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Public awareness and the politics of urban growth

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INTRODUCTION

In the last 30 years, Sydney's urban planning framework has been infused with mechanisms designed to encourage public involvement and participation (Byrne and Searle, 2002). Typically positioned in opposition to various pro-development lobbies, the public viewpoint in planning practice emerged dramatically in Sydney in the early 1970s. Here, the resident view came to represent interruption and possibility within a heady development trajectory led by a State government feverishly engineering Sydney's transition to a global city. More recently, consultative processes around urban planning have proliferated on a project-basis for a number of large property developers and place managers, arguably smoothing, and 'civilising' the planning and development process. This shift to greater awareness of a non-expert, public view in the planning and development community, has recently been labelled the 'communicative' or 'cultural' turn by a number of planning theorists (McGuirk, 2001; Healey, 1997).

Despite greater sensitivity to a public view in planning practice however, broader economic and social change, including tighter fiscal restraint and a shift in subsidies from, and an emphasis on, place competition and deepening participation in the housing market have limited alternatives to dominant planning and development approaches. For a number of commentators, the contemporary consultative turn in planning emerges within a context of economic rationalisation and fragmentation of community, leading them to question the 'democratic' potential of the consultative turn (McGuirk, 2001; Huxley and Yiftachel, 2000; Searle and Byrne, 2002). These accounts however, have yet to be grounded, with McGuirk and Huxley in particular, calling for more empirical research to underpin new concepts of public participation in planning, that take more account of economic and social contexts.

Using a case study of ADI St Mary's, in this paper, it is argued that despite these limits, there are a myriad of ways and settings in which public participation around land-use decisions occur. For instance, outside formal planning forums, played out in the press, using both the law, and planning laws, elections and different levels of government, to interrupt dominant landuse decision processes. The nature of the alternative they represent to dominant planning strategies will also be considered, particularly in light of broader planning intervention. Although it is suggested that

project-based mediation marks a break with metropolitan planning, and reshapes notions of 'the public' it is argued that this break is constantly negotiated. Managing our cities differently, while constituting an unlikely outcome, is presented here as a possibility. In understanding how possibilities were taken, or not, in this case, we might better focus our efforts on the factors required for change.

PART 1: THE RISE OF THE RESIDENT PARTICIPATION

In the last 30 years, mechanisms for public participation have infused planning legislation, practice and urban development in Sydney. Fuelled by visible and dramatic urban restructuring during the late 1960s, and sustained through a period of national and state social democratic governance, the resident view during the 1970s gained currency as a symbol of democracy and openness balancing urban growth. While emerging initially and dramatically in response to an overt display of global and neoliberal aspiration as the Askin government anxiously courted deregulated finance, Sydney's explosive mix of middle and working class opposition during the early 70s gave way under Wran's administration to a suite of legislative reforms. While these were arguably designed to soften the impact and nature of economic rationalisation, they do provide an acknowledgement of the 'non-expert voice'. By the late 1970s, legislative reforms favouring public input in planning through the Heritage Act 1977, the EPA Act 1979 and the Land and Environment Court Act 1979 were in place (Ryan, 2002), and by September 1980, the Land and Environment Court was established, reflecting the formalisation of a number of pieces of legislation and the advocacies of non-government and PEAK bodies around environmental justice, essentially permitting non-expert, non-planning involvement in the planning process (Ryan, 2002).

From its feisty, confrontational beginnings, the resident voice today seems to have gained a more secure place in Sydney's planning frame. There appears to be a proliferation of formal and informal mechanisms to garner public opinion, input and response to planning decisions. In 2001 for instance, stakeholders of the urban environment appeared in a pie chart in the front of *PlanFirst* the NSW Government's Whitepaper on planning reform, according to the size of their membership. With the release of the discussion paper, *Ideas for Community Consultation* at the same time, simplifying resident input into the planning process became, momentarily, a State-wide priority. Councils, and the State government are increasingly encouraging

developers to engage in consultative planning practice. Pauline McGuirk for instance, in her study exploring the redevelopment of Newcastle harbour by the Honeysuckle Development Corporation, reproduced the agenda for the planning process for the Development Control Plan, showing two months of a ten month process devoted to gaining public opinion including public exhibition, two drop-in centres, distribution of 8000 pamphlets, hotline for public inquiries, briefings with community and business groups and media coverage (McGuirk, 2001). This approach is reflected in the case study presented here of the ADI St Mary's site, and numerous large-scale development projects in Sydney in recent years.

Despite the history of public participation as a measure of accountability, openness, and wider consideration of planning implications, and the recent interest and proliferation in consultative processes, the consultative turn has also generated some concern among urban theorists. Criticism is focused on the difficulty, in light of 'institutional procedures, guidelines, and rules' (McGuirk 2001, 209) of valuing alternative opinions, views, and importantly, ways of knowing. McGuirk, for instance, questions the extent to which planning instruments, such as Development Control Plans (DCPs) can capture the 'multifaceted claims asserted in deliberative forums' (McGuirk, 2001: 196; also see Howitt, 1994). In her study of the consultative processes around the redevelopment of Newcastle Harbour, she illustrates the extent to which community input was, quoting one participant 'translated into proper things' (McGuirk, 2001: 196). Despite a history of public participation prising open planning processes, in the micro-context of public meetings around particular redevelopment schemes, the resident viewpoint for McGuirk is managed, 'filtered', 'patronised', 'trivialised' 'narrowed', 'fine-tuned' (McGuirk, 2001: 204-212) rather than disruptive, or questioning. Alternative opinions, while acknowledged in the Newcastle study, were deemed 'intangible', 'esoteric', 'philosophical' and 'social' (McGuirk, 2001).

This criticism of the consultative turn, however, while pointing to the power-relations in which planning is embedded, does not simply privilege an underlying, homogenic notion of power. So while McGuirk (2001) suggests that power is 'constitutive…irreducible' and 'cannot be reasoned away…' (McGuirk, 2001: 213). she also suggests the impossibility of *escaping* power relations does not preclude limiting these relations, so that:

> 'The key task thus becomes one of identifying where relations of domination are working *through planning*, and to imagine institutional conditions and planning practice which might limit those relations in politically legitimate ways' (McGuirk, 2001: 214)

The notion of *limiting* 'relations of domination' that are *fundamental* seems in some ways contradictory. Yet McGuirk's approach is nuanced, subtle and fine-grained. In suggesting that power works through planning, she is destabilising the idea that planning is objective. In terms of a consultative turn, for instance, with its overtures to a more open, democratic planning system, the position of planners as mediators, sorters, arrangers and organisers, of information is critical and inhibiting, because it privileges a scientific rational understanding, rather than, for instance, emotional or aesthetic understanding. Despite a will to move away from technicality and expertise, she shows how planners revert to these roles, and indeed, shows that consensus based on rationality is exclusionary.

McGuirk also suggests however, that this situation, or condition, where public participation becomes annexed, controlled and managed might be limited or *worked on*. While this appears, in some ways, to parallel notions of for instance, structuration, McGuirk is careful to question the notion of consensus as a desired outcome. Indeed, it is precisely the drive to resolve that she targets as problematic. In this regard, she seems to advocate a type of indifference towards completion and linearity, resonating with Gibson and Watson's 'side-stepping' (Gibson and Watson, 1995 :255) of models of power that deny or annexe agency. Power-relations for McGuirk are proximate, present and continuing but *never* complete.

Some versions of this politics however, have led to confusion. Consultative approaches have enjoyed a resurgence among planning theorists, such as Forester, Healey, Hillier, Hoch, Innes, and numerous others (Huxley and Yiftachel, 2000: 908). For Forrester for instance, the notion that planning is embedded in power-relations has been established. As he is at pains to point out:

> 'By the mid-1970s, we had celebrated a good ten years of discoveries at the end of planning theory articles that '(Aha!) Planning is political.' We know that quite well by now. We really need less often to keep rediscovering politics and 'power,' and more often to carefully assess forms of power and their specific types of vulnerabilities, for

> only where dominating power is vulnerable is critical resistance possible' (Forester, 2000: 915).

While Forester may seem to miss the register in some ways, of the more nuanced approaches to power outlined above, he is nonetheless conscious of facilitating alternatives to dominant planning trajectories. Valuing the non-expert voice is critical in his project, and if the role of planners in ordering and interpreting often diverse understandings is restrictive, it also gives voice to an excluded other.

Nonetheless, McGuirk challenges us to envisage a planning approach that transcends technical rationalities. Assuming for the moment that such an approach would limit exclusions, my concern here, is how such an inclusionary approach might emerge. That is, how might power relations be limited 'in politically legitimate ways' (McGuirk, 2001: 214)? What precisely are the challenges in opening the planning process to wider rationalities, that value negotiation, process, learning and becoming, rather than outcomes, conclusions and endings? McGuirk has identified the deep technical scientific filter, of for instance, consultative process tied to a DCP. In this paper however, the question of how this technical scientific filter arises, and is sustained will be explored. From this, we might begin to imagine how less rigid approaches could take hold.

To this end, in the next part of the paper, I will explore some of the economic and political factors shaping planning roles and public participation in Sydney. Second, drawing on empirical research tracing the development of REP 30 at the ADI St Mary's site, I will evaluate the extent to which current consultative strategies are tied to a development agenda and explore the possibility and implications for broader public input in planning.

PART 2: ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL FACTORS SHAPING PUBLIC INPUT

Although planners, in mediating conflict, may occupy a powerful position, especially in controlling alternative views, there are a range of factors limiting the extent to which they might facilitate the disruption to dominant planning ideas. One of the most pressing issues facing the State planning authorities is population growth. McDonald and Kippen (2002) for instance, have made a series of forecasts where 'moderate

range of future fertility rates' (1.5-1.7), high rates of immigration and an increase in jobs-driven long-term temporary migrant stream, suggest the 'number of households in Sydney will grow more rapidly than the population due to changes in household structure' (McDonald and Kippen, 2002: 263). In October 1997, Angus Dawson, president of the NSW Division of the Urban Development Institute of Australia was reported in the press claiming that Sydney 'requires almost 21 000 new dwellings per year over the next 25 years' (Dawson in Dwyer, 1997: 15). While this represents the high-end of more detailed predictions, the imperative to house unregulated population growth is such that meeting this demand, let alone modifying the ways in which the demand is met, is an enormous undertaking.

Second, reflecting on the shift from social democratic to managerialist and liberal corporatist fashions in government in NSW, Gleeson and Low have suggested the idea of government planning as a means to ensure 'higher living standards and social justice' (Gleeson and Low, 2000: 72) has given way to an 'increasing use of the market as a coordinating mechanism' and 'a much closer relationship between bureaucratic chiefs and their departments' (Gleeson and Low, 2000: 72). The public is repositioned as an inheritor of vast debts. In the area of urban planning, this has meant tighter fiscal control on public spending (McGuirk and O'Neill, 2002; Fensham and Gleeson, 2003; Gleeson and Low, 2000), a withdrawal from environmental regulation (Ryan, 2001) and growing emphasis on place-competition (Byrne and Searle, 2002). Indeed, diverse meanings of place are increasingly positioned as a luxury. The shift to competition for investment activates place in quite specific ways, constructing the public, increasingly, as the recipients of design changes and urban growth, rather than say, health innovation, or services. As pointed out by Gleeson and Low, 'even the most trivial-seeming sporting event or office development- is hailed by the state and city governments as a victory over competitors and a harbinger of 'better times' for all' (Gleeson and Low, 2000: 100). This is a particular notion of the public- one tied to the fortunes of the city, or the locality, as it competes.

Planning, similarly, is tied to this place promotion: 'strategic and even statutory planning have been transformed into vehicles for city promotion, rather than city regulation.' (Gleeson and Low, 2000: 100). Numerous planning theorists have noted the planning protocols by-passed for large-scale transformation (Searle and Byrne, 2002; Berry and Huxley 1992; Berry, 1990; Daly, 1982) and a drainage of planning

powers councils and even the State planning department to semi-autonoous planning bodies. Sandercock has suggested that increasing competition for industrial and finance capital has led to fast-track planning decisions and the 'isolation' of decision-making 'from public scrutiny and democratic politics', citing fast-tracked mega-development projects 'the Docklands in London, Darling Harbour in Sydney, the Casino and Docklands project in Melbourne, New York's World Trade Center, Mitterand's 'Grand Projects' in Paris… (Sandercock, 1977: 28)

Third, over time, development and developer contributions appear to converge in time and space so that the provision of urban services is linked directly to profits through development, and particular developments. Unsettling, or holding up dominant planning trajectories may inhibit services delivery and redistribution of profits. In their case study of Darling Harbour for instance, Daly and Malone (1996) show that public-private partnerships, although often seen as the privatisation of public assets, were also an attempt to leverage greater contributions from development in the transformation and beautification of parks and public spaces. In this case the NSW State Government aimed to access private funds, first, to enable the development of public space (for instance, Bennelong Park) and second, to ensure developers made some contribution to the state. This era was characterised by a range of partnerships that might be thought of as public entrepreneurialism where planners were reconfigured as negotiators and bidders, and masterplans as contracts binding developers to the impacts of their activities. In taking on the interpretation of developers' responsibilities, project-by-project, the scope for developing alternatives to urban growth was tied, perhaps irrevocably, to urban growth. In other words, continued growth became the condition for *alternatives*

Fourth, planning authorities face an enormous issue of providing affordable housing. Despite low inflation and interest rates, and that at the end of the 1990s, the housing affordability index- 'the price of a standard house relative to average earnings' (Badcock and Beer, 2000: 128) was lower than ever before, home-ownership in Sydney is no longer a tenure option for a growing proportion of the population. This has been linked by Mee (2002) to the prosperity of Sydney, and more recently by Mee, to notions of quality of life. In their analysis of Green Valley and Mount Druitt for instance, Dowling and Mee (1997) showed how 'public housing allowed residents to plan their futures in place as they enjoyed security in their housing supply' (Mee,

2002: 346). With increasing privatisation of affordable housing delivery, housing stock at the lower end of the market depends more heavily on growth in other segments. Again, unsettling dominant trajectories of urban growth increasingly means unsettling provision of alternative housing forms.

Thus population growth, place competition and fiscal constraint, have led to increasing dependence on the market, and continued urban growth to ensure the provision of some of the most basic alternatives, such as affordable housing and open space. While the rational organization of alternative viewpoints in the micro-contexts of community forums around particular developments is deemed problematic, this criticism emerges in a context where alternative tenure types and design standards are linked to the smooth and rapid expansion of the urban core and periphery. Bearing in mind these broad trends, and this slightly sobering account of current motivations for developing housing at rapid rates the question of whether alternative rationalities and planning for conflict can limit and take-hold in such contradictory circumstances emerges. Drawing on the case of the redevelopment of the ADI St Mary's site, where alternative rationalities, mainstream consultative practice and dominant growth logics collide, I will outline in more detail the factors shaping public involvement in planning.

PART 3: ADI-ST MARY'S

The case study focuses on the consultative processes in the development of Regional Environmental Plan (REP) 30 for the Australian Defence Industry (ADI) site at St Mary's from 1991 to the Federal Election in 2001.

In light of the collapse of weapons manufacture in Australia and continual pressure on Australian Defence Industries to justify spending, ADI, in 1993, began a rapid reassessment of its land-holdings, which swiftly led to an engagement with the property industry. Its land sell-offs, by 2002, had generated about $450 million (Perinotto, 2002: 64) and the rezoning and development of the St Mary's site was a priority for Defence, anticipated at around $150 million.

The site was also strategic however, for the State government in meeting increasing housing demand and maintaining housing affordability through land release. Recent increases in housing stock from the period 1996-2001 include 10268 new houses in Liverpool, 8867 Blacktown, 8780 in Sydney, 7535 in Baulkham Hills, and 6631 in South Sydney (Planning NSW). The first Masterplan for the ADI site anticipated 10 000 housing units, but over the course of the study period, this was halved. The site is also one of the first, and most exhaustive examples of new urbanism in NSW. It has been characterised by high-level community planning run by Delfin-Lend Lease, integrated service provision, employment, housing, transport and provision of greenspace (Lendlease, 1992).

The broad planning process may be summarised as follows:
ADI approached the State Government in the early 1990s with a plan to rezone the area to enable the development of 10 000 housing sites (Penrith Council, 1999). In order to facilitate the rezoning, ADI formed a partnership with Lend Lease, who in 1996, presented a second masterplan, also proposing 10 000 dwellings.

In 1993, both of the relevant councils, Blacktown and Penrith, and the State Government agreed that any rezoning would occur via a Regional Environmental Plan (REP). The first stage of rezoning, the Regional Environmental Study (RES) concluded ‘the site could accommodate a measure of urban development, but it remained silent as to the extent of that development’ (Penrith Council, 1999: 4).

The REP was completed in 2001. The process of rezoning included a range of deliberations by a Section 22 committee comprising representatives of the State government, the two local councils and the developer, and resulted in a number of modifications including a reduction in housing lots to 8000. Throughout this period, Penrith Council opposed any residential redevelopment and was critical of the underlying assumption that ‘some level of development would be accommodated’ (Penrith Council, 1999: 4).

In the June 1997, the Australian Heritage Commission listed two thirds of the site on the Register of the National Estate and Council used this to lobby for the preservation of the whole site as a Regional Park, suggesting ADI might be compensated for this

zoning through the Federation Fund and the Natural Heritage Trust Fund. By 1998, the Minister decided to proceed with the REP however.

Following considerable community pressure during the 2001 Federal election, Jackie Kelly successfully lobbied the coalition so that the REP was modified to include the area already set aside on the Register of the National Estate, increasing the Regional Park zoning from 578 hectares to 828 hectares. The latest proposal is for 5000 houses and a population of up to 12 000 people.

Formal consultative program

Formal consultative processes included a presentation by Delfin Lend Lease of the second Masterplan, to the Australian Defence Industry RAG in 1996. This was accompanied by a shop-front display. The section 22 committee provided an important forum through which council could express its reservations. A range of consultative programs activated with approval of the modified REP were also described by community liaison officers (personal communication, 2003). Here, different stakeholder groups would be targeted- first the service providers, then the public, in a range of public forums, and feedback days.

Informal consultative approaches

Throughout the planning period, however, other avenues for public involvement emerged. One of the long standing stakeholder groups involved in contesting the use of the site for housing is the Australian Defence Industry Resident Action Group (ADI RAG), which emerged in 1991. The current group is mobilised largely around a preservation agenda, but a number of members trace their involvement to concerns about radioactive waste, with some 80 ADI workers contracting cancer or heart disease, and ultimately, the death of two men, Mr Grebert (in November 1996) and Oswald Baxter (Osborne, 1997: 1). It was revealed in a parliamentary inquiry that there was some low level radioactive material on the site and these early health concerns encouraged both residents and members of the Blacktown Branch of the Socialist Party of Australia to lobby for a health study.

At the same time, a councillor and community worker had helped raise awareness about the ADI site with the logo, ‘participation in planning’. Their initial canvassing in the area showed residents were concerned primarily about the contamination of the

site. With the deterioration of the Socialist Party in 1993, the two groups joined making up the core membership of today's ADI-RAG, which has more of a preservation focus.

In the early stages of preparation of the REP, the developer did meet with the resident action group, presenting the second Masterplan, for 10 000 houses to 60 members of the ADI RAG in the North St Mary's community centre. At the time, the ADI-RAG helped promote the event but resident accounts indicate a level of tension between the developer representative and the ADI-RAG. The meeting ended with an announcement by the RAG that they would lobby for zoning as a regional park emphasising tourist potential.

The criticisms of the Masterplan by the community at the time were that it did not take account of the contamination issue, transport congestion, other development in Western Sydney, or public hospital provision. There was also a concern among residents that Western Sydney had absorbed a large proportion of Sydney's housing, and a double standard was emerging in the marking of this defence site for housing release, and others around the harbour foreshore as open space. Residents were also aware that current council plans were addressing population pressure, without having to develop the ADI site (personal communication, 2003).

Despite their commitment to lobbying for change, a number of members of ADI-RAG began to doubt their capacity to challenge the development through formal mechanisms however. After several meetings with their local MPs, Jackie Kelly (in Lindsay) and Roger Price (in Blacktown) advised the RAG that 'nothing can be done', One of the residents described a growing awareness, that traditional forms of protest such as writing letters was ineffective in what was increasingly a 'political battle' (personal communication, 2003).

With sustained pressure by the ADI RAG during the 2001 political campaign, Jackie Kelly eventually lobbied Treasury within the coalition and modified the REP to include all the areas in the Heritage Listing. Her re-election to the seat of Lindsay, generally regarded as a cliff-hanger, saw the modification of the REP.

It is possible then, to identify broadly, a dominant pro development position, led by Planning, and a secondary position, marginalised and discredited variously as naïve, aspirational and elite, initially supported by Penrith council, and throughout by the resident action group resisting development.
In order to envisage ways in which alternative rationalities might reshape planning approaches, the justification for following a pro-development agenda must be considered.

Economic and social factors shaping dominant and minor planning trajectories

For NSW Planning at the time, there appeared to be a number of factors shaping, and indeed justifying, their essentially pro-development stance.

First, the agreement with Lend Lease differed from previous large scale development in that they were required to meet employment targets in the LGAs. This integration of employment and housing at the time of the Masterplan, and indeed, tying the developer to the provision of employment in close proximity to housing is an acknowledgement of an urgent planning problem facing Sydney- of access to jobs, and from this, pressure on transport. Although the consideration of employment and residential population is featured in, for instance, the 1988 Metropolitan planning strategy, this is a large-scale example of integrating residential development and employment. This also addressed one of the key concerns of council.

Second, through the developer agreements, reported in the press at $100 million, the State government felt it was able to ‘leverage the developer in terms of funding the open space and funding the major infrastructure rising out of it’ (Personal communication, 2003). There is a sense here of this particular development paying for itself. Shifting the responsibility for infrastructure provision to the private sector reflects one of the key justifications for greater co-ordination and planning roles for developers. It is worth considering here, the view of Blacktown council, which was in favour of redevelopment. In 1998, Charlie Lowles Mayor of Blacktown City Council at the time saw the redevelopment of the ADI site as an opportunity to mobilise State support for the extension of a rail line between St Mary’s and Riverstone (Flynn, 1998:1). As Mee has pointed out rapid development of affordable housing on the fringe ‘left parts of the region with significant service deficits of social disadvantage’

(2002: 338). Developer agreements are emerging as the avenue through which these differences might be alleviated.

Third, there was an immediate redistribution in terms of environmental costs. While National Parks appeared at first to have mixed reactions about the ongoing question of who manages the Regional Park, through the Section 22 deliberations, Lend Lease tied NPWS into the development as well so that, according to Mayor at the time, 'that for every block of land that they unloaded NPWS scored a benefit- in other words a set number of dollars that would be transferred to NPWS for every lot' (Personal communication, 2003).

Fourth, there is the issue of affordable housing. Although the issue appears to be gaining credibility in the context of the labour market, and inability of low-paid workers to live in the city (Personal communication, 2003) continued housing development is also framed in terms of equity:

> 'So in equity terms- you won't stop the growth of the city- you will just make it a far more inequitable city. We saw a 400% increase in the price of land on the fringe in 4 years- from 1996 to December last year- to a million dollars and acre for undeveloped land which equates to $190 000 upwards for a 300 sq m block at Kellyville or West Hoxton park or somewhere. So it's quite frightening and that's simply a supply and demand issue because the government hadn't released more land- and the situation snuck up very quickly. (Personal communication, 2003)

So there were in a sense, a range of reasons used by planning to justify their position. Within existing political and economic constraints. To what extent did a public viewpoint disrupt this agenda, and with what costs?

To begin, it is significant that the formal consultative mechanisms were by no means the only, or the most effective, means of public input into the planning process. The recognition that this was a 'political battle' and the efforts of the RAG to contest it in elections, highlights the range of consultative settings in which negotiation might occur.

Having denied the capacity to change the REP, Kelly, her seat under threat, instigated a series of meetings with her cabinet colleagues, ultimately finding over a

hundred hectares more for the Regional Park. Thus while NSW Planning had a mandate to develop, and following McGuirk's accounts, ignored the requests of council through a series of deliberations designed, ostensibly, to rezone the land as a Regional Park, pressure was applied elsewhere and outside formal consultative processes to force a wider consideration of the meaning of place. The 'public view' in this case, is not somehow restricted to developer meeting and presentations, but in fact, takes hold in a number of more everyday settings, for examples, elections and voting.

Second, the masterplan endorsed by the State Government in delivering housing for a growing population was not the only technical-scientific approach to planning. Council claimed a number of times during the Section 22 deliberations that there was enough land already rezoned in the LGA to meet housing demand for the next ten years. This suggests that alternative planning approaches may not necessarily be defined, or characterised entirely by alternative rationalities. Indeed, there appears in this case a proximate, even likely alternative, prevalent throughout discussions, based on traditional, objective notions of planning.

Third, following from this, we might question the urgency of rolling out 5000 houses at ADI on a number of grounds. If indeed, we are struggling to manage population growth and affordability, how can a Masterplan of 10 000 be reduced to 5000? While the marginality of Lindsay is clearly critical, we have seen the same pressure applied in other seats in Sydney, recently, around the Callan Park redevelopment, but as far back as the State election in February 1971 where the seat of Fuller was contested over the issue of rezoning Kelly's Bush. While this is possibly bad news for alternatives in safer seats, it does indicate the level of public commitment in areas where change is deemed possible through an engagement, and perhaps revitalisation of electoral process. While the ADI-RAG was continually positioned as a minority group, in the 2001 Federal Election, they gained 2600 first preferences. And this in spite of the fact Kelly was campaigning strongly on the same issue.

Thus, if following McGuirk (1999), we are interested in limiting 'relations of domination' in politically legitimate ways we might:
(a) consider the full range of democratic processes through which alternatives might be articulated, not just developer and planning-led consultative programs and from

this, reconceptualise notions of power as fine-grained, rather than concentrated and bounded (especially by categories such as 'developer')

(b) consider the full range of plans made- including those proximate alternatives- in this case Council's own rezoning strategies focused on building up the town centre and conversion of derelict industrial sites close to existing infrastructure- while not necessarily more value-laden or representative of alternative rationalities- these plans seem to indicate a minor deviation from continuing services-challenged development.

(c) question, in light of public pressure exerted in this case, and the apparent possibility of halving housing roll-out, the urgency and crisis laden manner of planning in NSW.

PART 4: POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Despite a reputation as unpractical and idealistic (Forester, 2000), this more complex understanding of public participation in planning flavoured with the post-structural openings explored by McGuirk, provides us with a clear set of implications for planning policies and approaches.

First, the notion of the 'proximate plan' is critical. Despite the justification provided by Planning NSW that large scale roll-out of housing was the only option, there was no research brought to my attention informing this choice over Council's own rezoning strategies. While this is a minor alternative in some ways, its neglect appears *almost arbitrary*. If we are not taking the quite likely alternative, how are we to develop the capacity for deeper change- for instance, in breaking down binaries between nature and culture and so on?

I would suggest more detailed empirical research in this area, outlining the assumptions concerning the large-scale roll-out of housing and **the costs and benefits of large scale housing roll-out compared to town centre build-up on the fringe**. A second, more discursive project, might explore the relationship between the assumptions and the actual costs and benefits. In short, how what we know becomes interpreted, and taken up by, the Sydney planning and development community. If we have this information, and it is not being used, why not? While this

appears to be a somewhat tame project given the variety of innovative approaches to urban growth available, it appears to be the type of research the planning community in Sydney could feasibly use and implement given we are geared up for both types of development, that population is becoming an important political issue, and that access to housing is a critical issue for the public.

Second, the role of the planner is also critical. Urban and metropolitan planners in this case, despite a range of consultative mechanisms, were clearly not in a position to garner or lobby alternative views. The formal consultative process was not the forum in which a public view was played out- it spread slowly through the local and state press; the Land and Environment Court; the 2001 Federal Election, at the ballot box; at the police station and resident rallies at Penrith Plaza and council chambers in both LGAs. In this respect, both the press, and also importantly, academics, through our capacity to trace and negotiate all these settings are perhaps more important and useful facilitators than a bureaucracy charged with housing a population.

Third, and building on this point, there appear to be a range of assumptions, about for instance, the benefit of population growth, fiscal constraint, public-private partnership. In the short term, all these areas in terms of urban development and services might be researched form the point of view of a metropolitan strategy however. Increasingly, ADI style development is rolled out, ostensibly as integrated planning, and a solution to urban sprawl. If these isolated housing developments do not contribute to sprawl, to what extent are they absorbing planning resources and urban service delivery at the expense of other areas?

I think these are all important questions characterising a research and policy agenda that considers change important, but takes into consideration the sticky, and pervasive social, economic and political traditions shaping the roles, identities, aspirations and imaginations of all stakeholders. Importantly, it acknowledges the vulnerability of ‘ideals’ and the importance of grounding, fixing and making concepts work.

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