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On the Fringe of Neoliberalism: residential development in outer suburban Sydney

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ABSTRACT Although there is widespread consensus in human geography that neoliberalism is achieved through the intersection of multiple scales and states, there has been growing emphasis in recent years on the hybrid qualities of neoliberalist-styles of governance. Because hybrid approaches draw attention to the wide range of actors and contradictory agendas underpinning the always uneven expression of neoliberalist projects, they are particularly suited to the identification of residual state capacities in contexts where neoliberalist forms dominate economic and political life. Drawing on two cases of large-scale residential development in New South Wales, namely Warnervale Town Centre on the New South Wales Central Coast and the Australian Defence Industry site at St Marys in Sydney’s west, the present paper adopts a hybrid approach in order to identify current state capacities. Through a comparison of both sites, it identifies the potential for socially and ecologically balanced development in the outer suburban context.

KEY WORDS Neoliberalism; hybridity; urban governance; planning; residential development; New South Wales; Sydney.

Introduction

Over the past three decades, there has been increasing concern over the rise of neoliberalist governance in Western nations (Brenner & Theodore 2002a; Peck & Tickell 2002; MacLeod et al. 2003). As a discursive and political achievement, neoliberalism champions reduced state spending and regulatory roles, privatisation, and modifications to the welfare state. Exploring the nature of these changes has been one of the key concerns of economic and urban geographers, where, for the most part, it is assumed that the retreat of the state does not happen instantaneously—that it is mediated locally and hinges on the intersection of competing scales and states (Peck & Tickell 2002). Yet, if contingent approaches to the study of neoliberalism are one of the hallmarks of human geography, it is the wholly uneven qualities of neoliberalist projects that have attracted more recent attention. Coined by McGuirk (2005) as ‘hybrid’ approaches to neoliberalism, these accounts emphasise the wide range of actors and disparate agendas that not
only complicate the achievement of neoliberalist outcomes, but also have the potential to usher in new political and economic futures.

Within this conceptual terrain, the place of large-scale residential development in Australia occupies an ambiguous position. On the one hand, current research points to the distinctly neoliberalist trajectories that have characterised the deregulation and privatisation of the public housing sector (Wearing 1995; Beer et al. 2007) and the reorientation of planning capacities away from spatial equity towards entrepreneurial and competitive cities paradigms (Gleeson & Low 2000, McGuirk 2005). Although these approaches have done little to alleviate employment, services, and infrastructure shortfalls in many outer-suburban and inter-urban contexts (Fagan & Dowling 2005), they have also exacerbated city-wide pressure on housing prices and land supply across the metropolitan region. Paradoxically, outer-suburban and interurban areas, although relatively vulnerable to the spatial blindness of neoliberalist planning regimes, are critical sites in maintaining the structural coherence of the metropolitan region.

On the other hand, there is evidence of renewed State government interest in planning roles, signalled by a reinvigoration of metropolitan planning processes (McGuirk 2005). Although this resurgence in state activity certainly flags a period of experimentation in urban governance in New South Wales (NSW), it is less clear how these plans will come to terms with the spatial inequalities experienced by suburban and interurban areas (Forster 2007). Even though elsewhere we have argued that neoliberalist outcomes in fringe and interurban contexts occur unevenly and are mediated locally (Ruming 2005; Ruming & Cook, 2007), current and potential state capacity to steer these outcomes towards socially and ecologically balanced development remains unexplored.

Drawing on two cases of residential planning and development on Sydney’s fringe and interurban areas, the present paper begins to address these gaps. It aims, first, to identify existing state capacities in the achievement of large-scale residential development in outer-suburban and interurban contexts. Second, through a comparison of the different outcomes achieved at each site, it aims to establish the types of state-market configurations that lend themselves to socially and ecologically balanced outcomes. We begin, however, by outlining the conceptual shifts in geographical understandings of neoliberalism, highlighting the suitability of hybrid approaches to the analysis of residual political and economic paradigms in an outerurban context.

Theorising neoliberalism: shifting conceptual frame

Neoliberalism has emerged as a significant state management tool in Western nations in the last 30 years (Brenner & Theodore 2002a). Although contemporary understandings point to the uneven qualities of neoliberalist projects—their tendency to blend with other political and economic regimes and the many actors and institutions whose disparate agendas unsettle a coherent project—there are some key trends that, since the end of the long boom, can be comfortably identified as neoliberalist. As a discursive and practical accomplishment, neoliberalism represents a framework of political and economic authority that champions market operation and efficiency over a wide range of social relations (Brenner & Theodore 2002b). This includes the removal of the state-centred bureaucracy and executive characteristic of the sociodemocratic tradition of Keynesianism and, in its place,
the centralisation of the market in public management (Larner 2000). Characterised by the privatisation of public assets, and an emphasis on market provision of formerly ‘public’ goods and services, this is a form of governance that effectively transfers ‘power away from democratically elected governments with a mandate to ensure universal service provision towards private capital concerned primarily with furthering opportunities for accumulation’ (Larner 2000, p. 6).

Although there is widespread consensus among human geographers that Western cities and their suburbs are central to the reproduction and expression of neoliberalism (Brenner & Theodore 2002b; Jessop 2002), one of the hallmarks of this work is its attention to the unevenness of the neoliberalist project. One of the key, and by now well-established, elements of this criticism is that the centralisation of markets does not mean a minimisation of state intervention; rather, it involves a redirection of state activity from distributional outcomes towards supply-side intervention (O’Neill 1997; Peck 2001; O’Neill & Moore 2005; O’Neill & Fagan 2006). This is a shift that, in an urban context, is characterised by the withdrawal of the state from policies designed to engineer spatial equity and a reorientation of state capacity towards the production of regulatory and administrative frameworks that lock cities into global circuits of money, people, and trade (McGuirk 2005). This includes, for instance, regulatory and financial support for flagship redevelopment projects (Searle & Bounds 1999), real estate development and gentrification (Smith 2002), technological innovation and internationalisation (Brenner & Theodore 2002b), and new forms of social control, including policing and surveillance (Peck & Tickell 2002; Smith 2002). This is a shift that, compared with an earlier phase of ‘roll-back neoliberalism’, reconstitutes state roles in a myriad of ways coined by Peck and Tickell (2002) as ‘roll out’ neoliberalism (p. 380).

Yet, in human geography, urban governance is also of a spatial order, where economic and political systems require (or indeed are) configurations of agents and processes operating at (interrelated) national, regional, local (and so on) scales (O’Neill 1997; Brenner & Theodore 2002a; Peck & Tickell 2002; McGuirk 2003, 2004, 2005). The sheer magnitude of agents and processes involved in the achievement of urban governance means the types of outcomes that result are locally specific and ‘realised contingently’ (McGuirk 2004, p. 1019). In this formulation, urban governance is a practical accomplishment that ‘requires a series of dispersed elements (for example, political interests, rationalities, technologies, realms of policy intervention) to be drawn into relation, and articulated into a concrete conjuncture’ (McGuirk 2004, p. 1024). Unsurprisingly, the achievement of neoliberalist-style governance is not immediate: it requires adoption, negotiation, and struggle (Brenner & Theodore 2002b); it unfolds unevenly, ‘slouching toward birth’ (Smith 2002, p. 429).

Yet, if the contingent expression of neoliberalism is one of the hallmarks of geographical research, it is the wholly uneven qualities of neoliberalist-style governance that characterise the field’s most recent inflections. Captured by McGuirk (2005) as ‘hybrid’ approaches to neoliberalism, these accounts emphasise, first, the ensemble-like qualities of urban governance, where the range of actors and institutions involved in the organisation of society and space extends beyond the government and the executive to include workplaces, schools, universities, welfare agencies, medical practitioners (Larner 2000), and non-government organisations and civil society (O’Neill 1997; McGuirk 2003, 2004,
Second, and in a clear departure from earlier approaches, there is a growing emphasis on the disparate qualities of the players in these ensembles: that is, their partial alignment with each other and their sometimes ambiguous positions in relation to dominant agendas. This allows some incongruent coalitions politically—for instance, the temporary intersection of indigenous or nationalist with neoliberalist interests (Larner 2000)—or spatially, where local states may engage with regional or national agendas even if responding to a different set of factors than those drawing higher orders to the same moment (McGuirk 1997). Third, given the contradictory mix of agendas and players involved, there is new willingness to consider the potential for alternatives to neoliberalist-style outcomes. This is not simply a reassertion of the variegated nature of neoliberalist projects, but an orientation towards new political possibilities, where the ‘result is not a foregone conclusion’ (Larner 2000, p. 19). As McGuirk (2004, p. 1022) points out:

As a loose institutional ensemble that is spatially disparate, the unity of the state and its capacity to govern is neither pre-given, necessitated by a determinative capitalist logic, nor, indeed, assured.

Hybrid approaches are therefore attendant not only to the contingent expression of neoliberalism, but also to the potential for disparate and contradictory elements to usher in new political possibilities. Moreover, because hybrid approaches do not suppose the project of neoliberalism is complete—rather, that markets and states operate in contradictory and unlikely ways—they remain alert, not only to the wide range of agents gathered in the achievement of neoliberalist-style projects (Larner 2000), but also to the resilience of alternative economic and political orders. This includes ‘traces’ of earlier regimes of governance, such as ‘social–democratic aspirations, institutional capacities and political drive’ (McGuirk 2005, p. 61); the resilience of ‘marginal’ or grass roots agendas (Larner 2000); and disparate agendas operating across multiple scales (McGuirk 2004). Therefore, this approach is particularly suited to the identification of state roles and the redefinition of distributional outcomes, not least where neoliberalist tendencies have dominated political and economic life (Larner 2000; McGuirk 2005).

Despite the potential role played by hybrid conceptualisations of neoliberalism in enacting new political possibilities, much contemporary urban geography continues to illuminate a neoliberalist ‘force field’ (Peck & Tickell 2002). While recognising the tendency for Western states to periodically search for new institutional and regulatory frameworks (Brenner & Theodore 2002b; Peck and Tickell, 2002), current accounts tend to reinforce the coherence of neoliberalist projects. In these formulations, urban governance is characterised by distinct intergovernmental relations, including the devolution of responsibilities to municipal and local government and the development of ‘new institutional relays’ enabling the direct control of development outcomes by powerful business interests (Brenner & Theodore 2002b, p. 369). These outcomes are ‘malleable’ but also ‘deeply dysfunctional’; they are ‘unpredictable mutations’ rather than ‘coherent, sustainable solutions’ (Brenner & Theodore 2002b, p. 375; see also Peck 2001).

Although we would agree that it is wholly premature to anticipate an era of “push-back” neoliberalism (Peck & Tickell 2002, p. 401), we are equally conscious that the failure of neoliberalist forms of governance periodically, and sometimes routinely, leads states to review or reflect on their roles and responsibilities (Brenner and Theodore 2002b). While we do not suppose that
this type of reflection, on its own, has the capacity to generate a new era of urban governance, moments of experimentation do flag a critical opportunity to redefine distributional outcomes in particular contexts (McGuirk 2005). These opportunities are particularly important in areas that have experienced institutional restructuring and/or depletion characteristic of spatially unconscious forms of urban governance. In these cases, even if political will is mobilised, institutional memory and analytical terrain may be sufficiently altered that new analytical tools through which to identify existing and potential state capacity are required. Turning, in our next section, to large-scale residential development in Australia, we explore these themes in relation to an urban form that has long outlived its Keynesian origins and now faces significant challenges in a substantially reconfigured and reterritorialised metropolitan landscape.

**Large-scale residential property development in NSW**

Although in countries like Australia (where the state has long supported private home ownership) it is difficult to draw firm boundaries between state and market roles in relation to housing development, *direct* government intervention towards housing provision was greatest at the end of the World War II. At this time, housing production became a major element of the broad program of war reconstruction (Berry 1999) and, throughout the post-World War II era, the state used housing as a tool for shaping broader economic activity, with large areas of housing being developed on the fringe of Australia’s capital cities. Much of this stock was developed through direct state construction of public housing, while private developers released land at a profuse rate, leaving the state to construct and fund social services and infrastructure (Troy 1995). Although seen as a driver of the national economy, most of these outer suburbs were characterised by piecemeal development of speculative estates, owner-builders, and public housing construction (Troy 1995; Howe 2000). Although such policies may have effectively dealt with post-war housing objectives and facilitated the economy of the ‘long boom’, this development soon came under criticism, primarily because of its lack of imaginative planning, stark physical landscape, and substandard social reputation (Powell 1993; Mee 2002). By the early 1960s, the boundaries between public and private housing provision were again changing, with developers taking on much stronger roles in financing infrastructure and public services (Morison 2000; Clark 2002).

If the relationships between the state and the private sector in the post-World War II period were relatively uneven, housing and planning policy in subsequent decades may be more readily described as neoliberalist (Beer et al. 2007). This is evident in three interrelated trends. First, in a suite of reforms that resemble elements of ‘roll-back’ neoliberalism, the social housing sector in NSW has experienced dramatic restructuring with policy directions favouring private sector provision of low-income (rental) housing and, through cooperative lending societies, the development of financial mechanisms to support the transition to home ownership (Raine 1988; Wearing 1995; see also Dodson 2006). At the same time, in the early 1990s in NSW, the Department of Housing was restructured into two parts: one based on its role as a social housing provider and the other as the public, profit-oriented developer Landcom (Mant 1992). Second, and also characteristic of ‘roll-back’ neoliberalism, the NSW State government has relied
more heavily on private involvement in the planning, financing, and delivery of large-scale residential development projects, including, in some cases, the remediation of brownfield sites, financing of infrastructure including transport, generation of employment, and community and human services delivery (Troy 1999). Third, the government has stepped back from normative and spatially equitable elements of planning regulation towards a more flexible model characteristic of ‘roll-out’ forms of neoliberalism and competitive city planning paradigms. Characterised by fragmented and locally scaled plans with greater flexibility in planning controls, state capacities are reconstituted around regeneration and place-making projects deemed capable of ‘[catapulting] the city into global city league’ (McGuirk 2005, p. 64). But whether roll-out or roll-back styles of neoliberalism, the theme here is of state withdrawal from spatially equitable planning and residential development outcomes.

Nonetheless, at the metropolitan scale there are numerous indications that the transition to a competitive cities planning regime has not been absolute. Amidst these clear attempts to redirect state spending, this period was also characterised by strong intervention by the NSW State1 government in urban consolidation, as well as the intervention of the Federal government in the socially balanced development goals of the Building Better Cities program (McGuirk 2005). On a place-by-place basis, there have also been significant attempts to achieve socially, environmentally, and economically equitable outcomes (McGuirk 2005; Ruming 2005; Beer et al. 2007; Ruming & Cook 2007; see also Sagalyn 1997; Swyngedouw et al. 2002). More recently, McGuirk (2005) notes a shift in NSW towards stronger metropolitan planning through both the Growth Centres Commission and a strengthening of metropolitan planning itself, flagging new willingness by the NSW State government to undertake stronger planning roles, partly in response to earlier failures. Although these new plans are certainly replete with neoliberal tendencies, including strong representation of the private sector in powerful development corporations, they also contain strategies that fit comfortably in social democratic frameworks, including public funding of infrastructure, greater government intervention in the control of land supply, and more evenly distributed sociospatial outcomes (McGuirk 2005).

Although this resurgence in metropolitan planning flags a period of experimentation in urban governance in NSW, it is less clear how these plans will come to terms with the spatial inequalities experienced by suburban and interurban areas (Forster 2007). In Australian cities, housing affordability and limited availability of land mean that outer suburban, and particularly interurban, residential areas continue to play critical roles in the delivery and consumption of housing (McGuirk 2005; Department of Environment and Water Resources 2006; Beer et al. 2007). Yet, these areas face considerable planning challenges, including shortfalls in employment, services, and public transport deficits, all of which have been exacerbated by the lack (over the past 30 years) of a coordinated, spatially conscious metropolitan planning framework (Fagan & Dowling 2005; McGuirk 2005). Although these areas face growing competition for resources from other parts of the fringe, there is growing evidence that the current shortfall in infrastructure is beginning to threaten the wider structural coherence of the city (McGuirk 2005). Moreover, it is not clear whether and how the ‘spatially selective’ interventions sketched in the current metropolitan plan will alleviate the infrastructure and housing pressures in these areas. Indeed, although Ruming (2005) has argued that neoliberalist outcomes in
these contexts are mediated locally, and we have also argued that these outcomes are uneven (Ruming & Cook 2007), we have yet to identify current state capacities in fringe governance.

To address this gap, we turn, in the remainder of the paper, to two cases of large-scale residential development in Sydney: (1) the planning of Warnervale Town Centre (WTC) in one of Sydney’s interurban growth corridors; and (2) the planning and redevelopment of the Australian Defence Industry (ADI)–St Marys site on Sydney’s suburban fringe. Through interviews with planners, politicians, developers, and consultants, as well as a range of secondary sources, including key planning instruments for each site, our first aim was to identify current state roles in the governance of large-scale residential property development. Second, through a comparison of both projects, we identify the factors that led to relatively balanced development outcomes at ADI-St Marys compared with those at Warnervale, where development has, for the moment, stalled.

Case studies

The case studies are of large-scale residential property development in NSW. They are both significant to NSW State and local government land release targets and, at the time of planning, were expected to add 28 000 homes to Sydney’s outer-suburban dwelling stock. Our first case, Warnervale Town Centre (WTC) is located in Wyong Shire (Figure 1), one of the most rapidly growing regions of NSW. The WTC is a master-planned retail and services centre designed to anchor the expanding, largely private sector, residential growth of the interurban region of Wyong Shire. With almost 30 000 people commuting from the area each day and relatively low household incomes, the availability of services is, like many interurban areas, critical. The WTC involves NSW State and local government funding of both services and urban design features in a context of strong private

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**FIGURE 1.** Warnervale Town Centre and the Australian Defence Industry site at St Marys, New South Wales.
sector pressure from national and local developers for land release, but with little private sector input beyond mandatory contributions. The development of master plans and financial plans was heavily driven by the public sector. Private developers in this case were a relatively minor presence in the planning process, even though the development of the town centre was designed to underpin private residential development.

Our second case of ADI–St Marys is more typical of the entrepreneurial planning models that have characterised large-scale residential development in the 1990s in NSW. In this case, the planning process was coordinated by a large institutional developer that took a lead role in planning and financing residential and town centre development. Although the NSW State government and two relevant local councils were involved in the negotiation of development contributions and the overarching planning instrument, *Regional Environmental Plan 30* (Department of Urban Affairs and Planning 2001), ADI–St Marys signals stronger private sector involvement in planning and development than the case of Warnervale. The draft master plan for the site also promised to add another 10,000 homes to Sydney’s housing stock: a significant input into the process of housing provision and land release for NSW. The site is located in Sydney’s outer-western suburbs on a disused military site of 1535 hectares (Figure 1).

Taken together, the cases point to the variation implicit in governance models characterising large-scale residential development in NSW. Although both sites emerge in the tighter fiscal era of the late twentieth century, they also exhibit relatively high levels of state involvement, and therefore do not immediately conform to international models of privatised residential development. Nonetheless, they reflect the distinct governance realm of large-scale residential development and planning in NSW, one that resists a simple historicisation of state and private sector involvement (McGuirk 2005), and therefore offer a unique vantage point to observe the nuances of state–market relations. The variation evident between the two cases that unfolded during the same period of time also provides a useful lens through which to explore governance as an inherently uneven process and, at the same time, highlights those characteristics that led to the successful development of one site and less certain outcomes for the other.

**Warnervale**

The suburb of Warnervale is located in one of the most rapidly developing areas in NSW, the commuter region of the Central Coast. Comprising the two local government areas (LGAs) of Wyong and Gosford, the Central Coast is a key suburban corridor between Sydney and the NSW regional centre of Newcastle. In 2001, the Central Coast housed 7.1 per cent of the NSW population and, in the 5 years to 2001, the population grew by some 56,000 people. In the same year, Wyong LGA was ranked fifth of 42 LGAs by number of development applications approved in 2001 and its population grew at almost double the State average (NSW Premier’s Department 2001). Within this already rapidly growing interurban region, the Warnervale site—part of Wyong LGA—is expected to add 18,000 homes and over 30,000 people to the locality.

The Warnervale site was initially identified for residential release in the 1968 Sydney Region Outline Plan, but not released until 1994 in response to increasing pressure from the development industry for residential land (Ruming 2005). Unlike
traditional fringe residential releases, the Warnervale release areas are divided into two distinct planning areas, which reflect both the privatisation thrusts of residential development and increasing master-planned and state interventionist planning. The first section of the Warnervale area was released under the management of Development Control Plan 49 (DCP49) (Wyong Shire Council (WSC) 2002a). The DCP49 covers the southern section of the release area and is characterised by 'traditional' residential estate release, rarely exceeding 600 lots per estate, with blocks ranging is size from 450 to 750 square metres (WSC 2002a). The DCP49 was released in response to increasing pressures from residential developers for land (Ruming 2007). Developments comprise both land only and house and land packages, are largely devoid of alternative housing options, such as medium density dwellings, and are owned by large development firms.

In stark contrast, and partly in response to the development occurring under DCP49, the northwest sector of Warnervale is designed to be a town centre of mixed use with social services and employment, implementing many of the initiatives intrinsic to the principles of New Urbanism (Ruming 2005; WSC 2002b). To date, the land has not been released to private development, with the majority of land in the region owned by state institutions (WSC, NSW Department of Transport, Planning NSW) with other holdings by Landcom and a large supermarket chain. Although economic considerations were of key interest to both State government and local council departments involved in the planning process, social outcomes were also a key priority for many of the NSW State government departments and, in particular, for WSC.

To these ends, in the development of the WTC master plan, the WSC worked with a range of NSW State government departments, including the state property developer Landcom, to ensure the delivery of socially equitable housing outcomes through the delivery of affordable housing and social services. Through its partnership with the Central Coast Regional Coordination Management Group, Wyong was also able to demonstrate the significant shortfall in employment, social services, and infrastructure within the shire, its already disadvantaged population, and the difficulty of securing contributions from a largely uncoordinated private sector. Through this process, and formalised under the Community Support and Human Services Strategy for Warnervale/Wadalba (WSC 2002c), Wyong Shire secured Au$300 000 over 3 years from the NSW State government to employ a project coordinator and a Au$10 million commitment over 5 years for social services provision in the north of Wyong Shire (WSC 2002c; Table 1). Transport NSW also made a Au$27 million commitment to rail and road upgrades that,

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<th>Table 1. Funding and planning roles of the public and private sectors for the Warnervale Town Centre</th>
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coupled with Au$8 million in Section 94 contributions and an additional Au$2 million provided by council, resulted in total local and State government funding for the WTC coming in at over Au$37 million.

With a range of financial commitments and coordination roles, the WTC emerges as a master-planned, state-led investment in suburban infrastructure. Although these functions fit somewhat uneasily within the competitive cities planning paradigm, the intergovernmental relations between the local and State government nonetheless highlight strong neoliberalist tendencies. First, the commitment by the NSW Department of Transport for a new railway station plus additional funds to aid the construction of a transport exchange and upgrade of the major arterial road (Transport NSW 2002) were the product of intense negotiation between council and the NSW State government. The spend remains a source of tension between both tiers of government; and construction, at time of writing, had not commenced, despite an initial timeline that identified completion in 2007. This is a key source of concern for the local council because the infrastructure provided the catalyst for the most recent round of planning in the region and was positioned as the primary driver in achieving the goals embedded in the New Urbanist development objectives of the strategy (Ruming 2005). Second, although the planning partnership between State departments and WSC was initially formalised under a Project Control Group, once these strategies were agreed upon, the plan’s development was placed in the hands of Wyong Council and Landcom, leaving the remaining NSW State government departments as essentially sign-off authorities. Unsurprisingly, the NSW State government and Wyong Council are locked in a standoff: torn between a divergent set of departmental objectives.

So, the case of WTC certainly exhibits contradictory tendencies. In as much as the Wyong Council has been overloaded with planning and financial responsibilities, the relationship between local and NSW State government resembles the interlocal relations, which, for Brenner and Theodore (2002b), epitomise contemporary forms of neoliberalism. This is particularly evident in the withdrawal of financial commitments by the NSW Department of Transport and the marginalisation of Wyong Council by the NSW State government in its resumption of planning powers (Elbra 2006). Yet, at the same time, the WSC worked consistently to steer the project towards socially balanced outcomes. This included its diversion of Section 94 contributions from elsewhere in the shire to underwrite recreational services in the Town Centre, its mobilisation of NSW State government departments in the coordination and provision of human services, and its development of affordable housing outcomes with Landcom. Rather than harnessing the site to the fiscally austere planning trajectory pursued by the NSW Department of Transport and Premier’s Department, Council sought to steer development towards the needs of the existing and incoming community. And although the WTC suffers from a lack of investment in infrastructure, the outcome bears the legacy of this disparate planning trajectory: it is at once fiscally constrained and thoroughly planned and costed. While it therefore reveals the multiple agendas and disparate trajectories pursued by localist and regionalist authorities that produce contingent forms of urban governance in interurban contexts, we are also interested in the configurations of actors and agendas that lend themselves to more successful urban outcomes. To these ends, we move, in our next case, to the planning and redevelopment of ADI-St Marys.
In contrast with the planning of the WTC, the planning and redevelopment of the ADI site was characterised by much stronger interaction between the public and private sector. The site was owned from 1941 to 1991 by the Commonwealth Department of Defence for the manufacture and testing of ammunition (El Khoury 1998). However, with bipartisan support at the national level for the privatisation of non-combat military operations, the ADI, in 1991, sought to privatise its landholdings with profits ear-marked for the consolidation of its heavy engineering operations (Senate Committee 2000). A key step in the sale of the site for residential housing was its rezoning from military to residential land use. Although local government in Australia has the authority to undertake such rezoning, attempts by the Commonwealth to have the site rezoned by the relevant local planning authorities (Penrith and Blacktown City Councils) were unsuccessful. This was based (in part) on the level of works required to remediate the site and, in the case of Penrith City Council (PCC), reservations over the need for further land release in the LGA. With the rejection of the two local councils, authority to rezone the site was transferred to the NSW State government. Envisaging a difficult rezoning process, the Department, in 1994, sought the advice of the national property developer Delfin Lend Lease (Delfin) to help negotiate a complex planning terrain (see Cook 2006).

In a useful example of the state roles characterising ‘roll-out’ style neoliberalism, both the Federal and NSW State governments made significant efforts to secure private sector involvement. This was evident, first, in the attempts of the public sector land owners (the Commonwealth) and the public planning authority (Planning NSW) to limit competition from other potential developers. This was achieved through an agreement between the Commonwealth and Delfin that, provided the site was rezoned, ensured ownership would be transferred to the developer for Au$164 000 (Kelly 2004). Second, through the efforts of the NSW State government, a relatively complex rezoning was negotiated. This was a critical step for all three stakeholders because, for most of the twentieth century, the site had been fenced off, preserving large tracts of the Cumberland Plain Woodland—a significant ecological community under State and Federal government legislation. In order to rezone the site, NSW Planning was bound by the Environmental Planning and Assessment (EP&A) Act (1979) to undertake a Regional Environmental Study (RES) in order to identify appropriate environmental guidelines. The significance of this remnant bushland was demonstrated in the draft RES, which recommended 1100 hectares of the site be zoned ‘Regional Park’ (Doherty 2000; PCC 2000). Critically, Planning NSW had the authority to take this recommendation through to the final RES, ensuring that all master plans submitted by proponents (in this case, Delfin) included a Regional Park of 1100 hectares. However, the NSW State government opted to leave the size of the Regional Park unspecified in the final RES, thus allowing a minimum interpretation by proponents. Unsurprisingly, Delfin opted for only 600 hectares zoned Regional Park in its October 1995 master plan, submitted to Planning NSW one month after the RES was released (PCC 2000).

Despite these clear overtures to the private sector by the both the Commonwealth and NSW State governments, there were also efforts to ensure social and hard infrastructure for members of the incoming and future community. Table 2
sets out the contributions from the developer, negotiated by the NSW State
government and two local councils during a series of meetings enabled by Section
22 of the EP&A Act (1979). Used as the basis for the final Regional Environment
Plan (REP) 30—ADI–St Marys, contributions secured during the Section 22
negotiations included Au$100 million for open space and infrastructure and an
additional Au$6.9 million, paid by Delfin to the National Parks and Wildlife
Service to manage the Regional Park. After 12 months of negotiation, the final
balance between housing and ecological outcomes achieved through the Section 22
Committee included an increase in the size of the regional park to 630 hectares and
a reduction in the number of dwellings to 5000. So, despite NSW Planning’s
flexibility in the development of the RES, the master planning process at ADI–St
Marys emerged as a key site in the regulation of development outcomes, where the
negotiation of roles, responsibilities, and economic contributions in this large-scale
fringe development were determined.

Despite the clear function of the Section 22 Committee in shaping Delfin’s
contributions, the striking ecological balance achieved at the ADI site cannot be
explained by this factor alone. Gaining momentum throughout the Section 22
negotiations was a strong campaign for the full conservation of the site. This was
spearheaded for nearly 3 years by the PCC, which, while party to Section 22
negotiations simultaneously sought heritage listing of the site through the Australian
Heritage Commission and Federal Government support through the 2001 ‘Federa-
tion Fund’ (PCC 1997). Although these efforts were unsuccessful, and Council
eventually capitulated, the ADI Resident Action Group (ADI-RAG) continued to
lobby the Federal member for Lindsay, Jackie Kelly, who, in order to protect her seat
in the 2001 Federal election, campaigned on a platform of preserving the ADI site.
This was a position counter to the economic rationalist outlook of the conservative
Federal Government of the time and an ideological position aligned to the concerns
of both ‘Howard’s Battlers’ and the wider conservation movement in Sydney. With
her re-election, REP 30 was modified (although not by the NSW Government until
2004) to a regional park of 900 hectares. Although blurring the boundaries between
politics and planning, the outcome is impressive: the site achieves a notable balance
between housing and ecological outcomes, including the preservation of the
Cumberland Plain Woodland and a reasonably large land release underscored by
significant developer contributions.

There is little doubt that this case bears strong neoliberalist tendencies. Some
elements clearly resemble the extralocal relations identified by Brenner and
Theodore (2002b): for instance, the attempts of the NSW State government to
minimise the size of the Cumberland Plain Woodland in REP 30 and the agreement
with the Commonwealth signed by Delfin resemble the generation of new

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Services/infrastructure</th>
<th>Private sector (Delfin Lend Lease)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Open space and infrastructure</td>
<td>Au$100 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Parks and Wildlife Service to</td>
<td>Au$6.9 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>manage regional park</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Au$106.9 million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
‘institutional relays’ through which powerful business interests may directly intervene in local development outcomes. However, throughout the planning process, Council pursued an alternative planning agenda. While party to Section 22 negotiations, PCC attempted to tie the site to locally and historically embedded concerns, in this case to ensure the biodiversity values in the locality. The breakdown of the alliance between the PCC and the ADI-RAG points further to the disparate agendas in play, underscored by the equally temporary alliance between the conservative member for Lindsay and the ADI-RAG. The modified REP 30, including an extra 300 hectares, is a legacy of these disparate and multi-scalar agendas that continued to evade State government control.

Taken together, the disparate agendas, multi-scalar planning trajectories, and different outcomes at each site lend the cases readily to the concept of hybrid neoliberalism. Although both cases show clear neolibealist tendencies, it is the persistence of socially and ecologically balanced planning trajectories and residual regulatory mechanisms (including Sections 22 and 94 of the EP&A Act (1979)) that test the allegiance of both cases to neoliberalist interpretations. Indeed, the balance between biodiversity and housing achieved at ADI–St Marys resembles a social democratic as much as neoliberalist planning outcome. With a clearer indication of the actors and institutions mobilised around each site, we turn, in our final section, to the identification of existing state roles in fringe governance; and through a consideration of the relatively successful outcomes at ADI–St Marys, we explore the potential for alternative distributional outcomes.

Discussion

We have so far argued that the planning and development processes at Warnervale and ADI–St Marys lend themselves to hybrid forms of neoliberalism. Neither case fits wholly into the competitive cities repertoire because planning trajectories tying both developments to socially and ecologically balanced outcomes were in play. Therefore, although the two cases build on accounts of planning in NSW as a hybrid form of urban governance, their disparate and multi-scalar qualities point to the residual and multiple roles played by states. To these ends, the cases illustrate two key trajectories through which spatial equity is currently pursued in interurban and fringe contexts.

First, in both cases, local government was a key site for the development of longer-term agendas for socially and or ecologically balanced outcomes. At Warnervale, the WSC sought to mobilise NSW State government support for the area, based on its social and economic needs, whereas at ADI–St Marys, PCC sought to mobilise Federal and non-government organisations in its plans for the full preservation of the site. In both cases, rather than facilitate the integration of the sites into a competitive city planning regime, the local authorities sought relationships through which to harness both sites to their own planning trajectories. So, rather than responding to extralocal forces, Wyong and Penrith Councils isolated and oriented the process of development to the achievement of socially and ecologically balanced ends—irrespective and, indeed, despite—the more strongly neoliberalist goals of both the NSW State government and, at ADI–St Marys, Delfin. In this formulation, the WTC emerges as a panacea for current, as much as future, infrastructure shortfalls, where the activities and actions of a higher public authority and the private sector are effectively used by the local council in its own project of shoring up
investment in infrastructure in a rapidly growing area (also see Ruming 2005). Similarly, at ADI–St Marys, Council sought to formulate an alternative plan, not only of local and regional, but also national significance. Although we do not suppose the cases point to an essentialised ‘local’ agenda mapped to a coherent ‘local’ government, they do suggest that, as a practical accomplishment (and in concert with other factors), the devolution of responsibilities to lower-order authorities contains within it the potential for the strategic use by local authorities of regionally significant development to further their own planning trajectories.

Second, the cases draw attention to the residual regulatory framework in operation on the urban fringe. Although this framework barely captures Keynesian aspirations of spatial equity, it nonetheless marks the distributional relays that leverage planners in NSW in their negotiation with the private sector. This includes the capacity, through the Section 22 Committee and Section 94 contributions, to secure contributions from the private sector for the maintenance and development of services and infrastructure. Similarly, in relation to property development, Landcom continues to exert control over the organisation of residential property development and housing stock.

Although in both cases the plurality of planning roles (split in both instances between local and State government) and existing legislative frames were critical in releasing the sites from strictly neoliberalist outcomes, these factors were not enough, in either case, to steer projects towards socially or ecologically balanced development. Even though the disparate planning trajectories underway at the WTC have, for the moment, stalled, the relative success of ADI–St Marys provides a stronger insight in this regard; and here we draw attention to two key differences between the sites. First, the state capacities gathered in the achievement of ADI–St Marys exceeded the alternative planning trajectory pursued by local government and the availability of developer contributions. In this case, the ability of the Section 22 Committee to negotiate a significant private sector contribution hinged on the heavily discounted land made available to Delfin by the Commonwealth. Although direct state intervention in the property market departs significantly from neoliberalist forms of urban governance, the failure of infrastructure commitments at Warnervale provide a bleak illustration of the consequences of poorly leveraged planning authorities in the achievement of large-scale residential development on the fringe. To these ends, the contrasting outcomes at each site lend support to the initial sketches in Sydney’s current metropolitan strategy for stronger state intervention in the property market. This is not so much to provide affordable housing or infrastructure but to leverage planning authorities in their negotiation of developer contributions. Second, the ecological outcomes at ADI–St Marys hinged on the advocacy of both PCC and a mobilised civil society. This activates a much broader conception of ‘state’ involvement, moving beyond planning authorities to a wider set of gatekeepers. Indeed, the case highlights the extension of state market relations beyond the private sector and planning departments to incorporate the civic realm (McGuirk 2005; Cook 2006).

Taken together, our cases point suggestively to the mechanisms that, in concert, unsettle (or ‘push back’) neoliberalist claims to the multi-scalar fringe. These include the plurality of planning power (split in our cases between State and local government), the availability of strong legislative frameworks, direct state investment in the property market, and a strong civil society. Although developing a theory of alternative governance is beyond the scope of the present paper, the cases
nonetheless point to the different outcomes that emerge where a single authority cannot take control of processes operating at multiple scales and, indeed, the alternatives that present themselves when these scales and actors continue to share claims to the whole, even when this is achieved, as in the case of ADI-St Marys, through a blurring of planning and politics.

**Conclusion**

Hybrid forms of neoliberalism have been concerned with mapping the re-entry of state roles in supposedly market contexts (McGuirk 2003). They not only point to the complexity of neoliberalist projects, but they also highlight the potential these offer in terms of reinscribing state roles. Given the broader context of market intervention in urban development outcomes, the present paper has mapped the new boundaries between states and markets in residential planning and development, where the contingent intersection of multi-scalar states and actors is central. No universal theorisation of neoliberalism can expect to translate the specificities of the sites and the multiplicity of factors that interact at these sites. Although WTC and ADI-St Marys both represent large residential land developments on the fringe of Sydney, they offer vastly different translations of state and market interaction, neither of which aligns to the expected norm of a roll-out or roll-back neoliberal state—they are both ‘actually existing neoliberalisms’ that reflect the specificity and hybridity of fringe development (Brenner & Theodore 2002b; Ruming 2005).

By way of conclusion, we do not advocate a return to the welfare state (if such a thing were indeed possible), nor do we suggest that the market is the best and most efficient provider of social services and infrastructure tied to residential development. Indeed, both case studies illustrate the limits of state–market configurations on the fringe. In the case of Warnervale, development remains to be initiated. This failure hinges primarily on the inability of the state (at all levels) to agree on, fund, and implement a relatively complex master plan. Here, it could be argued that a stronger relationship between the state and private sector may have helped in facilitating development at Warnervale, where commercial demands for a faster development turn-around may have alleviated on-going bureaucratic infighting tied to securing budget funding and aligning diverse departmental objectives (such as the timing and location of the train station; Ruming 2005). Similarly, the case of ADI-St Marys suggests that without a much broader notion of state roles—including public sector investment in the property market and the extension of planning control beyond a single planning authority—the possibility for ecologically balanced suburban growth is limited.

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NOTES
[1] Hereafter, a capital ‘S’ is used where the word ‘state’ is used in forming a proper noun, such as ‘NSW State government’.
[2] The Regional Coordination Management Group is a regional management group of State departments charged with developing an integrated approach to state involvement and intervention. The initiatives stretch beyond those discussed in the present paper. The Regional Coordination Management Group strives for a ‘whole of government approach’ and includes departments such as Health, Planning, Premier’s, Transport, Roads Authority, Public Housing, Community Services etc.
[3] Section 94 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act (1979) enables council to levy contributions on developers for public services and amenities required as a consequence of development.

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