wellbeing are not crucial issues. Nevertheless, I stress that the tendency to concentrate on such dramatic situations in public housing estates, and in particular in Waterloo Estate, reinforces an impression of social breakdown, a neighbourhood out of control, and therefore in desperate need of the state’s intervention. In addition, it reinforces an image of individual responsibility grounded on a supposed individual psychology and an apparently evident biology, more than on social or political factors and living conditions. The recurrent image of “Suicide Towers” brings out the opposition between health and illness, especially in relation to psychological illness, as a central image shaping the urban imagination of this area.

David’s perspectives demonstrate the process of territorial stigmatisation underlying the project of Waterloo. His portrayal resonates with wider urban imaginaries, articulating the different meanings that can be attached to places and people. Fundamentally, these current discourses emerge not as spontaneous, or simply conjunctural narratives aiming to serve present interests. Rather, they reverberate with discourses built up over years. In this case, they are related to past understandings of Waterloo as a “slum area” and, later on, as a public housing enclave framed as unfair and out-of-space.

Conclusion

During the bus trip described in the beginning of this chapter, I asked my friend what she thought about the wider development plan for Sydney, a plan known as the Three Cities Strategy. She answered that she thought it was, in fact, a plan for a “three classes city” (Fieldnotes, September 2019). For her, it was clear that the New South Wales government wanted to remove Waterloo residents from the inner-city, leaving the area and the waterfront of the city “to the rich.” Whether a genuine and intentional strategy or not, this is how Clara understood current government plans. To come to this conclusion, she had linked her personal experiences of living in Waterloo to wider city aspirations, connecting levels of analysis commonly separated.

This chapter captures this effort to contextualise Waterloo Estate within wider city dynamics from a number of vantage points: a bus trip, a small business owner, a private resident living just outside the estate, and public residents living within it, including a thoughtful immigrant engaging in contrasts. It reveals the complex social mapping that people engage in synchronically and diachronically.

The chapter has also raised questions about the motivations of the government in proposing another redevelopment. It showed how the area has been discursively constructed over time as a place that required state intervention, and how these discourses easily feed into wider state agendas regarding development and economic growth, that leave individuals responsible for their own well-being in the face of these developments.

Waterloo epitomises the wider socio-spatial organisation of Sydney that involves neighbourhood classification and hierarchies. While moving around the city, Clara, like other residents of Waterloo, shared how she daily experienced the city as a public housing resident, and how she positioned herself as part of a global city like Sydney. In doing so, she unveiled her living perceptions about a landscape of growth that not only spectacularised urban renewals like Waterloo, but major construction sites, new highways, bridges and other city infrastructure. For her, those massive city changes did not generate hope, nor the promise of improvement and positive change that those projects were widely declared to produce. While dramatically impacted by this landscape of growth, Waterloo Estate residents experienced that landscape with doubts and apprehension.

However, this critical perspective of Sydney's growth is not a specificity of current redevelopment. Waterloo has long been discursively built as a "sacrifice zone" to enable continuous urban growth and surplus production. The social representations attached to this area of the city have long entangled ideas of class, race, gender and age, and represented the continuities of structural violence against local Aboriginal communities and the urban poor. Since at least the beginning of the last century, different media discourses and state interventions, including the slum cleansing, the erection of the Waterloo Estate as a commemoration of Captain Cook, and the imposition of the Redfern-Waterloo Authority, have supported the territorial stigmatisation of Waterloo, and therefore its symbolical and economic devaluation.

Contemporary narratives like the ones shared by David detail how official discourses resonate with the historical conditions of public housing estates in the inner-city. They reveal that the redevelopment of Waterloo does not only respond to pure mercantile dynamics, but it transforms and articulates itself with local and social value dynamics. Connecting these two levels of analysis, thus, contextualises the redevelopment of Waterloo and its participatory process as part of wider urban dynamics. Territorial stigmatisation not only creates the possibilities for urban renewals, but it also shapes the conditions of resident participation in the master planning of Waterloo.

Chapter Four

Planning: Between Participatory and Global Cities

“Everyone should be here!”. This was the conclusion of a Waterloo resident in July 2019 after she had listened to a government presentation about Sydney’s future planning. Hearing the expected density increase in the inner-city area, and the special target given to Waterloo and its surrounding area, this resident suddenly realised that Metropolitan Strategic Plans were one of the key instruments defining the future of Waterloo. She publicly asked why there were not more people in the room, and called for the participation of more citizens and residents in a meeting with fewer than five attendees. While listening to the new planning strategy, she also realised that the redevelopment of Waterloo was not an isolated project in the city; it was part of a wider strategic masterplan for the whole city. Crucially, she recognised that while the Waterloo masterplan claimed to engage residents in its decision-making process, drawing considerable attention from the media and local residents, it had already been framed by other plans that were given, or were attracting, much less attention.

Following this resident’s call to further engage with wider city’s plans, this chapter outlines the current Metropolitan Strategic Plan that frames the redevelopment of Waterloo. In doing so, the chapter looks at how the state of New South Wales, through planning practices, has performed the revaluation of Waterloo after the devaluation process examined in the previous chapter. In short, the goal of the chapter is twofold: first, to foreground the future image of Sydney, showing how Waterloo fits into this wider project; and second, to explore the limits of the two projects as juxtaposed in the city’s urban imaginary as the project of a global city and a participatory city that seeks to reconcile global financial interests with local demands.

Australian cities use Metropolitan Strategic Plans as a central instrument to guide socio-spatial transformations and orient urban renewals in particular ways. Strategic planning is a set of future-oriented tools that define the state’s vision for future cities: how they should look and how governments can facilitate and coordinate towards this aspiration. Accordingly, Metropolitan Strategic Plans establish central areas for change and the necessary processes required for urban developments. These follow a specific urban morphology and desired city life.

In 2018, the New South Wales government released an updated version of the Greater Sydney Regional Plan, *A Metropolis of Three Cities*, that outlined the planning for the city for the next forty years, until 2056 (Figure 4.1).

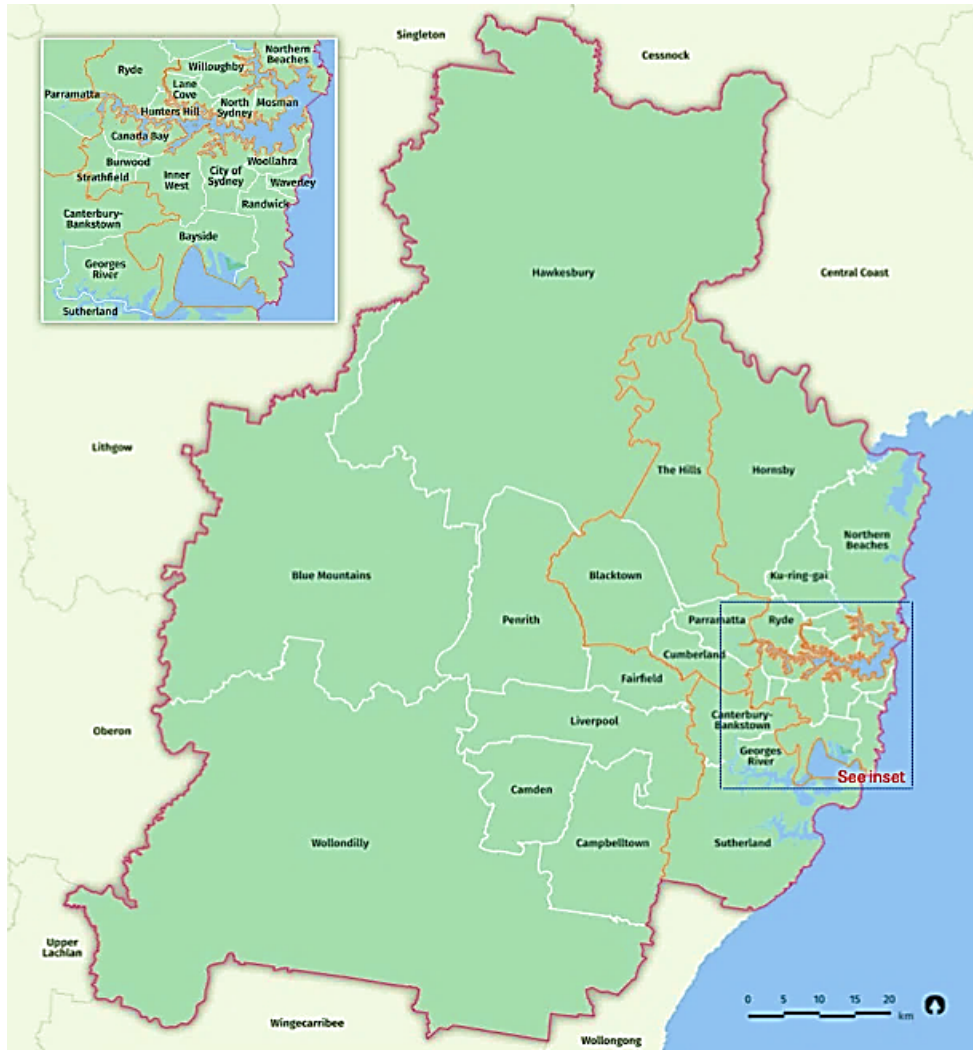


Figure 4.1: Greater Sydney Area delimitation.
(Source: *A Metropolis of Three Cities* Plan, Greater Sydney Commission).

While representing one of the most important tools for organising Sydney’s development, this plan integrated different levels of planning that were to be rolled out simultaneously: subregional planning, local planning, and infrastructure planning, among others. Such a complex and interconnected framework requires a high level of technical comprehension, alongside a shared understanding of other plans created at different levels of government, covering different periods, and for different purposes. This wide interdependent framework

of the city explains why Metropolitan Strategic Plans emerge as key tools for understanding the decision-making processes of a city.

Far from assuming that plans work as a set of rules to which any following decision will be attached, regardless of how transformative the new strategy might claim to be, in the setting of a plan, different decisions are made around particular political views, discourses and representations of the city. The *Metropolis of Three Cities* plan is therefore a key tool for the decision-making processes of Sydney because it frames local decision-making and other participatory urban planning. As a governance technology, it enables a common understanding of the city, connecting people, things, ideas and places. It therefore provides the proper ordering of the social and material world of Sydney, putting things and people in their place (Sletto 2009, 445). In other words, it is a framework for social and political assessments, essentially shaping the decision-making process. It also lays down the foundations for future decisions and instigates a performative process of place making, space and knowledge production.

Simone Abram and Gisa Weszkalnys define planning in a general sense, as “a way of conceptualising space and time, and the possibilities that time offers space,” and as “an inherently optimistic and future-oriented activity” (Abram and Weszkalnys 2011, 3). Through planning, we imagine and perform the future, acting in accordance with this horizon. Plans, thus, manifest “what people think is possible and desirable” (Abram and Weszkalnys 2011, 4). Ultimately, plans are world-making practices, informed by specific ideologies, that contain landscapes as they have been, as they are, and as planners think they should or could be (Sletto 2009, 444). Accordingly, in the following sections I approach planning as a performative act, extricating the common concepts mobilised in the Sydney Metropolitan Strategic Plan, *A Metropolis of Three Cities* in order to show how this plan performs or articulates, through future imaginaries, a transnational, post-industrial, global and neoliberal logic for the city.

A considerable number of anthropologists, such as Scott (1998) and Li (2007), draw inspiration from the work of Foucault to also understand planning as a discourse and governance technology that reflects a state’s vision of society. In this context, planning, in particular state planning, cannot be analysed without recognising it as an exercise of power that raises questions around rights and authority. Plans are designed to mediate some of the

tensions of democratic and capitalist societies, whether by promoting, masking or manifesting conflicts related to labour, land use and capital. Henri Lefebvre (1991) has probably been one of the most influential authors to highlight the role of spatial discourses in the social production of space. Drawing on a triad of *perceived*, *conceived* and *lived* spaces, Lefebvre stresses the role of experts in producing conceived space. This conceptualisation of space fundamentally draws from dominant ideologies to produce space as intelligible, legible and visible through the use of technical and scientific discourses (Delgado 2018).

The previous chapter described the lived and perceived space of Sydney. This chapter turns to the conceived space, describing the spatial representations and discourses articulated in Sydney's Metropolitan Strategic Plan – and the associated ideologies it manifests – as a crucial element in the production of space, the shaping of place experiences, and the evaluation of the current city and its corresponding future possibilities. These wider representations have been used to justify and legitimise the Waterloo redevelopment itself.

The next section outlines the main planning principles guiding current Australian Metropolitan Strategic Plans. Following this contextualisation, the chapter teases out the narrative pursued in Sydney's current Metropolitan Strategic Plan, highlighting the main concepts and metaphors mobilised in the document to perform the future. Subsequently, I discuss the two main logics and ideologies that mark this plan: the aspirations of global cities, and neoliberal urbanism. In doing so, this chapter discusses the key ideological tensions metabolised through this plan as it tries to reconcile the democratic claims of local participation with global aspirations.

Planning Principles

A Metropolis of Three Cities follows the urban planning principles observable in other Australian cities, and illustrates the dominant logic of Australian planning for anticipated growth. Drawing on Ruming's (2018) analysis of previous Metropolitan Strategic Plans for Sydney, it is possible to identify the four main principles that have continued to inform Sydney's urban planning: the principle of "compact cities;" the prioritisation of different urban centres; the promotion of polycentric cities; and "transit-oriented" development.

The principle of “compact cities” is also known as “urban consolidation.” This principle seeks to increase urban densities, usually around transport nodes. It envisions a spatial ordering dramatically at odds with traditional Australian fringe urbanism, and consolidates the previous “anti-sprawl” approach (Ruming 2018, 27). This compact city logic draws on claims of efficiency, sustainability and balance to justify its approach. According to this logic, concentrated density increases a city’s efficiency and territorial balance. It is legitimised as a “win-win” approach in which neighbourhoods can be renewed while meeting housing targets (Pinnegar and Randolph 2012). The current Sydney plan confirms this wider principle through the following statement:

A Metropolis of Three Cities is a bold vision for three, integrated and connected cities that will rebalance Greater Sydney – placing housing, jobs, infrastructure and services within easier reach of more residents, no matter where they live (Greater Sydney Commission 2018, 3).

While growth in density emerges as the main reason for the Plan’s existence, urban regeneration also appears as a key driver to delivering denser cities.

The second crucial organising principle of *A Metropolis of Three Cities* is the identification and prioritisation of a variety of urban centre typologies, including regeneration centres, able to accommodate higher residential densities and economic growth. In this centre hierarchy, space is divided according to prescribed activities such as employment (usually high-skilled jobs), entertainment, government provisions, and tourist services (Ruming 2018). For instance, the current Plan identifies fifteen “growth areas” to meet housing and employment targets, including the Redfern-to-Eveleigh Corridor and the Epping and Macquarie Park Urban Renewal Area. Significantly, these sites offer wide profit margins to the private sector, which typically develops these selected areas in partnership with the state.

Moreover, the search for increased densities through designated urban centres consolidates the two remaining urban principles that characterise the various Australian Metropolitan Strategic Plans: polycentric cities, and transit-oriented development. The polycentric urban structure promotes the idea of a “30-minute city” in which residents can ostensibly access services such as employment and schools within short periods of time (30 minutes). According to Ruming (2018, 35), this structure responds to the “suburbanisation of

employment, the need for specialised industrial and hi-tech clusters and new service centres, and access to transport infrastructure” (Ruming 2018, 35).

Correspondingly, “transit-oriented developments:” constitute a key planning logic in which mixed-use urban centres and a large population living around public transport nodes generate “cost-effective solutions” (Ruming 2018). This logic represents what Dodson (2009) has classified as the “infrastructure turn” in Australian planning, in which the state’s investment in infrastructure becomes the primary driving force for urban interventions, and large-scale infrastructure projects emerge as a crucial solution for urban problems. The combination of a polycentric and compact city oriented by infrastructure provision is clearly articulated in the following opening statement of Sydney’s Metropolitan Strategic Plan:

It [the Plan] also is the first to be prepared concurrently with Future Transport 2056 and the State Infrastructure Strategy, aligning land use, transport and infrastructure planning to reshape Greater Sydney as three unique but connected cities. (...) This plan aspires to a 30-minute city, where jobs, services, and quality public spaces are in easy reach of people’s homes. (Greater Sydney Commission 2018, 3).

Following these basic planning principles, *A Metropolis of Three Cities* draws on a variety of metaphors to justify and conceive a future that it claims will be marked by “liveability,” “sustainability,” “balance,” “efficiency,” and “vibrant communities.” While these planning principles represented current best practice internationally, they are mostly grounded on technical decisions. This means planners must also find ways to engage in wider discourses and promising narratives that justify such decisions by showing them to be about the general improvement of urban life. This is where metaphors come into planning performances.

Promising Futures

A Metropolis of Three Cities performs a narrative wherein some practices are planned to change, while others are expected to continue. An analysis of this performance draws attention to who this promising future metropolis is being designed for, and shows how the present Waterloo fits awkwardly into this promise. The Plan starts with a powerful message

by the Premier, the senior state elected official: “Greater Sydney is Australia’s economic powerhouse” (Greater Sydney Commission 2018, 3). Accordingly, the following pages depict the coming years of Sydney as a clear future of economic growth, providing a sharp vision of a competitive and growing economy that cuts across all the documents. This plan assumes the leadership of the city, nationally and worldwide, centring economic growth as the main goal of planning, and consequently, the main purpose of the city itself. Essentially, the plan seeks to change the current urban structure to “maximize economic growth and cater for population growth” (Greater Sydney Commission 2018, 80).

The future of Sydney is thus imagined as one of increased productivity enabled by “good jobs” and “skilled workers” (Greater Sydney Commission 2018, 3). As outlined in the plan, some of the jobs projected for Sydney by 2056 are “knowledge-intensive jobs” and in “tertiary education” (Greater Sydney Commission 2018, 30), particularly in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (also known as STEM). In this speculative scenario, these are considered the aspirational forms of labour to best “boost productivity” (Greater Sydney Commission 2018, 3).

As a result, in this projected future, the workplace is also different. The Plan predicts an increasing need for shared spaces and home offices, especially for the expected growth of the so-called “gig economy,” defined as “a labour market characterized by the prevalence of short-term contracts or freelance work as opposed to permanent jobs” (Greater Sydney Commission 2018, 30). Different from traditional industries historically based in the city such as tobacco manufacturing, flour mills, clothing and glass manufacturing, and, particularly in the former swamp area of Waterloo, hides and wool treatment (Fitzgerald 1987, 9), labour and workplaces are both depicted differently in this post-industrial city, which is now to be mainly focused on service industries and on a knowledge-based economy.

Technology is also expected to be at the centre of Sydney’s future. Visions of increased use of “3D printers,” “sharing cars,” “autonomous vehicles,” “robots,” and “drones” compose the planning report (Greater Sydney Commission 2018, 30). In this representation, Sydney is outlined as the centre of a technological world compared to other cities both in the country and worldwide. The combination of all these aspirational components – targeted job creation, education, workplace change and innovative industries – produces a vision of

a city that wants to be the lead among modern cities that are saturated by high technology, while supporting a “skilled” workforce. The following statements capture this wider project. First, the statement connects the digital economy to knowledge-intensive jobs:

The digital economy is disrupting businesses and the workforce worldwide with emerging technologies. (...) While advancements can reduce demand for certain types of jobs, they enable innovation, new knowledge-intensive jobs and business opportunities (Greater Sydney Commission 2018, 141).

In this plan, the promotion of a knowledge-based economy is essentially justified by increased profits, alongside human and private capital attraction to the city. This principle organises the spatial arrangements of a post-industrial and corporate city. The following statement links this project to business opportunities and global competitiveness:

Economic development strategies must embrace the digital economy and capture its benefits and productivity improvements. They must focus on sectors that will enhance Greater Sydney’s global competitiveness and the creation of high-value jobs. Embracing economic opportunities from new technology relies on education, ongoing workplace training and building business and worker resilience (Greater Sydney Commission 2018, 141).

The overall structure of the Plan can be summarised in the following statement:

Combined, the spatial elements make up the structure plan for Greater Sydney. (...) Of critical importance are the integration of the mass transit network with the economic corridors, centres, transit oriented development, urban renewal and health and education precincts. (Greater Sydney Commission 2018, 12).

A Metropolis of Three Cities presents these shifts as *inevitable* changes, sometimes perceived as external “trends,” and a natural pathway to follow. For example, the 2018 Plan states that “rapid technological change is inevitable” (Greater Sydney Commission 2018, 30), and that there is a “growing trend” in global cities for “centres being as much about living as they are about jobs.” This discourse follows that of the much earlier 2005 Metropolitan Strategic Plan, *City of Cities*, which also enumerated different “trends” and “drivers” that the plan “must take into account” such as population growth, economic

change and growth, globalisation of the economy, and household composition, among other things (NSW Government 2005:21). The 2010 Metropolitan Strategic Plan had repeated some of these trends, for example, the trends towards “smaller households, in particular single person households” (NSW Government 2010:108), a digital economy, and competition from “emerging economies, ...and growing population and climate change” (NSW Government 2010:130).

Planning thus has been increasingly adopted as a *managerial* technique that draws on statistical trends and forecasting (Abram and Weszkalnys 2011), to justify local planning decisions. These techniques support a plan’s promise of a linear and progressive temporality, associated with an ordered, Cartesian space (Yarrow 2017, 568). Here, the purpose of planning is not so much to lead change, but to passively adapt to those inevitable broader developments, transforming the physical and social fabric of the city in order to respond to and absorb the changes in the economy and labour market. This approach is markedly expressed by the recurring use of language that describes seeking to “manage,” “facilitate” and “support” continuous growth.

A Metropolis of Three Cities indicates that the 2018 strategy to accommodate this expected (and desirable) economic and population growth is to develop three different urban centres. As the name of the plan indicates, and Figure 4.2 shows, a polycentric approach to Sydney is at the heart of this plan. The goal is to have “three cities” well connected by transportation, where residents can live within thirty minutes of most of their activities: jobs, education, health and other services. The “first city” is to be the Eastern Harbour City focused on the Harbour and Central Business District, the “second city” is to be the Central River City focused around Parramatta, and the third city is to be the “Western Parkland City” focused around the new Badgerly’s Creek airport.

The plan foresees that the Central River City will have “health, education, administration, finance and business services driving the economy” (Greater Sydney Commission 2020). The Eastern Harbour City will continue to be “Australia’s global gateway, with a strong financial, professional services, FinTech, health and education economy” (Greater Sydney Commission 2020). Lastly, the Western Parkland City will be the “tourism gateway” and “aerotropolis,” where a new airport is currently under construction to “catalyze” and

support this growth, not only for local residents, but also for tourists and multinational business (Greater Sydney Commission 2020).

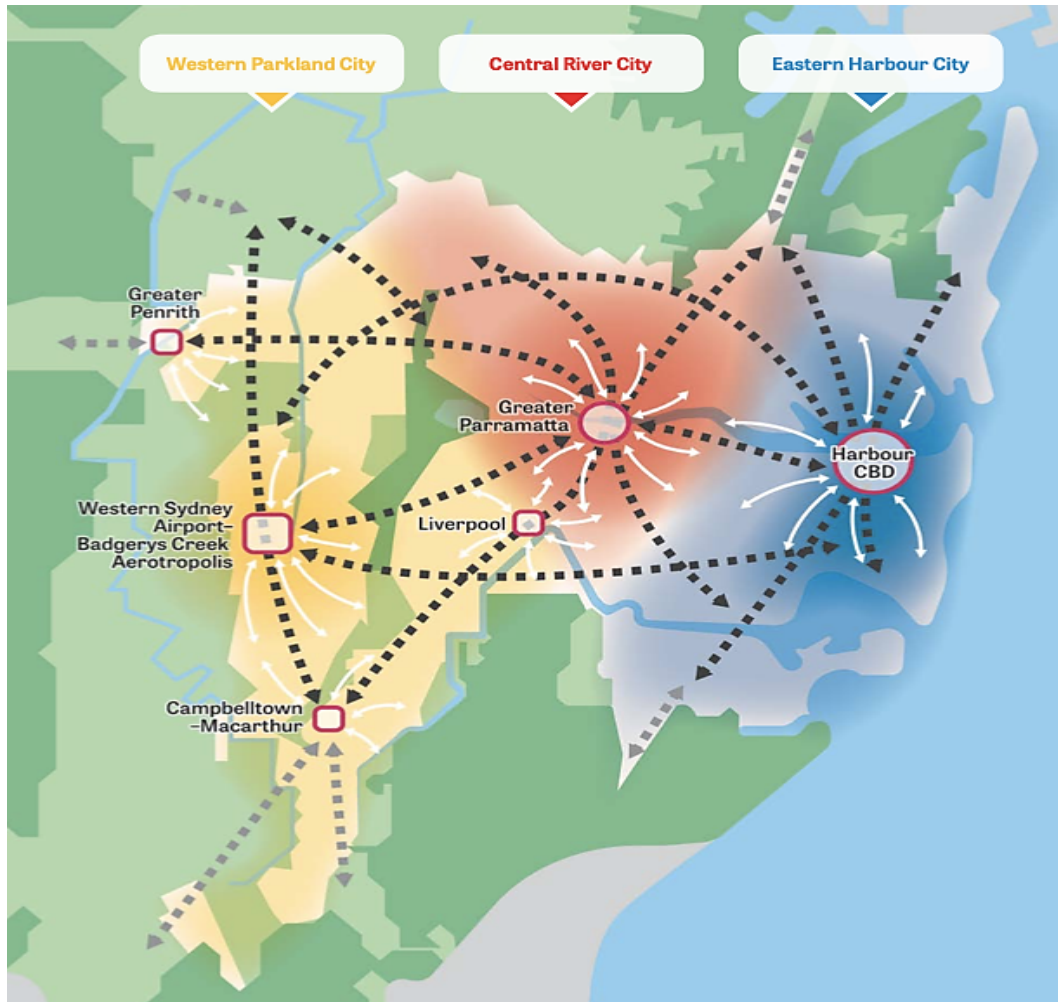


Figure 4.2: The 2018 Three Cities Plan (Source: *A Metropolis of Three Cities Plan*, Greater City Commission 2018)

In this “three cities” plan, future urban space is also visualised to grow vertically, with the building of more commercial towers, “roof top gardens,” and “vertical farms” (Greater Sydney Commission 2018, 30). In this way, the government expects to “better capitalise on air rights rather than making space by expanding the urban footprint” (Greater Sydney Commission 2018, 30).

To justify this urban growth, planners looked at New York as a reference for urban density. According to the plan, Sydney currently has thirty-one people per hectare in the Eastern Harbour City, whereas New York accommodates one hundred and nine people per hectare

(Greater Sydney Commission 2018, 28). As these documents show, local urban planners, bureaucrats and politicians look to iconic international cities like New York, London and Paris, as models for their city. Nevertheless, the 2018 planning strategy is to build on Sydney’s unique “natural beauty” – the Sydney Harbour, bushland, beaches and the Blue Mountains – and on its “cultural diversity” and “economic strengths” in order to continue to “appeal to visitors” and “attract international investment” (Greater Sydney Commission 2018, 6).

This aspirational effort can be observed in the decisions made for the spatial arrangements of the city, including the “Global Economic Corridor,” also known as the Global Arc, first established in the 2005 Metropolitan Strategic Plan, *City of Cities*.

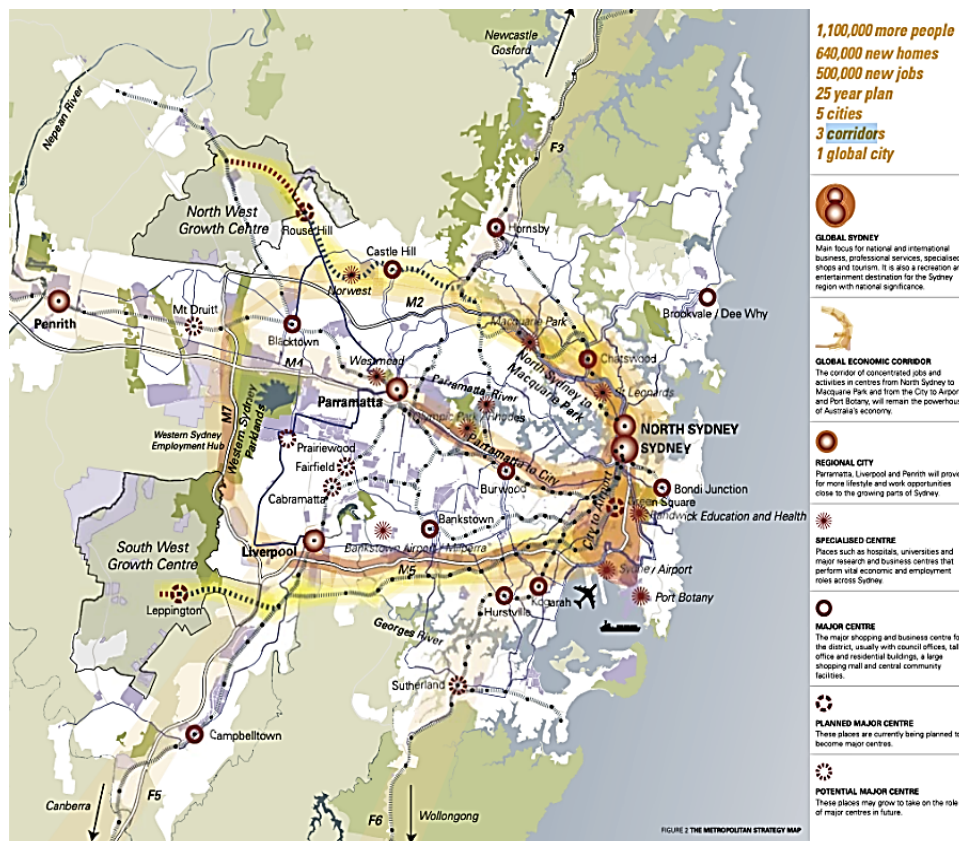


Figure 4.3: Global Economic Corridor or ‘Global Arc’ (Source: *City of Cities Plan*; NSW Government 2005).

According to the different Metropolitan Strategic Plans for the city, the Global Arc appears to be a critical feature of Sydney’s productivity and job creation. This economic corridor is to be the “powerhouse of Australia’s economy” (NSW Department of Planning 2005, 11).

The corridor starts in Macquarie Park – including Macquarie University, a new metro station and the Ivanhoe Estate urban renewal – passes through the CBD and continues until the city’s international airport at Mascot and container port in Botany Bay. The following image represents this corridor as a dynamic flow of movement and helps to contextualise the redevelopment of Waterloo as part of this wider vision. As it shows, Waterloo is located in the eastern part of this corridor. It is surrounded by the Technological Park and its projected new metro station. Its development, then, appears to be inevitable.

Finally, a key ideal cutting across the Metropolitan Strategic Plans since 2005 is the promotion of urban *redevelopment* strictly linked to the ideas of progress, development and modernisation. Here, urban renewal works as a strategy to promote the aspirational image of Sydney. The discourse is consistent across the different Metropolitan Strategic Plans. The 2005 *City of Cities* plan stated that the Plan “sets the parameters for future residential developments,” identifying in this plan corridors for redevelopment. By “ensuring adequate land is zoned and available,” the plan expected to “provide a sound basis for future investments” (NSW Department of Planning 2005, 3). Likewise, the 2010 Metropolitan Strategic Plan defended a Sydney that will “increasingly be regarded as a global city region,” and that this transformation would be achieved by a “strong and targeted focus on urban renewal” (NSW Department of Planning 2010, 16). In this same Plan, a set of potential areas for urban renewal were flagged: Redfern-Waterloo appears as a model for such future developments (here still referring to the 2004 Redfern-Waterloo Authority redevelopment plan). Accordingly, the 2018 *A Metropolis of Three Cities* Plan maintains this approach. It states that:

Greater Sydney is already an outstanding global city with a reputation for liveability and cultural diversity that attracts international investment and appeals to visitors. *A Metropolis of Three Cities* will build on its social, economic and environmental assets to improve the quality of life for all its residents and to uphold its status as one of the top cities of the world (Greater Sydney Commission 2018, 3).

Barangaroo and Darling Harbour are probably the most emblematic examples of this strategy. Darling Harbour received robust amounts of investment during Sydney’s 2000 Olympic Games, and Barangaroo is an ongoing redevelopment that is expected to be

completed in 2025. They are both urban renewal projects in former industrial and working waterfront areas in Sydney that today host an increasing number of towers, tourists in luxury hotels, casinos, and entertainment attractions like aquariums and museums. Similar to other coastal and post-Olympic cities like Rio de Janeiro and Barcelona, this project illustrates how Sydney has used mega-events for the symbolical redefinition of old urban spaces (Pujadas 2005), and how it builds on the distinctive elements of a coastal city in order to project itself internationally in a shared language and imagery of what prosperous, successful, and modern cities should be. The overview of the current Sydney Metropolitan Strategic Plan shows the heavy influence of Sydney's search to meet its global cities aspirations.

Planning a Global Sydney

Projects like Barangaroo and Darling Harbour have proliferated in different cities over the past three decades (Harris 2018). These forms of urban renewal respond to wider political and economic changes in post-industrial and transnational cities, shaping what have been commonly named as global cities (Sassen 2001). Some central changes include market-driven urban politics, increasing inter-urban competitiveness for financial and human capital, and the growth of knowledge based economies (Florida 2002). Different authors (Hannerz 1996; Pujadas 2005; Brenner 2004; Harvey 1989) show how global cities orient their main activities and urban transformations towards global flows of capital and people, increasingly in competition with other cities worldwide, but also nationwide. As a result, the imagined future for local urban planners, as observed in Sydney's recent Metropolitan Strategic Plans, are profoundly marked by the international standards and trends of what constitutes a global city in mainstream urban planning practice.

The Metropolitan Strategic Plan for Sydney is thus a key instrument for "globalising" or "worlding" the city. Roy and Ong (2011) define this process as "the art of being global," in contrast to the static images and categories of a global city. This ongoing effort to become and sustain a global city includes a set of discourses, planning techniques and spatialising practices that shape the urban field, like Sydney's *A Metropolis of Three Cities*. Importantly, Roy and Ong's approach challenges the canon of global cities ranking, mostly framed by Global North cities. It does so by avoiding the colonising effects of international ranking and, instead, pays attention to the multiple globalising strategies employed by different cities worldwide. In this context, Baker and Ruming conceive Sydney's strategic

planning as a practice of “worlding from above” while envisaging a “Global Sydney” (Baker and Ruming 2015, 66). Sydney plans are thus sharply marked by a global narrative, which plays a central role in producing and circulating global urban imaginaries (Baker and Ruming 2015). Accordingly, they work as strategic and political technologies seeking “to world” Sydney, while excluding other urban visions.

Assuming that Sydney is imaginatively “worlded” through its strategic planning, Ruming and Baker (2015) identify three main strategies to pursue this political goal. First, the plans must seek to reproduce global city standards, giving particular emphasis to New York and London as leading practices. As a disciplinary mechanism, international standards encourage and valorise specific urban developments. Second, Sydney’s globalising strategies must deploy comparative techniques, such as the extensive use of tables, lists and ranks, to assess Sydney’s performance against international rivals. Lastly, planning must use extra-local policy models. Here, the policy principles analysed in the next chapter, such as the “social-mix,” are key examples of policy standards typically designated “best practice” that shape local urban practices.

The 2018 *A Metropolis of Three Cities* reveals various strategies to promote Sydney’s connection to a global network aligned with other policies in different levels of governance, according to Searle and Bounds (1999) and McGuirk and O’Neill (2002). These include global economic integration; the restructuring of industry increasingly based on knowledge; the promotion of an educated workforce (mainly in STEM areas) combined with a controlled and skilled migration policy aimed at serving this industry and attracting human capital; the creation of corporate headquarters and attractive cultural and leisure activities; and investment in efficient transport and logistics. As this plan states: “efficient trade gateways and freight and logistics networks are required for the region to be more internationally competitive” (Greater Sydney Commission 2018, 79). In a nutshell, the spatial ordering of Sydney is heavily informed by a social model that combines a segmented and prioritised workforce, targeted education, particular workplace types – such as “technological hubs” – and the appropriate infrastructure to allow this wider project.

Nevertheless, the project of globalising cities also share problematic logics, first, because of a gap between what is promised and what is delivered. In Waterloo, the project is being dramatically delayed due to political resistance, changes in government and bureaucratic

barriers, and currently the Covid pandemic. Relocations were expected to begin in 2017, however, in mid-2021, plans have not yet been approved. Gupta (2015) analyses this phenomenon of the “suspension” of the promise of infrastructure, and considers it to be based on an assumption that projects *will* be delivered eventually, despite any delay. However, the time between plans to final execution has critical effects on residents’ lives. In Waterloo, residents extensively shared their worries about the difficulties they had in planning their daily lives, and activities like painting their houses or buying something new for it, when the redevelopment had not yet started but was still promised. Many everyday activities had had to be suspended, and residents were finding that they could not become engaged in some because of the uncertainty. Such difficulties expose the dual temporalities that can operate simultaneously in planning practice.

During the bus trip to visit the community garden in Penrith, Clara had indicated that she was extremely worried about her future and where she would live. She explained how receiving a long-term place to live in had provided her with confidence and security, and had help her change her life. When the redevelopment was announced, her insecurity had returned. Clara, like many others on the estate, said she had been living in agony since the announcement of the redevelopment. Although the plan guaranteed the *right* to return after the redevelopment, some of the residents were suspicious of this guarantee, or simply did not know how long it would take for them to return to their homes. As a result, while the plans promised a prosperous future for all, Waterloo residents were experiencing the contrary in the present: many felt concern and uncertainty, and were fearful of displacement. On the one hand, planning was predicting a secure and ordered future; on the other hand, it was generating disruption and uncertainty: “they said nothing will happen this year, but when it does, I just don’t know what I will do,” Clara said while looking at the estate’s buildings. She knew they were likely to be demolished soon, although she did not know when the plans would be implemented. While sharing this concern, Clara revealed how her living experiences clashed with the promising futures envisioned in Sydney’s plan. To a public housing resident who had experienced long periods of housing insecurity, such disruptions were threatening and could bring great harm. Clara’s concerns unveil the mismatch between the rhythms of daily life and city planning, as well as the gap between what is promised, to whom it is promised, and what is effectively delivered and when.

Another critical effect of worlding cities projects such as Waterloo, is how they tend to exacerbate structural inequalities, unlock urban conflicts and sideline local residents in relation to international investor and visitor interests. Despite the positive and frictionless projection of the global city model, it hardly ever finds consensus support among residents, and often results in socially and ecologically unsustainable projects.

A different example of recent redevelopments in Sydney is Millers Point, one of the oldest public housing areas in Australia, close to Sydney Harbour. This highly valuable inner-city area was recently sold and redeveloped, relocating nearly 600 public housing tenants who actively mobilised against the relocation, with no success (Morris 2019). Alongside Waterloo, the iconic case of Millers Point provides another example of the recurrent process where low-income areas in the inner-city become particularly attractive for developers interested in symbolically valued areas, leading to conflicts of interest between this imagined global city and the maintenance of long-term residencies, local networks, and the different symbolic and spatial references built up over time. In other words, such plans represent a clash between the idea of urban spaces as economic assets and the views of those actually living in cities, producing daily social practices and uses (Certeau 1984; Jacobs 1961). In this context, inner-city public housing estates such as Millers Point and Waterloo suffer great pressure because they not only undermine Sydney's self-representation as a modern and cosmopolitan city, but more importantly, they also come to be identified as barriers to increased land profits.

As a result, the Metropolitan Strategic Plans for Sydney since 2005 have effectively supported the knock down of public housing estates by presenting them as outdated spaces, incompatible with the general aspirations of the city (Sadana 2018). In these Plans, low income areas like Waterloo are projected as simply unrealised economic opportunities. In this way, globalising plans become crucial tools to promote the attraction of real estate investment, rather than instruments to ameliorate the inequalities of uneven investments in the overall city.

Neoliberal Urbanism

The underlying logic of wealth production through city development in Australia, while strictly linked to the global cities aspiration, currently also draws on the neoliberal ideologies informing urban planning. Assuming that cities are one of the main sources for

the reproduction and continuity of capital accumulation, the literature around neoliberal urbanism by scholars such as Brenner and Theodore (2002), Franquesa (2013) and Hackworth (2013), sheds light on how neoliberal politics have increasingly informed urban planning, putting accumulation at the centre of its policies. For Hackworth (2013), neoliberal urbanism is the result of an increasing inter-city competition where a metropolis seeks to secure a place in the global scene and attract people and capital. Given the growing adoption of austerity measures, cities progressively compete over private and international investments to finance their own urban development. Importantly, in this context, local decisions become increasingly constrained by global finance dynamics.

Neoliberal cities like Sydney are thus characterised by the active role of local government and urban policies in search of investments. Rather than passive or external actors that unleash market forces, the city's and state's institutions are key actors in creating the conditions for private investments, through policy regimes and regulatory practices such as financial and tax support, deregulation, flexibility of planning controls, the creation of mixed capital corporations, and public-private partnerships (Brenner and Theodore 2005). For David Harvey (1989), this process constitutes an entrepreneurs' turn in local government, in which the function of local government shifts from a redistributive role in space production to the inducement and facilitation of private investments.

The redevelopment of Waterloo illustrates this entrepreneurial role of the state government. In contrast to local government, the state is both driving and supporting its urban renewal program through ongoing and localised public investment, including in metro stations and other city infrastructure. The Sydney Metro administration explicitly states that the new Waterloo station will operate as a "catalyst for growth" (Sydney Metro 2018, 13). This demonstrates that the principle of "transit oriented development" found in the various Australian Metropolitan Strategic Plans has a neoliberal tendency in that it instrumentalises the power of the state's planning and its corresponding infrastructure investments to attract global private investment and facilitate capital accumulation.

In this context, Metropolitan Strategic Plans emerge as a key governance technology that secures the commodity of space. For Polanyi, land, like money and labour, was a fictitious commodity insofar it had never been "produced" for sale on the market: "land is only another name for nature" (Polanyi 2001, 75) and the condition of life itself. However, urban

plans have played a key role in socially producing and reproducing land as a commodity. Furthermore, Franquesa (2007) argues that urbanism is a set of knowledge, practices and discourses that operates on instances of power and can act to organise the geography of capital. In this light, urban planning works to secure land as a key commodity in the current market system.

Following this approach, the value dynamic observed in Waterloo can be understood as a process of creative destruction (Schumpeter 1976), defined by the need to devalue certain areas of the city in order to then revalue it for profit. However, this process does not occur through exclusive mercantile processes, nor mere value exchange dynamics exempt from use-value characteristics (Franquesa 2007). Rather, extra-economic factors, like the discourse produced by the Metropolitan Strategic Plans, are key instruments to support and legitimate surplus generation. To secure land as a commodity requires a set of political mechanism, practices and discourses, informed by neoliberal ideology.

In Waterloo, the socio-spatial order articulated in the Metropolitan Strategic Plans since 2005 discursively organise the meaning of space towards the state's interests (Weber 2002). This organisation undermines other conflicting and local meanings attached to the same region, and attempts to produce hegemonic conceptualisations of the space. Fundamentally, such organisation, achieved through the extra-economic practice of planning, creates the conditions for redevelopment and enables surplus value. The socio-spatial organisation includes the prioritisation of urban centres, the creation of new infrastructure corridors and the selection of renewable precincts.

Moreover, Waterloo has been declared a State Significant Precinct, which grants the area alternative planning controls designed to facilitate the redevelopment. This local governance technology has also played a key role in the redevelopment, beyond the pure exchange value dynamics. Finally, the state's target of Waterloo as a redevelopment area has resignified the historically negative value attributed to the area, as discussed in the previous chapter, and constituted it as a new promising investment site.

Other examples of extra-economic practices are observable in the dynamics of "gaps." Infrastructure investments such as the new Waterloo Metro Station seek to widen the gap between the potential ground value and the actual rent that can be capitalised (Smith 1996). For Smith, this process of devalorisation and revalorisation is what allows gentrification

and the production of surplus value. Accordingly, neoliberal urbanism generalises this process through planned gentrification and state-led forms of gentrification, as have been observed in Waterloo (Hackworth and Smith 2001). In New South Wales, the rent gap that allows the process of gentrification ultimately functions as an index for urban planning decisions (Sisson 2020, 131). Through the concept of *subsidy*, the Commonwealth Productivity Commission annually calculates the difference between the rent paid by public housing tenants and the potential market value of their homes. This calculation, which can also be read as the calculation of rent gaps, is used to identify areas for potential redevelopment like Waterloo, to attract private investments. Between 2006 and 2016, under a process of gentrification, Waterloo increased its median weekly rent from \$164 to \$520, a significant incentive for further redevelopment.

However, locally this gap is not just perceived in economic terms, but mainly in terms of what could be described as “social” gap, through which publicly housing residents are typically classified as not fit for purpose or capable of returning value for money. One Waterloo resident said that, for her, the government’s discourse on redevelopment assumed that Waterloo was just “waste:” “the implication is that we are a waste of space, a waste of money,” she said (Fieldnotes, March 2019). Following this logic, the public housing estate of Waterloo threatens the urban imaginaries associated with being a global city while also preventing surplus extraction. Crucially, the social gap – or the not fit for purpose discourse – challenges macro-political economy analysis that does not take into account the social relations that constitutes people in everyday life. While creative destruction certainly functions as a driving force for capital accumulation, it only advances through its articulation with local discourses, practices and governance strategies that overlook the social value in people’s lives.

Arguably, Waterloo residents perceived they did not belong to the aspirational future as it was presented in a Metropolitan Strategic Plan in which pensioners, the unemployed, and people with disabilities were hardly reflected. Instead of the top-down and aspirational perspective shared in a Plan filled with images of “highly skilled” workers driving shared-cars, enjoying vertical urban gardening and the high technologies of an “outstanding global city,” residents of Waterloo live a different experience in the city. The plans for rooftop gardens is a clear example of this mismatch. Both the Metropolitan Strategic Plan and the

Waterloo masterplan refer to buildings with new rooftop gardens, yet residents have continually asked for community gardens on the ground due to accessibility issues in a mostly aging community. While roof top gardens are desirable alternatives when the aim is to maximise space in a compact city project, the solution seems to serve a limited number of people, few of whom currently reside in Waterloo.

This example illustrates the practice of planning undertaken by a political elite that tends to mirror its own practices and desires in the final plan, at the expense of other social realities. As previously argued, the practice of planning therefore articulates political views of what the urban space should be and for whom. As such, the Metropolitan Strategic Plans of Sydney reveal a logic that organises the space in terms of productivity. Moreover, by drawing on postcolonial and neoliberal ideologies, the Plans primarily serve the needs and aspirations of the upper classes and White Australians. Finally, these examples illustrate how global city aspirations require the production of a particular kind of “global citizen,” one fundamentally at odds with Waterloo’s current population.

At this point, the link between the Waterloo redevelopment and the underlying logics of a broader city aspiration are clear – they are the logics of a transnational, post-industrial and neoliberal city. In this specific project, the promotion of growth is enabled by selling off state-owned land, specifically public housing states, alongside a gradual investment in the surrounding areas to actively increase land value. The area is thus oriented towards the generation of surplus value through public investments, looking for efficient conditions that enable the extraction of wealth from land use. To use Lefebvre’s terms (1991), here, landscapes are represented as abstract spaces, quantifiable and classified according to the capacity of production and economic growth. Space is produced in terms of a technical and capitalist logic, and organised in “economic corridors” such as Sydney’s Global Arc. In short, the imagined future for both Sydney and Waterloo builds on the belief in a necessary continuous growth in (and through) the city, undermining particular local needs, redistribution principles, and even the materials, energies and bodies necessary to forge and sustain this imagined city.

Urban planning and Decision-making

The redevelopment of Waterloo, as part of this wider strategic planning for Sydney, reveals a conceptualisation of space that is mobilised for economic purposes, where the

restructuring of space itself becomes a key strategy for surplus production in a competitive global scenario. In this context, profit generation and global city aspirations become the main goal and justification for urban redevelopment and the principal logic guiding urban decision-making. Economic productivity is thus the main organising principle that hierarchically categorises the urban space. It guides the decisions of located public investments, of the creation of new urban centres, their assumed urban form, the limited uses of space, density, public space availability, redevelopment governance and financing.

This analysis exposes the limits of a participatory urban planning project within a neoliberal system. The Waterloo project unfolds in the intersection of democratic and urban production, foregrounding, through this encounter, the conflicting dimensions of democratic principles in neoliberal cities. Here, democratic principles of popular decision-making clash with the hegemonic perspective of neoliberal urbanism. Although juxtaposed in documents, side by side, as compatible principles, a fine-grained analysis reveals the conflicting interests. As a result, the hegemonic ideals informing the visions of Sydney's future compromise the democratic claims of a right to the city.

Drawing on Henri Lefebvre (1968), David Harvey approaches “the right to the city” as the common right to reshape processes of urbanisation strictly linked to the development of capitalism. More than individual rights and freedoms to access urban resources, for him, this right refers to “the freedom to make and remake our cities and ourselves” (Harvey 2008, 23). Influenced by Robert Park's claim that by making “the city” people remake themselves, Harvey argues that the right to the city is “the right to change ourselves by changing the city” (Harvey 2008, 23). He argues that neoliberal urban governance, while merging state and private interests, sustains the reinvestment of surplus in a way that favours corporate capital in the shaping of contemporary cities. Considering that each day more private interests tend to dictate urban life, shaping cities according to global elites' desires, Harvey advocates for a wider right to the city. Assuming that urbanisation is a key process to realise surplus, for him the common right to the city requires democratic control over the surplus used in urban development.

However, in its attempts to include democratic elements in its approach to planning, the 2018 Metropolitan Strategic Plan poses challenges to local participation. In particular, it exposes the limits of combining global cities claims, since they are increasingly dependent

on the global finance system, with citizen participation. While Metropolitan Strategic Plans tend to present both agendas together as if they were compatible goals, the conflicts that emerge out of local engagement reveal a different scenario. This clash is not a trivial urban contradiction. Terms such as “participation” and “community engagement” are increasingly presented as part of a global city agenda that tries to represent itself as modern, democratic and free of social conflicts. It does so as a fundamental claim of Western societies in opposition to other supposedly authoritarian regimes. But equally important, it does so as a way to promote investment security and stability.

The 2011 NSW Government Plan, *NSW 2021: A Plan to make NSW Number One*, affirms that the government wants to make sure that people have “real say on development that affects them” (NSW Government 2011, 57) so as to restore confidence in the planning system. Crucially, it seeks to provide “certainty for communities *and investors* through a new planning system” (NSW Government 2011, 56, emphasis added). The official document thus foregrounds the use of participation, not only as a democratic mechanism, but also as a business strategy. In this strategy, community engagement may ideally control future dynamics, prevent unforeseen conflicts and pacify frictions that emerge out of conflicting visions of the city’s future. In doing so, participatory practice can generate the stability, confidence and predictability necessary for private investment.

An example of this approach was observed during a workshop conducted during the consultation process for a new redevelopment in Redfern. At the end of the two-day workshop, a government representative mentioned that the consultation was successful and that interested developers were satisfied with the process. The surprising content of this sentence was that no one knew that there were interested developers observing residents’ interactions during the activities. In addition, while these potential investors were “confidential” and public tenders were yet to be announced, they were joining, together with government representatives, the open consultation processes. Leaving ethical questions aside, in this context, consultation served as a “showcase” to display the qualities of the area and attract potential investors. The workshop acted as preliminary “market research” undertaken by the government in which investors could sense the level of acceptance of the project and evaluate potential risks and community resistance. The main audience for consultation, then, were private investors, rather than the residents themselves.

These kinds of situations exemplify the challenges of making a global city agenda compatible with a participatory city agenda in strategic planning. In Australia, this dynamic seems to hold particular strength as state governments rely on political autonomies to design and implement Metropolitan Strategic Plans and infrastructures. Searle and Burke (2010) identify this control structure as a distinctive element of Australian Metropolitan Strategic Plans. In this country, councils are not legally recognised in the Australian Constitution. State legislatures are responsible for creating and defining local level institutions. In turn, states hold a great range of power over economic, social and environmental issues, including full control over urban growth and infrastructure. This combination gives state authorities the ability to effectively coordinate urban planning with other areas such as transport supply, holding the requirement to legally account for council claims. Consequently, Searle and Burke (2010) characterise Australian Metropolitan Strategic Plans as relatively prescriptive and detailed in comparison to other countries, such as the US and in Europe. Metropolitan Strategic Plans include detailed information about proposed land use, infrastructure size and location, articulating central decisions about the city.

Such detailed spatial ordering puts at risk the capacity for community participation in the design of plans, as it is subservient to the overall goals and aims of Metropolitan Strategic Plans. It follows that the level of detail and the decisions explicit in the plan promote not only material limits to the built environment, but also ideological guidance. Accordingly, this centralised and prescriptive dimension of Sydney's Metropolitan Strategic Plan leaves no clear answer to what happens when residents' desires do not fully align with the key aims and strategic goals of the Plan.

Simone Abram and Cowell (Abram and Cowell 2004a, 2004b) have raised this issue as the central dilemma of participatory planning. While it is reasonable that consultation might begin with some general drafts for guidance, overly detailed and prescriptive vision statements may frame the agenda to the point of making citizen participation ineffective. Accordingly, when the condition of planning is to "hold powerful interest together," plans "become even harder to crack open" (Abram and Cowell 2004b, 709). Adding to this issue, planning activity also increasingly relies on a complex web of plans, both interconnected and interdependent, that secure the continuity of hegemonic visions for cities. The

masterplan of Waterloo is not exclusively linked to Sydney's Metropolitan Strategic Plan, but it rolls out, simultaneously, together with infrastructure plans, sub-regional plans, local planning and other documents. Such interlocking instruments of planning effectively limit the possibilities of actual community control over city-making while framed by multiple plans that, together, reproduce the dominant aspirations for a global and neoliberal urbanism.

Planning in this sense becomes a central governing tool to promote stability and continuity over the years, while conducting popular participation and undermining the citizens' right to the city. For this reason, the view expressed by the Waterloo resident at the beginning of this chapter – “everyone should be here!” – remains a thoughtful provocation. While seemingly evoking promising futures and frequently going unnoticed even within affected communities, Metropolitan Strategic Plan contain central social conflicts that avoid democratic deliberation. Fundamentally, the overarching document manifests core contradictions in a democratic project while planning, simultaneously, a global and participatory city.

Conclusion

The previous chapter of this thesis posed the simple question of why a redevelopment of Waterloo Estate was considered necessary. In response, that chapter explained the historical conditions and devaluation discourses that enabled the thought of an urban intervention in Waterloo to be realised in terms of the need to overcome territorial stigmatisation. This fourth chapter has added to this initial question by outlining the wider political and economic visions underlying the planning of Sydney and Waterloo, and analysing the work of Metropolitan Strategic Plans in revaluing certain city areas to enable profit.

The chapter revealed Metropolitan Strategic Plans as key governance technologies that articulate and perform particular urban futures. Through planning, the state has performed an “economy of appearances,” defined by the need to dramatise economic performance as part of an inter-city competitiveness (Tsing 2000). For Tsing, anticipated dramatic performance precedes economic performances. As such, in order to reevaluate Waterloo, it has been necessary to continuously promote the spectacle of a new inner-city estate that belongs to a growing and global city. In a context where capital accumulation becomes spectacle, plans and their associated images, such as the Global Arc Flow (Figure 4.3) or

the *Metropolis of Three Cities* image (Figure 4.2), are not mere collections of images, but performances of a “spectacular accumulation” (Tsing 200; Carter 2016).

In Australia, the planning principles of compact cities, transport node development and infill redevelopment, align with a dominant planning discourse that seeks to accommodate increased density while promoting economic growth (Ruming, 2018) as part of a “vision” of the city as a global city. The fundamental argument to advance such principles is their supposed “efficient” and “cost-effective” approach. Accordingly, the desire to promote the image of a global city orients the main decisions made around Sydney: the uses and activities designated to each area, the selection of new centres, and their corresponding provisioning of transport infrastructure.

More than this, these urban decisions promote a certain vision of society. For example, Sydney’s 2018 Metropolitan Strategic Plan saw this society as constituted by a knowledge-based economy, high-skilled workers and high technology. City renewals are thus part of an integrated project that expects to transform not only the urban fabric of the city, but also its workforce, level of education, the kind of work that will be valued, and the infrastructure those workers will use. In this respect, Waterloo is currently perceived as a barrier for these aspirations. It limits surplus extraction, and challenges societal aspirations. It does not fit the plan.

This raises the question of how the participatory planning agenda of the redevelopment plan can deal with these imperatives of global capitalism and growth when they seem likely to severely constrain the latitude for community influence on the project. This chapter argues that growth-driven plans tend to accelerate the processes of “creative destruction,” since the demand for the realisation of value through urban renewals is insatiable. When the perceived legitimacy of a government relies solely on its ability to increase land value and enable profits, it risks becoming caught up in an upward spiral of neighbourhood devaluation, revaluation, and profit realisation. Sydney’s *A Metropolis of Three Cities*, and the Plans immediately preceding it, invite an endless repetition of this process through the convenience of public-private investment partnerships. In this process, tensions arising from local demands, such as improved housing maintenance rather than demolition, or investment in mental health, eventually clash with the insatiable search for profit-realisation through cities.

Chapter Five

Policies: the Non-Negotiable Principles of Redevelopments

On 15 May 2019, I attended a meeting held as part of the monthly gathering of the Waterloo Redevelopment Group, which brought together residents, local community-organisations and government representatives to consider issues relevant to the redevelopment. This meeting was to discuss a public housing refurbishment undertaken on Grand Parc Estate in Bordeaux, France. According to the invitation to the meeting, this project had refurbished 530 state-owned units rather than fully demolish the Estate. Similar to Waterloo, the Grand Parc Estate had been built after World War II, and had, since then, been suffering maintenance issues. However, unlike the Waterloo strategy, local authorities had decided against tower demolition, and at a cost of €50,000 per flat, the project had added external winter gardens and balconies to increase sunlight and ventilation (*The Guardian* 2019). Moreover, during the refurbishment, tenants did not need to relocate.

At the beginning of the meeting, a five-minute movie was shown that provided statements by Grand Parc tenants in support of the refurbishment. The Waterloo residents recognised themselves in these narratives, and became particularly interested in the proposal, which offered an alternative to the knock-down proposed for Waterloo. Crucially, this alternative strategy resonated strongly with another conflict at the core of the Waterloo redevelopment: the “social-mix” discourse. Given the state’s government policy framework, a refurbishment strategy was not considered possible in Waterloo due to the need to increase density, mostly through vertical growth, and generate new private flats in order to fund the project and create a new mixed tenure estate. The sale and demolition of the Waterloo Estate, then, was a precondition of its redevelopment. Yet, the Grand Parc example reinforced the Waterloo tenants’ disagreement with the social-mix policy and its corresponding political principle that there be no direct public investment.

In this context, the residents at the Waterloo meeting decided to present a motion against the social-mix policy, requiring the Government “to reconsider the current social mix target of 35% social and affordable housing and 65% private housing for the Waterloo redevelopment.” The motion concluded by linking the social-mix policy to the absence of

public investments, urging to government to “reconsider its no-net cost policy for the redevelopment of Waterloo and instead support direct investment into social housing.”¹

The points articulated in the motion – namely, criticisms of the social-mix framework and the no-net cost orientation – along with the proposed increase of density in the area, were commonly referred to by residents as the “non-negotiables” during the consultation process. From the beginning of the project, these crucial aspects had been left out of the consultation. Nevertheless, these three principles underpinned the government’s official framework on the “drivers and commitments” of the redevelopment (Inner Sydney Voice 2017). The motion on 15 May aimed to demonstrate that the non-negotiable aspects of the redevelopment were in fact arbitrary and could be changed, contrary to the government’s argument. In doing so, the motion revealed how the three aspects of the non-negotiables were articulated around the same objective of maximising profit in the area, reflecting the neoliberal ideology underlying the Waterloo policy framework.²

This chapter focuses on the policy frameworks and principles that oriented the proposed Waterloo redevelopment: the *Future Directions for Social Housing in NSW* policy statement, and the Communities Plus program. While the previous chapter discussed the strategic planning underpinning the redevelopment, this chapter explores policies and policy principles as another key technique to understand the conditions of democratic participation, and the legitimisation of the redevelopment. The chapter starts from the observation that local participation unfolds within wider policy frameworks developed at multi-levels of governance – local, state, and federal – that both shape and limit the meanings of participation. Accordingly, it stresses the constitutive role of policy frameworks and their principles in the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion of urban citizenship and participation.

1 See Chapter Eight for a detailed discussion of this “meetingized” response. The ratio 35:65 included 5% affordable housing.

2 The complete drivers and commitments of the redevelopment included: a new metro station; housing mix of private, social and affordable housing; the sale of the private homes to fund the new social housing dwellings; no loss of current 2,012 social housing; 30% of total dwellings as social housing; up to 70% of private housing; with 5%-10% of these being affordable housing for low to moderate-income households; increase of density; requirement of private and not-for-profit sector investment to deliver the redevelopment; a model of partnership management between public and community housing to be defined through the redevelopment process (Inner Sydney Voice 2017).

Policies are generally seen as an “intrinsically technical, rational, action-oriented instrument that decision makers use to solve problems and affect change” (Shore and Wright 1997, 5). However, if scholars take at face value this alleged ideologically neutrality, they can fail to analyse policy as a cultural and political phenomenon. In Foucault’s term, policies are a key political technology that conceal the political under the appeal of efficiency, neutrality and “expert knowledge.” They operate through discourse, structures and agencies (Shore and Wright 1997, 6) that offer fruitful lenses through which to analyse the functioning of power in contemporary society. Moreover, as the policies analysed in this chapter show, policies set what is the priority in the organisation of urban space and how to achieve these pre-established goals. The Waterloo policy framework simultaneously lays out housing and urban priorities, intertwined with a specific mode of governance that establishes the main actors, goals and processes of the redevelopment. These policies express social norms and values, metabolise organising principles of society and articulate, implicitly and explicitly, models of society (Shore and Wright 1997).

From this perspective, this chapter critically analyses the urban and housing policies of Waterloo that integrate participation within its framework. The discussion starts by first analysing the history of Australian housing policies and their neoliberal turn. Following Pawson and Pinnegar (2018), the chapter unpacks the strategy of the *Future Directions for Social Housing in NSW* and the Communities Plus program into three hegemonic practices of state renewals that are presented as non-negotiable: partnership models of governance and funding; community engagement; and the social-mix principle. The chapter argues that these principles underlying the Waterloo policy framework have major implications for local participation, including the need to attract private investments, the promotion of restricted accountability, and depoliticisation.

Public Housing Policies in Australia

The public housing system in Australia is vital to providing adequate low-cost housing for Australian citizens unable to participate in the private housing market. The current system is composed of three main categories: public housing, community housing and Aboriginal housing. The former refers to homes directly owned and managed by the government through rental payment. In contrast, community housing comprises rental accommodation managed, and sometimes developed and owned, by not-for-profit organisations. Finally,

Indigenous housing compounds specific housing provision for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island peoples, managed by Indigenous organisations.

Although still playing an essential role in the welfare system, the Australian social housing scheme is a relatively limited contribution, currently corresponding to less than 5% of the overall housing stock in the country (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2020). Compared to other OECD nations, Australia lies in ninth position, well behind countries like the Netherlands (with almost 40%), the UK and New Zealand (OECD 2016). Up until 2017, public housing programs in Australia had constructed a total of almost 607,000 homes, but by 2019, after consecutive sales and demolitions, this number had shrunk to only 430,000 state-built homes (Pawson, Vivienne, and Yates 2019, 87).

The current public housing system of Australia had its antecedent in the early 1900s, starting with cheap finance for working settlers to purchase homes (Hayward 1996). After World War I, the Commonwealth provided special support for returned servicemen to purchase homes through the *War Service Home Act 1919*, (Pettigrew 2005). In 1936, following growing concerns over slum conditions, there were also small initiatives oriented to slum clearance, such as the controversial *Housing Improvement Act 1936* (Pettigrew 2005). This initial government support was pre-figured by earlier assistance in the form of land grants, a central strategy for Australian settler colonisation (Sisson 2020). For instance, the New South Wales *Labour Settlements Act 1893* provided loans and purchase rights in exchange for working a property (Troy 1992). This timeline that began in the nineteenth century, shows the continuities of a settler ideology in Australian housing policies. As highlighted by Sisson (2020), instead of an abrupt replacement of models as the country moved from settler colonialism to a welfare state and then to a neoliberal state, the structures of colonialism and land dispossession have continued to resonate in the Australian governance of land. As Porter argues, home ownership in Australia has always been upheld by systems of land tenure, property and planning, in both colonial and postcolonial contexts (Porter 2018; Sisson, Rogers, and Gibson 2019). As a result, Indigenous people remain over-represented in the social housing system. Despite a variety of different Indigenous-specific housing policies in recent decades, more than 15% of social housing has an Indigenous householder (Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision 2019, Tables 18A.5–18A.8), despite Indigenous people

representing only 3.3% of the overall national population (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016).³

The 1945 *Commonwealth Housing Agreement* (CHA) was the first nationwide scheme to tackle housing as a social issue in Australia. The institutional priority given to the program, alongside the breakdown of specific goals, strategies and committed funding, rendered this post-war agreement a milestone in Australian housing policy. The agreement between all of the states of the Australian federation was a direct response to the pivotal 1944 Commonwealth Housing Commission, which explicitly recognised the role of state institutions in ensuring adequate housing beyond free-market, philanthropic or religious initiatives. This policy can be read as part of an emergent post-war Keynesian welfare state, in which state intervention was legitimised (Pawson, Vivienne, and Yates 2019).⁴ The 1945 *Commonwealth Housing Agreement* worked both as a form of economic recovery in the aftermath of World War II, and as a way of promoting access to housing for the working class. By 1956, over 96,000 public dwellings had been delivered, representing 14.4% of construction at the time (Troy 2012). The scheme functioned through Commonwealth loans at low rates. In the program, each state had the responsibility to build and manage a targeted public housing stock, offering tenants economic rents. Although largely idealising families and low-to-moderate waged men as the preferred recipients of the program, this first agreement had a crucial impact. For the only time in Australian housing history, public rental housing was stimulated in detriment to home ownership (Hayward 1996).

However, with the promulgation of the second agreement in 1956, housing policies gradually reverted to the government-assisted home ownership strategy. The Menzies government eased the previous disincentive to public housing purchase that had required the full amount of the loan to be repaid at the moment of sale, and slowly promoted the privatisation of public housing stock to sitting tenants. As a result, 6.6% of public housing stock was sold off, and home ownership increased from 54% to almost 70% (Hayward 1996). In short, the agreement promoted a regime in which cheap public funds served to finance the sale of public stock in favour of individual home-buyers.

³ For an extensive overview of Indigenous-specific housing policies, see Pawson et al. (2020), and Read (2000).

⁴ It is worth noting, though, that the term “welfare housing” was only explicitly used for the first time in the 1973 Agreement (Pettigrew 2005).

The concentration on ownership continued in the following *Commonwealth Housing Agreements* of 1961 and 1966, consolidating Australia as a country with one of the highest levels of home ownership in the world. However, there were three main consequences for this political orientation (Sisson 2020): first, the subsequent marginal percentage of public housing countrywide is low; second, public housing has a dual character that reinforces its stigma through its distinct visual form, with on the one hand, inner-city apartments and high-rise flats like Waterloo, and on the other hand, outer-suburban estates, mostly following Radburn design principles.⁵ Finally, ownership-oriented policies have successively promoted the homeowner as the ideal good citizen. As stressed by Kemeny (1977, 47) the “Australian Dream” of owning a house upholds what the author calls a “property-owning democracy.”

Market-driven Housing Provision

Several authors observed an initial shift in the 1970s from what could be considered a welfare state initiative to the gradual neoliberalisation of public housing in Australia (Hayward 1996). During this period, there was growing concern over tenancy allocation and the need to prioritise low-income applicants. The 1975 *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Poverty* fuelled this debate. This so-called Henderson Report, named after the Chair of the Inquiry, cast doubt on the merits of public housing by highlighting that almost three quarter of public housing tenants were above the poverty line in the country, while a significant portion of low-income private renters were struggling to access stable and adequate housing (Henderson Report 1975). Although arguably seeking to extend housing provision to the most vulnerable citizens, the report and its subsequent policies reinforced an association between poverty and public housing that strengthened in the following decades.

The call to further target public housing to low-income tenants, combined with increasing funding difficulties, led to pivotal changes in the public housing system.⁶ In 1976 the New South Wales government established a full market rent policy with means-tested rebates

⁵ This design has the fronts of homes facing one another over a common green space, with road access at the rear of the houses.

⁶ Pawson and colleagues enumerate four main factors that contributed to a funding crisis: the reduction of rent-capacity of an increasingly low-income demography in public housing estates; rising costs to support tenants with special needs; ageing properties and increasing cost of maintenance; state/territory subsidies incompatible with the true costs of public housing provision (Pawson, Milligan, and Yates 2019, 108)

based on more restricted eligibility criteria. Moreover, the Fraser Federal government also set the policy of selling public housing stock at market price, increasing the sale of public assets while reducing the possibility of tenant purchase (Troy 2012). These measures were combined with a considerable public funding retreat from the housing system.

Essentially, this period was marked by eligibility policies that seeded the demographic shift of public housing residents and the respective imaginary associated to them. Targeted allocation not only favoured low-income tenants, but increasingly prioritised people with disabilities, aging care needs, mental illness, drug dependency, and other complex personal situations. This coincided with policies to deinstitutionalise mental health that were pursued over the 1980s without additional appropriate funding to the housing system, further escalating the downward trend of this system (Pawson, Milligan, and Yates 2019). This process has been defined as the “residualisation” (Morris 2018) of public housing and the welfare system as a whole, a process in which the combination of strict eligibility criteria that increasingly targeted only the poorest and limited public housing stock resulted in the spatial concentration of social disadvantage. If during the previous decades residents had been mainly idealised as White, low-to-moderate income male workers and their families, the following decades saw the growing association of public housing with those who could not be included in the system of economic production. Public housing residents were increasingly portrayed as dependent, unproductive and undeserving. This residualisation process fuelled the territorial stigmatisation that has allowed the discourses of de-concentration and the strategy of social-mix to fundamentally grounding current social housing policies in New South Wales.

In the following decades, housing policy maintained its orientation towards market rationalities, inaugurating two crucial new policies: the creation of Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) in 1981; and the gradual transition of State Housing Authorities (SHAs) towards asset management, incorporating market calculative practices and the search for profits. The Commonwealth Rent Assistance plan instituted a social policy in which the state’s subsidies flowed towards the private housing market. From mid-1980s to the 1990s, the Commonwealth Rent Assistance policy’s spending almost tripled, while public housing investment decreased considerably (Sisson 2020, 93). State Housing Authorities also began to focus on the valuing, sale and maintenance of its assets, rather than building new ones

(Pettigrew 2005). This increasingly transferred housing management and ownership to non-profit organisations such as the Community Housing Providers (Hayward 1996).

By this time, Australia's biggest cities were experiencing a chronic overall housing shortage. During the 1980s the public housing waiting list almost doubled (Hayward 1996). In 1996 and 1999, the various State Housing Authorities made major cuts in housing construction programs: almost 25% in comparison to 1989/90 investment levels. As a result, the annual average of public houses being built fell from 16% (1945–1970) to 3% in mid-1990 (Pawson, Milligan, and Yates 2019, 94). The Australian public housing system was slowly being dismantled.

The beginning of the twenty-first century was marked by the continuity, and even strengthening, of these political orientations. From 2000 onward, policies were mainly marked by the reproduction of market logics in public housing provisions, the ongoing transfer of public housing to Community Housing Providers, and growing surveillance and punitive regulation of public housing residents. These policies reflected a value arrangement that still resonates today, emphasising competition, citizenship independence and partnerships between public, private and non-state agencies.

Different policies and agreements demonstrate the consistency of this approach. In 2001, the New South Wales government created the Land and Housing Corporation as an asset management agency. The Corporation served to increase private development and real estate influence in urban governance, as well as introducing new professionals more related to managing, finance, development and engineering. The 2009 Commonwealth *National Affordable Housing Agreement* (NAHA) crystallised this project of transferring public housing to Community Housing Providers. This agreement targeted a transfer of 35%, with no increase in public housing (Housing Ministers' Conference 2009). The transition was mainly justified by a rhetoric of choice, flexibility and efficiency – liberal values commonly attributed to Community Housing Providers to the detriment of public management (Sisson 2020). Underpinning the choice of Community Housing Providers was a competition-driven policy that assumed that competition brought better services – and believed that state services were inherently inefficient (Pawson, Milligan, and Yates 2019). In accordance with this, the *National Affordable Housing Agreement* also initiated a discourse focused on “tenancy diversification” and “deconcentration.”

Subsequent regulations have reinforced the punitive dimension of recent public housing policies. In New South Wales, the right to fixed-term or secure tenure ended in 2006 with the introduction of new short-term tenancy contracts of two, five or ten years (NSW Government 2010). In 2014 the state's Baird Liberal-Coalition government created the Vacant Bedroom Charge, limiting the stay of guests. Last but not least, in 2018, the subsequent Berejiklian Liberal-Coalition government created a targeted public housing bond system to cover damage to properties, and grant greater power for the government to financially investigate tenants in order to prevent rental rebate fraud.

The last burst of public housing construction may be attributed to the economic stimulus investments undertaken to counter the effects of the 2008 Global Financial Crisis (Pawson, Vivienne, and Yates 2019). The investment of almost 20,000 dwellings was insufficient to revert the sales and austerity measures that had been occurring in the housing system, so it was clearly not intended as a change in policy direction. The current state of housing provision in Australia is the outcome of deliberate policies that have progressively relied on ownership support, restrictive eligibility, limited tenure terms and market-driven logics to the detriment of public rental schemes.

Future Directions for Social Housing and the Communities Plus Program

This historical background to Australian housing policies, and in particular the last decades driven by neoliberal political ideologies, laid the foundations for the current housing policies shaping the Waterloo redevelopment. In 2016, the Baird Liberal-Coalition Government in New South Wales acknowledged the critical situation of public housing in the state and released the policy statement: *Future Directions for Social Housing in NSW*. Note the change in terminology from public housing to “social housing.” The document set three main goals for the following ten years: increase social housing; increase opportunities to avoid the need for state-owned housing and support tenant exit from the system; and improve the “experience” of social housing.



Figure 5.1: Future Directions For Social Housing in NSW – Goals (Source: NSW Government 2016).

In accordance with previous policies, therefore, the *Future Directions* policy continues to expect to move from a system “dominated by public sector ownership” towards a “dynamic and diverse system.” The main proposals of the policy include: greater involvement with the private sector and the third sector; private renter support; further transfer of the state’s housing stock to Community Housing Providers in order to promote further “competition” and “diversity;” the promotion of housing assistance as a “pathway to independence” (NSW Government 2016, 5–6).

Essentially, the *Future Directions* policy is a continuity in the overall shift from a welfare state to a neoliberal state characterised by private rent support and the transfer of the state’s ownership. However, in contrast to other countries that are also currently reducing their overall public housing stock, the peculiarity of this policy is that it includes an increase in the state’s portfolio, even if insufficient. Nonetheless, the policy maintains values such as individual independence, and retains competition as the ideal policy vehicle. It is therefore following a strategy that risks reproducing structural inequalities while promoting capital accumulation at the expense of common resources.

The second policy framework that is shaping the Waterloo Estate redevelopment is the Communities Plus program, which is run by the Land and Housing Corporation in conjunction with the *Future Directions* policy. This program is designed to renew and grow the current social housing portfolio. As a direct translation of the *Future Directions* policy, the program reinforces a paradigm in which social housing projects are merged into urban redevelopment, becoming almost synonymous. One of its main strategies is to tackle urban poverty. Specifically, this \$22 billion program is a housing-led regeneration model (Pawson and Pinnegar 2018) that has selected almost thirty sites with relatively low-density residency to undergo massive redevelopments. Major public housing estates being

integrated into the program include Arncliffe, Villawood, Redfern, Ivanhoe, and Waterloo, the most iconic project in the program. In accordance with the *Future Directions* strategy, all Communities Plus projects follow the principle of full demolition and socially mixed tenures.

Fundamentally, the program reproduces common international trends in urban renewals – here specifically targeting public housing estates – in terms of urban governance and financing arrangements. Following Pawson and Pinnegar (2018), there are three main principles that have characterised Australian urban renewals in the last two decades that have imported, in different ways, the urban thinking of countries such as the USA and UK: the search for public-private partnerships; community engagement; and social-mix.

Partnerships

The Communities Plus program follows a governance logic of partnership with, and collaboration among, multi-stakeholders. According to this approach, the post-war planning model which included the massive building model of public housing estates, mainly failed due to “over-centralised and unilateral policymaking” (Pawson and Pinnegar 2018, 319). Contemporary planning, in contrast, was to draw on a collaborative discourse applied to funding schemes and urban governance, to ostensibly distribute government power, and restructure hierarchical planning strategies.

Partnership is a “pillar” discourse in current neoliberal governance. It characterises a model of state power that is no longer merely configured as a top-down relationship but as a “supportive” relationship (Angelis 2003). This strategy articulates a different form of power within society – one now organised as “partnership” – and establishes a continuity of power upwards and downwards (Foucault 1991, 91). It does so by integrating partners who share the premises of market logic as a given – thus foreclosing further political and economic debate – by creating a “common discursive ground” for conflicting forces (Angelis 2003, 21).

The partnership logic rests on the underlying belief that state provision of services is inherently worse than private provision, and that increasing competition between stakeholders brings better quality services and efficiency. While civil society may still have a designated role in this planning arrangement, the model currently favours public and

private partnerships. Since at least the beginning of this century, there has been a growing hegemony in which developer investments are accepted as the key drivers of urban intervention and state renewals (Pawson and Pinnegar 2018). As a result, the partnership principle gives rise to increasingly complex funding schemes of mixed-capital corporations, joint-ventures, cross-subsidies, and multiple other arrangements for development and investment purposes.

The final funding arrangement for the Waterloo redevelopment is still to be defined by future tenders. Nonetheless, following other Communities Plus redevelopments, Waterloo is likely to establish a hybrid arrangement between state ownership, private developers and Community Housing Providers. In other Communities Plus projects, Community Housing Providers have usually joined the consortium bidding together with developers, expecting to be the future managers of the public housing component. Previous Communities Plus arrangements have worked as follows: developers are responsible for the construction and sale of private properties, typically following their own funding arrangements, together with banks and international funds; Community Housing Providers gain their right to lease and manage the rebuilt public stock; and the state government's Land and Housing Corporation keeps the public housing ownership. For instance, the Ivanhoe estate in Macquarie Park formed a Communities Plus consortium consisting of Mission Australia Housing (a Community Housing Provider), Frasers Property Australia, and Citta Property. Likewise, the Bonnyrigg redevelopment was undertaken by five stakeholders, including a bank as the financier (Westpac Bank), a Community Housing Provider, developers and a maintenance enterprise. As for the ongoing redevelopment of the Waterloo Metro Quarter, the tender winners were a joint-venture between Mirvac and John Holland, developer groups engaged in a number of major redevelopments in the state, including the Sydney Football Stadium and Green Square.

Funding and management partnerships unfold alongside a multi-stakeholder mode of urban governance. In Waterloo, the main stakeholders currently involved in the development are the Land and Housing Corporation (LAHC), the City of Sydney, the Ministry of Industry, the Department of Community and Justice (formerly Family and Community Services), private developers and local community organisations. Together they form a complex network of governance that must deal with conflicting interests and contrasting levels of

power and visibility. It follows that, rather than making a stable organisation, partnerships operate as dynamic institutions, highly susceptible to changes during the course of the redevelopment.

The Land and Housing Corporation, a public trading enterprise and the government's authority over who owns and manages most of the New South Wales public housing portfolio, is the leading body for the redevelopment. Before the 2019 state election, the Corporation undertook the redevelopment of Waterloo alongside the UrbanGrowth NSW Development Corporation. At the time, UrbanGrowth was responsible for the Waterloo master plan, and had the primary purpose of delivering urban renewals programs and facilitating the economic development of urban centres. However, during the course of this study, the Land and Housing Corporation was transferred from within the recently defunct Family and Community Services Department to the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, and UrbanGrowth NSW was abolished.

The Land and Housing Corporation is a self-funded asset management agency that must generate its own income – mainly from rents and property sale – to build and maintain current properties. As a consequence, the enterprise brings market logic into public housing provision, with a “business model” at the core of the organisation (NSW Land and Housing Corporation 2021). According to the official explanation, the Land and Housing Corporation operates as follows: “we divest high-value properties or properties that are expensive to maintain, such as heritage buildings, so we can use that money to build more modern homes that are fit-for-purpose” (NSW Land and Housing Corporation 2021). Essentially, as discussed in the previous chapter, this public enterprise follows the logic of creative destruction (Schumpeter 1976), mobilising dynamics of devaluation and revaluation under the claim of “selling older homes to build new ones” (NSW Land and Housing Corporation 2021). As a result, this state institution is a key instrument for the reproduction of capital accumulation through a process whereby public enterprises mobilise the space to leverage private interests and increase revenues. Figure 5.2 illustrates the model:



Figure 5.2: Land and Housing Corporation Business Model. (Source: LAHC website <https://www.dpie.nsw.gov.au/land-and-housing-corporation/about-LAHC>).

Residents who were more active in the Waterloo redevelopment perceived the move of the Land and Housing Corporation from Family and Community Services to the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, as a formal indication of its goals and priorities. Rather than a public housing provider focused on its social function, the reorganisation was understood as an affirmation of the Corporation's goal to generate and facilitate profits. As an illustration of this perception, during the announcement of the departmental shifts, an annoyed resident asked a government representative whether: "you've changed it so you can sell more?" The officer ignored the question, possibly because the question was, in reality, a rhetorical question.

The role of these corporations as a profit-enabler reflects a wider shift in urban governance in a neoliberal context. In particular, it is linked to the reconfiguration of the state at city level to what Neil Brenner (2004) considers as the socio-spatial reorganisation of state power within global capitalism. The Land and Housing Corporation's operation is associated with the hegemonic forms of urban governance operating in a post-Fordism context, where public-private partnerships are the driving forces of urban transformations. Rather than the weakening of state power, government agencies such as the Land and Housing Corporation and the previous UrbanGrowth NSW Development Corporation,

reconfigure the state's production of space in the form of fragmented and localised arrangements (Lefebvre 1991).

This urban governance arrangement expects to attract surplus value to urban renewals in an increasingly competitive global capitalist world. Accordingly, as analysed by Searle (2006), the partnership between the Land and Housing Corporation and UrbanGrowth, as well as with the previous Redfern-Waterloo Authority, in many respects represents the rescaling and reconfiguration of the state (Brenner 2004). These governmental entities promote the city's competitiveness via urban projects that are funded through land revalorisation, public-private partnerships, and enabled through the flexibilisation of planning controls. Here, it is crucial to highlight the nomination of Waterloo as a State Significant Precinct (SSP) in 2017. State Significant Precincts are areas with state or regional planning significance because of their social, economic or environmental characteristics. This declaration has essentially placed planning regulations and controls, including approvals and conditions for the redevelopment, directly in hands of the New South Wales state government rather than the local government, enabling the override of local planning controls.

Fragmented Partnerships

This mode of governance has key implications for any democratic and participatory project because it reshapes public accountability regimes and by-passes democratic mechanisms of control. First, local participation is actively undermined in order to maximise surplus extraction. In the case of Waterloo, for instance, the opposition of the local council over the insufficient number of new public housing proposals, has been publicly acknowledged. Yet, the instrument of State Significant Precinct status functions to overcome potential barriers imposed by local opposition. Second, accountability requirements have become increasingly difficult to meet in this fragmented scenario of governance. For instance, the transfer of public management to Community Housing Providers has significantly reshaped the responsible actors for the functioning of public housing. While in a state-managed model ministers and elected officials could be held accountable, in the Community Housing Providers management model, accountability is replaced by the "skills-based boards" that form the Providers (Pawson and Pinnegar 2018). As a result, this partnership mode of governance, while fragmented and dispersed, reshapes the notion of local democracy,

introducing new, unelected actors that, far from being exterior to practices of the government, are vital to its rationality.

Fragmentation here is understood as the increasing institutional complexity (Taşan-Kok, Atkinson, and Martins 2021) that arises from contemporary forms of urban governance. The partnership discourse, in association with the neoliberal forms of governing and developing cities, gives rise to new governmentalities that seek to cope with increasing administrative layers and the regulation of a highly complex network of organisations. Fragmentation, then, emerges as a result of such complexity, defined as the “proliferation, specialisation and diversification of institutions, actor constellations, norms and discourses active in an issue-area” (Pattberg et al. 2014, 5).

During an interview, the local Member of Parliament for the Waterloo area, Jenny Leong, and one of her cabinet officers, provided me with further illustrations of governance fragmentation. For example, in the state’s governance of housing, the Department of Housing New South Wales takes care of tenancy management – of “the people,” as Ms Leong puts it – whereas the Land and Housing Corporation is dedicated to “the building,” that is, to asset management and maintenance. In addition, Ms Leong, as local member, must deal with a divided electorate. Part of Waterloo Estate belongs to the Heffron Electorate, which currently has a Labor representative. The other part, the Newtown Electorate, is represented by Ms Leong, who is from The Greens Party. The local government is also run by another independent party which also holds competencies in the estate. Waterloo is thus subjected to four different political forces. Yet, despite all three local governing parties expressing fundamental objections to the redevelopment, the state government holds the final decision, regardless of any democratic opposition.

Another example of fragmentation has been the splitting of the masterplan into the Waterloo Estate and the so-called “Metro Quarter.” Many residents and community-based organisations have expressed concern over this strategy, since it has obfuscated the final numbers of public housing and the increased density of the estate. Although the Metro Quarter integrates the Waterloo area, planning is lodged as two different redevelopments.

From Ms Leong’s perspective as an opposition parliamentarian, the sheer number of fragmentation examples indicate a deliberate policy to undermine democratic controls, rather than a genuine search for fruitful partnerships. As the different examples show, the

fragmentation of political space promotes a decentralised form of power in which public responsibility can be distributed to diverse actors at different scales (Taşan-Kok, Atkinson, and Martins 2021). Accordingly, Ms Leong also explained that the Ministry of Housing was a highly complicated institution to manage, with reduced investments compared to other areas, but with high social pressure and expectations. In this case diversification also works as a strategy of risk management within a highly conflicted ministry. Finally, the fragmented landscape set up by the Waterloo policy framework constituted a regime of accountability – that is, the rules and regulations that delegate responsibilities among multi-stakeholder in urban projects (Taşan-Kok, Atkinson, and Martins 2021, 3) – in which no one, and yet everyone, is simultaneously responsible.

This partnership mode of governance also has profound impacts within the community. During my fieldwork, I had the opportunity to observe some of the daily effects of such dispersed and fragmented governance, including the distribution of blame and responsibility within society, the residents' perceptions about the redevelopment, and the role of participation within this wider system. For example, during the initial months after re-election in 2019, the Liberal Coalition state government initiated what they called “new clusters” of “government machinery.” During a Waterloo Redevelopment Group meeting, when a government representative announced this restructuring, both residents and community-organisations asked how these changes would affect the redevelopment, and who they should direct their demands to: “in terms of the proposal that currently is being put together, who signs-off [on] that? Where is the approval?” asked one member. However, the government officers were unable to provide any answer, effectively making political accountability harder, if not non-existent: “I don't think it has been identified yet,” one replied (WRG meeting transcription, June 2019). During these public meetings, it was also a common strategy to evade controversial questions by answering that the issue raised was the responsibility of another department. Such confusing answers, in practice, reveal the actual “messiness” of urban politics (Blanco, Griggs, and Sullivan 2014) and its overlapping policies, administrations and competences, but they also show a lack of regard for the participatory process since these were questions that could have been anticipated.

Furthermore, in this highly dispersed mode of governance, residents had to deal with the constant frustration of government officer turn-over. In the beginning of 2019, a new

community officer was announced to coordinate the local Neighbourhood Advisory Board (NAB). Despite the officer being motivated to support the tenants, she was greeted with suspicion. Residents had not been made aware of this change, and demonstrated their disapproval of the government's ability to shift important positions without consulting the community. Mainly, however, their primary concern was about accountability and the state's hierarchy: "who is your boss?" a participant asked her (Sydney, January 2019). Following this uncomfortable situation, it became obvious that community control was likely to be a central concern in such a decentralised and highly rotating system. Yet, during my fieldwork, I witnessed a number of changes in the government's organisational structure: Waterloo's project director, from the Land and Housing Corporation, left his position in 2019; a community officer from the Inner Sydney Voice, responsible for "capacity building" activities, finished her work during 2020; another "community facilitator" from Mission Australia, was replaced by a new officer during 2020; the community officer from Counterpoint also ended his work in 2021, after his contract was not renewed by the Land and Housing Corporation; and the volunteer and independent Chair of the Waterloo Redevelopment Group was also replaced by a new Land and Housing Corporation officer. All these positions had close contacts with tenants. This rotating dynamic heavily impacted residents' experiences during a redevelopment that was already characterised by uncertainty and disruption.

The partnership principle pursued by *Future Directions* and the Communities Plus program framed a mode of governance with two main implications for participation. First, the prioritisation of public-private partnerships led to the legitimisation of the privatisation of public land and the realisation of revenues, to the detriment of local demands. Second, the multi-stakeholder form of governance facilitated a fragmented and dispersed government. Locally, this dynamic increased the uncertainty and instability within the community, while simultaneously allowing government officials to evade political responsibility.

Community Engagement

In accordance with the partnership rhetoric, "community engagement" was another feature deployed in the Communities Plus Program. In Waterloo, this activity was mainly undertaken by local community organisations that developed activities such as "information sessions" in three different languages (English, Russian and Chinese),

“capacity building” workshops, the coordination of the monthly meetings of Waterloo Redevelopment Group, social events such as Morning Teas (every Friday), among others. As a result, local community organisations were a key stakeholder in Waterloo’s redevelopment governance, working alongside the Land and Housing Corporation, the Department of Community and Justice (formerly Family and Community Services) and other government agencies. They were the actors with the closest connection to residents, developing a personal and key link between local demands and the government. Crucially, these organisations usually developed the groundwork for the redevelopment, playing a central role in shaping resident perspectives about the project.

There were several organisations engaged with the redevelopment in Waterloo. In 2011, a coalition of local non-government organisation (NGOs) had been established to follow the former interventions in the Redfern-Waterloo area. The coalition, named Groundswell, continues to play a key role in the current redevelopment of Waterloo, gathering together non-government organisations such as the Counterpoint Community Service, South Sydney Community Aid, Inner Sydney Voice, Redfern Legal Service, the Tenants’ Union New South Wales and Shelter New South Wales (a housing advocacy organisation). Groundswell has two main purposes in Waterloo: to facilitate a united vision, and to encourage independent and critical positions towards the government by a collective, rather than a single opponent. Such critiques were encouraged by Groundswell insofar as coalitions of organisations were not as easily targeted by the government.

As part of this association, three principal locally-based organisations engaged on a daily basis with the Waterloo community and the redevelopment: REDWatch (Redfern Eveleigh Darlington Waterloo Watch), Inner Sydney Voice and Counterpoint Community Services. REDWatch was a local organisation founded in 2004 by private residents of Redfern. Since its foundation, the organisation has played a crucial role in monitoring government work, mobilising and informing residents through its locally known newsletters, and extensive recording of official documents.⁷ The Inner Sydney Voice was initially established in 1974 as a state-funded initiative to create Regional Councils for Social Development. After more than forty years working in the area with campaigning and advocacy, now Inner Sydney Voice plays a crucial role for local and community information, publishing the *Inner Voice*

⁷ For an extensive review on the democratic role of REDWatch in the area, see Rogers (2016).

magazine four times a year. Finally, Counterpoint is another important organisation that provides community services such as computer access, English teaching, and various social gatherings at its centre, The Factory, located within the Waterloo Estate. Both Inner Sydney Voice and Counterpoint currently work as formal community organisations during the redevelopment, and have been granted government funding to undertake “community development” (Counterpoint) and “capacity building” (Inner Sydney Voice) activities. As soon as the redevelopment was announced, these organisations collectively requested specific funding for independent community engagement activities, bilingual translators, and an Aboriginal Liaison officer. The funding was approved but finished at the end of 2020, contrary to the organisations’ position.

While these organisations have done important work in the community, they have had to constantly reinforce the importance of their work to the government due to funding instability. This dynamic has generated suspicion among residents in relation to the authenticity of the organisations’ critical and independent position towards the government. For instance, during the consultation period, residents typically distinguished organisations as being “tenants-led” groups such as the Waterloo Public Housing Action Group, and “other” community organisations. Moreover, most of the positions responsible for the community engagement activities were on short-term contracts. This had a significant impact on the daily relationships between community officers and residents. First, it limited the possibilities of critical positions due to economic dependencies. Second, the emotional investments of care and trust between residents and community officers was often at risk because of job insecurity.

In the course of my fieldwork, I listened to frequent complaints about former community officers that had been respected by the community but left the position due to personal decisions, better offers (such as fixed contracts), or simply the end of their contract. As one resident told me, it was understandable that temporary workers would be more worried about their jobs and acting impartially, than about getting actively involved in the most contentious conflicts within the community. One local officer admitted, under anonymity, that it was hard to criticise the “hand that feeds you” (Interview, January 2019). As a result, the constant rotation of community officers, the limited funding, and the difficulties of creating any trust between community officers and residents that might have led to the

formation of an alliance among them, functioned as key mechanisms to keep them apart, and regulate how participation and community engagement were undertaken in Waterloo.

Nevertheless, these organisations played a crucial role in the exertion of opposition and social pressure for better outcomes in the redevelopment. However, there were limits to this pressure in both form and content. Critiques tended to be oriented towards what were considered pragmatic demands within the “negotiable” aspects of the redevelopment. The formats of such demands also tended to reproduce government practices, such as recommendation reports and meetings like the Waterloo Redevelopment Group.⁸ This dynamic had crucial implications for the redevelopment and in the practice of political participation. Yet this was not an issue related to non-government organisations alone. Rather, it was the outcome of a particular understanding of participation within a neoliberal mode of governance. Non-government organisations, as non-state actors, have long been acknowledged as central actors in “governing through community” (Li 2006; Rose 1999). Alongside private consultants, civil society organisations and the state, they constitute a governmentality capable of conducting an extended network of people towards a specified goals. For this reason, more than an external actor, Non-government organisations operate, through their specific logics and funding dependencies, as central organisations in the rationality of government. They do not function as fully autonomous bodies, but are directed by specific goals, responsibilities, conditions, timeframes and activities that are set by the state. In the Waterloo redevelopment, they were oriented by the calculated means that characterise neoliberal modes of governance, defined not by the will to govern over a community, but *through* community.

As a result, the principle of community engagement alongside partnership reveals how government officers, urban planners and policy-makers conceptualised participation in Waterloo. In this context, participation emerged within a highly complex participatory structure that was underpinned by liberal values such as competition, individual choice and efficiency. During the consultation process, residents deployed a common expression that captured these wider values. They claimed that participation was “just another box to tick.” This metaphor expressed the perception of the residents that participation was a depoliticised development management task – just one of many such tasks rather than a

⁸ Chapter Eight contains an account of these activities.

genuine search for community-control. Participation, in this light, is perceived as a mere bureaucratic formality and an ineffective procedure. The policy framework of the Waterloo redevelopment was essentially oriented by principles of private and public sector assemblage, and the desire to overcome a landscape supposedly “dominated by the state” (NSW Government 2016, 6). As a result, this policy framework generated a local conceptualisation of participation shaped by neoliberal ideologies, including managerialism and bureaucratic administration, in association with developmentalist discourses (Escobar 1995).

Mike Raco and colleagues (2016) have explained this process by drawing a parallel with Ferguson’s concept of “anti-politics” machines (Ferguson 1990), a form of international governance that assembles public, private and non-profit organisations under a highly bureaucratic working system that, as an effect, tends to depoliticise the wider context in which development programs occur. The authors argue that a phenomenon similar to that described by Ferguson can be currently observed in contemporary urban redevelopments, with the addition of a new discourse on local participation. The Waterloo redevelopment follows an outsourcing strategy that distributes participation and community engagement activities across public, non-governmental and private corporations. This, in turn, increases bureaucratic power to coordinate all the actors involved. This anti-politics development machine turns what is political decision-making into a pragmatic management process that is rational, and directed towards an efficient and delivery-focused urban intervention (Raco, Street, and Freire-Trigo 2016). Accordingly, anti-political machines seek to “fast-track” developments and prevent disruptions and unpredictable political contests. A clear illustration of this process is the nomination of Waterloo as a State Significant Precinct. So, too, is the participation process itself, with its characteristics of a non-binding consultation in a limited timeframe and specific stages in which to “have your say,” rather than an ongoing process, and with crucial aspects designated “non-negotiable” even before consultation starts. It is thus possible to conclude that the *Future Directions* strategy, combined with the Communities Plus program, shapes an anti-political machine with key consequences for citizen participation, through its non-negotiable principles.

The Non-Negotiable Principle of Social-Mix

Social-mix is one of the foundational pillars of the Communities Plus program. The defining of this principle as non-negotiable contributes to eliding political-economic questions such as the privatisation of public land. The principle seeks to promote urban redevelopments with a mixed tenure of public and private houses following the specified proportion of 30% public and 70% private.

To understand the logics of the social-mix strategy, it is first necessary to understand its corresponding discourse of “poverty de-concentration” and tenure-mix policies for the state’s renewal programs. As authors such as Galster (2009), Atkinson and Kintrea (2001), and Arthurson and Darcy (2015), have pointed out, narratives regarding poverty and tenure-mix are underpinned by what is called the “neighbourhood effect.” This effect assumes that social disadvantage is socially contagious (Pawson and Pinnegar 2018), and that a concentration of disadvantaged citizens will result in unproductive or unwanted socialisations such as unemployment, laziness, and anti-social behaviours. The significant 2009 *National Affordable Housing Agreement* illustrates this argument. According to its policy statement, the agreement was aimed at “creating mixed communities that promote social and economic opportunities by reducing concentrations of disadvantage” (Council of Australian Governments 2009, 7). Urban scholars such as Darcy (2010), Arthurson (2012), and Arthurson, Levin, and Ziersch (2015) have all pointed out the extremely problematic assumptions that underpin such social-mix policies on this basis. For a start, the policies assume a natural correlation between public housing and disadvantage, ignoring clear evidence that changes in public policy can *produce* this correlation. The Australian public housing demographic shifted after measures were enacted that restricted eligibility, prioritised disadvantaged residents, and reduced housing stocks, creating a spatial concentration of disadvantage through the residualisation of public housing (Morris 2018). Second, social-mix policies mask unequal structures by assuming that residents living under poorer environments were individually responsible for their disadvantaged state (Slater 2013). This logic results in policies that fundamentally seek to change individual behaviour (Doney et al. (2013).

Specifically analysing the recurrent proportion of 30:70 as a “perfect mix,” urban scholars such as Shaw (2012) find weak evidence to support the numbers. In terms of

implementation, too, Levin and colleagues (2014) have challenged the ideals of integration by highlighting the emergence of the so-called “poor door” in Australian experiences of social-mix policies, where public housing residents have a different entrance to a social-mix building. Developers, too, have been reluctant to promote what they call “salt and pepper” mixes within a single building, as they devalue private apartments. Accordingly, the 2018 Victorian Inquiry into the Public Housing Renewal Program concluded that:

[I]t is not clear that creating a social mix of tenants alone leads to social mixing or improves the life outcomes of public housing tenants. Rather, such a mix can be a part of a broader policy of creating healthy communities (Parliament of Victoria 2018, 102).

Also problematic in the rationale underlying the diversity ideal is that it draws exclusively on economic factors. The social-mix strategy implies that the interaction between different *economic* classes will automatically lead to social improvements, because higher income residents will inspire independence, values, job motivation, financial responsibility, property care and, overall, better social behaviours in low income residents. In other words:

[T]he rhetoric of socially balanced communities’ is underpinned by the belief that importation of better-off households able to afford market-price housing will boost local purchasing power, offset area stigmatisation, provide positive role models, and reinforce (desirable) social control (Pawson and Pinnegar 2018, 317).

During a discussion on social-mix organised by the Waterloo Redevelopment Group, a participant critically summarised this logic: “you hope that the private people will rub off on public housing tenants and they will go and get jobs.”

The local community did not share this perspective. In fact, during the consultation activity, a resident wrote on a Post-It note a short sentence that challenged these assumptions of the neighbourhood effect. She wrote: “we don’t need private residents to look respectable.” Residents were not claiming that Waterloo did not suffer serious tenant conflicts. Many had reported them to me on different occasions. Rather, they considered that this neighbourhood effect strategy seemed an overly simplistic and morally charged perspective, that conveniently masked its underlying economic interests. In short, as a

“non-negotiable,” the social-mix principle worked as a business model to promote economic feasibility, and legitimise the sale of public housing, supposedly in the best interests of tenants (Arthurson and Darcy 2015).

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the housing and urban policies used to frame the Waterloo redevelopment. The analysis has revealed how these policies permeated the participatory process in Waterloo, and acted as “non-negotiable” values that both shaped and limited the consultations. Specifically, the chapter argues that the state government’s *Future Directions for Social Housing* strategy, alongside the Communities Plus program, function as key political technologies – and as extra-economic factors – to deflect dissent and legitimise anti-democratic decisions. These policies are contextualised within a wider process of the neoliberalisation and residualisation in Australian housing policies, and unpinned by three hegemonic practices of public estate renewals in Australia: partnership, community engagement and social-mix (Pinnegar and Pawson 2018).

For each principle I have combined fieldnotes and official documents to understand their logics and practical effects on residents’ daily lives. First, the partnership principle, and the complex funding arrangements for the redevelopment of Waterloo, reflects the reconfiguration of the state in a global system (Brenner and Theodore 2002). This multi-stakeholders’ mode of governance also generates dispersed and fragmented experiences with the state, with major implications for local accountability regimes. Second, the community engagement principle puts into critical question the conflicted position of non-government organisations when integrated into an anti-political machine.

The social-mix policy principle captures the main conflicts of the redevelopment: the de-concentration of poverty, and the “neighbourhood effect.” As one of the three non-negotiable principles constituting the main framework of the redevelopment, setting its goals, actors and processes, this principle codifies the values, principles of organisation, and models of the society that the Waterloo Estate policy envisions (Shore and Wright 1997). Yet, this most contentious issue, from which the other principles flow, is ruled out of the public debate. This foregrounds the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion – that is, of the negotiables and non-negotiables – that occur through modern policy-making. These imposed restrictions not only set the limits of political debate, but work to define what is

factual, achievable and realistic, which, paradoxically, limits the horizons of possibility for an ostensibly participatory project.

The next chapter turns to the question of how the government has been able to reproduce the principles of social-mix, no-net cost and density requirements as “non-negotiables,” especially in a project that claims to feature partnership, collaboration and citizen participation.

Chapter Six

Policy-making: when Politics Become “Non-Negotiable”

Throughout the redevelopment consultation process, residents had been calling for further discussion about the policy framework of the masterplan. After several invitations, participants of the Waterloo Redevelopment Group were able to arrange a special meeting with government officers to discuss the social-mix strategy with the government. On 18 September, John Phillips, a highly-placed officer in the Communities Plus program, attended the monthly gathering of the group to explain the government’s arguments for the social-mix policy, and to discuss the doubts and concerns of the residents.¹ The meeting was organised as a thirty-minute initial presentation, followed by a group discussion. In addition to Phillips, the group had also invited a researcher from the University of New South Wales who had worked both in government housing agencies and in academic research on health and housing policies. The context was rich for observing how a government officer publicly justified the social-mix principle, but most importantly, how he performed and reproduced this policy as “non-negotiable.”

It was not the first time that Phillips had participated in such a meeting. He was one of the Land and Housing Corporation’s representatives who frequently came to provide updates and resolve potential doubts. Usually, he would sit at the table as every other participant did. On this day, though, he stood in front of the gathering of around fifteen participants, and set up his presentation with PowerPoints. He began the exposition by repeating, as he had done several other times, that the social-mix proportion was part of the *Future Directions* policy, and so was embedded in the policy framework, the implication being that it could not be changed. To support this argument, Phillips read out section 1.1(d) of the policy as written on the PowerPoint: “ensure large developments target a 70:30 ratio of private to social housing, with the aim of delivering integrated communities and improving social outcomes.”

¹ I chose to use pseudonyms here to protect individual identities and prevent any personal harm to public officers. My analysis is not aimed at determining individual responsibility. Rather, it is to understand the social-mix policy as a social discourse reproduced through state institutions enmeshed within wider power structures.

In making this statement, Phillips thus initiated his presentation by publicly performing, as a government representative, the authority enacted by the policy. Throughout the presentation, it was clear that his main purpose was to justify this policy as a thought-through orientation. In other words, the policy and its principles were not random political decisions, nor was the social-mix an indiscriminate mix proportion, but a policy and principle articulated within a wider vision about the city, and grounded on evidence. To emphasise this, Phillips continued his presentation by outlining the expected social impacts of the policy: “There are *more* things embedded in this policy,” he said, “*more* social housing, *more* opportunities.” In emphasising that there were other benefits, he redirected the focus of the meeting away from the social-mix aspect of the policy, to reinforce that the focus of the *Future Directions* policy was to ensure “work opportunity” and education.

Phillips then moved on to the second and most important part of his argument, in which he provided examples of previous estate renewals that had followed the 70:30 proportion dictated in the policy. First, he stressed the history behind the requirement. According to Phillips, this policy was first implemented by a Labor government in 2002. This fact was a key point in his argument: “This is important to understand,” – he emphasised, – “because everyone thinks that this starts with *Future Directions*, but it actually started back in 2002” under a different government. In highlighting the antecedents of the policy, Phillips stressed the continuity of the project in relation to previous governments, and so attempted to avoid the perception of arbitrariness or partisanship in the policy. Moreover, he deflected attention from the government’s unilateral decision-making capacity by adding new actors, including the current government’s Opposition, thereby implying government bipartisanship and an apparent consensus over the matter.

As examples of other state renewals, Phillips cited Bradbury, Claymore, and Bonnyrigg, and current projects such as Ivanhoe, Macquarie Park, Telopea, Riverwood and Arncliffe. Minto, though, in the south-west of the city, thirty-eight kilometres from the city centre, was cited as the iconic successful case, introduced in 2002 by a Labor state government. This estate commonly emerges as the origins of the *Future Directions* policy, articulating a mythological narrative that claims a dramatically chaotic neighbourhood until state intervention and poverty de-concentration provided renewal. In many different discourses,

Minto is considered a watershed in public estate renewals. Such a “myth of origin” provides a seeming coherency to policies of urban renewal (Lea 2020, 24).

Phillips’s presentation was illustrative of this policy-making “myth of origin” narrative. He first reproduced a lineal cause and effect argument. Essentially, Minto “had a lot of problems” due to its “high concentration” of public housing. Here, the concentration of state-owned properties *per se* was the problem, as poverty was directly linked to social conflicts. To reinforce this idea, Phillips showed a picture of the run-down rear of a house to symbolise the sense of precarity and lack of home care that had reigned in Minto before its renewal. Supported by these images, he continued to promote a narrative of salvation, in which the social-mix redevelopment policy had enabled not just the physical, but also, especially, the social and symbolic recovery of the area. He acknowledged that “social housing communities” had become “stigmatised” areas: “as soon as you entered there you knew you were in Minto’s social housing estate,” he said, but immediately after this statement, he showed new pictures, adding: “but this is what it looks now.”

Minto

Overview

- One of the first NSW Government renewals based on 30% social housing to 70% private and affordable housing
- Joint venture between NSW Government and Campbelltown City Council the project reduced the concentration of social housing to approximately 30% over 15 years
- Not implemented as a funding model as land value insufficient to fund all new social housing

<https://vimeo.com/239753213>



NSW GOVERNMENT

4

Figure 6.1: Slide of a social-mix presentation from the Land and Housing Corporation

At this point, Phillips compared the photograph of the rear of the former Minto house with a sophisticated street-front illustration of the Minto redevelopment (Figure 6.1). It was striking to observe that the redeveloped neighbourhood was portrayed as a friendly and

harmonious environment whereas, in contrast, the old estates were illustrated by individualised photographs that portrayed a degraded area. The new Minto was also presented through an image of overall neighbourhood life, while the old Minto was represented through an image of the rear of a single supposedly representative house.

Through these comparisons, Phillips depicted public housing estates in general as problematic spaces that needed, and benefited from, a mix-tenure redevelopment. He reported the crime statistics for Minto prior to the introduction of the social-mix policy, and the levels of “anti-social behaviours” and the need for educational assistance. There were even supposed difficulties in food delivery: “those sort of things were not happening in the area (...) and that is pretty consistent with our estates at the moment,” he assured the meeting participants. The residents of Waterloo present in the room were particularly uncomfortable with these statements, as they declared afterwards. The images Phillips projected were ones of chaos, in contrast to the new flourishing neighbourhood: “bus drivers wouldn’t enter into the area, they [residents] would throw stones and bricks and those sort of things....” According to him, “shopping started to collapse” as all the major stores, like Kmart and Coles, left the area “as things changed over time.” In contrast, due to the de-concentration strategy, in the new neighbourhood: “the kids wear their uniform and feel proud of it,” he said, “community facilities and retails had returned ...the shopping centre has reopened [and] tenants are able to walk and access” everything they needed.

Another powerful metaphor presented by Phillips was the slogan of “One Minto” in which the redevelopment was seen as facilitating the integration of a previously disintegrated community (UrbanGrowth NSW 2016). The idea of an “integrated community” thus emerged as a core value underpinning the social-mix rhetoric. In accordance with this logic, Phillips also stressed the idea of a “threshold” for the mix, aiming to calculate, mathematically, the optimum combination between public and private housing. In his words, it was crucial to “get the mix right.” Otherwise, the community risked disintegration or continued chaos.

At the end of his presentation, Phillips mentioned the rise in the value of properties in Minto as a positive outcome of the redevelopment, as if this was immediately relevant to public housing tenancy. Previously, according to him: “Minto was a highly stigmatised estate, the property values became quite depressed” but as a result of the redevelopment, “one of the

improvements in the neighbourhood quality [has been] the value of properties.” At this moment, it became clear what kind of result the government expected from a redevelopment, a result previously masked by the de-concentration discourse: it expected, indeed, wanted a rise in property value that would attract private investment.

Phillips had presented the project in terms of a win-win situation, in which positive social outcomes were reconciled with economic activities that sought surplus generation. In other words, he emphasised the supposedly mutual interest shared by all the multi-stakeholders involved in the project, including public housing residents. In short, the official discourse presented by Phillips resonated with precisely those problematic assumptions that had urban scholars so concerned about the social-mix logic. The main logic sustaining the Communities Plus program’s non-negotiable principles was the production and dissemination of a negative image of the area, supposedly caused by poverty concentration, in comparison to the thriving and integrated community that the area should aspire to be. The “neighbourhood effect” emerged as a fundamental rationale, in which the interaction with upper-class residents would automatically bring about a more promising future for low income residents.

Following this presentation, residents, researchers and local government representatives at the meeting all began to challenge these assumptions. Sophie, a Waterloo tenant, declared that the comparison between Waterloo and Minto “just wasn’t fair.” She claimed Waterloo had “lots of shops” in the area, and this was precisely why she lived there. Overall, she perceived Waterloo as an already thriving neighbourhood, in spite of the social conflicts that arguably existed in the area, but she also rejected the chaotic picture of Minto as representative of Waterloo. At a certain point in his presentation, Phillips had also mentioned the need to limit and define the area of work and to have control of policy delivery. He had said:

[I]t is very easy to do this... We draw a line around Waterloo, we draw a line around Minto, then draw a line around Bradbury, around Bonnyrigg... it is very much about how you define those neighbourhoods and where you can actually have the impact.

Sophie criticised this perspective as tending to objectify social life through “lines” around neighbourhoods as if they were self-evident units (Cordeiro and Costa 1999). She said:

“John says you can just draw a line around it like...Donald Trump...” At this moment Phillips tried to interrupt, but Sophie continued: “... but I would say we are already 30%.” The question for Sophie was *where* policy-makers decided to draw “a line” and why. The reference to the former president of the US, with its implication that drawing a line was like “building a wall” with Mexico, challenged the divisions that were being created exclusively against low-income neighbourhoods. In addition, her claim that Waterloo already had a 30% mix drew attention to Waterloo being a neighbourhood that was already surrounded by private apartments. Following Sophie’s logic, if the “line” determining renewal shifted to the whole of the state of New South Wales, social housing would represent less than 2% of the overall mix of housing (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2020).

Following Sophie’s intervention, other participants joined the discussion. The invited researcher pointed out that there was no consensus over rationale behind the social-mix strategy, and a City of Sydney representative, also present in the room, affirmed this:

[There] is nothing really definitive that says 70:30 is it (...) it just sort of happened to be the thing that happened, properties developer might have actually said that was good, but they can’t actually pinpoint where it comes from.

Other residents and non-government organisation representatives also insisted that the social-mix was not a “magic bullet,” and asked why the government was building so many “unaffordable houses” despite a growing waiting list for public housing: “who is coming to live here?” a resident asked. “Airbnb?” quipped another person. Equally suspicious, another resident stressed that there were already “two Waterloos,” one of luxury apartments and the other the public estate: “one Waterloo wants more and is getting bigger, while the other is shrinking,” she said. Finally, a resident stated she “took offense” at being judged by her income, as the official social-mix discourse indicated. She claimed that residents were “working class,” rejecting the term “disadvantaged people” typically used by policy-makers. Phillips remained silent during this discussion, other than to reinforce that the social-mix concept was well accepted in countries like the UK and New Zealand. “But what about Finland?” a resident asked following this argument, suggesting that there was more

depth of knowledge among residents of different approaches to social housing than the presentation had assumed.

In this meeting, the government’s official discourse had attempted to reinforce a logic that linked poverty to crime in order to legitimised the sale of public housing, but participants were generally unconvinced by the presentation. Phillips’ arguments were publicly challenged, on the basis of the policy’s arbitrary selection of cases and inconsistent comparisons. Also revealed was the lack of consensus for the linkages being drawn not just among residents, but also among academics and even other policy-makers. Arguably, the social-mix policy presentation had brought out the main conflicting principles of the redevelopment and had revealed that, although policy principles were presented as non-negotiable, they were in fact built on narratives of policy-making that were disputed.

In describing this encounter between residents, government officers and others at length, the discourses of policy-making and the operations that allow principles in a policy to be conceived of as non-negotiable are seen as contestable, despite the authoritative nature of the officer’s presentation. During the encounter, residents publicly asserted their opposition to the principles, revealing the conflicts within the New South Wales government’s policies, and the tensions that the non-negotiables were attempting to silence.

Policies are not “hermetic, integrated, and smoothly operating interventionary apparatus coming down from on high to ‘impact communities’” (Lea 2020, 15). Rather, policies are “wild.” They unfurl a “series of project stutters, misdirects, and meanderings” (Lea 2020, 15). They are therefore susceptible to skilful players who can tap into their misdirection, their insubstantial arguments and orientations – such as in the social-mix principle – reshaping their ostensibly hermetic and complete version. In this meeting about the social-mix principle, participants exposed the fragility and role of discretion in the Communities Plus program by questioning the established commitments of the policies and the assumptions that allowed them to be seen as the “best” direction to pursue. In doing so, they also exposed that policies as incontestable decisions are not a given. In fact, the “non-negotiables” and the limits of political discussion, had to be daily produced and sustained.

Drawing on the social-mix meeting description above, the following sections bring out some of the assumptions that produce policies as inviolable political outcomes. First, the chapter discusses the performatic distinction between policies and politics observed in the

Waterloo meeting. Second, the analysis also highlights the liberal values underlying the housing policies of New South Wales and their implications for the meanings of participation and the production of policies as “non-negotiables.” To do so, the chapter also draws on non-European democratic experiences to shed light on the Eurocentric perspective that was shaping the ideals of participation in Waterloo.

Policies Against Politics

Phillips’ performance at this meeting was aimed at presenting the redevelopment policies as inherently good, fair, scientifically-based, consensual and, in sum, a “stable body of rational thought” (Lea 2020, 17). In doing so, he sought to reinforce the idea of the policy’s principles as “non-negotiable,” since they had already been sanctioned by the government’s internal decision-making. Here, policies seemed to hold a magical power, above individual will, that exempted them from further democratic deliberation. Lea defines this “magic of intervention” as the faith that supports the institutional power to fix problems through an interventionist lens, while simultaneously denying this very desire and perception of the world (Lea 2007, 18). A profound faith in a policy renders it non-negotiable, sometimes even making this inviolable and conveniently closed decision-making pass unnoticed.

However, unpacking some of the assumptions underpinning this deeply-rooted idea makes it possible to understand how policy frameworks become “non-negotiables.” First, as a key political technology of urban governance, policies are marked off from the political arena by following a technical, objective, effective, legal and rational idiom. The performance by Phillips and the discourse he reproduced were clear examples of how this process can occur. During his presentation, Phillips attempted to legitimise the policy through the use of historical records, academic literature and other countries’ examples of “best practice.” Thus, the policies embodied by Phillips advanced as non-negotiable while presenting themselves as decisions above moralities. They managed this advance by objectifying, universalising and thus collectivising the responsibility for decision-making (Shore and Wright 1997). In doing so, policies, as the final outcome of political decisions, can come to be perceived as inanimate artefacts, absent – and even detached from – any human agency, subjectivity, ideology or irrationality. Policies therefore function as a central instrument to distance policy makers from the objects of a policy, promoting decision-making processes as anonymous and impersonal (Shore and Wright 1997). While Phillips

was a personification of government decisions, he continuously referred to the “government’s framework” – as a general and collective sphere, – in order to remove himself, and any subjectivity or individualisation, from the policy-making process. He presented himself as a passive agent that actually had no decision-making power; he did not decide, he simply implemented.

Second, the incontestable nature of the policies was supported by a vertical image of the state in which the national and state levels encompassed the local (Gupta and Ferguson 2002). According to the scalar interplay at work in the Waterloo decision-making process, specific activities and powers corresponded to particular levels of governance. Policy-making belonged to the realm of the state’s power, leaving participation to the local level, here assumed to be hierarchically inferior and subordinate: local decisions could not override state policies. As a result, the non-negotiables were authorised by a vertical and authoritative image of the state, in contrast to the bottom-up ideal of participation. While following this top-down dynamic, the Waterloo participation process encountered a fundamental contradiction in which participation was allowed for urban planning as a local dynamic, but not for urban policies as a responsibility of the state.

I once witnessed another government representative similarly arguing that the social-mix was non-negotiable because it was – as a past action – “government’s decision, embedded in a policy framework.” This exemplary argumentation reveals the deep-seated belief in a state government that contains the local, and consequently, the belief that local participation is necessarily framed and encompassed by the state’s policies. Moreover, this government claim also exposes the legitimising function of policies. Policies not only set government actions into a timeframe, but they also fix their course of action within “a universal set of goals and principles” (Shore and Wright 1997). This operation lends authority to decision-making, for disagreements over specific issues may be construed as an illegitimate critique of the universal and putative principles that guide the general policy framework. Indeed, this was the central claim of government representatives, as Phillips’ presentation indicated.

Participation Otherwise: Participation as Political Negotiation

The different principles explored both in this and the preceding chapter – partnership, community engagement and social-mix – reflect the challenges of a contemporary democracy in which the canon of liberalism is being increasingly questioned and emptied,

while continuing to serve to legitimate neoliberal impositions. Against this backdrop, Santos and Mendes (2018) claim the potential of Southern Epistemologies to further develop democratic theories. In this section, non-European experiences are drawn on to highlight the liberal and Eurocentric approach to participation being pursued in Waterloo and how these approaches support the production of non-negotiables. This contrast of experiences and conceptualisations show how the divisions of policy and politics, technical and political, and economy and politics, are not fixed or inevitable, but the result of an unstable dispute over the meanings of democracy and the practice of politics.

In the last decades, peripheral continents such as Latin America have shown an impressive capacity to question, regenerate, and experiment with new democratic grammars and thinking (Santos and Avritzer 2003). Crucially, they have challenged democratic ideals historically constituted through colonising states. Bolivia, for instance, has recognised “communal democracy” in its constitution. This has been fundamentally shaped by Indigenous ontologies, giving place to a democratic culture based on self-management, reciprocity and mutual aid (Bicas 2018). Similarly, Ecuador and Bolivia have also challenged the ways colonialism is deeply rooted in the form of the “nation-state,” thus decolonising democratic thinking and proposing a new pluri-national form of state (Urquidi 2018). Other examples of democratic innovation have emerged worldwide: in India (Sheth 2002), Peru (Nugent 2008), Rojava in Syrian Kurdistan (Graeber 2016), and Mexico (Andrade 2018), among others.

Of particular interest to this thesis, Brazil inaugurated the first participatory budget in Porto Alegre that, unlike the Waterloo example, offered citizens control over the public investments budget. In doing so, the fictional nature of the separation of economy and politics was clear. Moreover, Brazil also experimented with an alternative model for participatory urban planning in its City Statute in the 1988 Constitution. In this example, unlike the underlying ideologies of the redevelopment of Waterloo, social justice was a core principle of democratic formulation.

While, for a neoliberal project, participation rested on the principles of individual freedom of expression and assembly, the Brazilian model offered a democratic perspective in which participation was instead a means of equalisation. Where for the former, individuals were formally equally free, in the Brazilian model, institutionalised participation was a critical

means to redistribute power and wealth, and redress problems like urban inequalities (Caldeira and Holston 2015). These different experiences challenge hegemonic frames that tend to imprint a dualistic perspective of the world in which the Global South is the place of problems and the Global North the region of solutions. Rather, these experiments in democracy invert this common equation by enriching the growing critiques of the Eurocentric models of liberal democracy. Correspondingly, these practices – and their respective conceptualisations of democracy – offer insightful perspectives from which to analyse the ways in which the New South Wales government makes sense of democracy and citizen participation.

Brazilian democratic practices, as with other Global South experiences, are obviously not free of criticisms and challenges.² I do not pretend to produce a romantic perspective on these practices, as many Southern epistemologies risk promoting (Santos 2018; Ribeiro 2014). Rather, the strategy of comparison allows analysis of the dynamics that are frequently taken for granted in postcolonial countries such as Australia. Brazilian experiences shed light on the two main mechanisms operating in the Communities Plus program: the exclusion of democratic control over budget, that is, the defiscalisation of participation; and the principle of participation as a means for ostensibly free, equal and individual expression in the public sphere, rather than as an instrument for achieving redistribution and social justice.

Defiscalisation

The legitimisation of the non-negotiables in the Waterloo consultation requires the production of the economy and politics as independent and autonomous domains. The non-negotiables are grounded on urban policies – namely *Future Directions* and *Communities Plus* – that predetermine the funding arrangements of urban renewals. The density of the redevelopment, the “no cost” approach, and the 70:30 formula are interrelated principles that cultivate a funding model based primarily on the sale of public housing and private investments. The basis of the non-negotiables is thus essentially of economic nature, leaving it out of the discussion in democratic deliberation.

However, as the ethnographic accounts in this chapter have indicated, this separation is at the core of the conflicts over the redevelopment. Public meetings, motions, movie

² See Avritzer (2018) and Santos (1998) for some of these.

screenings and other events repeatedly challenge the social-mix as an economic model, calling for direct public investments to promote social justice and reverse unequal rights to the city. While these issues seem to be significant and repeated demands within the community, they have paradoxically been just as repeatedly left out of the discussion. The *neoliberal mode of urbanism* is, in effect, the non-negotiable dimension of the redevelopment. As a result, the lack of economic debate has created a sterile and empty participatory process. Residents can only reaffirm the current social and economic arrangements, already settled by the housing and urban policies in place.

In contrast, the participatory experiences of Porto Alegre and other cities such as Belo Horizonte, have put budgetary control at the centre of urban decision-making processes, arguing that the democratic process becomes irrelevant if there is no discussion of funding, financing and investments. This system emerged at the grassroots level in the late 1980s, with the advocacy of the Federation of Neighbourhood Associations of Porto Alegre (União das Associações de Moradores de Porto Alegre, UAMPA). The foundational document of this organisation claimed the right to monitor the recently elected local administration (ruled by the Workers’ Party), articulating an alternative understanding of democracy. The three main points of the document equated participation with “control of the definition of the city budget;” budget-making with a democratic discussion of investment priorities; and the control and monitoring of budget (Avritzer 2017, 52).

This chapter cannot describe in detail the mechanisms and procedures of participatory budgeting (PB).³ It is more important to the chapter’s purposes to examine the conceptualisation of democracy in this context, and contrast it to that in Waterloo. In Porto Alegre, participation is understood, not as an end in itself, but rather as a means by which to redistribute the city’s resources through a sophisticated system of points and priorities and a long-term binding deliberative process. The design of the decision-making process is based on the rules and criteria of distributive justice – its foundational goal – leading Boaventura de Santos to define the system as a *redistributive democracy* (Santos 1998). As Avritzer (2017) defines it, participatory budgeting is a democratic response designed to reverse and compensate for the prevalence of private interests in urban policies, while simultaneously challenging the bureaucratic and technical conception of budget

³ For extensive analysis see Baiocchi (2005), Avritzer (2009) and Azevedo and Fernandes (2005).

elaboration, and the opposition between the technical and the political (Santos and Avritzer 2003). Participatory democracy is thus formulated by its participants, activists and local administration as a mechanism by which to promote social justice, by giving the city control over economic decisions. In this way, participatory democracy in Brazil “[proposes] to debate and decide the uses of wealth and social surplus through democratic processes” (Marquetti and Campos 2019, 17). Moreover, in this definition of democracy, budget deliberation is integrated with urban policy decisions (Avritzer 2017). Both areas, budget and urban policy, are perceived as interrelated and inseparable domains, expanding democratic deliberation to the economic sphere (Marquetti and Campos 2019).

Essentially, this conceptualisation of a redistributive democracy questions the fictional nature of the divorce between economy and politics and their redefinition as radically autonomous and independent realms. Accordingly, it reveals a key tension underlying participatory initiatives: the “embeddedness” of economy. Karl Polanyi (2001) introduced this concept to argue that the economy was not an autonomous domain of social life, but rather, was “embedded” in society, and thereby subordinated to cultural, social, religious and political dynamics. However, the modern economic thinking of the free-market – as an equilibrated system of supply and demand, self-regulated through price mechanisms – tends to “disembed” economy from social relations and its natural environments. As part of this liberal thinking, society is subordinated to market logics under the claim of rationality and science. The United Nations sponsored Global Compact discourse provides an illustrative example of this thinking, which Massimo de Angelis (2003) has named an “inversion of Polanyi:”

The rationale is that a commitment to corporate citizenship should begin within the organization itself by embedding universal principles and values into the strategic business vision, organisational culture and daily operations (United Nations 2000, 3).

As this statement shows, universal principles (meaning human rights, social justice, ecology, and the like) are embedded in “business visions,” namely, the economy, not the contrary. For Polanyi, the underlying rationale of modern economic thinking is that society is the result of “human atoms behaving according to the rules of a definitive kind of rationality” (Polanyi 1977, 14). Accordingly, while human economy is formed by

reciprocity, redistribution and market exchange interactions, the capitalist system tends to focus exclusively on market exchanges, creating the “delusion of economic determinism as a general law for all human society” (Polanyi 1977, 14). In this process of (dis)embeddedness, the economy eclipses politics. By following liberal thinking, centrally shaped by the European Enlightenment ideals of individuals as rational atoms, politics no longer makes sense within a universal and self-regulated system of supply-demand-price.

In this light, the conflicts being lived through in Waterloo are at a deeper level a dispute over the limits of disembeddedness, that is, over the frontiers between the economy and the political. While the non-negotiables of the Waterloo redevelopment are based on a formal divorce of the economy from social and political decisions, residents are seeking to re-assert their mutually constitutive nature. They are calling for a democratic process closer to the participatory conceptions developed in the Brazilian experience, where budgetary control and economic redistribution are at the centre of democratic deliberation. In doing so, they are challenging the embedded conceptualisation of participation, where economy – as exclusive market exchange – is beyond discussion because it is this fictional division between economy and politics that grounds the social-mix, and the Communities Plus program in general, as a non-negotiable.

Nugent (2008) has observed the delineation of spheres as a key component of liberal and representative democracy. For him, this delineation marks the realm of politics open to popular decision-making, while excluding others such as class structures, property or market exchange. In other words, these construed frontiers mark off what is negotiable from what is non-negotiable in a representative and liberal democracy, and which issues are allowed to go through popular deliberation, and which are not. In Waterloo is possible to observe this process of the “defiscalisation” of democratic decision-making, that is, the complete removal of the community’s budget control during participatory processes. Put differently, the “defiscalisation” of participation is defined by the discourses and practices that separate economics from the political, leading to the emptiness of participation. For instance, in Waterloo the “non-negotiables,” and other economic decisions, remove high conflict issues from public debate to avoid the reprioritisation and subordination of profit generation as part of the redevelopment. Crucially, this process sustains representative and liberal democracy insofar as it does not call into question political concerns over class

structures or property ownership. In fact, if these issues were open for Waterloo residents to debate – as they claim they should be – democracy would assume a radically different form.

Autonomous Participation

Another fundamental element in Waterloo’s policy framework is its liberal approach to citizenship and participation. The ideals reflected in the New South Wales policies correspond in many ways to normative liberal democratic ideals that are fundamentally shaped by a specific European historical and political trajectory (Nugent 2008; Paley 2008). Strictly linked to the so-called “bourgeois revolution,” democratisation in Western Europe produced groups of entitlements, institutions and public spheres that uphold the current meanings of Western democracy (Nugent 2008). Specifically, those institutions correspond to general values such as “individual rights”, including the “freedom of speech,” protections for private property and a system of justice based on *human* rights – here understood as autonomous individuals, essentially White and male, and detached from their natural environment. Such values are central to liberal democracies, implicit in urban policies that conceive participation as a mode of individual expression and choice. Crucially, these values are pursued to limit the state’s power, but are not necessarily concerned with citizen engagement in political affairs, such as economic or urban policies. In other words, “liberal rights map out a terrain where state power *may not* be exercised” (Nugent 2008, 26). As such, in this democratic model, the focus resides on the limits of state intervention, rather than on citizen control, and feeds into an autonomous mode of participation.

Liberal ideology is central to Waterloo’s policy framework and grounds the fundamentally paradoxical project of simultaneously pursuing democratic and neoliberal ideals. Non-European democratic practices may support the understanding of this dual approach. Drawing on the participatory urban planning model founded in Brazil, Caldeira and Holston (2015) identified two key re-conceptualisations of representative and liberal democracy. First, the Brazilian initiative questioned the technical discourse and modernist and centralised approaches to urban planning by experts and elites, by introducing the possibility that the working class could plan and organise urban space. Second, this conceptualisation also unsettled core liberal values such as the right to private property, by introducing consideration of the “social function” of land as a requirement in the 2001

federal Cities Statutes. Following popular amendments to the 1988 Brazilian federal Constitution, including propositions from the National Movement for Urban Reform (Movimento Nacional pela Reforma Urban), the Cities Statutes now include instruments to promote the social function of the city and tackle urban poverty. These have led to the establishment of progressive taxes for underutilised urban properties, regulated informal urban squatters, and incorporated popular participation in urban policy-making and planning (Rolnik 2011). In doing so, the statutes acknowledged the central role of urban policies in reproducing social inequalities and have “[subordinated] urban redevelopments and property to collective interests and principles of social justice” (Caldeira and Holston 2015, 2004).

However, in practice, Caldeira and Holston also observed two conflicting principles that limit this participatory project and that can be similarly identified in Waterloo, namely, the aspiration to reconcile democratic values to neoliberalism. On the one hand, policies such as the Communities Plus program imagine an active society, organised and informed about its goals and priorities. On the other hand, it simultaneously sets the ideal of a state that is no longer exclusively responsible for producing and implementing projects in urban spaces. In this participatory approach, the state negotiates public and private interests, operating as an orchestrator and manager between a variety of agents responsible for providing services, such as housing, once exclusively its own responsibility. As analysed in the principles of partnership, the state’s function during the redevelopment of Waterloo was to “work in partnership with all levels of government, not-for-profit housing providers, the private sector and social housing tenants to deliver more housing with better support services” (NSW Government 2016, 4).

Following Caldeira and Holston, this logic contains profound contradictions, as it imagines the articulation of state and society by “rationalities of government that are both democratic and neoliberal” (2015, 2004). Democracy and neoliberalism converge on projects for dismantling interventionist states, and yet, diverge on whether equality and social justice are central goals and how they are to be pursued. While democratic movements advocate for participatory approaches as a tool for achieving social justice, neoliberal orthodoxy sees the participatory method as a strategy for reducing the interventionist state through privatisation and claims of decentralisation. Accordingly, from a neoliberal perspective, the

state’s responsibility is not to promote social justice; rather, the citizens must organise themselves freely, from a formal equality, and according to their interests and priorities. Here, individuals are responsible for their own future, free to make calculative choices about their destiny with the support of multiple businesses. Drawing on this framework, liberal ideologies conceive participation as a means for ostensible equal and free individual expression in the public sphere, rather than as an instrument for creating social equality and pursuing justice.

The policy framework of Waterloo expresses this paradox insofar as it combines democratic aspirations for community participation within neoliberal goals. For instance, the 2011 O’Farrell Liberal-Coalition government’s strategic plan, *NSW 2021: A Plan to Make NSW Number One*, announced its twenty-ninth goal to be to restore accountability and return “planning powers to local community” (NSW Government 2011, 55). While pointing to this democratic ideal as a government priority, the document simultaneously highlighted that to achieve this goal required “hard work, innovative thinking, and rigorous fiscal responsibility and management discipline” (NSW Government 2011, 55). Yet, as argued in this chapter, the “fiscal responsibility” discourse is precisely what limits the possibility of public investment. This austerity value assumes the need to sell public land in order to finance a project, even if this approach contradicts local demands for direct investment and redistribution. Moreover, official documents also reflect liberal ideals of choice and individual freedom at the core of the democratic project. The twenty-ninth goal of the O’Farrell government strategy, for instance, affirms that “essential to our strong democracy, personal choice and freedom are public institutions and administration that people trust” (NSW Government 2011, 55). Accordingly, it claims that “government doesn’t have all the answers, and will stimulate a more diverse public sector economy to improve choice, transparent benchmarking and quality.” Such documents reflect participation in terms of individual choice more than social justice, and the pursuit of decentralisation as a mode of governance, rather than as a form of distribution and equal access to urban life.

The participatory budgeting and participatory urban planning cases discussed in this sections occurred alongside many other examples of democracy beyond Eurocentric traditions. The relevance of these cases to this chapter is to bring out how the Western

European understanding of democracy is just one among many understandings of democracy. In regard to the central theme of this and the previous chapter, Policies and Non-negotiables, the comparison stresses the role of policy frameworks in reproducing Eurocentric approaches to democracy and citizenship, consequently setting fundamental limits to political participation. Nevertheless, the continual need to devise narratives for these policy frameworks in order to limit contestation reveals the unstable and contestable ground on which they are based.

Conclusion

This chapter has questioned how the New South Wales government reproduced certain policy principles as “non-negotiables.” Rather than taking non-negotiables as a given, the chapter unpacked some of the mechanisms the government deployed to sustain political decisions as “unquestionable” decisions, especially during a redevelopment that claimed to promote collaborative forms of planning. Ethnographic accounts explored how the official social-mix discourses performed these policy decisions as coherent, technical, rational and inviolable decisions that were above politics and moral judgments. Nonetheless, the interaction between government officers and residents in which residents challenged these decisions, also revealed how the non-negotiable discourse was attempting to silence the conflicts, contradictions and unjustifiability within these policy-decisions. In doing so, it highlighted that the so-called “non-negotiables” were produced as such by the state of New South Wales, and continued to be reproduced as such, although not without tensions.

The chapter argues that Eurocentric conceptualisations of participation played a pivotal role in this production of decisions as non-negotiables. The experiences of participatory budgeting and participatory urban planning found in Brazil were explained to bring out, by contrast, two of the main mechanisms at work in the New South Wales government’s policies. The first mechanism was the utilisation of the fiction of the separation of the economy from social relations, specifically through what I have called the *defiscalisation* of participation, that is, the removal of citizen budget-control. The second was the promotion of autonomous participation, that is, the claim of citizen participation as a potent strategy to control interventionist states by encouraging individual *expression* in the public sphere, rather than as a democratic strategy through which to seek social justice, redistribution and economic sovereignty. Both mechanisms and values support the

production of certain kinds of political decisions – in particular economic ones – as unquestionable.

Overall, the chapter has contributed to the thesis by showing how policies operated as a key political technology that both limited and shaped participation in an urban planning project, despite any democratic claims. The chapter argued that the political participation in Waterloo generated a paradoxically shallow participatory process in which the most contentious discussions were ruled out of the public debate, even as residents were encouraged to “have their say.” It also showed that the work behind the production of non-negotiables during this apparently participatory process not only served to legitimate the redevelopment of Waterloo, but also reinforced the limits of what could be under discussion in a liberal democracy: what was considered pragmatic and achievable, and therefore the spectrum of possibilities that were actually available for consideration.

PART II: *PARTICIPATION*

Chapter Seven

Performing democracy

Politicians and policy-makers increasingly use the concept of collaboration to promote inclusive forms of governance (Healey 2013). In the “collaborative turn” in government, decision-makers mobilise the dominant discourse of participation as a way to decentralise power and invest in local knowledge to address problems in the public sector, in particular with urban planning (McClymont 2011, 242). Generally, this discourse is justified by claiming that groups normally excluded from vertical decision-making processes should be included in decisions that will affect their own lives.

In Waterloo, during the rezoning process for the redevelopment, the New South Wales Department of Planning, Industry and Environment issued a set of study requirements to the Land and Housing Corporation. One of the requirements was a consultation process with multiple stakeholders, including different state agencies, councils, non-government service providers, and the local community affected by the redevelopment. The requirement prescribed that the consultation should be aligned with International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) core values. This Association is an international organisation guided by a board of volunteers, which promotes participation through training, certifications, awards and publications. Its core values include, among others, the belief in the right of those who will be affected by a decision to be involved in the decision-making process, a commitment to public contributions that actually influence final decisions, the contributions of participants in the designing of the decision-making process, and the facilitation of information for meaningful participation. As part of this alignment, the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment required that the Land and Housing Corporation should undertake a community engagement program that included “integrity, clarity, scope and purpose, inclusiveness, accessibility to all those affected, genuine dialogue and open discussion and opportunity for influence” (NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment 2017, 46).

This chapter introduces the second part of this thesis, where I show how participatory performances, discourses and practices have attempted to legitimate the redevelopment of Waterloo in order to enable surplus production through the revaluation of space. Specifically, the chapter shows how the state of New South Wales performed its democratic

ideals during the consultation process to render the Waterloo urban redevelopment participatory. It starts from the assumption that the belief in democratic institutions is not a given and stable perception, but that it requires continuous work to sustain the representations of a democratic and participatory state. For this reason, I suggest that through the Waterloo consultation process, the New South Wales government “performed” a narrative that supported the building of consensus. This was a linear and cumulative narrative that evolved over a well-defined timeline, and through different set stages, as if a bureaucratic procedure. In this story, social actors interacted harmoniously and rationally with the support of reports, policies, and bureaucratic artefacts, to achieve consensus in settings such as community centres, and other public arenas. In short, drawing on studies of legal anthropology, conflict resolution, state formation and knowledge production, the chapter demonstrates the practices, things and spaces through which the state built an official consensus narrative, and in turn, performed this narrative “democratically.”

Consensus and Harmony

Chantal Mouffe (2005) has presented one of the most influential critiques of the consensual approach in current liberal democracy. She has extensively analysed how liberal democracies refuse to acknowledge the agonistic dimension of political life, promoting an anti-political vision where consensual forms of democracy become central. In her critique, she has argued that the belief in a universal and rational consensus fundamentally grounded on individual rights rejects the possibility of plural and agonistic contestation in the public sphere, a contestation where different political projects can be confronted and compared. Instead, as she put it, liberal democracy promotes supposedly impartial procedures allegedly able to reconcile conflicting interests and achieve irrefutable agreements.

Mouffe’s work provides a significant critique of the so-called “post-political” context, where fundamental social antagonisms have been foreclosed. Against this backdrop, for her, diffuse and uncritical notions of participation, consensus and deliberation have become increasingly empty in a political scenario where “no real choice is at hand” and “participants in the discussion are not able to decide between clearly differentiated alternatives” (Mouffe 2005, 3). Mouffe’s critique raises complex questions about the possibilities for consensus through deliberation. However, in this chapter I am less concerned with this debate, than with how these concepts are locally signified and

practiced. More than a normative or prescriptive analysis of democratic ideals, I am interested in the political and strategical uses of consensus, and how citizens and government officials perform such relations locally.¹

In this light, Laura Nader (1990) has also provided an insightful analysis of forms of participation grounded on what she identified as a “harmony ideology.” In her extensive work on justice and legal anthropology, she has reflected on the current centrality of harmony in conflict resolution, aiming to understand how it became so central, why, and what effects it produces in a society. According to Nader, during colonisation, religious missions were key actors in propagating the Christian values of harmony, negotiation and consensus, finally functioning as powerful instruments of pacification. Through richly detailed examples, she demonstrated how colonial states actively promoted agreement and arbitration as a form of justice in which the powerful maintained their privileges, while they managed to silence and pacify colonised populations. As she described it, coercive harmony was a powerful tool for hegemonic control.

Since the 1970s, harmonic models of conflict resolution have been increasingly deployed by justice systems. Since then, different states have been advocating for a shift from a confrontational paradigm to agreement as a form of justice in a “win-win” situation. In this process, a harmonic grammar has gradually developed, as well as the performance of harmony to deal with social conflicts. Moreover, as Nader put it, justice and social rights has become less relevant than the search for harmony as an end in itself. For her, in this growing intolerance towards conflict, people are less concerned with the causes of disagreement and injustices themselves, than how they manifest (Nader 1994). As an example, she cited mandatory mediation processes between unions and local administrations, and international conflicts where the most powerful tended to advocate for negotiation, while the less powerful usually demanded the enforcement of law.

Although Nader’s work was mostly focused on legal and justice systems, it offers a useful framework to understand how a more widespread harmonic ideology shapes the way in

¹ The critical perspective I develop in this chapter does not pretend to be a general critique of consensus. In fact, I acknowledge the various approaches to consensual decision-making as a democratic practice, including as a common practice in different non-western and indigenous societies. In addition, there are other consensus-reaching practices promoted by anti-hierarchical grassroots movements that seek to challenge the centrality of the majority voting system and advocate for direct forms of democracy (Graeber 2013).

which Waterloo's residents and government officials perceived and managed their conflicts. Arguably, the notion of coercive harmony is particularly relevant to analysing the political motivations to build a consensual narrative through a consultation process, and in turn, frame conflicts and injustice in harmonic terms. Thus, in Waterloo, participation can be understood as a technique to solve potential disagreements in terms of collaboration and negotiation, while avoiding and pacifying potentially deeper and even intractable conflicts.

Power, Knowledge and State-making

Another crucial discussion for examining participatory processes and the building of a narrative of consensus is the relationship between knowledge and power. As highlighted by Uma Kothari, participatory approaches are about "the identification, collection, interpretation, analysis and (re)presentation of particular forms of (local) knowledge" (Kothari 2001, 143), and thus inseparable from the exercise of power. Knowledge-making is a fundamental process in the building of a consensual narrative that strives to reveal common "visions," "needs," and "desires" for Waterloo. Participatory methodologies then become decisive citizen technologies (Cruikshank 1999) through which to conduct local knowledge production, while serving wider (and global) political and economic interests. They constitute a mode of governing through community (Rose 1999), in which the building of a community – or "the vision of a community" – makes "collective existence intelligible and calculable" (Li 2006, 4). Through such knowledge-making, the New South Wales government, alongside private consultancies, has attempted to render the Waterloo redevelopment as technical. They have investigated, classified and documented the Waterloo community, translating it into, and finally re-presenting it to itself and to the wider public, in the form of maps, statistics, diagrams and reports.

In examining how this local knowledge has been produced through the techniques of participation, I am not suggesting that official knowledge production is a straightforward process: it will always be the unstable and fragile result of a tensioned relationship between practices, people, place, knowledge and power. Hence, I am mindful of Andrew Mathews' (2008) concerns about knowledge-making analysis that easily assumes authoritative impositions of official knowledge and disregards processes of translation, misinterpretation, contestation, erasure, concealment, negotiation, and evasion, among other practices. Echoing these concerns, I provide empirical details about the knowledge-

making processes at work in Waterloo and their corresponding re-inscription of state power, combining an analysis of official narratives with institutional materiality, and encounters between government and residents. Together, they provide a sense for the textures of this process rather than reinforcing a perspective of narratives of consensus as a top-down imposition.

The following sections thus juxtapose materials from my participant-observation fieldwork with official documents. First, I analyse the reports produced and circulated during the consultation process, stressing how these documents built a narrative of consensus and performed a democratic state, in order to promote the perception of unity and community choice. Second, I describe the meeting where the final masterplan was released, seeking to detail how consensus and official knowledge was translated and performed in the public arena. This section gives special emphasis to how official knowledge may be contested during social action. Finally, I focus on the end of the Future Planning Centre, a residents' group that challenged the consensual narrative and promoted an alternative approach to participation. The closure of this centre revealed how the government actively managed to erase the existence of this oppositional resident initiative to render invisible any dissent that challenged their consensus narrative.

The Vision of Waterloo

In 2017, the Land and Housing Corporation contracted an external consultant, Kathy Jones Associates (KJA) to run the “engagement program” for the redevelopment of Waterloo. The purpose of the program, as explained in the government’s official reports, was to gain “input and feedback” from Waterloo residents. To do so, the government and external consultants organised a twelve-month master planning process that comprised three main stages: the “envisioning phase,” “the testing options phase,” and the final preferred masterplan.

The first stage of the consultation, the “envisioning phase,” was undertaken by a team of designers, policymakers, and communicators. The results of the process are summarised in a final report, called *Let's Talk Waterloo – Waterloo Redevelopment Visioning Report*, delivered in May 2018. This final document illustrates how a narrative of consensus was built during the consultation process, with the aim of contributing legitimacy to the urban redevelopment.

In the first section of the document, the organisers outlined the main goals and principles of the envisioning stage. The words and expressions they chose to use reveal how the process was understood, while gradually shaping a participatory and collaborative grammar. The report explained that the objectives of the process were to “develop a vision to guide the masterplan,” ensuring a “range of opportunity” for community to “get involved” and “have their say” (KJA 2018, 5). Moreover, the report detailed the activities undertaken during the process: workshops, pop-up information stalls, a “community day,” and an online survey. Finally, it presented the “key findings” of this process – Waterloo’s “needs,” “priorities,” and “aspirations” – laid out according to five themes: culture and community life; transport, streets and connections; housing and neighbourhood design; community facilities, services and shops; and environment and open space. The overview of the process set out the narrative to be developed throughout the report, a narrative that could be summarised as follows: for twelve months, experts organised a variety of activities tailored for different audiences. This stage was an opportunity to share and discuss the future of Waterloo. During these activities, consultants recorded the process, gathering extensive and diverse data. Afterwards, specialists analysed the information, identified common themes, and were able to synthesise the results into a common vision about the needs and desires of residents.

A significant space in the document was dedicated to explaining and justifying the report’s methodology. The report claimed to merge quantitative and qualitative methods, exemplified throughout the document by the highlighting of selected quotations from residents. Coloured, bold, and highlighted numbers filled out the pages, indicating that 1570 persons had participated in the program. A set of lists indicated the activities undertaken, alongside graphs that demonstrated the profiles – mainly the ages – of participants. Through this presentational strategy, the report suggested a scientific approach to the process, able to objectify, and objectively understand, the complex social reality of Waterloo through “data collection” (or gathering of views and inputs), analysis of experts, and the distillation of “insights” and “key findings.” According to this logic, consensus was achieved through expert analysis and tools such as “dotmocracy,” “word clouds” and “canvases” that, as Li (2007) has stressed, render communities technical, to enable governing.

The report’s so-called “dotmocracy” provided participants with a colourful and large-scale canvas with questions or provocations. Residents were invited to stick three dots on this canvas as a voting and preference system (see Figure 7.1, left). In the example provided in Figure 7.1, the prompt for the activity says: “I would like to see Waterloo’s culture and history acknowledged and celebrated in this way.” Below the prompt, participants could choose different options: “public art,” “naming of communal/public spaces or buildings,” “cultural/community facilities or venues,” “signs to show important places,” “community events, programs and festivals,” “building and landscape design,” or “building and landscape design” (KJA 2018, 28).

The “word cloud” was another tool employed during the process (see Figure 7.1, right). In the centre of the cloud shape, participants could read the question, “What makes community special for you?” With a marker, they could freely write what they thought inside the cloud.

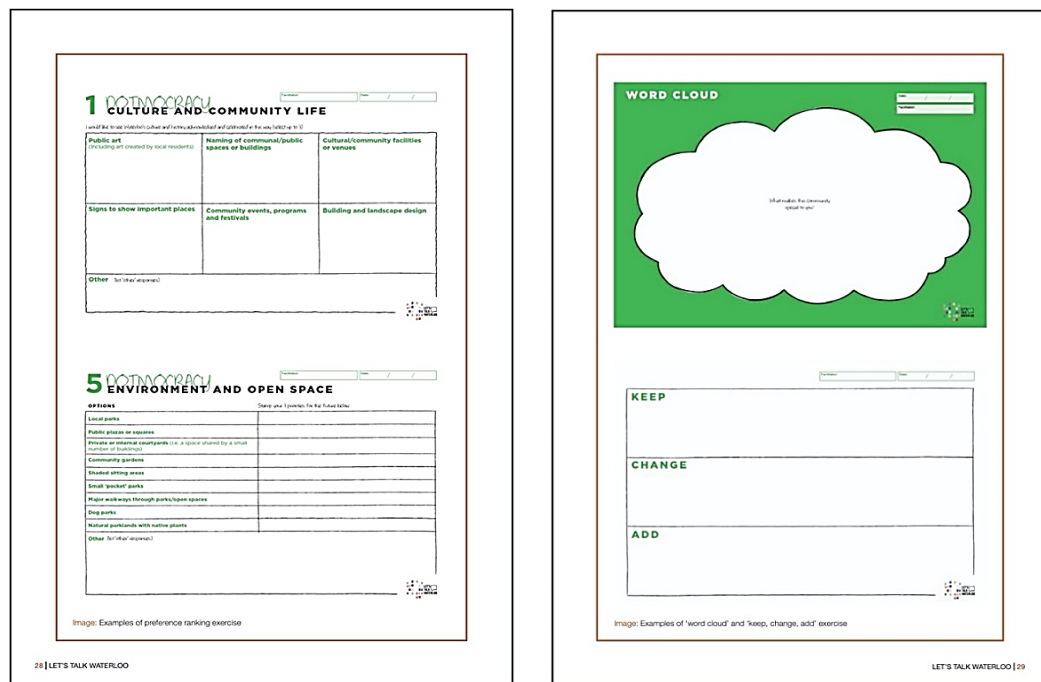


Figure 7.1: “Dotmocracy” and “Word Cloud” tools used during consultation. (Source: KJA Envisioning Report 2018)

The final consultation tool invited participants to write on a “canvas” things to “keep,” “change,” and “add” to their neighbourhood.

Observing how frameworks like dotmocracies and word clouds perform consensus is striking as, side by side, they present different – and sometimes contradictory – answers.

The activities visually gathered a diversity of expressions, representing in one unique output a collective exercise. Nonetheless, what is significant about this process is that it did not support deliberation, nor agonistic pluralism (Mouffe 2005). Rather, the simplistic activities limited consultation to visually juxtaposing ideas, without necessarily determining how they were articulated or prioritised.

Moreover, these powerful tools sought to achieve apparent consensus by guiding the conversation. Similar to traditional surveys, they pre-set the themes to be discussed, framing the problems and the options available to choose, but in a playful way. In this case, the questions raised during the process were problematic for a variety of reasons. First, they were framed in terms of individual preferences. This way, the shared and common vision presented was not the result of extensive deliberation among community participants. It was a summation of individual priorities and preferences. Second, the activity did not offer any guidance as to which options offered were to be excluded. In some exercises, it would have been plausible to implement all of the options, and yet, residents were only able to choose three. By guiding and narrowing down the questions and answers of the process, curtailing what and how they could be discussed, these activities made it look easy to achieve consensus, precisely because of their restrictions.

Another mechanism of consensus production was generalisation, allowing the claim of a totalising view despite disagreements. Given the limited discussion allowed in the process, the outcomes tended to produce broad and generic answers. For instance, results included that “accessibility is very important to the people of Waterloo” (KJA 2018, 37); that “feedback highlighted the importance of public transport” (KJA 2018, 49); or that “feedback revealed the importance of facilities, services and shops that cater to the existing community” (KJA 2018, 64). The results were anodyne. Examples like these were pervasive, revealing that these consultation mechanisms treated basic rights such as accessibility or mobility in the city as a matter of preference or individual choice, as if the best residents could ask for was simply that the redevelopment meet minimum, vague standards of service for residents. Issues likely to generate conflict were left out of the discussion, and in this way, consensus could be achieved.

The shortcomings of these mechanisms were readily perceived by Eddie, an architect who used to live in Waterloo and was actively engaged in the consultation process. When I asked

him about his perception of the consultation, he told me that he thought that KJA Consultancy had presented their data in “questionable” ways. For a start, they had combined their results from both Waterloo residents that lived on the estate, and private renters or owners who lived outside the estate. In Eddie’s words, this was an issue because:

What people want when they are the ones directly impacted by the redevelopment, and what people want when they aren’t impacted by the redevelopment, but might benefit from it, is usually polar opposites. If you think about it: ‘Oh we want more shopping centres because it will be convenient for us to just walk across the road, but I still live in my three-storey terrace.’ Compared to: ‘I want to keep my home, so I don’t want a shopping centre here.’

For Eddie, those were “conflicting ideas that should not be combined together.” Yet, that was precisely what the consultation and its final report did. In doing so, for Eddie, they “washed out the wishes of people who lived [in Waterloo].” As a result of the combination of opposite interests, this architect argued that the final consultation results tended to be vague and meaningless. Specifically, he explained to me that: “they [KJA] just ended up with results like (...) super obvious: ‘we want green space.’” Following this argument, he then asked ironically: “why do you need a consultation to say ‘we want lights,’ or ‘we want to have doors?’” (Sydney, February 25, 2020).

With this remark, Eddie summed up a fundamental problem in the consultation process. The report presented, as a *shared* vision, the different, sometimes opposing interests of public housing tenants and private residents, combined in such a way that the opposing views of the private residents cancelled out the views of the public housing tenants. On several occasions, residents of the Waterloo public housing estate expressed to me that they thought the interests of private residents were different from theirs. The prospect of having their homes demolished completely had changed their perspective about the redevelopment. Many of them perceived the private residents as a threat to the affordability of their homes and to the way of life they were used to. They believed that private residents were active agents of gentrification and thus aligned with the proposed redevelopment. In fact, many Waterloo tenants believed private residents were the main constituency pushing

for the removal of public housing from the area.² This classification between public and private residents and their wants was commonly mobilised by residents, revealing that what were actually very antagonist interests within Waterloo were being strategically presented as “common” and “shared.” Furthermore, the consultation activity was supposedly a collective identification process, but turned out to be one in which the values and practices of the public housing residents were perceived as *diverging* from those of the private residents.

Another common rhetorical resource used to produce a perception of harmony – an ideal friendly relation among very different residents – was the recurring affirmation that the report was the result of collaboration. As an example, the report stated that themes were developed *with* “the community” and *aligned with* those of the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (KJA 2018, 21); that “community” groups *refined* the aims of the process (KJA 2018, 18); and that “the community” feedback would be *combined* with technical studies and inputs from the government (KJA 2018, 16). Such conciliatory sentences – including the strategic use of the term “community” – produce in the reader the perception of a harmonious consensus of an already harmonious group. This impression is supported by different images of smiling residents from a variety of nationalities, thus suggesting a diverse, joyful and entertaining process of togetherness. Lastly, totalising expressions such as “the people’s view,” “community feedback,” and “shared vision” were used repeatedly. Such terms function as “floating signifiers:” their meaning is suspended between antagonistic ways of understanding them, making them ambiguous and susceptible to power, here implying a consensus among residents that in fact did not exist.

In short, the strategy of narrowing down the debate to a list of pre-set options, and mobilising vague and totalising concepts, supported the report’s performance of consensus. Skilful rhetoric, accompanied by appealing pictures, illustrations, and statistics, built the narrative of a homogeneous “vision,” by strategically avoiding issues of conflict. As a result, the report involved a fundamental contradiction: residents participated, but only

² The KJA *Visioning Report* claimed that participants were “drawn from the Waterloo social housing estate, the surrounding neighbourhood and the broader community” and that “over half” of the 1570 participants were “social housing residents living on the Estate” (KJA 2018, 5, 21).

under very limited conditions. They did “have their say,” but were structurally restricted to what could be said, and their views were thematised in such a way as to water them down.

Testing Options

In August 2018, three months after the release of the KJA *Visioning Report*, the Land and Housing Corporation delivered a brochure with three preliminary options for the masterplan, and a relocation staging map. The options were theoretically based on the results of the previous envisioning phase and marked the beginning of a new round of consultation and feedback: the Option Testing Phase. Accordingly, a new consultant firm, Elton Consulting, undertook more focus groups, community day information sessions, and online surveys between October and November 2018. The process consulted around 1000 participants, including members of non-government organisations, government agencies, local private owners, and public housing tenants. Non-residents interested in the area were also able to participate through the online surveys. Finally, as part of the engagement program, Elton Consulting also organised a community information day and technical study sessions to further explain the proposal before the consultation activities.

In January 2019, two months after the testing activities, the New South Wales government released a new report with “key findings” from this second stage, the *Let’s Talk Waterloo: Waterloo Redevelopment Options Testing Consultation Report Key Findings* (Elton Consulting, 2019). The results supposedly reflected the different reactions to the three options, serving as new inputs for the final preferred masterplan. However, similar to the envisioning report, this second document continued to suggest a general consensus about the redevelopment, regardless of the various actors and relationships within the area. The report indicated that 50% of participants in the online survey were public housing tenants. The other participants were private renters (17%), private owners (16%), workers in the area (7%), visitors (4%) and business owners (2%) (Elton Consulting 2019, 68). Although presenting different interests in the area, the report presented those groups as if they had equally participated in the process, uncritically working in collaboration.

Nonetheless, while the first document was marked by the production of a unique, bounded, and homogeneous community – “a vision” – the second one was marked by the performance of “free and individual choice” from among multiple options. As Figure 7.2 illustrates, the three options provided were basic preliminary plans, with few details, and

only subtle differences that could have triggered fruitful debates. Accordingly, for Mary, a public housing tenant who participated in the consultation, the contrasts between the options were only slight formal differences. When I interviewed her about the process, she said the debates were centred on whether “we will shove the park down further, or we will close that road, or open that one.” Because of that, she concluded that “that [was] not much of a choice” (Sydney, July 23, 2020).



Figure 7.2: The three options for the Estate of Waterloo

Nevertheless, this *appearance* of choice managed to sideline the central paradox of a consultation that performed diversity of choice with few real differences to choose between. Figure 7.2, for instance, appeared to present multiple options, while at the same time keeping those options so similar as to be almost undifferentiated. Accordingly, it is striking to observe how in the online survey results, the most common answer for the question, “Which is your preferred option for the masterplan?” was the “no preference” option, despite the intense debate about the redevelopment (Elton Consulting 2019, 65). This result may have reflected indifference to the proposals because of their similarity, or even a rejection of all three options. After all, despite the appearance of diversity, no real choice was at stake.

Moreover, the visual representations of the proposal were insufficient to allow those surveyed to grasp what the final neighbourhood would look actually like. Formal aspects such as building heights, densities, public spaces and shadows – common concerns among

the residents – were difficult if not impossible to perceive and understand through two dimensional maps. The visual techniques of presentation increased the difficulty of understanding the variations between the options. Differences were smoothed out, as if there were no other alternatives possible, no other way of living and planning the neighbourhood.

Finally, the links between the previous *Visioning Report* and the options proposed in this consultation were not explicitly indicated. For example, in the *Visioning Report*, the summary results for the “Culture and Community Life” category stated that “Waterloo’s diversity, inclusiveness and community spirit are what make it unique, and people want to retain and strengthen these elements in the future” (KJA 2018, 42). Based on this finding, the main “need” identified in this area by the consultants was to “encourage and promote community interaction” (KJA 2018, 42). The outputs of the options testing phase for same category of “Culture and Community Life” were along relatively similar lines, presenting little new or additional information, despite the further consultation. The results of the options testing for the same category state that:

Participants expressed a strong connection to the Waterloo social housing estate and local area. They emphasised the importance of Waterloo remaining an authentic place with its own character and where current residents continue to enjoy a strong sense of community and belonging. They highlighted the need for the redevelopment of the precinct to provide opportunities for people to meet and socialise and for it to continue to be a welcoming place for *all members of the community*. (Elton Consulting 2019, 2).

Given the vagueness of such statements, it was difficult to identify how the desire to “promote community interaction” was reflected in the three masterplan proposed options shown in Figure 7.2 and the “testing” results. In both reports, the results were expressed in terms of abstract concepts such as “strong sense of community” or “belonging” that increased the difficulty of tracking what had been said in the consultations and how it applied to the options. Moreover, in the end, the results of the options testing phase maintained more or less the same information as the previous stage of the process. Instead of further developing certain concepts, and thus reflecting the new information that

consultants had acquired during the testing options phase, the final results remained mostly the same as the envisioning phase results. Again, this process avoided dissent and performed consensus. High level statements such as “the promotion of strong community” will hardly ever encounter opposition. Conflicts emerge on the details of the meanings of community, or how to actually promote it, both of which were missing from the reports.

Mary described this process to me as highly generic, indifferent and repetitive. She experienced what could be understood as a loop of feeling, or a cyclic quality to the process, in which people participated in apparently different activities that repeated the same kinds of questions. Nothing changed. She said: “[participants] were basically given three choices *again, and again, and again*, and you had to choose something even if you didn’t like it” (Sydney, July 23, 2020). She emphasised that she felt fatigued from participating in different, and yet similar activities. Her account contrasts strongly with the narrative of the consultation as an optimistic, coherent and carefully staged process that evolved over time. That is, the process was described as one in which the next stage always built on the previous one, and the final result was always going to be necessarily better than its starting point. In contrast to this narrative, Mary’s comments, as well as the previous examination of the consultation results, demonstrates a much more circular rather than cumulative process. As Mary put it, in the process, the residents and government did the activities without apparently creating new ideas, changing perspectives, or providing meaningful impacts for their lives.

Building on her perspective, this resident also described her experience of the consultation metaphorically:

It’s like you come along by saying: ‘we are going to paint your house. You can have this colour, this colour, or this colour.’ But I don’t want my house painted because I already painted it, and I like the colour it is. (Sydney, July 23, 2020).

Mary also stressed how the consultation was only focused on “the positive” aspects of the redevelopment and on what people supposedly might want. She said:

They went with the positive ... if people want this, or people like that... But it sort of left out all the negatives, what people said: ‘no, we don’t want that, we don’t like that, we like this as it is.’

For her, there was no clear alternative to a proposal that she had rejected from the beginning, no matter which of the three variations were presented.

Statements like this, alongside analysis of the official documents, provide an explanation of how the politics of consensus and dissent play out in a process that is grounded on a harmony ideology. Despite the consensus narrative and the performance of choice, there was no space for disagreement, and no alternative options. Redevelopment would occur, no matter what the consultation found. Equally important, outsourced consultants held the power to produce knowledge about Waterloo that strategically undermined other forms of local knowledge. On the one hand, both documents analysed here tell a story of consensus and harmony; on the other hand, daily interactions revealed a more complex picture, with much greater disagreement and anxiety.

The Preferred Masterplan

Even if rendered invisible in the documents, as the account of the masterplan official meeting reveals below official knowledge is fragile, and consensual narratives can be challenged during social action. On 2 April 2019, I joined one of the most long-awaited meetings of the consultation process: the release of the final masterplan. After a lengthy process of consultation, this was the big day to get to know what the future Waterloo would look like. This meeting was the first one to be held between government representatives and residents to discuss – or rather, as it turned out, to simply reveal – the “preferred masterplan.”

Urban planners, politicians and designers were standing in front of a spatially separated audience, to offer a Powerpoint-based presentation. They were all holding significant amounts of paper, looking as if they were well prepared for the task at hand. People stood or sat on the floor as the number of chairs was insufficient. The space was packed like I had never seen in any other meeting related to the redevelopment. This meeting was clearly different: it had a very specific proposal to discuss; it had the presence of the urban planners

responsible for the masterplan; and it had mid- and high-level bureaucrats involved in the decision-making process for the redevelopment present.

Mark, who worked as a government staff member, started his presentation with the usual Acknowledgement of Country: “I acknowledge the traditional owners of this land and pay respect to their Elders past, present and emerging,” he said, then began sharing with the community an account of the masterplan participation process. With the support of a Powerpoint slideshow, he indicated the three options discussed in the consultation process: option 1, named “Waterloo Estate;” option 2, the “Village Green” plan; and option 3, entitled “Waterloo Park.” In his presentation, Mark reiterated the ideals of the consultation process: inclusiveness, openness, choice, and the possibility to engage in democratic discussions.

Mark continued to recount the consultation process, seeking to ground the decisions made. He displayed on a big screen the numbers and all the consultation activities undertaken during the last year: technical studies, internet surveys, pop-ups, focus groups and “communities days.” These were all central visual features of his consultation narrative, although they were limited to bullet points, lists, and numbers that could not reveal the content of the activities themselves. While standing beside his Powerpoint projector, Mark was the protagonist of a democratic performance that included numerous activities, the end of a long and comprehensive consultation process.

Peter and Dave, two urban planners, were the ones responsible for explaining the new proposed masterplan. However, as soon as they took hold of the microphone to start speaking, people started to question and complain. The planners tried to continue their presentation, expecting to leave the “Q&A” session for the end, but a few seconds in, another man interrupted: “Sorry, since you are talking about open space, let’s talk about high-rise: are you actually proposing 45 storey towers here?” Another person then felt motivated to build on this question: “From 2500 people, you want to increase the number of dwellers to 11000? This is insane! Do you live here? Would you live here?”

Questions started to pile up, and the dynamic of the meeting started to shift. People did not want yet another polished presentation, but rather, to express their frustration, and perhaps, change a project that was being presented as finished and definitive. The urban planning team tried to respond to each of the questions, but their technical answers were not

sufficient to deal with the background political questions. “You have some really nice and glossy pamphlets, but the truth is that we have no say in the density for this future neighbourhood!” said a young woman. Following her, another man raised his hand to also contribute: “How many new public housings are you building here? I need figures!” Surprisingly, none of the presenters knew the answer. Between the images of new coffee shops and parks and the renovation discourse, this central issue seemed to have disappeared. Slowly, a meeting that was supposed to perform decision and control over the process fell apart, revealing that the plan still had unanswered questions and ill-defined objectives, leaving uncertainty.

An Aboriginal man stood up and added his own statement on the plan: “This is Aboriginal land, and we will not be, once again, removed from our own land.” Having asserted this, he left the room without waiting for a response since that was not the purpose of his interjection. At this point, the meeting was becoming increasingly tense. Despite the consensus performed at the beginning of the presentation, residents seemed furious, and daily life revealed itself to be more conflicted than the harmonious final report admitted.

Finally, the president of the Community Garden Association also decided to intervene: “What is this ‘community facilities’ square in this illustration? We said we need our community garden on the ground here. Where is it on this planning?” After another generic answer from the presenters, he continued to speak while organisers and some people from the audience tried to ask him to conclude and let other people have their say. He ignored the request, and the moment someone else tried to end his statement, he pointed his finger: “You won’t shut me up, mate!” People started to feel uncomfortable. He continued until he was interrupted one more time and, again, angrily stated he wouldn’t stop.

As the environment became more heated, with different people speaking at the same time and raising their voices, a woman fainted and fell from her chair to the floor. Everyone suddenly stopped talking. A group of people moved in her direction to help. She slowly recovered, and the organiser explained she had epilepsy. “She got nervous,” he said, and called for everyone to calm down. After this worrying scene, the president of the Garden Association concluded his idea and turned his back with his last thoughts: “You are just a cascade of bureaucrats!” he said.

This meeting was a theatrical stage where government bureaucrats thought they could perform the official knowledge of what Waterloo needed. But after that night, this meeting would be repeatedly referred to as “*The meeting*” or “a disaster.” What was expected to be an informative session, or even an event to celebrate the final masterplan and resolve lingering doubts, became a stage for confrontation and insults. The meeting had sought to mark the end of the consultation process and the start of a new stage in the project’s execution. The unexpected questions of residents changed the course of the event.

On the one hand, for government officers and urban planners, the event failed because residents engaged in the public sphere as opponents rather than allies performing a general consensus. On the other hand, for residents, the whole process had been a failure, and the final masterplan presentation, incapable of providing a genuine shared vision about the future of the neighbourhood, was the affirmation, in public, of this failure. As a result, although considered a failure by the organisers, other participants accomplished their goals in the meeting, which were to turn the event into an opportunity to oppose the project and challenge its consensual narrative. It was a stage on which to dramatise the limits of residents’ participation in the process.

In describing this meeting, my goal has been two-fold. First, I wanted to stress the centrality of everyday public performances to constructing belief in a democratic state. In this meeting government officers sought to perform their roles as inclusive, democratic, participatory and central promoters of consensus. My second goal was to show the entanglement of official knowledge production and representations of the state and its legitimacy as an *unstable* social production. As part of an effort to avoid analyses of states as monolithic and coherent institutions, the failure of this event showed the potential of sites like these to redirect scholarly attention towards conflict and contingency, rather than consensus and certainty.

Mathews’ ethnography has suggested that all “official knowledge can also be the relatively fragile product of negotiations between officials and their audiences” (2008, 486). Rather than a straight-forward vertical imposition, he insists on the relationship between power and knowledge as a coproduction. It is therefore vulnerable to destabilisation and requires institutional power, the persuasion of sceptical audiences, skilled rhetoric and performances, and strategic alliances that will support stable representations. As a result,

knowledge-making should be seen as context dependent and only partially constrained by official discourses (Mathews 2008, 492).

This approach provides a more complex perspective on the narrative of consensus. The encounter between officials and residents in Waterloo is highlighted as a critical social moment in the production of the official narrative. The public performance of knowledge about Waterloo – what it needed and how it should be – was revealed as always going to be a risky task. Citizens would either acquiesce and accept, or they would fight to reject the official narrative, and might actively interfere in its production while the uncomfortable bureaucrats sought to engage the audience in their story.

The failure of the meeting also showed the potential of such sites to enable the observation of the wider practices, values and ambiguities of political life. This social drama revealed the contradictions between a participatory democracy in a neoliberal urban project, and most importantly, the impossibility of a consensus approach in such a context. The meeting dramatised these tensions, exposing the underlying neoliberal logics that structured the process. Although the government had promoted a form of participation, it was such a constrained form that residents felt incapable of influencing decisions already made that had been justified on the basis of criteria that had little relevance to them: economic viability and the production of surplus value through the privatisation of public land, increased population density and building heights, pre-set ratios between public and private housing, and a need for redevelopment that they did not accept. The participatory process sought unsuccessfully to reconcile neoliberal interest in a city with the multiple local interests. As the failure of the celebration unveiled, these interests were antagonistic and irreconcilable, and Waterloo residents finally demanded to renegotiate the non-negotiable.

The meeting thus dramatised the paucity of the consensus model through the exposition of the tensions that had always existed among the multiple understandings of participation in a supposedly democratic process. It demonstrated the contradiction between the democratic ideals of the New South Wales government – practiced as a limited form of consultation that rejected conflict and dissent – and an active group of residents who claimed a space for effective influence in the decision-making process. Residents would no longer seek influence through the official channels of participation, which they had found ineffective,

but instead through the disruption of public presentations of official narratives and knowledge.

The End of the Future Planning Centre

The release of the masterplan challenged the official narrative of consensus around the redevelopment of Waterloo. Although silenced in the consultations and the final reports, residents had been articulating different, opposing ideas ever since the announcement of the redevelopment. As an example, I briefly present the case of the Future Planning Centre, an organisation that sought to articulate – not without tensions within the organisation itself – alternative approaches to the consultation and the redevelopment, and which was eventually silenced by the state.

The Future Planning Centre (FPC) was established in April 2017 at the Community Centre of Waterloo, in a room owned by the state government but ceded to community groups for use. The Centre was organised as an off-shoot of the Waterloo Public Housing Action Group and gathered residents from the neighbourhood, academics, architects, artists and other activists from the area specifically for the purpose of autonomously creating alternative representations of Waterloo, as well as attempting a different approach to the consultation process itself.

Two former members of the initiative wrote an article about the organisation in *Runway Journal*, an Australian journal of contemporary art. In the article they clearly expressed their perspective on the purposes of the centre. For them, the Future Planning Centre was “a space outside of the choreographed loop of ‘consultative’ frameworks currently used by governments for community consultation and engagement” (Murray and Sherwood-Spring 2017). As such:

[I]t provided a fundamentally unique opportunity to physically locate an oppositional viewpoint on the estate. It is defining an alternative model of negotiation and resistance that sits outside of the current technocratic, neoliberal, and participatory frameworks.

As this official statement reveals, the Centre had a clear political position, critical of the consultation discourse of the government and its top-down imposition. It was thus an

initiative that intended to challenge the effort of consensus-making, and instead, express dissent against a highly constrained process.

While the Centre was open, members carried out information sessions, undertook parallel consultation workshops, provided a response to the official visioning process, and formulated a booklet that complemented the option testing phase by showing building heights in three-dimensional models and shadow projections (see Figure 7.3 below). Due to various internal conflicts, however, key members of the organisation left the Future Planning Centre in sequence, gradually slowing down its activities and moderating its political claims.

In spite of being less active, during my fieldwork, the Waterloo Public Housing Action Group continued to hold its general meetings in the community room where the Centre had initially been established. Although these were not so much related to the initial proposal of the Centre anymore, the room remained as a place where residents continued to meet. Yet, in February 2019, the government claimed back the use of room, ostensibly because they needed more space for their meetings, officially closing the headquarter of both the Waterloo Public Housing Action Group and the Future Planning Centre. Although the Waterloo Public Housing Action Group remained fully active, and continues to be at the time of writing, neither they nor the Future Planning Centre had a designated room in which to maintain their presence on the estate, as well as to meet.

Although I was not present at the establishment of the Centre, I attended its closing, helping the organisation move out of the Community Centre. Only three people attended this closure. They packed up all the materials used by the Future Planning Centre in the previous years: office materials such as pens, markers, and papers; pamphlets from old demonstrations; pictures of residents on the wall; and the Post-It notes that were all over the place. The most sensitive materials were the remains of what used to be a three-dimensional model of the neighbourhood built by residents themselves with the support of architects (Figure 7.3). The colourful model was displayed on a table in the centre of the room, and stood as a reminder of the conversations generated about the present and likely future of the neighbourhood.



Figure 7.3: Three-dimensional mock-up created by the Future Planning Centre (Source: Dore 2019).

Unlike the two-dimensional models presented by the government, this three-dimensional model better captured the planning proposals, especially the different building heights. It had also been a dynamic model where people could continually remove or add things, stick on new notes, and write down their feelings and questions about the redevelopment. One of the Post-It notes stuck to the model asked: “When will the relocation begin?”

On that day, we carefully disassembled the mock-up. We removed the building models, trees in miniature and notes, one by one. Although we were a small group – the few still active – there was a sense of nostalgia in the room, and frustration for having to leave. “We are the first eviction,” one of the members said repeatedly. Carrie, the other member, told me she thought the new space would be a “brain washing room” created by the government. Before the Centre closed down, the glass doors had been covered with red writing, with phrases such as “people’s need first,” “people before profit,” “the Battle of Waterloo,” or “hear our voices” (Figures 7.4 and 7.5).



Figure 7.4: Glass door of Future Planning Centre (front view) (Source: Dore 2019).

Anyone passing by could read these messages from the outside and see the mock-up inside the room.



Figure 7.5: The Waterloo Estate Mock-up and glass doors of the Centre. (Source: Dore 2019).

In the weeks following the move, however, the room was completely emptied and blank. There were no posters or pictures. The doors had been cleaned. The highlighted sentence that had been written on the black board two years before – “This is Aboriginal land” – had been erased. No memory of the initiative was left.

A wall had originally separated the Community Centre into two different rooms: one for the Future Planning Centre and the other for general community events. The latter was normally used by government officials for their community meetings. In this meeting room next door to the Centre, in late January 2019, a government officer had announced the end of the Centre and the dedication of the room for other “community activities” — in a general sense — besides the Future Planning Centre. He said that the wall that separated the rooms would be knocked down to make more space, since, for government, the other room was being underused. He then proudly described what the new space would be like: “We will put a big new TV for the Community Centre” (Sydney, January 23, 2019). Indeed, after the construction work, the Waterloo Public Housing Action Group and Future Planning Centre space was absorbed into a larger conventional meeting room with tables, chairs, a small kitchen, and a new TV for general bureaucratic meeting presentations – a “brainwashing room,” as Carrie had foretold.

Alongside people, objects and documents, space is a crucial dimension in the building of a consensus narrative. Although less active than in its beginning, the Future Planning Centre room had still been a place that symbolically represented dissent against the Waterloo redevelopment, a place where residents were able to contradict the consensus narrative. The way it was forced to close, and then had its space transformed into a conventional meeting room amounted to an admission that consensus was *not* being achieved during the consultation process. Rather, in order to sustain the democratic performance, potential conflicts needed to be avoided, and memories and spaces actively erased.

The abrupt closure of the Future Planning Centre revealed the practice of silencing, omission or evasion necessary to the production of official knowledges and state-making. Rather than a straightforward process, official knowledge production requires active work to sustain the narrative of consensus and suppress always emerging dissent. Accordingly, place erasure emerged in the redevelopment of Waterloo as a specific practice that not only concealed alternative forms of knowledge and dissent perspectives, but attempted to erase

any evidence of their existence in order to maintain the appearance of consensus in the state's narrative. Furthermore, the practices of silencing and concealment in Waterloo did not only focused on data, information, and knowledge in general, as the analysis of the final report shows. The practice of the symbolic erasure of places of dissent became a central mechanism for providing legitimacy to the redevelopment of Waterloo. In short, the closure of the Future Planning Centre and the de-housing of the Waterloo Public Housing Action Group highlights the role of space, as well as documents and people, in the creation and management of stable representations and consensus-making.

Conclusion

This chapter explored the work required to shape and maintain representations of a democratic and participatory state. Specifically, the analysis showed how the consensus-building around the controversial redevelopment of Waterloo was produced and enabled through a narrative performed by the New South Wales government. In this process, the state's narrative organised harmonised and non-conflictual information to produce a "vision of Waterloo," supported by documents, people and space. Accordingly, consensus-making through narrative functioned as central to a participatory process that must render the community technical to enable its governing (Li, 2007).

The consensual narrative developed through consultation in Waterloo tells the story of a process in which residents, community-based organisations, consultants and government apparently collaborated in order to arrive at a common vision about the needs and futures aspirations of Waterloo residents. Nonetheless, the chapter reveals this official knowledge-making as a fragile process that required constant negotiation and skilful performances to maintain. While public performances worked to maintain the democratic appearance of the process, it was a risky task where ideal harmonic relations could not be ensured. As an example, the failed celebration of the preferred masterplan revealed the conflicts and antagonisms inherent in a participatory process, but which were strategically being avoided during the presentations of consultation results. The closure of the Future Planning Centre also foregrounded place erasure as a key practice through which to reproduce consensual narratives. The combination of these three dimensions – discourses, public performances and place erasures – constituted a narrative that enabled consensus-making in Waterloo.

The chapter, then, describes how the state of New South Wales is represented as a consensus-maker, a mediator who holds the power to gather different perspectives and actively filter them in order to provide a final and supposedly consensual outcome from dissenting viewpoints. In this representation, the state is not so much responsible for top-down, autonomous decisions, but rather, it ostensibly embodies and reflects a synthesis of the different interests within a society. In this account, decisions are no longer presented as the product of a government's will, but as a rational consensus among equal individuals, and the result of a harmonic and collaborative relationship between citizens and the government.

This democratic performance is essential for maintaining a state's legitimacy and authority, grounded on its ability to collaborate, engage in dialogues, and build strategic alliances. Crucially, this narrative functions conveniently to sustain neoliberal arrangements, in which the state's responsibility is decentralised and outsourced, and states are no longer fully responsible for common issues. Rather, in this representation, the state emerges as an orchestrator, capable of achieving consensus among multiple stakeholders. As a result, the ability to generate common visions, even if only apparently, instead of identifying and addressing social conflicts, emerges as a core value and skill for the modern, neoliberal but self-claimed democratic state.

As this chapter has shown, in Waterloo this approach functioned as a technique of pacification that had to work to avoid conflicts during a polemic redevelopment. It produced a *coercive* harmony (Nader 1994), underpinned by liberal ideologies of consensus. The participatory process for Waterloo can therefore be understood as part of a liberal promotion of consensus in which fundamental antagonisms within a society are supposedly overcome, as rational and equal individuals collaborate to achieve agreement. Finally, this political use of consensus is critical to understanding how participation was put into practice in Waterloo through everyday democratic performances.

Chapter Eight

Meetings, Motions and Petitioning

At a typical Waterloo Redevelopment Group meeting, participants arrive minutes before the start. In early October 2018, Jason, a public housing tenant, was one of the first participants to arrive. As usual, he entered the room with a wheeled suitcase – his “meeting kit” as he called it – with utensils for preparing coffee and tea: cups, spoons, sometimes biscuits, instant coffee and several tea bags. Jason said that this kit was his contribution to the meeting and a way to encourage people to meet and talk around food and beverages. On that day, after organising his “meeting kit” in the kitchen, he went back to the main room and started to rearrange the chairs and tables, without mentioning anything to the Chair of the meeting. Instead of their customary positions in rows, he organised the chairs in a circle, saying that he wanted everyone to see each other. While he moved the chairs and the tables, I noticed some uncomfortable and puzzled looks at him. In the silence of the room, the moving tables and chairs created an unexpected and excessive noise. Some participants laughed, others asked him to stop, but Jason continued until he was satisfied with the final arrangement.

More than once during my fieldwork, I witnessed similar scenes: Jason bringing in a suitcase, rearranging the chairs, and people appearing annoyed by this act. Although not fully supported, for him the form of the meeting was just as important as its agenda. As he once explained to me, he believed that the ways in which we organised the space transformed the meeting. By changing the formal arrangements and rules of that meeting – and surprising, and sometimes annoying, participants by doing so – he made explicit that *there were* rules in the format.

As soon as I started my fieldwork, I was surprised by the number of meetings and the seemingly endless reports, minutes, motions and petitions. It became clear that my “field site” was meetings: official government meetings, Council meetings, community meetings, and many other gatherings that assumed a relatively similar form: that of the modern bureaucratic meeting. This chapter traces some of the initiatives pursued by the community of Waterloo to reorient the preferred masterplan proposed by the government of New South Wales through meetings. It discusses the role of meetings, petitions and motions in shaping this collective action and organising political life in Waterloo. I argue that, after an

insufficient and highly constrained participatory process, Waterloo residents had no option left other than to draw on traditional bureaucratic tools to engage with supposedly democratic institutions. By analysing the tactics used by the local community to change the social-mix policy, I show how the bureaucratic practices of the state – including parliamentary rules and protocols – framed Waterloo’s political possibilities. Correspondingly, I also show how the practice of producing and circulating motions and petitions was a political grammar and tactic used by residents during the redevelopment. The long-term struggle to influence the masterplan stretched back to 2016, when the redevelopment started, inspiring a multiplicity of initiatives. However, as my fieldwork did not start until 2019, the chapter focuses on selected initiatives to demonstrate the relevance of bureaucratic rationality in Waterloo’s collective action.

The first event the chapter will highlight happened in late March 2019, when the City of Sydney released its own master planning proposal, along with a campaign to pressure the New South Wales government. This proposal was not an “official” plan; it was a tactic used by the local government to pressure the state government, and to demonstrate that a different kind of masterplan was possible. In its alternative proposal for Waterloo, the City of Sydney considered a mix of 70% public housing (instead of 30%), lower density and shorter towers. A wave of excitement grew in the local community following this release, and a new tenants-led group was created to support the City of Sydney’s proposal.

On 22 March, I observed the first meeting of this group. By the end of the third meeting, the group had formalised an organisational structure, voted on its name, drafted a letter to the Mayor and had begun to organise the first public community gathering of the group. But surprisingly, after only these three meetings, the group dissolved. The process of setting up the group had occurred during a state election in which most of the pre-election polls were indicating that the Opposition Labor Party would form government. This party had publicly supported an increase in public housing in the estate, and many residents were hopeful that the party would win, so the group had decided to wait for the results of the election before taking any further action. After the re-election of the Liberal-Coalition government was announced, the group lost hope, and never gathered again.

Then, in May 2019, just two months later, and a month after the presentation of the final masterplan, another initiative to change the masterplan proposal was attempted, this time

by the Waterloo Redevelopment Group (WRG). This group successfully passed a motion against the social-mix proportion of 70:30, requesting at least 70% public housing. Yet nothing changed in practice after the approval of the motion. In fact, at the following meeting, a resident criticised the already forgotten motion and the group as a whole for their ineffectiveness. He stated that the group too was gradually losing its reason to exist, since they exercised no decision-making power.

As this last member highlighted and as this brief summary of two thwarted initiatives in Waterloo showed, the democratic tools available to the residents to influence state decisions were limited. Residents often shared their scepticism regarding tools such as petitions, motions or meetings like those of the Waterloo Redevelopment Group. Yet, what surprised me during my fieldwork was, precisely, the persistence of some residents in participating and reproducing their most characteristic protocols. This apparent paradox drew my attention to the everyday meanings of bureaucratic meetings, motions and petitions. Although largely taken for granted, and often perceived as boring or even meaningless, meetings were clearly a fundamental practice within democratic institutions. In this chapter I take this ubiquitous organisational form seriously, both to understand why people kept returning to it even though they acknowledged its constraints, and to demonstrate its consequences for political processes.

Meetings have long been analysed by multiple fields of study, including sociology, psychology, and business. Anthropological inquiries related to meetings as a social form have also offered major contributions to the understanding of the familiar practice. For example, ethnographies by Bailey (1965), and Kuper and Richards (1971) have focused on the decision-making process of meetings, providing ethnographic accounts that distinguished decisions made by majority rules or consensus. Other scholars, such as Irvine (1979) and Myers (1986) have analysed meetings in terms of speech, focusing on their communicative dimension. To a great extent, these authors were inspired, in different ways, by the work of Erving Goffman (1959) on interaction frameworks.

Of particular relevance to this chapter is the work of Helen Schwartzman (1989). While most works tended to focus on decision-making – or the results of meetings – Schwartzman analysed the taken for granted form of the meeting itself. She argued that the practice of meeting defined the organisation, established the forms of interactions between actors, and

enabled the reproduction of the organisation itself. More than just a strategy *in* an organisation, meetings provided a setting for participants to interact and recognise themselves in the organisation as a collective body and single entity.

Anthropological interest in meetings has since been reinvigorated with more recent studies. For instance, Simone Abram (2003) analysed rituals in the town halls of Norway as enactments of transnational flows of policy concepts; Thedvall looked at the meetings of the European Union as rituals of legitimation (2008); and Sandler (2015) examined how a social movement's meetings could reveal the activist imagination of white-led progressive movements in the US. David Graeber (2009) has also paid attention to the relevance of meetings in activist environments, understanding it as a creative and experimental space for alternative social relations. In regard to participatory democracy, Polletta (2002) has described it as an "endless meeting."

All in all, meeting analysis foregrounds the multiple ways in which people can come together as a community. In an effort to bring these discussions to attention, in a recent book edited by Sandler and Thedvall (2017), several scholars explored the conceptual framework for considering meetings that, in many ways, grounds this chapter. Drawing on Larkin's (2013) influential article on infrastructure – the "built networks that facilitate the flow of goods, people, or ideas and allow for their exchange over space" (Larkin 2013, 328) – the writers approached meetings as "both architecture and practices of circulation" (Larkin 2013, 339). In doing so, they called for attention to both the material, "formal, replicable, invisible structuring elements and the practices of circulation of ideas, instruments, documents, etc., in the meeting" (Sandler and Thedvall 2017, 14). More than just political technologies, as in the Foucauldian sense, meetings are also *makers*. They carry within them endless opportunities and the power to make things happen. In this sense, as this chapter illustrates, meetings are a powerful avenue for anthropological inquiry. They have an architectural dimension for political organisations insofar as they carry – as a pipe carries water – ideas, documents, subjectivities and decision-making processes.

In the following sections I show, in different ways, these various dimensions of meetings and the documents, motions and petitions they produce and circulate. The chapter begins by describing the meetings of the Waterloo Redevelopment Group, focusing on its social form – its organisational and architectural dimension. In doing so, the section shows how

the Waterloo Redevelopment Group meetings are at the same time shaped by and producing modern subjects. The following section discusses petitions and motions as a specifically bureaucratic mode of engaging with democratic institutions. Subsequently, the chapter analyses the formation of a new community group in Waterloo and the procedures they undertook to formalise and institutionalise their group. Specifically, the section shows the mimetic practices of a group that reproduces a bureaucratic meeting format mostly shaped by postcolonial state ideals. The remainder of the chapter discusses meeting beyond its disciplinary power: as way of managing uncertainty and generating hope, as well as claiming legitimacy and legibility to the state.

The Waterloo Redevelopment Group Meetings

The Waterloo Redevelopment Group was formed in 2016 and constitutes, together with four other themed groups, the Waterloo Neighbourhood Advisory Board (NAB), a board designed to “[bring] together tenant and relevant Government, Non-Government and Community Organisations representatives” (Waterloo Redevelopment Group 2016, 1). According to the Terms of Reference of the group, they were an open organisation that provided a conduit between the multiple stakeholders involved in the redevelopment, as well as inputs to assist in community engagement strategies. They also sought to identify local issues and information to keep the community well informed and to assist the Community and Justice Department to understand community issues and perceptions during the redevelopment.

Systems of meetings such as the Waterloo Redevelopment Group engaged in function as a central technology of neoliberal modes of governance. Similar to other organisations that also exist to coordinate complex urban redevelopments, the Waterloo Redevelopment Group can be understood as a governmental technology used in a decentralised and multiple stakeholder model of governance that encompasses the public, non-governmental and private sectors – all of them, with local, national and often global presence. As analysed by Abrams (2017a), during complex development programs, meetings work to structure responsibilities, monitor outcomes and provide accountability for diverse funding schemes. Moreover, they transfer knowledge, connect and coordinate the different levels of hierarchical structures, and mark the temporality and progress of development within

specific timeframes. In this sense, meetings make tangible multi-scalar development programs as a social institution; they enact the time, space, and relations of interventions.

On multiple occasions during my fieldwork, I joined the monthly meetings organised by the Waterloo Redevelopment Group. During these gatherings I observed this enactment purpose of meetings, analysing how urban governance was negotiated in practice and how specific modes of governance – namely technocratic, delivery-focused, and pragmatic – were enabled by very specific meeting behaviours and skills.

Meetings

The formal Waterloo Redevelopment Group meetings were always preceded by pre-meeting interaction characterised by informal talk about daily issues. It was a moment before the meeting where people could identify who was participating in the meeting, sometimes understand their background, or identify any significant personal issues. In doing so, participants could negotiate who they were, both as individuals and as a group. Eve, for instance, once told me at the beginning of the meeting that her 82-year-old husband was going through severe health issues. She had just arrived from the doctor, but despite her personal worries, she went to the meeting. Many others had similar interpersonal conversations. Meanwhile, the minute taker, Tom, would distribute the agenda and the minutes of the last meeting. Finally, at 2pm, the Chairperson would announce the beginning of the meeting: “Should we start?”, he usually said. The meeting, then, would officially start, everyone would go quiet, and personal issues like Eve’s worry over her husband would be left behind. The Chair would be the only one speaking.

At each meeting, the Chair first went through the minutes of the previous meeting and ask for any comment. The room often remained silent. Hardly ever someone had a comment. “Any apologies?” he would ask. At this moment, attendees evoked absent people that could not come for any reason, and Tom immediately wrote down the names “as an apology.” Following this meeting protocol, the meeting then turned to the participants’ introduction stage. The Chair presented himself as the Independent Chair of the Waterloo Redevelopment Group, a voluntary position in the organisation. Afterwards, one by one, everyone introduced themselves in a circle, clockwise. Some of the introductions were brief, involving only a name and an institution. On other occasions, if participants did not

represent an institution or group, they tried to find a role: “Phillippa. I am the mother of two children,” said a woman once.

Participants normally remained still, serious and formal during their own presentations. Eve, however, was a resident already known for making long introductions. One day, an intervention she gave made clear the rhythms, body language, and restricted contents expected for this introduction stage. She stood up and said: “My mum said we should stand up for what we are proud of.” Afterwards, she remained standing and continued to say that she had just started a choir and wanted to invite everyone to participate in it. A few seconds later, some people at the table started to smile ruefully due to her long presentation, but she continued: “I am here because of the future generation,” and after that, she enthusiastically defended the need for public housing in Australia. At this moment, the Chair politely interrupted, asking her to be quicker. The format of the meeting called for just her name and institution, and a short and objective introduction. The implication was that the introduction was not the appropriate phase to speak about the participant’s motivations for joining the meeting, nor the projects they enjoyed participating in around the city.

While people introduced themselves, a sign-in sheet went around the table. On the sheet, attendees were to also write down their names and the institutions to which they belonged. There were normally around twenty people in the room from various organisations: the Land and Housing Corporation, City of Sydney, Waterloo Connect, tenants’ representatives, RedWatch, and Inner Sydney Voice, among others. After this initial protocol of around fifteen minutes, which included last minute comments, apologies, the sign-in sheet and introductions, the meeting moved on to discuss the agenda. Similar to the introductions, interventions during the meeting’s agenda items were also expected to be brief and concise to keep to the meeting’s schedule. This characteristic could be observed on various occasions. One day, for instance, Jason raised an issue during the meeting when he noticed the New South Wales government officer, looked at his watch. “You are looking at your watch,” Jason said, “I hope it is ok to ask you something.” Made uncomfortable by this unexpected, attention-drawing comment, Anderson replied: “I do have another meeting, but it’s ok”

Scenes like this one were quite common, especially for government officers who frequently would arrive late at meetings and sometimes leave earlier. The perception of this behaviour

among the participants was that government officers were always on the run to another meeting as part of their core practice as decision-makers, and that the other meeting was always necessarily more important than the one they were currently attending. In other words, they were busy persons. However, their performance of time scarcity also demonstrated the power inequality in relation to the participants, while at the same time reinforcing the need to be objective and avoid any unnecessary time-consumption.

At the end of every Waterloo Redevelopment Group meeting there would usually be another, post-meeting moment outside the room. At this time, the meeting's framework shifted, and attendees could comment on the issues raised during the session in a more extended and informal style, however, these comments were not able to be officially noted in the meeting's minutes.

As this brief description reveals, these bureaucratic-style meetings were highly structured by social norms: they had pre-set agendas, an order of speaking, limited durations for each person to speak, official minutes, approval for the minutes of previous meetings, sign-in sheets and "apologies," introductions by name and institution, a chairperson, and a minute taker. As I observed in different meetings of this group, they also expected participants to be objective, "stick to the meeting's point," and avoid discussing anything "out of scope." Participants had to be polite, negotiate and not interrupt.

In this section, I suggest that these practices also enacted the technocratic rationale underlying the daily operation of the redevelopment. These encounters also enabled a delivery-focused approach to participation that, rather than promoting community control, sought to accelerate developments while preventing disruption and unpredictable political contestation. In other words, the Waterloo Redevelopment Group meetings also allowed democratic engagement to be transformed into "reasonable and deliverable units of activity" (Raco, Street, and Freire-Trigo 2016, 218) through their specific meeting skills and behaviours.

As argued in previous chapters, the politics of urban planning are increasingly being shaped by anti-political machines alongside local and participatory discourses (Raco, Street, and Freire-Trigo 2016). In this chapter I argue that the Waterloo Redevelopment Group meetings also worked as a key institution to enable the depoliticisation of the redevelopment through socially accepted meeting behaviours, captured in the expressions

“sticking to the point” and “being objective.” These culturally shaped practices also enacted neoliberal notions of time, as well as a self-governance dynamic that controlled democratic engagement and constrained political deliberation.

Accordingly, the Waterloo Redevelopment Group format was also shaped by the modern meanings of social gathering. The group resembled a modern phenomenon that van Vree (1999) calls the “meetingization” of Western society. According to van Vree, during the industrialisation of Britain, meetings proliferated as the most acceptable mode to organise collective efforts and transform politics across all classes. The working class, for example, gradually adopted modern meeting protocols in order to transform politics through unions and guilds. This transformation implied not only a civilising process (Elias 1994) in the working classes, which cultivated the manners of modern meetings, but also consolidated a polite, non-violent and collaborative way of dealing with conflicts with the state. In the context of sovereign state formation and the democratisation of political activity, the standardisation of meetings as the legitimate and appropriate decision-making behaviour had created a new way of negotiating conflicts collectively.

The meetings of the Waterloo Redevelopment Group were clearly shaped by this standardised mode for modern subjects trying to act objectively (Evans 2017). Modern and bureaucratic meetings uphold the custom of parliamentary rules as the ideal good citizen’s behaviour and consequently embody the stylisation of elite views about how to conduct oneself in social gatherings (van Vree 1999). Taking turns to speak, discussing one issue at a time, avoiding personal attack, and voting to achieve a majority when disagreements arise, are some of the examples. As van Vree argues, modern meetings structure society in terms of civility and rational efficiency, with the expectation of managing conflicts and making collective decision-making non-violent, through the cultivation of democratic processes of self-inhibition, and the elimination of any time-consuming debate or apparently chaotic or disorganised discussion.

As a result, the bureaucratic meetings of the Waterloo Redevelopment Group produced very specific forms of knowledge. What the format of the meetings achieved in terms of politics was strictly connected to the guidelines they followed. The requirement that participants should be objective, direct, clear, and pragmatic, shaped what could be expressed within this format. In these meetings, people were required to always provide

rational evidence for their arguments and avoid mentioning issues that could not be resolved in that space. This, in turn, produced political tactics that tended to be pragmatic, achievable, and, as in government-sponsored meetings, frequently left aside the most challenging conflicts provoked by the redevelopment.

As a result, through their rigid forms and rules, the bureaucratic meetings of the Waterloo Redevelopment Group acted as a fundamental constraint upon possible forms of political and collective action, ordering and controlling any unpredictable political activism during the process. Accordingly, the imposition of forms to express ideas set limits on, and domesticated, the organisation. As a disciplinary mechanism, this imposition delegitimised other types of political expression, participation, and protest, producing a particular form of domination. Essentially, the meetings of the Waterloo Redevelopment Group worked as a citizenship technology – here defined by its power to constitute and regulate citizens – that both enabled and constrained political actions (Cruikshank 1999).

Motions and Petitions

As mentioned in Chapter Five, on the 15 May 2019, I joined a meeting of the Waterloo Redevelopment Group that presented a short video of a social housing renewal project in France that managed to avoid the full demolition of state-owned apartments through a cost-effective refurbishment. The purpose of the meeting was to consider alternatives to the knock-down of public housing, as was proposed for Waterloo. The successful French example supported tenant objections to a full demolition of Waterloo, generating some debate around the issue. Yet, unexpectedly, immediately after the video a resident proposed a motion to be voted on that day. Surprisingly, the motion was not indicated in the meeting's agenda, yet, it had been prepared, and it “went forward.”

First, Mary described the motion and then read it out aloud. The motion stated that the group wanted to the government to change the proportion of private and social housing from 30:70 to 50:50, and to reconsider its no-net cost policy. The motion was thus calling on the government to invest more in social housing.

A long discussion followed Mary's introduction. First, Eve mentioned she was against it. She thought the motion should propose that 100% be public housing, not only 50%. Other participants, however, raised the need to be “pragmatic” and advocated for a percentage

that would be more likely to be accepted by the government. Representatives of the government present at the meeting, on the other hand, tried to defend themselves. Clearly uncomfortable and impatient with the situation, they tried to dissuade the participants by explaining that the proportion was state government policy and they could not change it: it was one of the “non-negotiables” of the redevelopment. In other words, they were saying that whatever participants demanded on the motion, it would be ineffective. Furthermore, they argued that if residents had any issue with the ratio, they would have the chance to submit their concerns during the exhibition period after the final masterplan was lodged for institutional approval. According to them, the government did not know yet when the period for comment would start, but residents would definitely have thirty days to “have their say.” In other words, they attempted to delay the issue.

Despite these discouraging arguments and delay tactics, the discussion around numbers continued: 50:50, 40:60, 100% public housing. Through one argument after another, the group gradually convinced itself that 70% of public housing and 30% private housing (including affordable housing) seemed like a reasonable convergent point. If the reference of the government’s proposal was 30:70 (the 70% including 5% affordable housing), the group was going to advocate for the exact opposite proportion. After that agreement, a woman asked who agreed to change the text of the motion – to *amend* it – and increase the proportion of public housing from the initial 50:50 in the motion to 70:30. In “meeting language,” that person was the “mover”, and the woman would be the person who *seconded* the motion and agreed to it being carried forward. She then asked everyone to raise their hands to vote on the motion, and almost everyone raised their hands, signifying agreement. She looked satisfactorily surprised since she was not expecting unanimous support. She immediately changed the text and read it out aloud:

CONTEXT:

The New South Wales Government’s proposed Waterloo Estate redevelopment is of a size and scale never before seen in Australia. The Government has proposed an increase of the number of homes on the Waterloo estate by about 388 per cent from 2,012 homes to a target of 6,800 homes.

This proposal does not include the adjacent Metro Quarter proposed 700 dwellings or surrounding areas that are of a high density such as Green Square and Zetland.

MOTION:

This Waterloo Redevelopment Group requests that the Waterloo Redevelopment Group call on the New South Wales Government to reconsider the current social mix target of 35% social and affordable housing and 65% private for the Waterloo redevelopment.

This Waterloo Redevelopment Group seeks a social mix composition of social housing comprising no less than 70% of total dwellings developed with a maximum of 6,800 dwellings in total vis. a “social mix” of 70:30. Thus, following development, 70% of total housing will be social, 30% private.

The Waterloo Redevelopment Group urges the Government to reconsider its no-net cost policy for the redevelopment of Waterloo and instead support direct investment into social housing. (Waterloo Redevelopment Group 2019).

Since no one had any other comments about the wording, the group proceeded to the formal vote already knowing the results. First, however, the Chair of the meeting had to read the voting rules written under section 4.6 of the group’s Terms of Reference:

The Waterloo Redevelopment Group (WRG) will aim to reach decisions by consensus, however when a vote is required, each Member has one vote only, and all organisations, government departments and agencies have one vote only regardless of the number of representatives present. Members must be present to vote. Conflicts of interest must be declared. The chairperson will not exercise a vote (Waterloo Redevelopment Group 2016).

After reading these terms and conditions aloud, the Chair proceeded to read the motion one more time and finally ask: “Those in favour of the motion?” As if in a synchronised

movement, eleven persons in the room raised their hands together. The Chair counted, said the number out loud and wrote it down. “Those against the motion?” he asked. As expected, only the two government representatives in the room voted against the motion. The similarity to a parliament’s ritual was evident. However, more than just a legitimisation of the system, through this process, participants were also subverting its meaning in that they were differentiating themselves from the government representatives and putting the two into a difficult and embarrassing position as a minority in the room. It was a mechanism to provoke shame, as the slight smiles amongst participants around the table revealed. “Motion approved,” the Chair finally announced. The room was filled up by a brief moment of joy, until the Chair had to move to the next point on the agenda. Within seconds, no one was speaking any more about the consensus they had just reached.

After almost one year of attending these meetings, this was the first time participants, as a group, had decided to express their position regarding the redevelopment. Yet, the celebration was quick, almost imperceptible. This was clearly not the space to celebrate or to feel that they had collectively achieved something together. Rather, they had to continue to perform as a responsible and objective group that had just concluded a reasonable decision, the same way that any other formal group would have done. It was almost a mathematical issue: eleven votes against two; 70% of public housing instead of 30%. Instead of enjoying this exceptional moment, the meeting had to move on. Time was short, and they had to continue on to complete the agenda.

A month after the voting on the Waterloo Redevelopment Group motion, the group gathered one more time. In the agenda there was no mention of the previously approved motion. They first discussed the recent Waterloo Metro excavation works, and then, Derek Moore, the Land and Housing Corporation officer present, provided updates about the master planning. This meeting was the first one held after the 2019 state elections. Moore explained that the masterplan approval process was on hold until the New South Wales Liberal leadership had established the new structure of government. While he was explaining the difficulties of what he called the “government machinery,” a resident stopped him and said: “But meanwhile things continue to change on the ground here, on the estate, from the community.” Although the motion was not on the agenda, the resident used the presence of the government officer to confront him: “You are aware that just one

month ago, at this table” – and he strongly knocked down on the table with his closed fist – “the community made a resolution. They spoke, loudly!” The motion had now been reanimated and demanded a response from the government. Through the ritual of moving, discussing and voting, the motion, as a bureaucratic artefact, had become the way in which the community could “speak loudly.”

Moore tried to give his position as a representative and mediator between residents and the government:

At the moment the government has the *Future Directions* policy, and the policy from the government’s point of view was that we do estate renewal at 30% and 70%, and that is sort of government’s policy in its place. That had government approval, not just bureaucrats’ approval.

He then continued to defend his position, mentioning examples from other estates in Australia and the UK. At this point, the Chair interrupted him saying they all already knew those cases and that they just wanted to know his impressions after the motion approval. Moore finally acknowledged that he had not been aware of motion, and had just read about it in the minutes. He highlighted, again, his policy position: “Well...look, it’s a government resolution, it has the approval, I mean, the policy is embedded in that arrangement.” Once again, the defense was that politicians and bureaucrats had already made a decision – despite any community motion – and that should be enough. The motion was not mentioned again in the meeting.

However, a couple of months later, the same resident raised the motion again. He had already despaired that it would lead to any change. However, he wanted to criticise the group for not being effective enough, and hence, this time raised the motion as a means to condemn the community organisation rather than the government. After his statement, other participants appeared to be encouraged to share similar feelings of frustration. For them, the group was losing its point, since the issues raised in the meeting hardly ever led to specific actions or change. Both meetings and motions were becoming useless.

By the end of the meeting, however, the group agreed to change the format of the minutes and to create a new column called “actions.” The idea was that every meeting should lead to specific tasks, actions or follow-up. But as the day passed, few actions were actually

written down. The purpose of the meetings and its artefacts in practice, did not seem to lead to any change or *motion* – as the name implies – but quite the opposite: they were designed to control and organise for unpredictable political events.

This ethnographic account of the meeting provides another example of modern organisational procedures and their corresponding document production. The ritualised vote on the motion gave participants the feeling of acting rationally and objectively. In this sense, it resembled a wider effort by residents during their struggle against displacement, to cultivate polite manners and use authorised forms of opposition, such as democratically-enacted motions. It is also relevant that they discussed and voted in a meeting for an organisation that was formally recognised by the state. In spite of the intensely emotional experience of opposing the redevelopment, this motion – as well as the meeting itself and its minutes – played a crucial role in containing the emotions evident in daily interaction. In other, informal contexts, for instance, Waterloo residents Margareth and her friends told me they were feeling “devastated” and afraid of having to move to a new and unknown neighbourhood. Similarly, Maria offered me her clothes because she wanted to get rid of her things before having to move out, even though no notice of relocation had been issued yet. At that moment, she confessed that she would have preferred to move out straight away instead of going through almost three years of uncertainty. She thought certainty would have made the process less painful. Conversations like these were not shared in meetings like that of the Waterloo Redevelopment Group. However, outside of those meetings, during the course of my fieldwork, I saw people crying, angry, insulting, laughing, and hugging each other when speaking about the redevelopment. Yet, when they came together in a meeting, all these emotions were erased, or at least internalised as individually-felt, and contained.

In a meeting, writing a motion meant being practical and realistic while directing the message to the government using its own language. For instance, possible class conflicts were expressed by tenants in relation to both the mathematical proportion of 30:70, or the complete inversion of 70:30 that they had proposed for the “social mix.” Demands had to be reasonable according to the state’s terms, – and needed to “realistic” – thus they only advocated for pragmatic proportions, like 50:50 or 70:30. As a result, these mechanisms regulated citizens’ participation and encouraged claim-making within the state framework.

In this sense, bureaucratic meetings and the whole web of documents they produced invited collective action to assume the particular forms set by the authority of the government.

Petitions

Van Voss defines petitions as “demands for favours, or for the redressing directed to some established authority” (van Voss 2001, 1). Alternatively, Matthew Hull describes them as an “open engagement with governments, publicly invoking their citizen signatories’ rights to or needs for just treatment under policies and laws” (Hull 2012, 86). The British practice of petitions began in the Middle Ages, where petitions were a fundamental part of kingship, characterised by a deferential style towards the ruling power and the expression of grievances and supplications for “favours” – often with a humiliating demeanour – within a highly hierarchical society (Zaret 1999). In a concise and written style, a petition represented the dependency between lordship and petitioners, beseeching the authorities for favours in a society characterised by deference and patronage. Yet printing in the English Revolution shifted this petitioning model based on personal appearance before the lord, secrecy and privilege, towards broader anonymous audiences. Although retaining some rhetorical elements in their style, petitions were increasingly included in the list of fundamental individual rights, rather than treated only as supplications and favours. In this sense, as Zaret (1996) argues, petitions changed political communication and enabled public opinion to mediate between civil society and the state.

The British political institution of petitioning had a significant impact on its colonies. In Australia, records of petitions exist from at least the 1840s, when immigrants influenced by Chartism expanded their popularity while calling for the end of transportations and more representative governments (Curthoys and Mitchell 2011). For colonists, petitioning was a remarkable British practice, representative of the nation’s constitutionalism. In this context, not only colonists used the tool, but also Aboriginal people adopted it as a mechanism to claim their rights as British Subjects from Australian settlers and even from the Queen in England. As a fundamentally colonial practice, petitioning has been gradually institutionalised as a legitimate form of dealing with conflicts in the Australian post-colonial state. Although the practice has seen a decline in use – what was once an average of thousands per year is now around 300 (Parliament of New South Wales 2018) – petitioning is still a popular institutional and democratic resource in the country.

Given this backdrop, the format of petitioning was a key communication tool between the Waterloo Redevelopment Group and the government. Every time residents had an issue, whether a doubt or a request, they would write a petition in the Waterloo Redevelopment Group meeting to the responsible government officer. Normally in the meeting they would discuss the content of the petition, and the meeting minute taker would write it down in a standard format and forward it to the Community and Justice Department and the Land and Housing Corporation. A reply was not guaranteed. Sometimes they would receive a prompt written response, sometimes a response could take months of waiting, and sometimes they never received a reply.

Figure 8.1 shows an example of how petitions were addressed in the Waterloo Redevelopment Subgroup, a group created exclusively for tenants' representatives. The written format required a formal and polite style of writing to address the Land and Housing Corporation. The document is also divided into two different parts. One space was for residents' requests or comments, and the other for the Corporation's response. On the residents' side, sentences were usually written in third person, as the Community Officers often supported residents to write the statements. On the Corporation's side, the response was also written on behalf of the whole corporation, which could freely address the issue. The petition was not a space for dialogue or negotiation, but rather a one-way question and answer process. Accordingly, requests could either be accepted or rejected, with short and concise arguments that fitted the document's format.

WRG Subgroup - LAHC Response		February 2019
WRG Comment/Request	LAHC response	
<p>Opinion on the masterplan was mixed. Residents felt as though LAHC ignored community concerns of height and density. Most residents were pleased with the location of parks. All residents present welcomed the commitment to aged care services and homes. Although, they have requested further detail in terms of location/number of dwellings.</p>	<p>More details on the aged care services and homes will form part of the Human Services Planning and Community Facilities Planning. This consultation and planning will occur in 2019. It will not impact the lodgement of the Masterplan.</p>	
<p>Concern of Pitt/McEvoy street was again raised. Residents have requested that a workshop be held specifically for traffic and parking with the relevant traffic/planning experts, accompanied by detailed modelling of the estate. Residents would like to be presented with a supported argument as to why Pitt/McEvoy must be opened with traffic lights. It is not enough for residents to say that connecting Pitt/McEvoy is necessary to ease congestion elsewhere. They request the relevant modelling and the opportunity for a Q&A with experts.</p>	<p>LAHC has consulted with Roads and Maritime Services (RMS) and the City of Sydney (CoS) and is confident the opening Pitt/McEvoy will be beneficial to the area.</p> <p>LAHC has released the baseline study summary report on Traffic and Transport. All modelling will be available as part of the traffic and transport technical study when the Masterplan goes on public exhibition.</p>	
<p>A few residents recalled that LAHC committed to giving residents choice to relocate anywhere in NSW (once letters of relocation are received). Can LAHC confirm this?</p>	<p>The Masterplan will be submitted to the Department of Planning in March 2019 and residents, stakeholders and the wider community will be able to make submissions during the Masterplan exhibition.</p> <p>When residents are notified of a need to relocate, they will be assigned a relocations officer from FACS Housing who will assess their needs and discuss their relocation options. Residents will be given six months' notice before relocation and all current social housing residents have the right to return to the Waterloo Estate.</p>	
<p>Residents would like to know when details of community facilities will be made available with exactly what services there will be. Residents considered the line in the brochure that there will be, "opportunities to provide education, learning, childcare and health services in addition to those facilities located in the new Metro Quarter" as far too vague.</p>	<p>A community facilities plan will be developed in 2019 in participation with the community to ensure the appropriate allocation of community facilities and locations.</p>	

Figure 8.1: Waterloo Redevelopment Group petition and Land and Housing Corporation response
(Source: Waterloo Redevelopment Group).

In this and other examples provided here, the government bodies displayed three types of response. The first one was the ability to evade a question and not deal with the most controversial issues. For instance, in Figure 8.1, the first comment addresses the different

opinions regarding the masterplan. It showed the disagreement with the proposed density and building heights. At the same time it recognised other possible positive aspects of the masterplan.

The strategy of offering both positive and negative assessments was a common diplomatic tactic used when engaging with the government. The combination gave the appearance of residents acting in good faith, offering impartial analysis and constructive critiques. In turn, drawing on this opportunity, the response could address only some of the concerns and ignored others. In this case, the response deliberately did not address one of the most contentious issues of the redevelopment: the density and building heights. This refusal to respond was likely to have been because the redevelopment required a certain amount of new buildings in order to maintain the “no cost” policy.

A second type of response used in these petitions played with the temporalities of the project to argue for future commitments. These responses stated that the present moment was not the appropriate moment to discuss an issue, as the discussion should follow the project’s timeline. Correspondingly, this type of response argued that the issue was part of another future plan. For example, as again shown in Figure 8.1 the first response explained that “more details on the aged care services and homes *will* form part of the Human Services Planning and Community Facilities Planning.” Similarly, the fourth response stated that “a community facilities plan *will* be developed in 2019.” In both responses, details and possible answers would be revealed in the future. Finally, another response strategy to these petitions was the use of institutional and technical support to legitimise the final decision. In the second response, the Land and Housing Corporation drew on the Roads and Maritime Service, the City of Sydney, and a “study summary report” to defend its position.

Another type of petitioning used to oppose the Waterloo redevelopment proposal was the traditional parliamentary petition, directly addressed to the Parliament rather than a government organisation, and through an elected representative. From the beginning of the redevelopment announcement, residents had joined forces with local Member of Parliament Jenny Leong from the Greens Party to pressure the government for more public housing in the redeveloped estate. One of their main strategies was to organise an official petition to present in the New South Wales Parliament. In this state system, a petition with more than 500 signatures must receive a response from the responsible minister within

thirty-five days, while petitions with over 1000 signatures were scheduled for debate in the Parliament. Nevertheless, as the official definition mentions, a petition “doesn’t compel the Parliament to take action.” Rather, a petition “helps raise awareness of an issue in the community and lets Members of Parliament know what action the community wants the Parliament to take” (Parliament of New South Wales 2021). In the case of Waterloo, residents aimed to get the required 1000 signatures but did not manage to do it. The effort to gather written signatures in the standard forms was enormous (see Figure 8.2), and they also had the misfortune that some of the sheets with signatures blew away on a windy day when residents had gathered on Waterloo Green to ask for support.

In spite of this misfortune, Ms Leong managed to present over 500 signatures and so demand a response from the Minister. In the petition moved by the community were four specific requests for the government to: (1) place the security and well-being of local residents ahead of developers’ interests; (2) provide an independent advocacy service fund to offer advice to residents; (3) commit to negotiating and incorporating residents’ feedback into any plan; and (4) increase investment in public housing in New South Wales (see Figure 8.3).

Unlike the previous example shown in Figure 8.1, this petition included broader political and economic demands. While the previous example was focused on quotidian comments, concerns and demands, the parliamentary petition criticised the foundational issues of the redevelopment, such as insufficient public housing investment in the state as a whole. In this case, the state Parliament was the institutional channel used for the petitions and the minister herself was the addressee. Moreover, the petition had the support of the local Member, which granted it the possibility of addressing wider political ambitions. Accordingly, this petition showed deference to the authority of the Minister and the Parliament by using the formal address of “To the Honourable Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly.”

Procedures for signature verification and the availability of the petitions online are also part of the ritual of presenting a petition in the Parliament. As a result, as Matthew Hull stresses, a petition indicated more than just the ongoing dissent within a community; it also showed how “government [was] normatively perceived and engaged by those outside it” (2012, 88). For instance, the Parliament explicitly requires petitioners to address “the Speaker and

Members of the Legislative Assembly,” to “have a clear request that the Assembly do something,” and to “be ‘respectful, decorous and temperate’ in language” (Parliament of New South Wales 2018). The petition in Figure 8.2 provides further illustration of such norms being used to engage with democratic institutions.

Figure 8.2: Petition to Parliament - Waterloo Redevelopment

One month later, the Minister provided her response (see Figure 8.3). This time, the response was longer, going onto a second page, and taking the form of a letter.¹ Yet it was still perceived by many residents to be insufficient. The content of the response was aligned with the government’s statements in favour of the project. It highlighted the number of new houses delivered by the program, but failed to address how the plan insufficiently redressed the current public housing deficit in the country. The Minister’s response also repeated the narrative of a “thriving mixed tenure community” and stressed the delivery of “brand new homes” without addressing the maintenance challenges with either the current or the future homes. While the petition implicitly argued that the privatisation of the current state-owned land attended to the developers’ interests instead of

¹ Figure 8.3 has been compressed to allow it to appear on one page. See Appendix I for the full size letter.



The Hon Pru Goward MP
Minister for Family and Community Services
Minister for Social Housing
Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault

EAP18/11542

Ms Helen Minnican
Clerk of the Legislative Assembly
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000



Dear Ms Minnican

Helen,

Thank you for forwarding the petition from Ms Jenny Leong MP, Member for Newtown, regarding public housing in Waterloo and Redfern.

The NSW Government has the biggest social housing building program of any state or territory across the country. The NSW Government's \$22 billion Communities Plus program is delivering 23,000 social housing dwellings, 500 affordable housing dwellings and 40,000 private housing dwellings over ten years. As part of Communities Plus, in July this year I also announced the introduction of a Build-to-Rent model to be used for 600 Elizabeth St, Redfern to deliver more social and affordable housing.

The redevelopment of the Waterloo estate is a major project under Communities Plus, delivering more and better social housing to the area. New social housing at Waterloo, together with affordable housing and private housing, will establish a thriving mixed tenure community, with good access to services, transport and employment opportunities. All public housing residents of the Waterloo estate have the right to return, and most will be able to move straight into brand new homes. Residents will not have to locate until at least late 2019.

The Department of Family and Community Services (FACS) has been consulting extensively with Waterloo estate residents and the broader community about plans for the redevelopment of the estate.

I am advised that FACS has funded a range of independent supports to enable public housing residents in Waterloo to participate fully in the consultations and planning of the estate. This has included a community development worker and a capacity building project run by Inner Sydney Voice. Further, an independent Aboriginal Liaison Officer is providing advocacy and support for the local Aboriginal community, and bilingual educators are assisting the Chinese and Russian speaking residents in Waterloo to have their voices heard. Additionally, FACS has an on-site office, Waterloo Connect, for community members to drop in, ask questions and lodge feedback.

Resident and community contributions were invaluable in shaping the three masterplan options for Waterloo, which were released in August 2018. The options

show how the Waterloo estate might be redeveloped, with each having different designs for open space, buildings, and community and retail facilities.

Further consultation on the three options occurred from early September 2018 and concluded in late November 2018. In all, over 1,000 residents, community members and non-government agencies (NGOs) shared their views across approximately 60 events and activities. A preferred plan will be shared with the community prior to being lodged with the Department of Planning and Environment.

An important goal of the consultation program has been to identify the supports that residents will need as the redevelopment progresses. Planning for community facilities and services is an important part of the process and this will continue into 2019.

I trust that this information addresses the concerns raised in the petition lodged by Ms Leong MP. Additional background about the Waterloo Estate redevelopment and the Redfern site can be found on the Communities Plus website at www.communitiesplus.com.au.

If you or Ms Leong would like more information, you are welcome to contact Peter Anderson, Executive Director, Communities Plus on 0428 964 388 or email peter.anderson@facs.nsw.gov.au.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Pru".

Pru Goward MP

Figure 8.3: Government Response to Petition in Figure 8.2 (compressed)

those of the local residents, the reply was that this financial mechanism would generate a thriving community, hence reinforcing historical representations of the neighbourhood as a decaying area requiring state intervention.

Finally, the response invoked the participatory process of the redevelopment to legitimise the ability of the government to plan with and for citizens. Yet as suggested by this thesis, the participation process had more to do with the search for the control over and legitimacy for what was always going to be a controversial project, than eliciting actual community contributions over urban planning.

The petition thus repeated the political uses of participation as analysed in this thesis. It offered the government the opportunity to reproduce its discourse of development, rather than to acknowledge the critical content of the petition. The format of the petition, in this sense, facilitated the evasion of conflicts because it did not require face-to-face negotiations, reply and rejoinder, nor meaningful or continuous dialogue. Both written petitions acted as self-sufficient democratic tools, although ineffectual. They reinforced the distance in time and space between petitioners and government: they set a slow pace of response and offered government ministers the strategic choice of when to respond. While parliamentary petitions benefitted from the space for extensive argument, the possibility of support and political advice, the skilful use of rhetorical techniques and the containment of emotions, this applied to both sides, to the detriment of the authority-deficient petitioners.

Compared with the Waterloo Redevelopment Group meeting, where interventions needed to be short and concise, petitions stood in contrast as elaborate and lengthy. However, they were still fundamentally shaped by the same modern ideals of rationality and efficiency. In short, petitions served as a strategy for politicians to perform democratically, while evading or postponing actual political change.

Creating Community Groups

From the announcement of the Waterloo Estate redevelopment, the City of Sydney council had opposed some of the central proposals of the New South Wales masterplan. Following this position, and using the opportunity of the 2019 state elections, the council decided to internally design an alternative proposal alongside an institutional campaign. In March 2019, the City of Sydney surprised the Waterloo community by announcing this brand-new

alternative masterplan. The proposal was presented at a public meeting on 6 March by the Mayor, Clover Moore, and the city's Director of Planning, Development and Transport. Although still promoting a massive change in the area, the new proposal had significant differences: the density would be decreased from 6,800 dwellers to a maximum of 5,300; the social-mix would be of 30% private housing, 50% public housing and 20% affordable housing; building heights would be rescaled to allow a maximum of fourteen-storey towers, instead of forty, thus increasing solar access and reducing overshadowing. The two main towers of the Waterloo Estate – *Turanga* and *Matavai* – and other potential buildings would be refurbished under the City's plan instead of being fully demolished. Moreover, instead of a "no-cost" approach, the City of Sydney called on the New South Wales government to allocate the proceeds from the sale of other public properties in the City of Sydney area. Finally, the council also called on the state to retain public ownership through leasehold provisions (City of Sydney 2019). The plan, however, was not official since the City of Sydney did not have planning control over the estate. Rather, the release of the alternative plan was a strategy used by the municipality to call attention to the inadequacies of the current plan, and pressure the state government.

As part of this strategy, the alternative approach gained massive media attention and was published in the main local and national newspapers. Thousands of emails were also sent through an online campaign website. However, despite the widespread news, the strategy did not have immediate success. The government of New South Wales kept with their preferred masterplan and simply announced they would be in close conversation with the City of Sydney before lodging the final plan. One of their main arguments against the City's plan was that the City of Sydney, unlike the New South Wales government, had not undertaken any consultation in designing their masterplan. In this vein, the participation process itself was used to legitimise the state's redevelopment project over the City's, even though the City's plan was more in alignment with what residents had been asking for, as spelt out in their petitions.

To reflect the support of residents for the City's plan, a small group of residents decided to form a new community group, and a resident invited me to join them. She told me the members had met during the official presentation of the plan and had decided to organise the group in support. Excited to know more about the initiative, I accepted the invitation

immediately, and in early March 2019, joined the first meeting of the group. When I arrived, five people were already in the room. Three of those present were local residents, and the other two were friends of one of the main organisers. As the organisers explained to me, the non-resident participants were invited because they were “experienced community organisers” who had long-term experience in collaborating with different activist groups in the city. As such, they could bring valuable knowledge and help to set up the new group.

After a few minutes of informal conversation, a participant invited us to *start* the meeting. “We are starting the meeting at 12:20pm. Can you write that down?” she said to Margareth who had offered to take the meeting notes. The sentence marked the change of interactions and the actual beginning of a meeting. The register of the hour signalled that, from now on, everything would be put on record, and they were entering a different regime: one of defining problems and finding solutions, of planning and organising, and of keeping records. As I had also observed in the Waterloo Redevelopment Group, they would now be following modern meeting protocols: making short interventions, following the agenda, being effective, and making decisions. Another marker of the interactional change was the Acknowledgement of Country pronounced by Joe, an Aboriginal man. This marked not only the new rules of the gathering – now a *meeting* – but also the political position of the group who respected and acknowledged, as Joe said, the traditional owners of that land.

The first thing we did when the meeting started was to introduce ourselves to each other. In these official introductions, we were expected to mention certain aspects of our political engagement and positions: the community groups we might have already been involved in, the skills we could potentially offer, and the reasons why we supported the group. After a few minutes of introduction, Judie jumped in and tried to move on with the agenda, now proceeding to define the goals of the group. As we all expected, everyone quickly agreed that the purpose of the group would be to support the City of Sydney alternative masterplan. The goal was strategic, pragmatic and institutional. The group expected to show full alignment with a project they thought had good chances of going ahead, as it was produced by the local authority.

After agreeing on this point, Joe proceeded to read a letter he had drafted to send to Mayor Clover Moore. The letter stated that a recently established group, formed by existing tenants

and supporters of the state, opposed the New South Wales project and “strongly supported” her alternative masterplan. As the letter explained, the group wanted to “get behind her” and assist the Mayor in “winning acceptance” for her masterplan. To do so, the group asked for a “brief meeting” with the Mayor, at a time suitable to her. The goal of the meeting would be to get details on how the group could help her to “accomplish her aims.” The content of the letter included explicit support for the council, recognising the apparent good intentions of the City of Sydney’s alternative masterplan, the leadership of the Mayor in this process, and the greater power they had to achieve any change in the current masterplan. Through the letter, the group sought a strategic alliance with the City of Sydney council, currently under the control of Independents and unaligned councillors, which is at odds with the state government.

The next point of the agenda was to define each person’s role in the group. To my surprise, at the first meeting, institutional positions were already being distributed to formalise the group. At first, it felt strange to prioritise this task since we did not know each other very well, and we were not sure about the tasks necessary for the group. Nevertheless, everyone seemed to be sure about the required roles, and we voted for each one of them: Chair, Deputy Chair, Secretary, Secretary Assistant, Tenants’ Liaison, and Editor responsible for reviewing official communication. Some positions like Chair, Deputy and Secretary quickly emerged as a necessity and seemed like basic positions to have in a formal association. Other positions, however, were created for specific participants after asking about their skills. Margareth, for instance, was not sure about her role. She was an older woman who came as a friend of one of the other members. She could potentially support different tasks according to the emerging needs of the group, but to perform as a formal and institutional group, able to engage with the City of Sydney council, everyone was to have an official, fixed and well-defined position. For this reason, the group decided that Margareth could be the Editor.

In this process of forming and institutionalising the group, we also discussed that the “Board” should have a maximum of ten people. Since we were already six, the group wanted to think carefully about who else should be invited, according to the needs of the group and the skills these persons could offer. We then agreed that we would bring some possible names to the next meeting, alongside an explanation of why we thought the person

could be helpful. During these discussions, members were particularly interested in the form of the meetings, rather than in the content itself. It was part of an institutional ritual of group formation. To exist as a group, these format decisions were fundamental: to collectively set the rules; to define each person's positions and responsibilities within the group; and finally write them down in minutes.

Another fundamental issue raised by the group was to have a responsible person for "saving the meeting's practices." At this point, Judie – invited to the meeting for her expertise in building community groups – shared her meeting "best practices:" participants should always raise their hands before intervention; the Chair should concede and set the order of speaking; participants should keep confidentiality; they should demonstrate respect to each other; the practices of taking minute and moving motions were encouraged; the group should be inclusive and consultative with the community; and we should always acknowledge First Nations people at the beginning of the meetings. After sharing these suggestions, the group agreed with them all, and Judie became the person responsible for keeping the form during future meetings. Although we were still a relatively small organisation, for them, these were key rules to lend formality to the group. Members believed these rules were fundamental practices to keep the dynamics, rhythm and pace of the group. They also anticipated the possibility of future conflicts and established, from the beginning, how to avoid them, to maintain order, and prepare themselves with mechanisms to solve potential conflicts.

The attempt to render the meeting professional was also noticeable during a discussion about the possibility of timing and limiting every intervention. As I observed in other gatherings, this time control practice was a key characteristic of modern meetings that sought to be efficient and avoid any time-consuming interactions. In his work about the "meetingization" of society, van Vree points to the contemporary professionalisation of meeting behaviour and "the rise of an upper class of professional chairmen" (2011, 252). This widespread use of positions such as chairs, deputies, and general secretaries in different organisations with a variety purposes, and the trend to treat each other in a "business-like manner" has become increasingly apparent. This trend, van Vree argued, had become more prominent with the growing division of functions, the enlargement of institutions, and global forms of governance. In the Waterloo Redevelopment Group, this

trend was particularly explicit for the state funded roles of Chairs, Community Officers and Minute Takers. Although presented differently, in this recently formed group, the same approach was particularly foregrounded by the two colleagues invited to the meeting to support its set up. During the meetings they were the ones responsible for transferring specific skills and knowledge on how to conduct a meeting correctly: they were professionalised meeting-holders. As van Vree also demonstrated, in this process of the meetingisation of society, meeting competence becomes a skill increasingly required for social acceptance and positions:

[A]nyone who wants to participate in society with some degree of success needs to know and be able to apply elementary meeting rules, and to have mastered the type of language spoken in meetings (van Vree 2011, 252).

Moreover, during this group formation process, it was also striking to observe the emphasis many people in the group gave to confidentiality. As a political strategy, they wanted to maintain the group's privacy, at least before the first public community presentation and officially sending letters to the Mayor. However, at the beginning of the meeting, a member said they wanted to act differently from other groups in the area: they wanted to have an organisation with "no secrets." Yet in the course of the meeting, there were ongoing explicit requests to preserve confidentiality. This emphasis, in comparison to secrecy, also conferred professionalism and built bonds of trust among the group's members. "Secrets" were treated as immoral behaviours, associated with the inappropriate use of privileged information and abuse of power. On the other hand, "confidentiality" was legitimated as part of an attempt to provide the group seriousness and relevance. Until this moment, no sensitive issues had been discussed in the meeting, nor any conflicting interests. In fact, everything was being recorded in the minutes in order to provide transparency and create an archive of the group's deliberations. In spite of that, it was still extremely important to attendees to guard the meeting's confidentiality, both as a political strategy and as a group-making practice that promoted respectability. On another occasion I found myself in a position that reinforced this insistence on confidentiality. I was at a group meeting when someone noticed I had a phone in my hand and quickly asked me not to record anything. When I said I was not recording the meeting, he was relieved and said to me that "what

happens in this meeting, stays in this meeting,” an expression that confirmed the value of confidentiality to that group.

My participation in this meeting revealed the practices and rituals necessary to create a community group. Equally relevant, it demonstrated the central role of meeting practices in the production of even the smallest and most nascent collective body. But even further, at this point of the meeting, I was also increasingly surprised to observe the similarities between this gathering format – informally and spontaneously organised by some residents – and the Waterloo Redevelopment Group, an institutional and state-led organisation. Both were profoundly shaped by state-like modern meeting rules. During my encounters with this group, this pattern became clear in two particular moments: when we decided on the name of the group, and during my initiation as the secretary of the group and as a minute taker.

At the end of March, we met for the second time. In this meeting, as we had agreed in the previous one, everyone brought different names for the group. We started by reading them out, one by one, and discussing the aspects we liked and disliked. Most of the options were centred on the concept of an “action group,” a common term used in the Australian context. A great proportion of the suggestions were also built as acronyms: VOW, WAG, WV. So, every time someone suggested a name, we would transform it into an acronym to listen to how it sounded. After many attempts, a member commented this suitability as an acronym actually was not a requirement for the name. After her comment, other participants confessed they were tired of acronym constructions, typical with government bodies. In doing so, they reflected on how they were unconsciously being shaped by the Australian state institutional forms, aesthetics and language. Through a mimetic process, they were imitating how the Australian postcolonial state usually named organisations, institutional titles and sometimes people themselves according to acronyms.

During the naming process, we started to collectively come up, very fluidly, with different names, eliminating others, until we finally arrived at just one option. At this moment, since I was the minutes taker, my impulse was to write down the final name right away. However, I suddenly realised this impulse was a mistake: I was not following the meeting protocols. “Wait, we must vote first,” someone said. In that fluid process, I thought we had achieved

an agreement through consensus, and it was not necessary to vote since we already knew the result, and we were just six people. But I had misinterpreted the process.

“Do you want to call the vote, Margareth?” someone asked, and Margareth accepted. Again, as an inexperienced member in these meeting formats, I made another mistake and instantly raised my hand. “Wait!,” they stopped me again. In a pedagogical tone, they taught me I should first repeat the final name decision, out aloud, and only then vote. I apologised for my accidental mistakes and then followed the rules. As soon as I said the final name, we all raised our hands, counted it down and pronounced the decision. “Now you can write it down” – they told me – “Put it as a unanimous decision.” In the minutes, the discussion was eliminated, and only the final result was described. Following my embarrassing mistakes, it became clear that the most relevant action in that process, more than the discussion itself, was the voting ritual. We had to vote to be socially efficacious and be able to change or establish something as important as our name: whether politics, people or social arrangements. The magic was accomplished by the majority voting system that also characterised government decision-making processes. While reproducing this practice, the naming and voting process conferred on the group social existence, legitimacy and power.

A final example of this search for formality was my training as a minute taker. At the end of the meeting, a member approached me with the printed version of the last meeting’s minutes that I had written. It was the first time I had ever written official minutes like this in English, and had used my own style and sentences. A member kindly sat by my side to comment on it and taught me how it could be improved to fit the traditional formats. According to her, at the beginning of the minute, I should explicitly write the headings of “Chair,” “Minute taker,” “Present” and “Apologies,” followed by names. She explained to me that I should also write shorter sentences and the term “action.” For instance, “Action May: design flyers.” Finally, she detailed the tone I should try to use: instead of “must” for example, it was better to write “need to.”

All these tips were part of the making of a meeting, its procedures, rules, languages and aesthetic. The advice was part of the process of teaching and learning through repetitive practices how to be and how to enact the state from its citizens’ perspective (Abram 2017b). As this member taught me these practices, it became clear the necessary know-how

of a meeting that aims to present itself as legitimate, professional and thus authorised to make claims regarding state institutions. The final comment of the participant who had just trained me in the art of meetings was particularly illustrative of this attempt. She apologised for having corrected me and explained she did so only to “stand to procedures.” Following this comment, another member supported this idea, and very politely said to me it was important “to show formality” in the minutes.

The practices described above constituted this collective not just as a group, but as a *legitimate* group to contact the local government and arrange a meeting. Nevertheless, this particular process can also be understood as a mimetic practice in which the local residents imitated postcolonial state procedures, and in particular, their organisational forms. During this meeting, the local community replicated bureaucratic modalities of institutional gathering recognised by the state. While the forms were similar, however, the content sought to subvert its usual ends and produce a critique of the very act of governing. As Taussig argued in his work on mimicry, to mimic is also a strategy of survival and potential subversion. For Taussig (1993), who was largely inspired by Frazer’s concept of sympathetic magic (Frazer 2009/1922), during the magic of mimesis, copying becomes a form of retaining the original form’s power; to “get hold of something by means of its likeness” (Taussig 1993, 21). Similarly, modern bureaucratic meetings, in the case of Waterloo, seemed to hold the magical power to effect political change. Even further, the form was simultaneously a claim to become a legible organisation in the state’s terms (Scott 1998). As Ferguson has highlighted, mimics are not always expressions of resistance and subversion as anthropologists often seek to celebrate. Mimetic practices, or the claim to “become the other,” may often be genuine claims to “political and social rights of full membership in the modern world;” that is, claims to being “equal citizens of a modern urban society” (Ferguson 2002, 555).

This pursuit was particularly important in the context of stigmatised communities, where extra relevance was given to community self-presentation. For instance, I once witnessed a discussion among residents about the forms of a possible protest. While some people advocated for a non-violent public rally in the estate, others supported current strategies such as the Waterloo Redevelopment Group meetings, motions, media releases, or any other tactics rather than rallies. The main argument was that rallies would only invite the

police to the community, facilitate potential arrests and, according to them, lead to no real change. What became clear in this discussion was that, for this community in particular, it was necessary to avoid any association with the police. Such concern was also constantly called to mind by the recurrent signs in the neighbourhood – visibly more so than in other areas of the city – to avoid “anti-social behaviour.” Waterloo residents, more than other citizens, needed to behave according to social norms, including how they came together and organised local claims. As explained in the first chapter of the thesis, Waterloo historically had been associated with crime and violence. This particular environment encouraged residents to adopt the most formal and socially accepted forms of gathering. Formality was a strategy to counter-balance the negative image of the community and support their claim for respectability.

At the end of the meeting, a member raised the need to nominate a treasurer, claiming that our future meetings should always include a report of the finances of the group. Although, at this moment, we did not have clear sense of the possible expenditures and financial needs of the organisation, this issue was already a concern within the group. The argument was that if they planned to apply for funding in the future, for instance, they would need to be able to demonstrate the form of financial responsibility and set of bureaucratic conditions required to be considered eligible. What these conditions revealed was that the protocols being performed by the group were also a pre-condition for becoming part of the state’s bureaucratic infrastructure and thus being legible, and respected, by the State.

David Graeber (2011) also illustrated this concern in his experience with the Direct Action Network in New York. Drawing on personal accounts, he detailed how, as soon as someone donated a car to the network, conflicts started to emerge. Before that, the network did not have concrete resources, nor a treasurer to administer any assets. As he described it, they were “a decentralised network, operating on principles of direct democracy according to an elaborate form of consensus process” (Graeber 2011, 43). For this reason, they had deliberately decided to avoid practices like appointing a treasurer. Yet, after the donation, they suddenly discovered that, legally, it was impossible for an alternative organisational form to own a car. As Graeber described: a *network* could not own a car. The state demanded that there be someone, an individual, to claim the ownership of the object. In

turn, this person would be held responsible for fines, insurance, permission for third-party drivers, and, in short, becomes trapped by governing mechanisms.

What Graeber's experience highlights is the material and bureaucratic infrastructure that surrounds any organisational form willing to engage and be acknowledged by the state. Similar to the newly formed group in Waterloo, it made visible the complex web of government regulations that people assume and anticipate in order to constitute themselves as a formal group. These regulations, as Graeber also highlighted, are generally enforced by the systematic threat of violence, and assume that the standard form of individual relations are mediated by the market and organised hierarchically. This expectation explains the need to have a President, a Vice President, a Deputy, a Treasurer, and so on, and to have an accountability and transparency system – such as minutes – if the group anticipates having any resources or funding available. In this vein, the institutional format that the Waterloo group was gradually shaping through these meetings, was not a mere copy of traditional statecraft. It was an attempt to *become* something, to render themselves visible and rightful in the face of state hegemonies. Mimicry in this sense was also an assertion of rights to the city through a recognisable organisational form. David Harvey argues that the right to the city means far more than individual rights to access urban resources. It is the claim for a common right, and the “right to change ourselves by changing the city” (Harvey 2008, 23).

In conclusion, the formation of community group in Waterloo revealed the ritualised practices, skills, documents, languages, aesthetics and rules necessary to create and institutionalise a new residents' group. Crucially, it illustrated the use of bureaucratic and parliamentary protocols as a mimetic practice, but also as an attempt to render these organisational forms professional, legible for the state, and thus authorised for claim-making.

The Other Meanings of Meetings

The dynamics analysed in the newly formed group in Waterloo invites meeting analysis to consider this organisational form as more than just a political technology and a mode of neoliberal governance. While meetings, motions and petitions certainly enact a particular way of understanding neoliberal governing and participation, they remain insufficient to understand why people kept going to meetings, or voting on motions, despite the common

recognition of their inefficacy. As a result, in this last section I would like to draw out some other meanings of meetings that coexisted during the redevelopment of Waterloo.

While dealing with corporate meetings, Bargiela-Chiappini and Harris (1997, 30) noted that “high levels of uncertainty are counterbalanced by an increase in the number of meetings at all company levels in order to maintain a semblance of status quo.” Similarly, I suggest that, in Waterloo, the continuous uncertainty experienced during the redevelopment process was managed by attending meetings like those of the Waterloo Redevelopment Group. What at a first sight could be seen as an endless and boring repetitive action – where every meeting seemed the same – was precisely what the meeting routines sought to provide during uncertain and unstable times. In a similar context of urban planning in London, Evans noticed how meetings could work as a “stabilisation device,” or the “organisational means for distributing cognition about navigation matters” (Evans 2017, 135). For her, during uncertain times, creating mechanisms of navigation able to provide a collective sense of direction was particularly necessary. Bureaucratic meetings become “the means for steering the course towards a common future, and for plotting how to proceed, especially in moments when the way forward is unclear” (Evans 2017, 135).

In Waterloo, it may be exaggerated to assert that those meetings upheld the power to effectively make decisions and change the course of the redevelopment. In this case, other meetings – often closed, more restricted, and sometimes outside the institutional realm – seemed truly to hold power, not the meetings residents attended. Nevertheless, local meetings still held the power to simulate that navigation and encourage people to participate. As some residents shared with me, the meetings always offered a chance to receive new information, and equally importantly, to have it first-hand, before any other tenant, and directly from their source. In the moments of a complete lack of information from the government regarding the future of the community, the arena of meetings also remained a place to fill those gaps, a place where participants could get together and counterbalance their high levels of anxiety and uncertainty about an unknown future.

In this sense, another motivation to continue to join meetings – even if frequently recognised as boring and sometimes meaningless and often fruitless – was the ability they also had to generate hope. Meetings such as the Waterloo Redevelopment Group were still an opportunity to have personal contact with otherwise absent government officers. As a

resident once told me, when attending meetings there is always a possibility for politicians to change their minds. While saying this, she gave special emphasis to her physical presence in this encounter, so government officers could *see* the residents, and perhaps feel or perceive things differently. *Being there* was thus a crucial political strategy. Her presence upheld the possibility to make visible to bureaucrats the injustices of their decisions and to potentially unmake prejudices.

As a result, in-person meetings challenged the technologies of “governing at distance” in neoliberal states and provided an encounter between the ones who govern and those who are governed. For Rose (1999), modern government acts at a distance through the activities and calculations of authorities other than those of “the State:” urban planners, doctors, social workers, and the like. In this sense, governing does not operate through the direct intervention of state officials, but through non-political actors. Accordingly, it links dispersed experts across different sites through calculation techniques, standardisation, and the objectification of subjects.

The redevelopment of Waterloo certainly offered examples of how this mode of governance operated in practice, through the presence of non-government organisations, social workers, urban planners and other actors. However, the Waterloo Redevelopment Group meetings also showed how this distance could be rescaled. Meetings such as those of the Waterloo Redevelopment Group, or even a personal invitation to meet the Mayor, are actually privileged spaces where this distance may be shortened. In these cases, meetings still provided rare encounters between high level government officers and citizens. By doing so, they added the possibility of drawing on emotional or performative strategies, and re-asserting the embodied experiences of the ones impacted by political decisions. This opportunity became particularly clear from the excitement evident in the meeting room every time the Waterloo Redevelopment Group Chair announced that, in the next meeting, the Executive Director of the Communities Plus program, the Waterloo Project Director of Land and Housing Corporation, or any other high government officials was scheduled to appear. Every time they came, participants experienced tense interactions, accountability demands, pressure and explicit critiques. What is important to highlight is that it was not rare to have them present. In fact, they quite often attended, which made participating in the meetings still worth the effort.

Conclusion

This chapter traced different community initiatives that sought to influence the redevelopment of Waterloo after a limited and mostly ineffective consultation process. In doing so, the chapter showed the tendency of local community organisations to assume bureaucratic forms, reflected in the meetings of the Waterloo Redevelopment Group and in the documents produced and circulated through this group's gatherings. The analysis revealed how bureaucratic practices of the State – including parliamentary rules and protocols – shaped local forms of collective action, while framing Waterloo's political possibilities.

Bureaucratic meetings are typically taken for granted as the pervasive organisational forms of democratic institutions. However, this chapter sought to denaturalise this seemingly universal gathering format, exploring meetings and bureaucratic documents as essential modes to participate and navigate in democratic institutions. In doing so, the chapter unpacked an everyday practice – including the socially accepted meeting rules, codes, values and forms – in the conduction of the redevelopment of Waterloo. As a result, the chapters offered a micro-analysis of participatory practices that allowed the continuities of wider political economy within local communities.

Bureaucratic meetings emerged in Waterloo as a specific form of citizen participation and engagement during the redevelopment. As such, their analysis revealed how this modern and institutional form of gathering enabled the sell-off of the biggest public housing estate in inner-Sydney. In other words, it helped to explain how local forms of participation themselves created the possibility of the redevelopment of Waterloo, and its central goal of profit realisation. The chapter examined how the forms of meetings conduct and control local knowledge production, at the same time as they enable governance, arguing that meetings function as key citizenship technologies (Cruikshank 1999) insofar as their social *form* facilitates pragmatic and prudent decision-making aligned with the objectives of governing. Finally, bureaucratic meetings, and their associated documents, helped to depoliticise and evade the wider political economy dynamics of Waterloo, consequently perpetuating unequal rights to the city (Harvey 2008). In short, from an everyday perspective, the meetings functioned as a central political technology to control epistemic

production, conduct participation, enable governing and, in turn, allow the redevelopment itself.

However, the chapter also analysed modern meetings beyond the exclusive ends of making decisions or governing. Accordingly, it explored some of the alternative motivations that led Waterloo residents to participate in multiple bureaucratic meetings, and even reproduce bureaucratic meeting practices in their own community organisations. The meetings of the Waterloo Redevelopment Group regulated and constrained collective actions through its modern ideals of efficiency and objectivity. At the same time, ethnographic accounts revealed how they also continued to produce hope during the redevelopment. In Waterloo, meetings certainly enacted a techno-political approach to urban governance through very specific skills and behaviours. Nevertheless, they also managed uncertainties, and served as stabilisers during highly unclear futures. Meetings such as the Waterloo Redevelopment Group constrained the very idea of political participation and engagement, yet, although limited, they remained an opportunity for privileged and embodied political encounters.

The meetings therefore held multiple meanings and motivations for coming together. They served the New South Wales government's interests as a tool of governing, but paradoxically, they also served as a mode to manage uncertainty and generate hope for residents. They served as a way of claiming a group's legitimacy and legibility to the state, which, in turn, enabled them to challenge the state, even if this challenge was limited in its effectiveness. This double-pronged approach is, precisely, what encouraged residents to continue to participate in the meetings despite their acknowledged restricted possibilities. These remaining appeals of meetings managed to partially mask meeting's will to govern and, instead, to empower, finally producing an effective tool to make the redevelopment of Waterloo possible.

Chapter Nine

Beyond Consultation: Moral Economies and Differentiated Citizenship

In early March 2019 I joined a theatre group in Redfern. The initiative, called *The Interim Project*, was funded by the City of Sydney and had the purpose of gathering local residents to discuss and create a performance about the redevelopment of Waterloo. Initially, the group was formed by four local residents, Tom, who was a local community officer, and me, who joined as an active participant in the creative process and performances. However, after a few months, some participants were not able to continue the project, and we finally formed a group with two local residents, Tom and me. We gathered once a month over three months, from February until May 2019. During the different encounters we had, we discussed the positive aspects of living in the neighbourhood as well as the difficulties. We also talked about the relationship between residents and the Housing Department and about the redevelopment itself.

During the course of the project, it soon became clear that we were actually dramatising aspects of the urban renewal that went beyond the event of the redevelopment itself. We were discussing forms of political participation in a wider sense, not necessarily framed by the formal consultation. In practice, through different theatrical scenes, the residents reflected on citizenship, morality and the meanings of home. Through creative activities, performances and other embodied forms of reflection, the residents were able to express their daily experiences of living in Waterloo using methods other than interviews.

As I show in this chapter, these residents were collectively reflecting on what it meant for them, and for others, to be public housing tenants. One concrete exercise revealed to me the centrality of these relationships. The room was dark, like a theatre. Sophia, one of the coordinators of the project, first asked us to gather around a circle. As we did so, we slowly gained confidence with each other, warming-up to act and create new scenes for our upcoming show. On that day, the warm-up activity encouraged us to offer imaginary gifts and express things we would like to have in our homes. Sophia began the activity with a demonstration to give us an example. She held an empty box, looked at another person in the circle and gave it to her: "Hi, I give you this home gift. It has a beautiful garden for you." Following the game proposal, the next person who received the gift should first thank

the box-giver, and then offer the box to another person, adding a new imaginary surprise inside the house represented by the box: a blue wall, a nice view, a wooden chair, and so on. The initial idea of the activity was to share things we would like to have in our places, offer gifts to each other, and imagine our ideal home.

However, as soon as the game started, participants began to change its original purpose and gradually shift its positive approach to an ironic and critical game. This occurred because the residents began to dramatise how it really felt to receive “the gift” of a home from the government: “Hi, here you have this home gift,” said Lisa, “it has a leak and no hot water.” Her critical gift was not expected, and yet participants immediately laughed at her improvisation, recognising the experience of receiving a house that claimed to be a gift, but was, in fact, full of problems to fix. After Lisa’s ironic humour, another participant felt encouraged to keep on with the game this way: “Here it is; it is full of cockroaches.”

The warm-up activity soon became a fun game. Residents simultaneously laughed and criticised the meanings of being a public housing tenant and having the state as a landlord. At first, the purpose of the game was to talk about the ideals of a generic home, but as soon as the game had started, residents drew on their personal experiences and quickly demonstrated that they did not experience public housing as receiving a “gift” from the government, although this was often the official rhetoric. What was officially described as a gift or a privilege for residents was in fact a right. They also acknowledged that housing provision was never a voluntary or altruistic act. It was conditional. In practice, they knew that they were always expected to give something in return.

This exercise became so revealing to the group that we continued to discuss this issue for a long time. We felt motivated to keep developing the game, until we finally decided to develop the exercise and make it into one of our final scenes. The scene would represent the experience of humiliation and constant suspicions toward public housing tenants, masked by the concept of a voluntary “gift.” The metaphor of housing provision as gift-giving portrayed it as an act of goodwill from the government, an act also somehow outside of market logics. Yet daily life revealed this seemingly voluntary gesture was a coercive experience.

The scene evoked Marcel Mauss’s (1923) classic analysis of gift-exchange. In his interpretation, every act of gifting contains an obligation. Exchanges implicate the acts of

giving, receiving, and most importantly, reciprocating. Following his argument, it is possible to draw a parallel between the gift-giving logic and the state's housing provision. More than just a strict legal contract, in this context, housing provision unfolds within a risky system of expectations, obligations and debts. Yet, for "The Gift of a Home" scene in the Waterloo performance group, Marcel Mauss's description of *potlatch*, with its agonistic exchange, seemed to be a better analogy for housing provision. In this system, recipients (the tenants) are incapable of returning the gift they have received. For this reason, rather than a celebration of equality and reciprocal relation, housing provision reinforces the giver's (state's) authority and acts as a form of social control. Similarly, Grace Goodell (1985) used the logic of *potlatch* to shed light on the agonistic effects resulting from paternalistic dynamics. For her, in both modes of giving, benefactors aim at domination, finding many ways to "make the giver-receiver relationship nonreciprocal" (Goodell et al., 1985, p. 256).

In this chapter I draw on these analyses of gift-giving to show how public housing tenants live the ideals of participation and citizenship through mundane and everyday experiences. The chapter considers political participation beyond its most formal official events, such as consultations, public meetings, or an election. Instead, it emphasises experiences that would not normally be classified as "political" – such as contacting a call centre to request to unblock a toilet – as central to political expectation, perceptions of the government, and identity and citizenship building.

In doing so, the chapter analyses how the moral economy that operates through housing policies in New South Wales articulates structural inequalities, finally functioning as a form of domination and symbolic violence. As a result, it foregrounds the contradictions of a paternalistic relationship that is evoked to maintain a monopoly on power and political authority that is in tension with a participatory project that ideally respects communal autonomy and self-management.

The Moral and Political Economies of Housing

The main concept that structures this chapter is "moral economy." This concept was initially proposed by Thompson (1971) in the paradigmatic case of a food riot in eighteenth-century Britain. In the context of an emergent capitalist economy guided by the so-called free-market, a moral economy – that is, social norms and obligations – underlay collective

actions against an increased grain price. During this episode, the moral obligation to provide food justified attacks against targets the rioters deemed to be immoral profit-seekers. Beyond the motivations of hunger, according to Thompson, was the search for moral punishment and a call for a fixed price, alongside an emergent inclination towards market-regulation ideals. Thompson's main contribution in this work was, first, to challenge the *Homo oeconomicus* model of neoclassical economy and its associated moral rationality and utility maximisation, and second, to link this moral economy to a wider social political transition from an ideal of paternalistic reciprocal obligations to a free-market society.

Similarly, James Scott (1976) deployed the concept of moral economy to understand peasant mobilisation in Vietnam, using the concept to understand collective action not so much as the direct result of an increased and unbearable exploitation, as a more traditional Marxist political economy analysis would argue, but rather as the shift from a reciprocal arrangement that allowed peasants a minimal living standard – what he called the moral principle of “securing substance” – in the face of a new and risky economic arrangement. Similarly to Thompson, Scott encouraged an analysis of political behaviours beyond universal and economic perspectives. He integrated into his analysis the understanding of local values, as well as the moral obligations that sustained local social structures.

However, following Palomera and Vendetta (2016), it is possible to identify three main issues with these foundational analyses of moral economy that still resonate with contemporary analysis. First, the early uses of the term moral economy tended to restrict moral economies to specific groups, such as “the peasants” or “the crowd” in the case of Thompson. Thus, instead of an interconnected system, moral economy risks being essentialised to refer to a single group in isolation, rather than embedded in relationships. Second, in moral economy narratives, an assumption seems to operate of a break with a previous moral arrangement. In most cases, the past is seen through an overly optimistic lens, sometimes considered as inherently good or a “lost paradise” (Götz, 2015, p. 154). Third, the close link of this concept to the embeddedness theory of Polanyi (2001) leads to a common understanding of moral economies as a separate dimension of political economy analysis and global market dynamics. In fact, moral economies have gained a particular

relevance in recent studies of alternative forms of economic activity that emerge in opposition to hegemonic capitalist practices.

This chapter follows the definition of moral economies proposed by Didier Fassin (2009): “the production, distribution, circulation, and use of moral sentiments, emotions and values, and norms and obligations in social space” (Fassin 2009, 37) However, instead of simply stressing the economy of morals over the morality of economies (Palomera and Theodora, 2016), I add to this definition the centrality of everyday moralities to continue or even deepen structural inequality and capital accumulation. Following Narotzky (2015), and in accordance with Palomera and Vendetta (2016), I share a conceptualisation of moral economy in which structural inequalities are realised through dynamics of norms, meanings and practices. Consequently, the emphasis given in this chapter to the moralities attached to housing provision systems does not undermine the political economy – that is, the relationship between capital, class and the state – that essentially shapes the redevelopment of Waterloo. Rather, the chapter reveals how both moral and political economies are enmeshed in daily life.

The chapter develops these ideas following the three main parts of Mauss’s gift exchange system: giving, receiving and returning. The discussion starts by describing in detail the final scene of “The Gift of a Home” to discuss the current exchange system underpinning housing provision, and the shift from understanding public housing as part of a social contract, allocated according to a regime of deservingness, to surveillance and penalisation in a residual system. The chapter then turns to the act of receiving public housing from the government and its attached obligation of repayment. In particular, it analyses how tenants fulfil their reciprocal obligation by behaving properly, performing gratitude and deservingness. The remainder of the chapter shows how the state fails to live up to the mutual obligations inscribed in housing provision. To do so, I provide personal stories of tenants who were unable to get their houses repaired, showing through these examples the systemic failure of public housing maintenance.

Gift-Giving: Housing as a (Non)Reciprocal Exchange System

After months of collective creation and dozens of rehearsals, on 1 May 2019, our theatre group presented its final show. When I arrived at the venue, I was surprised by, and a little unnerved, to see the number of people waiting outside to watch. There were almost forty

people: Waterloo and Redfern local residents, local community organisers, researchers studying the area, and local politicians such as the Deputy Lord Mayor of Sydney, Councillor Linda Scott. Apparently, everyone was curious to see what we had to show.

The opening scene was the ten-minute skit of “The Gift of a Home.” I was the first person to enter the stage, standing up on a chair in a black suit. I represented a government officer and held the power to provide people with a home. Although I was extremely nervous looking to the audience, I had to act as a confident, authoritative character, standing up on the chair, higher than the other actors. I held a box in my hand, exhibiting it as if owning a treasure: it was the key to a new home. For a few seconds, I remained staring at the audience, in silence, until Carrie, who represented a public housing tenant, appeared in the back of the audience, waiving her hand desperately. “Me, me! Please! Choose me!” she screamed.

I looked at the crowd as if looking into a mass of unknown and insignificant people. I squeezed my eyes, as if I could not see anyone. Meanwhile, Carrie continued to move uneasily in the back, mixing with the audience. She jostled people around her to attract attention as if in the midst of desperate people wanting to be chosen. While she acted in despair, I remained calm, indifferent, straight on the chair. I continued to scan the audience for a couple of minutes more, doubtful of whom to choose. After this apprehensive scene opening, I finally pointed, randomly, to Carrie: “You!” I commanded her, “Please come forward.”

Carrie ran desperately, as a spotlight followed her from the back of the audience to the stage at the front. She acted as if she was extremely grateful, as if she couldn’t believe she had been chosen. At this moment, Carrie ran straight toward me, excited to receive her home. But I suddenly stopped her. “Ah! Stop!” I ordered, raising my hand to prevent her from coming closer. “Stand back, please,” I said disdainfully. Carrie apologised, and in a humiliated tone, she thanked me for the gift of her new home. “Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!” she tirelessly repeated it, almost crying. She acted as though eager to get the keys out of the box, but I hesitated to give it to her. I wanted to make sure she would take care of the place and honour her gift. “Do you know how privileged and lucky you are?” I asked. Carrie responded nodding her head, looking to the floor – never into my eyes —and bowing to me. In the following lines, I continued to remind her, over and over again, how

lucky she was, as if needing to make Carrie feel embarrassed and humiliated while begging for a place to live.

I sustained my position and continued to ask if she would take care of her own place. “Will you clean it every day?” I asked her. “Do you know how to clean a house?” Carrie continued to simply nod. At this point, I slowly started to give her the keys while still asking questions, and Carrie carefully reached out her hands to get the keys. When she was getting closer, I abruptly moved my hands back again with the keys: “You know, the house has some broken windows, but I am sure you don’t mind and will be able to fix it, right?” The audience laughed at this line, while Carrie hesitated: “Broken windows?” she doubted. My answer was sharp: “So you don’t want it? Because if you don’t someone else will...” “No! No! I am sorry,” Carrie said, regretting her hesitation, and reasserting that she was extremely grateful for her gift.

We played like this for about five minutes, until at the end of the scene, I finally gave Carrie the keys, still acting as though suspicious about her. Once she received the keys, she thanked me again and left the front stage through the middle aisle in the audience. When she was distant enough from me, she said in a quieter voice: “What an asshole...” The audience laughed in reference to the irony of this final scene. Then, all the lights went down, and the scene ended.

Although intentionally exaggerated, this scene dramatised a common dynamic between state landlords and public housing tenants, or more broadly speaking, between givers and receivers: the obligations of reciprocity embedded in these relationships. Through a humorous and ironic approach, the scene – created and interpreted by residents – highlighted the exchange relationship underlying the public housing system in New South Wales. The performance represented the system of rights and moral obligations that informed the everyday practices and behaviours of public housing residents, ultimately regulating shared ideals of citizenship. Crucially, the scene expressed how people both refused and make sense of this asymmetrical and non-reciprocal relationship.

Specifically, “The Gift of a Home” revealed the moral economies that sustain social relations between citizens and government. On the one hand, despite the increased dismantling of the public housing system in Australia under contemporary neoliberal governments, authorities acknowledge that they still hold a minimal moral obligation to

provide basic shelter for the country's citizens – and voters. On the other hand, this assistance must be repaid. The few residents that still have access to this increasingly scarce resource must show themselves grateful by complying with a series of norms and obligations: they must keep their houses in “good conditions,” comply with annual inspections, keep noise to a minimum, commit to searching for a job, maintain good relationships with their neighbours, and so on.

In everyday interactions residents realise quickly that alongside government assistance comes high levels of social expectation – not without suspicion and distrust – about appropriate behaviours. This expectation, in turn, is embodied by residents who feel morally obligated to live up to expectations or risk suffering a permanent judgement of individual guilt and blame if they fail, as well as homelessness. Nevertheless, in exchange for good behaviour, Housing Departments are also expected to meet certain obligations such the maintenance and the security of the place, maintaining like this a dynamic exchange circle. Yet, such obligations are rarely fulfilled without persistence, conflict and sometimes even humiliation on the part of the recipient.

From Social Contract to Conditional Welfare

Historically, this reciprocal exchange system was seen as part of a social contract between citizens and the state. In the last decades, however, this presumption has changed dramatically, producing crucial alterations in the moral economies of public housing residents. The exchange system between citizens and the state has been reconfigured over the last decades to include other actors such as private parties and the non-governmental sector. The initial model of a social contract established that in return for resident contributions to society – mainly through taxes, labour and war services – citizens were entitled to material resources such as housing and other social protections. In other words, the state had the moral obligation to care for workers who contributed to the country, “from cradle to grave” (Alexander et al., 2018). This model was particularly prevalent during the post-war period, when a specific configuration of state, labour and capital in the Global North established what is commonly known as the “welfare state.” At the core of this model was an entitlement ideal associated with productivity and national citizenship. In Australia, housing policies of the period imagined public housing residents as White and low-to moderate-wage male workers and their families. The moral economy of public housing

residents, thus, was associated with the country's economic prosperity, with respectable families and the right to a home in exchange for labour.

From the 1970s onward, however, the moral evaluation of public housing residents started to gradually shift. With the neoliberalisation of public housing policies, new emphasis was placed on individual responsibility. The "productive" citizen was no longer the idealised subject of housing policies. Instead, as Hyatt (2011) suggested, the idealised subjects of neoliberal policies are mainly autonomous individuals responsible for making the right choices and using the services provided by the free-market. Citizens are thus imagined as consumers and "homeowners," not renters or public housing residents, and the highest values orienting neoliberal policies are freedom, consumer choice, market-based freedoms and competition.

As a result, in recent decades, the Australian public housing system has undergone critical changes. The system has been financialised, public housing assets have been transferred to Community Housing Providers, home ownership policies and assistance to the private rental market have been prioritised, market rents have been introduced into public housing, and mixed capital corporations have been created to manage public housing as assets. Austerity-based and market-oriented reforms have been crucial to reconfiguring these relationships between citizens, the market, and the state and state-like organisations. More importantly, these changes have redrawn the lines between eligible and non-eligible applicants, between the good and the bad citizens.

An effect of these changes to housing policies has been the emergence and reinforcement of welfare conditionalities as "an ideology enacted upon citizens" (Parsell, Vincent, Klein, Clarke and Walsh, 2020, p. 5). Following Watts and Fitzpatrick (2008), this model of governance represents a radical shift in the state's role and responsibilities, from meeting all citizens' needs towards a model in which welfare is designed to change and control some citizens' behaviour. It does so through the combination of three practices: the establishment of the socially appropriate behaviours citizens should follow; the surveillance of compliance on these prescribed behaviours; and the penalisation of any eventual transgressions (Parsell et al., 2020).

In Australia, an iconic example of this paradigm is the Cashless Debit Card initiative. In this program, welfare recipients have 20% of free use of their welfare benefit, while 80%

of their support payment comes with restrictive use. The 80% is managed through a debit card – privately administrated – preventing the recipients from using the benefit for purchases such as alcohol or gambling (Vincent, Markham and Klein, 2020). As this policy example reveals, welfare conditionality is often justified through a paternalistic rationale (Parsell et al., 2020). According to this approach, states must orient and incentivise people, for their own good, to make correct choices – such as look for a job, refrain from stigmatised purchases, and behave properly in society. Importantly, this new form of governmentality unsettles the strict boundaries between social inclusion and exclusion. In contrast, it establishes a model of differentiated inclusion, characterised by the state’s hyper-segmentation of society and an hierarchical system of integration (Ávila 2012).

In this context, different authors such as Koster (2015) and Smart (2013) have highlighted that current housing policies are sharply marked by moralising discourses of deservingness, respectability and dependency. These relationships were explicitly expressed by residents in our theatre scene of “The Gift of a Home.” During the performance, government officers repeatedly asked if Carrie knew how to clean her place, if she would maintain her place in an organised way, if she could fix the broken window of the new house given to her by the New South Wales government. Moreover, current changes in eligibility requirements and allocation priorities – such as disabilities, aging care needs or mental illness – have facilitated the redefinition of public housing subjects as what could be considered the “underclass:” a category charged with moral judgements that fuel territorial stigmatisation. As a result, the former criteria of citizenship and labour no longer set the parameters of policy making. Instead, housing policies include increasingly more restrictive eligibility conditions, such as means-tested subsidies and strict norms against anti-social behaviour.

In the course of these structural changes, different authors have also highlighted the links between the emergence of neoliberal practices and the elaboration of a punitive surveillance apparatus targeting the poor. For example, Wacquant (2009) demonstrates the intricate relationship between three main phenomena associated with the emergence of neoliberalism: first, the commodification of public goods and the rise of underpaid jobs; second, the shift of welfare from a collective right to one of workfare in which social protection schemes require gainful activities, penalising unemployment as an individual incapability; and third, the extension of punitive and surveillance measures into low-

income areas in order to bring “law and order” and ensure individual responsibility and proper behaviour.

This logic also explains how political and moral economies become enmeshed in housing policies. As Waterloo demonstrates, several social protection schemes work to shape the conduct and subjectivities of recipients according to the neoliberal values of responsibility, deservingness and independence. Recent examples of such disciplinary and coercive projects are the Vacant Bed Charge, short-term contracts and the introduction of public housing bonds. In New South Wales, under-occupancy – for example, a three bedroom house for a couple – is penalised by a Vacant Bedroom Charge of \$20 to \$30 a week per household. Moreover, in 2018, the state government introduced housing rental bonds for tenants who had previously caused property damage over \$500. In addition to the cost of the damage itself, in those cases tenants must pay a \$500 deposit for their next home. The justification for the bond is to “discourage people from damaging their own property” (NSW Department of Communities and Justice 2018).

Yet, as Lisa explained to me during an interview, tenants do not simply “want” to damage their place (Sydney, March 2021). Her next door neighbour, for example, had drug issues, and had in fact, frequently caused some damage to his place. However, as she argued, instead of financially penalising such tenants, government should provide further services to support them and, in that way, prevent property damage. Otherwise, the residents who need public housing the most because of various social issues – including mental health, drugs or unemployment – ended up being the ones who were most likely to lose their properties and become homeless. Yet, punitive measures have become the main strategy to deal with such social issues in public housing estates in New South Wales. Essentially, the tenancy reforms legislated in the New South Wales *Residential Tenancies Act (2010)*, such as Public Housing Bonds and short-term contracts, attempt to regulate public housing tenants as responsible and independent individuals by encouraging certain behaviours and discouraging and penalising others.

Conceptions of housing provision and the structural requirements in the legitimacy regimes underlying housing provision, are not naturally occurring. They are subject to change. When de-naturalising and re-historicising the rights over housing, it is thus possible to see how shifts in moral economy can produce crucially different social effects, with ethical and

political implications such as the humiliation expressed in “The Gift of a Home” scene or through the surveillance over public housing behaviour. For Fassin (2009), moral economy changes produce new ethical orientations, redistribute sensibilities within a society, and articulate new narratives that may, in turn, be reappropriated by local communities, governments and international organisations.

Accordingly, the changes in the moral economy of public housing residents occurred alongside broader structural, political, economic and ideological changes. In the last decade, the system of legitimacy associated with public housing has been reconfigured from the metaphor of a social contract to a system of conditional welfare that depends on deservingness. Since each system imagines and shapes its citizens differently, the moralities attached to public housing also shifted, from workers’ families to “the underclass.” Accordingly, the conditional meanings now associated with public housing tenants have brought a dramatic change to how Waterloo residents make sense of their citizenship. Housing, in this sense, is not a universal citizen right. Instead, tenant’s rights – or deservingness – over a state-owned house, depends on how they behave, on their employment records, or how much they earn.

Returning the Gift: Deservingness and Gratitude

It is no coincidence that the scene of “The Gift of a Home” chose to represent the ritualised moment of receiving a key and becoming an official public housing tenant. The scene not only dramatised a nonreciprocal and asymmetrical exchange system, but it also portrayed a rite of passage that indicated the entering of a new stage. Public housing systems draw on modern rituals, like placing one’s signature on a contract to start a new tenancy, to suggest a changing of subject condition to one in which residents must start behaving differently and comply with new norms and rules. Below, Lisa describes the process of applying for a home, of being granted a place and finally moving in. Her story reveals the changes in the tenancy allocation and the process those changes entail.

Lisa is a middle-aged woman, as many others are in Waterloo, who lives by herself in one of the walk-up buildings of the Waterloo Estate. She first applied for a public house in the 1980s and had to wait almost three years to be granted an apartment. “Up until that time, houses were for low-income working families,” she explained to me, “and so they changed it, so that single people and unemployed people could apply. That was me,” she told me in

an interview (Sydney, August 2020). When she first applied, she was living in a squat owned by the Department of Housing. However, when the Department reclaimed the building to turn it into new flats and terraces, Lisa was left with no home. While looking for support through the same Department of Housing, an officer recommended she modify the application and apply together with her partner at the time. As he explained to her, there were few one-bedroom places available, and so it would be easier for her to apply for a two-bedroom place, if she could justify living with someone else.¹ Already at this point, it was noticeable how tenancy requirements affected households and personal lives, such as moving in, or not, with a partner. Nevertheless, Lisa accepted the proposal and followed the officer's advice. "Sometimes you can find nice officers that are really there to help you," she ironically told me, and in fact, this individual's advice changed Lisa's housing possibilities. After being on the list for almost three years, the change to her application meant that she was granted a two-bedroom flat in about six weeks. Although it seemed a long time to me, she highlighted that this was relatively quick: "now it is about ten years."

Back then, she had the option to choose from up to three areas in which to live. She applied for inner-Sydney because she had been living in Darlinghurst and wanted to continue living in the city. However, during her three-year application wait, the government changed the boundaries for inner-Sydney: "That kind of upset me; they just changed the rules," she explained. But finally, as she put it, "It worked out." They first gave her a flat in Marrickville, another suburb in the inner-West of Sydney, but then, she managed to swap it for a unit in Waterloo about eight months later. She has lived there ever since.

Regarding the paperwork, Lisa described it as a "pretty much standard lease." She said: "I just had a lease that said to keep the property in reasonable conditions." But this sense of "being standard," predictable, almost mechanical and repetitive, was exactly what Lisa was looking for and what this transitional ritual enacted. The "standard lease" for her meant security and a materialised stability: "I got a lifetime lease," she told me. Carrie, another middle-aged woman living in Waterloo, had shared the same feeling when she moved into her new place. She described it to me as a "relief" to finally be able to settle. In Lisa's words, this is what a "standard" and lifetime lease meant: "There was this idea, at least in

¹ Current policies allow single people to apply for two-bedroom flats. Given the increasing number of single applications – pensioners, widows, divorced women – and the lack of one-bedroom stock, policies changed to facilitate allocation.

my head, that because of that [lifetime lease], you can treat it [the apartment] like it's your place. You can hang pictures. You can paint. You can put in a carpet, or rip it up as I have done." However, with the introduction of short-term leases in New South Wales in 2006, that sense of belonging and ownership has changed. For Lisa, now, "If they come to check, and you've made a mess, or... broken stuff or... I don't know... It's much easier for them to kick you out" (Sydney, August 2020).

With this last reflection, Lisa drew attention to the "deserving regime" underlying the moral and political economy of the current housing system. Specifically, she referred to the growing need for public housing tenants to demonstrate that they actually deserved their places. Lisa's life trajectory illustrated the wider structural shifts in the understanding of public housing provision from a social contract to a system for the "deserving." Moreover, her comments revealed the social effects of these shifts on how residents make sense of their own living conditions as public housing tenants. Whereas she once felt her lease gave her assurance, even the possibility of treating her place like a property she owned, her new residency felt tenuous and provisional, making her subject to being relocated or even homeless if she failed to live up to the conditions of her occupancy. Increasingly, her residency felt precarious and conditional.

Deservingness

Lisa's trajectory highlights that the process of becoming a public housing tenant is never fully finished, but rather, is ongoing, dynamic and contested. After being granted a house, the resident must daily express their deservingness to the property. During the theatre group's *Interim Project*, several exercises exposed the conflicting ways in which residents tried to prove themselves rightful possessors of a home. One day, Sophia asked us to create a gesture that would represent what was important for us in a home. How do we stay at home? How do we feel? What do we do? Following this orientation, Lisa first created a scene in which she danced, freely, in her private bedroom. Carrie, on the other hand, performed a short scene in which she dreamed of decorating her own place. She sat on the floor and acted as if she was holding a magazine – "one of those typical house magazines," she later explained, "where you can make your own wish list." On the floor, with her legs crossed, she started to flip through the imaginary magazine's pages, speaking to herself, as if hearing another voice: "She said I should imagine..." she mumbled, while continuing to flip pages. "She said I should imagine," she repeated it. In the next act, she abruptly closed

the magazine and protested: “This is not working!” Then, little by little, she began to daydream: she imaged herself painting her house a new colour, putting up a blue curtain, and a new bathroom. During this scene, she also played with the different meanings of needing and wanting: “I want a washing machine,” she exclaimed. “I don’t need it... But I want it!” she stressed.

Inspired by her performance, we commented on the distinction that Carrie had proposed between actually needing something and wanting things for their own sake. In the discussion, Lisa also felt encouraged to share her personal experience. She complained about the fact that she commonly had to explain to other tenants why she smoked, and how she could afford it. Considering a package of cigarettes in Australia costs an average of \$40, Lisa shared the moral judgements she had to deal with in her own community because she spent a considerable proportion of her income on cigarettes. Likewise, she mentioned that she also felt she had to provide explanations of a recent trip to London.

Underlying these comments was an expectation placed on public housing tenants – and any other citizen who receive government support – about how they should spend their personal income. As part of a collective judgment, public housing tenants feel they need to perform austerity and financial responsibility. Expenditures like leisure travel or buying a new car, as different participants in the theatre group shared, may be misinterpreted as extravagances or luxuries, thus unsettling the expectation of public housing tenants in relation to poverty. According to this implicit social logic, welfare benefits should be spent on basic material needs only because any recipient should be abjectly poor. Drinking alcohol or smoking is perceived as a misallocation of public funding for immoral or anti-social behaviours.

A practical result of these judgements, as we discussed in the group, is that no resident claimed during the consultations to want a pub included in the redevelopment, even though the local pub was currently an important place for socialising, and that neighbourhood pubs are an institution in Australian life. As a result, everyday experiences of moral judgement led residents to feel that life was being increasingly regulated through a disciplining moral project that justified social policies and made welfare conditional in ways that did not even accord with an everyday Australian life. Rather, these experiences mobilised a moral economy of guilt, blame and shame within the community itself, which often mirrored the state’s own governmentality. In other words, residents themselves reproduced the

deserving judgements promoted by state government, maintaining a self-controlling system within the community of Waterloo.

This social expectation has been identified by Mark Peel (2003) as the “performance of poverty” in the Australian context. During Peel’s investigation of poverty in the country, one research participant told him that, when he was in high school, the teacher used to say that “[t]he disadvantaged Schools Program coordinator is coming out; look poor,” in an ironic, and yet serious way (Peel, 2003, p. 26), indicating that it was not enough to simply *be* poor. Drawing on several other similar events, Peel demonstrated that explanations of behaviour, decisions and aspirations are constantly demanded of welfare recipients who must “look precarious” in order to be judged, and continue to be judged, as deserving.

Poverty performance not only has material effects on what one can buy or do. As Carrie’s performance about her house wish list expressed, the need for an austerity performance also has dramatic effects on subjectivities: in what a poor person is allowed, or disallowed, to wish or desire. While stating that she didn’t *need* a washing machine, but that she simply *wanted* one, Carrie was expressing the expectation of austerity that is imposed on public housing tenants. Public housing tenants are expected to only have things that they actually need for basic living conditions. Yet, as Carrie’s performance implied, the difference between needing and wanting reflects an ongoing dispute over the boundaries between the good and the acceptable. It reveals the values, norms and moral obligations embedded in any form of dispossession (Palomera and Theodora 2016). In the context of a public housing estate like Waterloo, then, desire becomes profoundly controlled, ultimately functioning as a form of violence over a tenant’s own possibilities of dreaming. Here, home fantasy is penalised as a whim, and indulging oneself even in dreams may be misinterpreted by housing officials and the local community as living beyond one’s own possibilities, or even mispending public subsidies.

Yet, poverty performance clashes with the government’s expressed desire to build independent individuals. At the same time that government policies seek to shape welfare recipients into independent, motivated and ambitious individuals, these same subjects must also perform as the poor in order to retain their right to a home. While intended to suppress only specific and targeted behaviours – those considered immoral like alcohol consumption or destruction of public property – conditional welfare eventually actually prevents citizens

from thriving in the multiple other dimensions of their lives because they feel obliged to continually perform that they are both abject and deserving.

Related to the distinction proposed by Carrie between need and want was the differentiation between need and preference. In May 2019, I joined a meeting of the Redfern Legal Centre – a local centre that offered free legal advice for tenants and local community members – to talk about the right of return announced by the redevelopment. According to the claims by authorities, after the redevelopment every resident would have the right to return to the neighbourhood. Nevertheless, this right was not yet officially announced in a policy, nor did residents know where they would be able to return to: to which house, to which building. They thus feared not being granted this right, or being forced to move to less desirable residences, without a balcony or with fewer bedrooms, for example. Given this concern, local lawyers recommended that tenants write a request of return and start documenting everything that could “prove” their need to return to a specific type of unit. For instance, they recommended getting a doctor’s declaration about mobility needs that could justify requesting a ground or first-floor flat. According to this advice, by using the authority of a doctor – and thus also medicalising their social needs – residents could justify certain conditions as necessities, rather than just priorities, and request specific types or features of a house.

In this case, residents were again required to justify their personal wishes, aspirations and needs. Once again, authorities acted to regulate their desires, always suspicious about certain requests. A doctor or other authority could make a request on their behalf, but their own preferences were not considered legitimate. Residents had to demonstrate, once more, what they deserved to have and where they deserved to be. Here, it is also worth remembering the official goals of the redevelopment consultation in Waterloo. As the official documents announced, the consultation expected to identify Waterloo’s needs and aspirations. Yet, the deservingness regime underpinning public housing policies had crucial impacts on tenants’ wishes and desires. As a result, daily life experiences, occurring outside the consultation program, became central to understanding the limits and contradictions of this ostensibly democratic initiative.

Failing to follow social expectations poses an ongoing threat to public housing residents, who must daily deal with a haunting fear that they might lose their homes, and be rendered

homeless. One last scene during our theatre activities illustrated this fear and the impacts it has on the daily lives of residents.

In a short skit, Carrie praised a painting that she loved. She had received it as a gift from a friend when she moved into Waterloo. The painting was beautiful, and she had it hanging in the centre of her living room. Yet, in her monologue, she told us how she would hide the frame every time she had an inspection. She feared the inspector would see the frame, think it was too pretty, and question her right to the apartment. Simply imagining this situation, Carrie described a common threat, even a paranoia, shared by many residents in the estate. Similar to the panopticon effect described by Foucault (1991a), this threat acted as a self-disciplining mechanism, leading residents to regulate their own aspirations, to preemptively conceal what *might* be considered unacceptable activities, and even hide belongings they thought *might* look suspicious.

The threat of eviction was thus a major influence on what residents felt they were allowed to do. During our exercises, for example, Lisa once performed a critique of a government officer working in Waterloo. However, later that day she regretted the performance and asked us not to include it in the final performance. As she told me after the session, the coordinators of the theatre did not live in Waterloo, “but me,” she said, “I have to see [the government officer] the next day.” Lisa was concerned about the consequences of her critique, finally choosing to avoid potential conflicts with anyone who held power over her tenancy, who had given her “the gift of a home,” and were allowing her to continue enjoying that “gift.”

Gratitude

Another common behaviour expected from residents was the demonstration of gratitude. In response to the continual veiled threat to their residency, tenants sought to perform gratitude in order to secure their homes. In the government’s official discourse, one common argument that justified the need to show appreciation was the limited number of public housing units available, and the growing list of those who wanted them. This imbalance fuelled the conceptualisation of housing provision as a privilege instead of a right. According to this assumption, the recipients must recognise their privilege and act gratefully, regardless of the housing conditions, location or service one might receive. During “The Gift of a Home” initial game, Lisa clearly signalled this relationship. She

offered a gift home with leaks, suggesting that residents should not mind. In other words, she made explicit the perception that public housing tenants should not complain or make demands. Rather, they should be grateful for anything. Lisa disagreed with this perspective and told me she thought that “to have a castle was a privilege, not a roof over [her] head.” The poor quality of the housing made the expectation of unqualified gratitude too onerous. In sharing this, she refused to demonstrate an absolute and uncritical attitude towards the state’s assistance.

However, the sense of gratitude can change dramatically depending on one’s life trajectory. Carla, for instance, an immigrant woman from Brazil, constantly reminded me how grateful she was for her home and the Australian government as a whole. When I visited her at her place, she made sure to retrieve from her drawer her Medicare card. She told me about the good relationship she had with her doctors, all with offices close by her house. While entering the flat, Carla proudly showed me everything and told me how an inspector who had come recently to her place complimented her for her clean house. At the time, she was satisfied to be recognised by a state representative – a housing inspector – as a clean and organised person, in contrast to the negative image associated with public housing tenants. She wanted to publicly share how she complied with her obligations, demonstrating her entitlement to the house.

Carla prepared a coffee for me, and while we talked, she continued to tell me all the “good things” she received from the Australian government. She described to me in detail how she got an English teacher from the government to support her when her husband passed away. She was also very pleased with her neighbours, who were mainly women, and had developed a strong solidary network with them. As a religious woman, she told me that being good to our neighbours was what the Bible taught us to do. Being a “good” tenant for her, then, had religious value as well, as did her reciprocal understandings of giving and receiving.

Carla was clearly grateful for her life in Waterloo, especially when comparing it with her previous experiences with public services in her hometown, Minas Gerais, in Brazil. The fact that she was not originally born an Australian citizen also contributed to her perceptions. She framed the good quality public services as acts of generosity rather than a right due to her in the first place. For her, the state’s social schemes might be considered

entitlements for born and raised Australian citizens, part of a social contract between the state and those with formal citizenship status, however, that she, a woman from another country, could be granted a public house, had special meaning to Carla.

During our conversation, I did not ask her any specific question about her gratitude or relations with the government, yet she felt compelled to perform such gratitude. However, when I was preparing to leave her home, she offered me some of her clothes, telling me that she had already begun organising to move out, back in 2019. She confessed she was devastated at being told she had to leave. She demonstrated a dual response of gratitude and sadness in relation to the Australian government. She performed gratitude, yet could not avoid showing her sadness over the redevelopment.

Paternalism and Tutelage

The mixed feelings experienced by Carla and many others in Waterloo may also be understood as the outcome of the paternalistic relationship between the state and its citizen. As part of this relationship, citizens could simultaneously experience both protection and violence. In Waterloo, the moral economy of public housing provision was strictly linked to a state tutelage relationship. Pacheco defines tutelage as a form of domination marked by the exercise of intermediation, anchored in the contradictory principles of protection and repression. Such a paradox constitutes a particular form of social relationship that can be used one at a time, in different contexts, depending on the purpose. Fundamentally, this form of domination undermines the autonomy of the participating subjects by a figure of authority responsible to intermedate, guide or even protect certain citizens. The core paradox of this system is that, once citizens receive protection, they are simultaneously subjected to increased state control over their daily lives, more than any other ordinary citizen, and incapable of exercising the independence and autonomy the state claims to be encouraging.

In a tutelage regime, a group may speak on behalf of another group, establishing an interdependent relationship based on collective expectations, moral obligations and unequal exchange. In the case of Waterloo, such authority is justified by political mandates and transmitted through institutional rituals. In practice, the tutelage system shaping the housing policies of Waterloo means that authorities may dictate what is the best way to deal with local conflicts or how the neighbourhood should be changed, even if the majority

of residents disagree. As Chatterjee (2020) demonstrated in her recent study on the Waterloo Estate, the Land and Housing Corporation mobilises different policies and tenancy legislations – such as the anti-social behaviour management policy (NSW Department of Communities and Justice, 2021) – to place conditions on individual residents’ flats, acting as the protector of both the tenants and properties.

These forms of relationships share significant parallels with the historical modes of territory control and governing in colonised countries like Australia. Missionaries, for example, ignored or prohibited the original languages of the Indigenous people, teaching them a new language while imposing Christian values and rituals on them in an attempt to coerce Indigenous communities into settlers’ customs, justifying this as an improvement in their lives. In this sense, the redevelopment of Waterloo proposal feeds from, and at the same time reinforces, a moral economy underlying public housing policies that resembles colonial regimes. Following a paternalistic logic, the redevelopment becomes a just war against anti-social behaviours, a way of freeing residents from their own evils.

In this vein, public discourses draws on the moral economy of public housing to justify a supposedly urgent need for state intervention in Waterloo. The redevelopment is described as necessary to recover a degraded area, but mainly, to morally transform its residents. Ultimately, redevelopment is conceptualised as a strategy to “civilise” the community in a colonial sense, and create a new neighbourhood of good and productive citizens.

When the State Fails: Maintaining Homes and Infrastructures

The relationship between a public housing tenant and the state does not end in the act of receiving, but continues in the daily work to maintain housing as liveable. Accordingly, the analysis of what happens *after* Waterloo residents receive a home becomes central to understanding the everyday moralities associated with the effort of house maintenance, particularly in the face of the failure of the state in meeting its own obligations to maintain public housing in a fit state for occupancy.

When I met Stacy, a Waterloo tenant, in 2019, she was already complaining about her long and unresolved campaign to fix the toilet in her apartment. We were on a street corner of Waterloo. She was smoking while telling me, in detail, her agony over this, cursing everyone for what she was going through. “I am sorry for my words,” she apologised,

nevertheless still angrily. Stacy was an older Italian woman with a child, who had migrated to Australia when young. Her problems with the toilet in her unit had started in mid-2017, and it was not until 2021 that the situation was resolved by her managing to be transferred to a new apartment. The toilet had overflow and flooded the bathroom; it smelled badly, and she had to clean it every day. When she was telling me the story, another tenant looked at me, shocked, and later on, confessed: “I don’t know how could she live under those conditions for such a long time.” It was indeed hard to imagine the stress of receiving an endless parade of plumbers, no solution, and having to manage a malfunctioning toilet for almost two years.

Later, when I asked Stacy to tell me again the details of her journey towards getting the problem resolved, she sent me by email an impressive written account of every phone call, every “job number,” the dates and times of the plumbers who visited. It was a personal diary that she decided to register after her accumulated frustration; it was her instrument to claim accountability and to pressure authorities, while seeking further help. In the message when she sent the log, she wrote:

I am sending you the entire logs, lots to read, but you will be able to appreciate how long it took, 4 years until [...] Jenny Leong green member intervene and even then it was patch work on the pipes to my toilet. Sometimes, out of frustration I use foul language. Sorry about that. It’s a long read of interaction between me and the various authorities. I finally got moved from there thanks to Jenny. [...] Please don't mind my language and sorry for the lengthy log.

Blessings, Stacy

The short message summarises Stacy’s story of frustration. It illustrates the agony lived by a public housing tenant trying to have her toilet, a basic utility in any home, fixed, and her long and futile “interaction between [her] and the various authorities.” It was not until she decided to use different channels, seeking an intervention by the local Member of Parliament for Waterloo, Jenny Leong, that she had her problem resolved, not by having the toilet finally fixed, but by being allowed to transfer to another place. The document log itself tracks Stacy’s story with impressive detail, showing the centrality of this issue to her daily living. The document starts with a first sentence that synthesises her frustrating

journey – the first day of what would later become, for her, a nightmare: “19/07/18, work number 8001334486, plumber no show, I called twice they didn’t call me.”

Following this initial register, the log records a sequence of similar disappointments: “He was sent to wrong address;” “I heard nothing after that;” “He showed up half an hour later;” “They could have called, I was here waiting like an idiot;” “He said he can do nothing.” The list of frustrated experiences continued, providing emotionally charged accounts: “I was disheartened, they did it again, they got the wrong order;” “This sucks;” “Toilet did it again, I panicked;” “WTF;” “My heart sank;” “They were cold and dismissive;” “He said plumbers know what they are doing (big joke here);” “Holy Mary protect us.”

After almost four years of interacting with different people – the Land and Housing Corporation, the maintenance call centre, outsourced plumbing contractors, and others – Stacy expressed in different ways her anger and frustration. At the beginning of the problem, plumbers thought the toilet was blocked. They cleaned it, but the problem persisted, and the water kept flushing from time to time. Afterwards, Stacy’s main struggle was that the department of maintenance kept repeatedly sending someone to unblock the toilet, even though Stacy had already explained that blockage was not the problem. Plumbers, then, normally came to do the wrong work and had to return with no results. For Stacy, this was “patchwork.” She wanted to solve the root cause of the problem and requested, as she was advised, a pothole cleaning. Her problem was further complicated due to Stacy’s difficulties in explaining herself to contractors and using the right technical words in English. In September 2018, for example, she wrote: “Camera inside revealed pothole (*I’m finally using those words correctly, sorry*) at about 4/5 metres full of water.”

Finally, after several attempts and the wrong person being sent, in September of 2018 plumbers came to undertake the job in the pothole. During the cleaning, contractors found scarfs, t-shirts, tree roots and underwear. Yet the problem remained, and this triggered another issue for Stacy. She started to look for individual residents responsible for throwing in clothes and blocking the pipe. But still, Stacy was thrilled that she had finally had this job done: “Praise for the plumbers” she wrote, “Plumbers worked really hard.” As she acknowledged, not everyone mistreated her in the process. However, more than individual mistreatment, she was tired of the whole process. To be fair, she sometimes shared pleasant interactions with officers who stood out in the tedious process. Yet, what overwhelmingly

prevailed through the whole process was a feeling of being abandoned: “no phone call,” “cancelled appointment,” “wrong work sent,” she constantly wrote in her log.

Even after the pothole cleaning, the toilet continued to overflow. Stacy then tried different strategies and alternative channels. At the beginning of 2019, she managed to contact higher ranked officers at the Land and Housing Corporation to treat her case as a special one. However, when dealing with higher officers, she had to remain careful to sound respectful and not abusive. On January of 2019, for instance, she wrote: “I have to call Ron. Hope he doesn’t get tired of me.” With this worry, Stacy expressed the social norms implicit in her interaction with more senior officers: they have limited time and she felt she should not contact them too much. Otherwise, they held the power to either resolve her case faster or slower.

In addition to the Land and Housing Corporation officials, Stacy also contacted Lorraine, the tenant’s representative of her building, who actively intervened on her behalf, pressing for a quicker solution during the tenants’ representative meetings and using the privileged channels they maintained with the Housing Department. Finally, as her initial email explained, Stacy also contacted Jenny Leong, Waterloo’s local Member of Parliament, to request extra support, finally organising an apartment transfer for her and her son when the problem could not be resolved.

I use the personal story of Stacy to bring into the analysis the pain and suffering, as well as time, involved in the process of maintaining and trying to repair public housing, even for a repair that was not the responsibility of the tenant. This extended description conveys some of the affective dimension of her struggle with state representatives, foregrounding what Smadar Lavie (2012) describes as “bureaucratic torture.” Drawing on this experience, and similar other, this section highlights the constitutive role of emotions and affects in the making of political subjectivities. Here, the state becomes an object of emotional investments: more than just epiphenomena, emotions like the pain and frustration suffered by Stacy emerge as structural of the political field and its intersubjectivities (Laszczkowski and Reeves, 2018). In this section, then, I link the emotionally and morally changed encounters between residents and state representatives (including outsourced service providers) to discuss the building of a differentiated urban citizenship through unequal infrastructure. To do so, I depart from this lived experience of a distressing campaign to

repair a toilet to first discuss the implications of wider infrastructural disruptions such as the sewage system in urban contexts, and then the government's failure to maintain a properly functioning city for every citizen.

Infrastructural Violence

Modern urban life tends to take for granted the networks that allow the city to function. Pipes, wires, ducts, tunnels, tubes, cables and other infrastructure systems tend to remain invisible, most of them underground, until something ceases to work in harmony with urban rhythms (Graham, 2010). In those moments, as Stacy's experience dramatically exposed, an underground existence re-emerges to the surface, revealing the structures that sustain and allow urban life: energy, water, transport and sewage systems. Above all, in those instants of disrupted flows, it is possible to understand the usually subterranean politics of the circulation, flows and connections within cities, and the associated politics of repair and maintenance. Stacy's story – including the persistent breakdowns and unattended claims – reveals at the same time the uneven distribution of infrastructures in the city, the legal-bureaucratic instruments that either accelerated or delayed repair (Grealy, 2021), and the impact of these on urban citizenship.

Although largely overlooked in the politics of housing, infrastructures are also central to the proper functioning of homes. Several case studies in Waterloo have described how toilets block, ceilings collapse, and windows break. Houses do eventually disassemble without the necessary ongoing maintenance work (Grealy, 2021). Stacy's story provides an example of the ongoing efforts by residents to hold homes in place, despite bureaucratic constraints and political under-prioritisation. Bearing that in mind, her experience raises the fundamental question of how some houses manage to remain intact, while others fall apart.

The painful experience lived by Stacy might initially seem like an isolated incident of housing disassembly or simply a run of bad luck. However, returning to the scene played out in "The Gift of a Home," the chronic probability was already explicit in the irony of giving a "new" home with a leak or "full of cockroaches." During my fieldwork I encountered a number of cases of ongoing impasses and suffering from these sorts of conflicts. Lisa, for instance, also shared with me a long experience trying to fix her toilet. In a demoralised tone of voice, she confessed that it was a "disgusting" situation having to

deal with sewage in her bathroom. Her case, as in Stacy's, was not easy to fix. After seven months of complaining and daily cleaning of her bathroom, Lisa went to a tribunal against the government. She finally won the case, her toilet was fixed, and the government granted her a three-month rent compensation. However, as she highlighted, she "had the wit" to do this: she knew who to ask for legal support, how to appeal in the tribunals, and was aware of her right to request compensation. She reached out for legal advice to the Tenants Union, a local community group that supports tenants in situations like Lisa's or Stacy's. Nevertheless, as different residents shared with me, not everyone is aware of these free services, nor do they have the social knowledge of who to contact, or how. Stacy also resorted to a tenants' representative, higher officers, and later on the local Member of Parliament, but many just stay trapped in unresolvable circles of pursuing housing maintenance that never seems to arrive.

Both cases provide examples of a wider challenge facing public housing in Australia. The 2016 New South Wales Inquiry into Public Housing Maintenance described a dramatic situation of consistent failure of the state to meet its legal obligations to repair and maintain its property adequately (Legislative Assembly of New South Wales, 2016). According to the report, residents faced multiple problems: long periods of waiting that could reach more than fifteen years; recurring issues caused by the so-called "patchworks;" an increasing number of requests – an average of four per resident in a year; and an increasing number of residents who resorted to legal actions and local advocacy groups to get repairs done. The inquiry revealed a host of unresolved issues under the justification of high costs and the prioritisation of planned work over responsive maintenance, given the possibility of economy of scale in planned work. Accordingly, the report showed concern over the accumulation of unresolved issues and their impacts on housing safety and health, including poor ventilation, sewage contamination, slippery floors, allergies, and respiratory and skin conditions due to mould. Furthermore, the inquiry highlighted the tracking difficulties caused by the fragmentation of the maintenance service into two different agencies – one dedicated to tenancy management (Housing New South Wales) and the other one to asset management (the Land and Housing Corporation) – as well as multiple outsourced contractors (currently six contractors, who may also outsource their services to other sub-contractors). Finally, the inquiry also raised a growing concern over disrespectful and intimidatory relationships between tenants and contractors, given the vulnerable condition

of public housing tenants, and the consequences of outsourcing public services according to a low-cost priority. Examples included tenants being coerced to report “good services,” abusive relationships with non-English speakers and dwellers who suffered mental illness, arriving at tenants’ homes without appointment and reporting “refuse entry.” The situation was so dramatic that local advocacy groups such as The Redfern Legal Centre and Tenants Union provided public housing tenants factsheets to inform them of residents’ rights. In the *Repair Kit* (Redfern Legal Centre, 2019), for example, the Redfern Legal Centre explains how to get the Department of Communities and Justice (DCJ) to support tenants to “navigate” the process of repair and modifications.

The systematic breakdown of housing maintenance reveals the unequal distribution of the material, social and symbolic conditions to live in the urban context. In this vein, Rodgers and O’Neill (2012) link the systemic inequality of infrastructure to the notion of structural violence through the act of governing. Drawing on Paul Farmer (2004), these authors recognise structural violence as an indirect form of violence in which no one is ostensibly directly responsible, although everyone might be implicated. They propose the reading of infrastructure as a material channel for structural violence (Rodgers and O’Neill, 2012). For them, infrastructural violence is both the embodiment of violence and its instrument, not only reflecting, but mostly reinforcing social orders.

This structural dimension of infrastructure repoliticises Stacy’s apparently individual issue, thus reconstituting the socio-spatial production of suffering in a city like Sydney. As her trajectory shows, the often-ignored experience of trying to fix one’s home – and eventually being prevented from doing so – includes everyday interactions with plumbers, maintenance hotlines, forms and applications, which constitute the social and material forms of violence. Here, it is also crucial to foreground time as a technique of governance (Bear, 2016), in which legal and bureaucratic instruments manipulate time in accordance with contracts, programs or planned works of repair (Greal, 2021). In Stacy’s diary, for instance, recurrent references to time were explicit: “no one came,” “I was waiting like an idiot,” “no show.” Contractors can delay or show up unpredictably; Stacy had to wait. Their time was valuable; hers was not. The urgency of her situation did not affect their response.

Fundamentally, underlying these experiences is a mutual obligation system implicit in housing provision, in which one side is ignoring its obligations. As is clear from the

examples and the report, the New South Wales government has constantly failed to meet its legal obligations towards tenants. By failing to comply with the mutual obligations underlying housing provision, *the state* breaks the gift exchange cycle initially represented in the scene of “The Gift of a Home” and its associated obligations to give, receive and return. While residents seek to adhere to the norms and rules agreed to in the exchange agreement within the housing system, the state fails to reciprocate and fulfil its obligation to provide security and housing maintenance.

In Oliveira’s (2004) analysis, this break down of reciprocity and the gift relationship is perceived by the affected party – in this case tenants – as a moral insult. As Oliveira highlights, the obligations associated with the gift-exchange system not only reaffirm the rights of all persons involved, but also the mutual recognition of dignity between the parties. Reading housing provision in these terms, the refusal or inability to return and meet the state’s moral obligation, then, negates the other’s identity and is a refusal to share. As a result, the conflict that emerges out of the state’s unwillingness to maintain public housing is related not only to the material conditions of an appropriate living environment, but to demands that the citizenship of residents be recognised. Correspondently, the conflicts may also be explained by the mismatch between the different perceptions of the housing provision. While governments tend to perceive it as an impersonal and strictly economic transaction, constantly calculating its costs and potential benefits, tenants perceive and live it as an aspect of a social and reciprocal exchange founded on mutual moral obligations.

In short, Stacy’s subsequent encounters with the maintenance system, as simple as fixing a blocked toilet, reveal the material conditions of social suffering that occur within a non-reciprocal exchange system. In addition to the material and failed moral obligation, her experience was also charged with recurring forms of emotional harm, social suffering and frustration that both reflect and reinscribe the meanings of being a social housing tenant. Through these multiple dimensions – material, affective and moral – stories such as the ones narrated by Stacy finally unveil the uneven infrastructures of city and its central role in the building of differentiated citizenship.

Housing Repairs and Political Subjectivity

The failure to repair and maintain a house is not just an isolated episode nor a circumstantial issue. Rather, as Grealy (2021) observes in his fieldwork in the Northern Territory of

Australia, housing disassembly is an endemic living condition. Drawing on Vigh (2008), Grealy argues that the persistent disruption associated with this makes people live in fragmented worlds, rather than realise the promise of normalisation. Housing instability, in a material and spatial sense, then becomes “the long-term context from which people interpret and act in the world” (Grealy, 2021, p. 5).

The changing physical environment of dwellers may work as repositories for meanings, identifications and bodily orientations with political implications (Fennell, 2011). If so, analysing the infrastructural violence lived by public housing residents as constitutive of an emplaced notion of citizenship is possible. Rodgers and O’Neill (2012) argue that the exclusion from the possibility of proper housing conditions – including the urban infrastructure that sustains the possibility of a home – produces a differentiated category of citizenship, rights and claims (Holston and Caldeira, 1999). Infrastructure inequality, then, produces degrees or tiers of citizenship with relative privilege or deprivation.

The long-term disruption of a toilet block and sewage flow inside the intimate space of a home profoundly marks the bodies of residents, who themselves come to be perceived as unhygienic and unclean. Both Lisa and Stacy expressed revulsion and outrage for being subjected to this unpleasant environment for such a long period, without adequate support to overcome the problem. As Anand notes, processes like the ones Lisa and Stacy had to navigate, put in place by the management of public infrastructure and their political and moral economies, facilitate the under-recognition of tenants in the city, here treated as unworthy of full citizenship (Anand, 2012). In other words, through the technopolitical management of public infrastructure, people living in a marginalised area like Waterloo are partially or fully disconnected from the rights of urban citizenship.

Melissa Arrigoitia (2014) has proposed the concept of “home unmaking” in an attempt to reincorporate the “emotional and embodied dimensions of the breakdown of homes” (Arrigoitia, 2014, p. 189). Rather than following technical arguments for housing degradation, she repoliticises this long-term process that may start with an unattended toilet block or ceiling leak. Arrigoitia explores the process of home unmaking not as an isolated event, as it can be seen in the image of housing demolition, but as the result of an ongoing disassembly that, in Waterloo, serves the interests of residualisation.

Moral assumptions also play a central role in the under-recognition of public housing tenants. In Waterloo, the perception of untidiness is particularly relevant, produced and circulated in different ways. Carrie, for instance, once angrily recalled a day in which a housing inspector entered her place saying, relieved: “Finally, some fresh air.” This back-handed compliment, for Carrie, was an insult. The expression insinuated that her community was poorly maintained by the residents, a collection of unpleasant and unclean houses due to individual negligence. As a result, while the maintenance of public housing is directly linked to a political economy in which repair services are underfunded and increasingly outsourced, a moralising and individualising discourse insinuates that public housing residents do not demonstrate the individual responsibility, nor ability, to take care of their own homes. As part of this discourse, public housing tenants are perceived as unclean, and the constant breakdown of poorly-maintained, under-resourced sewage systems, as in the case of Stacy, reinforces this belief. Moralising discourses, thus, facilitate the displacement of blame for the systemic, and systematic, neglect of public housing maintenance onto the individual stigmatised resident.

These experiences are crucial to the building of political subjectivities. As this chapter has shown, situations like the ones lived in by Stacy and her son, Lisa and others, shape the political expectations of residents and their willingness to engage in participatory activities and under what conditions. One last entry in Stacy’s log succinctly captures her shared feelings of frustration and abandonment arising from the failure of the state to meet its obligations. In despair in January 2019, Stacy called maintenance again to find out when plumbers were supposed to arrive. She wrote:

Good luck, maintenance said that 130270260 will be here within 48 hours.
Let’s see just how hard I can laugh, no one will show up, if they do, they will be just as useless as all the others. There it goes again, 1:25pm, toilet rumbled moderately.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed how everyday experiences outside the official channels of political participation, play a crucial role in shaping the political engagement of Waterloo’s residents. To do so, the chapter linked studies of moral economies to citizenship building, and analysed how the exchange system underlying housing provision produces and

circulates the different moralities attached to public housing tenants. In doing so, the chapter has revealed how this system enacts differentiated urban citizenship, fundamental to the simultaneous dispossession and capital accumulation linked to the redevelopment of Waterloo.

Alexander and colleagues (2018) have proposed that “home” constitutes a privileged arena for understanding how public housing tenants engage with government authorities and, through this experience, build their understandings of citizenship. Accordingly, they argue that analysis of moral economies provides ethnographers the means to understand the multiple forms of demand for housing and citizenship, and in particular, the ways in which tenants make sense of their rights while dealing with wider political economic shifts.

This ethnographic emphasis on non-participatory moments and underprivileged engagements with public services seeks to reclaim “the intimacies of social policies,” defined by those everyday life moments where citizens and bureaucracy meet (Davis and Craven, 2011; Hyatt, 2011). By scrutinising these intimate encounters, analysis may overcome analytical oppositions such as public and private spaces, local and global. Instead, they foreground the intimate moments of policies – as for example receiving a plumber in the bathroom – as a domain of political tension inextricable from larger forms of power (Wilson, 2016). Accordingly, the chapter explored several intimate situations charged with moral judgements that both produced and reproduced contested beliefs about bad and good citizens. Tenants expressed guilt if they smoked, or travelled abroad for leisure. They also reported constantly struggling to fix housing issues such as getting access to internet, fixing intercoms to receive visitors, removing mouldy cupboards or ceilings. These issues were perceived by residents as *unacceptable*, but for the state government, such problems were simply not a priority. They could wait to be fixed for weeks, months, and sometimes even years.

The stories lived and performed by tenants like Carrie, Lisa and Stacy revealed how public housing residents experienced, struggled with and tried to make sense of housing policies in their daily lives. In their stories, the making of a home emerged as a contested arena where dwellers built, fought over and acted out different understandings of citizenship (Alexander et al 2018), but essentially, it showed how the moral economy of housing in New South Wales reproduces structural inequalities, while simultaneously working as a

form of domination and violence. This reflection reveals the fundamental contradiction underlying the project of citizen participation in Waterloo. On the one hand, official discourses encouraged citizen participation in the city's decision-making processes; on the other hand, the everyday life of public housing tenants resulted in highly authoritarian experiences of government for citizens. Mainly, residents experienced the repeated enactment of a disciplinary, surveillant and punitive governing ideology. This indicates that it is inevitable that participatory projects like Waterloo will fail in the face of housing policies that attempt to shape citizenship in a coercive manner.

Chapter 10: Conclusion

Participation in Waterloo was extensively promoted as an opportunity for residents to “Come and have your say!”, as many calls announced. However, at the time of writing, tenants appeared tired of the endless gatherings, frustrated and hopeless that they could change anything through their participation. They did not expect to remain in their neighbourhoods anymore, nor “Save Waterloo,” as local campaign slogans generally advocated. As Lisa, a Waterloo tenant, summed it up, “[the consultation] wasn’t really a true choice, [...] it was like, ok, there are three options, which one do you hate the least?”

Lisa had always strongly disagreed with the redevelopment’s grounding premise that the estate must be demolished and rebuilt in order to be redeveloped. Yet, she participated in the masterplan process hoping to make a difference. In her own words, she participated to “[choose] something, even if you don’t like it.” But indeed, after several engagement and participatory activities, her suspicions turned out to be true: participation in Waterloo felt as just another “box to tick”, and the most polemic decisions around the redevelopment remained largely the same, and largely unaddressed. Lisa, as many other Waterloo tenants, lived the paradox of having experienced too much, and yet too little democracy.

Participation has become a double-faced project. The demands for “real democracy” that had echoed during the Occupy movement, the protests of the *Indignados* in Spain, and the Arab Spring, had reinvigorated a genuine hope for a more direct and participatory democracy. However, over the last few years, the proliferation of so-called participatory state projects have raised growing concern over how participation was being implemented by neoliberal governments. One approach to understanding this problem has been to focus on participatory procedures: on the inappropriate tools, the scarcity of time, or insufficient activities during the process. As a result, this approach has often ended up calling for “better guidelines,” more “capacity building,” better “toolkits,” new working groups, or new and improved plans. Although oriented by good intentions, such analyses risk fuelling the “remedial circularity” of failure discourses, arguing that only more state intervention can fix the problem (Lea 2008, 13). In remedial circularity, a community can become trapped in an endless cycle, calling for more of the same procedures and remedies that have already failed, and feeding a self-sustaining cycle of escalating bureaucracy in the state.

This thesis has taken a different approach. It has stepped back to observe and understand how participatory urban planning was being experienced and what it meant for government and residents in the first place. Instead of asking why a genuine participatory project seems to be so hard to achieve, the thesis has analysed the actual participation that did occur in the situated context of urban redevelopments, and the divide between the discourses of participation and its everyday practices. In attempting to get to some level of intelligibility about this conflicting, ephemeral and often contradictory experience of participation, it has not evaluated, measured, or generally defined the term. Rather, it specifically questioned how the New South Wales state government make sense of and interprets this ideal form of democratic activity, while also asking how the residents of Waterloo Estate experienced the events that were staged for them in terms of what they conceived participation to mean.

During this investigation, I came to link two dimensions of political thinking that might at first appear autonomous: urban dynamics on the one hand, and democratic practices on the other. The thesis suggests that how we live our day-to-day lives in neighbourhoods is not independent from how we participate in democratic institutions. Conversely, how we imagine and transform cities is not detached from how we participate in democracy either. Instead, the main argument of this thesis is that both processes are mutually constitutive at the level of governance and at the level of experience. The political, economic and social dynamics of cities frame participation. In turn, the conduct of participation – as a citizenship technology (Cruikshank 1999) – enables capital accumulation and produces distinctive forms of alienation.

In this light, the participatory urban planning of Waterloo occurred through a simultaneous double movement. First, there was a movement of framing, in which plans and policies defined the rules of urban decision-making. In addition, there was a movement of the conduct of participation, in which particular performances, discourses and practices helped to produce local knowledge that served the legitimisation of the redevelopment, the depoliticisation and pacification of its processes. Put as inquiries, two main questions, then, oriented this thesis. First, how do urban dynamics frame participation through plans and policies; and second, how does participation enable the reproduction of neoliberal cities through its discourses, performances and bureaucratic practices?

City-Making: the Framing of Participation

The redevelopment of Waterloo is not occurring in a vacuum. The conditions of possibility for this redevelopment are situated historically, and framed by specific planning policies such as the Sydney Metropolitan Strategic Plans, *The Future Directions for Social Housing in NSW* policy statement, and the Communities Plus programme. The redevelopment is also informed by the ideologies and urban imaginaries of a neoliberal and global city. Importantly, these conditions are not only framing and enabling the redevelopment, but have also formed the very terrain on which participation has had to unfold.

Part One of this thesis, *City-Making*, has been mainly guided by this argument that urban dynamics shape and are shaped by participation. It focused on questions related to space production, of how Waterloo has been conceived, perceived and lived. Analysis in this part is grounded on a conceptualisation of urban space as produced by social and power relations, rather than being a mere abstract container in which social relations and production occur (Lefebvre 1991). Following authors such as Harvey (1982), Castells (1974) and Lefebvre (1991), Part One contextualised Sydney and Waterloo as part of a geography of capital. In this context, cities like Sydney function as key resources for the continuity of capital accumulation, acting simultaneously as the outcomes of production and the means of production itself. This process has been particularly evident in the neoliberal urbanism followed in the redevelopment of Waterloo, characterised by the sell-off of an entire public housing estate, and the active role of state government in increasing land value through the construction of the new Waterloo Metro Station. In neoliberal urbanism, urban policies put capital accumulation at the centre of decision making. Moreover, local governments emerge as central actors to attract investments and facilitate profit realisation in a highly competitive global finance scenario (Brenner and Theodore 2002; Franquesa 2013). Hackworth 2013).

Along these lines, the redevelopment of Waterloo has constituted a process of creative destruction (Schumpeter 1976), defined by the need to generate wide differences of value in order to create surplus opportunities. Creative destruction consists of the incessant need to destroy and devalue in order to then recreate and revalue. Nonetheless, following Franquesa (2007), the thesis finds that this process does not occur solely through mercantile activity. Rather, through an ethnographic approach, the thesis described the social relations

required to enable the economic goals of neoliberal urbanism. Instead of revealing a universal and dematerialised analysis of economic processes, the thesis brought to light the extra-economic factors required to secure and legitimate surplus generation, such as Metropolitan Strategic Plans, urban policies and, crucially, participatory processes.

Chapter One of the thesis situated Waterloo in time, and in the wider context of the city of Sydney. Its analysis revealed the devaluation and territorial stigmatisation processes that have been necessary to generating wide value differences during a process of creative destruction. Waterloo was discursively constructed over time as a place that dramatically needed to be redeveloped, creating the conditions for the rebuild of the biggest public housing estate in inner-Sydney, and justifying the ongoing dispossession of Aboriginal residents in a postcolonial city. Crucially, territorial stigmatisation not only created the possibility of the redevelopment itself, but also set the conditions for participation. For example, Chapter Six discussed how the everyday experiences of public housing tenants reinforced differentiated classes of citizenship and consequently, unequal forms of participation.

The devaluation of Waterloo and its residents was presented as essential to the possibility of the redevelopment. However, processes of creative destruction must be combined with the revaluation of an area in order to maximise surplus production. In this context, Metropolitan Strategic Plans emerged as governance tools and extra-economic strategies to perform two central functions: first, to secure land as a commodity, attract investments and sustain the self-image of a growing city; and second, to limit local decision-making while constituting an interconnected system of plans that, overall, secure certain future directions. The Metropolitan Strategic Plans of Sydney expose how global aspirations and neoliberalism guide space production in Sydney and the government's investment decisions. In doing so, the Plans orient future developments while simultaneously limiting future decisions and local participation. The analysis of the Metropolitan Strategic Plans revealed key tensions underlying the redevelopment of Waterloo. Chapter Two explored how Sydney's Metropolitan Strategic Plan attempts to reconcile the ambitious of a global and neoliberal city with the project of a participatory decision-making process. This analysis brought to light how participatory planning deals problematically with the imperatives of global capitalism and its growth-oriented plans.

Metropolitan Strategic Plans work alongside policy frameworks as key governance tools. Specifically, the 2016 *Future Directions for Social Housing in NSW* and the Communities Plus program are the fundamental frameworks through which to understand the principal conflicts affecting the redevelopment of Waterloo and its participation program. Both policies are the result of a gradual process of neoliberalisation of housing provision in New South Wales, laying the foundation for the “non-negotiables” that were removed from the reach of participation: its financial model (a no cost orientation), the social-mix framework, and the increase of density in the area. While creating these practical boundaries around consultation, Sydney’s urban policies also simultaneously shaped the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion in urban citizenship and participation. They set what could be discussed, as well as how, and when.

Policies are generally perceived as technical, coherent and rational instruments for decision-making. However, policies are also cultural and political phenomena. They express social norms and values and enact organising principles for society (Shore and Wright 1997). Accordingly, while presenting themselves as non-negotiable principles, these boundary tools emerged in Waterloo as key political technologies to conceal power under the appeal of efficiency. For this reason, it would have been insufficient to simply state that policies limit political debates through the strategy of making certain decisions “non-negotiables.” Instead, the relevant question was how certain policies, not just outcomes, come to be perceived as “non-negotiables.” This thesis has argued that the public discourses and performances of government officers helped to sustain the belief that policies, as opposed to politics, came to these non-negotiables by following a technical, objective, effective, legal and rational idiom. Chapter Three explored how John Phillips, a government officer, attempted to “perform” policies as *above* moralities, and *outside* politics, during a public meeting. For example, the use of scientific language, the claim to international “best practices,” and visual techniques helped Phillips to promote the policies as impersonal and inanimate artefacts that were distant from policy-makers (Shore and Wright 1997).

Moreover, the belief of policy principles as non-negotiables is also built on the liberal ideologies that ground current representative democracies. Nugent (2008) argued that the delineation of spheres is a key strategy to mark the realms of politics open to popular

decision-making (the negotiables) and the ones excluded (the non-negotiables), such as class structures, property relations or market exchange. Accordingly, the fictional separation of economy from social relations (Polanyi 2001) reproduces the perception that economic decisions are non-political and consequently non-negotiable. In this case, in Sydney's redevelopment planning, the fictional division between economy and politics grounded the social-mix and density policies as well as the financial model for the redevelopment, making them non-negotiable and therefore immune to any community opposition. The thesis has argued that this process of defiscalising participation – that is, the process of separating the economic impact of the redevelopment from the political process of participation through discourses and narratives of individualised choice – leads to the emptiness of participation, as it is no longer about redistribution and the social justice needs of collectives.

This defiscalising of participation also follows Eurocentric conceptualisations of democracy in liberal and neo-liberal terms. By analysing non-hegemonic conceptualisations of participation from the Global South – as discussed in Chapter Three – it is possible to understand the tensions amongst the multiple meanings of participation in Waterloo. There, participation is conceived of by residents as a strategy to reduce the arbitrariness of interventionist state policies, and by the state as a strategy of promoting individual expression in the public sphere, rather than the stronger democratic claim that seeks social justice, redistribution and economic sovereignty.

In summary, Part One of the thesis discussed the processes of devaluation and revaluation in Waterloo through territorial stigmatisation, planning and policies. Yet, while these wider urban dynamics helped to frame the redevelopment and the conditions of participation, they were not sufficient to understand how the redevelopment of Waterloo was made possible. The thesis has argued that the redevelopment of Waterloo did not simply occur through global financial impositions: it required articulation with local realities. Here, participatory methodologies – alongside public investments and other legal-bureaucratic tools – played a pivotal role in pacifying local conflicts, conducting local knowledge production, and legitimising the redevelopment.

Conducting Participation

Following contributions from governmentality, different chapters in the thesis have stressed the uses of democratic discourses – or the “will to empower” (Cruikshank 1999) – as forms of governing in a neoliberal context. During the redevelopment of Waterloo, governments evoked participation alongside claims of autonomy and choice in an attempt to shape individual freedom towards the government’s own interests (Rose 1996). Moreover, urban governance in Waterloo was also characterised by an extensive and decentralised network of state and non-state agents. In this fragmented context, participation actually *contributed* to the strategy to legitimate the redevelopment, while governing those who engaged in the offered participatory methods and attempted to participate in such constrained forms of collaboration. As a result, a key question running through the whole thesis and connecting its various parts was how participation itself functioned as a citizenship technology to control dissent and knowledge production, so as to enable the sell-off of entire public housing estates.

For this reason, while Part One focused on the urban dynamics at work in shaping the redevelopment of Waterloo, Part Two of the thesis, *Participation*, focused on how democratic practices and urban dynamics came together in the redevelopment of Waterloo to essentially disenfranchise public housing tenants. Democratic states are typically represented as relatively stable systems, the result of long-term historical processes, and defined by formal criteria such as free elections, divisions of power and a constitution. Nevertheless, complementary to this perspective, is the centrality of everyday public performances that construct and reinforce the belief in democratic states, and the documents and materials that support the building of a consensus narrative.

The democratic state does not simply assume its image as a stable, monolithic and coherent institution to be true, it engages in continuous work to shape and sustain this representation as both democratic and participatory. Far from a simple process, this makes the building of the state’s authority an unstable and contested social production. As a result, Chapter Four examined the discourses, practices, things and spaces through which the state of New South Wales built an official consensus narrative to legitimise a redevelopment process, and perform it democratically. For example, the consultations underpinning documents, such as the *Waterloo Redevelopment Visioning Report* or the *Options Testing* final reports,

played a pivotal role in conducting participatory processes through the “codification, classification and control of information” (Kothari 2001, 143). They limited options to choose and discuss, while presenting relatively similar and generic options. They presented basic rights, such as accessibility or urban mobility, as if they were a preference or individual choice. Moreover, they visually juxtaposed antagonistic ideas without acknowledging or resolving conflicts. Finally, they used scientific and technocratic language, and in doing so, they managed to render the community of Waterloo technical, thereby enabling its governance (Li 2006).

These techniques are central to understanding how participatory processes come to be perceived as democratic even while they capture and divert public anger or resistance. They constitute extra-economic techniques that, through participation, depoliticised and legitimised the redevelopment of Waterloo, building what appeared to be a consensus in support of a controversial initiative. Essentially, this analysis revealed how the so-called “vision of Waterloo” was in fact produced and conducted, not as a straightforward and simple top-down imposition, but through everyday practices undertaken in a highly contested and dynamic political terrain that elicited, but also muted and filtered, community views and political-economic questions.

A state’s bureaucratic practices are another way to conduct participation. As ubiquitous organisational events within democratic institutions, bureaucratic meetings are often overlooked. Yet, as this thesis shows, meetings enable governance in practice. They work as a political technology to control epistemic production and produce modern subjects. This approach to analysing meetings privileged the *form* of meetings as the object of analysis, more so than what happened *within* meetings. In focusing on the form of a meeting, it reveals that the choice of the meeting format was not a minor issue: it was a central choice that produced, transformed and affected social realities. Meetings defined the organisation, established the forms of interactions between the actors, and enabled the reproduction of the organisation itself (Schwartzman 1989).

For van Vree (1999), the *meetingization* of society is part of the “civilizing process” described by Elias (1994) through which the working classes gradually came to adopt the elite manners of modern meetings, consolidating a polite, non-violent and collaborative way of dealing with conflicts. In the context of Waterloo, meetings functioned as key

citizenship technologies (Cruikshank 1999) that conducted knowledge production towards pragmatic, objective and efficient modern ideals, frequently eliding the most challenging conflicts through its disciplinary form. Put differently, meetings supported self-governance, but they also controlled democratic engagement, constrained political deliberation, and delegitimised other means of political expression and participation.

Accordingly, the production and circulation of petitions and motions – typical documents that the rationality of modern meetings produces – also became key bureaucratic modes through which to participate and navigate democratic institutions. Chapter Five traced some of these kinds of initiatives pursued by Waterloo residents to change the preferred masterplan after the highly constrained consultation process. The analysis of these initiatives revealed how the bureaucratic practices of the state, including its parliamentary rules and protocols, came to frame Waterloo’s own political possibilities and became a key political grammar of participation.

However, also in the context of the Waterloo redevelopment, meetings became more than simply forms of social control and governance. Approaching participation as an experience and being mindful of its affective dimensions and expectations, meetings also emerged as modes through which to manage uncertainty and to generate hope. Crucially, they revealed strategies through which to claim rights, assert a group’s legitimacy, and demand legibility to the state (Scott 1998).

Experiencing Participation

Christopher Kelty (2019) argues that analyses of participation disproportionately focus on its concepts and procedures, often forgetting to ask how it *feels* to participate. For this reason, this thesis also proposed to understand participation as an experience, as “embodied affects that represent a collective sense-making capacity” (Kelty 2019, 22). This approach allowed the exploration of a key issue in current processes of participation, increasingly perceived as empty and meaningless exercises. Specifically, the ethnographic accounts of meetings in Waterloo shed light on a process charged with expectations and frustrations, and monotony and repetition, rather than any promise of excitement or decisive action. In daily life, participation was revealed to be endless meetings: tiring, often boring, and highly bureaucratised.

The analysis of meetings as boring practices, and yet central to democratic institutions, confirms the appreciation of Kelty that participation, in the twenty-first century, “is more often a formatted procedure by which autonomous individuals attempt to reach calculated consensus,” rather than a “mode to make sense of different collective forms of life” (Kelty 2019,1). For Kelty, participation holds the promise of a collective sense of belonging and a transcendental opportunity to move beyond oneself. However, as the fieldwork for this thesis amply illustrated, participants most often felt frustrated by this promise, realising the opposite sensation: that they did not belong. For residents in Waterloo, community meetings could be a time in which their own marginalisation was made painfully apparent, when their suffering and fear was demonstrable, but was unable to move the authorities who decided their community’s fate. They felt they not only did not belong in this mode of participation, but that they did not belong in the envisioned Waterloo.

The thesis has argued that the affective, embodied and moral dimensions of participation demonstrate key tensions within current participatory practices. In doing so, it looked at participation not solely as a form of governance, but as an experience beyond democratic institutions. The ethnography in the thesis showed how Waterloo residents lived the experience of democratic participation and citizenship-building through mundane experiences outside explicitly “political” contexts. These experiences challenge normative classifications of “the political,” drawing attention to daily interactions that would not usually be considered to be political — including those unfolding beyond the formal and institutionalised practices of community engagement —, but that were nevertheless imbued with power. As described in Chapter Six, practices such as trying to fix a window or a leak in the context of public housing are, in fact, highly political. They are central to residents’ political expectations and perceptions of the government, identity and citizenship building, and how they, as citizens, are treated by the state. Under this perspective, political life is deeply entangled with the social, economic, moral and affective realms. Similarly, citizen-making emerges as a dynamic, embodied and contested process rather than an essentialist ideal of what citizenship should be, and it is acutely responsive to the play of power. Sometimes a person most feels a citizen when the state accords his or her concerns about a toilet the official recognition of a telephone response or an effort by a subcontractor to redress a problem.

Yet the gratitude that residents must perform in response to this minimal form of recognition by the state reveals that the moral economy that underpins housing policies in New South Wales functions as a form of domination and symbolic violence. This can be seen in the everyday moralities that shape the experiences of public housing tenants during their attempts to maintain their homes – to fix a window, to unblock a toilet, change a carpet or paint a wall. The thesis thus brings out not only the infrastructural inequalities embedded in public housing provision, but the contradictions between the paternalistic relationship that shapes housing provision through the regime of deservingness that organises current neoliberal housing systems in New South Wales, and a participatory project that seeks community autonomy and self-management. Fundamentally, the thesis has brought to the surface underprivileged and intimate relationships that both shape and contradict the ideals of political participation within a context of structural violence, coercion and market-driven policies.

The emphasis on experiences and moralities, however, does not seek to contradict the political economic analysis – that is, the relationship between capital, class and the state that is shaping housing provision and the redevelopment of Waterloo. Rather, the thesis argues that both processes are enmeshed together in daily life and that structural inequalities are confronted through dynamics of norms, values and moral obligations (Narotzky 2015). Everyday moralities thus become central to the continuation or even deepening of structural inequality, as the art of governing is enacted through the political experiences of housing maintenance. In this context, political participation is revealed to be a highly contextual and unequal experience rather than one that is universal and equal. The meaning of being a public housing tenant, and the differentiated notion of citizenship that comes along with that status, profoundly mark the conditions of a person's political participation.

This acknowledgement ties up the initial motivation for this research project, which was to understand how urban dynamics were interconnected with democratic practices in a neoliberal state. As a result, the thesis challenges fundamental pillars of a liberal democracy that assumes that political subjects are free, equal, and rational individuals making calculated and pragmatic choices. Rather, the different ethnographic accounts in the thesis highlighted the moral, emotional and affective investments associated with local politics, including the politics of mundane interactions with the state, and the differentiated

experiences attached to such participation. For instance, in residents' accounts of neglect and fighting over infrastructural violence, political engagements emerged in intimate experiences of frustration, threat, fear, insecurity, humiliation, and other social emotions that together shaped the conditions of that engagement. Participation, in this sense, did not just occur in isolated and discontinuous extraordinary events like meetings with government officials or expensive consultations. Rather, the ongoing practice of political participation occurred in many mundane interactions, apparently unrelated, and often contradictory: gratitude for a home but frustration that it was marred by apparently irreparable problems.

In short, this thesis has shown how, in everyday life, participatory practices and discourses articulate logics of space production in neoliberal and postcolonial cities. Since 2015, the lives of Waterloo residents have been shaped by the looming threat of redevelopment, uncertainty about their futures, and potentially dramatic changes to their homes or their locations. To be a participant in this process can be seen as form of slow violence against people whose democratic claims are allegedly being addressed. Accordingly, it is also to be the subject of a coercive form of participation since there were no other forms available to interfere in the state's decision beside engaging in a state-led consultation. During the redevelopment of Waterloo, governments welcomed residents to share their visions for possible futures that they, paradoxically, did not belong to, and may not ever have. Many were unsure of when they would be able to return to the estate, or even if they would be able to come back at all, especially in the case of older residents. Moreover, residents could only share their visions over limited urban issues.

This phenomenon characterised a contemporary iteration of urban gentrification in which residents were coercively invited to participate and become accomplices in their own displacement through the seemingly apolitical discourses of participation, self-management and empowerment. This process of participatory gentrification constituted one of the main targets of the analysis in this thesis. It captures how wider urban dynamics shape participation, and in turn, how participation enables space production and capital accumulation while it claims to support local communities. In a nutshell, the thesis explained how the practice of participation in liberal democracies may perpetuate the structural inequalities lived in current global and neoliberal cities.

Civilising Democracy

At the beginning of this thesis, I highlighted the need to unpack and analyse “the great narratives” that currently organise the global political system into democratic and non-democratic states. While obviously incomplete given the enormity of such a task, in these chapters I have revealed some of the primary modes that actually organise democracy in a country typically considered in those narratives to be a reference point for either fledgling or non-democratic states. Throughout the thesis, I have provided examples of how, contrary to its claims, the free and democratic state of Australia remains, in troubling ways, distant from these aspirations. In particular, I have observed how *regulation* appears, in various forms, as a key principle by which to order Australian political life. This invasion of regulation, with its accompanying rationalisation and often structural violence, into different dimensions of life in Australia derives not only from the will to govern and to empower, but as David Graeber (2015) argues, from a profound fear of improvisation, creativity and playfulness in life. This fear is derived from a tacit cosmology in which such ideas are perceived as frightening, in contrast to a predictable, ruled and regulated experience of highly ordered “freedom.” However, this obsessive will to regulate, order and rationalise participation, as an area most likely to benefit from creativity and playfulness, clashes with the effort to collectively imagine possible futures for cities.

The thesis argues that this tension holds profound links to ongoing colonising strategies. Participation, as it is locally practiced, and was seen in Waterloo, can be understood as the continuation of a civilising process and the ongoing effort to discipline democratic practices and political life in general. In the postcolonial city of Sydney, this process was clearly exemplified in the ways purposeful participatory, non-government gatherings within the civic sphere were constructed according to bureaucratic meetings as the primary organisational form. In addition, in Australia, the search for consensus and politeness is also particularly encapsulated in the image of a “gentleman’s society” that, as Thompson (1994) argued, held the deep-seated belief that it was an equal and classless society. Yet, as David Graeber (2015) has pointed out, the semantic connections between “policing” and “politeness” are not a coincidence. Rather, the search for consensual cities – and the appearance of a polite and harmonious democracy – reflects just another form of

governmentality in service to biopolitics, another way of thinking, through which to govern land and people.

As a result, it is imperative to reclaim a democratic project that recentres imagination and the playfulness of democracy at its core, a project that rejects imposing non-negotiables and, in contrast, works to expand the limits of what is possible, of what is factual and achievable. After all, “hope is about possibilities” (Appadurai 2007, 30), and if we aspire to maintain our hopes in democracy, we must take a careful look into the practices and discourses that constrain, rather than expand the limits of possibilities. This examination is what this thesis has sought to offer by unpacking those mechanisms in the case of the Waterloo redevelopment, and in doing so, reclaim the politics of hope and imagination against the politics of prudence.

The redevelopment of Waterloo remains an unfinished story. At the time of writing, neither relocations nor demolition have begun, despite the original timeframe in the planning. Delays have been caused by various factors, including popular forms of resistance that insist on rejecting the non-negotiables and expanding the horizon of urban politics. This appreciation opens up new areas of inquiry for this thesis. Specifically, it encourages future scholarship on democratic cities to further explore non-hegemonic decision-making processes unfolding simultaneously to and alongside official redevelopment processes accompanied by participatory discourses. It would be a mistake to assume that all urban politics are the result of a unique and all-powerful state-led decision-making process. While the thesis shares a critical perspective on participation as governmentality and frustrating experiences, it acknowledges decision-making as a practice that may unfold beyond the state’s reach, beyond democratic institutions and official consultation. Yet, this analysis should not only focus on the underprivileged and daily practices of decision-making within community. They should be linked into wider processes of space production. In doing so, they would continue the wider effort to reformulate both urban and democratic dynamics, and understand the multiple ways we may, in common, imagine the futures of cities.

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Appendix I: Response from the Minister



The Hon Pru Goward MP

Minister for Family and Community Services
Minister for Social Housing
Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault

EAP18/11542

Ms Helen Minnican
Clerk of the Legislative Assembly
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000



Dear Ms Minnican

Helen,

Thank you for forwarding the petition from Ms Jenny Leong MP, Member for Newtown, regarding public housing in Waterloo and Redfern.

The NSW Government has the biggest social housing building program of any state or territory across the country. The NSW Government's \$22 billion Communities Plus program is delivering 23,000 social housing dwellings, 500 affordable housing dwellings and 40,000 private housing dwellings over ten years. As part of Communities Plus, in July this year I also announced the introduction of a Build-to-Rent model to be used for 600 Elizabeth St, Redfern to deliver more social and affordable housing.

The redevelopment of the Waterloo estate is a major project under Communities Plus, delivering more and better social housing to the area. New social housing at Waterloo, together with affordable housing and private housing, will establish a thriving mixed tenure community, with good access to services, transport and employment opportunities. All public housing residents of the Waterloo estate have the right to return, and most will be able to move straight into brand new homes. Residents will not have to locate until at least late 2019.

The Department of Family and Community Services (FACS) has been consulting extensively with Waterloo estate residents and the broader community about plans for the redevelopment of the estate.

I am advised that FACS has funded a range of independent supports to enable public housing residents in Waterloo to participate fully in the consultations and planning of the estate. This has included a community development worker and a capacity building project run by Inner Sydney Voice. Further, an independent Aboriginal Liaison Officer is providing advocacy and support for the local Aboriginal community, and bilingual educators are assisting the Chinese and Russian speaking residents in Waterloo to have their voices heard. Additionally, FACS has an on-site office, Waterloo Connect, for community members to drop in, ask questions and lodge feedback.

Resident and community contributions were invaluable in shaping the three masterplan options for Waterloo, which were released in August 2018. The options

show how the Waterloo estate might be redeveloped, with each having different designs for open space, buildings, and community and retail facilities.

Further consultation on the three options occurred from early September 2018 and concluded in late November 2018. In all, over 1,000 residents, community members and non-government agencies (NGOs) shared their views across approximately 60 events and activities. A preferred plan will be shared with the community prior to being lodged with the Department of Planning and Environment.

An important goal of the consultation program has been to identify the supports that residents will need as the redevelopment progresses. Planning for community facilities and services is an important part of the process and this will continue into 2019.

I trust that this information addresses the concerns raised in the petition lodged by Ms Leong MP. Additional background about the Waterloo Estate redevelopment and the Redfern site can be found on the Communities Plus website at www.communitiesplus.com.au.

If you or Ms Leong would like more information, you are welcome to contact Peter Anderson, Executive Director, Communities Plus on 0428 964 388 or email peter.anderson@facs.nsw.gov.au.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Pru', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Pru Goward MP

Appendix II: Ethics Approval

Arts Subcommittee
Macquarie University, North Ryde
NSW 2109, Australia



16/12/2019

Dear Professor Downey,

Reference No: 52019356612707

Project ID: 3566

Title: An ethnographic study of the participatory urban redevelopment in Waterloo, Sydney

Thank you for submitting the above application for ethical review. The Arts Subcommittee has considered your application.

I am pleased to advise that ethical approval has been granted for this project to be conducted by Prof Greg Downey, and other personnel: Mayane Pereira Dore.

This research meets the requirements set out in the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2007, (updated July 2018).

Standard Conditions of Approval:

1. Continuing compliance with the requirements of the National Statement, available from the following website:
<https://nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/national-statement-ethical-conduct-human-research-2007-updated-2018>.
2. This approval is valid for five (5) years, subject to the submission of annual reports. Please submit your reports on the anniversary of the approval for this protocol. You will be sent an automatic reminder email one week from the due date to remind you of your reporting responsibilities.
3. All adverse events, including unforeseen events, which might affect the continued ethical acceptability of the project, must be reported to the subcommittee within 72 hours.
4. All proposed changes to the project and associated documents must be submitted to the subcommittee for review and approval before implementation. Changes can be made via the [Human Research Ethics Management System](#).

The HREC Terms of Reference and Standard Operating Procedures are available from the Research Services website:
<https://www.mq.edu.au/research/ethics-integrity-and-policies/ethics/human-ethics>.

It is the responsibility of the Chief Investigator to retain a copy of all documentation related to this project and to forward a copy of this approval letter to all personnel listed on the project.

Should you have any queries regarding your project, please contact the [Faculty Ethics Officer](#).

The Arts Subcommittee wishes you every success in your research.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mianna Lotz".

Dr Mianna Lotz

Chair, Arts Subcommittee

The Faculty Ethics Committees at Macquarie University operate in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2007, (updated July 2018), [Section 5.2.22].