

Big ideas in smaller spaces: investigating social equity in the context of social housing densification in Glen Innes, New Zealand.

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Introduction

New urbanism is characterised as concerned with sustainability in our cities and towns, with a focus on more compact forms of development. It is a response to environmental, economic and social problems resulting from ongoing urban sprawl. In the Brundlant Report (WCED 1987) social aspects of sustainability were expressed through references to equity both within and across nations and between generations. Investigations into social equity in urban areas have been guided by a planners' view of the world – city scale and spatially determined. The focus has been on whether the 'compact city' lives up to the promise of improved 'liveability', including 'walkability', affordability, 'sense of belonging', and 'vibrancy'. The spatial concentration of poverty, the most profound equity issue in cities, is related less to urban form and more closely to investment and tenure patterns, structural changes to employment, and transnational and globalising forces (Syme et al. 2005, Bramley et al. 2006, Burton 2000).

Notions of 'community sustainability' inherent in planning discourses of liveability draw on social capital discourse and often ignore a long history of critique in social science for reliance on notions of 'community' as unitary, bounded societies, and for ignoring issues of power, change, pluralism and conflict (e.g. Cohen 1985, Young 1986). In addition, critics claim that 'liveability' strategies are more about investment protection, privacy and security than attempting to improve social and environmental outcomes, (Helms 2005, Winstanley 2003). This criticism draws on Douglas' notion of cultural pollution and the imposition of social order. Concern has been expressed that a focus on social order is likely to impact most

profoundly on those already marginalised in cities – the poor. Clear links to social equity and distribution of resources are evident in these critiques. Examination of social sustainability in cities or, more specifically, social equity, therefore needs broader analysis of investment relations, economic development policies, and power relations operating at a range of spatial scales.

A political ecology approach to social sustainability in our cities and towns investigates the relationship between the environment, social equity and power to understand changes to urban form. This chapter uses this approach to understand the discourses and material conditions shaping the built environment and everyday life for Glen Innes residents in Auckland, New Zealand. Competing discourses reveal the plurality and ever-emerging complexity of this community, and the need to prioritise social equity when defining ‘liveability’. Reliance on a community governance model to address local socioeconomic issues in Glen Innes ignores issues of power, capacity and the need for inter-agency and cross-sectoral collaboration at various scales to address high levels of relative deprivation.

Political Ecology

Environmental anthropologists develop knowledge of how culture mediates the relationship between environment and human societies, demonstrating that problems and solutions to environmental problems are ‘as much cultural as they are physical or biological’ (Milton 1996:224). Political ecology provides a framework for analysing the relationship between environmental change, historical political processes and socio-economic outcomes, while recognising complexity and ambiguity (Keil 2003). Political ecology merges concerns with ecosystems and social equity (Harper 2004) and investigates the ways in which the environment ‘serves as a locus for the enactment and perpetuations of patterns of inequality’ (Brosius 1999:280). Methodologically, political ecology investigates discursive, material, social and cultural dimensions of the human-environment relation from multiple scales of analysis: from

micro-level analysis of everyday life through to the macro-level national and global structural dimensions (Escobar 1999, Harper 2004).

The emerging field of urban political ecology draws on cultural constructions of the environment, political economy and the environmental justice movement and is concerned with the 'interwoven knots of social process, material metabolism and spatial form that go into the formation of contemporary urban socio-natural landscapes' (Swyngedouw and Heynen 2003:906, in Keil 2003:727). Urban political ecologists have used critical social theory to challenge more positivist planning and policy-oriented perspectives that underpin much of the urban sustainability literature (Keil 2003), and focus on social inequality and power as fundamental to understanding changes to the built environment. This provides a framework for the analysis of Glen Innes ethnographic data. Competing discourses of liveability and the agency of actors to impose their vision of a 'liveable' environment can be explored with reference to Douglas' notion of cultural pollution (1970). Changes to the built environment create a threat to existing cultural values, requiring a reassessment of dangers and risks. Fears that intensification of housing will endanger human health and safety are constructed through discourses of pollution and defilement; state tenants are constructed as the 'Other', 'people out of place'. Examining the production of meanings and identities through discursive practices leaves some questions unanswered, however. Glen Innes residents challenge liveability strategies as mere 'window dressing' and unlikely to address social segregation and problems related to concentration of poverty. Discourses are therefore contextualised within historical political processes that have shaped material conditions within the built environment, and pathways are tracked between micro- and macro-scales.

Social equity and urban form

Bramley et al. (2006) distinguish two core ways in which social sustainability and urban form are being investigated: social equity (access to jobs, services and affordable housing) and 'sustainability of community' (social networks, community participation, sense of place,

community stability & security). Investigations into social equity, like policy discourses of liveability, have been guided by a planner's view of the world, that is, city scale and spatially determined. Compact and mixed-use settlements are seen as more socially equitable. Higher population densities are said to make local facilities and services more viable, and therefore provide more equitable access to goods and services. Increased levels of social interaction and cultural activities are also perceived to result from densification (Williams 1999). Cultural values, practices and aspirations related to urban form and open space have, however, received little examination, and social justice issues have been narrowly focused on issues perceived as related to urban form.

Burton (2003), for example, investigated social equity outcomes in 25 'compact' UK cities and concluded such cities have the potential to promote social equity, particularly in redeveloped urban areas that are close to public transport nodes, services and facilities. The study focused on 'the goods that are most influenced by the built environment' (form, amenity, accessibility, affordability) but acknowledged that distributive justice could also be analysed from broader factors 'more closely linked to the management and ownership of the built environment than to characteristics of urban form itself' (2003:541). Job accessibility and wealth were excluded from the analysis.

Intensification and community renewal in social housing estates have sparked debate about whether failed experiments in higher density social housing are due to concentration of housing (spatially determined) or poverty (socio-economically determined). Tenure and structural changes to employment are considered to have a greater influence on tenant well-being and social equity than housing density (Burton 2000). Increased poor health, crime and low amenity values are also more likely to be the result of concentration of poverty than housing type or density (Syme et al. 2005, Bramley et al. 2006).

Social equity does not appear to be a major driver for changes in urban form, although claims are made in policy discourse about potential for improving social justice. In this paper concern with social equity underpins the analysis and ethnographic research informs the ways in which social equity is defined.

Background to New Zealand urban form

New Zealand has been identified as a biodiversity ‘hot spot’, rich in endemic species but threatened by human activity; the number of households is rising at nearly twice the rate of the population (Liu et al. 2003). Rapid land and housing development is seriously affecting natural resources and the quality of human life in cities. New Zealand city dwellers have traditionally seen suburban life, with single dwellings on large sites, as the norm. A very strong cultural attachment to home ownership predominates. Single dwellings accounted for 82% of New Zealand homes in 2003 (Beacon Pathway 2006).

Auckland, where a third of the nation’s population resides, is ranked among the top 10 more ‘liveable’ cities internationally, but is also where social disparities are most evident in the country (Craig and Porter 2006). Population density in the Auckland region is low at 18.9 people per hectare (Arbury 2004), though this is changing rapidly. Former leafy suburbs have been carved up into 300–500-m² sections, and terraced housing, town houses, duplexes and multi-storey apartment blocks are becoming more common in some targeted growth areas. Approximately 25% of building consents in Auckland are currently for multi-unit dwellings, and these are expected to outstrip single dwellings by 2016 (Beacon Pathway 2006).

So, while media representations tell us that citizens are extremely cautious and see intensification as a challenge to the ‘quarter acre pavlova paradise’ⁱ, societal changes are resulting in a proliferation of smaller households, creating a demand for a greater diversity in housing types (Liu et al. 2003).

Investment patterns are important in the shaping of urban form, with large investments of surplus capital being invested in speculative place construction (Harvey 1996). Urban renewal through new urbanism in the UK and USA are aimed at revitalising decaying city centres. In New Zealand, many inner city suburbs have been gentrified over the last 30 years, leaving a mix of affluent and more deprived fringe suburbs (Syme et al. 2005).

In Australia, Randolph (2005) determined that the current higher density market in major cities is distinctive as it is predominantly a rental market. Housing form is being determined by perceptions and behaviour of investors rather than people looking for homes to buy to live in. Smaller two-bedroom dwellings are predominating, and high tenancy turnover, closely associated with the rental market, is a feature of higher density housing. Randolph raises concerns about the impact of these factors on social stability, community building, provision of open space, exclusion of children, and design and building quality. This investment pattern applies equally to New Zealand cities, with implications for management of higher density housing. Rental investments, predominantly owned by 'Mum and Dad investors', are often passively managed, under-maintained, and are commonly sold every 1–3 years (Saville-Smith 2005).

Planning context

Local governments in New Zealand are incorporating the concept of liveability into growth management strategies. Compact, mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly developments are intended to reduce urban sprawl and reliance on cars, increase uptake of public transport, provide 'vibrant' public spaces and make more 'liveable' communities. A mix of housing types is intended to cater for people at different life stages and with different income levels, reducing social segregation and increasing the number of affordable homes.

Liveability refers to a range of features, usually related to the physical environment, that are intended to make a place good to live in. As observed elsewhere (Lehrer 2006), competitiveness

between cities is strongly implicated in discourses of accommodating growth, although this is not evident in policy discourses.

The Auckland Regional Growth Strategy 1999 (ARGS) was collectively developed by the region's local councils, and implementation commitment was then signalled through sector agreements. For example, Auckland City Council, the territorial local authority for Glen Innes, thereby signed the Central Sector Agreement (2004) (CSA), identifying growth capacity and sequencing of development as consistent with the ARGS. Liveable Community Plans are the key implementation strategy of the CSA.

The Auckland Regional Growth Strategy (1999) states that growth will be managed by promoting quality, compact, urban environments (intensification) within existing metropolitan areas and focussed around town centres and major transport routes to create higher density communities. Rapid growth in the region's populationⁱⁱ, increasingly polluted skies, heavy reliance on cars, changing household dynamics, and a growing demand for a greater range of housing forms have shaped planning strategies. In this context, medium- to high-density living is assumed to lead to greater liveability. The Growth Forum recognised, however, the danger of intensification of low-income suburbs with low natural amenity and the need to ensure adequate open and recreational space in areas of intensification.

The Local Government Act 2002 denoted a shift in government policy – the so-called Third Way, 'Inclusive' liberal turn – requiring highly consultative planning processes to determine Long Term Council Community Plans (LTCCP), based on 'four well-beings' (social, cultural, economic and environmental). This social governance model attempts to reverse the policy-operations spilt created through neoliberal policies of the 1980s and '90s, shifting the focus on accountability of 'outputs' towards greater accountability of 'outcomes'. Collaboration within and between government and community sectors underpins both LTCCP and Liveable Community Plan processes, yet no implementation funding was allocated to either plan.

Achieving ‘outcomes’ (four well-beings, liveability, social equity) therefore continues to be plagued by problems of departmental silos in budgeting, planning and strategising (Craig and Porter 2006). The social determinants of ‘liveability’, commonly acknowledged as related to political economic dimensions, remain unexamined.

Glen Innes context

In pre-European times, Glen Innes was the site of a strongly fortified pā (settlement), ‘Taurere’, situated on a multi-peaked scoria cone and with the capacity to hold 2000 people. The pā was served by the port at nearby Tahuna Torea (the Sandspit), where hundreds of canoes could be pulled up at one time. Tahuna Torea was an important junction in trading routes between Māori from Manukau (for their smoked eels) and Mahurangi (for their smoked mullet) (Gunn 1994).

Glen Innes takes its name from William Innes Taylor who settled in Auckland in 1843 and farmed in Glen Innes for 50 years. Glen Innes was developed in the 1950s as a state housing area, a dormitory suburb to service the freezing works and manufacturing industries in nearby Penrose and Mt Wellington. Glen Innes included Auckland’s first comprehensively planned town centre (Auckland City 2004). The post-war baby boom, the migration of rural Māori to Auckland, and planning policies all contributed to a significant increase in the population in the broader Tamaki area within which Glen Innes is situated (Shirley 1979). Many of the new migrants to Glen Innes came from Freeman’s Bay, an inner-city suburb that had undergone an urban renewal programme in the 1950s, leading to its gentrification.

Today, Glen Innes rates in the highest decile of deprivation in New Zealand. Very low relative household incomes and poor health are particularly implicated. Glen Innes’ standard of living is especially low in comparison with adjacent suburbs that include some of the wealthiest suburbs in the country. Glen Innes has a youthful population and is ethnically diverse: Māori (14%) and Pacific (29%) populations being significantly higher than elsewhere in the city (7% and 11%, respectively). In New Zealand, poverty is entrenched among indigenous Māori and more

recently Pacific peoples, reflected in Glen Innes statistics. Glen Innes was particularly affected by neoliberal economic reforms commencing in the 1980s: huge job losses occurred in industry and unemployment soared, particularly among Māori and Pacific people, heavily represented in manufacturing. Although unemployment figures have dropped significantly in recent years, the casualisation of the employment market and unrestricted global capital flows have resulted in very low wages and the displacement of low and semi-skilled jobs. Benefit-dependant families face even greater relative deprivation as welfare is targeted at wage earners (Craig and Porter 2006).

State housing predominates in Glen Innes, accounting for over 60% of housing (and over 90% in some streets). It consists mainly of single dwellings, as well as some duplex and multi-unit blocks. In-fill housing, where 'standard ¼ acre sections' have been subdivided to fit two to three homes, has become increasingly evident in recent years. Parks and reserves are plentiful but are under utilized due to fears for personal safety.

Māori and Pakehaⁱⁱⁱ families have lived in Glen Innes for many years, and waves first of Pacific peoples and more recently of an extremely diverse mix of ethnicities have shifted to the suburb. Ethnic and church affiliations are strong (reinforced by ethnicity-based service provision), while bridging ties between such community-based networks are weak, undermining attempts to build a sense of belonging, community connectedness and civic engagement (Bava and Scott 2006, Mathur et al. 2004). A large number of formalised networks have recently been established in Glen Innes to create cross-sectoral and inter-government links, some facilitated by Council and Housing New Zealand Corporation (HNZC), the state-owned social housing provider. This networking is aimed at strengthening links with community-based groups and building community capacity to 'rise to the challenge' of participatory democracy. Long time-frames and adequate resourcing will be needed to create community readiness for collaborative action (Scott and Liew 2007). While some Council officers were involved in Glen Innes community development activities (most funded by Ministry of Health) during the period of the research,

the Liveable Community Plan process was rarely mentioned and was not perceived as having any relevance to improving socio-economic conditions in Glen Innes.

Research approaches

Ethnographic research in the suburb of Glen Innes informs this chapter^{iv}, together with other research and evaluation undertaken in Glen Innes by the author^v. This research builds on an earlier study of Council documentation and public submissions to the Glen Innes Liveable Community Plan and to Proposed Plan Modification 61 (PPM61) to allow higher density housing in Glen Innes (Scott and Shaw 2005). While home owners' and other stakeholders' views on community renewal and intensification were strongly articulated in submissions, many residents, particularly state tenants, had not made their views known. Many had signed pro forma submissions rejecting intensification in its entirety, and although all submissions were given credence, Council gave closest attention to submissions that gave reasons for rejection or support of the changes.

Subsequent ethnographic research (February–September 2006) included participant observation, media reviews, and two focus groups, one with a group of 6 state tenants and another with 10 Glen Innes residents and community development workers. Participant observation has continued throughout the research and writing stages of this chapter and has involved participation in several formalised social networks that support social environmental sustainability initiatives in Glen Innes. For the purposes of related research focused on the mapping of social networks and community governance processes in Glen Innes, a further 20 interviews were undertaken with other stakeholders – some of whom were also Glen Innes residents – including social service providers, iwi^{vi}, local government, government agencies, and non-governmental organisations (Bava and Scott 2006). These interviews were also analysed in terms of discourses related to social justice, intensification and community renewal.

Policy constructions of community renewal and intensification in Glen Innes

Glen Innes was selected in 2000 as a priority area to accommodate growth. Following 4 years of consultation and strategic planning, Council prepared a Liveable Community Plan (ACC 2004) and rezoned land to allow intensification. Rezoning was a two-step process. The initial 2004 plan change applied only to a state housing estate known as Talbot Park. The change supported the Talbot Park Community Renewal Project, a \$45 million project to provide 206 new and refitted homes. Council subsequently notified a comprehensive plan change in 2005 to introduce suburb-wide, medium-density Residential 8 zoning. This rezoning applies to approximately 481 privately owned and 684 publicly owned residential properties in Glen Innes. A total of 586 submissions were made to Council, the majority opposing the plan, but the final decision was to allow the rezoning.

Reviews of planning documentation (Scott & Shaw 2005) showed that Council started from the point of accommodating growth by increasing housing densities (form), while placing controls on quality (design). Other themes of amenity, accessibility, vitality and viability of the town centre, and infrastructure were prioritised as necessary to create a 'liveable' community. As these themes are related to place, they fit within the traditional planning realm and are the core business of Council. Slightly less related were local economy and safety, which were assumed to be addressed by changes to form and design. While the theme of sustainability appears to be the driver for accommodating growth through changes to settlement form, it was not a strong focus in the discourse.

This discourse of accommodating growth was applied at a city scale, under requirements of the Auckland Regional Growth Strategy; growth was never questioned nor where growth could occur at a regional or national scale. Council's expectation was that residents accept changes in form and, in return, would benefit from improvements to place. Nevertheless, Council planners reported feeling constrained by the context within which they worked. They felt constrained by regional growth management strategies that required accommodation of a certain level of

population growth within city boundaries. Planners were concerned with the concentration of poverty within Glen Innes but were aware that Council was unable to influence the ownership and occupancy mix. Another driver for HNZC was to meet an increasing demand for smaller two-bedroom homes. HNZC's housing ownership and allocation policies, determined by central government, prohibited sale of HNZC properties and required that those categorised as 'highest need' be housed first. The quality of houses and adequacy of maintenance were the responsibility of HNZC. ACC officers were also aware they had limited capacity to attend directly to socio-economic issues in Glen Innes. Council responsibilities were therefore limited to zoning of land, resource consent processes, and facilitation of some community-development activities.

HNZC was also largely driven by a need to accommodate growth; in particular, to address the long waiting list for social housing in Auckland. HNZC was limited to increasing the number of dwellings on existing state-owned land; high land costs, limited resources for land purchase, and national policies that prohibit sale of HNZC properties meant HNZC was unable to sell some of its very valuable properties and purchase properties in a range of locations. There was also a lack of political will to drive 'pepper potting' of state-owned properties in new developments. HNZC was unsuccessful in gaining access to build in a nearby new quarry development and in a large greenfields development further to the south; these developments will collectively house 40 000 people, with no affordable housing included.

Talbot Park is a social housing estate in central Glen Innes. The Talbot Park Community Renewal Project, completed during this research, sought to address issues of community and personal safety, local employment opportunities, community health concerns, education and social service provision and community pride. Site areas were redeveloped based on principles of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles (Auckland City Council 2005) and sustainable urban design (Scott 2007). Housing renewal included the renovation of nine three-storey multiplexes – known as Starblocks because of their star-shaped

form – with a total of 108 flats. A further 111 new homes were constructed, including large single dwellings, terrace housing, and three-storey multiplexes. Two parks were still to be developed on site (a Council responsibility, and at time of writing, October 2007, just started); on-site tenancy management and community development strategies were also being implemented by HNZN. The inclusion of narrow, ‘walkable’ streetscapes had slowed traffic and created pedestrian-friendly streets as planned. Tenancy turnover in Talbot Park has been greatly reduced by the redevelopment (from 50% to 4% p.a.) and there is now a waiting list of people wanting to live there.

Residents’ perceptions of community renewal and intensification

Liveability planning processes are strongly underpinned by an assumption that ‘community’ is homogenous and that changes to the built environment will lead to improvements for all residents. Phrases such as social cohesion, community belonging and vibrant communities come from a social capital discourse and are widespread in policy. Critiques of such notions of community, with reliance on concepts of unitary, bounded societies, ignoring issues of power, change, pluralism and conflict also have a long history in social science (e.g. Cohen 1985, Young 1986, Strathern 1982).

Discourses of community renewal and intensification in Glen Innes reveal conflicting perceptions of what will create a liveable community, and are the focus of this section.

Following a political ecology framework, social equity is prioritised in the analysis, with a focus on those most marginalized in Glen Innes. Links to broader political processes impinging on daily life are also identified and the limitations of liveability planning to address social equity.

Submissions and interviews with residents showed several strong and often conflicting themes in relation to ‘liveability’ plans. Themes included fears of slumification/gentrification, and concern over affordability, suitability for families, and tenancy management. At the public

hearing of submissions to PPM61, the operator of a local radio station stated that none of the station's listeners supported the zone change, and that he had had between 70 and 80 telephone calls directly objecting to it. In-fill housing, which residents tended to equate with intensification, had led to many Glen Innes residents feeling 'invaded' by incoming residents, and to the disruption of community relations, noise pollution, and higher local traffic volumes. It was feared these problems would be multiplied by higher density housing, and they clearly conflicted with policy aspirations related to liveability. Several state tenants commented that HNZN had no process for introducing new residents to the wider community, and that residents perceived intensification as being 'done to them' with no benefits for them.

A common view throughout New Zealand, and strongly articulated in submissions, was that apartment blocks were not suitable for families with young children – lack of space including private outdoor spaces not large enough for children to play and noise from children playing were common concerns. Numerous submissions and interviewees commented that 'children need green spaces to play', which was equated to private rather than public open space.

Another common view was that 'people are not designed to live in close proximity to each other'. Home owners and some state tenants living in single dwellings expressed concern about a lack of privacy, noise pollution, tall apartment buildings shading neighbours, the potential for conflict between neighbours, security concerns for children in shared public spaces, and a general lack of control over the surrounding environment. These concerns were deeply imbedded culturally and cut across class.

Closer examination of the data suggested there were other differences in perceptions of what would result from changes to urban form in Glen Innes and that these differences could be largely attributed to social class. In the following section, perceptions of two groups – home owners and state tenants – are examined. However, it must be acknowledged that distinctions in perspectives often blur, conflict and change over time.

Home owners: 'Liveability' plans will lead to 'slumification'

Many submitters to the Glen Innes Liveable Community Plan, particularly home owners and social service providers, saw the plans as mere window dressing aimed at painting over the problems of poverty and inequality and the essential 'polluting' nature of a concentration of state tenants. A common concern among social service workers, private home owners and residents of neighbouring suburbs was that a higher concentration of low-income people would exacerbate existing socio-economic problems:

At the moment the flats at Talbot Park are being re-vamped. They all look really nice then the tenants move in and they now look like a ghetto. There [sic] verandas look ugly, people drinking outside them and sitting under trees, throwing rubbish outside. It is a waste of money if people are not going to look after them and bring the area down. And now you want to put more of the flats in the area, bring in more people who don't care. On my street there is one area there [where] a lot of housing are put close together. It is the messiest, noisiest area on the whole street and you want us to say yes to more of this. NO THANK YOU' (submission to PPM61).

State tenants were framed as the 'Other' in these discourses; collective use of public outdoor space by state tenants was frowned on. Many home owners expressed the view that the number of state homes should be reduced not increased. 'The answer to Glen Innes' problems lies not with intensification of housing, but with addressing the income mix of its residents'. There was a strong perception that state tenants – and HNZN – did not take good care of their homes.

However, while there were repeated calls for HNZN to sell off some of their properties, there was also concern that Residential 8 zoning would allow poor quality development and that new, privately owned properties would be rented out with no maintenance or tenancy management:

My concern is with these [higher density houses] if Housing New Zealand bought them, then forget it, it would just be terrible. But also if people started buying high density housing I could see what would happen, they would sell them like they do in the inner city and they would be rented out and you would get more of the same, and I think that's where the danger is. I think if they built them so they were nice apartments, expensive to buy so that people who had to live in them had a bit of money, that would help change the face of Glen Innes, but I can't see that happening (home owner).

Homeowners (and social service workers) were concerned that small apartments would become home to large, low-income families, with dire consequences for families and the community. One long-term home owner who had observed that garages in Glen Innes always became homes to families commented:

I remember when they first talked about [Talbot Park] I said to [HNZC] now don't put garages in, just put carports and maybe a little shed for the bikes. If you do put a garage in, make sure it's fully lined and preferably has toilet facilities and is carpeted and sound proof so that people can live in them comfortably.

Families, meaning two adults and children, were commonly considered best for community building by homeowners. Single people were thought to make bad neighbours and could threaten others' feelings of security. People reminisced fondly about when Glen Innes was first established as a state housing area for low-income families.

The discourse of slumification was also evident in views of renewal of the town centre. One submitter commented, 'The only shops that will benefit through the extra people in the neighbourhood are the TAB [betting agent], takeaways, Lotto and pub'. Home owners expressed a desire for a more diverse range of shops and community facilities, including repeated calls for an arts centre. Residents in affluent neighbouring suburbs, many of whom

make use of the Glen Innes train station and supermarket, expressed strong concerns in submissions about the potential for ‘slumification’ in Glen Innes through intensification. Although not articulated in submissions, it is likely that these home owners felt threatened by the potential of having even more ‘high need’ state tenants at their doorstep.

Middle-class attachment to low-density living and private outdoor space was strongly evident in discourses of liveability. Claims by home owners that intensification would lead to slumification implicated concepts of cultural pollution in the discourse, and also pointed to strongly entrenched poverty and historical political processes that impinge on experiences of urban form.

State Tenants: ‘Liveability’ plans will lead to gentrification

A common theme in submissions from state tenants was fears of gentrification due to ‘liveability’ plans – “As happened in Ponsonby in the 1960s”, “fear of being pushed out to Otara”, or as one person said in an oral submission, “I am afraid this is shorthand for moving some of the community out”. This fear was heightened by close proximity to comparatively wealthy suburbs. State tenants often commented that Glen Innes was well situated, easy to walk around and well-serviced by public transport. Car parking had become a problem since renewal of the train station as many residents from neighbouring suburbs parked in central Glen Innes to make use of the train service. The local shops were considered very affordable, and state tenants feared ‘liveability’ processes would change this:

Glen Innes has got everything you need, all the shops here, it’s convenient. You can walk to the supermarket, you can buy clothing here, you can buy everything you need...I know people which moved out of the area...and they all complain that everything is just so much more expensive...they just can’t afford a lot of things and especially having big families. Here even second-hand clothing and so on for the little ones... (state tenant).

State tenants were cynical about the dominating presence of a new police station in Glen Innes since it was known as a regional centre for traffic police rather than a community policing

centre. Authorities claimed a reduction in reported crime in Glen Innes, while residents complained that it was ‘a waste of time’ to report crime as ‘nothing ever happens’ as a result. State tenants (and community development workers) made repeated calls for more community police presence. A residents’ group was engaged in removing graffiti, actively eliminating this symbolic threat to social order. If liveability strategies were about attaining improved social order, as claimed in other localities, then residents would generally be extremely supportive.

Affordability was a key issue for state tenants. Intensification was perceived as helping meet the need for more affordable homes in Glen Innes:

[Medium density housing] for a great number of people to be housed in the smallest space and low maintenance, and that brings the cost of housing down, and at the same time providing for some accommodation for some people who can’t afford it, including families. Because at the moment we have about 4000 people waiting for housing in Glen Innes alone, and we haven’t got any houses. Something like [medium density housing’s], I guess, practical in a sense but it’s a matter of getting used to a new kind of lifestyle to fit in with what’s available, I guess that’s what it is (state tenant).

Focus groups and participant observation suggested that residents enjoyed living in the revamped ‘Starblock’ apartment blocks in Talbot Park. They were perceived to be healthier to live in, ‘like new’ after the renovations, with improved ventilation, security, and outdoor public space. Concerns about personal safety in Talbot Park had largely been addressed by reconfiguration of public space and tighter controls on tenant behaviour. Some liked the fact that apartment living meant they did not have the expense or work of maintaining private outdoor space, and for this reason were prepared to live in a smaller living space. Social service and community development workers in Glen Innes also reported that Starblock tenants were generally happy in their refitted homes, and that some of these tenants have a ‘new lease on life’, feeling good about where they live, which has a positive impact on other parts of their lives.

Starblock residents identified some issues associated with living in close proximity to neighbours, including noise, feeling ‘jammed in’ and the resulting ‘strong tenancy management’ approach by HNZC. One Starblock resident liked her flat but, commenting on the construction of apartment blocks in close proximity to hers in Talbot Park, said, “our road is real narrow, imagine when they’ve finished all the buildings, you’ll be stuffed in like a [sardine], won’t be able to get out of there”. Lack of privacy did not emerge as an issue for these residents, and some expressed feelings of security and comfort with having people nearby. While one single parent said she liked the opportunity for social interaction, most appeared to operate under a system of ‘polite avoidance’ of their neighbours in order to preserve people’s privacy.

Tenancy control measures produced contradictory responses from tenants: they wanted restrictions on other people’s behaviour but at the same time resisted controls over their own freedom. Much of the talk about living in Talbot Park centred on the tenancy control measures, seen by some as too heavy handed and making some feel fearful. Some residents saw them as the only thing they did not like about living in the area.

A shift in views became evident over time among state tenants, social service and community development workers, from anxiety about ‘town cramming’ in Talbot Park before construction, to ‘watching with interest’ during construction, and finally being impressed with the post-construction results and hopeful that more such renewal programmes would take place in Glen Innes. However, some state tenants remained strongly opposed to intensification. The Auckland Housing Lobby, reportedly supported by many state tenants, stated in a submission to PPM61 ‘...Talbot Park was a toe in the water for Housing New Zealand and the council but the consequences were dislocation of existing tenants and ‘slumification’ of the area’. This group’s views have not changed over time.

Affordable, safe, healthy homes were strong themes in state tenants' discourses of liveability, and results to date in Talbot Park were positive in this regard. Middle-class concerns about privacy and adequacy of indoor and outdoor space were less evident. Vulnerability to national policy changes in relation to state housing underpinned concerns of potential gentrification of Glen Innes.

Comparing discourses of 'liveability'

Examination of discourses of liveability showed a clear mismatch between Council and HNZC objectives of accommodating growth and residents' goals of addressing socio-economic issues. This mismatch in the discourses reflected the competing political, institutional, social and economic processes at various scales that shape urban form at a city scale.

Home owners and social service workers wanted to see significant improvements to the socio-economic well-being of residents before more people (especially 'high need' HNZC tenants) were housed there. Liveability planning processes raised expectations that their concerns about socio-economic issues would be addressed as priority concerns. This contrasts with the Council's expectations that the community would accept changes in form and, in return, would benefit from improvements to be made to place. Fears that intensification of housing would endanger human health and safety were constructed through discourses of pollution and defilement; state tenants were constructed as the 'Other', 'people out of place'.

In contrast, state tenants, a marginalized group that is in most need of a more 'liveable' environment, valued the efforts of HNZC to provide attractive, healthy homes in a suburb that is well serviced by public transport and a local town centre. Despite concerns about the perceived 'big brother' approach of HNZC to tenancy management, Talbot Park had become sought after by state tenants. Talbot Park residents' desire for a range of housing styles and construction materials so that they 'don't look like state houses', for example, was accommodated. People living in revamped Starblocks perceived their living environment to be more suited to their ways of life than single dwelling homes, in part because of, rather than in spite of, the lack of private

outdoor space. Despite the small size of the research sample and the fact that the housing is still relatively new, this study suggests that more compact forms of development may provide well for marginalised people in Glen Innes, and their perceptions and experiences of intensification deserve further investigation. However, their marginal position is unlikely to change as long as broader socioeconomic issues are not addressed and cultural concepts of urban form that value single dwellings remain dominant in the public arena (and equate intensification with ‘slumification’). State tenants also remain vulnerable to changing political and economic forces, in particular the possibility of political changes that could allow the sale of HNZN properties.

The need for locally specific indicators of liveability was recognised by Council and HNZN through a process of consultation and collaboration. HNZN went to considerable lengths to incorporate sustainable design and CPTED principles at Talbot Park, based on current best practice. Government strategies have aligned to create more affordable homes, improving community stability, safety and amenity values; and the establishment of a waiting list of tenants wanting to live there signals that it is now considered a more ‘liveable’ neighbourhood. Council undertook lengthy consultation in the preparation of the Glen Innes Liveable Community Plan, detailed research of new urbanism and liveability considerations, and prepared a plan that incorporated this analysis and clearly articulated Council roles and responsibilities in implementation. However, a common issue raised by all stakeholders was the sense that they were strongly constrained by national, regional, city and local policy, as well as by legislative and statutory requirements. In effect, this points to the ways in which government agencies fail to link place-based strategies and the lack of power that each agency has to control just how intensification of housing will be applied and by whom. Local government recognises it lacks both the power to influence investment patterns that will ultimately help shape Glen Innes under new rezoning, and the political will to enforce quotas for affordable housing in new developments.

The governance model on which the Liveable Community Plan was based was called into question by residents since implementation of the plan was not funded. The plan relied on partnerships being built between residents, HNZC, police, Council, and community organisations, many of whom are already stretched to meet existing socio-economic challenges, 'core business' or contractual requirements. As a result, the consultative approach to policy in this case was unlikely to achieve intended outcomes. This supports Craig and Porter's (2006) observations that 'the outcomes orientation [in government policy] is not in fact primarily about producing social change outcomes, but about attempting (and largely failing) to widen narrow public service accountabilities' (2006:245).

To return to the critique that liveability planning can be more about reordering space to attain social order than improving social and environmental outcomes, there was some evidence that this was the case in Glen Innes. HNZC's strong tenancy management approach was aimed at maintaining order in the newly revamped Talbot Park. Council aimed to make improvements to the place to off-set perceived negative impacts of an increased population density. While this strategic approach to liveability planning could be named as attempting to impose social order, it was clear that all residents would dearly love to have a greater sense of safety and security. This matches findings from ethnographic research in low-decile high schools in USA where rather than seeing surveillance and controls on students as being inappropriate 'power over', people wanted stronger social order imposed in order to create a safer learning environment (Devine 1999).

Nevertheless, the core issue in both ethnographic examples is the concentration of poverty and socio-economic problems. These are arguably more strongly linked to a deregulated economy and employment than to the built environment. Liveability planning processes shaping the built environment in Glen Innes are largely detached from economic processes that shape the socioeconomic context that are of primary concern to residents. The focus of liveability planning processes on issues of security and social order can be understood as dealing with the

symptoms rather the cause. As Wacquant (2003) observed, it is ironic that in the neoliberal state, 'more state' is required to maintain public order 'to remedy the generalized rise of objective and subjective insecurity that is itself caused by 'less state' on the economic and social front' (2003:198).

Conclusion

Auckland City has little available land to accommodate even natural population increase, and while the public generally does not want urban sprawl, it also does not support intensification. Critical dialogue on intensification is badly needed. Changes to the built environment are forcing people to reassess cultural assumptions about urban form and associated dangers and risks. Environmental problems such as air pollution and threats to natural resources are also impacting on quality of life in cities and raising questions related to the urban form. More compact forms of development could provide affordable homes and therefore contribute to social equity. However, provision of affordable homes is only part of the equation.

Concentration of poverty and other issues associated with material conditions have a bigger impact on social equity than urban form. State tenants fear that liveability strategies are 'shorthand for moving some of the community out', thus supporting claims that such strategies are intended to impose social order. The fact that Glen Innes, the most impoverished suburb in the city, was the first to be targeted for liveability planning raises questions about whether those already in highly marginalised positions stand to bear the brunt of bureaucratic agreements to accommodate growth within city boundaries.

Low-density housing is a symbol of middle-class New Zealand, signifying stability, independence, and control over private indoor and outdoor space; and these representations, though under threat from new urbanism, are far from eliminated from discursive constructions of the built environment. Based on Douglas' notion of cultural pollution, policy and home owner discourses of liveability in Glen Innes could be explained as an attempt to impose social

order and protect property values. However, Glen Innes residents also challenge liveability strategies as mere window dressing and unlikely to address social segregation and problems related to concentration of poverty. In Glen Innes, liveability planning is not rhetoric to sell homes but rather aimed at accommodating growth, and if social order is improved in the process, Council, HNZA and residents alike will be happy.

Historical political processes clearly have important implications for material conditions in Glen Innes residents' everyday lives. Social and environmental sustainability, discourses that underpin liveability strategies, demand the prioritisation of social equity, in particular the needs of those most marginalised. Political ecology has been used as a guiding framework to examine discursive and material conditions that shape the built environment, revealing recursive links between micro- and macro-scales.

All the actors express very limited capacity to address socio-economic issues that have the most pronounced impact on marginalised groups within society. Each group of actors within government agencies therefore continues to stick to 'core business', be that provision of state housing, social and physical infrastructure, or social services. Ethnographic research in Glen Innes suggests that while all parties have followed best practice guidelines, the impact on social equity is likely to be minimal in the long term.

Once a vibrant hub of commercial activity during pre-European times, Glen Innes was established as a state housing area in the 1950s, became homogenized in terms of class, and stigmatized as a result. Nevertheless, 'GI' became home for several generations of people who lived in single dwellings, duplexes, and apartment blocks. The suburb is now being reshaped to house more people in apartments and townhouses, meeting the needs of some residents, while creating a threat to others. Whether this leads to gentrification, slumification or something in between remains to be seen.

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ⁱ Colloquial expression referring to the standard suburban section of land in New Zealand; pavlova is a popular New Zealand dessert.

ⁱⁱ Increased from 700,000 to 1.2 million since 1970 and is projected to reach 2 million by 2030 (ARC 2006)

ⁱⁱⁱ New Zealanders of European descent

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^v The Low Impact Urban Design and Development (LIUDD) programme <http://www.landcareresearch.co.nz/research/built/liudd> and evaluation of a Glen Innes community development project (Mathur, Scott, & Strang 2004).

^v Māori tribal and urban groups