The Role of Tenure, Work and Cooperativism in Sustainable Urban Livelihoods

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Abstract

This paper responds to challenges posed by urban sustainability through a consideration of sustainable livelihoods within the Western, industrialised context of Australian urban areas. Application of sustainable livelihood considerations to urban areas is a task notably absent from literature to date. Sustainable urban livelihoods (SULs) necessitate that affordable housing and hybridised governance be made accessible, widespread and mainstream and that work be reinterpreted and reorganised along local, cooperative lines. This paper uses contemporary case studies and recent relevant models to illustrate why non-profit tenure systems, more localised and diversified work structures and cooperative governance are crucial components for establishing sustainable livelihoods within Western cities.

Introduction: Why Work, Tenure and Governance?

Work on 'sustainable livelihoods' focuses on making localised, usually non-industrialised livelihoods sustainable. According to the concept's instigators, a sustainable livelihood is one

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which can cope with and recover from stress and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, and provide…opportunities for the next generation; and which contributes net benefits to other livelihoods at the local and global levels and in the short and long term (Chambers and Conway 1992 in Sneddon 2000, 533).

Sneddon outlines three key stages in the model, claiming that "the first stage of the [sustainable livelihoods] model is an assumption that sustainability can only be analyzed with reference to an individual household's livelihood patterns and what constitutes 'a living' under specific environmental and socioeconomic circumstances" (Sneddon 2000, 533). In the second stage, assessment of sustainable livelihoods requires consideration of environmental and social sustainability, as these outline relevant physical and social constraints and opportunities. In the third stage, there is a requirement to develop ways to translate abstraction into action. Sneddon states Chambers and Conway are silent on this stage, particularly in terms of the forms of community decision-making that might facilitate such change. He sees a more promising intervention in this point of the model, in the form of 'livelihood intensity', which he defines as involving "initially, determining the capacity of poor rural communities to diversify resource uses and restore degraded land. In addition, operationalizing livelihood intensity demands recognizing the importance of nonfarm activities and the benefits of local circulation of goods and services" (Sneddon 2000, 533). He also proposes that further consideration of livelihood intensity allows assessment of development projects and policies.

Sustainability is a widely touted and contested term (see McManus 1996 for an overview of the uses and abuses of 'sustainability' in Australia). Consideration of sustainable livelihoods in a Western urban industrialised context provides a useful framework for both highlighting the impacts of Western lifestyles and, critically, presenting a model of sustainability moving beyond questionable mechanisms such as guilt-based 'green consumerism' or interpretations more concerned with ongoing economic expansion. The first stage of sustainable livelihood analysis highlights the relevance of assessing 'a living' within western industrial systems, highlighting the nexus between paid labour, bought commodities, transport and housing tenure. Currently dominant processes and structures of Western urban lifestyles revolve around a generalised separation and specialisation of systems of production and consumption. Cash-based exchange fills the gaps between the *objects* of production and consumption, while primarily fossil-fuel based transport fills the gaps between the *spaces* of production and consumption. This system rests on the commodification of land and housing, such that – for the vast majority of individuals – staying in place requires the continual securing of a cash stream to be channeled to banks, private landlords and/or government to maintain housing and/or land tenure. Within these frameworks, housing and food security require the commodification of work which is often

separated in both place and function from the systems and processes of housing or food production. This dislocation generates vast adverse impacts, ranging from pollution due to transport systems and modes of food production, through decreasing housing affordability, to social malaise and stress due to overwork, underpay and insecurity (Pusey 2003; Register 2001; Hamilton 2003).

Many of the growing social, economic and ecological ills tabled by Pusey (2003) and Hamilton (2003) can be addressed by the reintegration of work, cooperative governance and tenure. Urban sustainability manifestos such as ecocity briefs (eg., Register 2001) call for the redress of these dislocations through localised, diversified systems of energy, food, waste and water sourcing, production, reuse and treatment. Such manifestos call for reinterpretation, redesign and retrofit of the built form through more ecologically benign or reparative architecture, frequently predicated on reduced house or unit size and increased community facilities (see McCamant et al 1994). Full description of the various ecocity objectives is beyond the scope of this paper; the key point is that these call for the conscious integration of the requirements of daily life on a more diffuse, decentralised, locally appropriate and sensitive basis. These physical design manifestos usually carry parallel reflections on work and governance, calling for more locally based or appropriate work systems, diversified local economies and locally relevant and accessible mechanisms of decision making and delivery (see Kennedy and Kennedy 1995; Trainer 1996; Robinson 2001).

Attempts to develop sustainable urban livelihoods (SULs) reveal the critical role of housing affordability and tenure models, as SULs when conceived as localised systems of food, energy and so forth, cannot generate the income required to meet increasing housing costs in Australian urban areas. Models of tenure which can counter the prevailing upward forces on property markets are therefore essential to the enunciation of SULs. The development and management of such systems requires the development of appropriate governance and delivery mechanisms. To date, discussions of cooperativist governance mechanisms which substantially involve local communities in resource management and manifest appropriate systems of allocation have focused on non-urban spaces and processes such as forests and fisheries (see Berkes et al 2003; Folke 2007). Such systems are discussed as combining multiple stakeholders in systems of communication, feedback and learning that foster cooperativist mechanisms while securing the rights of the individual. This paper therefore draws on case studies sought for their illustration of various aspects of the combination of onsite work, innovative tenure and/or cooperativist governance in urban areas, with a view to examining possibilities for their integration.

Home Again: The Other Housing Markets

For the purposes of SULs, housing must therefore manifest greater security, diversity and accessibility, work must also become localised, diversified and more

equitably distributed throughout the community, while cooperativism needs to be upheld through institutional mechanisms of delivery, decision-making and management. Security in housing refers both to equitable tenure forms and to greater community control over the terms of "development". Equitable tenure balances the right to move with the right to stay put, countering both the public sector insistence that state housing recipients take what they are given and not move, and the private sector ability to force evictions due to life and/or economic changes, market spasms or the whims of landlords. Diversity refers to a broadening of tenure forms, but also to housing forms accommodating and foster various life stages and choices, and to the uses to which housing can be conceivably put, many of which have historically been written out of these spaces. Accessibility here refers to the physical ease of housing styles, but also to the ease and transparency of residential tenure uptake and transfer, dislocated from variables such as employment, race, gender, income, ability, sexuality and so on.

Third sector housing in the US offers relevant models. Davis (1994) defines third sector housing as that using private, non-profit modes of housing production and private, non-bank forms modes of finance. It can be and often is, publicly subsidised and regulated, but is not publicly owned. Third sector housing establishes new forms of private tenure via its models of ownership, control and conveyance. Defining features, according to Davis, are that developments are privately owned, price restricted and socially oriented, often through collaborative effort or involvement. Davis highlights the range of tenures that should be widely available throughout the urban fabric, referring to a housing tenure 'ladder' comprising: shelters; transitional housing; non-profit rental with or without tenant control and management; zero/limited equity cooperatives; limited equity condominiums; resale-restricted housing either on community land trusts, or subject to deed covenants or options; and open market housing. While the assertions implicit in Davis's list are questionable – a 'ladder' with private ownership as its top rung still upholds and promotes this as the most desirable tenure – the diversity of models presented offer an illustrative insight into other ways of conceiving and arranging tenure. Abromowitz (2000) discusses several of these, revealing their varying degrees of success at generating affordability, concluding that models providing affordability in perpetuity offer the best options, particularly when underpinned by significant government support.

Davis describes third sector housing as able to engender affordability, stewardship, dependability and mobility. Third sector housing utilises various mechanisms to generate affordability in perpetuity, such that this is maintained across tenure transfers. When models involve ownership, incentives allowing or encouraging properties to become unaffordable over time are removed, often through the involvement of more than one party with ownership split between these. The presence of multiple parties, often through board structures, aims to ensure that affordability measures cannot be compromised over time by any

particular stakeholder. This balancing of stakeholder interests and restriction of profiteering are appropriate mechanisms for generating the economic and institutional space for SUL activities.

Hi ho, hi ho: Localised Work Structures in Sustainable Urban Livelihoods

To continue this articulation of SULs, the dependence on waged work as a basis for livelihood needs to be thoroughly disrupted. Albert's (2003) participatory economy (parecon) offers a relevant starting point. Parecon's model of the 'job complex' represents a maturation of Trainer's (1996) localised working week by enabling and enshrining a diversity of tasks and roles within the responsibilities seen as 'a job'. Trainer outlines the tasks involved in a localised working week within a sustainable economy, ranging from feeding chickens and mending chairs with the neighbor, to formalised "work" in the local factory (or school, hospital, etc) and attending board meetings. Parecon takes this brief sketch further, offering a robust reconceptualisation of labour organisation and organisational ethics with work organised by democratic workers' councils.

Albert provides illustration of this from within an existing press, with 'a job' involving days spent on editorial, production and business tasks. A feminist critique of parecon would build on Hayden's (1980) HOMES[2] model to broaden the application of the job complex to the essential caring work largely relegated to the time and spaces around productive (i.e., waged capitalist) enterprise. This brings the usually invisible work of care into a reinterpreted economy. It is vital that, rather than leading to an expansion of free market ideologies and the commodification, casualisation and under-funding of care, work – including care – be reinterpreted in line with models such as parecon or localised, stabilised economies (see Trainer 1996, Kennedy and Kennedy 1995). Building on parecon in line with feminist concerns starts to flesh out how localised, diversified community-based work may look, and hints at how work and tenure may come together for the enactment of SULs. Localised systems like HOMES echo examples of cooperative community control over resources for sustainability and appropriate governance structures. While literature on these has tended to focus on systems for managing forests, fisheries or rangelands (eg., Berkes et al. 2003), such adaptive systems offer salient models for SULs.

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[2] Hayden's HOMES model combined housing delivery with localised employment structures based on an assessment of the food production and provision, care and laundry needs of the resident community; this combined a neighbourhood development of 40 households with work for 20 day care workers, three food service workers, a grocery depot worker, five home helpers, two drivers, two laundry workers, a maintenance worker, a gardener and two administrative staff (Hayden 1980).

You Scratch my Back…: Cooperativism and Governance

Recent work on cooperativism and emerging forms of governance for sustainability tends to focus on illustrations from non-urban and/or non-Westernised systems, communities and spaces, such as management of forests, rivers or fisheries[3]. Given the overwhelming economic and political dominance exerted by Western, industrialised cities, as sustainability must penetrate these spaces, so too must the systems of governance, ownership and management increasingly documented as necessary for sustainability. Traces of these have been laid out in the discussion above, referring to multiple stakeholders, diversity and relevance, all of which are centrally important to appropriate urban governance mechanisms.

The work of the Resilience Alliance and key authors such as Berkes, Folke, Colding, Olsson and Ostrom, provide thorough illustration of the strengths of appropriate governance structures for the purposes of sustainability. Key features of such structures include a degree of functional diversity and redundancy at different scales; vision, leadership and trust; committed funding; combinations of multiple forms and sources of knowledge; and arenas for adaptive learning (Olsson et al 2004; Folke 2007). For the purposes of SULs, these suggest mechanisms already under various stages of development within third sector housing and parecon, requiring mainly the dedication of resources and funding from broader scales to further the potential and capabilities of these.

Rather than this translating into an abstract and imposed set of regulations, models of cooperative governance translate local aspirations, constraints, opportunities and endeavours into accessible and negotiable systems operating within the context of broader constraints, opportunities and so forth. This requires the presence and involvement of bodies from multiple scales in systems balancing and distributing rights, power and agency throughout these scales, rather than defaulting to either pugilistic parochialism or hierarchical domination. Ridley (1997) argues that cooperative mechanisms do not fail due to some innate failing of cooperation or an innate inability of humans to cooperate, but due to failures to properly implement and normalise these behaviours and attitudes. Instances documented by Ridley, in which cooperation has been established and has succeeded, reveal a similar suite of ownership, management and maintenance traits. These focus on individual rights and responsibilities within common ownership regimes, and on management and maintenance systems closing the loop between

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[3] Most of the work of the Resilience Alliance and its key authors focus on these spaces. See for example Berkes et al (2003), Berkes et al (1998) and Olsson et al (2004). For a notable exception from outside this alliance, see the discussion of stewardship and housing in Salsich (2000).

cause and effect, action and impact, making it overtly in the individual's best interests to cooperate. To an extent this becomes an issue of scale, with much of Ridley's criticism levelled at large state systems attempting to centralise and standardise diverse, contextual phenomena and forces and subsequently creating distance and anonymity between the spaces and individuals associated with cause and effect. Success has generally occurred when there is direct and obvious feedback between individual and collective decisions, actions and impacts. Effective governance requires the combination of localised knowledge, experience and accessibility with broader knowledge, regulation, contextuality and resources.

Therefore sustainability requires that a diversity of agents are involved in governance, that multiple knowledges are accessible and are utilised for the ongoing refinement of management. Regarding SULs, this does not correspond to a modernist notion of perfectibility, but to the establishment of diversified local structures able to respond to challenges and changes to maintain and uphold core functionalities such as affordable housing and food security on an equitable basis. This requires that residents are involved in governance and correlates neatly with SULs as governance can become part of the job complex of an individual or a community. Involvement in management on a daily level reintegrates management into lived reality, binding process and outcome into flexible feedback systems.

So What Does Urban Sustainability Look Like?

The establishment of resilient urban systems combining affordable housing with sustainable livelihoods does not translate into a blueprint of what should go where and through what mechanism. Rather we can sketch out the principles and parameters by which this can be framed and outline possible mechanisms which can be brought to operate within these. Systems can be developed combining work, tenure and governance according to key principles of equity, engagement and the localisation of production and consumption. Directly tying work to tenure also serves to decommodify labour and establish a more secure base for residency than the vagaries of markets and the increase in precarious forms of waged-work in so-called 'flexible' labour systems. Economic models developing in parallel to urban sustainable livelihood considerations include Albert's parecon, LETS systems, local currency models and steady-state economic models (eg., Albert 2005; Kennedy 2005; Kennedy and Kennedy 1995). There are also Australian examples of development and support of local, community-based 'alternative' economies channelling local ability and aspiration into diversified economic forms (see Cameron and Gibson 2005). Such models and projects aim to structure and circulate labour and money (where the latter is used) in more localised and diversified economies; again, however, the sustainability of these forms requires that these and their driving philosophies be replicated and supported at other scales.

The aim of such models is to remove from tenure and security those threats presented by unchecked land and labour markets. This should not translate into an

insistence that all individuals perform the same tasks in a localised environment, but that economic forces must not force eviction and dislocation. Relevant models can range from completely localised agrarian economies (even – and perhaps especially – within urbanised contexts) but also to systems balancing such essential work with specialised work and services within a system that does not pitch localities and institutions against each other, demanding that the individual endeavours to sell their labour to the highest bidder in order to secure tenure. This starts to heavily and consciously echo Cuba's models of agroecology, science, health care and development as manifesting along collectivist, cooperative, decommodified lines. So if Cuba is going ecological (Levins 2005), how on earth can the rest of us, with all our contemporary anti-socialist baggage, do likewise?

I Don't Know, but Have a Look at These…

Several models illustrate aspects of SULs through varying integration of housing, work and tenure. Four case studies are explored here to tease out themes and models for consideration and further endeavour: community land trusts and their affiliated support structures in the United States; Habitat for Humanity Australia, in Sydney; the Community Housing and Employment Cooperative, also in Sydney; and the New South Wales community housing sector. Key attributes and issues of each are provided in overview in Table 1.

Case study	*Key attributes*	*Issues*
Community Land Trusts	• Land held by Trust on a non-profit base • Combine housing affordability, employment and/or food security	• Funding is vital; CDFIs crucial to CLT evolution and survival • Localised non-profit shared ownership systems can secure affordability in perpetuity • Able to deliver multiple outcomes
Habitat for Humanity Australia	• Householder gains access to housing through sweat equity and nominal deposit • Sweat equity is flexible to individual abilities	• Land prices in Sydney are constraining activities • Relies on volunteer, faith-based workers • Builds skills, self esteem and community networks
Community Housing and Employment Cooperative	• 6-16 hrs/wk work in onsite organic food garden secures tenure • Property held by state housing department • Allows variation in garden work hours and other income streams	• Reliance on public housing department is constraining project • Breakdown of annual food system into discrete tasks has been a vital tool • Is building local network of organic waste processing into food production
Community housing sector	• Non-profit sector dedicated to development and delivery of affordable housing • A few examples have addressed work or community development programs	• May represent cost-cutting and outsourcing by the state; needs support and regulation • Ability to combine multiple programs and outcomes is largely untested • Has resources to be flexible and equity to grow

Table 1. Key attributes and issues of the case studies.

Community land trusts: balancing power for sustainable outcomes

One of the responses to growing unaffordability, gentrification of formerly low cost housing stock, speculation and displacement in the United States has been the conceptualisation and formation of community land trusts (CLTs). CLTs build on an activist and intellectual tradition passed down through Henry George, Ralph Borsodi and Robert Swann. Borsodi and Swann collaborated to develop Borsodi's model of local, largely self-sufficient homesteading independent from capitalist wages into a tenure model facilitating this and engendering broader social involvement in such models. Initiated in the 1960s by Swann, there are now over 150 CLTs listed on the website of the sector's core funding and support body, the Institute for Community Economics (ICE) (Institute for Community Economics n.d.). CLTs are a hybrid tenure form, combining aspects of public and private ownership. Seeing land as the legacy of the entire community, CLTs balance non-profit community ownership of land with private ownership of houses and improvements, with the relationship between the two governed via long-term, inheritable ground leases. CLTs balance individual and community rights through this split ownership, with the trust board comprised of residents, broader community members and affiliates, and local government. In this way, neither the residents, the surrounding community nor the trust can easily dominate planning, affordability and development decisions.

Under the CLT model, housing prices are controlled through a mechanism upholding use value but restricting the exchange value of land and housing. The community oversees both use and sale via covenants, by-laws or deed restrictions, to prevent the occurrence of impacts on affordability from externalities or speculation. The strength and uniqueness of the CLT model lies in its hybrid tenure type, its ability to combine and address multiple local issues, its balancing of public and private interests, and its flexibility. CLTs in the United States have combined low- to median-income housing provision with organic agriculture, local employment, youth employment, care services, women's refuge needs, crisis accommodation, training and community development, in varying combinations, according to needs identified by local communities (Meehan 1996; Medoff and Sklar 1994). CLTs combine housing affordability and provision with local control over and engagement with development; the local community desire for control over the local environment and quality of life are key phenomena CLTs are able to tap into and effectively channel (Meehan 1996).

CLTs were initially driven by a desire to decommodify land and establish local community development and security as a base on which the cash economy can lie. Meehan (1996, 244) states that the CLT model:

> …envisioned an alternative to the competitive capitalist market and the industrial system, not as a self-sufficient refuge from these aspects of modern life but rather as a base community which could

provide basic nurture and shelter. The cash employment economy would then be an addition to subsistence needs, but not an inescapable, single source of the goods of life.

This obviously resonates with SUL concerns. However, the CLT movement's focus on the practicalities of affordable housing delivery are seen by some as detracting from the CLT's more substantial and systematic property, planning and development critique and agenda. Meehan documents responses to the outcomes of this pragmatic focus, whereby CLTs and community development corporations (CDCs) are seen as becoming domesticated by state discourses and paradigms, having to downplay the radical implications and possibilities of the model for the purposes of securing funding or support. Meehan (1996, 341) asserts that "funders generally support the goal of permanent affordability but not the goals of participatory organisation and democratic land planning". His conclusion is that strong state support in the form of social democratic political parties is the best chance that CLTs have of surviving in greater numbers and as a more widespread cooperativist organisational form. This highlights the need for broader structural support for SULs to become substantial, viable options, and the appropriateness of the state to coordinate and support this. In the instance of CLTs, Meehan (1996, 342) refers to this multiscale coordination and management thus:

> The State can guarantee rights, and evenly distribute the social product for reinvestment, while cooperativist institutions offer the opportunity for participation at the local level, economic innovation, and personal bonds of solidarity. There are limits to what CLTs, and similar organisations, acting locally on their own, can do without linking up to a broader movement for social democracy.

Hence the strengths of CLTs in developing locally relevant mechanisms and structures must be structurally supported and broadly endorsed for these to substantially take hold.

Habitat for Humanity Australia: Sweat Equity In/Action[4]

Habitat for Humanity's sweat equity and dual mortgage model originated in the United States, but is discussed here in its Australian manifestation. Habitat for Humanity Australia (HFHA) provide a mechanism for low income ownership via a deposit of AU $500 and 500 hours' labour on either the property of residence under construction or other HFHA properties. The resident is then responsible for an interest-free mortgage of AU $150 000 – AU $200 000, with HFHA holding the

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[4] Unless otherwise stated, this section's primary data is sourced from an interview with the Program Manager of HFHA Sydney, 2004.

mortgage for the balance between that amount and the free market value of the property[5]. HFHA works in partnership with two mortgage groups, homebuilding companies, appliance companies and building material suppliers who provide seed funding, materials, goods and/or volunteer labour for house builds.

HFHA see their core business as "building dignity", focusing on helping marginalised families develop personal, social and economic skills and become part of an ongoing residential community. This is achieved through a building process utilising the volunteer labour of HFHA members as well as residents of new and existing properties, and the existence of the family "Friend", an HFHA member assigned to provide support, stability and contact for the family throughout the build. This can take the form of taking photos, counselling, casual chats, and advice on dealing with people. These tend to be strong, longstanding relationships; similarly, ongoing relationships often form between HFHA families living in the same area, through the build process, shared experience and physical proximity. In 2004 HFHA began consultation with an engineer regarding the physical sustainability of their designs, not formerly a concern of the group. At that time, Sydney land prices were such that land was becoming increasingly hard for the group to secure, with HFHA resorting to drive volunteers to regional areas for house-building days. At October 2007 the group had built 68 homes nationally and plans another 20 by the end of 2008 (Habitat for Humanity Australia 2007). Activity to date has been in New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia, primarily in lower-priced peri-urban areas, or regional centres. HFHA has also been part of Habitat for Humanity's work on rebuilding India, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Thailand in the wake of the tsunami of December 2004 (Habitat for Humanity Australia 2005).

Key outcomes from the group's activities relate to secure tenure in the form of ownership for families otherwise locked out of this, community building and the development of self worth, skills and confidence in resident families. The program is flexible enough to allow the 500 hours of sweat equity to vary according to individual abilities. Currently the group is focusing on first-generation affordability; consequently, if the partner family chooses to sell, the house becomes standard stock on the open market, with the family responsible for both mortgages. As such there is currently no provision for the long-term retention of affordability across transfers of title. The model established by HFHA also raises issues regarding the broader aims and philosophies of housing action: are the primary goal and outcome to enable communities, or to corral 'problematic' or marginalised populations into 'normal' behaviour? Currently the HFHA model can be seen as either of these, with the definite outcome of tying low-income households firmly to a mortgage, robustly documented by Hayden as a model for domesticating and

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[5] Sydney's median house price in mid-2007 topped AU $560 000 (RP Data 2007).

subjugating dissatisfied workers and generating a captive consumer population (Hayden 1981). Ultimately, without a concurrent assessment of livelihood and an analysis of what and where work is, models focussing on tenure alone may not suffice for the dual purposes of sustainability and affordable housing.

Community Housing and Employment Cooperative: "I Can't, We Can!"[6]

Issues raised above about long-term, transferable affordability and the ability to combine housing, work and food security are being addressed by the Community Housing and Employment Cooperative (CHEC) based in the lower Blue Mountains in western Sydney, Australia. Building on the work of Trainer (eg., Trainer 1996), the group responds to his call for local, community-based endeavour to manifest sustainability, by raising the question of how this can ever be achieved in the spaces around the increasingly large amount of time and energy dedicated to waged work in order to secure tenure.

CHEC's tenure system short-circuits this loop, removing the phenomenon of offsite work as a necessity for securing tenure. Currently the group is a housing cooperative registered under the auspices of the Association to Resource Cooperative Housing. As such, CHEC membership can accommodate an income mix of 65% public housing eligible members and 35% on higher incomes, while retaining eligibility to access public housing stock. The group is also targeting private developers, as the model is seen as applicable and relevant beyond the realm of public housing alone.

A central component of the CHEC model is its Operations Manual. This thoroughly details the tasks involved in the annual maintenance of an organic community garden sufficient to feed the intended community of fifteen individuals. This work is ordered and broken down into daily tasks accessible on a daily jobs board; each job card contains directions and can be taken to the job site, to be filled out and returned to the board upon completion. Each member is required to work a minimum of 6 hours per week in this fashion, is free to pursue other work, volunteer or paid, on- or off-site, and is obliged to pay 30 per cent of gross income as rent, a universal public housing requirement. This forms the core of the model; however the Manual also outlines the project's potential to generate waged work through further development of the food garden system into localised commercial organic agriculture, community development outcomes, and how administration and management requirements can be addressed. A custom-built computer forum facilitates communication and discussion about project developments such as the

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[6] Unless otherwise stated, primary data and quotes in this section are taken from interviews with CHEC members in 2004. The author's involvement in drafting supporting documents and management plans for the group throughout 2004 is also drawn on here. "I can't, we can!" is the group's motto.

food garden; this forum is also accessible for those without computer access or literacy. The model represents an urban interpretation of Borsodi's homesteading model on a collective base with a decentralised and accessible decision-making system.

Currently the majority of members are public housing recipients or on public housing waiting lists; several core members have been granted long-term rental tenure in public housing stock and are putting the model into practice with the rapid establishment of programmes and networks beyond this initial core resident base. These include a car share scheme, worm farming, composting (including food scraps provided by local businesses) and a notice board. The systems are being enthusiastically taken up and developed by pre-existing housing tenants and surrounding businesses. Key aspects of the model have also been adopted by a developer in the area to address heritage conservation obligations focusing on ongoing adaptive reuse of early colonial farm buildings. This will be achieved through community-based residential site management echoing local colonial agricultural heritage, replicating earlier uses of the buildings for food security and agrarian endeavour with a strong social focus in a contemporary context. Ideally the model comprises sustainable, community-oriented design largely informed by ecocity and cohousing developments and literature (see Register 2001; Todd and Todd 1994; Engwicht 1992; McCamant and Durrett 1994), in combination with the tenure and work model. The group is therefore approaching public and private partners about the potential for accessing a site on which to build medium-density cohousing to facilitate their cooperative aspirations.

While offering an exciting and promising model for integrating innovative design, sustainable food production, work and tenure, and largely removing a dependence on waged work from this equation, the group is currently operating at the very periphery of Sydney's paradigm, hanging onto this by a thread (albeit fairly robust) of supportive individuals within local governments, developers and housing agencies. The model is consciously reliant upon government housing provision as core group members see public hands as the safest place in which to put housing and land title, setting these aside from commodity status and re-asserting their place as community-held resources and responsibilities. While any project undertaken with a private developer would raise issues about stock title – as welfare recipients accommodated within a private development represent a direct channelling of public funding into private hands – this may offer vital mechanisms for broadening the model beyond a possible interpretation as relevant or applicable only to individuals on low incomes, with high needs and/or unable to secure other forms of work and tenure. This broader application is crucial if the model is to systemically address the adverse impacts of dominant work/tenure complexes.

Within the current Sydney housing market, the group's possible sites are relegated to those with existing public housing stock or subject to the ambitions or

requirements of sympathetic developers. In 2005, the group received information from the Office of Community Housing (OCH) (the community housing funding arm of the NSW Department of Housing) that despite the past eighteen months of OCH endorsement, higher needs groups had to be given housing priority. This reflects the increasing pressure OCH are under, given decreasing funding and increasing need, and exposes the vulnerability generated by reliance on an increasingly constrained sector. This highlights the need for substantial support of public housing – ultimately a reversal of current and recent trajectories in Australia – and for groups such as CHEC to seek creative sources of support. Ultimately CHEC and HFHA find themselves in similar situations, potentially offering innovative models for combining housing tenure, work and cooperativism, but greatly marginalised by current land and housing market parameters and forces.

Community Housing: Our Best Bet?

Ultimately such housing needs to achieve overt control over housing markets. Davis (2000, 235) asserts that

> It is where municipal government – or, in some cases, state government – has weighed in on the side of third sector housing that it has gone beyond being an interesting social experiment and has become a credible alternative to the housing provided by either the market or the state.

In assessing options for the combination of SULs and affordable housing in Australia, and the structural gaps and constraints operating within Australian housing systems, perhaps the best place to start would be the national community housing sector. This non-profit sector receives a degree of government funding via OCH and more recently, the newly-formed Centre for Affordable Housing, comprises over 1000 organisations and is responsible for close to 40 000 dwellings (Community Housing Federation of Australia 2005). The sector has great potential to evolve in similar directions to the CLT sector in the US.

Historically, the sector has predominantly relied on federal funding to head lease from the private sector, properties which it then sublets to residents at the standard public housing set rate of 30 per cent of gross income. However, larger community housing organisations are increasingly operating as dedicated non-profit housing developers and managers, acquiring properties and utilising their growing asset bases to leverage funds for further development. The sector itself is urging universalised regulation and the establishment of clearer governance mechanisms to reassure public and private partners of the stability, professionalism and accountability of the sector. Drawing on work carried out in the UK, Clough et al (2002) cite core traits of such governance as transparency, accountability, proportionality between regulation and enforcement, consistency of regulation and targeting of regulation. Developing performance-based regulation focuses on

outcomes rather than process, allowing providers to develop innovative and flexible methods for achieving the necessary outcomes. This would suggest potential for exploring the combination of multiple programmes.

Community housing currently performs many roles and has partnered with programmes similar to those run by CLTs in the United States. Community development outcomes achieved by the sector include work and training outcomes and community building, and the sector is able to link up with other programmes and other governmental agencies in achieving these outcomes (Clough et al 2002; NSW Federation of Housing Associations 2001). The sector sees an increasing role in the provision of affordable housing[7] as a core part of its business and expanding its current incorporation of models such as cooperatives to achieve this. The sector is described as able to develop locally appropriate, equitable and secure tenancies through flexible delivery systems which enable tenant opportunity and empowerment (Kennedy 2001). Kennedy (2001), Clough et al (2002) and Barbato et al (2003) outline the need for regulatory frameworks which enable rather than bind providers and which provide the security and guarantees necessary to attract and reassure non-governmental partners. Regulation, diversification of income levels, programmes and tenure types, plus enhanced control over assets, offer much potential to leverage greater outcomes.

Community housing displays potential for evolving further in similar ways to CLTs. The Australian community housing sector focuses primarily on assessing the relevance of broader-scale governance models from the United Kingdom, Canada and the Netherlands as a way to establish priorities and options for growing the sector. Combined with those considerations of sectoral organisation, regulation and funding, should be consideration of how to broaden the sector's delivery and tenure options to manifest the flexibility and innovation fostered by the broader governance frameworks under consideration. This would engender flexibility and innovation at multiple scales, combining best-practice community housing sector-wide governance examples with robust and tested local governance and tenure examples from the CLT sector. Structured in this way, local community housing providers can act on a base of increased support and funding to act as trusted and understood focal points of local community endeavour. The sector's current efforts and successes with low-income rental housing and work outcomes through linking up with employment programmes could broaden to include mixed-use and mixed income development combining food security and other forms of community

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[7] Community housing has traditionally operated within public housing as a local public housing delivery mechanism, funded by the state and housing only those eligible for public housing. The sector is now expanding into affordable housing, which targets higher income earners (households earning up to 120% of the median income), allowing cross-subsidisation within larger-scale projects.

enterprise based on SUL concerns of energy sourcing, water sourcing and treatment and sustainable housing design and/or retrofits. Occasional instances within the broader public housing sector already address these issues, including community-based governance in the cooperative housing sector and the growing community garden programmes within public housing. Better regulation and enablement of the community housing sector would foster opportunities for innovation along these lines, furthering the SUL outcomes of the sector.

The sector holds great potential for addressing multiple issues at once and growing the sector would suggest greater opportunities for such multifaceted programmes and outcomes in a similar vein to CLTs and in line with SUL concerns. Its core difference to the CLT model is its funding base, which in Australia originated in the public sector and seeks now to enhance private investment. In contrast, the CLT model has represented a channel for private non-profit philanthropic funds combined with an unregulated and piecemeal degree of public funding evolving *ad hoc* alongside the model's development. Funding streams similar to those developed in the US have been assessed in an Australian context, with the conclusion that Australia displays a glaring absence of the Community Development Finance Institution (CDFI) sector (Parker and Lyons 2003). Community housing in Australia currently languishes in a gap between diminishing public funding and underdeveloped private philanthropic funding streams. Recent announcements of dedicated funding for the sector may represent efforts to grow the sector; however, it remains to be seen whether this is in addition to existing public housing provisions, or instead of them.

Reflection and Manifesto

While McCarthy (2005) outlines the potential of various instances of commons as counterhegemonic projects, this potential possibly reaches its zenith in local, non-profit, community-based control over and management of price-controlled urban land for the purposes of affordable housing, food production, water sourcing and management, waste management, energy generation, local labour and enterprise, and so forth. This may raise concern regarding a possible neoliberal outsourcing of core functionalities to communities left to their own devices to sink or swim. Cooperative governance and delivery systems still require broader regulation and support to prevent unsustainable inequity within or between communities. Some form of centralised government remains an appropriate mechanism for broader co-ordination, regulation and redistribution; increasingly dysfunctional attempts at centralised and decontextualised service provision, however, are perhaps best remedied through committed support and regulation of locally determined and managed, accountable mechanisms.

Hence, while communities often hold responses to their own challenges within them in a state of latency, presuming that this is so and that all localities will blossom when left to do so, is a dangerous trap. The need to balance local

development and governance with broader support, regulation and redistribution remains crucial. The existence of a community housing sector within Australia provides an avenue for reinterpreting the purposes of integrating SULs and affordable housing, combining cooperative governance, involvement and management with broader structures and forces. The challenge lies in reversing the trends of diminishing state resourcing and support.

The community housing sector in Australia could hold potential to develop models analogous to CLTs and to incorporate concerns, processes or structures of groups such as HFHA and CHEC, moving these innovative reinterpretations of tenure from their currently marginal status and into broader adoption and dissemination. State regulation and significant, ongoing support of the sector is central to this advancement. Further, the advancement of models such as community housing, CHEC and HFHA can trigger – and ideally should sustain – more thorough reinterpretations of work and tenure and promote urban development more in line with SULs and more able to address broader sustainability issues.

Such housing developments can no longer be seen as an adjunct to mainstream of "proper" housing tenure forms. As public housing fails to meet its demand and housing stress creeps out throughout the income spectrum, the increasing failure of public and private housing delivery systems, triggers the need for the identification, development and adoption of other ways of conceiving and developing housing and tenure. Housing and land need to be seen as focal points and core components of local sustainable endeavour, implying and carrying rights and responsibilities which are socially, environmentally and economically contextualised and bound through mechanisms which are accessible, negotiable, flexible and appropriate. Such conceptualisations filter through into broader economic models based on actually paying heed to "externalities" and bringing the economy back into its social and physical environment and subject to the opportunities and constraints found there. Support of SUL projects through governance models such as those under examination in the Australian community housing sector, offer mechanisms for safeguarding such endeavour and allowing economic models such as microfinancing and revolving loan funds to take root. As such, models combining local sustainable livelihood concerns with affordable housing provision represent substantial challenges to our current modus operandi and perceptions of land and housing, but ones which actually address currently identified needs and desires for security, access, equity and engagement on the base of an existing infrastructure. Such outcomes can then be realised on the basis of the invigoration and reinterpretation of delivery mechanisms and governance channels already in place and calling for development in the community housing sector.

There is much debate on how to fund affordable housing in Australia and how to diversify and reinvigorate public housing in general. Much discussion

focuses on channelling superannuation funds into affordable housing provision and establishing relevant mechanisms for this (Berry 2002; Farrar 2004). Refreshingly, one private developer has tabled the relevance of CLTs before government (Crotty 2004). Whether it is from such sources and channelled by CDFIs, or through the establishment of more committed funding through traditional arrangements such as the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement, it is clear that equitable housing provision requires funding and resources. While Australian governments and their bureaucracies presently seems determined to build houses without these, the nation lacks any alternatives to take up the slack. The calls from the community housing sector for flexibility, enablement and innovation would suggest funding streams more in line with CDFIs than public funding as previously manifest. While CDFIs definitely display the ability to develop and deliver appropriate, relevant and flexible financing systems, without structural support, reliance on the CDFI sector could reflect and engender a neoliberal policy of unsupported outsourcing. So while the community development sector has developed locally successful and relevant mechanisms, what is needed now is yet again commitment and support at a structural level. Currently in Australia, while debate rages about affordable housing provision and sustainability and the CDFI sector becomes gradually brought into the perimeter of the limelight, attempts to intertwine these three remain conspicuously absent. Australia's one embryonic CLT, Gaia House in Perth, Western Australia, is establishing itself as a sustainability information and learning centre, with the other substantial commitments of the key members translating into somewhat slow progress on this project. No CLTs targeting affordable housing, community development or SULs as yet exist in the country. So while ideas are tossed about regarding best options for funding affordable housing, the absence of any discourse on price controls, non-profit models of tenure or affordability in perpetuity stands a good chance of making any such endeavour an ongoing, uphill battle and always the poor cousin of "proper" tenure patterns and philosophies such as speculative ownership.

The temptation to defer to Cuba as an example is overwhelming. Here the partial decommodification of labour and the understanding that investment in the citizenry is a public boon has generated relatively stable, sustainable urban systems involving local organic food production, community-based healthcare, group-built housing and impromptu public transport (Levins 2005; Murphy and Morgan 2004). While obviously starting from a different place, Australia has the potential to rework its existing – if languishing – community housing delivery systems into multifaceted local development agencies along similar lines and according to similar recognition of public investment as an asset rather than a cost. Further to affordable housing and community development outcomes, when these systems manifest as localised planning and development agencies as evidenced by the CLT sector in the United States, these move beyond traditional sustainable livelihood concerns and into a daily grounding of the rhetoric of resource and environmental management policies in accessible, relevant action. When conceived on a base of

cooperativist tenure and management, this directly ties local enterprise into urban sustainability, which is increasingly documented as vital to the advancement of this.

Conclusion/Suggestions

Framing housing in urban areas in terms of SULs ultimately highlights tenure forms as core components in the implementation of sustainability. An SUL framework breaks livelihood analyses – and hence sustainability – down into a focus on key critical needs such as food, shelter, water and community. However, focusing on the integrated production and supply of these critical needs through affordable urban housing, reveals the role of broader economic forces in shaping, supporting or undermining cooperative, localised and/or holistic manifestations of sustainability.

Models such as those outlined here present significant reinterpretations of property and housing. Seeking to (re)establish these as common goods, such models require that we relinquish our fascination with private ownership as a preferable and natural condition. Realising the social construction of property systems, it is possible to dismantle the structures upholding singular models of ownership and begin to explore and understand systems which more accurately reflect the social, physical and economic context and dimensions of property and more actively engage with these. Models which seek to channel sustainable, local, cooperative social ability, endeavour and aspiration through equitable, accessible and flexible management systems move well beyond traditional economic interventions in property such as those of Henry George. While George's mechanisms left the commodity status of property unchallenged, attempts to manifest sustainable livelihood models in urban areas require that the core driving force of land and housing prices be addressed and held in check. This enables a winding down of the currently frenetic work-wage-housing cycle to a more manageable and appropriate dynamic. This opens up spaces for far more creative local interpretations of the economy as guided by local issues, abilities, possibilities and desires.

While seemingly utopian and far over the horizon, the emerging skeleton of such systems may be apparent in the existing infrastructure of Australia's community housing sector. Local systems for SULs represent models which can be achieved with minimal changes to existing delivery systems, just their diversification, support and reinvigoration. Such endeavour requires serious commitment, either directly via the state or through a dedicated CDFI sector, but cannot occur without resources and cannot be used as justification for further diminishing and outsourcing public commitment to social and environmental justice. Rather, such systems needs to be seen as fertile investment in robust, dynamic and evolving systems which ultimately can generate sustainable, multifaceted and interwoven benefits and ongoing community evolution.

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