

# **Territorial stigma and territorial struggles in Sydney's Waterloo estate**

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Alistair Sisson

## **Abstract**

This dissertation is about territorial stigmatisation and public housing in Sydney, Australia. It draws on discourse analysis and 18 months of ethnographic fieldwork, much of which was spent working with a resident action group who were contesting the redevelopment of the Waterloo estate, in the city's inner-south. While public housing in Australia has always been a marginal form of tenure and has been further marginalised and stigmatised in the era of neoliberalisation, the stigmatisation of Waterloo is especially intense. The Waterloo estate is the largest in the country and is located in a gentrifying neighbourhood. The stigma of public housing is also conjugated with the stigma of the Aboriginal community: throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the neighbourhood of Redfern-Waterloo was home to a large and politically active community of Aboriginal people from across NSW and Australia, particularly during the self-determination movement of the 1960s and 70s.

Through interviews and ethnography with tenants and community workers, interviews with public servants and other housing professionals, and discourse analysis of a range of media and policy texts over the 10 years to 2019, I unpack (i) how the territorial stigmatisation of public housing is produced; (ii) how it was deployed and articulated through the redevelopment of the Waterloo estate; and (iii) how tenants contested and resisted the redevelopment, and the stigmatisation that undergirded it, through what I call *territorial struggles*. I fuse concepts of territory from political geography with the prevailing urban sociological/geographical approach to territorial stigmatisation to argue for the centrality of territory to understanding the production and contestation of territorial stigmatisation. Territory is both the space controlled from above through politico-institutional practices and representations *and* space that is appropriated physically and symbolically from below through everyday and organised means. Thus, as I explicate through my case study, territorial stigma is not thrust upon its subjects without some form of resistance: inhabitants of stigmatised territories like Redfern-Waterloo engage in territorial struggles over both symbolic classification and physical control.

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## List of acronyms

ABC: Australian Broadcasting Corporation  
ABS: Australian Bureau of Statistics  
AHC: Aboriginal Housing Company  
AHCP: Aboriginal Community Housing Provider  
ATP: Australian Technology Park  
ATSI: Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander  
BEP1: Built Environment Plan Stage One  
BEP2: Built Environment Plan Stage Two  
BLF: Builders Labourers' Federation  
CBD: Central Business District  
CHC: Commonwealth Housing Commission  
CHP: Community Housing Provider  
CPTED: Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design  
CRA: Commonwealth Rent Assistance  
CSHA: Commonwealth State Housing Agreement  
FACS: Department of Family and Community Services  
FPC: Future Planning Centre  
GFC: Global Financial Crisis  
GSC: Greater Sydney Commission  
GST: Goods and Services Tax  
ISV: Inner Sydney Voice  
LAHC: Land and Housing Corporation  
LGA: Local Government Area  
NAHA: National Affordable Housing Agreement  
NCIE: National Centre for Indigenous Excellence  
NHFIC: National Housing Finance Investment Corporation  
NSW: New South Wales  
REDWatch: Redfern Eveleigh Darlington Waterloo Watch  
RLS: Redfern Legal Service  
RWA: Redfern-Waterloo Authority  
SHA: State Housing Authority  
SSCA: South Sydney Community Aid  
SSH: *South Sydney Herald*  
SSP: State Significant Precinct  
TGON: *There Goes Our Neighbourhood*  
TUNSW: Tenants Union of New South Wales  
UGDC: Urban Growth Development Corporation  
USyd: University of Sydney  
UTS: University of Technology Sydney  
WLH: We Live Here/#WeLiveHere2017  
WPHAG: Waterloo Public Housing Action Group

## Chapter 1 Introduction

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In early April 2018, my colleague Pratichi Chatterjee and I met with Angela\*, a white woman in her 40s who lived in the Waterloo estate, in Sydney's inner-south. We met at a café on Raglan St, across the road from a giant pit, obscured from our view by tall hoardings plastered with NSW Government and Sydney Metro branding – shown in Figure 1.1. Excavation of the pit had then only recently begun: it was to become the Waterloo Metro station – a new stop on the new service running from Sydney's north-west through to the CBD and then south-west via Waterloo, as illustrated in Figure 1.2. Building the Waterloo Metro station was part of a larger project: first, three residential towers would be built above the site, capturing some of the 'value uplift' that this new piece of transport infrastructure was expected to generate. Secondly, the adjacent Waterloo estate, to the station's east, would be redeveloped. The 18ha estate and its 212 dwellings would be slowly demolished and approximately 2140 social housing units built in its place, along with 4000 to 5000 market dwellings. The project was announced in December 2015, but the ensuing planning and consultation process was marked by multiple revisions and delays. At the time of writing, the final plan for the estate redevelopment was still being developed, but a 'Preferred Masterplan' had been released. In part this delay was due to the contestation and resistance of tenants and their supporters. Angela was meeting with us so that we could interview her for our respective research projects. We had met through the Waterloo Public Housing Action Group (WPHAG), a group contesting the redevelopment that we had all become involved in.

At times it seemed like the project would never begin, but the sight of the Metro station pit made it suddenly seem 'real' to all three of us.

At that time, Angela had lived in Waterloo for a little over two years. She had struggled in the private rental market for several years before applying for public housing, finally approaching a women's housing support program with a deep sense of shame at having to seek their assistance:

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\* Pseudonym

So, after a significant time living, you know, really hand-to-mouth, my sister supporting me and, you know, all that stuff, I finally went to the Women's Housing at Surry Hills – really upset and ashamed and crying my eyes out, saying 'I have to do this.' And they were going, 'Why are you so upset?' 'Because I'm a loser, and I'm really scared, and what's going to happen to me? And all the people down there – men just out of jail...' And they're going, 'No, what are you talking about? Everything will be fine' (interview April 2018).

After five years on the waiting list – three years of waiting patiently and two years of doggedly pursuing an outcome through an experienced social worker who acted on her behalf – Angela was shown the Waterloo apartment that became her home. Despite the immense difficulty of her circumstances over those five years, Angela was reluctant to accept it:

I got an offer to live down here. And I didn't want to live here. I was just like, 'I... I can't cope with Waterloo. But I have to.' I didn't have any choice. I was paying like \$450... no, \$380 a week in Potts Point for a studio, and I just couldn't afford it. Everyone else was having to pay it for me. So, a friend and I came down here to see the place and... he said to me, 'You have to say yes. You have to.' And I knew that too, but I felt so intimidated at this two-bedroom with just a normal-sized living room... I was like, 'This is too big – I'll never fill this place.' I... I think I'm telling you this because I was living in such reduced circumstances before at such high rates. You know what a studio is in Potts Point, I'm sure. So, but it didn't take long for me to adjust. I was very lucky because it's a very, very good building and there were more women than men, older women who'd been here forever, who were very kind to me and kind of reassured me that this was *not* how I'd been described this place by tabloid TV as *dens of iniquity* and *crack pipes everywhere*, you know. You know the drill. I mean, 'You're not gonna live in Waterloo – are you crazy?! Do you wanna, you know, get bashed up?' And there was that whole energy around it. And as I'm sure a lot of people have said, it's more community-minded than anywhere I've *ever* lived. I mean, the whole time I was in Potts Point no one spoke to me and as soon as I got here the ladies from downstairs, they all came out to say hello, and say who they were and what they were and how they could help, so that's how I... that's kind of how I got here (interview April 2018, original emphases).

Angela's initial perception of the Waterloo estate reflected its intense stigmatisation. Public housing generally is stigmatised in Australia, as a uniquely subsidised tenure costing the 'taxpayer' too much money. Tenants are variously stigmatised as 'undeserving' this subsidy because of their purported antisocial behaviour or fecklessness, or simply for inhabiting real estate that is seen as 'too valuable' to be 'wasted' on them. Estates in particular have become stigmatised for their 'concentrated disadvantage' and for their supposedly isolating and criminogenic built environments. None are more stigmatised than the Waterloo estate: pictured in Figure 1.3, it is

**Figure 1.1**  
Waterloo Metro  
station construction  
site

Source: author's  
own



the largest in the country, hyper-visible due to its modernist concrete towers and location a short trip downtown from the CBD, within a neighbourhood that over the past two decades has become increasingly gentrified. Furthermore, it is next-door to the suburb of Redfern – the famous and infamous neighbourhood that was at the centre of Aboriginal peoples’ struggles for self-determination in the mid- to late-20<sup>th</sup> century and once home to a community of Aboriginal people from across NSW and Australia that numbered in the tens of thousands. Redfern also contains a large public housing estate, and the two suburbs – Redfern and Waterloo – are co-constituted in the minds of many residents and within various state policies and interventions: as Redfern-Waterloo.

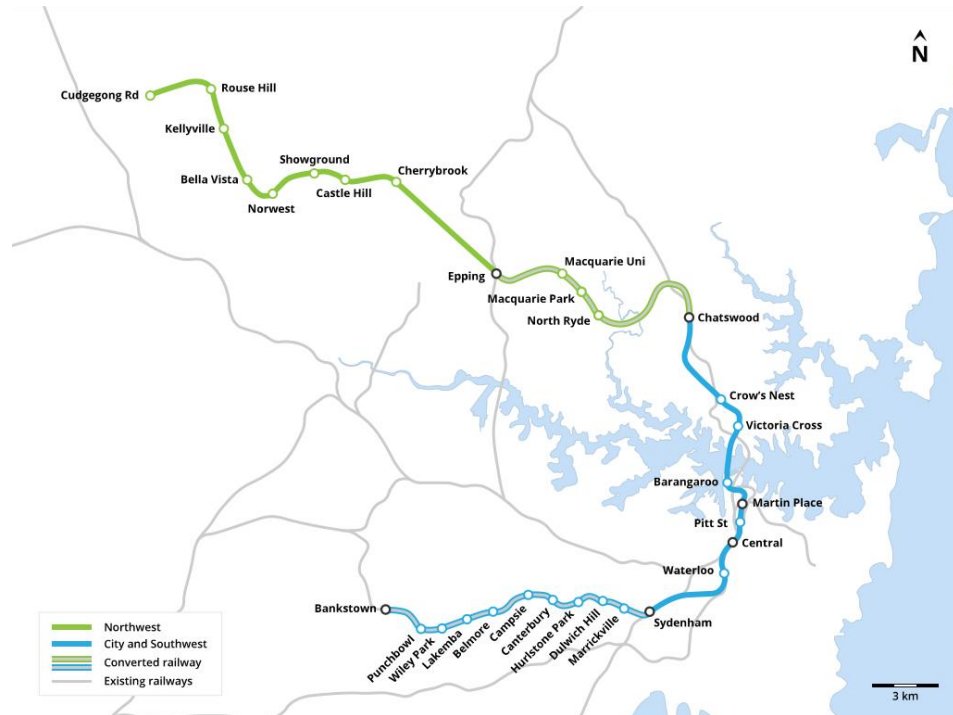
Gentrification in Redfern-Waterloo had been led by the state prior to the announcement of the Waterloo estate redevelopment; the project announced in 2015 was in many ways a continuation of state-led gentrification and efforts to imagine and realise the ‘potential’ of the neighbourhood. The Metro station was incorporated into the project so that the estate redevelopment could proceed at no cost to the NSW Government; the station would further increase the value of the land so that it could be handed to consortia of property developers and Community Housing Providers (CHPs) in exchange for both private and community housing<sup>1</sup>. The redevelopment of the Waterloo estate was planned according to the principle of ‘social mix’,

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<sup>1</sup> Social housing managed by private, not-for-profit providers.

**Figure 1.2**  
 Sydney Metro  
 Northwest, City and Southwest  
 stations and route

Source:  
 Wikimedia  
 Commons



which, in the case of estate redevelopment, simply means mixed-tenure (Lees et al. 2012). Social mix was described as a solution to the ills of concentrated disadvantage, introducing tenants to ‘role model’ private home owners and renters who would break the ‘cycle of disadvantage’. For Angela, it also carried a symbolic meaning:

What I particularly resent is this... this kind of propaganda – it’s not really spoken, but the implication goes something like this, for me: ‘You people should be very grateful to these nice rich people because *they’re going to pay for your houses.*’ And that just inflames me, you know? I mean, we had one lady

come in and talk about... I think it was another mixed community thing. She made a really interesting point that had never occurred to me, and it surprised me that it hadn’t. She said, ‘Everybody’s housing is subsidised. Absolutely everybody. And the bigger the house, the bigger subsidy.’ You know what I’m saying? (Interview April 2018, original emphasis).

I have quoted Angela’s comments at length in this introduction because they encapsulate so much of what I hope to communicate in this dissertation. The technical and discursive construction of the subsidy that public housing tenants receive is indeed central to their stigmatisation, and this was reified by the Waterloo estate redevelopment. While, as Angela pointed out, public housing tenants are far from being the only people who receive a housing subsidy, this fact is obscured by the stigmatisation of public housing and the valorisation of home ownership through both policy and discourse. This is, I argue, a constitutive feature of

**Figure 1.3**  
Aerial view of the  
Waterloo estate  
from north-west

Credit: Robert  
Pearce  
Source: Gorrey  
(2019)



Australian settler colonial capitalism and neoliberalised settler colonialism (Tomiak 2017). In addition to a range of policies and programs which explicitly incentivise home ownership, all settlers effectively subsidised through the colonial theft of land; however, home ownership enrolls its subjects into the systemic denial of this theft, both materially and ideologically. Furthermore, as Angela stressed, the internal experience of living in a public housing estate like Waterloo is often vastly different to the external representation of estates (e.g. August 2014; Garbin & Millington 2012; Slater & Anderson 2012). This gap can be a point of frustration for many tenants who, like Angela, are conscious of their stigmatisation but do not themselves internalise it (Jensen & Christensen 2012). As I have alluded to already, and as I discuss below, Redfern-Waterloo public housing tenants, community workers and allies organised and mobilised various forms of contestation and resistance – to the redevelopment specifically and to the *territorial stigmatisation* (Wacquant 2008) that underpinned it. Contestation and resistance, I outline, was both everyday and organised: it was present in Angela’s everyday interactions with her neighbours, which contradicted stigmatising representations and helped her to resist internalisation, and it was present in the form of groups like WPHAG. It was also both symbolic and material: it took the form of counter-representations like that which Angela articulated, and it took the form of physical appropriations of space and expressions of concrete demands.

\*

Public housing estates are a very frequent setting for scholarship on territorial stigmatisation (e.g. Arthurson et al. 2014; Arthurson & Jacobs 2009; Cuny 2018; Hancock & Mooney, 2013; Jacobs & Flanagan 2013; Kirkness 2014; Pereira & Queirós 2014; Schultz Larsen 2014; Slater 2018) and

the ‘blemish of place’ (Wacquant 2008) fixed onto estates has been deployed to legitimate the redevelopment of many of them (e.g. August 2014; Kallin 2017; Kallin & Slater 2014) as well as other noxious territories. With this dissertation I aim to add to this corpus of literature with contributions that I hope will help to conceptually furnish territorial stigmatisation in several ways. My aim has been to explicate how the territorial stigmatisation of public housing estates in Australia is produced, what it functions to do, and how inhabitants respond to it. The research questions I derived from this aim were as follows:

- Why are public housing estates in Australia stigmatised? What are the elements or features of public housing and of estates in particular, compared to other housing tenures and forms, that animate territorial stigmatisation?
- What are the consequences of territorial stigmatisation? How does it shape policy and planning interventions? How is it deployed or articulated in discourses on these interventions? How is it experienced by those who are subject to it and how do they understand territorial stigmatisation?
- How is territorial stigmatisation contested and resisted, both by those who are subject to it and those who are not? What are the opportunities and limitations to resistance? What might the ‘destigmatisation’ of public housing entail?

To address these aims and research questions I undertook discourse analysis of a range of texts over a ten-year period to 2019, outlined further in Chapter 3. I also undertook a case study of Redfern-Waterloo and the Waterloo estate. As I have already discussed, the neighbourhood and the estate has long been intensely stigmatised and was in 2015 selected for redevelopment. There are several unique aspects to this case study, and I therefore attempt to delineate conclusions that are generalisable from those that are specific to the Waterloo case (or others that are somehow similar).

Inevitably, I draw heavily on the work of Loïc Wacquant, who first coined the concept of territorial stigmatisation (Wacquant 2007, 2008), and who situates it within the rise of advanced marginality and the state project of neoliberalism (Wacquant 2009a, 2010, 2014, 2015, 2019; Wacquant et al. 2014). I discuss this at length in Chapter 2 and Chapter 4. As a form of ‘consequential categorisation’ (Wacquant & Akçaoğlu 2017), territorial stigmatisation obfuscates the production of poverty and marginality via the restructuring of capital and the state, and thereby legitimates status quo socio-spatial inequalities and injustices as well as interventions that entrench or intensify them (Tyler 2013).

I also draw heavily on the work of Imogen Tyler, who has written extensively on stigma and abjection rather than *territorial* stigmatisation per se (Tyler 2013, 2015, 2018; Tyler & Slater 2018; Jensen & Tyler 2015; Allen et al. 2014). From Tyler, I take stigma to be both a political economy of (de)valuation (Tyler 2018) *and* a governmental rationality and technology that helps reproduce relations of domination and subordination, deployed to exercise control over stigmatised groups and build consent among wider publics (Jensen & Tyler 2015; Tyler 2013).

Building on Wacquant and Tyler, and numerous others, I emphasise the significance of the production of territory to territorial stigmatisation – a statement that would be tautological were it not for the surprising inattention to territory in the literature to date. I argue that the politico-institutional production of territory involves material practices of constructing concentrations of devalued people and practices, for territorially-specific governance and intervention (Brenner & Elden 2009). Simultaneously, these practices of construction are obscured through representations of territory – discursive, cartographic, statistical, etcetera – which render it pre-given and inherently pathological, as opposed to socio-politically constructed. The production of territory and the ‘territory effect’ (Brenner & Elden 2009) therefore procure consent and exercise control by obscuring the role played by the restructuring of capital and the state in creating poverty, disadvantage, marginality, and so on; instead of symptoms of structural inequality and violence, these are represented as innate problems of territory.

Territory, I argue, can also help illuminate resistance and contestation. As Tyler (2018) stresses, stigma has long been resisted from below, and despite scant attention to it from Wacquant this is also true of territorial stigma. Drawing on Tyler’s (2013, 2015) concept of classificatory struggles, a nascent literature on resistance to territorial stigma (e.g. Arthurson et al. 2014; Garbin & Millington 2012; Jensen & Christensen 2012; Kirkness 2014; Queirós & Pereira 2018), and a range of writings on territory ‘from below’ (e.g. Clare et al. 2018; Halvorsen 2015, 2018; Ince 2012; Raffestin 2012; Schwarz & Streule 2016; Zibechi 2012), I develop the term ‘territorial struggles’ to describe the everyday and organised ways in which inhabitants appropriate space both materially and symbolically, contradicting and often explicitly contesting territorial stigmatisation and its classifying and hierarchising rationalities. Redfern-Waterloo has a long history of such struggles, and the redevelopment of the Waterloo estate invigorated further struggles that sought to either prevent the redevelopment altogether or to change its conditions and procedures, as well as to challenge territorial stigma more widely and resist its internalisation among communities subject to it.

This dissertation contains a further eight chapters. In the next chapter I critically review the literature on territorial stigmatisation, outlining how scholars have conceptualised its production, its functions and effects, and practices of resistance and contestation. Drawing on scholarship from political geography, I argue for conceptualising the production of and resistance to territorial stigma vis-à-vis the production of territory. On the one hand, as scholars such as Stuart Elden and Neil Brenner have explicated, territory can be understood as a politico-institutional space produced and controlled from above through material practices (physical boundaries as well as technologies controlling mobility) and modes of representation (cartography, statistics, language, etcetera) (Brenner 2004; Brenner & Elden 2009; Elden 2013; see also Antonsich 2009; Branch 2017; Sack 1986). These representations, through which stigma is circulated, naturalise the socio-political construction of territory and obfuscate structural regimes of socio-spatial inequality and injustice – what Brenner & Elden (2009) term the ‘territory effect’. On the other hand, an adjacent conceptualisation of territory can assist with understanding how territorial stigmatisation is resisted ‘from below’. Inhabitants of stigmatised territories materially and symbolically appropriate space through organised strategies and everyday practices, contesting and resisting dominant practices and representations from above (Clare et al. 2018; Halvorsen 2018; Raffestin 2012; Schwarz & Streule 2016). These territories from below are thus enfolded and entangled with territories from above (Haesbaert 2013; Halvorsen 2018). As such, drawing on Tyler’s concept of classificatory struggles, I have used the term ‘territorial struggles’ to describe struggles over and about the classification, ordering, and control of territorial space.

In Chapter 3 I outline my methodological considerations and the specific methods I used to investigate territorial stigmatisation and territorial struggles over the Waterloo estate. Specifically, I discuss how I attempted to extend Wacquant’s (2009b) reflexive ethnography and Bourdieu’s ethics of ‘non-violent communication’ (Bourdieu 1999c) by way of a scholar-activist ethic of situated solidarities. This was my response to research fatigue among communities in Redfern-Waterloo and a concern over the perpetuation of symbolic violence through more detached approaches. However, this was not a perfect approach, and I discuss some of challenges and dilemmas I faced. Furthermore, I discuss my approach to discourse analysis, which complimented my ethnographic research. I approached Foucauldian-informed discourse analysis from a Bourdieusian sociological perspective by examining ‘discourse in context’ and various actors’ access to discourse (through channelling modes of capital into symbolic capital) within ‘symbolic struggles’ (Bourdieu 1989; van Dijk 1993). My discourse analysis encompassed a

range of material, taking account of the dominant discourses and counter-discourses that shaped social practices relating to the Waterloo estate.

In Chapter 4 I contextualise the stigmatisation of public housing generally and of estates in particular within a history and historical geography of Australian housing assistance. The stigmatisation of public housing constitutes part of a wider political economy of (de)valuation of particular tenure relations (Tyler 2018): I argue that the stigmatisation of public housing is produced relationally alongside the valorisation of home ownership through both policy and discourse. This valorisation, I contend, is rooted in settler colonialism: home ownership invests its subjects in the structure of settler colonialism and white possession – defined in the contemporary by “claiming, regulating and protecting land” through real estate (Rogers 2017: 4) – and enrolls them into settler colonial ideologies and myths, such as Australian egalitarianism and *terra nullius* (Veracini 2011). The consequences of this, I explain, have been the numeric marginality and subsequent marginalisation and stigmatisation of public housing. This did not begin but rather intensified with neoliberalisation. Per Wacquant (2009a), I take neoliberalism to involve economic deregulation and the extension of market mechanisms; the circulation of the cultural trope of individual responsibility; welfare state retraction and devolution; and punitive regulation and surveillance to uphold individual responsibility and ‘economic success’. Housing, I argue, is one field in which Wacquant’s neoliberal ‘centaur state’ has become apparent: it is increasingly liberal and lucrative for those atop the social hierarchy and increasingly punitive for those at the bottom, including public housing tenants. Territorial stigmatisation is both intensified by and deployed to perpetuate this neoliberalised settler colonialism (Tomiak 2017).

In Chapter 5 I dissect how stigma and territorial stigma are reproduced in discourse on public housing and how they function as governmental rationalities and technologies of consent and control. Firstly, I argue, stigmatisation is articulated through the character trope of the ‘taxpayer’, to whom tenants are constructed as ‘responsible’ or ‘accountable’. Thus, ‘undeserving’ tenants are undeserving their ‘taxpayer subsidy’. Furthermore, this subsidy is techno-discursively constructed in such a way that vastly exaggerates the actual cost, in monetary terms, of providing public housing. The so-called subsidy is constructed as the opportunity cost of public housing, or the gap between rental revenues and market rents or values; effectively an estimate of the rent gap (Smith 1989), it is higher for tenants living in areas of high real estate value and in periods of market revalorisation generally. This techno-discursive construction means that the stigma of subsidy is higher for tenants in gentrifying neighbourhoods, like Redfern-Waterloo. Secondly, I argue, ‘undeserving’ tenants are further constructed in relation to the ‘deserving’ tenant and equally ‘deserving’ applicant. ‘Undeserving’ tenants are represented as responsible for a range of

public housing problems, including the long waiting list for ‘deserving’ applicants and the poor amenity experienced by ‘deserving’ tenants. The stigmatisation of tenants as ‘undeserving’ therefore obfuscates the structural and institutional causes of housing problems and has been deployed to legitimate the introduction of a range of market-like practices and logics as well as punitive and panoptic ones.

In addition to the stigmatisation of tenants, I outline a more explicitly *territorial* stigmatisation evident in discourses on the concentrated disadvantage, built environments, and state management of public housing estates. Here, the politico-institutional practices that comprise estates are pathologised rather than tenants per se. Territorial stigmatisation similarly obfuscates structural and systemic causes of housing problems, but by deflecting attention and blame onto territory. Discourse on public housing is therefore characterised by a double-obfuscation of the structural and institutional causes of socio-spatial inequality and injustice, and a double-legitimation of neoliberal interventions including punitive reforms to tenancy management, greater surveillance of tenants, evictions, privatisation, and redevelopment. This public housing common sense or doxa (Wacquant 2004) renders certain ‘solutions’ necessary and reasonable and others inconceivable: it forecloses solutions to concentrated disadvantage, poor-quality built environments, and inferior state management practices involving the extension of state social support, and instead brings forth the deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation of these pathologised territories.

In Chapter 6 I explicate how the stigmatisation of tenants and territorial stigmatisation of estates were expressed in relation to the Waterloo estate and Redfern-Waterloo more broadly. The redevelopment of the Waterloo estate revisited past plans from earlier in the decade, which were part of a project of state-led gentrification. The NSW Government created the Redfern-Waterloo Authority (RWA) after the death of an Aboriginal teenage boy during a police pursuit, and the subsequent ‘riots’ and their racist condemnation that followed. State-led gentrification in this context was a racialised, revanchist project of reimagining and rearranging who the neighbourhood was for in line with long-standing settler colonial urban imaginaries (Addie & Fraser 2019; Blatman-Thomas & Porter 2019; Hugill 2017; Tomiak 2017). The work of the RWA widened the rent gap for public housing in the area but also articulated a reputational gap (Kallin 2017) between the neighbourhood’s stigmatised present and an imaginary of its prodigiously revalorised future, describing Redfern-Waterloo’s ‘potential’ for not only local market revalorisation but for metropolitan-wide economic benefits. The RWA’s widening of the rent gap and reputational gap, I explain, eventually led to the decision to build a Waterloo Metro station: the station would generate further market revalorisation to enable the realisation of this

‘potential’, in the form of estate redevelopment, at no cost to the NSW Government. Territorial stigmatisation is purportedly resolved through the project’s reterritorialisation of the Waterloo estate: its redevelopment involves reconfiguring the politico-institutional practices that constitute the estate and thereby transforming its social, physical, and institutional composition. In other words, it involves demolition, deconcentration, and devolution: replacing concentrated disadvantage with social mix, demolishing a pathological built environment, and devolving tenancy management to Community Housing Providers (CHPs). Thus, I argue, the ‘solution’ to territorial stigmatisation that is enacted through the estate redevelopment is yet further neoliberalisation, or *reterritorialised* neoliberalism.

As I describe in Chapter 7 and Chapter 8, inhabitants of Redfern-Waterloo contested territorial stigma and resisted this reterritorialisation. In Chapter 7 I unpack the everyday territorial struggles of tenants and community workers in Redfern-Waterloo: their everyday social practices and relations that contradicted territorial stigma and helped them resist its internalisation through self-inscription, lateral denigration, or mutual distancing (Wacquant et al. 2014). These everyday practices and relations constituted inhabitants’ lived territory, appropriating space from below through diverse socio-spatial networks. There was a vast gap between this territory from below and the territory of territorial stigmatisation (Garbin & Millington 2012), and this gap was brought into sharper relief by the redevelopment, which enhanced intra-community engagement and place-attachment. Tenants and community workers described, and I myself observed, the exceptional conviviality and sociability, diversity, acceptance and care, and independence that they experienced living in Redfern-Waterloo. Oftentimes they would articulate these practices and relations in explicit contradistinction to territorial stigma: for instance, they appropriated the discourse on social mix to describe the extant diversity of the estate and neighbourhood. Tenants thus articulated an awareness of their stigmatisation without internalising it as such (Jensen & Christensen 2012); territorial stigma shaped their self-descriptions and their accounts of everyday life but as a point *against* which to articulate them. Furthermore, tenants’ mobility, and thus the spatiality of their everyday practices and relations, contradicted representations of the estate as isolated and isolating. In other words, territory from below did not cohere with the boundaries of territory from above: tenants’ lived territory intersected with and extended beyond the estate in numerous ways.

Tenants and community workers further resisted the internalisation of stigma and contradicted the representation of tenants as incapable and undeserving in their criticisms of both the practices and procedures of the redevelopment process and its fundamental objectives. In Chapter 8 I describe the various efforts to organise tenant contestation and resistance, what I

term organised territorial struggles. An array of organisations and groups were involved in material and symbolic territorial struggles over the Waterloo estate, constituting a networked counter-public (Uitermark & Nicholls 2014; Fraser 1990; Warner 2002). Several scholars have written of a tension between counter-representations contesting ‘public perception’ and counter-public address for the development or consolidation of shared political identities and demands on the other (Fraser 1990; see also Negt & Kluge 1993; Iveson 2008). Both, I argue, are important strategies for contesting territorial stigmatisation and its reification through interventions like an estate redevelopment, and the Waterloo case demonstrates that the multiplication of symbolic struggles allows for this tension to be resolved to some extent. However, struggles in and over the Waterloo were relatively unsuccessful. One reason for this, I argue, was that territorial stigma functions to territorially encapsulate symbolic struggles (Uitermark & Nicholls 2014), encouraging territorially-localised counter-representations that can reaffirm territorial stigma whilst also contesting it (Garbin & Millington 2012). I argue that symbolic struggles must be situated within a wider critique the political economy of territorial stigma and a counter-discourse that articulates alternative social, political and economic relations. Furthermore, symbolic struggles alone are necessary but insufficient for ‘destigmatisation’: material territorial struggles that redistribute power and capital are also required. However, resourcing these struggles is extremely challenging, particularly in the context of inhabitants’ limited economic, social, and symbolic capital. Struggles in Waterloo turned to the state for economic and symbolic capital, leading to their territorial encapsulation and temporal delimitation (Uitermark & Nicholls 2014): these relationships with the state contained horizons of possibility and otherwise frustrated resistance.

The state’s complicity in territorial stigmatisation makes it generally hostile to resistance. Yet, as Wacquant (2009a) and Bourdieu (1999b) explain, the state is not monolithic but fractious and contested. Neoliberalisation has entailed the inculcation of the welfare bureaucracy into punitive and panoptic rationalities (Wacquant 2009a), making conventional appeals to the welfare state potentially counter-productive to territorial struggles. However, this is not true of all actors and agencies of the state; cautious, critical, and creative engagements with the state might still be pursued to resource resistance. In the concluding chapter I recapitulate my core arguments and contributions and discuss some possible directions for and approaches to future scholarship, arguing that it should continue to enhance its intellectual and ethico-political involvement in territorial struggles. In that spirit I outline some considerations for resistance to territorial stigmatisation from both a theoretical and normatively political perspective. In the context of public housing in Australia, ‘destigmatisation’ is an enormous task. However, public

housing can and should be a powerful component of any program addressing poverty and inequality, the climate crisis, and Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination. If this is recognised and realised, then destigmatisation may one day occur.

## Chapter 2

### Interrogating territorial stigmatisation: production, contestation, and the significance of territory

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Scholars have investigated stigmatised places for decades; urban research has long been drawn to places with noxious reputations (Crookes 2017). Often, however, stigma itself has not been critically interrogated. Writing about British social housing estates, Annette Hastings (2004: 239) argued that their stigmatisation:

is often presented in an unmediated, uncontested way. This is not to argue that the views of ordinary people have no value, but we might still expect a critical analysis of the common sense perspective in those studies which foreground it. Arguably, as an inadvertent consequence of those commonly held views, a social pathological explanation for stigma is to the fore in the literature.

Hastings gestured towards the complicity of researchers, who reproduce stigma by failing to engage with the political-economic and socio-cultural systems of its production – a critique which I extend in the next chapter. Hastings’ comments preceded, by just a few years, Loïc Wacquant’s work on what he called *territorial stigmatisation* (Wacquant 2007, 2008). Territorial stigmatisation, Wacquant observed, is a “new and distinctive phenomenon” that emerged through late-20<sup>th</sup> century processes of neoliberalisation in the Global North (Wacquant et al. 2014: 1273). This ‘neighbourhood taint’ or ‘blemish of place’ corresponds to what Wacquant called the rise of *advanced marginality*, with social destitution, ethnoracial division, and public violence “concentrat[ing] in isolated and bounded territories increasingly perceived by both outsiders and insiders as social purgatories, leprous badlands at the heart of the postindustrial metropolis where only the refuse of society would accept to dwell” (Wacquant 2007: 67; Wacquant 1996, 2008). Such places, Wacquant and colleagues have explicated, are (i) partially autonomised from poverty, ethnicity, physical condition, immorality and criminality; (ii) nationalised and democratised as “synonyms for social hell”; (iii) represented as “vortexes and vectors of social disintegration”; (iv) racialized through “selective accentuation or fictive projection”; and (v) subjected to “overwhelmingly stern corrective reactions” (Wacquant et al. 2014: 1273-1274).

Wacquant’s work on territorial stigmatisation and advanced marginality has had an enormous influence on the disciplines and subdisciplines of urban studies (see, for example,

commentaries and symposia in *City* [11]3, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 33[3], *Urban Geography* 32[2] and *Urban Studies* 53[6]). The study of the stigmatisation of places is now, by and large, the study of territorial stigmatisation. The concept has travelled far and wide from the Chicago and Paris of Wacquant's work, throughout the Global North and, increasingly, the Global South. Along its travels it has been critiqued, retrofitted, and reconceptualised. Several scholars have cautioned against universalising the precise contours of the concept articulated by Wacquant and have in particular drawn attention to various efforts to contest and resist territorial stigmatisation (Garbin & Millington 2014; Jensen & Christensen 2012). On stigma broadly, Imogen Tyler (2018) has written of the need to reconceptualise it as a political economy of (de)valuation and governmental technology of dehumanisation that has long been resisted from below – through 'classificatory struggles', over and against classification and hierarchisation (Tyler, 2013, 2015). Furthermore, I infer from the literature that the 'territorial' is an important feature of the production of stigma as well as a stage for struggles against it; however, few have sought to clarify the meaning and significance of this adjective. In this chapter I heed the call from Tyler and others to attend to resistance and articulate why the 'territorial' adjective matters.

In the remainder of this chapter I review the literature on territorial stigmatisation with respect to its production, purpose, and resistance, and the relevance of the territorial. In the first section I discuss some of the spatial concentrations of stigma that scholars have commonly discussed, in particular social housing estates, racialised ghettos, and camps. I argue here and in later chapters that while the spatial concentration, isolation and boundedness that Wacquant and others speak of often appear as pre-given or innate, they are in fact actively, socio-politically constructed through both material practices and representations. Spatial concentrations are represented as problematic or pathological, juxtaposed with the surrounding urban norms and purported to be linked causally to material conditions of disadvantage and deprivation. Thus, in the next section I discuss territorial stigmatisation's ability to misrepresent deprivation, disadvantage and marginality by obfuscating structural and systemic causes of inequality and injustice, and to thereby legitimate the reproduction or intensification of these conditions. In the third section I explicate a concept of territory as space appropriated from above, for domination and control, through politico-institutional practices and representations. It is through these territorial practices and representations that concentration and isolation are materially and symbolically constructed, and through which obfuscation and legitimation are achieved. I argue, following Tyler (2013, 2018), that territorial stigmatisation, is at a political economy of (de)valuation and a governmental technology for the reproduction and naturalisation of relations therein, that works via the production of territory. Yet in this section I also outline how a parallel

concept of territory can be drawn on to conceptualise resistance to territorial stigmatisation, for territory is also that which is appropriated from below. As I outline in the penultimate section, *territorial struggles* take place through organised and everyday, and material and symbolic, appropriations of space against territorial stigmatisation.

## **2.1 Spatial concentrations of stigma: estates, ghettos, camps and beyond**

Wacquant's conceptualisation of territorial stigmatisation combines Erving Goffman's interactionist theory of stigma with Pierre Bourdieu's theory of symbolic power. From Goffman (1963), stigma is understood as a 'spoiled identity' in relation to the societal 'normal'. A 'stigma symbol', Goffman writes, conveys certain information that discredits the possessor, "breaking up what would otherwise be a coherent overall picture, with consequent reduction in our valuation of the individual" (ibid.: 44). Significantly, Goffman contends that stigma is not static or fixed but relational, emerging from interactions with 'normals' (ibid.). Within such interactions, the stigmatised are seen to pursue strategies of 'passing' – including 'information control' and 'tension management' – if or when it is possible for them to do so (ibid.). Goffman argues that it is through such interactions that blemishes of the body and character, and tribal stigma, are produced; Wacquant adds 'place' to this list.

Among the critiques of Goffman's theory of stigma, the most significant is that his 'interaction order' is a depoliticised construct which "excludes questions of how social relations are structured through power" (Tyler 2018: 750). As with many other scholars of stigma, Wacquant must therefore "read power back into Goffman" (ibid.: 751). He and subsequent scholars of territorial stigmatisation have focused on institutional mechanisms of relegation and stigmatisation rather than interactions between individuals. Drawing on Bourdieu (1991), Wacquant sees in stigma the operation of symbolic power – the power of

constituting the given through utterances, of making people see and believe, of confirming or transforming the vision of the world itself and, thereby, action on the world and thus the world itself, an almost mystical power which enables one to obtain the equivalent of what is obtained through force (whether physical or economic), by virtue of the specific effect of mobilization (Bourdieu, 1991: 170).

Symbolic power enables dominant classes and groups to "[impose] the definition of the social world that is best suited to their interests" (ibid.: 167) by expending their symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1989; see also Skeggs 2003). Its "form par excellence" is the making of groups, most successful when founded in the 'real' affinities of agents being grouped together (Bourdieu 1989: 23). Thus, territorial stigmatisation can be understood to involve socio-spatial group making or

category constructions that are bound up in “multilevel structural processes whereby persons are selected, thrust, and maintained in marginal locations” (Wacquant 2015: 247). Territorial stigmatisation, Wacquant argues, has thus been central to the production of a neoliberal regime of advanced marginality in the Global North, characterised by the intensified spatial concentration of social destitution, ethnoracial division, and public violence stemming from the fragmentation of wage labour, the retreat of the welfare state, and its replacement ‘prisonfare’ system of punitive governance of poverty and marginality (Wacquant 2007, 2008, 2009). Importantly, Wacquant (2008: 239) also remarks that territorial stigmatisation needn’t necessarily represent ‘real’ conditions, but that

whether or not areas are in fact dilapidated and dangerous, and their populations composed essentially of poor people, minorities and foreigners, matters little in the end: when it becomes widely shared and diffused, the prejudicial belief that they are suffices to set off socially noxious consequences.

As I outline in the next section, territorial stigmatisation misrepresents marginality, obfuscates structural dynamics of inequality and injustice, and legitimates interventions that further entrench them. It is, in short, a process of ‘consequential categorisation’ (Wacquant & Akçaoğlu 2017), produced and activated for particular purposes or toward particular ends. In the present section I argue that this is achieved, in part, through the ways in which spatial concentrations of marginalised, deprived, and otherwise problematised social groups are socio-politically constructed. With territorial stigmatisation, poverty, marginality and deprivation are blamed on the impoverished, marginalised, and deprived themselves *and* on their spatial concentration. Yet these spatial concentrations are not pre-given or innate but are constituted materially and symbolically through both physical practices (through housing markets or social housing allocations, for example) and representations that portray the outcomes of these practices in particular ways. Territorial stigmatisation thus delimits, highlights and pathologises particular axes of socio-spatial difference while simultaneously masking over other axes of difference. Furthermore, as I discuss in concluding this section, territorial stigmatisation is relational in that the construction of spatial concentration requires a constitutive outside. Goffman’s key contention therefore remains relevant: stigmatised territories are juxtaposed with the ‘normal’ socio-spatial order that they are purported to be separate and isolated from, and this separateness or isolation is represented as the cause of inferior social and physical conditions.

If the existing literature is any indication, some of the most stigmatised places in the Global North are social housing estates. The stigmatisation of estates is typically situated within

the context of the ‘residualisation’ of public and social housing, a process whereby the stock of public and social housing has been both drastically reduced and increasingly targeted towards the poorest and most precarious individuals and households (a process which I outline, in the Australian context, in Chapter 4). Residualisation and concomitant underinvestment in maintenance and administration have steadily transformed social housing into a ‘tenure of last resort’, particularly in the UK, US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand (see, for example, Boughton 2018; Goetz 2013; Hackworth 2009; Murphy & Kearns 1994; Troy 2012). The residualisation of social housing has had the effect of concentrating within remaining estates many of society’s disadvantaged, marginalised, and oppressed, including ethnic and racial minorities, recent migrants, people with disabilities, people with physical or mental illness (including addiction), and the recently incarcerated. As such, some analyses present territorial stigmatisation as a somewhat straightforward and inevitable outcome of the spatial concentration of stigmatised people within social housing (e.g. Arthurson 2013; Birdsall-Jones 2012; De Decker & Pannecoucke 2004; Dean & Hastings 2000; McKenzie 2012; Pereira & Queirós 2014; Schultz Larsen 2014; Wassenberg 2004a, 2004b).

There are, however, more critical accounts of the stigmatisation of estates that explicate discursive processes through which estates and their tenants are constructed as exceptional and exceptionally problematic (e.g. Arthurson et al. 2014; Arthurson & Jacobs 2009; Crookes 2017; Cuny 2018; Devereaux et al. 2011, 2012; Hancock & Mooney, 2013; Hastings & Dean, 2003; Jacobs & Flanagan 2013; Kallin & Slater, 2014; Kearns et al. 2013; Slater 2018). Arthurson & Jacobs (2009), for instance, draw on Levitas (2005) to categorise representations of ‘housing problems’, observing that ‘moral underclass discourses’ and ‘social integrationist discourses’ dominate policy problem constructions (see also Arthurson 2004; Hastings 2004; Jacobs et al. 2011; Watt & Jacobs 2000). The former portrays individual deficits as the cause of social problems while the latter depicts tenants as socially isolated and economically disconnected. Within both discourses, the spatial concentration of the poor is said to exacerbate poverty and disadvantage, either by encouraging a range of socially pathological behaviours (criminality, immorality, incivility, irresponsibility, and so on) or by conditioning inhabitants’ aspirations and thereby causing them to self-exclude and self-limit (Arthurson & Jacobs 2009; August 2014). Paradoxically, such discourses depict concentrated social housing as a cause of disadvantage, rather than a part of the solution to it (Jacobs et al. 2011; Slater 2018). For instance, Hancock & Mooney (2013) describe how the ‘Broken Society’ discourse in the UK pathologises the poor by highlighting estates in portrayals of welfare recipients as privileged and undeserving compared to ‘hardworking taxpayers’ (see also Slater 2014). According to this discourse, fecklessness and

dependence are encouraged by ‘estate cultures’, which develop due to spatial concentration (Hancock & Mooney 2013; see also Cupers 2017). Similarly, Slater (2018: 882, emphasis added) unpacks the ‘sink estate’ label in the UK, revealing its use to “describe an area of council housing where the behaviour of tenants is, first, under intense moral condemnation, and second, *both cause and symptom* of poor housing conditions and neighbourhood malaise”.

As August (2014) explains, the notion of a ‘poverty pathogen’ has been a persistent one in social scientific, bureaucratic, and popular discourses. The idea that the spatial concentration of the poor enhances and entrenches their deprivation by encouraging deviant behaviours and norms is an epistemological foundation shared by concepts including the ‘underclass’ (e.g. Murray 1999; critiqued by Wacquant 2008), incivilities (e.g. LaGrange et al. 1992; Ross et al. 2001; cf. Sampson 2018), and ‘neighbourhood effects’ (e.g. Bauder 2002, Overman 2002; critiqued by Slater 2013). These concepts have been central to the production of territorial stigmatisation, through the knowledge they produce and their influence on policy regimes and interventions. As Wacquant (2008: 8) remarks, “under cover of describing marginality [they] contribute to moulding it by organizing its collective perception and political treatment”. This same criticism could be levelled at housing research that classifies and analyses populations according to tenure classes without examining how these classes have been socially, politically, and economically configured over time, and without mention of their internal heterogeneity. While there are of course meaningful analytical distinctions between tenure classes, housing studies can oftentimes encourage a deterministic or a priori view of social housing estates and tenants as physically and socially disconnected from the economy, society, and city. This is evident in academic and policy discourses of ‘concentrated disadvantage’ and ‘social mix’ (Darcy 2007, 2010; Darcy & Gwyther 2013), which render estates as socio-spatial forms that are inherently and pathologically separate and isolated from their surrounding area (a representation which I return to in Chapter 5).

In addition to these social scientific and policy discourses, the distinctive design features of estates (the result of innovative, at times experimental approaches to the challenge of mass provision under austere standards) have been subject to aesthetic critiques (Arthurson & Darcy 2015; Brattbackk & Hansen 2004; Cuny 2018; Kirkness 2014; McKenzie 2012; Shildrick 2018). Arthurson (2004), for instance, observed how the former public housing estate in Villawood, Sydney, was stigmatised not only for being poor but for being ‘ugly’. Elsewhere, as Dean & Hastings (2000), Kirkness (2014), and Wassenberg (2004b) have separately noted, the visibility of high-rise estates is read as a visual cue to the purported social ills concentrated therein. Such aesthetic judgements are made in relation to the norms and expectations of the wider socio-

spatial setting. The Villawood estate that Arthurson (2004) describes is seen as ‘unusual’, out of place, incongruous – a disruption of the otherwise coherent image of the surrounding area.

The concentration of racialized groups is another dimension to the problematisation of estates. Given the racialisation of poverty and oppression, many estates disproportionately house minority ethnic groups. This has been fundamental to the territorial stigmatisation of European estates inhabited by post-colonial migrants (e.g. Brattbakk & Hansen 2004; De Decker & Pannecoucke 2004; Kearns et al. 2013; Kirkness 2014; Sakizlioglu & Uitermark 2014; Slater & Anderson 2012; Wacquant 2008) and estates in settler colonial societies with large migrant populations (e.g. August 2014; Kipfer & Petrunia 2009; Purdy 2003). Furthermore, the stigmatisation of public housing in the US is entangled with and intensified by the presence of African American communities (Blokland 2008; Crump 2002; Goetz 2000, 2013; Keene & Padilla 2010), and in Australia the stigmatisation of some estates is intimately connected to Aboriginal communities (Anderson 2000; Birdsall-Jones 2012; Shaw 2000, 2011). Racialised estates have in several cases been represented as ‘ghettos’ (Birdsall-Jones 2012; Blokland 2008, 2019; Hancock & Mooney 2013; Shaw 2011; Slater & Anderson 2012; Wacquant 2008) to signify isolation and confinement (Wacquant 2019).

Of course, this ‘conjugation’ (Wacquant 2008) of the stigma of race and the stigma of territory within the so-called ghetto is not limited to public and social housing. As Wacquant (2008) outlined, the withdrawal of the welfare state alongside housing and labour market dynamics have compelled the congregation of many migrants and ethnoracial minorities, as well as other stigmatised groups, within neighbourhoods characterised by bottom-market private housing (see also Haferburg & Huchzemeyer 2017; Horgan 2018; Liu & Blomley 2013; Lloyd & Bonds 2018; Rhodes 2012; Slater 2004; Sommers 1998). Neighbourhoods labelled ghettos are not always and everywhere homogenous but are often instead racialised through “selective accentuation or fictive projection” (Wacquant et al 2014: 1274). In such cases, a particular axis of social difference (race, ethnicity, religion, migrancy, citizenship status, etcetera) is superordinated, fixed in space, and ascribed an explanatory power – thus effecting spatial concentration. For instance, Cohen (2013) describes how the territorial stigmatisation of Bat Yam, Tel Aviv, was undergirded by the racialised differentiation of Mizrahim from Ashkenazim. Eksner (2013) reveals how the diverse populations of Neukölln and Kreuzberg, Berlin, are homogenised through territorial stigmatisation: their inhabitation by Turkish, North African, and Middle Eastern migrants led to their construction as a ‘ghettos’ of ‘Muslim populations’ who were unable to ‘integrate’. Likewise, Jensen & Christensen (2012) describe how multicultural Aalborg East, Denmark, was portrayed as an ‘immigrant area’ due to a relatively large, but nonetheless

minority, migrant population. Similarly, Slater & Anderson (2012) describe how stigmatising discourses about St Paul's, Bristol, fixated on the Black population and in particular the Black Caribbean presence, which was disproportionately numerically represented but nonetheless a minority even locally. In Tarlabası, Istanbul, write Sakizlioglu & Uitermark (2014), framings of the neighbourhood as 'uncivilised' grouped together a diverse population of Roma, Kurds, African migrants, sex workers, and so on. The label 'uncivilised' or 'disorderly' presupposes a surrounding civility and order that the neighbourhood contradicts, though of course such an order varies between different geographic and temporal settings (compare, for example, Cohen 2013; Brattback & Hansen 2004; De Decker & Pannecoucke 2004; Thörn & Holgersson 2017; Zhang 2017). Thus, territorial stigmatisation does not derive from an essential character of a place but through its relation to its surrounding context. Goffman's key contribution to a theory of stigma – the contention that stigma is relational, produced through interactions – therefore continues to be relevant to a theory of territorial stigmatisation.

The conjugation of racial and territorial stigmatisation is further evinced in scholarship on Roma, Gypsy, and Traveller communities. In Europe, Roma have been constructed as an unassimilable social body exterior to European civility (Creţan & Powell 2018; Creţan & O'Brien 2019; Maestri 2017, 2019; Picker 2016). Similarly, in the UK, as Tyler (2013) argues, Traveller and Gypsy groups are represented as 'beyond' integration, "imagined as abhorrently unmodern anti-citizens who are antithetical to the self-scripting, flexible, entrepreneurial and individualized notions of selfhood promoted in neoliberal Britain" (Tyler 2013: 133). Practices of occupation, inhabitation and dwelling are fundamental to this representation: the camps which many Roma are confined to, whether through formal regulation or informal social control, are intensely territorially stigmatised (Clough Marinaro 2019; Maestri 2017; Picker 2016). These tightly connected communities, in semi-permanent dwellings without formal property title, present spatial concentrations that are incongruous and anathema to dominant socio-spatial orders. Thus, for Picker (2016), the stigmatisation of Roma is both tribal and territorial, and the two are mutually constitutive. The stigmatisation of the Roma, Traveller, or Gypsy body begets territorial stigmatisation, and the stigmatisation of the camp begets tribal stigma – for both inhabitants and, as Creţan & Powell (2018) have demonstrated, those living elsewhere.

As the examples outlined above demonstrate, spatial concentration is socio-politically constructed through both physical practices that impel or compel particular populations to inhabit particular places, as well as through racialising or otherwise essentialising representations which differentiate these concentrations from the wider socio-spatial order. In training focus upon a certain axis of socio-spatial difference, and pathologising it, such representations obscure

internal heterogeneity and difference. Yet territorial stigmatisation can also be produced where the co-presence of multiple racialized groups, or of racialized ‘others’ among ‘normals’, is represented as social or ethnic division and disharmony (Contreras 2016; Kearns et al. 2013; Rhodes 2012; Sullivan & Akhtar 2018). Contreras (2016), for instance, describes the case of Compton and South-Central Los Angeles, where populations have changed over time from majority Black to majority Latinx and where stigmatisation has therefore shifted from “Black lawlessness and violence” to ““Black and Brown” violence” (ibid.). Here it is the concentration of ‘division’ that is delimited and deemed pathological. Elsewhere, the concentration of problematised behaviours, practices and events – from ‘immoral’ consumption (Nédélec 2017; Sisson & Maginn 2018) to violent events (Holt & Wilkins 2015; Pohl 2017) – has undergirded territorial stigmatisation in a similar way.

Spatial concentration is of course a relational concept: it necessarily has a constitutive outside wherein the people, practices, or phenomena in question are not concentrated but supposed to be absent or evenly distributed. Goffman’s theory of stigma therefore remains relevant to the extent that territorial stigmatisation involves the delimitation and juxtaposition of problematic spatial concentrations from the ‘normal’ socio-spatial order. As I discuss in the next section, it is through the delimitation, categorisation, and representation of these spatial concentrations as separate and isolated that territorial stigmatisation functions to obfuscate structural and systemic causes of social problems. In other words, it enables the transformation of an existing ‘spatiality of problems’ into a series of bounded ‘problem spaces’ (Dikeç 2002), wherein social problems are purportedly caused and confined and their ‘solutions’ likewise to be located (Tissot 2018; van Eijk 2012).

## **2.2 What does stigma do? Misrepresentation, obfuscation and legitimation**

The production and purpose of territorial stigmatisation are difficult to disentangle; they are mutually constituted in the ‘consequential categorisation’ (Wacquant & Akçaoğlu 2017) of territorial stigmatisation. Broadly speaking, territorial stigmatisation is integral to the reproduction of relations of domination and subordination, and the production and extraction of value in capitalist societies (Lloyd & Bonds 2018; Tyler & Slater 2018; Tyler 2013; Wacquant 2008). As Tyler (2018: 753) explains, stigmatisation constitutes a ‘political economy of (de)valuation’, presenting profitable opportunities for various forms of enterprise, including eviction agencies, social impact bonds, and tabloid news media (Tyler 2013). It can also be deployed to gain political capital by providing, for instance, a shorthand (mis)representation of a problem which some new policy agenda or intervention purportedly solves. As Tyler and others

have demonstrated, territorial stigmatisation has thus been activated to obfuscate the structural causes and conditions of poverty and inequality, and to gain consent for dispossession, displacement, and other punitive interventions which further marginalise inhabitants while producing value for the owners and agents of capital (Tyler 2013; Wacquant 2008, 2015). In the remainder of this section I discuss this very aspect of territorial stigmatisation: its purposes within neoliberalism and neoliberal urbanism across various geographies.

For a number of scholars, stigmatisation represents a concerted strategy of misrepresentation and obfuscation of social and physical conditions, so that the culpability of the market and the state is hidden from view and the stigmatised themselves pathologised. Tyler & Slater (2018: 723) contend that stigma “veils over a whole host of more fundamental cultural, political and economic questions regarding the distribution of distress in society”. Slater (2014: 966), for example, describes how stigmatising discourses like ‘Broken Britain’ exploit public uncertainty and doubt by simplifying complex political-economic trajectories into behavioural explanations of ‘irresponsibility’, thereby “divert[ing] public attention away from the structural and institutional failures that lie behind poverty, and from the nature and extent of inequality” (see also Slater & Anderson 2012). Cognate with Slater, Hancock & Mooney (2013: 49) argue that discourses like ‘Broken Britain’ can “conceal the politics of poverty and its roots in class relations”.

Spatial concentration plays a key role in obfuscation, as its *territorial* stigmatisation misdiagnoses social deprivation and physical deterioration as self-induced by inherently problematic places and communities (Shildrick 2018). In other words, territorial stigmatisation represents the ‘spatiality of problems’ (i.e. the spatial distribution of poverty, unemployment, lower life expectancy, etcetera) as a phenomenon of ‘problem spaces’ (Dikeç 2002) and in so doing disguises structural and systemic causes of these social and physical conditions (Hancock & Mooney 2013). In Milwaukee, write Loyd & Bonds (2018: 899), the zip code 53206 “serves as a spatial fix anchoring discussions of two interrelated and sustained crises over racialized poverty and policing ... [fixing] these problems within an apparently discrete space, where, for some, the place and people are ‘lost causes’”. The delimitation and classification of such a ‘problem space’, they argue, dissolves historical and political economic explanations of poverty, segregation, and policing, and instead “reproduces longstanding racist discourses of Black crime, economic decline, and family dysfunction” (ibid. 899). Similarly, Slater & Anderson (2012) observe the racialisation of ‘decay’ obscuring the role of capital disinvestment in St Paul’s, Bristol, where physical deterioration of the built environment was attributed to the neighbourhood’s Black community within policy narratives of ‘ethnic segregation’ (see also August 2014; Cohen 2013;

Gray & Mooney 2011; Kipfer & Petrunia 2009; Thörn & Holgersson 2017). Blokland (2008) likewise noted that residents were blamed for blight during a community meeting for social housing tenants in an estate in Newhaven, Connecticut. Police in attendance highlighted the ‘disorderly’ physical environment and accused residents, *qua* ‘Broken Windows’, of thereby encouraging crime (*ibid.*). As Cupers (2017) has argued, discourses of defensible space and Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) have been central to the pathologisation of estates. The distinctive design features of modernist high-rises and Radburn estates in particular have been represented as criminogenic, and physically and socially isolating, as I explain in Chapter 5 (see also Arthurson & Darcy 2015; August 2014; Darcy 2013). Furthermore, Cupers (2017) argues, the emergence of social science and policy concepts of human territoriality led to further problematisation of public housing on grounds that it denied residents a sense of ‘ownership’ and therefore discouraged sociability and facilitated criminality and disorderliness.

Territorial stigmatisation has thus been analysed as an integral stage in the legitimisation of reform agendas and particular interventions. For Paton (2018: 921), territorial stigmatisation is a form of ‘soft power’ that is “central to moral and economic class projects”. This ‘soft power’ has been exercised by a range of actors within the state, including elected representatives and public servants (e.g. Kornberg 2016; Paton et al. 2016; Sakizlioglu & Uitermark 2014), as well as business people (e.g. Kudla & Courey 2019), think tanks (e.g. Slater 2014, 2016, 2018), journalists and commentators (e.g. Kearns et al. 2013; Liu & Blomley 2013; Sisson & Maginn 2018), and many others. Building ‘psychic distance’ (Jacobs et al. 2011) between the stigmatised and the ‘normal’ can achieve consent for “policies of removal, dispersal, or punitive containment” (Wacquant 2015: 245). Various neoliberal welfare reforms have thus been accompanied by stigmatising discourses that portray welfare recipients as feckless, fraudulent, and undeserving, and interventions that remake territories through their relocation and dispersal as therefore fair, just, and for the good of ‘deserving’ recipients (Gray & Mooney 2011; Jacobs et al. 2003; Liu & Blomley 2013; Slater 2014; Wacquant 2008, 2009). This deserts discourse variously stigmatises welfare beneficiaries and others who are seen to be unfairly profiting from state support (Fraser & Gordon 1994; Katz 2015). As I discuss in Chapter 5, the figure of the ‘undeserving’ is configured in relation to the ‘taxpayer’ on the one hand, and the ‘deserving poor’ on the other – greedily depending on the former and callously depriving the latter (Hancock & Mooney 2011). This discourse is territorialised through social housing, homelessness, informal housing, or low-end private rental accommodation (August 2016; Hancock & Mooney 2013; Jacobs et al. 2003; Peel 2000; Slater 2014).

While inhabitants may be portrayed as undeserving of assistance whatsoever, more often they are presented as undeserving the place they inhabit – as a ‘waste’ of land, preventing the attainment of ‘highest and best use’ (Christophers 2018; Rudolph & Kirkegaard 2018; Weber 2002). For example, public and social housing tenants in gentrifying neighbourhoods are represented as undeserving of, and out of place on, such coveted land (August 2014; Kudla & Courey 2018; Morris 2018). Low-income residents in sites designated for economically or symbolically important state projects – such as Glasgow’s Commonwealth Games (Gray & Mooney 2011; Paton et al. 2016; Paton 2018) or Shanghai’s World Expo (Zhang 2017) – have been subject to similar characterisations. Not dissimilarly, squatters and other informal inhabitants are routinely portrayed as ‘undeserving’ the land they occupy due to having no formal property rights and presenting a barrier to the realisation financial and political capital (Husseini de Araújo & Costa 2017; Sakizlioglu & Uitermark 2014; Tyler 2013; Zhang 2017). As Husseini de Araújo & Costa (2017) describe, residents of such places are often denigrated as ‘invaders’ who have selfishly and unjustly occupied a place to which they have no legitimate claim. These figures of the undeserving poor have been fundamental to the neoliberalisation of welfare regimes, providing a justificatory discourse for conditionality, punitive policies, ever-tighter eligibility constraints, and displacement (Wacquant 2009a).

In the post-2008 period of re-intensified property-led financial accumulation, particular attention has been paid to the role of territorial stigmatisation in legitimizing the dispossession and displacement that occurs through redevelopment and gentrification. Kirkness & Tijé-Dra (2017a: 253) surmise that the “speculative and evaluative practices of financial real estate actors can strongly re-enforce existing urban geographies of stigmatisation by turning negative reputations into aspects that can eventually lead to them generating profits in the future”. Or, as August (2014: 1319) more concisely puts it, territorial stigmatisation “builds public support for redevelopment and ‘primes’ [places] for reinvestment”. Consequently, territorial stigmatisation has been thoroughly examined in the context of social housing estate redevelopment (Arthurson 2004; August 2014; Kallin 2017; Kallin & Slater 2014; Kipfer & Petrunia 2009; Sakizlioglu & Uitermark 2014; Slater 2018) as well as other initiatives promoting gentrification through various state and market vehicles, in places with diverse tenure relations and social compositions (Crookes 2017; Gray & Mooney 2011; Horgan 2018; Kudla & Courey 2018; Paton 2018; Paton et al. 2016; Sakizlioglu & Uitermark 2014; Slater & Anderson 2012; Thörn & Holgersson 2017; Zhang 2017). Crookes (2017) demonstrates how a range of ‘urban policy scripts’ were deployed to legitimate the Housing Market Renewal (HMR) program in England. Through discursive, statistical, cartographic and photographic representations, the HMR rendered its sites obsolete or

derelict, or as ‘problem areas’ or ‘disaster zones’, and thus places *requiring* demolition and redevelopment (ibid.). Where territorial stigmatisation has centred on notions of ‘incivility’ and ‘disorder’, it has legitimated redevelopment as a force for order and civility (Gray & Mooney 2011; Sakizlioglu & Uitermark 2014; Sisson & Maginn 2018; Thörn & Holgersson 2017; Zhang 2017). Territorial stigmatisation thus functions as the “strategic armoury for gentrification” (Horgan 2018: 506): it is produced and intensified as a way of legitimating displacement and dispossession, and thus assisting with the assembly of land for new and more profitable forms of capital accumulation (Rudolph & Kirkegaard 2018).

Hamish Kallin provides a useful conceptualisation of the relationship between territorial stigmatisation and gentrification, arguing that stigmatisation functions not only as justification for gentrification but often as a necessary precondition (Kallin 2017; Kallin & Slater 2014). The combination of territorial stigmatisation and ‘revitalisation’ discourses creates a ‘reputational gap’: an *articulation* of the gap between potential and capitalised ground rent (Smith 1987). For Kallin (2017), the ‘potential ground rent’ of Neil Smith’s model is a hypothetical or imaginary value that must be legitimated through devalorisation of the land’s extant use, involving not only disinvestment and physical decline but the discursive work of representing and juxtaposing the present condition with an imaginary revalorised future. For Kallin, such is the power of territorial stigmatisation that, in constituting a reputational gap, it can propel state-led gentrification even where no market revalorisation has occurred (ibid.) – an important point which I return to in Chapter 6.

As Tyler (2018) argues, stigmatisation is not only deployed or exploited for gentrification and welfare retrenchment but creates further opportunities for capital accumulation across the multitude of sectors involved in the management and representation of marginality. Cultural production has received significant scholarly attention, particularly commercial news media. Media reports and commentary have often been mined for disparaging representations of people and places in the search for qualitative and quantitative evidence of territorial stigmatisation (Arthurson et al. 2014; Butler 2019; Butler et al. 2018; Christensen & Hansen 2018; Jensen & Christensen 2012; Devereaux et al. 2011, 2012; Kallin & Slater 2014; Kearns et al. 2013; Picker 2016). Jensen and Christensen (2012), for example, find that media discourses about Aalborg East have typically been either ‘unambiguously negative’, or ‘paradoxical’ in that positive news is framed as an exception to the norm, thereby reproducing territorial stigmatisation despite more ‘positive’ overtones (see also Dean & Hastings 2000; Devereaux et al. 2011). Many scholars have recognised that the commercial imperative of commercial or ‘mainstream’ media makes it prone to sensationalistic portrayals of people and places (Devereaux et al. 2011, 2012; Hastings 2004).

Adding to this critique, Jacobs et al. (2011: 13) contend that the ‘mainstream’ media is “embedded in the political/social nexus, and as such reflects the dominant power relationships that exist within society”. Adopting such an analysis of cultural production allows one to see that territorial stigmatisation is not simply cynically concocted and circulated to sell newspapers or TV series, or to attract audiences and thus advertising revenue, but reflects the sincerely held views of dominant classes and groups.

The observation from Jacobs and colleagues about media and cultural production hints at a more fundamental point about territorial stigmatisation: it is not created from thin air but is rather the product of relations of domination and subordination that emerge from struggles over the distribution of capital and the imposition of symbolic systems of classification (Bourdieu 1991). The resulting political economy of (de)valuation (Tyler 2018) appears as a kind of doxa or ‘common sense’, according to which the distribution of value and credibility appears innate (Bourdieu 1996). The material deprivation and symbolic discreditation of stigmatised territories is, per neoliberal doxa, natural and inevitable. Consequently, territorial stigmatisation is accepted and reproduced by many social actors who have no immediate strategic interest in it but for whom it appears self-evident. Deconstructing doxa, as Wacquant (2004) argues, requires careful, sustained critical attention as part of a larger project of resistance to territorial stigmatisation, as I discuss later in this chapter and in those that follow.

As I have discussed, there are both financially and politically profitable opportunities to exploit within the political economy of (de)valuation, via the active deployment of territorial stigmatisation (Kallin & Slater 2014; Tyler 2018). Thus, territorial stigmatisation is *also* a governmental rationality and technology for the reproduction and naturalisation of relations of domination and subordination (Tyler 2013; Wacquant 2006). More specifically, it has dual governmental functions as a technology of consent and a technology of control (Jensen & Tyler 2015), performed by an ensemble of institutions within and outside the state, including political representatives, bureaucrats, think tanks, social scientists, journalists and commentators, etcetera (Gordon 1991). Blokland (2008: 36) recounts an illustrative exchange: a building manager reminds tenants, “You’ve got to remember you’re living in public housing. You are being subsidized, you have to accept that when you live in a subsidized apartment you have to be able to live by the rules”. Thus, territorial stigmatisation shames and humiliates populations to manage their behaviour and helps legitimise both status quo inequalities and injustices and novel interventions that reproduce, entrench, or intensify them (Jensen & Tyler 2015).

Such is the pervasiveness of the doxa of territorial stigmatisation that it sometimes leads inhabitants of defamed places to self-inscribe or otherwise perpetuate stigma themselves. Thus, while not impossible, resistance to territorial stigmatisation is frustrated by its internalisation among those subject to it. In addition to self-inscription, or devaluation of one's self in accordance with stigma, Wacquant (2007, 2008) observes various strategies of disidentification, among which lateral denigration and mutual distancing are particularly notable. In deploying these coping strategies, residents deny their belonging to a stigmatised territory and divert stigmatisation away from themselves and onto a "faceless, demonized other" (Wacquant 2007: 68). Contreras's (2016) research in Compton and South-Central Los Angeles provides an instructive case. Here, residents were found to "deflect the territorial stigma not just to anyone, but to their weaker ethnic and gendered neighbors. Thus, some residents deflect blame onto Black residents, some to Latino immigrants, and others to certain ethnic women" (ibid. 2; see also Blokland 2008; Cuny 2018; Eksner 2013; Leaney 2019; Palmer et al. 2004; Verdouw & Flanagan 2019). Furthermore, territorial stigmatisation can be a force that "educates its dwellers to devalue themselves and reduce their demands" (Ruggiero 2007: 395). Sakizlioglu & Uitermark (2014), for instance, found that many public housing tenants in an Amsterdam estate had internalised stigma, feeling that they should be grateful and therefore not contest the redevelopment of their estate. Arthurson et al. (2014) also observed forms of self-limitation among public housing tenants in Sydney, regarding aspirations, behaviour, and geographical mobility (see also Arthurson 2010; Warr 2005). Wacquant (2008) argues that territorial stigmatisation is therefore concomitant with alienation and the 'dissolution of place', and that the loss of communal social ties and cultural familiarity embedded in place makes for an 'impossible community', "perpetually divided against themselves" (Wacquant 2008: 184; see also Bourdieu 1999a). Furthermore, according to Wacquant (2015: 254), the 'impossible community' is "deprived not just of the means of stable living but also of the means of producing its own representation".

However, these arguments regarding the internal effects of territorial stigma are not necessarily universal; many cases have been illuminated in which the inhabitants of stigmatised territories have contested territorial stigmatisation. As Tyler (2018) rightly points out, stigma has long been resisted from below, and in the penultimate section of this chapter I highlight several examples of struggles against territorial stigmatisation. Thus, in the next section I argue that the 'territorial' is crucial but overlooked in conceptualising both resistance to territorial stigmatisation and production and functions.

### **2.3 Whither territory?**

Paradoxically, territory and territoriality have received scant attention in the literature on territorial stigmatisation: ‘territorial’ is used, more-or-less, as a synonym for spatial or place-based (Slater 2017). Wacquant (2014, 2016) has clarified his understanding of space, following Bourdieu, as constituting symbolic, social and physical dimensions: put simply, symbolic power operates through symbolic space to structure and demarcate social space in the (re)production of domination and subordination, which are reified in physical space (see Bourdieu 1989, 1991). Territorial stigmatisation is one way in which symbolic power is deployed to order and hierarchise society through the delimitation of socio-spatial categories and boundaries (Wacquant 2010; see also Giddens 1985; Sack 1986). It might therefore be inferred that, by using the adjective ‘territorial’, Wacquant is gesturing toward recent geographic scholarship revisiting territory in recognition that, despite contemporary social science’s emphasis on networks, relations, and flows, “the lives of the majority of individuals are still today attached to a bounded politico-institutional space” (Antonsich 2009: 790) and that these boundaries “still have a role to play in the mobilization of emotions, racism, xenophobia, and, ultimately, violence” (Paasi 2012: 2303). As I discuss in this section, such work on territory can clarify both how territorial stigmatisation is produced through the socio-political construction of spatial concentration, and the obfuscation that it enables. Drawing on theories of territory as state space (Brenner 2004; Brenner & Elden 2009; Elden 2010, 2013a) and as politico-institutional space more broadly (Antonsich 2009; Branch 2017), I outline how territorial practises and representations construct spatial concentration, and how these are naturalised through the ‘territory effect’ (Brenner & Elden 2009).

Territory has been conceptualised as that which is appropriated from above through politico-institutional domination and control but also as that which is appropriated from below, for both active political resistance (Clare et al. 2018; Halvorsen 2015, 2018; Ince 2012; Schwarz & Streule 2016) and through everyday social relations (Raffestin 1984, 2012; Brighenti 2006, 2010). In this section I attempt to bring these conceptualisations together – recognising that territorial boundaries are not fixed, absolute and immutable but porous, processual, and mobilised for particular purposes (dell’Agnese 2013; Paasi 2009, 2012; Painter 2010), that multiple territories can exist in space in overlapping and entangled relation (Haesbaert 2004; Halvorsen 2018; Kärrholm 2007), and that not all boundaries are inherently or necessarily politically conservative (Clare et al. 2018; Halvorsen 2015, 2018; Ince 2012). As such, I argue that territory is also key to understanding resistance to territorial stigmatisation through what I term territorial struggles.

Territory has typically been apprehended in relation to sovereignty and the nation state (Elden 2013a). Stuart Elden, one of the most prominent contemporary writers on territory, insists that its emergence is intimately interwoven in relations between space and the state (Elden 2007; 2010; 2013a). However, rather than simply constituting that which lies within the borders of the nation-state, territory is for Elden (2013a) a composite of land, terrain, and power, enacted as a bundle of political technologies that measure land and control terrain (see also Elden 2010). As Brenner (2004) has demonstrated, such territory is not enacted uniformly across space but rather at multiple scales or in multiple layers: subnational territories are produced through decentralised and customised place-specific state interventions, beneath the levels of the nation-state and the supranational territories formed through multilateral institutions (ibid.; see also Novak 2011). Brenner and Elden together (2009) argue that subnational territories are crucial to the ‘State Mode of Production’ – Lefebvre’s (2009) theory explaining the increasing centrality of state institutions in the reproduction of capitalism. They elaborate that specific territories are selectively (re)organised by various state institutions to (re)shape political-economic life (Brenner & Elden 2009). These territories are made and remade in an ongoing process of deterritorialization and reterritorialisation that unfolds with the restructuring of capital and the state (Brenner 2004; see also Antonsich 2009).

Per Lefebvre’s (1991) theory of the production of space, territory is the product of (i) ‘territorial practices’ of physical, material boundary-making (fences, walls, etcetera, as well as more complex boundary infrastructures that enable and restrict movement); (ii) ‘representations of territory’ which render territorial practices cartographically, diagrammatically, statistically, etcetera; and (iii) ‘territories of representation’ lived everyday by inhabitants (Brenner and Elden, 2009). Crucially, the production of territory naturalises the state’s manifold spatial interventions through twin processes which Lefebvre (2009) termed ‘fetishism’ and ‘occultation’. Territorial practices are *represented* as “pregiven features of the physical landscape or purely technical dimensions of the built environment rather than as politically mediated motivations” (Brenner & Elden 2009: 373). In other words, representations of territory obscure practices of territory: the “weighing, calculating, measuring, surveying, managing, controlling and ordering” of land and terrain (Elden 2013b: 49) is obfuscated and naturalised by its representation through maps, figures, statistics, discourse and so on, in what Brenner & Elden (2009) term the ‘territory effect’ (see also Mitchell 1991; Painter 2010; Sack 1986). The territory effect is what naturalises the socio-political construction of spatial concentration and the structural causes of socio-spatial inequality and injustice. Territorial representations construct the grid of socio-spatial categories that comprise Bourdieu’s symbolic space, and it is through them that symbolic power is

exercised in the (re)production of common-sense or doxic understandings of the social order as natural or self-evident (Bourdieu 1989; Wacquant 2016).

Thus, as Rudolph & Kirkegaard (2018: 12) note, *territorial* stigmatisation involves “techniques for measuring and controlling land” upon which “legitimising narratives are anchored”. In other words, it involves practices of territory (physical boundary-making and control) and representations of territory (as both natural and pathological). For example, Uitermark et al. (2017) outline how urban policy in Rotterdam deployed technical and legal practices and statistical and discursive representations in the construction and management of exceptional territories of marginality, where new disadvantaged households were barred from living (see also Uitermark 2014; van Gent et al. 2017). They argue that statistics played an especially important role in *demonstrating* the need for exceptional measures, “serv[ing] to bring populations and territories into being and into view through demarcation and enumeration” (ibid.: 62). Similarly, Dikeç (2002) unpacks the construction of French *banlieues* as ‘objects of intervention’ through spatial designation, delimitation and representations of social problems. These interventions reconstitute the ‘spatiality of problems’ into ‘problem spaces’ within which both social problems and their solutions are purportedly contained (Tissot 2018). By fixing marginality and disadvantage to territory, the production of poverty and marginality through the restructuring of capital and the state is obfuscated, while interventions that at best relocate poverty and marginality are legitimated.

The production of territory, however, is not limited to the state but rather often involves networks of state and non-state actors (Painter 2010) – through, for example, property relations (Blomley 2016, 2019) or the spatial fixation of capitalist production (Cox 2013). Such networks appropriate a politico-institutional space that is more than state space (Antonsich 2009, 2011; Branch 2017). This conceptualisation of territory as politico-institutionally appropriated space is fairly consistent with Sack (1986: 19), for whom territory can be exercised by any “individual or group to affect, influence, or control people, phenomena, and relationships by delimiting and asserting control over a geographic area”. Territorialisation, Sack argues, fundamentally involves spatial classification, communication, and enforcement (ibid.). Not unlike Brenner & Elden (2009), Sack also argues that territory has a ‘reifying’ power that functions to displace attention away from the ‘controller’ and onto territory itself, making relationships impersonal, making territory appear as a neutral object to which particular characteristics can be assigned, and constructing it as ‘emptiable’ through deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation (Sack 1986). Thus, as Antonsich (2011) points out, Sack’s conceptualisation of territory, while not explicitly confined to the state, is not too distant from Elden’s and Brenner’s. We might therefore expand

territory to include the multitude of politico-institutional arrangements which appropriate space in the exercise of social domination and control: networks of state agencies, private corporations, think tanks, third sector organisations, and so on.

Conceptualising territory as a network of relations renders it open and contestable (Schwarz & Streule 2016: 1005) – the product of “dispersed sets of power relations that are mobilized for various purposes” (Paasi 2012: 2304). It is therefore not inherently politically conservative but able to be mobilised for radical and grassroots resistance and contestation as well (Clare et al. 2018; Halvorsen 2015, 2018; Ince 2012). Accordingly, several scholars have prised territory away from analyses of domination from above, some of them drawing on the work of Claude Raffestin (1980, 1984, 2012). For Raffestin, territory is the product of social relations rather than a technology for controlling them (Raffestin 2012; see also Murphy 2012). It emerges from an ‘ensemble’ of dynamic, plural, and power-laden social interactions which are created and sustained by labour (the combination of energy and information) and operationalised through mediators (material and immaterial instruments such as money) (Raffestin 2012). Drawing on Lefebvre’s (1991 [1974]; 2014 [1947]) theories of social space and everyday life, territory for Raffestin is a “power geography of the everyday” (Klauser 2012: 113) with dimensions of practice and representation (Raffestin 2012). As I discuss in the next section and further in Chapter 7, the territory of the everyday – that which is appropriated through everyday social relations – can contradict dominant and dominating representations of territory from above. Dominant representations of territory as separate and isolated, for example, are routinely contested by the everyday mobilities of inhabitants of stigmatised territories, whose social relations extend beyond the boundaries of the estate, ghetto, or camp.

Schwarz & Streule (2016: 1007) draw on Raffestin as well as Latin American social movement scholarship to position territory as the locus of active social struggle, “produced in the very instances when subjects struggle over territorial practices, meanings and tenures of urban space”. In their study of Lake Texcoco, Mexico City, they describe how differential power relations materially configure territory while contrasting *imaginarios* (social imaginaries) are inscribed into it (ibid.). They also add that the everyday practice of *ejido* (a form of communal land use) enacts an overlapping form of territorial regulation and provides a “stronghold in resistance” (ibid. 1011). Ince (2012) likewise highlights what he terms ‘counter-institutional’ territorial practices that challenge the dominant territorial order while nonetheless existing within it. Ince observed physical and symbolic boundary-making practices embedded in London anarchist groups’ prefigurative politics and critiques of authority (ibid.). Among these groups, territory was crucial to “the forging of particular social *relations* between those involved” (ibid.).

1661, original emphasis). In a similar vein, Halvorsen (2018: 791, original emphasis) develops a suitably ‘open’ definition of territory, as “*the appropriation of space in pursuit of political projects* – in which (from bottom-up grassroots to top-down state) political strategies exist as overlapping and entangled” (see also Haesbaert 2013). Territory is for Halvorsen (2018) a hybrid notion: both colonial and decolonial; of modern statecraft and of projects of resistance. Interrogating the territorial strategies of social movements and movements for indigenous peoples across Latin America, Halvorsen describes struggles over *land* that challenge private property, concentrated ownership, and quantification and objectification, as well as struggles over *terrain* that seek autonomous self-governance – some in antagonistic relation to the state, others more agonistic (ibid.). Clare et al. (2018) similarly reconceptualise territory through analysis of Latin American scholarship and praxis, observing a difference between top-down territories of *poder*, or ‘power over’, and bottom-up territories of *potencia*, or ‘power to’ (see also Bryan 2012; Halvorsen 2015, 2018). The everyday social relations forged within territories of *potencia*, they contend, can challenge territories of *poder* (Clare et al. 2018): they can become ‘territories in resistance’ “in which to build new social organisations collectively [and] where new subjects take shape and *materially and symbolically appropriate their space*” (Zibechi 2012: 19, emphasis added). As I outline in the next section, resistance to territorial stigmatisation has often involved such material or symbolic appropriations from below.

Thus, territory is the locus of both domination and resistance: a politico-institutional space that is (re)produced for the restructuring of capital and the state as well as space that is appropriated from below through alternative social practices and representations. The power that is deployed within and accessed through these different genres of territory is qualitatively and quantitatively different: the former asserts domination and the latter attempts resistance (Clare et al. 2016; Halvorsen 2018), yet both are territory nonetheless. Territories of domination and territories of resistance coexist in space, in overlapping and entangled multi-territorial configurations (Haesbaert 2013; Halvorsen 2018). This is evident from the literature on resistance to territorial stigmatisation: territorial stigmatisation operates through practices and representations from above which are contested through symbolic and material appropriations of space from below, both politically organised and everyday. In short, as I outline in the next section, territorial struggles take place over spatial classification and control. Scholars must interrogate both sides of these territorial struggles: doing so enables one to grasp how and why territorial stigmatisation is produced, how it is received and experienced by those who are subject to it, and what kinds of politics are made possible. In short, the significance of territory is both

theoretical and ethico-political: in extends our understanding of it and illuminates directions for further contestation and resistance.

## **2.4 Territorial struggles: resisting and contesting territorial stigmatisation**

Wacquant has been criticised for inadequate consideration of the agency of the marginalised in his writing on territorial stigmatisation and advanced marginality (Geiselhart 2017; Gilbert 2010; Jensen and Christensen 2012; Kirkness 2014; Pattillo 2009). In particular, besides briefly discussing inhabitants' 'coping strategies' (Wacquant et al. 2014), Wacquant has paid scant attention to resistance or contestation. Similar, if more pointed criticisms have been levelled at Goffman, who seems to have actively ignored of resistance in writing theory for 'normals' at a time when his 'interaction order' was being contested by mass resistance to racial oppression (Tyler 2018). Time and again, significant differences between residents' perceptions and dominant representations have been observed by scholars of territorial stigmatisation (August 2014; Dean and Hastings 2000; Garbin and Millington 2012; Hastings 2004; Palmer et al. 2004; Pereira and Queirós 2014; Verdouw and Flanagan 2019). Garbin & Millington (2012) draw on Lefebvre (1991[1974]) to conceptualise the gap between internal experiences and external representation, which they claim is inherent to the production of space. While they do not engage with the 'territorial' as such, Garbin & Millington's argument is cognate with Brenner & Elden's (2009). Among the levels of determination, they argue, representations of space are the most dominant: representations rendered cartographically, statistically, diagrammatically, and through classificatory discourses are increasingly powerful in capitalist societies, "encouraging urban nightmares rather than utopian dreams" (Garbin & Millington 2012: 2071).

Representations of space – or, as I argue, representations of *territory* – dominate the lived space/territory of everyday life and everyday imaginaries. In Garbin & Millington's case of La Courneuve, Paris, representations of territory legitimated punitive interventions, including police violence, and obfuscated structural deprivation and discrimination through state policy and the market economy. Crucially, however, Garbin & Millington argue that "territorial stigma incites residents to enter a representational space, or field, where they encounter dominant technocratic and media representations of space and, critically, envisage a transformed space" (Garbin & Millington 2012: 2074). Inhabitants of stigmatised territories contest territorial stigmatisation through symbolic and material appropriations of space and thus produce alternative territories from below.

In critiquing Goffman, Tyler argues that stigma must be more fundamentally reconceptualised: ‘decolonised’<sup>2</sup> through critique of its theoretical origins and reoriented around the struggles that reveal the antagonisms of its production (Tyler 2018; Tyler & Slater 2018). Bourdieu himself recognised that ‘symbolic struggles’ took place over the “legitimate vision of the world”, in both organised and everyday forms, and in both objective and subjective modes – the former attempting to bring realities into relief and the latter attempting to “transform categories of perception” (Bourdieu 1989: 20; Bourdieu 1991). Thus, Tyler calls for attention to ‘classificatory struggles’ – class struggles that coalesce around contestation over and resistance to classification and hierarchisation (Tyler 2013, 2015, 2018). A significant portion of recent scholarship on territorial stigmatisation has taken this focus, examining the contestation of and resistance to *territorial* classifications and hierarchisations. These territorial struggles might be thought of as a class of classificatory struggles, demonstrating alternative territorial practices and representations in their symbolic or material appropriations of space. In the remainder of this section I draw out some of these territorial struggles – material and symbolic, organised and everyday, local and institutional – and briefly outline some of the limits they face.

### Symbolic territorial struggles

Alternative narratives, maps, figures, images, performances, and so on have been variously deployed in organised symbolic struggles. These organised symbolic struggles articulate counter-representations that contest territorial stigmatisation by critiquing and contradicting dominant representations. They therefore symbolically appropriate space by articulating and circulating an alternative script or claim that is counter to those of territorial stigmatisation. Kirkness & Tijé-Dra (2017), for instance, locate resistance to territorial stigmatisation in the music of rap artists from Marseille’s *quartiers populaires*. Artists’ lyrics express place attachment, resilience, and community solidarity while critiquing systemic discrimination through neglect and ‘renewal’ from the authoritative vantage points they appropriate. The artists identify as belonging to a stigmatised place and express solidarity with their fellow residents, thus refusing the disidentification or lateral denigration that territorial stigmatisation encourages (Wacquant et al. 2014). They also assert that only ‘insiders’ can truly understand life in the *quartiers populaires* and thus contest the authority of external representations. In a similar register, Nayak (2019) has written of how the stigmatisation of Middlesbrough, UK, through the television series *Benefits*

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<sup>2</sup> In settler colonial contexts like the one from which I write, it is important to note that decolonisation is not just a metaphor nor just an intellectual project but a project grounded in material transfers, in particular the restitution of land and politico-institutional transformations that recognise sovereignty and self-determination (see, for example: Sovereign Union – First Nations Asserting Sovereignty [nationalunitygovernment.org]; The Red Nation [therednation.org]). As Tuck & Yang (2012) argue, we should be wary of the evasions that (purely) metaphoric use performs.

*Street*, was contested by Middlesbrough Football Club supporters in their unveiling of banners proclaiming that ‘Being Poor is Not Entertainment’ and ‘Fuck Benefits Street’ during a match. This straightforward critique of stigmatising representations and their for-profit circulation contested the production company’s authority to represent the city and its inhabitants.

‘Residents Voices’, a research project co-produced by academics and public housing tenants in Sydney, engaged with similar themes and likewise sought to contest territorial stigmatisation by symbolically appropriating space (Arthurson et al. 2014; Darcy & Gwyther 2012; Rogers et al. 2017). The project first involved the creation of a ‘digital storytelling’ platform through which public housing tenants could recount their experiences and express their views to fellow tenants and others around Australia (Rogers et al. 2017). It therefore used self-representation as a way of contesting dominant representations. Furthermore, in encouraging solidarity between and with tenants it moved beyond contestation of localised territorial stigmatisation and towards contestation of its systemic production (a point which I return to shortly). A subsequent stage of the project directly confronted dominant representations through organised focus groups in which tenants interrogated an episode of the derisive mockumentary series *Housos*, about a fictional Sydney estate (Arthurson et al. 2014; Rogers et al. 2017). In these focus groups, tenants developed a critique of the show and of the wider stigmatisation and misrepresentation of public housing. Some tenants provided diary entries that responded to subsequent episodes of the show, from which the academic and tenant researchers co-produced a series of academic and general research outputs that circulated these critiques and alternative representations among academic, policy, and general audiences (ibid.). *Residents’ Voices* thus facilitated a counter-public space in which tenants developed political identities and demands and articulated counter-discourses that expressed these. These counter-discourses were later circulated among wider publics to contest dominant representations of public housing tenants and estates.

In another example of participatory action research or scholar-activism, Cuny (2018) collaborated with residents of the Marzahn estate in Berlin to construct photographic portraits that gave counter-stigmatising ‘insider views’. These images “deactivate[d] the visual clichés usually associated with [Marzahn]” by presenting the viewer with an image that stimulated them to envisage living within it (ibid.: 24). Cuny collaborated with residents to stage a portrait that reflected each participant’s view of the estate and their place within it, and while the project revealed some ‘submissive strategies of internalizing stigma’, it also invoked ‘counterstigmatising images’ and ‘insider views’ that reversed stigma by critiquing the ‘outside’ (ibid.; see also Kirkness 2014). An image of a woman at her kitchen window, through which the estate appears only as an

apparition, and an image of man seated outdoors, with only a sliver of the estate visible in the background, refuse typical visual representations of Marzahn and instead represent the territory lived by residents, bringing the realities of everyday life in Marzahn into sharper relief (Bourdieu 1989).

Engaging with public perception was a key counter-stigmatisation strategy identified by Horgan (2018), who saw ‘discursive re-emplacement’ as key to destigmatisation in Parkdale, Toronto. Here, prospective residents of a proposed housing development for people with addiction and mental health problems were trained in communication and self-advocacy so that they could have “direct non-hostile interaction[s] with home-owners (as well as business people and other Parkdale residents)” (Horgan 2018: 512). This practice, argues Horgan, helped diminish concerns about the development and its future residents and was therefore complimentary to the material intervention of the development itself (which I shall return to shortly). A similar strategy of discursive emplacement was noted by Maestri (2017), among Roma advocacy organisations who sought to promote positive images of Roma and social awareness of their marginalisation. One campaign, for instance, advocated for official state recognition of the Roma minority (*ibid.*). In both cases, contestation was oriented toward the wider public, seeking to change perceptions of a stigmatised group through dialogue or symbolic recognition.

The question of how symbolic territorial struggles should engage with the media is a topic of some debate. The ‘mainstream’ media is more often interested in stories about ‘problems’, and while ‘mainstream’ attention might get these problems addressed in the short-term it can also perpetuate stigmatisation (Jacobs & Flanagan 2013; Peel 2003). Furthermore, the practice of framing ‘positive’ stories as exceptions to the rule can also perpetuate territorial stigmatisation (Dean & Hastings 2000; Jensen & Christensen 2012). However, several scholars have suggested that community media can contest the territorial stigmatisation of estates by circulating critical analyses of events and positive representations of place (Dean & Hastings 2000; Hastings & Dean 2003; Hastings 2004; Jacobs et al. 2011). While they may have small audiences and limited lobbying power, community media can circulate counter-representations that contest stigmatisation by discouraging its internalisation and its reproduction by residents. It is thus another means of symbolic territorial struggle through which space is symbolically appropriated to contest dominant stigmatising representations and, furthermore, can help build a critical consciousness that encourages further modes of organising and resistance (Jacobs et al. 2011).

The examples of organised symbolic struggle which I have outlined here attempt to bring particular realities of everyday life into public view, and in some cases to transform the categories through which these are perceived and understood (Bourdieu 1989). In doing so they articulate and circulate counter-representations that contest the stigmatising representations of territory. In other words, they symbolically appropriate territory by articulating a competing representational claim that contradicts stigmatisation and inscribes territory with alternative meanings and imaginaries. As I have alluded to here, and as I expand upon in Chapter 8, these counter-representations can both address public perceptions and help consolidate counter-publics within which marginalised groups develop political identities and demands (Fraser 1990; Warner 2002). These symbolic appropriations are therefore an important mode of territorial struggle.

### **Material territorial struggles**

Resistance to territorial stigmatisation has also taken the form of physical appropriations of space, or what I shall call material territorial struggles. Such interventions may, like symbolic struggles, be organised to draw attention to or to protest particular realities. They may also be organised to intervene more directly in these realities by practicing or prefiguring alternative social relations. In both cases, the practice of territory enables the development or consolidation of political identities and demands. For instance, Garbin & Millington (2012) discuss two ‘urban interventions’ that contested the territorial stigmatisation of La Courneuve albeit through highly dissimilar strategies and tactics. They argue that the 2005 riots in Parisian *banlieues* were a material appropriation of space that enabled young residents to “stress the extent of their marginalisation and to express a collective claim for social existence” (ibid.: 2076). While momentary, this practice of territory enabled participants to exercise a right to urban space and to demand that their voices be heard. Secondly, they discuss the work of the artist Monte, who located his practice in La Courneuve and thereby ‘confounded expectations’ of the place (ibid. 2077). Through his sculptures, the studios he rents out in a converted mill, and the local arts organisation he helps run, Monte “uses artistic interventions to force a rupture in the stigma and fill the emergent void with creativity from local residents” (Garbin & Millington 2014: 2077). In a similar register, Maestri (2017) describes NGO projects in support of Roma communities which led to the construction of arts, meeting, and social event buildings and spaces – interventions which both provided the community with new and improved facilities and physically disrupted its stigmatised image. Horgan (2018), whose study of symbolic struggles in Parkdale I have already discussed, also identified material territorial struggle in the form of ‘legal entrepreneurialism’. Following the expropriation of neglected private property, organisers pursued a legal strategy that enabled them to obtain the property for a housing development for

people with addiction and mental illness (ibid.). Combined legal and discursive strategies thus enabled the appropriation of physical space and allowed a stigmatised population to remain in the neighbourhood despite gentrification.

Occupation has been a popular form of organised territorial struggle in the context of evictions, displacement, or otherwise precarious housing conditions. Indeed, Tyler (2013) observes a new ‘politics of occupation’ exemplified by the activist camp set up in support of the Traveller community of Dale Farm, Essex, when they were threatened with eviction. ‘Camp Constant’ was established in solidarity with the community and worked to ‘common’ the space against enclosure. The occupiers practiced territory in their appropriation of space for alternative social relations of “collective provisioning and cross-class collaboration” and generation alternative forms of capital, solidarity, and democracy (Tyler 2013: 152). Maestri (2017, 2019) describes a similar case in Rome, where many Roma people participated in a squatters’ movement that protested generalised housing exclusion by occupying a number of buildings across the city. The new social relations that emerged through this material appropriation facilitated new solidarities, place attachments, and identity formation (ibid.) Queirós and Pereira (2018) suggest that this politics of occupation may not be so new by describing the centrality of occupation to struggles in 1970s *S Joao de Deus*, Porto. Here, territorial struggle through occupation won significant housing reforms, including the abolition of council housing regulations and estate ‘overseers’ (ibid.). As with the other examples I have outlined, it also facilitated a counter-public space in which residents and allies developed a critique of the neighbourhood’s dominant representation, thus providing a material base for symbolic appropriation (ibid.). By enabling the consolidation of alternative social relations and the development and circulation of counter-discourses and political demands, bottom-up territorial practices have been a core part of classificatory struggles that contest or resist territorial stigmatisation.

As the examples above suggest, the physical appropriation of space can be an important mode of territorial struggle, enabling the contestation and critique of oppressive classifications and hierarchical social relations as well as the prefiguration of alternative social relations and the development or consolidation of political identities and demands. These material territorial struggles reveal that the practice of territory is not necessarily conservative but can be mobilised from below, as a form of ‘power to’ in resistance to domination (Clare et al. 2016; Ince 2012). The distinction between material and symbolic struggles I not rigid; as I have alluded to, and as I describe in Chapter 8, they are often pursued in tandem. Physical appropriations of space can provide a material base for discursive politics, and symbolic appropriations can mobilise material

ones. And these distinctions are further complicated when one considers territories of the everyday and everyday resistance.

### Everyday territorial struggles

As Raffestin and others have stressed, territory is also that which is appropriated through everyday social relations. The lived territory of everyday social relations that inhabitants are imbricated in can contest territorial stigmatisation in subtle and overt ways, contradicting both dominant territorial practices and representations. As I have discussed, inhabitants have themselves often stressed the contradictions between stigmatising images of the neighbourhoods they live in and their own experiences. Inhabitants have contested stigmatising representations by highlighting overlooked or misrepresented positive dimensions, including physical amenities, accessibility, community sociability and conviviality, and belonging and place attachment (August 2014; Cairns 2018; Dean & Hastings 2000; Garbin & Millington 2014; Kirkness 2014; McKenzie 2012; Slater & Anderson 2012; Pereira & Queirós 2014; Zhang 2017). Palmer et al. (2004), for instance, met cohorts of ‘committed residents’ who actively challenged derogatory remarks and explained problems in structural rather than individual or pathological terms (see also Dean & Hastings 2000; Hastings 2004). Residents of Toronto’s Regent Park similarly shared a multitude of positive perceptions and experiences with August (2014), centring on accessibility, mutual assistance, and community conviviality. Pereira & Queirós (2014) found the same among residents of *Bairro do Viso*, Porto. As these and other studies demonstrate, residents are often proud of their neighbourhoods and communities despite stigmatisation (Slater & Anderson 2012), or even because of stigmatisation, for living with territorial stigmatisation can be seen as a sign of resilience and inner strength (Cairns 2018; Kirkness 2014; Kirkness & Tijé-Dra 2017b). As Adekunle (2017) and McKenzie (2012) both describe, place attachment can inspire acts of physical and verbal defence – material and symbolic appropriations which contest dominant practices and representations of territory. These everyday contradictions and contestations, as Scott (1985) has elucidated, are their own form of resistance. They are not necessarily even deliberate, for as Garbin & Millington (2012: 2079) point out, “resistance often occurs while people are busy doing other things”. The everyday territorial struggles which I describe here reveal how inhabitants do not simply live in the territory imposed from above but are also architects of their own territory (Nayak 2019), thereby resisting and contesting dominant territorial practices and representations.

By emphasising their positive perceptions and experiences of place, even if only within an interview setting, residents engage in forms of everyday symbolic struggle. Similarly, many

everyday physical appropriations struggle against stigma. Garbin & Millington (2012: 2078) describe how a community group from La Courneuve that competes in international dahlia contests “confront[s] the dominant view of *la banlieue* as a super-urban, bleak and monotonous space”, through the installation of their floral arrangements. Here, the symbolic and the material collapse into one another: the floral intervention is both a (somewhat small) physical intervention while simultaneously performing a (potentially more significant) symbolic function in disrupting the stigmatised image of the neighbourhood. Presence in space can be similarly be understood as both physical resistance and symbolic contestation. For instance, the ‘committed stayers’ in the estates researched by Palmer et al. (2004) and Dean & Hastings (2000) contradicted expectations that residents should disassociate themselves with a stigmatised place. Contrary to Wacquant’s (2008) diagnosis of the ‘dissolution of place’, close social bonds are often created in stigmatised territories, and these relations combat the internalisation of stigma. As McKenzie (2012) observed in St Anns, Nottingham, practices or perceptions of confinement and exclusion simultaneously provoked practices of investment in community and place, and feelings of ownership and belonging (see also Arthurson et al. 2014). However, many inhabitants of stigmatised territories are not, and do not feel, confined or excluded to them, and instead practice forms of mobility that contradict the purported isolation and exclusion of dominant representations (Gwyther 2009). This is an under-explored aspect of lived territories and everyday territorial struggles which I elaborate on at length in Chapters 7 and 8.

In a different register, Kirkness (2014) describes how young people in the estates of Valdegour and Pissevin, Nîmes, ‘tactically appropriated’ space through intimate knowledge of ‘nooks and crannies’, which they walk through with sense of possession and ease. (see also Adekunle 2017; McKenzie 2012). For Kirkness, the presence of youth in highly visible public spaces transgresses representations of the area as unsafe and youth as a ‘threat’ (ibid.). Their presence is simultaneously an appropriation of physical space that subverts their representation as non-belonging or unwanted, and a symbolic ‘counterscripting’ of territory that can linger past their departure (Kirkness 2014). Hussein de Araujo & Costa (2017) outline a more permanent everyday appropriation that contests stigmatisation: in Varjaõ, Brasilia, the mostly informally housed community “organised forms of direct control of the territory and regulated the relations between them in their own ways” (ibid.: 166), and did so despite defamatory rhetoric that described their ‘invasion’ of the area and denied their right to be there. The enduring presence of defamed groups in stigmatised places is both an alternative practice and representation of territory: it is a symbolic claim against the problematisation of their being in place and an assertion of their counter-claim through appropriation of physical space.

Such forms of everyday territorial struggle can be an important precondition to more organised struggles, as (Queirós & Pereira 2018) found in their work on resistance in *S Joao de Deus*. However, they are also a meaningful mode of struggle in their own right. In particular, they help inhabitants of stigmatised territories to combat the internalisation of stigma through self-inscription, lateral denigration or mutual distancing. As Jensen & Christensen (2012) argue, residents may internalise an *awareness* of their stigmatisation rather than internalising stigma per se (see also Kallin & Slater 2014). In other words, they may be conscious of their negative reputation while denying and contesting its legitimacy. Indeed, many report that misrepresentation and undeserved reputations are one of the biggest problems they face (Cairns 2018; Dean & Hastings 2000; Slater & Anderson 2012).

### Limits to territorial struggles?

While turning attention to contestation and resistance, it is of course important to approach them critically. As Garbin & Millington (2012: 2079) caution,

Rather than glibly celebrating ‘resistance’ or drawing over-pessimistic conclusions about the impact of place stigma (although some pessimism may be warranted), it is necessary to direct attention rather towards what we view as two ambiguities of domination/resistance.

Territorial struggles confront a multitude of barriers and limitations, yet few studies have interrogated them. Some of these limitations appear to be structural to territorial stigmatisation itself. Garbin & Millington (2012: 2079), drawing from Timothy Mitchell, argue that resistance cannot proceed from a position ‘beyond’ territorial stigma because, conditioned by hegemony, any efforts to contest stigmatisation must “accept, at least in part, existing social, cultural, economic and geographical structures”. Thus, they cannot help but reproduce territorial stigma whilst simultaneously producing alternative representations and practices of territory that contest it.

Furthermore, resistance and contestation are often obscured from external view through territorial stigmatisation itself (Purdy 2004): recruiting potential allies and otherwise resourcing resistance is made more difficult by the erosion of symbolic capital through stigmatisation itself (Bourdieu 1989). Queirós & Pereira (2018) suggest that organised territorial struggles are best placed when embedded within wider housing movements and solidarities with activists, intellectuals, and neighbouring communities (see also Jensen & Christensen 2012). However, questions of *how* organised territorial struggles might achieve such embeddedness, or wider visibility, publicity, legibility and legitimacy, have not received adequate scholarly attention. Furthermore, organised territorial struggles can be frustrated by the internal divisions that

territorial stigmatisation can cause (Sakizlioglu & Uitermark 2014). The tension between internalisation of stigma and struggle against it is similarly underexplored in the literature; as I discuss in Chapter 8, territorial struggles can at once resist territorial stigmatisation while also reproducing social practices that are conditioned by it.

Moreover, territorial stigmatisation seems to encourage symbolic or material struggles at a territorially localised scale rather than struggles against the multiple and multi-scalar processes which produce it. This territorial encapsulation of struggle – to borrow a phrase from Uitermark & Nicholls (2014) – is difficult to overcome, as I discuss in Chapter 8 also. As Kirkness (2014) stresses, local resistance to territorial stigmatisation has rarely altered the course of demolitions, discrimination, and disinvestment; this has been the sad reality of many of the cases hitherto discussed. Territorially localised struggles are necessary but insufficient; as Slater (2017) argues, resistance must also involve challenging structural processes and institutions such as property relations and real estate speculation. In other words, territorial struggles must incorporate counter-representations and counter-institutional practices (Ince 2012) beyond localised territorial stigmatisation. If we conceive stigmatisation as a political economy of (de)valuation (Tyler 2018), then resistance must also be directed toward the structural features of neoliberalised and racialised capitalism, imperialism and settler colonialism, and all other systems of oppression and exploitation.

## **2.5 Conclusion**

Territorial stigmatisation is a political economy of (de)valorisation (Tyler 2018) and a governmental technology of consent and control that enables the reproduction of relations of oppression and domination therein (Tyler 2013, 2015). As I have outlined in this chapter, territory is significant in both respects. Politico-institutional practices of measuring, ordering, and controlling land and terrain produce particular spatial concentrations of poverty, marginality, and difference. Representations of territory, which render these practices cartographically, statistically, discursively, and so on, make these appear pre-given or innate. They thus obscure the production of poverty and marginality via the restructuring of capital and the state and legitimate status quo socio-spatial inequalities and injustices as well as interventions that entrench or intensify them. Consequently, as Wacquant and many others have argued, territorial stigmatisation has been central to neoliberal urbanism, and in particular the restructuring of labour markets, housing systems, and the welfare state.

Yet territory can also be the locus of resistance to territorial stigmatisation – both space that is appropriated for domination and space appropriated for resistance; a space of power over

and space of power to (Clare et al. 2016). The literature on territorial stigmatisation provides numerous examples of resistance to territorial stigmatisation through symbolic and material appropriations of space, both organised and everyday. Thus, in this chapter I have drawn on Tyler's concept of classificatory struggles in coining the term 'territorial struggles' to capture the contested nature of territorial stigmatisation, between dominant politico-institutional practices and representations of territory, on the one hand, and the appropriations of space from below that contradict and contest them, on the other. Attention to these struggles – attention which Tyler & Slater (2018) and others have called for – illuminates the active and antagonistic reproduction of territorial stigma and the possibilities and challenges of resistance politics. Thus, in the chapters that follow, I briefly set out the historical political and economic conditions through which the territorial stigmatisation of public housing in Australia has been produced, outlining its foundation within Australian settler colonial capitalism and reproduction and intensification through processes of neoliberalisation. I then examine how territorial stigmatisation functions as a governmental technology and rationality, particularly through estate redevelopment. Then, in the final chapters I turn to some of the everyday and organised territorial struggles that confront territorial stigmatisation.

## Chapter 3

### Methodology and methods

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The empirical research which I undertook for this dissertation involved discourse analysis, ethnography, and semi-structured interviews revolving around the public housing communities of Redfern-Waterloo. In this chapter I detail these methods: the material that constituted my discourse analysis and how I analysed it; where and among whom I conducted ethnography; and who I interviewed (and couldn't interview) and what I discussed with them. I do this after first outlining the conceptual, ethical, and methodological considerations that informed them.

The first of these considerations concerned doing ethnography in stigmatised places. Wacquant has written extensively about reflexive ethnography as a tool of “rupture and theoretical construction” (Wacquant 2016: 1084) for deconstructing doxa and academically fashionable understandings of the social world. The kind of reflexivity he proposes is cognate with Bourdieu's (1999c): it is attentive to the positionality of the researcher in the construction and representation of the ethnographic encounter and interview exchange. This is important from both an analytical and ethical perspective. Particularly important to the study of stigmatised territories is Bourdieu's (ibid.) notion of ‘non-violent communication’, recognising and seeking to minimise the symbolic violence that researchers can enact. However, I argue that this type of reflexivity alone is not wholly sufficient in the context of territorial stigmatisation and over-research, which present particular ethico-political challenges to scholarly investigation. The practice of ‘situated solidarities’ (Nagar & Geiger 2007) through scholar-activism is, as I outline, one way of navigating these challenges. A scholar-activist ‘politics of resourcefulness’ (Routledge & Derickson 2015) is one approach to grappling with the social sciences’ historic and ongoing complicity in the reproduction of territorial stigma and the symbolic violence of over-research. It means involving oneself in classificatory and territorial struggles rather than simply studying them, critically or otherwise. Yet, as I discuss in the penultimate section of this chapter by way of detailing the specific methods I used, scholar-activism presents methodological and ethical challenges itself when things (perhaps inevitably) don't go as planned.

Wacquant (2015: 256) has also written of the need to “heed the constitutive power of symbolic structures and track their double effects, on the objective webs of positions that make up institutions, on the one side, and on the incarnate systems of dispositions that compose the habitus of agents, on the other”. Discourse analysis, I argue, presents a useful method of

interrogating the production of these symbolic structures, through social representations that are circulated among various publics and within circles of powerful political actors. While there are various methods and methodologies of discourse analysis, including the constructionist critical discourse analysis of Fairclough (1992) to Foucault's discursive archaeology (1982), I complement these with Bourdieu's (1991, 1989) theories of symbolic power, symbolic capital, and symbolic struggle to argue for greater attention to access to discourse and the social cognition of discourse (van Dijk 1993) in specific contexts. Doing so can lead one to see discourse as a site of struggle, with dominant discourses contested by counter-discourses. As such, my approach to discourse analysis responds to calls from scholars like Tyler & Slater (2018) for research that focuses on struggles over the (re)production of stigma and that de-naturalises dominant territorial representations and imaginaries. I fused discourse analysis with ethnography and interviews in an attempt to understand how discourse was articulated in my particular empirical juncture; how it facilitated or informed the social practices and processes I observed ethnographically; and the counter-discourses that were articulated in symbolic struggle with dominant discourses.

### **3.1 Investigating stigmatised territories: ethnography and ethics**

As Wacquant and others have noted, and as I briefly discussed in the previous chapter, the social sciences have oftentimes been complicit in the reproduction of territorial stigma. Scholarly accounts that give insufficient critical attention to its political and economic reproduction can reproduce territorial stigma and merely circulate derogatory representations more widely. Furthermore, as Wacquant (2013: 277) writes, social scientists are “deeply implicated in the work of group-making as its techniques of inquiry and analytic idioms are appropriated by political operators to project a falsely rationalized vision of their rule”. They are also, Wacquant (2018: 98) argues, prone to uncritically accepting and perpetuating “terminology, queries and worries propounded by city makers, policymakers, journalists or academic fashion”. Breaking this recursively complicitous bind, Wacquant (2016: 1084) contends, requires the use of ethnography as an “instrument of rupture and theoretical construction, rather than a simple means for producing an experience-near picture of ordinary cultural categories and social relations”.

Wacquant (2009b, 2015) calls for ethnographers to bring theoretical and methodological tools into their empirical work to practice an ‘epistemic reflexivity’ that considers the positionality of the ethnographer in the task of theoretical reflection and practical reconstruction (see also Schultz Larsen 2015). This is, to a large extent, a lesson from Bourdieu, who argues that

The positivist dream of an epistemological state of perfect innocence papers over the fact that the crucial difference is not between a science that effects a construction and one that does not, but between a science that does this without knowing it and one that, being aware of work of construction, strives to discover and master as completely as possible the nature of its inevitable acts of construction and equally inevitable effects those acts produce (Bourdieu 1999c: 608).

Bourdieu recognises the asymmetrical power relations between researcher and researched in disadvantaged places and calls upon scholars to actively attenuate the symbolic violence that can be inflicted through them (ibid.). For him this involves a reflexive interview methodology of active and methodical listening, acceptance of participants' life histories, active denunciation of dominant representations, and even at times the adoption of participants' affect (while always recognising that interviewees engage in self-portraiture and, sometimes, self-analysis, when interpreting and reconstructing an exchange) (ibid.). Relatedly, he calls for 'non-violent communication' through the pursuit of social proximity and familiarity (ibid.). For Bourdieu, a request for an interview can be a violent act, and the interviewer must therefore try to understand "the extent and character of the distance between the objective of the study as perceived and interpreted by the respondent and the object assigned by the investigator" (ibid.: 609). Where possible, Bourdieu contends, research should be undertaken at a close social distance, or after becoming familiar with/to participants, to both minimise symbolic violence and to accurately construct the interview exchange. Bourdieu's principle of non-violent communication is an important consideration for the ethical investigation of stigmatised territories, where research can do more harm by perpetuating the construction and surveillance of a distant 'other'. Reflexive ethnography should involve building proximity and familiarity to facilitate, to whatever extent is possible, non-violent communication.

The manner of reflexivity that Bourdieu and Wacquant propose does not merely attend to one's personal identity in relation to ethnographic subjects but also to one's position in the field of knowledge production (Wacquant 2006). The deficit- or problem-oriented nature of most urban research and policy (Crookes 2017) means that many stigmatised places are subject to constant investigation by academic researchers, journalists, bureaucrats and consultants. This over-research can lead to widespread cynicism and exhaustion due to researchers' false promises, disproportionate rewards, and repetitive research practices or themes (Clark 2008; Neal et al. 2016; Sukarieh & Tannock 2013). Research in over-researched places can also perform, or be interpreted as, further scrutinisation and surveillance (Sukarieh & Tannock 2013). The constant 'venturing' (Peel 2003) of various kinds of researchers into stigmatised places is a unique form of

symbolic violence. However, this is not to argue that research should be avoided altogether, for as Neal et al. (2016) contend, places have multiple identities and are always in the making; there are always new happenings and becomings. Rather, the ethical dilemma of over-research requires a reflexivity attuned to the “economic, political, institutional processes and structures that provide the context for the fieldwork encounter and shape its effects” (Nagar & Geiger 2007: 270).

The kind of reflexivity that Nagar & Geiger call for is less preoccupied with the epistemological dilemma of ‘accurate’ construction and representation from the position of the research subject and more concerned with the ethics of knowledge production (ibid.). It eschews the ‘God trick’ of the kind of reflexivity that encourages researchers to “assume that they can be fully aware of their own self-conscious and simultaneously survey the entire landscape of power [...], ignoring or concealing the more complex interplay of relations within and between the agency of the researcher and the workings of power” (Maxey 1999: 201-202). Instead, Nagar & Geiger (2007: 273) call for the practice of ‘situated solidarities’ that are

attentive to the ways in which our ability to evoke the global in relation to the local, to configure the specific nature of our alliances and commitments, and to participate in processes of social change are significantly shaped by our geographical and socio-institutional locations, and the particular combination of processes, events, and struggles underway in those locations.

Nagar & Geiger situate this approach within a feminist tradition of challenging pre-given social categories and measuring fieldwork and theory by the question: “What kinds of struggle does it make possible?” (Larner 1995: 187, in Nagar & Geiger 2007). They sketch an outline of a ‘speaking with’ model of engagement between researcher and researched: of talking and listening carefully and being open to a wide variety of influences. Similarly, Katz (1992), citing Haraway (1988: 585), calls for knowledge production and research practice that “privileges contestation, deconstruction, passionate construction, webbed connections”, through ‘non-innocent’ ethnography that is responsible to the representations it constructs and that, rather than only seeking to understand from the subject-position of the researched, works towards the redistribution of wealth, power, and justice between them (Katz 1992: 503). Situated solidarities work towards an ethics of ‘response-ability’, as Haraway (2016) puts it – a capacity to respond rather than a set of rules or procedures. As Sukarieh & Tannock (2013: 507) rightly argue, engagement in over-researched places demands such approaches, and as I discuss in the remainder of this section, scholar-activism is one.

Just as superficial and uncritical accounts of territorial stigmatisation can work to reproduce it, so too can accounts that give insufficient attention to the agency of inhabitants. By ignoring the various subtle and overt ways that stigma is contested and resisted, residents are reinscribed as ‘passive victims’ (Geiselhart 2017). As I discussed in the previous chapter, Wacquant’s work has been subject to this critique, and subsequent scholarship has focused upon organised and everyday resistance and contestation. However, relatively few scholars of territorial stigma have discussed how they themselves may have been involved in these struggles (however, see Cuny 2018; Rogers et al. 2017). While several may have been involved without writing about it, the literature suggests only the barest minimum of engagement with the ethics and practice of scholar-activism in scholarship on territorial stigmatisation. If one takes seriously the ethics of Bourdieu’s non-violent communication, the ethical challenges of over-research, and the need for research that privileges contestation and struggle in both theory-building and practice, then scholar-activism offers a path.

Wacquant has written that he sees the normative political task of the scholar as one of using ‘critical thought’ to ‘dissolve doxa’ (Wacquant 2004, Wacquant 2009b). Like Bourdieu, he wishes that social sciences be “an effective *countervailing symbolic power* and the midwife of social forces dedicated to social justice and civic morality” (Wacquant 2006: 263, original emphasis). It is thus for scholars to “develop new tools and instruments with which to deconstruct the categories and myths of the urban” (Flint & Powell 2019: 1). Important as these roles are, I would suggest that there is more that scholars can do for projects of social justice than critical analysis and public engagement – more than just discursive politics (Routledge & Derickson 2015). Scholar-activists can “bring together their academic work with their political ideals to further social change and work directly with marginal groups or those in struggle” (Autonomous Geographers Collective 2010: 246). Routledge & Derickson (2015) outline how scholar-activism can put Nagar & Geiger’s (2007) call for situated solidarities into practice, arguing that it can enable the production of knowledge that is responsible to the communities under inquiry and the struggles they undertake. Furthermore, scholar-activism can rework the ‘artificial boundaries’ or ‘false distinctions’ between academia and wider society (Autonomous Geographers Collective 2010; Oldfield 2015), recognising and rejecting the academy’s historic and ongoing complicity in the reproduction of many communities’ marginalisation (Routledge & Derickson 2015). The foundational ethics of scholar-activism, Derickson & Routledge (2015) argue, is a ‘politics of resourcefulness’ that can involve channelling the resources and privileges of the academy towards activist ends, designing research with/for activist collaborators, and seeking to understand the barriers to activism and solidarity. The authors expand this foundational ethic by

way of six practices which assist in the navigation of ethical issues stemming from asymmetrical power relations and over-research. They argue that scholar-activists should look to (i) be moved to reach out and take action; (ii) disperse power away from academia through collaboration and cooperation; (iii) find, generate, and resource potential for struggle; (iv) resource solidarity through the tools and capacities of academics and academia; (v) challenge the assumptions and norms of both academia and activism (about *who* and *what* constitutes them, for instance); and (vi) sustain collaboration (Routledge & Derickson 2015). As I discuss in section 3.3, this was roughly approach to research that I sought to take for this dissertation. However, as I discuss in section 3.3, it was not without its own challenges, tensions, dilemmas and failures.

### **3.2 On territorial stigma, discourse and symbolic power**

Wacquant's conceptualisation of territorial stigmatisation, undergirded by Bourdieu's theory of symbolic power, brings into focus the symbolic structures through which stigma is produced and reproduced. In other words, it draws attention to the representations that are circulated within various publics or fields that become common sense socio-spatial categories and classifications. As Bourdieu (1991) made clear, the language or utterances deployed by dominant classes and class fractions work toward the construction and imposition of a social reality, in the dual sense of both objective socio-material relations and their common-sense or doxic interpretation. This understanding of language resonates with critical discourse analysis. For instance, Fairclough's (1992) textually-oriented approach to critical discourse analysis situates individual texts within wider rhetorical strategies, which are themselves constitutive of social practices. Texts or 'discursive events' perform 'ideological work', by directing the interpretations of readers or listeners rather than by explicit proclamation, and fashion "subjects for whom (particular) connections are common sense" (Fairclough 1992: 177). Texts are therefore "concrete instances of social action" (Hastings 1999: 11) that provide evidence of prevailing attitudes, ideologies and social practices, and their transformation (Jacobs & Manzi 1996). This hierarchy of text-discourse-social practice has been adopted in several constructionist approaches to the study of housing problems (e.g. Darcy 1999; Hastings 1998; Jacobs & Manzi 1996; Jacobs et al. 2003).

Critical discourse analysis provides a method for the analytical progression from macro- and micro-level practices to individual texts to social practices (Darcy 1999). However, it has been criticised for its preoccupation with the meticulous examinations of particular texts and their reproduction of discourse, and for thereby failing to comprehensively examine wider political and economic contexts in which texts are produced (Jacobs et al. 2003). Foucauldian approaches to discourse analysis can take this wider perspective. Foucauldian 'discursive

archaeology' similarly positions discourse as the level at which language, knowledge and power are connected, and interprets statements as simultaneously conveying knowledge and commanding social practices (Foucault 1991). It is concerned with identifying and unpacking the rules, specificities, practices, regularity, and contradictions of discourse and systematic description of the 'discourse-object' (Foucault 1972). In other words, it involves investigating how discourses have come into being, have constituted subjects, and have affected social practices and social reality over periods of time, as opposed to focusing on specific discursive events or instantiations (Dodson 2007: 40). It attends to both discursive *objects* and discursive *subjects* and the order of relations between them: what is being spoken of, and its qualities, on the one hand, and who is speaking, being spoken to, and being spoken of, along with their characteristics, capacities and relations, on the other hand (Foucault 1972; Dodson 2007). The various subject-positions constituted by a discourse determine the nature and extent of action that can be pursued. As Flanagan (2019: 122) explains, discourse "regulates and organises the world, making particular ideas, actions or standpoints available to us while closing off the possibility of others". By mediating 'visibility', discourse "constitute[s] the possibilities for the expression of wills and desires in political struggle" (Dodson 2007: 249-250).

A Bourdieusian disposition toward discourse can complement these approaches by adding a sociological perspective to discursive practices and their effects on social practices. As van Dijk (1993: 257) has argued, the "power and dominance of groups are measured by their control over (access to) discourse". The symbolic capital of actors and groups determines the symbolic power they can deploy through access to discourse. Access to discourse is therefore determined by the distribution of various forms of capital and their translation to symbolic capital. This power, as I have outlined, not only shapes social actions and material conditions but also shapes understandings and interpretations, or what van Dijk calls 'social cognition' (ibid.). In other words, discourse both enacts or legitimates dominance and affects the minds of those subject to it. Yet recipients are not all uncritical agents manipulated by discourse into doxa, as some critical discourse analyses imply. Access to discourse is a 'power resource' that can be deployed to reproduce domination but also to challenge it (van Dijk 1993); capital is also directed by subjugated or subaltern groups into the production of counter-discourses (Fraser 1990). As Bourdieu (1989: 20) outlined, 'symbolic struggles' take place over the "legitimate vision of the world": objective symbolic struggles bring particular realities into sharper relief and subjective symbolic struggles seek transformation of categories of perception (see also Tissot 2018). Analyses of counter-discourses developed in symbolic struggles are critically important to both understanding the social cognition of dominant discourses – those that dominate discursive

space and are reflected in institutional practices (Hajer 1993) – and for identifying alternative political possibilities.

The approach to discourse analysis that I have taken adopts this Bourdieusian orientation to symbolic power and symbolic struggles. Rather than strictly following a Foucauldian archaeological method, or the method of textually-oriented critical discourse analysis, I am more interested here in discourse ‘in context’ – the ‘local centres’ through which it develops (Uitermark 2003) – and as a complementary methodology to reflexive ethnography. I am, in other words, interested in how discourse is articulated in a particular empirical juncture; how it facilitates or informs the social practices and processes observed ethnographically; and the counter-discourses that are articulated within struggles against dominant discourses of territorial stigmatisation as part of wider territorial struggles.

### **3.3 Methods and approach**

In December 2015, a month prior to the commencement of my doctoral candidature, the NSW Government announced its intention to redevelop the Waterloo public housing estate. As I have touched on and as I explain further in subsequent chapters, Redfern-Waterloo had over a long period of time developed a highly stigmatised reputation, which was associated with the presence of two large public housing estates and the longstanding prominence, demographically and politically, of the Aboriginal community. The redevelopment of the Waterloo estate appeared to be undergirded by this stigmatisation, activating it in subtle and overt ways. In the first eight or nine months I followed the subsequent events from afar, learning of the establishment of WPHAG and the Waterloo Tent Embassy, and of the #WeLiveHere2017 campaign (each of which I discuss in detail in Chapter 8). In August 2016 I attended a symposium at Western Sydney University with my friend and colleague Pratchi Chatterjee, who was also a doctoral candidate in urban geography at the University of Sydney and interested in the estate redevelopment. There we met Dr Jenna Condie, who presented a paper about her involvement with #WeLiveHere2017 and WPHAG. Jenna encouraged Pratchi and I to get involved, and we attended the first of several weekly WPHAG meetings in September 2016.

From September 2016 to October 2017 I attended these weekly meetings and many other events relating to the estate redevelopment and became increasingly involved in the organising and activist work that WPHAG was doing. I was one among several academic researchers who became involved, alongside Pratchi, Jenna, and Laura Wynne, who at the time was also a doctoral candidate. While I hadn’t initially set out to conduct a scholar-activist project, the significance of the estate redevelopment and encouragement from WPHAG moved the

project in that direction. Working collectively, myself and the other academics helped with petitioning, gaining media and public attention (including via social media), submissions to government inquiries and consultations, writing a tenants' handbook, setting up and operating a drop-in centre, and the basic, everyday logistics of organising (printing posters and flyers, moving tables and chairs, etcetera)<sup>3</sup>. While it would be misleading for me to suggest that we were explicitly following Routledge & Derickson's (2015) practices of scholar-activism, in retrospect we were trying to practice what they termed 'resourcing potential', 'resourcing solidarity', and 'challenging assumptions and norms'. However, as I shall discuss, we failed on some of the practices that Routledge and Derickson identify, particularly on sustaining collaboration.

Working with WPHAG as a scholar-activist ethnographer rather than detached observer provided me with insights not only into the possibilities and limitations of territorial struggle but into the biopolitics of state power as well, as the NSW Government began to engage with the group (see Chapter 8). Not insignificantly, my involvement with WPHAG meant that I spent a lot of time on the estate and in the neighbourhood more broadly, becoming familiar with its physical and social geography, and overcoming some of the preconceptions I possessed about Redfern-Waterloo; while not rigidly structured by territorial stigma, my preconceptions were inevitably conditioned by it in some way. My involvement with WPHAG also facilitated my access to other community and public meetings, which were often not widely advertised. These I observed more passively. Furthermore, the relationships I developed with tenants involved in WPHAG over this period were profoundly important to both my data collection and to developing the aims and objectives of the project. Firstly, by working with WPHAG I was able to become familiar with and to the tenants involved and thus, I hope, to minimise the symbolic violence of research. My active participation in WPHAG meant that I was challenging common pejorative representations and treatment of the estate and public housing tenants generally, in both words and actions. I was also able to be transparent about the potential benefits (or lack thereof) of my 'traditional' research outputs (including this dissertation) while seeking input from tenants regarding 'non-traditional' outputs that I could develop. Furthermore, many interviews were conducted by both Praticchi and myself in an attempt to minimise intrusion and research fatigue; as I discussed in section 3.2, over-research had made exhaustion, exasperation and cynicism prevalent among sections of the community, and this intensified as the redevelopment process slowly progressed. Thus, the kind of reflexivity I sought to exercise was one of vigilant attention to and labour upon the positionalities of myself and my participants, of recognition of

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<sup>3</sup> The fact that we were all relatively young and able-bodied, in the context of a group that was mostly older, was significant in this respect.

the ‘institutional baggage’ (Maxey 1999) I carried, and of working to break down the boundaries between academia and activists or community. This approach, I suspect, also helped facilitate more open and dialogic exchanges with research participants, though as Bourdieu (1999c) rightly argues there is a degree of self-portraiture taking place in any interviewee setting, on both sides of the Dictaphone.

Given that most tenants who participated in semi-structured interviews were recruited via WPHAG or were involved in other community groups, it goes without saying that the sample of Redfern-Waterloo tenants whom I interviewed was biased towards the passionate and engaged. In the overwhelming majority of cases this meant that I interviewed tenants who were adamantly positive about their neighbourhood and community and keen to portray it thus, though in one or two cases the opposite was true. Interviews with tenants and community workers focused on their views and responses towards the redevelopment, their experiences of the redevelopment process and with the NSW Government more broadly, their sense of stigma and its impact, and their perceptions and experiences of their community and neighbourhood generally. In total I interviewed 34 tenants, tenant advocates, and community workers, several of whom occupied dual positions as tenants and advocates or community workers.

My involvement with WPHAG ended in October 2017 after some of the group’s leaders – one in particular – had gradually shifted away from a position of radical refusal and towards accepting the NSW Government’s dubious proposition that they should engage with them for a ‘better’ redevelopment outcome through formal consultation processes (see Chapter 8). More importantly, racist, sexist and classist group dynamics (which in retrospect were clearly present from our earliest engagement) intensified and became intolerable. Several WPHAG members were alienated from the group, and the four of us academic researchers followed shortly thereafter. It was a failure on our part to not address these problems earlier; we were overly reticent to speak about them due to a fear of appropriating the tenants’ struggle. Clearly, we had failed to break down boundaries and binaries to the extent that we had hoped. This end to my engagement with WPHAG means that the data I acquired through interviews and ethnographic observation is not as full as it could be. However, the precarity of scholar-activism is an inherent ethical and methodological dilemma (Chatterjee et al. 2019).

While my research was not participatory in the strict sense of Participatory Action Research, I was encouraged by tenants to ‘turn the eye on power’ – to focus more on the government and private sector actors (including property developers, CHPs, and the media) who were controlling the estate redevelopment, or who had a political or economic interest in it. I

conducted semi-structured interviews with 14 current or former housing bureaucrats, CHP staff, and other housing sector professionals. The content of these interviews varied according to the specific position of the interviewee(s), broadly focusing on their views about the drivers and objectives of the Waterloo estate redevelopment, perceptions of public housing and of Redfern-Waterloo, visions for the social housing system, and views toward the significance of stigma as problem encountered in or addressed by their work. Access to powerful actors was difficult; multiple interview requests made to the City of Sydney, Redfern Police Local Area Command, the NSW housing authority Department of Family and Community Services (FACS), Greater Sydney Commission (GSC) commissioners (bar one), Urban Development Institute of Australia, and several CHPs, were ignored or denied. The response to requests for interviews I received from FACS was particularly noteworthy. I initially emailed a local client services team leader to follow up the interview request that I had made at the end of a Redfern Neighbourhood Advisory Board meeting – regular meetings attended by tenant representatives as well as representatives from various government agencies and NGOs. I eventually received a meeting invitation from another FACS staff member, which, after seeking clarification, I learned was for interviews with two more senior FACS staff. The passage below is from my field notes, taken immediately after a meeting two FACS staff whom myself and Pratchi were initially granted permission to interview:

Gavin\* arrives and we introduce ourselves. He is affable, confident, slick; in many ways a prototypical mid-forties corporate man. We are taken over to the reception to sign in. Gavin half-introduces us to Suzy\*, who does not turn to look at us. I introduce myself. Gavin makes small talk; Suzy is silent.

We make our way through security, up to level four, into the meeting room. Suzy is visibly uncomfortable. She says she had tried to arrange for her senior to take her place at the interview, and that she has only been in her role in Waterloo since November. Gavin is back and forth – fetching a glass of water for Pratchi, then momentarily disappearing for some other reason – and then sits down, leaning back (perhaps cross-legged?) in his chair. I hand out the paperwork and describe my project. Pratchi describes hers. I explain the key details in the paperwork. Suzy looks somewhat shaken and scared. Gavin asserts control of the situation, saying how he would like them to prepare for the meeting but that he thought it would be good to have us in first, “to meet face to face”. He goes on to say that he wants to brief Suzy, and to read through a list of pre-prepared questions – “Just your top five” – and, after a little back and forth, asks that we reschedule the interview. Suzy expresses her unwillingness to be there at all and says she’s not comfortable being recorded. Gavin says he is but if she doesn’t want to be then that’s OK (he later suggests that he will talk her around, because he’s done so many of these types of interviews before). We agree to reschedule. Gavin mentions it would be

useful to bring in LAHC, saying [not verbatim] “Our business is like Ray White<sup>4</sup>... We manage the asset for Land and Housing” and that they “control” the tenants for Land and Housing. (This is an interesting and revealing way of describing the nature of the relationship; that FACS effectively is contracted for LAHC, rather than the two being in partnership or the other way around.) We leave, assuring them that we will follow up by email in the afternoon (field notes May 2018).

I did indeed follow up by email in the afternoon, to which Gavin replied that he would schedule another date. However, this was the last I heard from Gavin or FACS, despite multiple attempts to contact them. ‘Turning the eye on power’, as it were, was made considerably more difficult by the intransigence of powerful actors and institutions.

Given the difficulty I experienced in recruiting interview participants from government agencies and the private sector, discourse analysis was an important component of my research methods. It provided a lens through which to examine the ‘realities’ or doxa that such powerful actors are enfolded within and act upon (Dodson 2007). Discourse analysis thus also ‘armed’ my ethnographic research (Wacquant 2009b) and made me a somewhat more useful scholar-activist. I assembled a wide range of material for this analysis, in recognition that while the state is a powerful and increasingly prominent producer of representations (Wacquant 2009a), it is, as I discussed in the previous chapter, networked with various institutions in the media, others in the private sector, and the third sector, in the production of territory from above through practices and representations (Antonsich 2009; Paasi 2009). The material assembled for discourse also reflect my research aims and questions regarding resistance and contestation: they include a range of cultural products that were intentionally included for their consistent circulation of alternative representations of public housing and Redfern-Waterloo specifically. The material that comprised my discourse analysis therefore included the following:

- (i) News media reports returned by a Factiva ® search for the terms “public housing”, “social housing”, “housing estate” and “housing commission”, from the *Sydney Morning Herald*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Australian*, and *Australian Financial Review* for the period 1<sup>st</sup> January 2009 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2018 (n = 2913);
- (ii) Publicly available Commonwealth Government, NSW Government, and City of Sydney documents relating to social housing, housing policy and planning generally, and the redevelopment of the Waterloo estate specifically published in the period 1<sup>st</sup> January 2009 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2018 (n = 66);

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<sup>4</sup> A major real estate agency

- (iii) Publicly available documents relating to social housing policy and planning published by think tanks, NGOs, consultants and other private- or third-sector organisations published in the period 1<sup>st</sup> January 2009 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2018 (n = 59);
- (iv) Online articles relating to public and social housing and Redfern-Waterloo published by the *South Sydney Herald*, *Inner Sydney Voice Magazine*, and Tenants Union of NSW (TUNSW) blog *The Brown Couch* for the period 1<sup>st</sup> January 2009 to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2018 (n = 214);
- (v) Instagram posts by the #WeLiveHere2019 campaign (n = 205); and
- (vi) Episodes in season one of the radio show *Survival Guide*, broadcast by Radio Skid Row (n = 9).

This material was assessed for relevance once collected and subsequently coded and marked up in NVivo ®. Key phrases and terms relating to the image or reputation of public or social housing and Redfern-Waterloo specifically were identified. These representations were assessed with respect to their reproduction or contestation of territorial stigma as well as their origins, the actors circulating them (and these actors' institutional situation and relations), their audience, objects, and subjects and subject positions. There are some clear limitations to this analysis. First, besides identifying and cataloguing supplementary non-textual representations (including maps, figures, and images) deployed alongside textual representations, my analysis was limited to text-based media and documents. Furthermore, while the established print media publications I analysed also publish their content through online digital platforms, my analysis takes poor account of the digitalisation of the media and media fragmentation generally (Cupples & Glynn 2016). I have neglected social media in particular and to a large extent other digital media from my discourse analysis (on stigma and social media, see Butler et al. 2018). Innumerable additional media sources were excluded based on their audience as well as pragmatic considerations; those included have a relatively large distribution and audience or were specifically engaged with the topic of public housing and/or Redfern-Waterloo. The four major corporate media publications selected for analysis are the national and NSW print publications of Australia's two major media conglomerates: News Corp Australia (which publishes the *Australian* and the *Daily Telegraph*) and Nine Entertainment Co. (which publishes the *Australian Financial Review* and the *Sydney Morning Herald*). Together these media corporations are responsible for Australia's status as the 10<sup>th</sup> most concentrated globally, by one measure, with a combined 86% of newspaper circulation in 2011 (Papandrea & Tiffen 2016). While newspaper circulation has of course declined dramatically over the past two decades, the two corporations span online, radio, television and print media. The decade-long time period from which material was collected

begins in the immediate aftermath of the post-GFC stimulus package and commencement of the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA), and ends around the time of the NAHA's expiration and its replacement with the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement in 2018-19. This period therefore falls between two poles in which utterances about public housing proliferated.

### **3.4 Conclusion**

The methods I used in conducting the research for this dissertation included discourse analysis, ethnography, and semi-structured interviews, guided by a scholar-activist ethic of situated solidarity (Routledge & Derickson 2015; Nagar & Geiger 2007). As I discuss in Chapters 4 through 6, by integrating ethnography, interviews, and discourse analysis I interrogated how the territorial stigmatisation of public housing was reproduced materially and discursively, and how this undergirded the decision to redevelop the Waterloo estate. Furthermore, as I discuss in Chapters 7 and 8, I also interrogated how the redevelopment of the Waterloo estate was contested and how the territorial stigmatisation that underpinned it was resisted, through territorial struggles that were both discursive and non-discursive. I also identified some of the challenges, dilemmas, and limitations of contesting and resisting territorial stigmatisation.

As I have discussed, discourse analysis is important in research on territorial stigmatisation given the concept's focus on the reproduction of symbolic structures and their effects on socio-material relations and subjectivities. Bourdieu's theory of symbolic power, and concepts of symbolic capital and symbolic struggle, are highly relevant. Symbolic capital determines access to discourse, which is a site of struggle: subjugated or subaltern groups do not simply passively accept the dominant discourses that reproduce their subjugation but rather often become engaged in the production of counter-discourses that contest them. As such, I have focused on both dominant discourses and counter-discourses in my critical discourse analysis. Critical discourse analysis alone, however, provides an insufficient picture of the social cognition of discourse (van Dijk 1993). As such, I integrated this method with ethnography and interviews, and this enabled me to observe the social and material effects of discourses in the redevelopment of the Waterloo estate, and the struggles over discourse that were part of wider territorial struggles.

Throughout my research and writing I made conscious efforts to try to avoid reproducing or reifying territorial stigma, whether through the uncritical representation and adoption of common-sense categories of analysis that Wacquant has himself critiqued, or through the inattention or ambivalence to agency and resistance that Wacquant has been

critiqued for. I was also cognisant of the ethical dilemmas posed by over-research. In attempting to navigate these methodological and ethico-political challenges, I sought to practice a scholar-activist ethic which, as I have discussed, presented unique benefits and unique difficulties. While things did not go as I had hoped, and despite its limitations, I am confident that this approach signals a more ethical way to research the issue of territorial stigmatisation, especially in the context of redevelopment and (possible) displacement. In the remainder of this dissertation I hope to demonstrate that it was also an empirically and conceptually fruitful one.

## Chapter 4

### Settler colonial foundations and neoliberal intensifications: a historical context for the territorial stigmatisation of public housing in Australia

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Public housing is a marginal form of tenure in Australia. The 2016 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census reported that 3.6% of all households were public housing and 4.2% social housing<sup>5</sup>, with only minor variation between cities and states. In NSW, 4% of households lived in public housing and 4.7% in social housing; in Sydney, 4.3% and 5%. These numbers are lower than they were mid-20<sup>th</sup> century: the proportion of public housing nation-wide peaked in the 1960s at approximately 9% (Hayward 1996). Conversely, home ownership has been a majority tenure form in Australia since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century and in 2016, 65% owned their home or were purchasing it. In Sydney, slightly fewer owned or were purchasing their home, at 62%. The marginal status of public housing and high rate of home ownership historically is a crucial point of difference from British and many European housing systems, among others: public housing in Australia has never rivalled home ownership in any numerically significant way. The territorial stigmatisation of public housing in Australia must be understood within this historic context, as something that has been produced relationally over decades of state policies and discourse that simultaneously devalorised public housing and valorised home ownership. As I argue in this chapter, the contemporary stigmatisation of public housing tenants and territorial stigmatisation of public housing estates is structured by the material and symbolic superordination of home ownership, which is a pillar of Australian settler colonialism and was strengthened by subsequent processes of neoliberalisation. This context is crucial, I argue, to understanding the political economy of (de)valuation that is constituted through territorial stigmatisation (Tyler 2018).

This chapter therefore provides a brief history and historical geography of Australian public housing and housing assistance generally, focusing on NSW and Sydney. The chapter contains two main sections, the first covering the period ‘pre-neoliberalisation’ and the second covering the period of neoliberalisation. As I discuss, this periodisation is not unproblematic: there is no clearly and neatly identifiable temporal break which one can point to as the beginning of neoliberalisation, and, as Berry (1999) points out, housing in Australia has been market-driven since land was put into market exchange in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Nevertheless, for the purposes of my analysis, the increased targeting of assistance and the shift to market rents in the 1970s

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<sup>5</sup> Subsidised, non-market rental housing operated by the state or a CHP.

were crucial reforms to the public housing system and are a useful heuristic for understanding what was both a piecemeal and occasionally contradictory process of restructuring.

Neoliberalisation modified, rather than replaced, the structure of settler colonialism that has shaped housing in Australia since 1788. However, as I argue in the first section, Australian housing scholars have paid too little attention to this fundamental structure. As Blatman-Thomas & Porter (2019: 31) observe, “in urban scholarship, unless the central subject of study is colonialism itself, the colonial structure invariably fades from view”. As Wolfe (1999) famously argued, settler colonialism is a structure rather than an event, and as Porter & Yiftachel (2018: 178) have contended, “urbanization tends to work to sustain the always-present structures of settler colonial nation-building”. Yet housing and urban scholarship has not only routinely ignored the centrality of urbanisation processes to ongoing processes of Indigenous dispossession and white possession but, in doing so, has further obscured it (Porter & Yiftachel 2018: 178; see also Coulthard 2014; Hugill 2017). Home ownership is of course underpinned by the first colonial thefts and has subsequently been upheld through systems of land tenure, property, and planning (Porter 2018). As the modality through which the majority of settlers settle, it has been a core component of the Australian settler colonial project, giving it “material presence and organizational shape” (Porter & Yiftachel 2018: 177).

As I outline in the next section, this ‘context of contexts’ (Porter 2018) is fundamental to public housing’s numeric marginality and stigmatisation alongside home ownership’s incentivisation and idealisation. Furthermore, as I explicate in the section after that, neoliberal refractions of settler colonialism through the housing system have intensified the territorial stigmatisation of public housing. In concluding the chapter, I recapitulate this argument and resketch the political economy of (de)valuation through which the stigmatisation of tenants and territorial stigmatisation of estates operates: the structure of the housing system under neoliberalised settler colonialism (Tomiak 2017).

#### **4.1 Housing assistance in the settler colony**

Home ownership, writes Kemeny (1977, 1981, 1983), is ‘naturalised’ in Australia: it is represented as an innate desire rather than a politically and economically manufactured one. This naturalisation “finds its expression in the elevation of home-ownership to ‘The Great Australian Dream’ [which] together with political beliefs about ‘a property-owning democracy’, combine[s] to produce what is undoubtedly the most powerful ideology in Australian social and political life” (Kemeny 1977: 47). Home ownership is ‘sanctified’ as an ideal by a ‘national belief system’ that equates it with ‘good citizenship’ and ‘investment’ in the community and nation-state, both

symbolically and materially (Ronald 2008; see also Spearritt 1974). Furthermore, as Ronald (2008: ix) argues, home ownership “support[s] a particular alignment or interaction of social and power relations” that invest subjects in private property relations, and therefore the structures as well as the ideologies of capital. For Jacobs (2019), home ownership has been central to cultures of individualism, which are materialised in the suburban form. As Castles (1994, 1998) has outlined, home ownership was a material basis for the particular form taken by the Australian capitalist state for much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: a ‘wage earners welfare state’ in which the welfare of society was managed (or not) through wage regulation, industrial relations, and state interventions in banking and finance that allowed workers and their families to meet their needs through regulated markets and asset-based welfare (see also Kemeny 1977, 2005). Home ownership has thus long been superordinated by successive Australian governments through policies of direct and indirect assistance, and through discourses of citizenship, community, and belonging. Such a regime has been discussed at length (e.g. Dodson 2006; Groenhart & Burke 2014; Groenhart & Gurrin 2015; Kemeny 1977, 1985, 1995; Jacobs 2015, 2019; Ronald 2008; Troy 2012; Yates 2003) and in this section I outline how state housing assistance, and public rental housing assistance particularly, has been configured within it. Among many other deleterious social and economic effects, the predominance of home ownership has been a socio-ideological basis for the residualisation of welfare generally and public housing especially (Jacobs 2019; Ronald 2008). I add that at the base of this regime – undergirding ideas about citizenship, belonging, community, and nation, *and* the system of private property relations – is the structure of Australian settler colonialism. In short, home ownership helps reproduce and naturalise the structure and ideology of settler colonialism, upon which Australian capitalism has been built. This is a critically important dimension of the housing regime that many housing scholars have overlooked.

At the centre of settler colonialism is the possession of land (Coulthard 2014; Moreton-Robinson 2015). Possession is defined “both as an intention to control territory and in its actual manifestation in the form of occupation” (Bhandar 2016: 122), enabling the nation-building of settler colonies like Australia. White possession is enacted and upheld through the private property relation, which is the “persistent and central organizing logic in settler colonial urbanization” (Blatman-Thomas & Porter 2019: 35). As a dominant form of property ownership, home ownership has enabled more rapid and widespread occupation of the land by non-Indigenous bodies – as Kemeny (2005) perhaps unwittingly points out in discussing the sprawling nature of settlement fuelled by home ownership. Furthermore, in Australia the alignment of property with real estate is so close as to depoliticise and normalise the former as a

“commonsense, mundane bundle of rights that people hold toward an estate” (Blatman-Thomas & Porter 2019: 35) rather than a system of Indigenous dispossession and settler possession. As Blatman-Thomas & Porter continue, “[p]roperty thus *becomes* the object in relation to settler subjects, emerging as the stable, severable thing that activates the familiar categories of ownership, exchange, control and belonging” (ibid.: 36, original emphasis). Thus, as Rogers (2017: 4) has argued, the *present* structure of Australian settler colonialism is defined by “claiming, regulating and protecting land” through real estate.

The ‘national belief system’ that ‘sanctifies’ the ideal of home ownership (Ronald 2008) is therefore “built on the disavowal of Indigenous sovereignty because the nation is socially and culturally constructed as a white possession” (Moreton-Robinson 2015: xxi). Home-ownership demands its subjects disavow Indigenous sovereignty and ownership and thereby enrolls them into the perpetuation of settler colonial myths like *terra nullius* and Australian egalitarianism (Veracini 2011). In investing its subjects into the structure of settler colonialism and white possession and enrolling them into settler colonial ideologies and myths, home ownership materially and ideologically ‘shores up’ territory “for the purposes of state formation, settlement and capitalist development” (Coulthard 2014: 125). In this ‘context of contexts’ (Porter 2018), home ownership has been the favoured tenure for successive State and Commonwealth governments while public rental housing has been of marginal interest at best. Indeed, as I discuss below, the public housing system was for several decades in the 20<sup>th</sup> century a vehicle for the expansion of home ownership.

In the remainder of this section I outline the history of Australian public housing and assisted home ownership from the late-19<sup>th</sup> century to the early 1970s, focusing on NSW and Sydney. I separate this period into two, either side of the creation of the Commonwealth Housing Commission (CHC) and the first Commonwealth States Housing Agreement (CSHA) in 1945. My argument is not that a housing regime less dominated by home ownership or private ownership generally, such as mass public provision or a social market, would be less (dis)possessive of Indigenous territories and less violently hostile towards their presence. Indeed, as I outline, the principle subject of public housing in Australia was for a long period the male settler worker, and it was once this changed that the stigmatisation of public housing intensified. Rather, my argument is that the superordination of home ownership in Australia has been and continues to be a key pillar in the structure of Australian settler colonialism and, in its relation to other tenures, a central driver of the marginal status and, ultimately, stigmatisation of public housing tenants and estates. The superordination of home ownership has meant that relatively limited resources have been directed towards public housing, making it numerically marginal (a

precondition for its social marginality) as well as, often, more poorly built and in lower amenity locations. This was exacerbated from the mid-1950s by policies that enabled public housing tenants to purchase their homes, removing better built and better located dwellings from the public system and ultimately producing the dual morphological character of stigmatised public housing estates in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: suburban Radburn estates on the one hand and inner-city high-rise estates on the other. Furthermore, the symbolic valorisation of home ownership for its purported citizen-, community- and nation-building qualities functions to deride renters as inferior citizens and community members.

### **Early forms of housing assistance: pre-Federation to post-WWII**

According to Hayward (1996), public housing provision in Australia emerged in the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century with the Commonwealth and State governments providing cheap finance for working settler men to purchase homes. There had, however, been extensive state assistance prior, in the form of land grants as well as government loans for the construction of housing. In NSW, the 1893 *Labour Settlements Act* granted loans and purchase rights for land in the new towns of Bega, Wilberforce and Pitt Town, on the condition that recipients carry out property works for a minimum of eight hours per day (Troy 1990). Furthermore, the 1901 *Blockholders Act* granted 99-year leases of up to 10 acres of Crown land in the Sydney region and loans of up to £50 or 50% of construction costs (ibid.). By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, roughly half of all settler Australian households were owner-occupied – one of the highest rates throughout the world – but rates were much lower in urban areas, where private renting was more common (Troy 2012).

While land grants are a fairly obvious technology of dispossession and white possession, settler colonialism was also reproduced in slum clearance in Sydney. The conditions of private renting became an object of state intervention in the mid- to late-19<sup>th</sup> century (Mayne 1982, 1983). For example, the 1877 *City of Sydney Improvement Act* empowered health officers to declare dwellings ‘unsuitable for human habitation’ and to demand they be vacated until repaired (Mayne 1993). In 1905, the NSW Government granted the city council the power to resume slums (Spearritt 2000), though slum clearance had also occurred de facto prior, when condemned buildings were demolished individually. Australian slum clearance can be understood as a feature of the kind of ‘Better Britonism’ which Veracini (2011) has argued is integral to the Australian settler colonial project. It was heavily influenced by British slum clearance interventions: Mayne (1993: 151) outlines how fear of “slumland’s insidious advance” was propagated by the circulation of British slum journalism and fiction, while politicians and philanthropists adopted

the reformist discourses and ‘solutions’ from the ‘old world’. It was also, in part, a racist response to Asian and other non-white, non-Indigenous slum residents whose presence destabilised the imaginary of a new white nation and the project of white nation-building (Fitzgerald 2008; Mayne 1993; Spearritt 2000). Thus, some but not all slum clearance programs and related interventions in the private rental market involved rehousing former residents, primarily via assisted home ownership rather than public or private rental (Troy 1990). Between 1910 and 1919, Labor governments in each of the six states introduced legislation to establish schemes for the public construction of homes – most of which were sold, rather than leased, to households on low to moderate incomes (Troy 2012).

The Commonwealth became more actively involved in housing after World War I, with returned settler servicemen given special assistance for the purchase of land and houses under the 1919 *War Service Homes Act*. According to the Act, the Commonwealth provided loans and established the War Service Homes Commission to build houses for sale to servicemen (Pettigrew 2005); however, while the Australian War Memorial records that over 1000 Aboriginal men fought in the war, only one is recorded having been granted land under this scheme (Australian War Memorial 2017). Beyond this scheme for returned settler servicemen, housing assistance was difficult to access for anyone other than working settler men, either as policy or in the practice of delivering housing assistance through loan arrangements that required the recipient to be in formal waged work (a practice that continued throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century) (Kemeny 1983). State and Commonwealth legislation directed the banks to make home ownership more accessible to waged settler men by permitting the banks to both develop and finance housing developments (Hayward 1996). The *Commonwealth Housing Act* of 1928 and amendments to the *Banking Act* empowered the Commonwealth Savings Bank to lend to approved housing authorities, including banks, for the purchase and construction of houses and the provision of mortgages (Groenhart & Gurran 2015; Troy 2009). Home ownership was also made more accessible by cooperative building societies, from whom it was hoped that more low- and moderate-income earners could borrow to meet purchase or construction costs (Pettigrew 2005; Troy 2012).

As Troy (2012: 33) describes, the approach to housing assistance throughout this period was one that was:

directed to shifting the young and aspiring professional class out of the rental category and into home ownership, using federal funds to bolster home ownership while ignoring the needs of the greater part of the rental housing

group, confined to landlordism by low incomes and lack of public housing for special welfare needs.

There were, however, some small exceptions to Troy's characterisation of this period. The new NSW Labor government of 1910 responded to rising social and political concerns about housing conditions by empowering the City of Sydney to build and rent dwellings, although this program was short lived (ibid.). It also established a Housing Board under the NSW *Housing Act 1912* to purchase and develop land and sell or rent dwellings (Pettigrew 2005). This Act was extended in 1919 to allow for advances to be made on the building or buying of houses (Troy 2012). The Housing Board oversaw the development of the first estate in NSW: Dacey Gardens was comprised of 309 rental homes in the south Sydney suburb of Daceyville (ibid.). This would be the NSW Government's only foray into permanent rental housing provision for another two decades. Even during the Depression of the 1930s – a period of heightened housing shortages, unaffordability, and evictions – the NSW Housing Trust was directed to assist unemployed men and their families to purchase or privately rent homes – through funds to assist with the purchase of building materials, rental payments, or outstanding rates and taxes – rather than building public housing (ibid.).

### **The emergence of public rental housing**

Calls for direct government intervention in low-income rental housing emerged out of renewed attention to slum conditions in the 1920s and 1930s (Hayward 1996). In Sydney, so-called slums had persisted in the inner south, including in Redfern, Waterloo, Surry Hills and Alexandria (Spearritt 1973, 2000). These slums were often stigmatised, and state interventions were developed and articulated in response to stigma (Spearritt 1973). However, as I discuss throughout this dissertation, this stigma was in many of these places reconstituted in a different form later in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The NSW Government attempted to recommence slum clearance under the 1936 *Housing Improvement Act*, which empowered and financed councils to acquire land for housing improvement schemes (Pettigrew 2005). A 1937 amendment to the Act authorised the board to build a 'demonstration project' of 56 low-rise apartments in Erskineville, the next suburb west of Alexandria in Sydney's inner-south (ibid.). This estate – the second in Sydney, after Dacey Gardens – failed to encourage local councils to partake in the scheme as intended. Nevertheless, slum clearance and tenant rehousing remained on the agenda in NSW and, following the election of the McKell Labor Government in 1941, became an objective of the 1941 *Housing Act* and the NSW Housing Commission that the Act established (ibid.). Initial progress was slow, focusing on housing for workers in industries crucial to the war effort and, after the war, temporary worker housing and emergency accommodation (Pettigrew 2005).

Wartime had widened the possibilities of state intervention, both during the war and in post-war nation-building. Slum clearance emerged from this political, economic, and cultural context: as Mayne (1995, pp.84-85) writes,

public memory of the mobilization of national resources for war was readily translated into calls for domestic social reforms designed to create a competitive edge ... [E]nlistment for war and slum abolitionism were conflated as acts of public service. The mobilization of community goodwill in support of an altruistic cause lay at the core of the reformers' metaphors of slumland battle.

At the level of the Commonwealth Government, the Joint Parliamentary Committee of Social Security appointed by the conservative Menzies government in 1941 (and retained by the Curtin Labor government following their victory later that year) recommended a national housing scheme based on adequate housing for low-income earners, the establishment and enforcement of minimum housing standards, a broad program of slum clearance and tenant rehousing, and the home purchase advances for low-income households (Troy 2012). The Committee presented its recommendations as a key pillar of post-war reconstruction, economic development, and nation-building. Providing affordable, adequate housing was seen to be necessary not only to meet the housing needs of working settler men and their families but to provide economic and political stability in the post-war period of geopolitical uncertainty and 'Red Scare' (Mayne 1993). The Department of Post-War Reconstruction was established by the Commonwealth Labor government in January 1943; as Troy (2012: 47) explains, it "was seen as an instrument to manage the anticipated economic challenges facing Australia and the social change it would need to undergo". The Department established the CHC and thus initiated a national framework for housing assistance.

The final report of the CHC recommended that the Commonwealth Government fund the delivery of 80,000 dwellings per year, through cooperation between the private sector and all levels of government (Hayward 1996). State governments would qualify for Commonwealth funding so long as they met conditions relating to planning provisions, building standards, building costs, allocations and administration (Troy 2012). The CHC recommended government support for home ownership but acknowledged the need for subsidised rental accommodation; specifically, it recommended that the government sponsor half of all annual construction and that half of this be directed to rental accommodation (ibid.). Rental accommodation would incur 'economic rents' set at a rate of amortisation of 6.5% of capital costs plus ongoing maintenance and administration costs. Under this model, a tenant's rental payments would decline after the cost of the loan and interest had been paid for. To contain rents, limits were imposed on

construction costs and rental subsidies were made available, and as such, the system proposed by the CHC was oriented toward low-income working men and their families (*ibid.*).

The recommendations of this report informed the 1945 CSHA, the first of several housing agreements between Commonwealth and State governments. Under the terms of the first Agreement, the Commonwealth lent funds each year to the States at a bond rate of 3% and a repayment period of 53 years, with the Commonwealth prepared to underwrite up to 60% of losses incurred by the States (Hayward 1996). Each State established a State Housing Authority (SHA), responsible for the construction and management of public housing that would be leased for economic rents with rebates available (*ibid.*). While applicants were not explicitly means-tested, preferential treatment was given to low- to moderate-income workers, dual-parented families with children, and, in particular, returned servicemen (Hayward 1996; Yates 2013). As such, the public housing system reproduced and reified the settler colonial constitution of the working settler male breadwinner as the principle subject *of* government housing and *for* nation-building. Nevertheless, and some home ownership schemes notwithstanding, the 1945 CSHA commenced the brief and exceptional period in which, for perhaps the only time in the history of Australian housing assistance, public rental housing was favoured over home ownership by State and Commonwealth Governments (Hayward 1996).

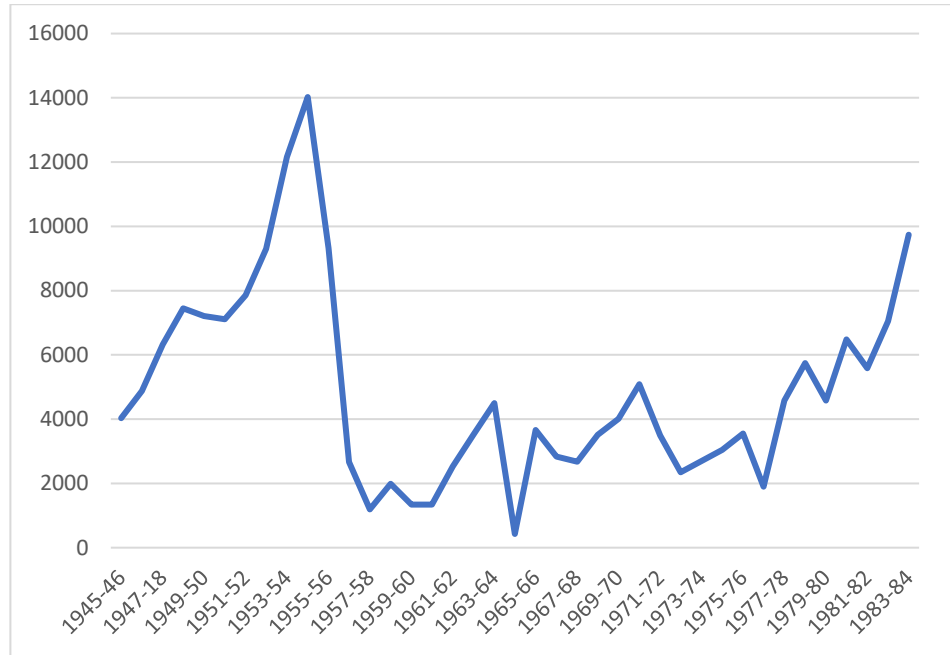
By the end of the Agreement in 1956, 96,138 dwellings had been completed nationally – 14.4% of all dwellings built over the period – and 37,718 in NSW (Troy 2012). The first permanent homes built by the NSW Housing Commission were in the western Sydney suburbs of Ermington, Rydalmere, Granville and Westmead – ‘broadacre’ suburban developments of mass-produced, mostly cottage-style houses that were consistent with suburban idylls and the growth of private automobile transport (Pettigrew 2005; see also Flanagan 2015, 2019). Broadacre development expanded in the 1950s to suburbs including Villawood, Blacktown, and Seven Hills (Pettigrew 2005). With the influx of applicants, material and labour shortages, and budgetary limitations, the acquisition and rezoning of rural land for suburban development was a cost-effective approach. These conditions also led to the subordination of housing quality to speed of supply (Hayward 1996) and experimentation with materials and construction methods (Flanagan 2019; Pettigrew 2005). This experimentation extended to the construction of high-rise apartment buildings, the first of which was the Greenway building, built in 1954 in the northern harbourside suburb of Kirribilli (Pettigrew 2005). The reinvigorated interest in slum clearance that had arguably been the impetus for public rental housing eventually found its resolution later in the 1950s, most extensively in Redfern and Waterloo where residents were rehoused in walk-up apartment buildings. Thus, dual trends of broadacre suburban and high-density inner-city

development began at an early stage. As I discuss in the remainder of this chapter and in the next, the territorial stigmatisation of public housing in Sydney centres on this dual morphological character.

Hayward (1996: 16) writes that a “tension was buried deep inside some of the SHAs between administering a viable public housing system and promoting home ownership, a tension that was not resolved until the signing of the second CSHA in 1956”. The 1956 Agreement and subsequent Agreements wound back home ownership disincentives and curtailed the expansion public housing. Troy (2012) rightly points out that all major political parties in Australia have always been heavily vested in home ownership; however, the conservative 1949 Menzies government made home ownership more of an imperative than its predecessor. Menzies is (in)famously credited with claiming that home ownership makes its subjects into ‘little capitalists’, and Kemeny (1983) argues that it was under his (second) prime ministership that home owners came to be constituted as an electoral force. The sale of public housing stock by the States had been heavily disincentivised under the 1945 Agreement by the requirement that the full value of the Commonwealth loan be repaid upon the sale of a property, but a 1954 amendment eased restrictions on the sale of properties to tenants and as a result, 6.6% of public housing dwellings nationally were sold by the Agreement’s end (Hayward 1996). The 1956 CSHA escalated the sale of public housing by permitting the States to sell dwellings under any conditions without having to repay Commonwealth loans (*ibid.*). As such, the SHAs “could now use cheap Federal funds to finance the sale of public housing into home ownership”, making public housing another tool for promoting home ownership (*ibid.*: 18). Furthermore, 20% of the CHC budget – increased to 30% in 1958-59 – was redistributed to a Home Builders Account to assist low-income working men and families into home ownership through building societies and other financial institutions (*ibid.*). The 1956 Agreement also removed directives regarding rental arrangements and withdrew Commonwealth subsidisation of rental losses (*ibid.*). The 1961 and 1966 Agreements largely continued these policies of favouring home ownership and permitting tenants to purchase their dwellings. Additionally, in 1964 the Commonwealth Government introduced Home Savings Grants for first-time purchasers (Bourassa et al. 1995). As late as 1965, writes Kemeny (1983), the Commonwealth Government was providing 40% of owner-occupier finance. The rate of home ownership rose from 53% in 1947 to 69% in 1971, rising sharpest in the 1950s, when materials and suburban allotments were relatively cheap and owner-building became popular (Troy 2012). While public housing construction continued, as Figures 4.1 and 4.2 illustrate, and even grew to approximately 7% of households in NSW and 8%

**Figure 4.1**  
Total CSHA public rental dwellings constructed per annum, 1945-46 to 1983-84.

Source: adapted from Troy (2012)



nationally, the rate of increase declined markedly following the 1956 Agreement (Hayward 1996). Troy (2012) estimates that by the end of the 1966 Agreement in 1973 (having been extended for a further two years in 1971), the stock of public housing was in real terms less than half what it would have been were it not for the sale of public housing.

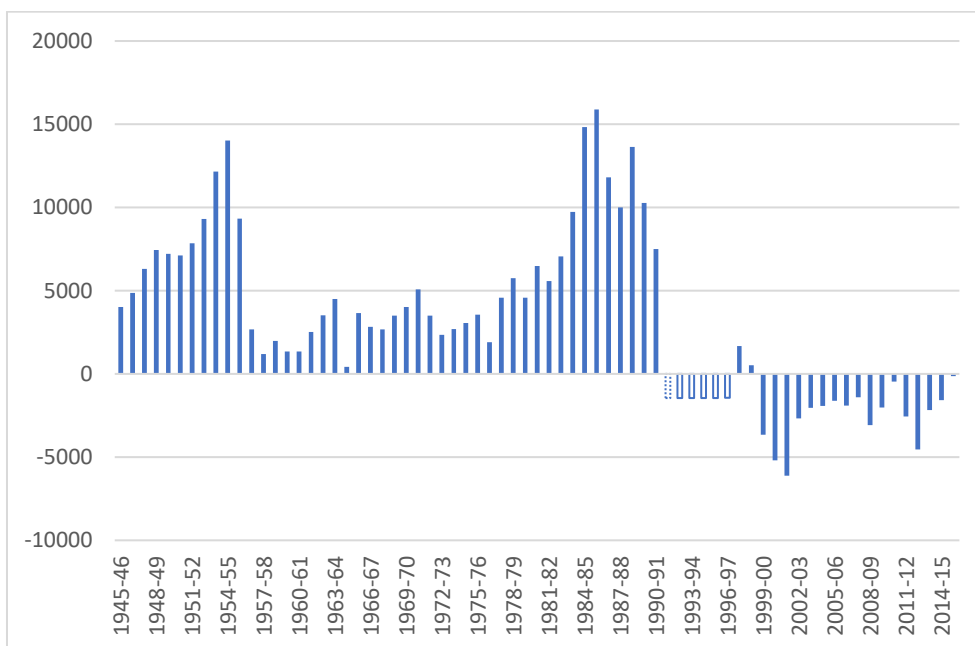
All public dwellings sold were houses rather than apartments or flats, which were not made available for purchase<sup>6</sup>, and the number and proportion of Housing Commission apartments grew following the removal of restrictions on the height of apartment buildings in the early 1960s. Increasingly large apartment complexes were built in Sydney, specifically in Surry Hills, Redfern, Glebe and Waterloo. In 1960, both John Northcott Place in Surry Hills and William McKell Place in Redfern were opened, and construction commenced for Sloss Court in Glebe and Poet's Corner in Redfern (Pettigrew 2005). The six towers in Waterloo's 'Endeavor' estate were completed from 1974 to 1976, including the 32-storey Matavai and Turanga buildings and the 16-storey Marton, Solander, Banks and Cook buildings<sup>7</sup> (ibid.). Few modernist high-rise

<sup>6</sup> While the introduction of Strata Title in NSW in 1961 made private ownership of individual apartments possible, the policy against the sale of apartments remained.

<sup>7</sup> The names of these buildings speak to a settler nation-building imaginary. The Waterloo estate is named after Captain James Cook's HMS Endeavor and the towers are named after various aspects of his voyage: Solander and Banks were botanists who accompanied him; Marton was the town of his birth; Matavai a Tahitian harbour he visited and Turanga (tūranga) a Māori word for 'landing place'. The interiors of the common areas in Matavai and Turanga were decorated with wall art depicting scenes of Cook's life and voyages, some of which remains. Furthermore, the three buildings of Poet's Corner are named after 19<sup>th</sup> century bush poets: (Henry) Lawson, (Dorethea) Mackellar and (Henry) Kendall. The Sirius building, which I discuss further in section 4.2, was named after the HMS Sirius, flagship of the First Fleet.

**Figure 4.2**  
 Net public housing additions 1945-46 to 2015-16. Imputed for 1991-92 to 1995-96 due data unavailability.

Source: adapted from Troy (2012); Foard et al. (1994); Productivity Commission (1999, 2000, 2001, 2005, 2009, 2013, 2018)



residential towers like these were built for private housing, marking inner-city public housing as visibly distinct to a significant extent. The “identifiable separateness” (Darcy 2013: 369) of these estates, as I discuss later in this chapter and in the next, would go on to function as both an exacerbating factor in and symbolic anchor for stigmatisation. Furthermore, as Hayward (1996) identifies, the growth in high-rise construction entailed a shift in organisational power away from SHA personnel with expertise in planning or social work and toward those with experience in construction and engineering – a shift that, as I discuss in the next section, continued through the remainder of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

While high-rise construction was expanding, broadacre suburban development continued in western Sydney suburbs like Mt Druitt, Green Valley and Bonnyrigg, and in south-western Sydney suburbs like Macquarie Fields, Minto, Airs, Bradbury and Claymore, in the mid-1960s to mid-1970s (Pettigrew 2005). Many of these outer-suburban estates were built according to Radburn design principles: a form of garden city planning which separates pedestrian and vehicle traffic to create communal public areas within clusters of ‘back to front’ dwellings (Pettigrew 2005). Radburn design was, like high-rise modernism, another example of innovation and experimentation in public housing design which similarly marked suburban estates as visibly distinct, exacerbating and anchoring stigma. As a rule, homes purchased by tenants from 1954 to 1973 were those in more desirable locations, causing a shortage of public housing in the inner- and middle-suburbs (Troy 2012). Newer suburban developments, increasingly forced towards the urban fringe due to the rising cost of land in a booming property market (Daly 1982), tended

to have poorer amenities and services. As such, reforms that allowed tenants to buy their homes consolidated the dual morphological character of public housing: inner-city apartments and outer-suburban estates. As I discuss in subsequent chapters, both built forms, and estates generally, came to be characterised as symbolic or and even causative of various social or socio-economic problems.

\*

The longstanding superordination of home ownership in Australia is central to the territorial stigmatisation of public housing in several ways. Firstly, the limited funds devoted to the construction of public housing have made it numerically marginal; it has never exceeded 10% nationally, nor in NSW (Troy 2012). This numeric marginality provided the foundation for its social marginality and residualisation from the mid-1970s onwards, whereby, as I discuss in the next section, public housing became increasingly targeted toward the most disadvantaged people. Furthermore, given limited resources, the subordination of quality to quantity and speed in the construction of public housing produced dwellings of relatively poorer quality in more poorly serviced and lower amenity places. Thus, compared to private housing, public housing was often of a lower standard, even before SHAs began falling behind on repairs and maintenance later in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Secondly, the extension of home ownership to public housing tenants through policies enabling them to purchase their rented homes contributed to the development of the dual morphological character of metropolitan public housing, illustrated below in Figure 4.3 and Figure 4.4. Better quality and better located dwellings were removed from the system, leaving outer-suburban estates (where SHAs continued to build) and high-density inner-city estates (where purchase of public homes was not permitted due to rules preventing the purchase of apartments). As I discuss in the next section and in subsequent chapters, this dual morphological character came to be denigrated later in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, its distinct physical form anchoring and exacerbating the stigmatisation of public housing tenants and the territorial stigmatisation of estates. Thirdly, the socio-discursive construction of home ownership as an ideal and as a demonstration of investment in community and nation – a feature of settler colonial state discourse – simultaneously functioned to construct non-home owners as socio-symbolically inferior. In other words, non-home owners are constructed as inferior citizens and community members according to settler colonial ideas about community, prosperity, and nation. This is amplified by material advantages provided to home owners and home ownership under a system of asset-based welfare, which continues to fuel socio-economic inequality (Adkins et al. 2019) and compound the symbolic devalorisation of non-home owners. As such, and as too few accounts of public housing and territorial stigma acknowledge, tenure inequality and the

territorial stigmatisation of public housing began prior to processes of neoliberalisation: they were constituted through the housing system of Australian settler colonial capitalism.

## **4.2 The neoliberalisation of housing assistance**

According to many accounts, the 1970s and the new CSHA in 1973 under the Whitlam Labor government marked the beginning of the neoliberalisation of housing assistance in Australia, given its shift to a more targeted form of assistance (Groenhart & Gurran 2015; Nicholls 2014; Tiernan & Burke 2002). Of course, characterising the changes wrought during this period as a sudden and sharp turn towards a neoliberal housing regime would be an oversimplification. For one, it would ignore earlier systems of housing assistance which, as I have discussed, have also been market-centric. As Kemeny (1977) rightly points out, home ownership was the dominant modality of privatisation – of social life and space – predating the privatisations of neoliberalism (see also Jacobs 2019). As I have alluded to already, home ownership worked symbolically and materially to encourage individualist ideologies prior to the neoliberal discourse on ‘individual responsibility’ that I shortly discuss (Jacobs 2019). Crucially, neoliberalism did not replace the structure of settler colonial capitalism but rather refracted it, enabling its reproduction and entrenchment in new marketised forms (Blatman-Thomas & Porter 2019; see also Bonds & Inwood 2016). Furthermore, as I discuss in this section, characterising the reforms of the early 1970s as a sudden and sharp neoliberal turn would ignore socially progressive changes to the constitution of the subject of government housing assistance; this period was one in which some of the demands of urban working class and Aboriginal communities – demands for both public or affordable housing and community control – were partially met.

Nevertheless, from the early 1970s onwards there were several changes to Australia’s housing regime that, from a post facto vantage point, are coherent with the wider project of political and economic restructuring usually labelled ‘neoliberalism’, and with conceptualisations of neoliberalism as a ‘market ethic’ (Harvey 2007; see Nicholls 2014; Tiernan & Burke 2002; Groenhart & Gurran 2015), as a discourse (see Darcy 1999; Dodson 2007; Flanagan 2015, 2019), and as a form of governmentality (Foucault 1991; Lemke 2002; see Dodson 2006; Jacobs 2019; Jacobs & Travers 2015). In the remainder of this section I outline several processes of neoliberalisation, including the contraction of the public housing system and marketisation of housing assistance, the emergence of discourses emphasising individual responsibility, and attendant political rationalities and modes of discursive subjectification. Neoliberalisation, I argue, intensified rather than created the stigmatisation of tenants and territorial stigmatisation of public housing estates.

**Figure 4.3**  
Claymore housing  
estate, c.1960s

Credit/Source:  
'Claymore housing  
estate,  
Campbelltown',  
Fairfax Collection  
(Campbelltown  
City Library)  
010\010059



**Figure 4.4**  
Northcott building,  
Surry Hills, c.1960

Credit/Source:  
040786 - Aerial  
view of Surry Hills,  
Sydney, c.1960s  
(City of Sydney  
Archives: 040786)



While drawing on a range of theories of neoliberalism, my discussion brings Wacquant's (2009) conceptualisation to the fore. For Wacquant, neoliberalism has involved the restructuring of the nexus of market, state, and citizenship from above – not as a strategy or plan by as a 'post-hoc functionality' through combinations of initial policy intent, policy adjustments, trial and error, and electoral politicking (Wacquant 2009a: 312). Wacquant (2009a, 2010, 2012) contends that four institutional logics have characterised neoliberalisation: (i) economic deregulation and the extension of the market and market-like mechanisms (see also Harvey 2007; Peck 2010); (ii) circulation of the cultural trope of individual responsibility and an end to 'leniency' (see also

Fraser & Gordon 1994; Bourdieu & Wacquant 2001); (iii) welfare state retraction and devolution (see also Peck 2001, 2012); and (iv) punitive regulation and surveillance to uphold individual responsibility and ensure ‘economic success’ (see also Flint 2018; Peck 2001). These logics are the “hard institutional contents to the soft notion of ‘political rationality’” used by Foucauldian scholars of neoliberal governmentality (Wacquant 2012: 72).

Eschewing hard distinctions between discursive and materialist approaches, Wacquant (2009a: 88) demonstrates how material interventions under neoliberalism have “reshaped the sociosymbolic landscape and remade the state itself” while the state has become a “potent cultural engine”, producing “categories, classifications, and images of wide import and use in broad sections of government action and civic life”. Punitive regulation of the poor performs profound symbolic functions that contribute to territorial stigmatisation by demarcating the ‘criminal’ and ‘irresponsible’ from the ‘law abiding’, by constructing and exemplifying poverty as an ‘intolerable offence’, and by ‘invisibilising’ the structural origins of social problems (Wacquant 2009a). At the same time, defamatory representations and classifications have been deployed to propel and legitimate neoliberal restructuring and punitive re-regulation. Territorial stigmatisation (along with other modes of stigmatisation) has thus emerged as a key feature of neoliberal urbanism (Wacquant et al. 2014).

Wacquant (2009a, 2010, 2012) argues that neoliberalism is principally a process of statecraft; it is not the withdrawal of the state but a transformation of its functions. States, he poses, have been transformed through struggles within the bureaucratic field – a concept from Bourdieu (1994, 1999) that explains the state as a splintered site of struggle over the legitimate use of physical and symbolic violence (which are operationalised through the concentration of capital, particularly its juridical form). Drawing on Bourdieu (1999b), Wacquant (2009a, 2010, 2012) describes two key contests in the bureaucratic field of neoliberalism. The first is a contest between ‘high’ and ‘low state nobility’ – between higher-level policy-makers intent on market-oriented reforms and policy executants more closely wedded to conventional state functions – in which the former has increased its ascendancy (*ibid.*). The second contest has involved the supersession of the state’s ‘right hand’ over its ‘left hand’, with the economic discipline imposed by the former increasingly supplementing or indeed supplanting the provisioning of social support by the latter (*ibid.*). This process of neoliberal statecraft, Wacquant claims, has produced a ‘centaur state’ that is liberal toward those in the upper echelons of society and punitively paternalistic towards those in the bottom. As Wimmer (2014: 1721) puts it, the centaur state

guarantees a 'liberal' order, tailored around the logic of economic markets, for those with the appropriate educational credentials, endowments with capital and so forth; and it keeps all others under control, quiet and depoliticized thanks to imprisonment, a push into low-paying jobs with no career possibilities, the confinement into stigmatized neighbourhoods from which there is no escape, and symbolic de-legitimization and dehumanization as crime-prone minorities.

Wacquant's theses on neoliberalism, with their emphasis on the reorientation of state control toward the punitive and panoptic rather than its simple cession to the market, should not be dismissed as the unique product of the US case he focuses on. As Spies-Butcher (2014) has described, a 'dual welfare state' has emerged in Australia that has begun to resemble Wacquant's centaur state with, on the one hand, the erosion of 'affluence testing' in areas such as school funding, health insurance and pensions, and, on the other hand, the emergence of workfare, mutual obligation, and surveillance of the unemployed (including the people with disability and single parents who have been shifted into this payment category) and rising rates of incarceration, as well as cuts to unemployment benefits in real terms. The punitive fist of the centaur state is brought to bear with greatest force upon Indigenous peoples, through hyper-incarceration (of both adults and children, with an outrageous number of deaths in custody each year), high and rising rates of removal of children into protective custody, targeted workfare programs for remote communities, the quarantining of welfare payments (via the Basics or cashless welfare card), and the raft of measures introduced through the Northern Territory Intervention<sup>8</sup>.

Housing is another field in which the operations of a centaur state can be observed. As I discuss in the remainder of this section, housing assistance has become increasingly marketised via demand subsidies, quasi-markets of non-profit housing providers, and asset management approaches to public housing. Reforms to public housing have both emulated practices in the

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<sup>8</sup> The Northern Territory National Emergency Response, or Northern Territory Intervention, is an ongoing set of punitive measures imposed on Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory, initially enacted by a conservative Liberal-National coalition government under the 2007 *Northern Territory National Emergency Response Act* and revised by a Labor government under the 2012 *Stronger Futures in Northern Territory Act* (which retained many of the measures of the previous Act). Undertaken in response to a Commonwealth-commissioned report on high levels of violence against Aboriginal children and women, but without heed to the report's recommendations or consultation with Aboriginal people, the Intervention involved a massively increased police presence, the restriction of 50% of beneficiaries' welfare payments to approved purchases, new restrictions on alcohol and pornography, the end to practices of considering customary law and cultural practice in bail applications and sentencing, and the appropriation of land held under Native Title via relaxation of the permit system (through which Aboriginal people can control who enters onto their land) and the five-year compulsory acquisition of townships. Measures implemented under the first Act required the suspension of the 1975 *Racial Discrimination Act* and deployment of the army for logistics and surveillance (see Brull 2017; Vivian & Shockman 2009; Watson 2009a).

private rental market as well as implementing more punitive regulations and surveillance (Flanagan 2015). At the same time, home ownership has remained valorised and heavily subsidised – for owner-occupiers most of all (Yates 2003; Groenhart & Gurrán 2015) – and home ownership has become increasingly key to wealth accumulation (Adkins et al. 2019). A centaur-like image of housing in Australia thus emerges. In this section I first unpack the complex legacy of the 1970s – the period in which many of the reforms I have alluded to originated, alongside some socially progressive interventions. In the second section I discuss the 40 years of marketisation, asset management practices, and marginalisation of public housing that followed. Reforms during this period intensified the stigmatisation of public housing tenants and territorial stigmatisation of estates in multiple ways. Increased targeting in the public housing system meant that its core subject was no longer the working settler male but rather came to include a range of marginalised groups (Flanagan 2019), whose concentration in estates worked to compound their stigmatisation by adding a territorial dimension. This targeting exacerbated the under-resourcing of public housing by reducing revenues from rents, leading to further deterioration in housing quality as SHAs struggled to keep up with repairs, maintenance, and debt. Furthermore, targeting increased the social distance between public housing tenants and home ownership: while tenants had previously been subjects of assisted home ownership programs, this became increasingly impossible during the late-20<sup>th</sup> century, and tenants thus came to be denigrated as ‘irresponsible’ or ‘dependent’. The techno-discursive restructuring of public housing through the introduction of market rents in the 1970s was in this respect fundamentally important, as it exaggerated the rebate that public housing tenants received. Notions of tenants’ as ‘subsidised’, ‘dependent’, and ‘undeserving’ have undergirded the rolling out of surveillance and punitive interventions. The increasingly punitive regulation of public housing both responds to and exacerbates territorial stigma (which itself might be considered a form of punishment) and obfuscates structural and systemic issues.

### **The conflicting legacies of the 1970s**

Concerns emerged in the mid- to late-1960s about lower income households being unable to access public housing, alongside rising consternation about public housing tenants’ assets and wealth (Hayward 1996). In this context the Commonwealth Government began to see the object of public housing as welfare for those most in need rather than a public good made available on the basis of equity and rights (Troy 2012). In 1971, it introduced the *States Grants (Housing) Act* which gave more favourable loans and capital grants to the States (who were struggling with increasing land and construction costs, passed on in turn to tenants paying economic rents) so that they could give greater assistance to low-income households (ibid.). SHAs continued to

struggle to keep pace with demand; in 1972 the NSW Housing Commission produced an 'Emergency Report' detailing the difficulties it was experiencing in supplying new housing and sought to halt the sale of its properties (Pettigrew 2005). In 1973, under a new CSHA negotiated by the Whitlam government, the CHC's budget was substantially increased and sales were limited to 30% of annual dwelling constructions, though an amendment was introduced that eased this restriction after a change of government in 1975 (Hayward 1996). 43,589 public housing dwellings were built under the five years of the Agreement while 27,404 were sold off (Troy 2012).

In addition to increasing funding and limiting sales, a third and perhaps most notable feature of the 1973 CSHA was its increase in the degree of targeting that the SHAs were to adopt (Hayward 1996). This was the first of several rounds of eligibility restrictions over the next four decades, commencing the process that has been termed 'residualisation' (Atkinson & Jacobs 2008). The term 'welfare housing' was used for the first time in the 1973 Agreement, further signalling a shift in the subject of public housing toward those most in need (Pettigrew 2005; see also Flanagan 2019). Increased targeting was supported by two reports published in 1975. The first of these, the report of the Commission of Inquiry into Poverty, or the Henderson Report, juxtaposed the large number of public housing tenants who were not living in poverty with the many impoverished people who were struggling to secure adequate housing (Hayward 1996). The Henderson Report thus provides an early example of the highly contradictory yet persistent expectation that public housing tenants should live in poverty, or at least extreme austerity, despite the anti-poverty purpose of public housing. The Priorities Review Staff's *Report on Housing* reinforced this analysis and recommended rents be set at market rates rather than economic rates, with rebates means-tested and housing vouchers provided for assistance in the private rental market (Hayward 1996; Troy 2012). The influential book *Housing and Poverty in Australia* (Jones 1972) made similar recommendations. In NSW, the Wran Labor government that came into power in 1976 set rents at 80% of market rates, with means-tested rebates (Pettigrew 2005). Full market rents were put in place with the 1978 CSHA, under Fraser's Liberal-National coalition Commonwealth Government (Hayward 1996). This Agreement also drastically reduced funding to the SHAs and required the States to match Commonwealth contributions, placing the SHAs under great financial strain in NSW and Victoria in particular (Troy 2012). Moreover, it introduced a policy of selling dwellings at market price, effectively ending the practice of tenant purchase (ibid.). The NSW State Government therefore resorted to selling many of its land holdings on Sydney's fringe to fund ongoing projects (Pettigrew 2005). The Commonwealth also began to consider the granting of funds to not-for-profit, faith-based

housing providers, as well as other alternative financing arrangements, which became more fully realised in the 1990s and 2000s (Troy 2012).

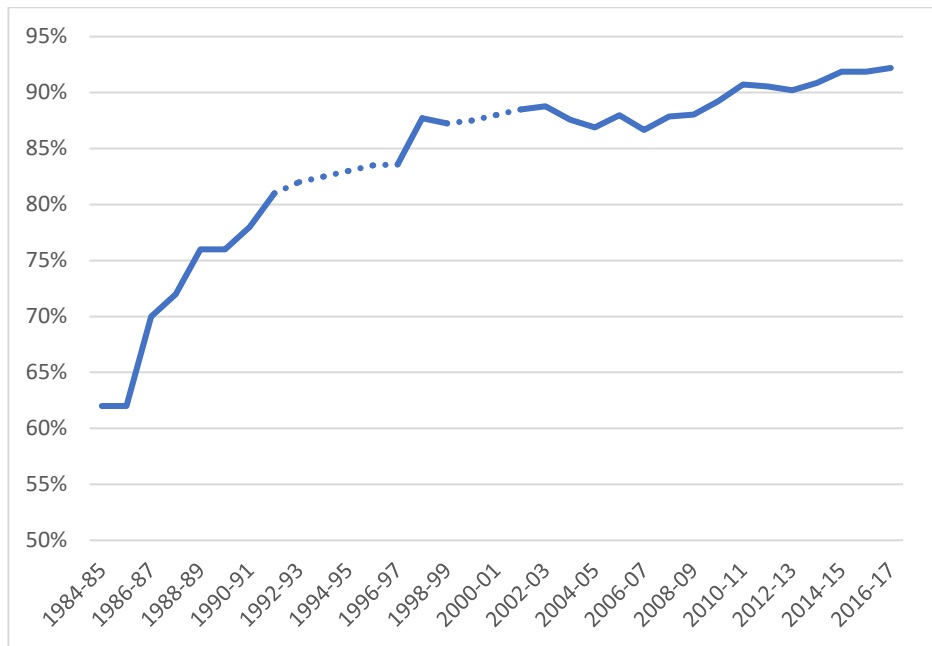
For Troy (2012: 181), the combination of the matching policy, market rents, and targeted rebates ultimately “stigmatised housing provided by the State housing authorities and forced many of them into technical insolvency.” Market rents and targeted rebates removed public housing incentives for higher-income tenants and ultimately further drained SHA finances by reducing revenue from rents as higher-income households exited the system – many by taking up favourable Housing Commission loans to purchase homes – or avoided it altogether (Troy 2012). As Figure 4.5 illustrates, the proportion of tenants receiving rebates grew steadily from this point to the present (Hayward 1996; Groenhart & Burke 2014; Troy 2012). Public housing became increasingly populated by low- and very low-income households, including various stigmatised groups: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, other racial and ethnic minorities, single mothers, people with disabilities, people with addiction, former prisoners, and the poor in general. Furthermore, the techno-discursive restructuring of public housing through market rent calculations (which were increasingly moot, given the growing proportion of rebated tenants) made public housing an object of condemnation and pathologisation within discourses of individual responsibility and independence. As I discuss further in Chapter 5, the purported ‘subsidy’, relative to market rents, that public housing tenants are said to receive is a key rationality in the stigmatisation of public housing tenants and estates. Discourses on subsidy, dependence, and irresponsibility have been repeatedly mobilised to legitimate the further retraction of the public housing system and punitive approaches to tenancy management.

At the same time, the 1970s, and particularly the early 1970s under the Whitlam government, were a period in which the trend toward market devolution was somewhat contradicted through the Commonwealth Government’s direct intervention in public housing provision and through the reconstitution of the subjects of government housing assistance in socially progressive ways, in response to some of the housing demands of working class and Aboriginal communities. In response to resident and union opposition to NSW Government redevelopment projects during the Green Bans era – during which the Builders Labourers’ Federation (BLF) aligned with resident activist groups, environmentalists, and Aboriginal communities to prevent destructive projects – the Commonwealth acquired and upgraded a Church of England estate in Glebe (which was then sold to the NSW Housing Commission in 1976) and funded the NSW Housing Commission’s works on the Woolloomooloo estate after commercial redevelopment was abandoned (Troy 2012; see also Burgmann & Burgmann 1998; Daly 1982; Iveson 2014). In the Rocks – another inner-city neighbourhood that the NSW

**Figure 4.5**

Percentage tenants paying less than market rent, Australia 1984-85 to 2016-17. Imputed for 1992-93 to 1995-96 due to data unavailability and for 1999-2000 to 2002-03 due to data inaccuracy.

Source: Foard et al. (1994); Productivity Commission (1999, 2000, 2001, 2005, 2009, 2013, 2018)



Government proposed to redevelop in the early 1970s – resident activists and the BLF won protection and rehabilitation of their homes as well as the construction of the Sirius public housing apartment complex for tenants displaced by the limited redevelopment that eventually occurred (Burgmann & Burgmann 1998). Similar action was taken in Waterloo against the expansion of redevelopment following the construction of the estate (*ibid.*), with the NSW Housing Commission eventually rehabilitating terraced public housing here too (Pettigrew 2005). Late in its term the Whitlam government created the Australian Housing Corporation for purposes of granting funds for the building or purchase of housing, for developing housing for sale and lease, for lending or granting money for rental payments, and for providing facilities and services associated with its developments (Troy 2012). However, it was abolished by the Fraser government in 1976 (*ibid.*). The Whitlam government also undertook a much broader program of urban infrastructure upgrades and provision and neighbourhood rehabilitation.

The Whitlam Government also committed tens of millions of dollars nationally to housing programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, granting this money both directly to Aboriginal Housing Associations and via State Governments (Long 2000). This massive increase in funding was reduced somewhat under Fraser but remained much higher than the commitments of previous governments (*ibid.*). Most famously, the Commonwealth provided \$500,000 to the newly established Aboriginal Housing Company (AHC) in 1973 for the acquisition and rehabilitation of several Victorian terraced houses in Redfern around what became known as the Block, pictured in Figure 4.6 and Figure 4.7 (Anderson 2000; Bellar

1976). This funding was awarded after a struggle over absentee landlords' attempts to evict Aboriginal people from their homes in Louis St and redevelop the site (ibid.). As I discuss at several points in this dissertation, in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century Redfern became home to a large community of Aboriginal people from across NSW and Australia, numbering in the tens of thousands according to oral histories (Redfern Oral History Project n.d.). As Gary Foley (2001) has detailed, it was also the crucible of the movement for self-determination, and housing for and by Aboriginal people was a key demand. The presence and activism of Aboriginal people in inner-city neighbourhoods like Redfern (or Melbourne's Fitzroy, South Brisbane, and East Perth) brought settler colonialism's structural incompleteness into sharpest relief (Blatman-Thomas & Porter 2019). As such, by supporting the continued presence of Aboriginal people – albeit belatedly, meagrely, and under duress – government interventions in the 1970s also ran counter to the settler colonial logic of elimination (Wolfe 1999) and the neoliberal market ethic (Harvey 2007) in a small but not insignificant way.

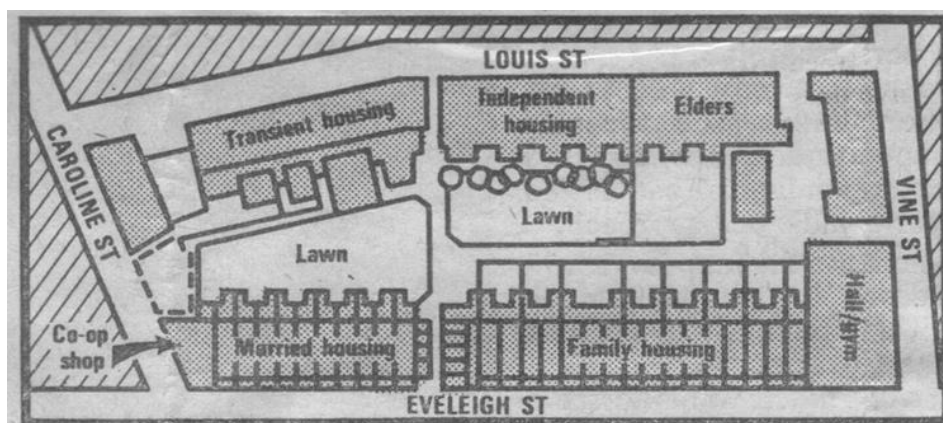
The 1970s were therefore a period of redefining who state housing assistance would be provided to, and how it could be gained, in socially progressive directions. Both the Commonwealth and NSW Governments, under sustained pressure from housing and social justice activists, made several interventions that preserved or consolidated the presence of public housing and of low-income and marginalised communities generally. This was not only significant for those communities themselves but was also significant in its symbolic valorisation and legitimisation of their presence. There were thus counter-tendencies to the stigmatisation of public housing that are often overlooked in analyses that focus purely on policy discourses, increased targeting, and the shift to market rents. These counter-tendencies are especially important to understanding Redfern-Waterloo. For one, the remaining Aboriginal and working-class communities would simply not be there were it not for community struggles in the 1970s and the response from the state, limited as this response was. Furthermore, and as I discuss in Chapters 7 and 8, contemporary communities in Redfern-Waterloo remain politicised by this history, whether they were personally present or not, and draw upon it in framing their contemporary resistance. The past makes resistance seem not only possible but also potent.

### **Marketisation, asset management and marginalisation: 1980s to present**

A new CSHA came into effect in 1981, retaining the key characteristics of the previous Agreement vis-à-vis public housing. While rates of construction and net additions rose under the 1981 and 1984 Agreements, as Figure 4.1 and Figure 4.2 illustrate, chronic shortages developed, in gentrifying inner-cities especially (Troy 2012). From 1981-82 to 1991-92, the national waiting

**Figure 4.6**  
Original AHC plan  
for the Block

Source: The Koori  
History Website  
(n.d.)



**Figure 4.7**  
Aboriginal Flag mural in The Block,  
2004

Credit/Source: City  
of Sydney  
Archives: Patricia  
Baile Collection:  
0277747



list for public housing almost doubled, from 125,570 to 216,339 (Hayward 1996). The NSW Housing Commission reported a waiting list of 35,000 in 1984 and, accurately, anticipated its growth to 50,000 before the end of the decade (Pettigrew 2005). The closure of several psychiatric hospitals in NSW, following the recommendations of the 1983 Richmond report, contributed to this and led to the further residualisation of public housing (Morris 2013). The 1984 CSHA briefly reintroduced economic rents but by this time a large majority of public housing tenants were receiving a rebate, as Figure 4.5 illustrates (Hayward 1996). With growing costs and diminishing revenues from rents, SHAs were forced to devote larger proportions of their budget to debt servicing, and some continue to repay this debt (ibid.). The Commonwealth began granting rather than lending funds to SHAs following the 1989 CSHA but this reform was accompanied by a net reduction in funding (ibid.). As Figure 4.2 and Figure 4.8 illustrate, the

next 25 years was a period in which the stock of public housing shrunk as SHAs turned to asset management, building fewer dwellings while focusing on maintenance, repairs, debt servicing and tenancy management, and selling properties or transferring them to not-for-profit providers.

The 1981 Agreement also led to the introduction of demand subsidies in the form of direct payments to “pensioners, Aborigines [sic], and other persons in need” who were renting privately (quoted in Troy 2012: 188). Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA), as it became known, grew over the course of the 1980s and 1990s as funding for public housing stagnated and declined. From 1984-85 to 1994-95, per capita Commonwealth spending on public housing fell by one quarter while spending on CRA more than tripled (Groenhart & Gurrán, 2015: 241). As Figure 4.9 displays, CRA spending outstripped CSHA spending on public housing from 1994-95 onwards, by greater and greater amounts (Dodson 2007). This growth of demand subsidies has been a central feature of the neoliberalisation of housing assistance. As an affordability supplement for housing in the private market rather than a market intervention (Dodson 2006, 2007), it is emblematic of a neoliberal market ethic that “holds that the social good will be maximized by maximizing the reach and frequency of market transactions” (Harvey 2007: 3). As Ronald (2008: 157) describes it, the growth of CRA was indicative of a shift in the role of the state and the object of state housing discourse from one of ensuring the supply of housing to families to one of ensuring the market supply of housing commodities. Furthermore, as Troy (2012) notes, the scale of the CRA budget places it in the sights of the Commonwealth Treasury whenever budget savings are sought, thus making low-income renters in a landlord-centric private rental market even more precarious.

Marketised systems of housing assistance came to be articulated within discourses on choice, flexibility, and efficiency, which emerged in the 1980s and 1990s and in the NSW housing field were circulated in three key texts: the 1991 National Housing Strategy, 1992 Mant Report (Inquiry into the NSW Department of Housing), 1993 Industry Commission of Inquiry (Darcy 1999; Dodson 2007). Better housing choices, flexibility and efficiency, it was argued, could be obtained through the devolution of public provision to markets via CRA and to quasi-markets of competing CHPs (Groenhart & Gurrán 2015; Jacobs & Travers 2015). With access to private finance and CRA, CHPs grew slowly during the 1990s and more rapidly from the early 2000s, while the stock of public housing shrunk – as Figure 4.8 illustrates (Groenhart & Burke 2014). CHPs came to be viewed as an alternative rather than supplement to public housing (Hayward 1996) and SHAs began to transfer title and, more often, devolve tenancy management to this purportedly more efficient, innovative and community-engaged sector (Darcy 1999). (Though given tenants had no input into the process, such transfers undermined the discourse

on ‘choice’.) The term ‘social housing’ eventually supplanted ‘public housing’ within housing policy discourse, denoting both public and community housing so that they could “be compared and evaluated against each other in a way not previously considered, and open[ing] the possibility of other structures of provision being developed which might achieve similar ends by different, as yet unknown, means” (ibid.: 21; Rogers & Darcy 2014).

The argument that CHPs could transform the structure of provision found its resolution in the 2009 National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA), which replaced the 2003 CSHA and was the first agreement under the Rudd Labor government<sup>9</sup>. Senior Commonwealth politicians argued that CHPs performed better as tenancy managers than the SHAs and that their access to private finance would enable them to build more housing, despite the dubious assumptions behind the latter claim in particular (see Yates 2013; Jacobs & Travers 2015). NAHA contained an aspirational target for 35% of social housing to be managed by CHPs by the end of the agreement. Rather than the total stock of social housing expanding to meet this target, this largely came at the expense of the stock of public housing (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2019). In NSW, more than 40,000 dwellings were transferred over the course of the NAHA, though only approximately 6,000 of those were title transfers (Bleby 2017). In the four years to 2016-17, for which data is available, the value of title transfers in NSW totalled over \$633 million – far greater than all other States and Territories (Productivity Commission 2018). In a warning as much as an observation, Jacobs & Travers (2015: 304) characterised this as “a radical political project to commercialise welfare provision and [...] likely to generate additional bureaucratic burdens and close off possibilities for progressive reform”.

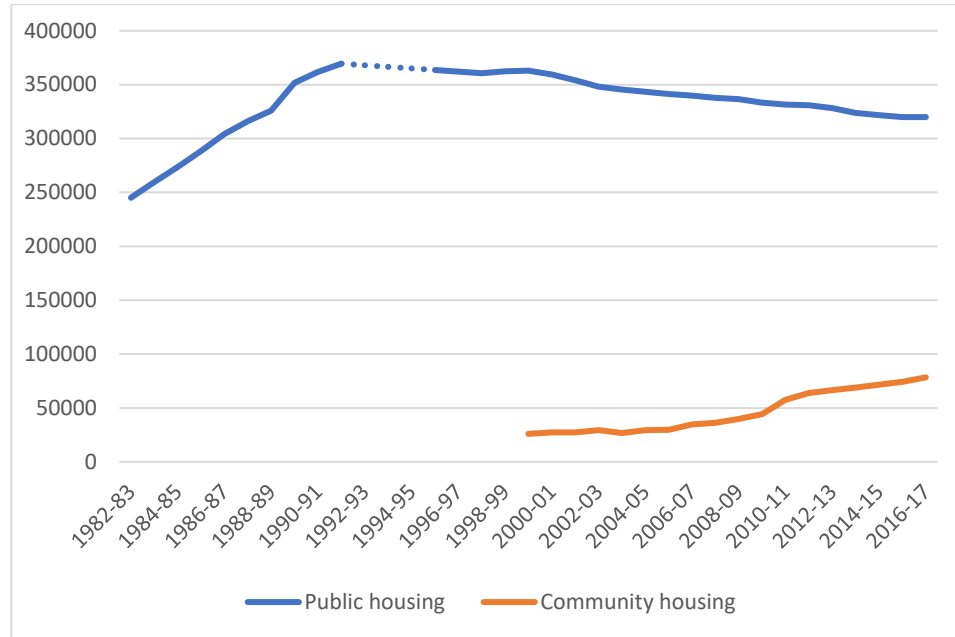
Devolution to CHPs has proceeded hand-in-hand with the re-orientation of SHAs toward neoliberal calculative practices of asset management. Following the recommendations of the Mant Report, the NSW Department of Housing (which replaced the Housing Commission in 1985 so as to take a more ‘integrative’ view of the housing system but was later absorbed into a larger Ministry) began to focus more on valuing and identifying assets for improvement and assets for disposal (i.e. on rehabilitation, redevelopment, and sale of dwellings) rather than on new construction (Pettigrew 2005; Randolph & Judd 2000). The shift towards asset management entailed further restructuring of the housing bureaucracy, increasing the number and prominence of developers, engineers and finance specialists within SHAs (Hayward 1996; Jacobs & Travers

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<sup>9</sup> The Rudd Labor government also included funds for the construction of social and affordable housing in its post-GFC stimulus package and, in yet another example of marketised housing assistance, implemented the National Rental Affordability Scheme, which subsidised affordable rental housing at 80% of market rate via tax incentives to approved private housing providers.

**Figure 4.8**  
Total public and community housing dwellings nationally, 1982-83 to 2016-17. Imputed for 1992-93 to 1995-96 due to data unavailability.

Source: adapted from Foard et al. (1994); Productivity Commission (1999, 2000, 2001, 2005, 2009, 2013, 2018)

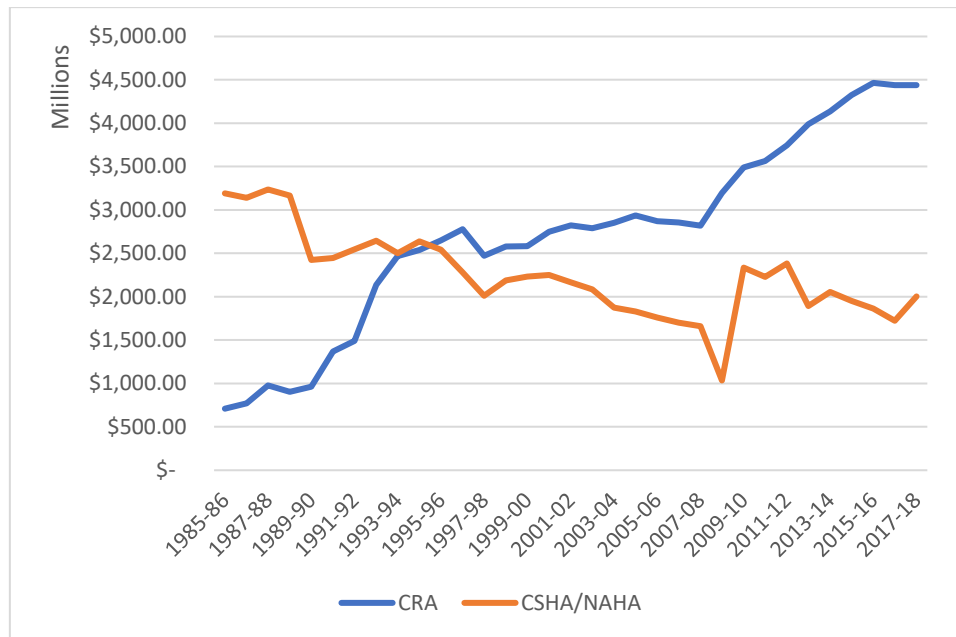


2015; Tiernan & Burke 2002). Furthermore, as some scholars have argued, this bureaucratic restructuring increased the level of influence of private development and real estate sectors over housing policy (Tiernan & Burke 2002; Jacobs 2015). In NSW, the Land and Housing Corporation (LAHC) was established in 2001 as an asset management agency, separate from the tenancy management arm of Housing NSW overseen by the Department of Family and Community Services (FACS). Between 2001 and 2011, LAHC was under the auspices of the Department of Treasury rather than FACS. It was subsequently brought under FACS before again being moved into the new Department of Water, Property and Housing in July 2019. Calculative practices of asset management were thus crucial to and co-constituent of processes of neoliberal statecraft in which social reformists in the bureaucratic field were gradually marginalised and replaced by asset managers, financiers, developers and engineers.

A key component of the asset management approach to public housing was ‘tenancy diversification’, through which areas of concentrated public housing were ‘deconcentrated’ via sale of select dwellings or larger scale redevelopment. Tenancy diversification was initially articulated within asset management discourse as a way of enhancing asset values, reducing costs, and raising revenue for new housing (Jacobs et al. 2010; Wood 2003). However, it later came to be articulated as a solution to the purported social and socio-economic problems of public housing estates – in other words, as a way of ‘breaking up’ pathological concentrated disadvantage (Darcy 2010, 2013). This was a key principle of the NAHA, in which “creating mixed communities that promote social and economic opportunities by reducing concentrations

**Figure 4.9**  
Commonwealth  
Government  
expenditure on  
CRA and  
CSHA/NAHA,  
\$2017-18.

Source: adapted  
from Productivity  
Commission (1998,  
1999, 2009, 2014,  
2018).



of disadvantage that exist in some social housing estates” was a stated objective (Council of Australian Governments 2009: 7). Several estate redevelopment projects took place in Sydney in the 2000s and 2010s, particularly in the west and south-west, as summarised in Figure 4.10 and Table 4.1 below. The Block was also demolished in the early 2000s. These projects generally involved total demolition – in many cases of heavily disorganised Radburn housing estates – and new housing developments of approximately 70% private housing and 30% social housing. Transfer of title and/or tenancy management to CHPs also occurred through several of these projects, as part of the strategy for “enhancing the capacity and growth of the not-for-profit housing sector” (Council of Australian Governments 2009: 8).

The representation of tenure diversification as ‘social mix’ hints at the neoliberal governmentality toward welfare that emerged in this period, identified succinctly by Wacquant (2009a: 292) as a shift from ‘people processing’ to ‘people changing’ via various forms of social control that attempt to rectify the behaviour and subjectivity of welfare recipients in line with notions of ‘responsibility’ and ‘independence’. This neoliberal governmentality was wedded to asset management objectives, as demonstrated by the principles articulated in the 2003 CSHA: innovative approaches that “leverage additional resources into social housing, through community, private sector and other partnerships” alongside “housing assistance [that] supports access to employment and promotes social and economic participation” and “greater consistency between housing assistance provision and outcomes, and other social and economic objectives of government, such as welfare reform, urban regeneration, and community capacity building”

**Figure 4.10**  
Estate  
redevelopment  
projects in Sydney,  
2002-2019. Major  
projects in bold.



(quoted in Troy 2012: 232). According to discourses on concentrated disadvantage and social mix, which I discuss at length in the next chapter, the disadvantage and deprivation experienced by public housing tenants is largely self-induced and is exacerbated or even caused by tenants' spatial concentration within estates. Within these discourses, 'deconcentration' – placing public housing tenants in closer company with more affluent home owners or private renters – can motivate or otherwise assist them to become upwardly mobile. The trope of individual responsibility, identified by Wacquant as a key feature of neoliberalism, is thus embedded in these discourses. More recently the trope has been activated in the form of education and training programs for NSW public housing tenants which are voluntary at the time of writing but have been mooted as future conditionality programs. Specifically, these programs are designed for the 'opportunity group' of tenants identified and classified as separate from the 'safety net group' for whom a long-term requirement of social housing is accepted as inevitable (NSW Government 2016) – a point which I return to in the next chapter. The *Future Directions for Social Housing in NSW* strategy (henceforth *Future Directions*) published in 2016 describes how such programs will help reduce tenancies and 'graduate' tenants from social housing (ibid.). In some cases, such programs have been introduced as part of estate redevelopment projects, and redevelopment projects themselves have been represented as a providing access to education and employment.

**Table 4.1**  
Major estate  
redevelopment  
projects in Sydney,  
2002-2019

Source:  
Communities Plus  
(n.d.); Doney et al.  
(2013); Eastgate  
(2016)

Estate	Dwellings demolished	Dwellings built
Minto (2002-2018)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Approx. 1000 public</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· 360 public/social</li> <li>· 1210 private</li> </ul>
Bonnyrigg (2004- )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· 833 public</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· 699 social (St George Community Housing)</li> <li>· approx. 1300 private</li> </ul>
Teloopa (2009- )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· 640 public</li> </ul>	<p><i>Phase 1:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· 530 social (Hume Community Housing)</li> <li>· approx. 1400 private</li> </ul> <p><i>Phase 2:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· approx. 1000 social (provider TBD)</li> <li>· 2500-3500 private</li> </ul>
Airds-Bradbury (2009- )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· 1400 public</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· 600 social</li> <li>· 1400 private</li> </ul>
Riverwood (2010- )	<p><i>Phase 1:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· 150 public</li> </ul> <p><i>Phase 2:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· 994 public</li> </ul>	<p><i>Phase 1:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· 150 social (St George Community Housing)</li> <li>· 500 private</li> </ul> <p><i>Phase 2: TBD</i></p>
Claymore (2010- )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· 983 public</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· 300-450 social</li> <li>· 1000-1200 private</li> </ul>
Ivanhoe, Macquarie Park (2014- )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· 259 public</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· 1000 social (Mission Australia Housing)</li> <li>· 128 affordable</li> <li>· 2000-2500 private</li> </ul>
Waterloo (2015- )	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· 2012 public</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· 2130 social (provider TBD)</li> <li>· 4000-5000 private</li> </ul>

Tenancy reforms during the 2000s reinforced this neoliberal governmentality through two related approaches: the emulation of market rationalities on the one hand and surveillance and punitive regulation on the other. The 1999 CSHA ended the CHC provision of security of tenure (Troy 2012), though this was not fully enacted in NSW until 2006, with the introduction of fixed-term tenancies of two, five or ten years for new tenants (Fitzpatrick & Pawson 2014). The shift away from outright security of tenure was justified in somewhat contradictory ways: on the one hand the changes were said to discourage welfare dependency and encourage tenants into more ‘independent’ housing, while on the other hand they were justified in the context of an increasingly scarce supply of social housing and the need to ‘triage’ housing provision (ibid.). Regardless, this is a clear example of tenancy reforms designed to emulate the private rental market in an attempt to refashion and regulate public housing tenants into ‘responsible’ and ‘deserving’ subjects. Subsequent reforms similarly emulated practices in the private rental sector for purposes of instilling ‘responsibility’. For example, public housing rental bonds were implemented in 2018, ostensibly to recover repair costs and prevent damage to dwellings. However, given the relative stability of public housing tenancies compared to private tenancies, for many tenants this payment would be better described as a fee or a fine.

The 2000s also saw the introduction of policies and practices uncommon in the private rental market that restrict NSW public housing tenants’ freedoms and use of their homes. As I discuss in the next chapter, tenants are constructed as ‘undeserving’ public housing in several different ways. Thus, several reforms have been aimed at regulating tenants’ deserts either by removing ‘undeserving’ tenants from the system or by preventing or policing undeserving behaviour. They include a Vacant Bedroom Charge – introduced in 2014 for tenants who have more bedrooms than household members – and restrictions on tenants’ guests’ length of stay. Tenants also have much more limited choices about where they can live, particularly following ‘broadbanding’ changes which gave tenants choice only over the region in which they would be housed (as opposed to the neighbourhood or suburb) and the reduction in the number of housing offers to new tenants from three to two (Dodson 2007). There have also been several new punitive policies and surveillance practices. The 2004 *Residential Tenancies Amendment (Public Housing) Act* introduced ‘anti-social behaviour’ regulations to public housing tenancy management which reversed the onus of proof against tenants and removed discretionary powers of the Consumer, Trader and Tenancy Tribunal (Martin 2004). In short, these amendments made it easier for FACS to evict public housing tenants. Amendments that came into effect in 2016 strengthened FACS’s powers of evictions through the legislation of a 1- and 3-strike scheme (Martin 2016). FACS and other SHAs have used these eviction powers

increasingly harshly and hastily, including against women with violent partners, families with children, and tenants undergoing drug and alcohol treatment (Martin et al. 2019). They have also been used disproportionately, and often without cultural sensitivity, against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tenants (ibid.). Furthermore, amendments in 2018 relating to rental rebate fraud introduced mandatory terminations for convicted tenants, and empowered Secretary of the Department to access information and powers to prevent or investigate fraud and to recover rental subsidies or other benefits received by tenants. This increasingly intensive surveillance of tenants' behaviour and financial affairs has been accompanied market-like and explicitly punitive reforms, including schemes encouraging tenants to report neighbours for antisocial behaviour and unauthorised occupants.

Housing assistance in Australia can thus be understood to have been subject to the kind of neoliberalisation described by Wacquant (2009a, 2010). Despite chronically high levels of demand for public housing, State and Commonwealth governments have favoured assistance for housing in the private rental market and the growth of a quasi-market of CHPs over the consolidation and expansion of public housing, which has increasingly been managed like an asset. Yet despite this retreat from provision of social support and devolution to markets and quasi-markets, the state has not become less involved in all low-income households. Rather, it has remained extensively involved via the operation of an ever-expanding apparatus of surveillance and punitive regulation on their behaviour and deserts, in the name of 'independence' and 'individual responsibility'. This is true of the public housing system and the welfare system more broadly. Estate redevelopment has also involved intensified state intervention, as I discuss in Chapter 6. At the same time, support for home ownership has continued. In the 1980s it was stimulated by the relaxation of lending limits and other banking regulations and the granting of tax rebates for mortgage interest charges (Troy 2012). First-time home buyers continued to be directly assisted into home ownership through grants, in the form of the 1983 through the First Home Owners Scheme (which replaced the short-lived 1982 Home Deposit Assistance Scheme) (Bourassa et al. 1995). This was abolished in 1990 but reinstated in 2000 and remains in place in 2019 (ibid.; Yates 2003). In NSW, home ownership was also encouraged through the Home Ownership Made Easier scheme in 1981 – a mortgage assistance scheme aided by Landcom's<sup>10</sup> large supply of relatively cheap land – and through the Premier Low Start Home Loans scheme, which offered fixed-rate mortgages through co-

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<sup>10</sup> The NSW Land Commission, later renamed Landcom, was established by the Wran Labor government and charged with the acquisition and development of land, often but not exclusively in consort with the Housing Commission.

operative housing societies (Pettigrew, 2005). Lower-income earners were also encouraged to purchase homes through specially designed home loans via the Home Fund Low Start Loans (ibid.). Support also continued in the form of capital gains tax exemptions for owner-occupied housing and non-taxation of imputed rents (Yates 2003). Furthermore, 1987 reforms to negative gearing that allowed losses to be offset against income from labour, as well as the 50% capital gains tax discount for investor-owned housing introduced in 1999, have encouraged more investor-ownership (complimented by the growth of CRA at the expense of public housing). As such, while home ownership remains as superordinate as ever, neoliberalisation has stripped away even more of its egalitarian veneer: first-time purchasers and owner-occupiers generally are now struggling to enter the market due to the rise of investor-ownership and the financialisation of housing (Aalbers 2017; Adkins et al. 2019; Jacobs 2019; Rogers 2017; Rolnik 2013). A centaur-like image of the Australian housing system thus emerges – liberal and lucrative for those nearer the top while precarious and punitive for those at the bottom.

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The neoliberalisation of public housing and housing assistance generally has intensified and entrenched the territorial stigmatisation of public housing tenants and estates in several ways. Changes to eligibility and allocations reconstituted the subject of public housing assistance: increased targeting in the public housing system meant that its subject was no longer the working settler male to whom assistance had historically been most forthcoming, but rather a range of marginalised groups. As I discussed in Chapter 2, the concentration of these marginalised groups in public housing estates fuelled territorial stigmatisation (though as I explain in the next chapter, that is not the extent of it). These reforms exacerbated the under-resourcing of public housing in favour of market- or quasi-market-based forms of assistance, which led to its deterioration in quality. Furthermore, they made the figure of the public housing tenant an impossible subject of home ownership. The superordination and idealisation of home ownership has been reproduced through neoliberalisation, albeit in a different way. Indeed, it has arguably become more significant, as a demonstration of ‘individual responsibility’ and ‘independence’, and even ‘entrepreneurialism’ if one is an investor. Public housing tenants have therefore been marked as inferior according to settler colonial ideas about citizenship and belonging as well as neoliberal notions of responsibility and independence that have been fixed onto them. The techno-discursive restructuring of public housing through the introduction of market rents has been fundamental to the stigmatisation of public housing in this respect. As I discuss in the next chapter, this initiated an exaggerated construction of the subsidy that public housing tenants receive and further fuelled the stigmatisation of tenants as dependent and undeserving. Such a

doxic notion of tenants' subsidised dependence and irresponsibility – the latter both fiscal and behavioural – has been activated in the form of their increasingly intense surveillance and punitive regulation. This punitive regime, cognate with Wacquant (2009a), communicates the discredit of living in public housing biopolitically, materially, and symbolically, and masks over the structural and systemic causes of social problems. Territorial stigmatisation is therefore both a form that punishment takes and a technology for legitimising it.

### **4.3 Conclusion**

The purpose of this chapter has been to establish the background and foundation of the territorial stigmatisation of public housing estates in Australia, and of those in Redfern-Waterloo particularly. Territorial stigmatisation might be thought of as part of a superstructure set above a substructure of neoliberalised settler colonialism (Tomiak 2017) which is reflected through the structure of the housing system. As I have argued, the stigmatisation of tenants and territorial stigmatisation of estates is the functional corollary of the material and symbolic valorisation of home ownership in Australia. In short, its stigmatisation is relational, as Goffman (1963) first stressed. This relation of relative value between public housing and home ownership is a feature of Australian settler colonialism, with its logic of possession defined by “claiming, regulating and protecting land” through real estate (Rogers 2017: 4). Home ownership invests its subjects in the structure of settler colonialism and white possession and enrolls them into settler colonial ideologies and myths. It was thus expanded through material incentives and symbolic idealisation, with numerous consequences for public housing – from its material shape to its socio-symbolic status. The structural superordination of home ownership thus forms the foundation for the intense territorial stigmatisation that developed through neoliberalisation, which I briefly outlined in this chapter and expand upon in the next. As I have stressed, neoliberalisation did not replace settler colonialism but rather refracted it through newly marketised systems (Blatman-Thomas & Porter 2019), and as such, territorial stigma did not begin with neoliberalism but was intensified by it. The techno-discursive restructuring of public housing through the implementation of market rents, alongside its increased residualisation, has led to the doxic construction of the ‘subsidy’ that public housing tenants receive, so exaggerated as to be effectively fictitious. As I discuss in the next chapter, this is a key rationality and discourse through which territorial stigmatisation is reproduced. Alongside the rise of asset management logics and rationalities and the devolution to markets and quasi-markets, housing assistance also became more punitive with neoliberalisation. The punitive regulation and surveillance of tenants' behaviour and deserts communicates the discredit of public housing to those subject to it but also more widely, obfuscating socio-spatial inequality and injustice. Yet as

I have discussed, there were also counter-tendencies to neoliberalisation in that the presence of low-income and Aboriginal people in the inner suburbs of Sydney was consolidated. This was most notable in Redfern-Waterloo, where the remainder of my dissertation is grounded, and where new refractions of neoliberalised settler colonialism have led to new struggles between contemporary inhabitants and the institutions and forces working to marginalise and displace them.

## Chapter 5

### Territorial stigmatisation and discourse on public housing

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Discourse on public housing is multiple, contested and contradictory: different objects, subjects and orders are articulated in government policy and planning texts, in publications by think-tanks and lobby/advocacy groups, in public statements of politicians and bureaucrats (and their representation in the media), and in commentary by reporters, journalists, columnists, editors and letter writers. There are, however, some regularities or commonalities in discourse on public housing which articulate and circulate stigmatising constructions of tenants and *territorially* stigmatising constructions of estates. Following from my discussion of the neoliberalisation of housing assistance in the previous chapter and drawing on my discourse analysis of the corpus of policy, planning, and media texts outlined in Chapter 3, in this chapter I unpack three regularities of discourse on public housing: (i) the techno-discursive construction of the subsidy that public housing tenants receive; (ii) the character tropes of the deserving, the undeserving, and the taxpayer, which animate a discourse of individual responsibility through which ‘undeserving’ tenants are made responsible for public housing problems; and (iii) discourses on estates specifically, which locate responsibility for these problems within the territory of the estate. These regularities not only demonstrate the existence of territorial stigmatisation but illuminate how it operates as a governmental rationality and technology of consent and control (Jensen & Tyler 2015).

In the first section of this chapter I discuss the trope of the ‘taxpayer’. As I illustrate, this trope has been repeatedly deployed in the construction of the ‘undeserving’ tenant – another regular character trope, who is unbecoming the taxpayer’s subsidy whatsoever or unbecoming its full extent. However, I then show that the techno-discursive construction of this subsidy is highly inflated, as well as spatially and temporally variegated, by the inclusion of opportunity costs in the form of market rents or market prices of dwellings. The stigma of subsidisation is therefore amplified by neoliberal rationalities, and calculative and evaluative practices. Moreover, it is intensified in areas where, and at times when, market values are higher. In the second section I further unpack the ‘undeserving’ trope and its mutual constitution with the ‘deserving’, which includes both the ‘deserving tenant’ and the ‘deserving applicant’. In doing so I demonstrate how the stigmatisation of public housing tenants is neither universal nor unequivocal but rather involves classifications and demarcations of cohorts deserving and cohorts undeserving the

taxpayer's subsidy – demarcations which for Wacquant (2009a) are a signal feature of neoliberalism. These tropes have been deployed, in both discourse and policy, to displace responsibility for crime and antisocial behaviour, and for the shortage of public housing and long waiting list, away from the market and the state and onto cohorts of undeserving tenants. Policies that regulate or exclude these supposedly undeserving tenants are thus represented as solutions to these public housing problems and thereby obfuscate more significant causes, such as the chronic under-resourcing of public housing and other state services, the criminalisation of addiction, and so on.

In the third and penultimate section before a brief conclusion, I discuss how public housing problems – including crime, antisocial behaviour, isolation and disadvantage – have been discursively constructed as problems of territory. As I outlined in Chapter 2, territory can be conceived of as a set of politico-institutional practices of power over space alongside representations in discourse, statistics, cartography and so on which 'naturalise' these practices (Brenner & Elden 2009; Elden 2013; Antonsich 2009). Rather than tenants themselves, the subject of territorial stigmatisation in public housing discourse is *the estate*: the politico-institutional practices that physically constitute estates are represented as causal factors in crime, antisocial behaviour, isolation, poverty and disadvantage. Discourses on concentrated disadvantage represent them as pathogens communicated both among tenants and intergenerationally due to the spatial concentration of disadvantaged people in estates (August 2014). Furthermore, representations of both Radburn and high-rise estates pathologise their particular built environments, suggesting that they cause isolation and facilitate crime and antisocial behaviour. State management itself has been implicated into these problems when they have been represented as inherent or inevitable features of an irrevocably flawed public system (Jacobs 2019). Thus, the territorial practices constituted in estates are problematised, rather than tenants themselves. While not all tenants are stigmatised as 'undeserving', all tenants living in estates are subject to this territorial stigmatisation.

Stigmatisation functions to devolve responsibility for public housing problems (real, hyperbolised, and fictitious) onto tenants while *territorial* stigmatisation devolves responsibility, at least partially, onto the territorial practices constituting the estate. As such, the stigmatisation and territorial stigmatisation of public housing dually function to obfuscate the structural and systemic causes of socio-spatial inequality (Slater 2014; Tyler 2013) and are activated to legitimate neoliberal policies and legislative interventions involving privatisation, marketisation, and punitive regulation. In sum, this public housing doxa makes particular interventions conceivable and others inconceivable; as I explicate in the next chapter, the regularities of discourse on public

housing make redevelopment appear a benevolent and necessary form of reterritorialisation, while making the massive expansion of public provision and easing of eligibility criteria almost inconceivable.

### **5.1 The stigma of subsidy**

As I alluded to in the previous chapter, the subsidisation of public housing is misrepresented as exceptional and unique despite various subsidies toward home ownership, as well as the growth of CRA. As I outline in the following section, this exceptionality is evident from the repeated invocation of the ‘taxpayer’ in discourse on public housing. The taxpayer character trope has been deployed in the construction of that of the ‘undeserving’ tenant, who for one reason or another is classified as undeserving of the subsidy that the taxpayer provides. Unlike more abstract notions of the public or the state, the trope of the taxpayer suggests a dichotomous relationship between tenants and non-tenants and a relationship of personal responsibility of tenants *to* the taxpayers who *personally* subsidise tenants’ housing. The taxpayer trope has been deployed to condemn antisocial behaviour as well as supposed inefficiencies and largesse in the public housing system, and to therefore legitimate the introduction of punitive regulations and market rationalities including the privatisation of public housing.

As I explain, the techno-discursive construction of the subsidisation of public housing is massively inflated by the inclusion of opportunity costs, of either market rents or market prices of tenants’ dwellings. As such, the gap between market prices or market rents (the latter set for public housing dwellings since the 1970s despite a vast a growing majority of rebated tenants) and rents actually paid has been techno-discursively constructed as a subsidy *provided* to public housing tenants. This construction not only exaggerates the ‘real’ subsidisation of public housing (particularly when land and housing markets are buoyant), it also suggests that public housing tenants living in neighbourhoods with more expensive housing submarkets are more highly subsidised. As I discuss in the section that follows, this purportedly uneven subsidy has been represented as inequitable in both media commentary and reports and in policy and planning documents, which have intimated that public housing tenants are undeserving higher value locations. The stigmatisation of public housing as exceptionally subsidised is therefore spatially uneven, being more intense in gentrifying areas. As, in essence, an estimate of the rent gap, this rationality of subsidisation has in some cases found its resolution in the privatisation of public housing while in others it has led to estate redevelopment projects which leverage land values to pay for replacement social housing.

## The 'taxpayer' trope

Public housing is often cast as 'taxpayer funded housing', concealing subsidies directed toward other tenures and implying that, because of their exceptional subsidy, tenants must be subject to exceptional standards and regulations. The character trope of the taxpayer encourages audiences to identify "as taxpayers and therefore as victims and battlers" (Archer 2010: 24; see also Archer 2009). It is deployed to imply a relationship of personal responsibility of tenants to taxpayers, as the latter 'generously' subsidises the former (Archer 2010). The subsidy, these tropes suggest, is conditional on tenants' continued performance of their deserts and gratitude, through their behaviour, comportment, and acceptance of austere standards of living. Tenants who contravene this responsibility are labelled undeserving the taxpayer subsidy of public housing.

The construction of undeserving tenants via the trope of the taxpayer is especially common in media coverage of crime and antisocial behaviour, particularly relating to drug dealing and drug use. For example, an editorial in the *Daily Telegraph* argued that

There is only one form of public housing suitable for drug dealers and criminals. That would be public housing with bars on the windows, uniforms, armed guards and strict visiting hours. Prison, in other words. Yet many drug dealers and convicted criminals are *allowed to occupy taxpayer-funded public housing, paid for by the very society they degrade* (Daily Telegraph 2014a: 24, emphasis added).

While the above example is an extreme one, the deployment of these character tropes is not limited to hyperbolic commentary in the corporate media; they have been deployed in the governmental legitimisation of several policy and legislative interventions. In providing justification for the introduction of rental bonds for 'high risk' tenants in 2014, then-Minister for Social Housing Pru Goward commented to the *Daily Telegraph* that

As a government, it is our responsibility to consider every possible way we can ensure money is spent on improving the public housing system, not simply cleaning up the mess of bad tenants [...] *It is clear some of our tenants need reminding the NSW taxpayer very generously funds the public housing system and expects that asset to be taken care of.* If you refuse to agree to very basic principles, like looking after your property, preventing damage and cleaning up after yourself, *then frankly most people would agree you don't deserve the privilege of a heavily subsidised home* (Silmalis 2014: 4, emphases added).

Goward's comments construct a falsely dichotomous relationship between tenants and taxpayers in which the former is generously and benevolently supported by the latter. Her statements are addressed to both groups in characterising public housing as a 'privilege' because of its purportedly unique subsidisation. Goward asserts that there are 'bad tenants' whose behaviour

indicates a failure to recognise and appreciate this privilege, implying that such tenants are unbecoming or undeserving the privilege handed to them by the taxpayer and that rental bonds would serve to show or remind them of their privilege and responsibility, or else punish them and cover costs in the event of damages. Similarly, when FACS introduced ‘one-strike’ evictions and probationary leases, estimated costs and photographs of damage to properties were shared with the *Daily Telegraph*, which reported that

#### YOU ARE PAYING FOR THIS DISGRACE

After repeated warnings to repair the damage she had caused, the tenant was finally kicked out — after a six month NSW Housing process. This is just one example of disgraceful public housing tenants that *cost taxpayers* a whopping \$14.2 million last financial year just for repairing trashed properties (Wood 2014b: 8, emphasis added).

Then-Minister Gabrielle Upton argued that the new legislation was required because “[p]ublic housing is a scarce resource and should be valued by tenants, *given the substantial financial assistance provided by the taxpayers*” (Daily Telegraph 2014b: 23, emphasis added). Both Goward’s and Upton’s comments, and the interventions that they sought to legitimate via the media, suggested that tenants’ irresponsible treatment of public housing imposed a large financial burden not on the public housing system, the government, or the public, but on the *taxpayer* directly. They thus distracted their audience from the chronic under-resourcing of public housing (and unaffordability of private housing) and shifted blame onto tenants themselves, or undeserving tenants specifically.

The use of the taxpayer trope is not limited to discourses on crime and antisocial behaviour but rather has been used in a number of instances to condemn tenants’ supposed fecklessness, fraudulence, or fortuitousness. For instance, the *Daily Telegraph* reported on FACS’s trial of a mutual obligation program by explaining that

Public housing applicants will have to get a job if they want a *taxpayer-funded home* under a tough new test to be introduced in NSW. The state government is overhauling the public housing system by stopping residents who languish on welfare for decades feeling entitled to a cheap home, *paid for by the taxpayer*, for their entire life (Brennan 2018: 2, emphases added).

The taxpayer trope was mobilised again by Minister Goward as she sought to legitimate the introduction of the Vacant Bedroom Charge (or ‘bedroom tax’) in 2014. Goward juxtaposed the tenants affected by this policy with applicants on the waiting list (a trope I turn to in the next section) as well as the taxpayer, in stating that

Although there will be public housing tenants with extra bedrooms who may not agree, this policy is *only fair and reasonable to the vulnerable families on the waiting list and NSW taxpayers* who heavily subsidise the public housing system (Wood 2014a: 24, emphasis added).

Here, the character tropes of the taxpayer and the deserving applicant are deployed to portray tenants as undeserving their *particular* dwelling, rather than undeserving public housing entirely, due to its overburdening of the taxpayer and consequent exclusion of deserving applicants on the waiting list (see also Archer 2010). Similarly, the NSW Government media kit that announced the privatisation of public housing in the inner-city harbourside neighbourhood of Millers Point outlined that

Properties in Millers Point can have a market rent of around \$4,000 monthly, *with the taxpayer subsidising as much as \$3,700 of that each month*. Some long-term tenancies in Millers Point have received more than \$500,000 in subsidies over the term of their tenancy (Goward 2014: 2, emphasis added).

This use of the taxpayer trope functions to represent tenants in Millers Point not as unequivocally undeserving but, like the tenant with a spare bedroom, as undeserving their particular home or location because of its unreasonable burden on the taxpayer. The taxpayer trope has thus been deployed to legitimate punitive policies like rental bonds, devolution of costs through policies like the Vacant Bedroom Charge, surveillance by the Tenant Fraud Unit, and, as I discuss in the remainder of this section, evictions and the privatisation of public housing.

### **The calculation of subsidies and the variegation of stigma**

The difference between the market value of public housing and tenants' rental payments has been constructed, techno-discursively, as a form of subsidy. Market values for rent and sale have been estimated and articulated as a cost – specifically, an opportunity cost – that governments have chosen to forgo in order to assist tenants. The value of this opportunity cost is published annually by the Commonwealth Productivity Commission, which calculates the total 'subsidy' of public housing as the sum of administration costs, operating costs, depreciation costs and the 'user cost of capital'. The latter is defined as

the cost of having funds tied up in the capital used to deliver services (for example, houses and land in public housing). It makes explicit the opportunity cost of using the funds to deliver services rather than investing them elsewhere or using them to retire debt (Productivity Commission 2009: 16.32).

In NSW, the user cost of capital is calculated through the annual extrapolation of accredited property valuations for one third of the existing housing stock, in addition to Valuer-General property information for vacant land and land held for redevelopment, and historical costs of

other assets (Productivity Commission 2018). This figure constitutes the overwhelming majority of the purported public housing subsidy, far exceeding costs of administration, operation, and depreciation. In NSW in 2016-17, the cost per dwelling excluding the cost of capital was \$9,626 while the cost including the cost of capital was \$44,344 (Productivity Commission 2018). Similar techno-discursive constructions of the gap between rental payments and market price or rent as a form of subsidy were reproduced in the 2009 Henry Tax Review (Commonwealth of Australia 2009), the 2014 National Commission of Audit (Commonwealth of Australia 2014), the 2014 Roles and Responsibilities in Housing and Homelessness report (Department of Prime Minister & Cabinet 2014), the 2015 McClure review of social services (Commonwealth of Australia 2015), the 2016-2017 Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal review of social housing rent models (IPART 2017), and in reports by think-tanks Infrastructure Partnerships Australia (2016), the Centre for Independent Studies (Potter 2017) and the Grattan Institute (Daley et al. 2018).

These calculative and evaluative practices for measuring market values against social rents are indicative of the neoliberal logics and rationalities that have been brought to bear on public housing. Estimating the market value of public housing is not merely a technical practice but an ideological one: market values are deployed as natural and innate values or performance indicators against which to measure the efficiency and effectiveness of public housing, despite public housing not being, and never having been, a market commodity. This naturalisation is evident in, for example, a report from the Audit Office of NSW in 2014, which stated that LAHC's housing portfolio was worth approximately \$32 billion in 2012 and

could have notionally generated market rent income of around \$1.5 billion. However, *nearly \$860 million was forgone* to fund rental rebates to public housing tenants. Almost 90 per cent of public housing tenants receive a rent subsidy by way of paying less than market rent (Audit Office of NSW 2014: 20, emphasis added).

The technical practices of estimating market value thus enable the ideation and discursive articulation of the possibility of *realising* these values. Or, put differently, they facilitate the representation of public housing as an asset which the state might choose to rent or sell at a market rate, rather than the non-market rate that it has been built and administered for<sup>11</sup>. As a consequence, the difference between social rental payments and market rents or sale prices is constructed as a subsidy, thus inflating the purported subsidy of public housing and exacerbating

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<sup>11</sup> The practices of estimating of market rents likewise ignore the fact that public housing has never been built or managed for the collection of market rents; estimates for individual properties in NSW are made based on private rentals of a similar size in the same neighbourhood or vicinity, despite the fact that public housing has typically been built to more austere standards and more poorly maintained.

its stigmatisation. Furthermore, the costs of public housing are seen to be rising as and when the price of land and housing grows. For instance, the aforementioned 2014 Audit Office report expressed concern at the increasing cost of public housing, claiming that it had grown by nearly 50% from 2001-02. This was at least partly attributable to land and housing market trends; costs excluding cost of capital grew 28% in the ten years to 2016-17, while costs including cost of capital grew 49% over the same period (Productivity Commission 2018). If the purported subsidisation of public housing grows in periods in which the price for land and housing grows – as occurred in Sydney between 2009 and 2018 – then arguably its stigmatisation will grow with it.

The techno-discursive construction of subsidisation that I have outlined can lead to some spatial variation in stigmatisation as well. The subsidisation of public housing has been problematised not only in terms of efficiency but also in terms of equity among public housing tenants, for it has been claimed that the subsidy that tenants receive is greater or lesser depending on the housing market of their neighbourhood. In other words, the techno-discursive construction of opportunity cost as a form of subsidy means that public housing tenants in higher-value locations are characterised as more highly subsidised than public housing tenants in lower-value locations. Thus, tenants in gentrifying neighbourhoods have been characterised as undeserving the so-called subsidy that enables them to remain there. The 2009 Henry Tax Review, for instance, argued that there was “significant variation in assistance within public housing, as the level of assistance depends on market value of the dwelling to which a recipient is assigned” (Commonwealth of Australia 2009: 604). The Henry Review termed this locational dimension an ‘in-kind subsidy’; similarly, the Productivity Commission termed it ‘implicit assistance’ and claimed that it is “inequitable and results in many of the 400 000 or so households in social housing having a considerable financial disincentive to exit” (Productivity Commission 2017: 13). Both reports, along with several others, recommended a ‘single system of housing assistance’ based on a higher CRA, and for “tenants who have a preference to rent a more expensive property [to] face at least some of the additional cost of that decision” (Productivity Commission 2017: 195-196). Thus, the spatial variegation of tenants’ ‘subsidy’ has structured deserts discourses: the increasingly sharp relief between market rents and rental payments in gentrifying neighbourhoods has intensified the scrutiny of tenants’ deserts and the stigmatisation of those classed as undeserving.

Notably, the construction of a location-based subsidy was deployed to legitimate the privatisation of public housing in Millers Point, an inner-city harbourside neighbourhood in Sydney where the NSW Housing Commission acquired several hundred workers dwellings from the Maritime Services Board in the 1970s. The neighbourhood was once a largely working-class

community of wharf workers and their families but became increasingly valuable real estate following the post-industrial transformation of the harbour. Some dwellings in Millers Point were sold in the 2000s when tenancies ended, before, in 2014, the NSW Government announced it would proceed with the sale of all remaining public housing dwellings. FACS released a media kit titled ‘High cost harbourside assets to be sold for a fairer social housing system’ (Goward 2014), justifying eviction and privatisation on the basis of the subsidies that could be saved and funds that could be redirected to new construction in cheaper locations on Sydney’s fringe or out of the city altogether:

Subsidies to tenants in the last year alone reached \$8.89 million, with individual tenants receiving subsidies as high as \$44,000 per annum. This compares to subsidies of \$8,000 per year in Campbelltown, \$7,000 in Gosford, and \$11,000 in Wollongong. For every subsidised tenancy in Millers Point, the Government could assist 5 tenants in Warrawong, or 3.5 tenants in Newcastle or Minto (Goward 2014: 1).

It bears repeating that this ‘subsidy’ included opportunity cost; while maintenance costs were high given the many heritage listed dwellings, a sum of \$8.89 million had not been *spent* to house tenants in Millers Point and there were no tenants being housed at a direct *cost* of \$44,000 per annum. These comments therefore misrepresented the ‘subsidy’ provided to tenants in Millers Point as an outlay that could be redirected to fund more public housing elsewhere. (Rather, it was revenue from the sale of properties that could fund new social housing.) This misrepresentation was reproduced by the Commonwealth Productivity Commission, which reported in its *Introducing Competition and Informed User Choice into Human Services* that tenants in Millers Point

received a very high level of implicit assistance — up to \$850 per week in some cases. The NSW Government noted that for every tenant assisted in Millers Point, it could assist five tenants in the suburbs of Wollongong, or three and a half tenants in Newcastle (Productivity Commission 2017: 179).

FACS’s claims were also repeated uncritically in the commercial media. For example, the City of Sydney Liberal Party councillor Christine Forster wrote in the *Daily Telegraph* that

For every one of the 410 tenants in Millers Point who have been receiving an average taxpayer-funded subsidy of nearly \$25,000 annually, the government could be assisting around three public housing tenants elsewhere in Sydney. Meanwhile, the hundreds of millions of dollars that will be raised from the sale of the Millers Point properties will go back into the public housing system, to assist the 57,000 families that are on the waiting list for a home (Forster 2014: 31).

*The Australian* editorialised that “Never have so few been so heavily subsidised by so many” (*The Australian* 2014: 13) and, similarly, columnist Miranda Devine in the *Daily Telegraph* asked

why should a Millers Point housing tenant score a taxpayer subsidy of \$25,000 to \$44,000 per year, compared to \$7000 a year for a public housing tenant in Campbelltown? How one group of public housing tenants being treated like royalty at the expense of more needy people can be portrayed as a social justice issue is one of the enduring mysteries of the left (Devine 2014: 13).

The privatisation of public housing in Millers Point is an extreme but nonetheless illustrative example of the stigmatisation of public housing via the techno-discursive construction of its subsidisation, and the deployment of this stigma of subsidy in the legitimisation of neoliberal interventions. The techno-discursive construction of opportunity cost as subsidisation, undergirded by the rationalisation of market values as natural and innate, inflates the subsidisation of public housing and, consequently, exacerbates stigmatisation – particularly in gentrified or gentrifying locations. Tenants are portrayed, explicitly or implicitly, as undeserving such subsidies, and therefore undeserving the neighbourhood they live in, because of their cost to the taxpayer or their ‘wasteful’ use of resources that could be used to house more tenants elsewhere. Consequently, the stigmatisation of public housing is intensified through neoliberal logics and rationalities that evaluate it according to its market value. Furthermore, to the extent that it is based upon its subsidisation, the stigmatisation of public housing is spatially variegated, according to the gap between rental payments and market rents or sale prices. While tenants everywhere suffer stigmatisation, tenants in gentrifying neighbourhoods appear to be subject to yet further denigration as undeserving. The stigma of subsidy has thus been perpetuated in the legitimisation of, on the one hand, punitive regulation of tenant behaviour and, on the other hand, eviction and privatisation. As I discuss further in Chapter 6, it has not only been deployed to legitimate evictions and privatisation in Millers Point but is also implied in estate redevelopment in Waterloo, where public housing is replaced but the land ‘leveraged’ through new private housing.

## **5.2 The deserving and the undeserving**

The trope of the undeserving tenant is not only constituted in relation to the taxpayer and their subsidy but also in relation to other ‘deserving’ tenants and similarly ‘deserving’ applicants waiting for public housing. As such, as I explicate in this section, public housing tenants are not universally or homogeneously stigmatised in discourse on public housing; rather, they are classified into cohorts of ‘undeserving’ tenants and ‘deserving’ tenants, the former more intensely stigmatised via their juxtaposition with the latter as well as with ‘deserving’ applicants. As I

outlined in the previous chapter, such classifications and demarcations are typical of neoliberalism for Wacquant (2009a) and many other scholars of neoliberalism. The character tropes of deserving tenants and applicants have been deployed to devolve responsibility for crime and antisocial behaviour, and for the long waiting list for public housing, on to individual ‘undeserving’ tenants and to thereby obfuscate more significant structural and systemic causes, such as the criminalisation of addiction and the chronic under-resourcing of public housing within a housing system and wider political economy that superordinates home ownership.

### Deserving tenants

A dichotomy between deserving and undeserving tenants is typical of discourses on crime and antisocial behaviour in public housing. Stigma is perpetuated not by wholesale condemnation but through the juxtaposition of tropes of the criminal or antisocial tenant and the vulnerable, innocent and victimised. For instance, a 2015 article described the experiences of one Waterloo tenant:

When it came to entering the safety of her own flat, Mahdi Seifert had ninja stealth.

No creaks of the brown wooden door. No sudden movements. Just mouse-quiet techniques, honed over many months living under the fear of retribution.

She dared not wake the rabid squatters holed up in the squalid apartment next door. “Give us some needles or we’ll cut ya,” they would moan, machete in hand, if they heard her footsteps.

The cuts never came, nor did the needles. But the threats were an ever-present reminder of her home’s ill-repute, where death and despair creep around like rats amid the feet of good folk on hard times.

This was life amid the misery and monotony of Waterloo’s notorious Joseph Banks block, one of the six housing department behemoths grimly dubbed the “Suicide Towers”. “It was a nightmare,” Mahdi says (Carswell 2015: 21).

In this report, public housing tenants are characterised as either deserving (“good folk on hard times” like Mahdi) or undeserving (“rabid squatters”, “ice addicts and dealers”, etcetera) and the negative experiences of the former blamed on the latter. I observed this mode of problem construction within commercial media reportage in August 2017 when a journalist from *News.com.au* attended a Waterloo meeting that was organised to critically discuss capacity building programs being run during the estate redevelopment process. The journalist was less interested in the content of the meeting than they were in tenants’ experiences of crime and drugs, and ultimately produced a story titled ‘Sex, guns and ice at Australia’s most notorious high-rises’

(Reynolds 2017). The article was accompanied by carefully selected photographs of graffiti, needles and poorly maintained common areas, portraying the public housing towers in Waterloo, Redfern and Surry Hills as beset with criminals, addicts and the mentally unwell, who terrorised ‘good tenants’ like Marie – a Redfern tenant who the reporter interviewed and described as a “waiflike” and “wide eyed” woman trapped in her own home:

These days, Marie doesn’t come back home after 4.30pm. “I’ve had too many experiences, people try to grab my purse or a few people approach me. They’re on the prowl looking for money. It’s lodged in my mind, there’s something about 4.30.” (Reynolds 2017).

The article likewise suggests that Marie’s experience is representative and that there are many innocent and vulnerable tenants in the estates whose lives are made unbearable, or are even imperilled, by the presence of a small but significant number of individuals not fit to be there. I interviewed Marie after this encounter with the media and she explained that during her 39 years of living in Redfern she had become increasingly frustrated with her neighbours and FACS, though she was not unsympathetic toward neighbours with mental health issues, including those experiencing drug addiction. Marie saw media engagement as a way of drawing attention to issues that she felt LAHC and FACS had neglected (and hoped that I would do the same). The *News.com.au* journalist had first visited after the routine cleaning and maintenance of Marie’s building, so they rescheduled, and brought a photographer on the second occasion. While Marie may have achieved her aim of drawing attention, the article represented the problems of her estate not only hyperbolically but as simply caused by ‘bad neighbours’ who were ‘undeserving’ public housing while ‘deserving’ tenants like her suffered. Like Mahdi in the article quoted above, Marie’s frustration was exploited in the production of salacious media content that failed to reckon with the systematic residualisation and neglect of public housing over several decades, alongside deinstitutionalisation, criminalisation, and inadequate funding for mental health and addiction treatment. Indeed, such reporting obfuscates these causes by constructing public housing problems as problems of individual undeserving tenants.

As numerous tenants recounted to me in interviews, tropes of deserving and undeserving are actively pursued by journalists despite the more complex everyday realities that they are presented with. Catherine, a Waterloo tenant and activist, related her experience of speaking to a reporter from the *Daily Telegraph* in an interview. The reporter, she explained, insisted on pursuing the subject of drugs:

when their interviewer came here, she was really quite unpleasant. She interviewed me and I wouldn’t really... I just kept returning positive answers

to her questions, and it was quite difficult really to keep doing that because she just came back on the attack all the time, with her negative. But I think I hung on, I don't think I said, but it was, I found it difficult. She wanted me to say certain things about drugs, drugs, drugs, drugs (interview March 2017).

Ultimately, Catherine's positive responses were not reported (see Daily Telegraph 2015: 38).

Likewise, Laura, a community worker in Redfern-Waterloo, described how after a highly-publicised murder involving the daughter of a former NSW premier:

it just felt like every other day there was reporters wanting somebody's story, you know? 'What does it mean for you to live in Redfern? Is this how you feel?' [...] And so it was that kind of 'drug dens', 'drug dens and squalor', and people were like, 'It's not. It's not – this is my home' (interview December 2017).

Laura elaborated that a group of Redfern tenants were approached about producing a documentary that would frame the estate more positively – an offer which caused some disagreement but was ultimately taken up. The suspicions of sceptical tenants were confirmed when, despite the generosity of those who participated, the estate was once again represented in a defamatory way. This is a risk that public housing tenants face when engaging with the media in hope that they might draw attention to a problem or present a more positive image of public housing. Despite some notable exceptions, the commercial media is typically wedded to the character tropes of deserving and undeserving tenants and the simplistic problem constructions which these allow.

Such tropes are not limited to sensationalistic reporting but rather have been deployed by politicians and bureaucrats to legitimate policy and legislative interventions. Tropes of deserving and undeserving have been used to frame individuals or groups of tenants as the cause of problems in public housing estates and thus the regulation or exclusion of these tenants as the solution. For instance, in justifying the introduction of the Local Allocation Strategy for Redfern, Waterloo, Surry Hills and Glebe, then-Minister for Social Housing Pru Goward explained that the policy was intended to protect innocent and well-behaved tenants:

I've met old ladies, for example, who haven't been able to get out of their houses, their homes – except to go and do the shopping – for years because of what they're going to encounter in the corridors. Because, of course, drug dealers and drug users, you know, prowl the buildings [...] And Fran [Kelly; host], nobody wants a *child* to be walking along a corridor in a public housing building and seeing drug paraphernalia on the ground, seeing people dealing in the shadows, and seeing needles and whatever else goes along with drug dealing. And this is all about keeping those tenants – elderly people and children – away from this sort of antisocial activity, but it's also about

keeping... reducing the risks of tenants re-offending (ABC 2018, original emphasis)<sup>12</sup>.

Goward's comments thus exhibit a similar tendency to that of commercial media, deploying tropes of innocent and vulnerable tenants – older women and children, in particular – to cast a separate cohort of tenants as undeserving. This construction of the problems of drugs, crime, and antisocial behaviour thus enables the elision of government culpability both for these specific problems and their underlying political and economic conditions. The tropes of deserving and undeserving tenants within discourse on public housing are therefore crucial to stigmatisation's power of obfuscation and legitimisation.

### Deserving applicants

'Deserving' public housing applicants have also been used to constitute the undeserving tenant. The trope of the deserving applicant has been deployed in the media and in policy literature to misrepresent the shortage of public housing as a problem caused by a cohort of tenants who have the capacity to exit social housing but, either fecklessly or fraudulently, refuse to do so. Government discourse on public housing identifies a cohort of tenants who purportedly possess a capacity for employment and therefore for 'independence' from public housing, and this cohort is consequently represented as an impediment to the efficient and effective functioning of the public housing system. For instance, the NSW Government's 2014 Social Housing Discussion Paper argued that

The system should provide vulnerable people with a safety net when they need it and a pathway to independence in cases where that is a realistic goal. But this is not happening. People are staying longer in social housing, *leaving less capacity to help other people in need* (FACS 2014: 2, emphasis added).

The report further elaborated that

There is a trend for tenants to stay longer in social housing meaning there are fewer opportunities to assist new people. Average tenure has increased from 10.7 years in 2008-09 to 11.9 years in 2012-13 for public housing and AHO tenants. Correspondingly, over the same five year period, annual exit rates fell from 7.4% to 6.9% of total tenancies. This exit rate translates to 7,000-8,000 exits per year and *limits the number of new people that can enter and benefit from social housing* (FACS 2014: 24, emphasis added).

This problem construction precluded the explicit classification of deserving and undeserving tenants within the *Future Directions for Social Housing in NSW* strategy, which identified a 'safety net

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<sup>12</sup> It is noteworthy that Goward was criticised by many tenants I spoke to for being far more distant than other Ministers, including other Liberal Party MPs. This was common among Waterloo tenants in particular during the estate redevelopment process.

group’ and an ‘opportunity group’. The former comprises tenants for whom long-term support was deemed inevitable and necessary, while the latter is described as tenants “who can be helped to become more independent so they no longer require social housing and government assistance”, most of whom receive unemployment benefits as opposed to the Age Pension or Disability Support Pension (NSW Government 2016: 7). In an interview with *The Australian* (Morton 2013: 7), Minister Goward characterised the presence of this latter cohort as evidence of the ‘failure’ of public housing to break the ‘cycle of disadvantage’ (a discourse which I return to in the next section), pointing to the reduction in the number of employed tenants and longer tenancy periods since the 1960s as evidence and thereby obfuscating the changes to eligibility criteria and rent models that I outlined in Chapter 4. Goward related her shock at discovering that “47 per cent of people in public housing are employable but aren’t employed. . . I find that statistic to be shocking, just shocking” (ibid.). Transitioning these tenants out of public housing has been an objective of a range of interventions, including employment, education and training programs and fixed-term tenancies. At the same time, the ‘safety net group’ and applicants on the waiting list have been elevated to the status of deserving, and the latter’s lack of access to social housing represented as a function of the presence of obstinately dependent undeserving individuals in the ‘opportunity group’.

Some public housing tenants who are believed to have the means to exit social housing are cast as fraudulent and are similarly blamed for the long wait faced by deserving applicants. Commenting on 15 ‘severe cases’ of fraud before the District Court, Scott Duffus, then head of FACS’s Tenant Fraud Unit, stated that he felt “a bit affronted that they’re using taxpayer money and the fact that people are waiting on the huge queues we’ve got” (Bashan 2013: 21). The Grattan Institute, an economic policy think-tank, went as far as to claim that public housing tenants have “‘squatters rights’, because it is politically difficult to force an existing low-income tenant to leave, even if the aim is to free up a place for someone else who needs the housing even more” (Grattan Institute 2018: 57). In 2016 the *Daily Telegraph* reported on information received from FACS that revealed a small number of tenants earning high incomes, who were therefore keeping “Families on the street”:

#### FAMILIES ON STREET WHILE HOUSOS EARN \$100K

Thousands of public housing tenants in NSW could easily afford to move out and support themselves — including some on incomes of \$100,000 or more — *while tens of thousands of desperate families languish on the waiting list.*

Shocking figures obtained by The Saturday Telegraph reveal there are 8504 people living in public housing who earn more than the maximum weekly income allowed.

There are also at least seven people on six-figure incomes who are being allowed stay in public housing while paying reduced rent – which can be as low as \$5 a week.

These housing hogs are sucking up much-needed properties, *leaving a staggering 60,000 households waiting* more than 10 years for a roof over their head (Hennessey 2016: 23, emphases added).

Several misrepresentations and sleights of hand are performed in this report, including the implication that tenants on six-figure incomes might be paying as little as \$5 per week (rather than the market rent they are required to pay) and the false equivalence between 8504 high-income tenants and over 60,000 applicants on the waiting list. Nevertheless, the essential thesis of this report and the others quoted above is that that undeserving tenants are responsible in a substantive way for the long wait for housing faced by deserving applicants. In other words, the thesis is the same as that of government policy discourse, devolving blame for the shortage of public housing onto a cohort of individually irresponsible tenants and thereby obfuscating and distracting from the systematic under-resourcing of public housing within a housing system geared toward home ownership. Thus, the animation of discourse on public housing with such character tropes as the ‘deserving’, ‘undeserving’, and the ‘taxpayer’ is central to the deployment of stigma as a governmental technology, building consent for punitive and market-oriented interventions such as those I outlined in the previous chapter, and exercising control over the lives of public housing tenants.

### **5.3 Territorialising stigma in the estate**

To this point I have primarily discussed the stigmatisation of public housing tenants and the spatial variation of this stigmatisation with respect to the geography of real estate values. As I have argued, this stigmatisation functions to devolve culpability for public housing problems onto tenants – ‘undeserving’ tenants in particular – and thereby obfuscate the role of markets and the state. There is, however, a separate set of regularities in discourse on public housing which locate culpability for public housing problems in *territory*, rather than among tenants, and thus produce territorial stigmatisation. As I argued in Chapter 2, territory is in one sense a set of politico-institutional practices that exercise power over physical space, which are in turn represented – through discourse, cartography, statistics, etcetera – as having natural and pre-given qualities (Brenner & Elden 2009; Sack 1986; Antonsich 2009). Rather than problematising individual tenants as such, discourses on concentrated disadvantage, on the built environments

of estates, and on state management, instead pathologise the particular politico-institutional practices that comprise public housing estates. As I demonstrate in the remainder of this section, this territorial stigmatisation has been deployed to gain consent for a raft of neoliberal interventions and in the wider obfuscation of the structural and institutional production of poverty and disadvantage. Such discourses stigmatising territory have been followed by processes deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation, as I discuss in the next chapter.

### Concentrated disadvantage

The spatial concentration of public housing in the form of the estate has been consistently represented as a physical and institutional arrangement that exacerbates, or even causes, tenants' disadvantage. As I discussed in Chapter 4, the problematisation of 'concentrated disadvantage' is undergirded by the concept of neighbourhood effects, which contends that poor peoples' aspirations and life chances are negatively affected by living among similarly marginalised and deprived communities. Public housing estates have been territorially stigmatised through the deployment of these notions in policy and commercial media texts that have represented estates as distinct social environments in which disadvantage is communicated like a pathogen, among tenants and intergenerationally (August 2014). This representation, I argue, functions to devolve responsibility for poverty and disadvantage to territory – the politico-institutional practices that configure the estate socially and materially – and thereby obfuscate its systemic production and the wider culpability of the state beyond its construction and management of housing estates.

Estates are a prominent object of intervention in public housing discourse, and policy and practice. Defined in NSW as agglomerations larger than 100 dwellings (Audit Office NSW 2014), there are 41,000 dwellings located in estates – approximately 40% of public housing dwellings in NSW. The *Future Directions* strategy suggests that many of these estates have perpetuated the 'cycle of disadvantage' as social pathologies are 'passed on through multiple generations':

While a range of social housing estates function relatively well, many estates experience high levels of crime, unemployment, domestic violence, tenancy management problems, poor educational outcomes and associated child protection issues. These experiences can be passed on through multiple generations, reinforcing the cycle of disadvantage (NSW Government 2016: 24).

Similar claims were made by the Productivity Commission in its report on *Introducing Competition and Informed User Choice into Human Services* (Productivity Commission 2017: 205), which, straying into social scientific postulation, contended that

A social environment can develop that compounds the effects of disadvantage, and increases the chance that disadvantage is passed on from one generation to the next.

Both statements quoted above, which are indicative of wider regularities in discourse on public housing, represent estates as causally responsible, at least in part, for the reproduction of disadvantage. This is due, they intimate, to the social relations, practices, experiences and atmospheres that emerge when disadvantaged people are spatially concentrated (a problematic representation in the context of the gentrification of inner-city neighbourhoods surrounding estates like those in Redfern-Waterloo, as I discuss in the next two chapters). Thus, tenants themselves are to some extent represented sympathetically, if condescendingly, as passive agents whose lives are structured by their noxious environment. Rather than tenants, or ‘undeserving’ tenants, the primary object of stigmatisation here is instead the territorial practices of the estate – the physical and institutional practices that have spatially concentrated disadvantaged people.

Territorial stigmatisation has also been perpetuated by the commercial media, which has circulated more hyperbolic claims about the causal influence of estates on disadvantage. Commentary in the *Sydney Morning Herald* characterised public housing as “pretty ghastly, a place where disadvantage is *distilled* into ugly estates as a result of past government folly (Horin 2011: 18, emphasis added). Mark Latham, the former Federal Labor opposition leader turned NSW upper house member for the far-right One Nation party, claimed in the *Australian Financial Review* that

For many years, research has shown that the problems of disadvantaged neighbourhoods are far greater than the personal characteristics of the people who live there. That is, if one was to examine the education levels, labour market history and other poverty indicators for each Claymore resident, they would point to a level of deprivation below that actually being experienced in the suburb. There is something about the place itself which *compounds and magnifies* the degree of disadvantage [...] The “mystery factor” is hope. When young people grow up in areas where there are role models for work and responsibility, they tend to follow these norms as adults. Take them away and aberrant behaviour becomes a way of life (Latham 2012: 48, emphasis added).

The examples quoted above deploy terms from physical sciences to argue that the spatial concentration of tenants intensifies disadvantage as a scientific principle or rule; in other words, it is an inevitable consequence of the physical and institutional practices constituted in estates. Furthermore, estates have regularly been labelled ‘ghettos’ and represented as isolated and detached from the ‘mainstream’ society of waged labour, market housing, and other social norms and expectations:

The ghettoisation of the disadvantaged in Australia, and in other Western countries, with its resultant social decay, has been politically caused and must be politically solved. There is no colder charity than state welfare. The social safety net has become a dragnet (The Australian 2009: 13).

We have got these huge concentrations of people in particular demographic areas that have no workplace participation and don't participate in mainstream Australia (former Shelter NSW CEO Mary Perkins, in Munro 2009: 6).

Like scores of Australian neighbourhoods which are home to clusters of housing estates, Rosemeadow is characterised by almost 100 per cent unemployment and the lack of any meaningful family and social structures.

The local McDonald's is one of the most popular hangouts. Yesterday morning, like every other morning, families could be seen having breakfasts of chips and Coca-Cola in the carpark.

Nearby sit endless rows of tightly packed McMansions. The aspirational McMansion dwellers might live only a kilometre away, but their day-to-day lives are a world away from Rosemeadow (Stapleton 2009: 1).

The notion of concentrated disadvantage in discourse on public housing has functioned to shift responsibility for tenants' supposed problems (poverty, unemployment, antisocial behaviour, etcetera) not onto tenants themselves but onto the territory of the estate. In doing so it obfuscates the ways in which disadvantage has been concentrated in estates by targeting and residualisation, and how, beyond the housing system itself, poverty and disadvantage have been exacerbated through the wider neoliberal project of labour market fragmentation, welfare state retraction and devolution to the market, and punitive regulation of the poor (Wacquant 2009a). Furthermore, the discourse of concentrated disadvantage distracts from the role that public housing plays in *alleviating* poverty and disadvantage through providing affordable housing to low-income households. It thereby radically transforms the meaning of estates from solutions for poverty and disadvantage to causes of them.

The representation of estates as pathological territories that exacerbate disadvantage has been deployed to legitimate the 'deconcentration' of public housing estates via redevelopment – a 'solution' to concentrated disadvantage which involves demolishing and replacing estates with mixed tenure housing developments. This 'social mix' model has been represented in policy and planning texts as a way of achieving 'inclusion' (Commonwealth of Australia 2009) or 'integration' of tenants with the mainstream of society (Redfern-Waterloo Authority 2006, 2011; NSW Government 2016; Infrastructure Partnerships Australia 2016). 'Social mix' in discourse on public housing has been described as a model for breaking cycles of disadvantage by introducing more affluent tenants to act as 'role models' who will demonstrate 'mainstream' behaviours and

practices and inspiring aspiration among tenants. For instance, in justifying FACS and LAHC's mixed-tenure redevelopment of several estates in Sydney, the former Minister Brad Hazzard commented that

The major plus of all this which is not necessarily given enough focus is that when you get a mixture of housing, private and public, you get an incredible drop in antisocial behaviour [...] Also what appeals to me is that little kids growing up don't just see their parents and grandparents not going to work [...] They see people around them dressed for work, leaving home to go about their day, and they think 'Gee whiz that's what I can do' (Saulwick 2016: 28).

'Deconcentration' is thus represented as a way of disrupting pathological social relations and practices facilitated by concentration. The territorial stigmatisation of public housing estates has therefore led to attempts to deterritorialise and reterritorialise them, as I discuss further in the next chapter. Moreover, in addition to deconcentrating concentrated disadvantage, these interventions have been represented as solutions to the pathological physical design features of several estates.

### **Pathological built environments**

As I discussed in the previous chapter, public housing in Sydney has become characterised by a dual morphological character of inner-city high-rises and outer-suburban Radburn estates. This is not to say that these two forms are the only ones in which public housing exists, but rather that these are its most recognisable forms and those that are circulated most frequently in representations of public housing generally. As Darcy (2013: 369) has argued, the "identifiable separateness of estates" functions to reinforce metaphors of exceptionality and exclusion in discourse on public housing. Moreover, the particularities of their physical design have been pathologised as socially isolating and criminogenic. Thus, as it is with discourses on concentrated disadvantage, the object of stigmatisation is territory: the causes of problems of crime, antisocial behaviour and dependence are located within the territorial practices that have constituted Radburn and high-rise estates, rather than among tenants themselves.

In Australia, the Radburn model was primarily adopted by SHAs, and in Sydney it was implemented in several estates in the western and south-western suburbs including Claymore, Minto, Rosemeadow, Villawood, and Macquarie Fields (see Darcy 2010, 2013). The physical environments and design features of Radburn estates have been represented as enablers or even causes of social problems. The Minto estate, for example, was described as "one of the public housing disasters of the 1970s where back-to-front townhouses built on the Radburn principle became a hotbed of drug-dealing, crime, social disadvantage and violence" (Grennan 2009: 17).

In particular, the supposed imperviousness of their boundaries, their lack of surveillance, and ambiguous ownership of common spaces have been interpreted as criminogenic according to CPTED principles. For instance, the *Sydney Morning Herald* described how “the laneways used as common entries and exits to the houses helped ghettoise communities and encourage crime” (Welch 2009: 4). The *Sydney Morning Herald* also reported that Radburn principles “unintentionally created de facto gated communities where violence rules” (Sydney Morning Herald 2009: 10). The redevelopment of these estates has thus at times been described as an effort to ‘de-Radburnise’ public housing, as well as ‘deconcentrating’ concentrated disadvantage.

High-rise public housing has been similarly derided for its distinctive built forms and physical design features. The stark physical contrast between public housing towers and the surrounding housing stock is one dimension of their stigmatisation: towers in Waterloo, Redfern and Surry Hills, for example, stand out among the terraced housing and low-rise apartment buildings that surround them. Thus, the Waterloo estate was described as “grey concrete buildings [that] remain strikingly incongruous against the relatively flat, terraced terrain of their urban surrounds – monuments to the era’s utilitarian style of housing projects” (Sydney Morning Herald 2017b: 23). The label ‘Suicide Towers’ has been variously applied to towers in these neighbourhoods (e.g. Godfrey 2017: 7; Reynolds 2017). Furthermore, like Radburn estates, high-rise estates have been labelled ‘ghettos’ or ‘slums’ and represented as ‘failed experiments’ in planning and architecture that have led to social isolation, crime, and antisocial behaviour. For instance, the McKell building in Redfern was branded a “slum of meth and death” – a “towering unit block renowned as a drug den, a suicide hotspot, an avenue of daytime drunkards” (Carswell 2014: 7). High-rises in Redfern and Waterloo have been collectively described as “rabbit warren-like public housing blocks [which are] the “perfect design” for drug dealing, according to police” (McClennan 2015: 14). The physical design of high-rise estates is here represented as criminogenic in its apparent affordance of discreet, unwatched spaces for drug dealing, drug use, and perhaps more serious crimes. As with Radburn estates, blame is devolved onto territory – the physical design practices and the politico-institutional practices that guided them. Discourse on the design and built environment of estates thus reproduces territorial stigmatisation.

Such representations have been circulated extensively at moments of neoliberal policy roll-out. Discussion about the aforementioned Local Allocation Strategy, which excludes applicants with drug convictions from Redfern, Waterloo, Surry Hills and Glebe, provides an illustrative example. The front-page headline of the *Daily Telegraph* read ‘End to Ghetto Hell: City to Export Junkies’, and the report that followed explained that

The city's *worst drug dens* will be cleaned up under a tough new policy that will ban known dealers from living in certain social housing towers (Brennan 2018: 2, emphasis added).

These representations have not been limited to sensationalistic reports in the commercial media but rather have been deployed in government and bureaucratic discourse on public housing. For instance, then-Minister Goward legitimated the Strategy using similar language, aligning drug dealing and use with high-rises and describing the towers as 'honeypots' (2GB 2018):

Although there is drug dealing in public housing across New South Wales, it is particularly prevalent in these four suburbs – in those big old tower buildings in Redfern and Waterloo, especially – and there are high rates of drug use and drug *abuse* in those areas (ABC 2018, original emphasis).

By attributing drug dealing and drug use and related antisocial behaviour to, in part, the physical design of high-rise public housing estates, Goward's comments devolve responsibility to territory and obfuscate a range of other, more substantive causes, including the criminalisation of addiction and inadequate training and resourcing of social support staff – the latter having been highlighted in a NSW Auditor-General's Report in 2018 (Audit Office of NSW 2018). Instead, the 'solution' pursued through the Local Allocation Strategy was the exclusion of tenants charged or convicted for drug supply or manufacture in the five years prior (or who refuse to consent to a criminal record check). Thus, stigmatising representations of territory worked in this instance to gain consent for punitive regulation: few reports in the commercial media critiqued the policy for its exclusions, focusing instead on its displacement of a 'problem' population to different neighbourhoods. As I discuss in the next chapter, such representations of territory have also undergirded estate redevelopment.

### State management

Discourses on concentrated disadvantage and pathological designs have been enrolled into a wider discourse on public housing within which state management is represented as inherently flawed compared to management by the non-government community housing sector. Because of the concentrated disadvantage and pathological designs of estates, public housing has been hyperbolically characterised as an "ineffective way to help the nation's most vulnerable" (Lunn 2009: 4); "mak[ing] the problem of the underclass exponentially worse" (Latham 2014: 53).

Further exemplifying this, former Finance Minister Greg Pearce remarked that

the era of concentrated swathes of public housing was over. "It's finished. It's a proven failure, it's a proven failure in other parts of the world. It just creates cycles of disadvantage and it can't be managed" (Tovey 2012: 3).

While state management is not always denigrated in such hyperbolic terms, it is routinely derided for its purported inefficiency, bureaucratic inertia, and detachment from community, compared to CHPs heralded for their agility, innovation, efficiency, and community-mindedness (Darcy 1999; Jacobs 2019). For instance, writing in the *Sydney Morning Herald* in 2011, the late journalist Adele Horin implored readers to

Banish from your mind any vision of vast housing commission estates. Either the money to build, or the titles to the new properties, have been or will be given to non-profit community housing organisations that have mainly managed properties for state housing departments. These community organisations have more liberal tenancy rules than state housing departments, which avoid concentrations of disadvantage (Horin 2011: 18).

Similarly, Michael Perusco, then-Chief Executive of the St Vincent de Paul Society NSW, wrote in an op-ed in the *Daily Telegraph* that public housing should be transferred to CHPs as part of the solution to the ‘crisis’ of affordable housing:

We need to see the large-scale transfer of the management of public housing stock to community housing providers. *History tells us that governments are not good at managing public housing.* Research is now showing that where community housing providers manage these properties it is more efficient and effective. They are also better at creating communities where people can thrive rather than be trapped in a cycle of intergenerational disadvantage (Perusco 2014: 28, emphasis added).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, representatives of the community housing sector have been similarly vocal with their unfavourable characterisations of public housing. Andrew McNulty, then CEO of CHP Link Housing, claimed that “[a]s good as state governments can be *they are generally not good housing managers* [...]”. Community providers are smaller, are more nimble, have lower overheads and are focused on housing” (Saulwick 2016b: 11, emphasis added). The Community Housing Industry Association’s 2018 *National Plan for Affordable Housing* presented a similar rationale in advocating for the continued transfer of properties from SHAS to CHPs (up to 50% by 2028), which they claimed would “breathe new life into the ailing public housing system” (Community Housing Industry Association 2018: 22).

As I discussed in the previous chapter, the stock of dwellings under the management of CHPs has grown as SHAs have embarked on transferring up to 35% of their portfolios. The reasons for these transfers are manifold; as I discuss in the next chapter, they include the possibility of private finance and cost shifting by state governments. They have also been posited as solutions to the pathologies of the public system. The purported problems of public housing – from crime and antisocial behaviour, to poorly serviced and maintained housing and

neighbourhoods, to concentrated and intergenerational disadvantage – are represented as inevitable, irresolvable outcomes of the direct involvement of the state in housing. With state management itself so implicated in territorial stigmatisation, the possibility that the public housing system could be expanded and improved, even emulating the ‘best practices’ of CHPs, is rendered almost inconceivable. The neoliberal doxa that has developed in discourse on public housing thus forecloses solutions to concentrated disadvantage, built environments, and tenancy management which might involve expanding the social provisioning role of the state, or even simply maintaining it. Rather, the only solutions it makes possible are those in which state social provisioning is devolved and the role of market or market-like processes widened. As I discuss in the next chapter, this has led to deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation via estate redevelopment: ‘deconcentration’ of disadvantage, demolition of pathological built environments, and devolution to the community housing sector.

#### **5.4 Conclusion**

An analysis of discourse on public housing reveals much about the production of stigma and territorial stigma. As I have discussed, tenants are stigmatised through techno-discursive constructions of their subsidisation, inflated according to neoliberal logics and rationalities that assess public housing against market values. This stigma of subsidy is spatially (and temporally) variegated according to real estate markets and is thus arguably more intense in gentrifying neighbourhoods where the gap between rents paid and market rents/values is largest. The classification of tenants as ‘undeserving’ this subsidy has legitimated new punitive regulations as well as privatisation and redevelopment. However, not all tenants are stigmatised as ‘undeserving’; rather, they are classified as either ‘deserving’ or ‘undeserving’, in relation to the ‘taxpayer’ who purportedly subsidises them and the ‘deserving’ applicant on the waiting list. These character tropes animate discourse on public housing, functioning to misrepresent a litany of real, hyperbolised, and fictitious problems as the failings of individual, undeserving tenants. The stigmatisation of tenants as ‘undeserving’ thus perpetuates the trope of individual responsibility that Wacquant (2009a) has identified as a pillar of neoliberalisation and, furthermore, has been activated to build consent for punitive interventions characteristic of the neoliberal centaur state. Moreover, it obscures the political and economic roots of public housing problems and issues of socio-spatial inequality and injustice more widely.

Additionally, related but distinct discourses devolve responsibility for various public housing problems to estates rather than to individual tenants. The politico-institutional practices of spatially concentrating tenants in Radburn and high-rise estates have been represented as

causes of poverty, disadvantage, isolation, and crime and antisocial behaviour. In other words, these problems have been represented as inevitable problems of territory – a representation which radically transforms the meaning of public housing from a solution to a cause of poverty and disadvantage, and similarly obfuscates a multiplicity of structural and institutional causes of socio-spatial inequality and injustice. Furthermore, the problems of concentrated disadvantage and physical environments have been represented as inevitable outcomes of state management, such that state management itself is implicated into territorial stigma. The neoliberal doxa that emerges from these discourses on public housing therefore forecloses the expansion and improvement of state management as a solution to housing and social problems. Instead it propels processes of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation, which I discuss in the next chapter: demolition, ‘deconcentration’, and devolution. Discourse on public housing is therefore characterised by a double-obfuscation, through both stigmatisation and territorial stigmatisation, and a double-legitimation of neoliberal reforms and interventions, including punitive regulation and exclusion, demolition and redevelopment, and devolution of social support to marketised and quasi-marketised forms of provisioning.

## Chapter 6

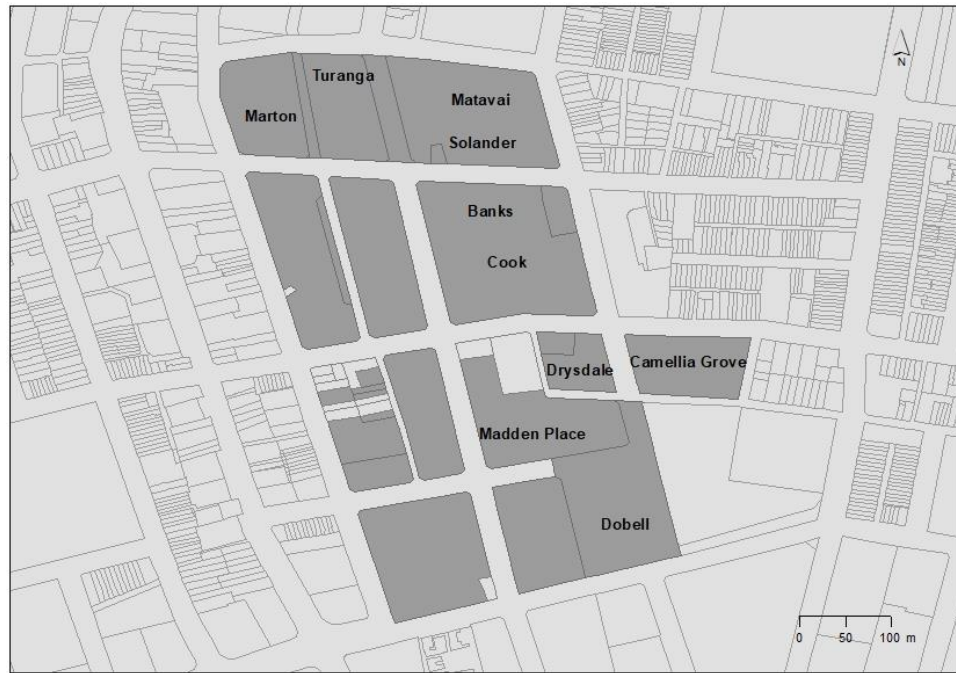
### Territorial stigma and the redevelopment of the Waterloo estate

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The Waterloo estate, in Sydney's inner-south, is the largest public housing estate in Australia. It is comprised of 2012 units over 18 hectares, including six high-rise towers and several blocks of walk-up apartments, as shown in Figure 1.3 above and mapped in Figure 6.1 below. Some of its walk-ups were built in the 1950s, but most construction took place in the 1960s and 1970s. The two 32-story towers, Matavai and Turanga, were opened by Queen Elizabeth II in 1976. As I briefly discussed in Chapter 4, the estate was officially named the Endeavor estate, and major buildings are named after members of and places visited on Cook's voyage. The estate makes up 16% of the area of Waterloo, which lies immediately to the south of Redfern; Redfern and Waterloo are separate suburbs but are in many ways imagined as one neighbourhood, by residents and by authorities alike. Indeed, they are often rhetorically conjoined in the name Redfern-Waterloo.

Redfern is one of Sydney's most famous and infamous neighbourhoods, for decades home to a large and politically active community of Aboriginal people. Redfern-Waterloo is Gadigal Country, but Aboriginal people from First Nations around NSW and Australia moved to Redfern in the early and mid-20<sup>th</sup> century for work, education, and political organising. According to oral histories, it was home to tens of thousands of Aboriginal people in the 1960s and 70s (Redfern Oral History Project n.d.). As I mentioned in Chapter 4, Redfern is where the AHC and the Block were established, providing affordable homes to several dozen Aboriginal families (see Anderson 2000; Bellar 1976; Foley 2001). It is also where many other organisations of the self-determination movement emerged, including the Aboriginal Medical Service, Aboriginal Legal Service, the Metropolitan Aboriginal Land Council, the National Black Theatre, and Murawina women's centre (see Foley 2001; Redfern Oral History Project n.d.). It is still a significant place for Aboriginal people and Aboriginal politics; however, as the area has gentrified, the number of Aboriginal people living in Redfern has declined dramatically. Redfern also contains a large public housing estate, illustrated in Figure 6.2, which is a short distance from the Waterloo estate, as Figure 6.3 demonstrates. Anecdotally, several Aboriginal families moved from the Block into the estates when the AHC-led redevelopment began. As such, in Redfern-Waterloo, the territorial stigmatisation of public housing is conjugated with the stigmatisation of the Redfern Aboriginal community. Thus, in this chapter I interrogate how this

**Figure 6.1**  
The Waterloo  
estate mapped.  
Towers and other  
larger complexes  
in bold



conjugated stigmatisation functioned to build consent for the redevelopment in Redfern-Waterloo and of the Waterloo estate in particular.

The redevelopment of the Waterloo estate was announced in December 2015, following the announcement that there would be a Waterloo station along the new Sydney Metro line. The estate and Metro station site were declared a State Significant Precinct (SSP) under legislation enabling the NSW Government to override and redraft local council planning controls. Waterloo thus became one of seven ‘major projects’ in the Communities Plus program, which would ‘leverage’ the private sector to redevelop estates into mixed-tenure precincts. As of 2018, Communities Plus was forecast to deliver approximately 6000 new social housing units, 17000 replacement social housing units, 500 affordable homes, and tens of thousands of new private dwellings (Pawson 2018). In Waterloo, public housing would be replaced with community housing, alongside approximately 4000-5000 new dwellings for private sale.

Prior to the announcement of the estate redevelopment, Redfern-Waterloo had become increasingly gentrified over two decades or more. Like many of Sydney’s inner-city neighbourhoods, it has become more and more middle-class, public housing notwithstanding. The estates stand out, and as I outline in the first section in this chapter, the redevelopment of the Waterloo estate must be understood in this context. The estate redevelopment is driven by the rent gap (Smith 1979, 1987) between public rents and market values, yet it also directly

**Figure 6.2**  
View of the Redfern estate, including the McKell building and Poets Corner towers, from Redfern Park

Source: author's own



intervenes to further widen this gap. While the rent gap functions as an index for identifying a redevelopment opportunity, the state does not act as any other landlord might, given the multiple competing objectives it must resolve as well as its influence on real estate markets. Conditions imposed on the redevelopment of the Waterloo estate, and on Communities Plus projects generally, included no loss of social housing, no cost to the NSW Government, and mixed-tenure development. Thus, the Metro station was built in Waterloo to generate further market revalorisation so as to meet these conditions and simultaneously ‘solve’ problems of concentrated disadvantage and dwellings being purportedly ‘unfit for purpose’. As I argue in the next section, the decision to build a Metro station and redevelop the Waterloo estate relied upon a ‘reputational gap’ (Kallin 2017), between a stigmatised present and the imaginary of a prodigiously revalorised future, which was widened during the prior decade of state-led gentrification, including an earlier plan to redevelop both the Redfern and Waterloo estates.

In the second section of this chapter I discuss how the redevelopment of the Waterloo estate can be understood as a process of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation, eradicating and replacing the politico-institutional practices that have been held up as responsible for the pathologies of territory that I discussed in the previous chapter. The redevelopment has been represented as a project that will remake the noxious social, physical, and institutional composition of the estate, through deconcentration, demolition, and devolution. It will involve the demolition of a pathologised built environment and deconcentration of concentrated

**Figure 6.3**  
Map of Redfern-  
Waterloo and  
surrounds



disadvantage by replacing it with a mixed-tenure development, wherein tenancy management will be devolved to CHPS due to the sector's apparently superior performance. As Brenner (2004) has explicated, such processes of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation take place with the restructuring of capital and the state, such as those I discussed in Chapter 4. Thus, in concluding this chapter I briefly recapitulate how the marketisation of housing assistance, the residualisation of public housing, changes in housing markets, and the rise of asset management – in short, neoliberalisation – led to the redevelopment of the Waterloo estate. Just as neoliberalised settler colonialism has produced territorial stigmatisation, so too has neoliberalisation been pursued to 'resolve' territorial stigmatisation.

### **6.1 The rent gap, the reputational gap, and redevelopment in Redfern-Waterloo**

As I discussed in the previous chapter, inner-city high-rise estates in Sydney contrast sharply with their surrounding landscape in terms of their physical design and appearance, their social composition, and residents' housing costs. Whereas neighbourhoods like Redfern-Waterloo were once predominantly working class across different housing tenures, gentrification and the residualisation of public housing have had polarising effects: the cohort of public housing tenants has become poorer and revenue from rent has declined in real terms while private housing has become more expensive and its residents wealthier. Accordingly, the concept of the rent gap – the explanatory model of gentrification developed by Neil Smith (1979, 1987) – is useful for understanding the redevelopment of the Waterloo estate. For the Waterloo estate, and

inner-city public housing generally, the gap between capitalised ground rent – in this case, revenue received from tenants’ rental payments – and potential ground rent – market rents or market value – has grown markedly due to gentrification and residualisation. As I explained in the previous chapter, this gap is explicitly calculated for public housing and articulated as a subsidy. Therefore, in this section I argue that the rent gap functions as an index identifying to the state the places from which it can generate the most revenue or leverage the most private investment to fund various objectives, including but not limited to the replacement of social housing. The redevelopment of the Waterloo estate was identified as a project that could deliver replacement social housing at no cost to the NSW Government because of the capacity for private residential development to be leveraged to fund it. However, as I have alluded to already, the state also intervened in order to further widen the rent gap so that private residential development could be further leveraged, and it is here that the significance of territorial stigmatisation becomes clear.

The rent gap in Waterloo was widened in the decade prior to the redevelopment announcement by a series of interventions by the NSW Government that constituted a process of state-led gentrification (Lees et al. 2008; Porter & Barber 2006; Watt 2009). These interventions were pursued in the aftermath – and arguably in response to – the death of an Aboriginal teenage boy under suspicious circumstances involving the police, followed by a night of ‘riots’ which were condemned in baldly racist rhetoric. The work of the Redfern-Waterloo Authority (RWA), established through special legislation mere months after these events in 2004, articulated a reputational gap, which Hamish Kallin (2017: 103) has defined as the gap “between the denigrated present and the promised future”. The reputational gap, argues Kallin, helps explain the role of territorial stigmatisation in state-led gentrification. He argues that gentrification can occur even in circumstances where there is no market revalorisation of the land because state policy determines that it could and should occur (ibid.). While market revalorisation *had* occurred in Redfern-Waterloo, planning documents published by the RWA nonetheless contrasted representations of the deficient extant condition of Redfern-Waterloo – its territorial stigma – with representations of the neighbourhood’s enormous ‘potential’, and outlined how investment in redevelopment and refurbishment would realise this potential. The potential articulated by the RWA was partially but not fully realised, for its plans to redevelop the Redfern and Waterloo estates were abandoned. Thus, they left open a significant reputational gap. This was revisited in 2015 with the decision to redevelop the Waterloo estate and to build a Metro station in Waterloo, the latter further widening the rent gap to help fund the estate redevelopment.

## Laying foundations: The Redfern-Waterloo Authority

The Waterloo estate was part of NSW Government redevelopment plans a decade prior to the 2015 announcement. In 2004, a Labor government established the Redfern-Waterloo Authority (RWA) through the *Redfern-Waterloo Act 2004* and amendments to the *Growth Centres (Development Corporations) Act 1974*. The RWA was established during a period of heightened scrutiny of the neighbourhood. In February 2004, TJ Hickey, a 17-year old Aboriginal boy from the neighbourhood, died on the Waterloo Green after coming from his bicycle following a police pursuit. Family and some witnesses alleged that his bicycle was clipped by the police car, though the police dispute this version of events. His death and the circumstances surrounding it prompted unrest around Redfern station and the nearby police station the following day, which was quickly dubbed the ‘Redfern riots’. As tensions escalated between the police and protesters who had gathered, some of whom allegedly threw rocks and bottles, the police dispersed the protestors with high-pressure hoses. The incident provoked fierce condemnation from politicians and media commentators while the grievances and demands of the Aboriginal community, including their demand for a parliamentary inquiry into the incident and the subsequent investigation, were and continue to be largely dismissed (see Liddle 2019; Sydney Morning Herald 2017a; see also Birch 2004; Shaw 2011). Then-Premier Bob Carr attempted to link the protests or riots to drug raids carried out by the Redfern police in the days prior, asserting that “the riot we saw was criminality, plain and simple” (Sydney Morning Herald 2004b). Mark Latham, then leader of the federal Labor party in opposition, deployed racist tropes about Aboriginal peoples’ parenting in blaming the parents of young Aboriginal protestors and calling on them to take responsibility for their whereabouts (The Australian 2004). John Brogden, then leader of the NSW Liberal party in opposition and later the CEO of the state development agency Landcom, was perhaps the most incendiary, commenting that

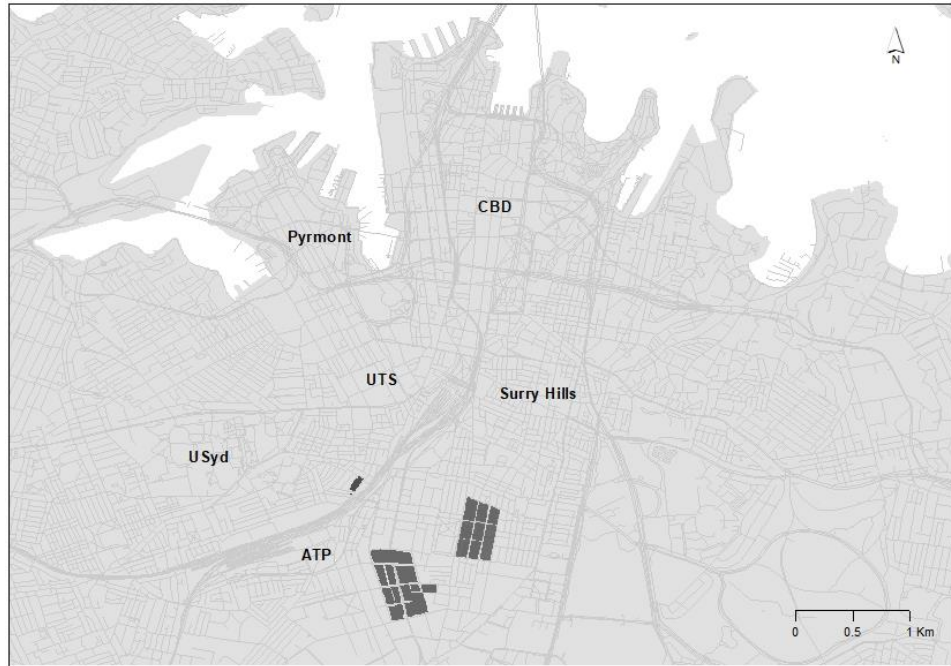
The fact that 40 or 50 police were injured whilst they stood there and copped it from young Aboriginal thugs and others is an unacceptable position going forward [...]. I’d bring the bulldozers in because I think allowing this to happen every couple of years, which is what’s going to happen, will never fix the problem (Sydney Morning Herald 2004a).

The immediate response of the NSW Government was to increase the number of police officers working in the Redfern Local Area Command and resource a 24-hour on-call riot squad (Herald Sun 2004). Shortly after, it formed the RWA and charged it with ‘revitalising’ the area by drafting new planning controls and identifying opportunities for the redevelopment of government-owned properties. From 2005 to 2011, the work of the RWA widened the both the rent gap and reputational gap for the Waterloo estate by facilitating the further gentrification of

the surrounding neighbourhood and by articulating Redfern-Waterloo as a territory of huge potential for revalorisation, both locally and with flow-on benefits for the entire Sydney economy. This work, undertaken in the aftermath of the death of an Aboriginal teenage boy under suspicious circumstances involving police and the racist public debate that followed, intensified gentrification and laid the foundations for the redevelopment of the Waterloo estate that was announced in December 2015. While gentrification was already well underway by 2004, the intervention of the RWA added a revanchist form of state-led gentrification (Smith 1996). Gentrification here was “not solely a manifestation of political-economic restructuring, [but] also a spatial and racial project to reimagine the city and whom cities are for” (Addie & Fraser 2019: 5), of a kind that is typical of settler colonial cities (Blatman-Thomas & Porter 2019; Hugill 2017; Tomiak 2017).

As illustrated in Figure 6.4, Redfern-Waterloo is close to employment hubs in the Sydney CBD, Pyrmont, Surry Hills, and the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) and University of Sydney (USyd). It is well connected to the city via Redfern station, which is a major railway interchange. The neighbourhood is also within Sydney’s ‘Global Economic Corridor’, a transect running from Macquarie Park in the north to the airport and Port Botany in the south, which multiple NSW Government strategic planning documents have identified as critical to the economy of the city and the state (e.g. GSC 2018a; NSW Government 2010). These were among the attributes underpinning the neighbourhood’s ‘potential’, as imagined in the RWA’s Built Environment Plan Stage One (BEP1) (RWA 2006). BEP1 states that Redfern-Waterloo’s “strategic location and public transport provision” would enable it to play “a major role in supporting Sydney’s Economic Corridor by concentrating jobs and activity around Redfern Railway Station and ensuring the provision of sufficiently zoned land for business” (ibid.: 12). This re-imagining of Redfern-Waterloo responded to racial and territorial stigma; it explicitly contrasted ‘potential’ with population decline and “a disproportionately high level of unemployment, public housing and social welfare dependency” (ibid.: 3). In attempting to realise its potential and solve its problems, such as they were, the RWA oversaw or facilitated a series of redevelopment projects that would propel Redfern-Waterloo further along the “road to social and economic revitalisation” (ibid.: 2). Prior to the publication of BEP1, the RWA had facilitated nearly \$300 million investment in Redfern-Waterloo, including its own direct investment of \$76 million (ibid.: 2). Most notably, it invested \$54 million in establishing the service sector employment hub Australian Technology Park (ATP) in South Eveleigh (RWA 2009) and

**Figure 6.4**  
Redfern-Waterloo  
and surrounding  
employment hubs



facilitated media conglomerate Channel 7's \$123 million investment in an office complex and television studios (RWA 2010). BEP1 identified a further eight 'strategic sites' where planning controls could be reformed for public or private investment in the built environment. In addition to ATP – pictured in Figure 6.5 – and the adaptive reuse of the adjacent former railyards, these reforms facilitated the conversion of the North Eveleigh railyards into the Carriageworks arts and events space, the conversion of the former Redfern Public School into the National Centre for Indigenous Excellence (NCIE), residential redevelopment of the former Rachel Foster Hospital (which remains in-progress at the time of writing), the construction of several multi-storey residential towers adjacent to Redfern Station (pictured in Figure 6.6), the AHC's mixed-use redevelopment of the Block (also in-progress at the time of writing, pictured in Figure 6.7), and some smaller multi-unit residential and mixed-use developments. By the time it was dissolved in 2011, the RWA had "directly facilitated the investment of well over \$600 million towards infrastructure development, the provision of improved human services and employment opportunities for the local community" (ibid.: 11) and indirectly facilitated billions of dollars of investment in redevelopment and adaptive reuse through its changes to planning controls, including a \$1 billion development at ATP anchored by the Commonwealth Bank of Australia's new headquarters (McKenny et al. 2015).

In 2011 the RWA published the Built Environment Plan Stage Two (BEP2) (RWA 2011), a set of draft planning control changes for the redevelopment of the Redfern and

**Figure 6.5**  
ATP from north-  
east and south

Source: author's  
own



Waterloo estates. BEP2 highlighted concentrated disadvantage, unsafe and criminogenic built environments, inaccessibility, and aesthetic inconsistency of the estates, compared to the surrounding, mostly private and gentrifying, housing stock. It also reiterated the strategic significance of Redfern-Waterloo's situation within Sydney's 'Global Economic Corridor' and its capacity for increasing housing supply in accordance with the wider planning strategy, *Metropolitan Plan for Sydney 2036* (NSW Government 2010). BEP2 outlined how these problems could be solved and potential realised via the redevelopment of large sections of both estates, as

**Figure 6.6**  
Development  
adjacent to Redfern  
Station

Source: author's  
own



well as some more superficial urban design and landscaping interventions (and, after community pressure, a human services plan). Geoff – a Waterloo resident, community worker and organiser with local organisations REDWatch and Inner Sydney Voice (ISV) – was one of six community members on the Built Environment Ministerial Advisory Committee. He described the imperative of BEP2 as ‘cleaning up’ Redfern-Waterloo:

the drivers there were very much, sort of, ‘Let’s clean up Redfern-Waterloo’, and the way to do that is, yes you have your employment and enterprise, we’ll do some stuff in that space, but it’s basically, you know, we take all the opportunities on this government land to do stuff (interview December 2017).

If BEP2 had been implemented, the McKell building and low-rise and walk-up apartments in the Redfern and Waterloo estates would have been demolished but the remaining high-rises would have been retained; the former were judged no longer ‘fit for purpose’ while the latter were “not at the end of their economic life and are likely to be retained for some time” (ibid.: 54).

Approximately 3500 new units would have been developed, mostly for private sale, and the total stock of public housing would have declined by several hundred, to be replaced elsewhere in Sydney’s inner-south. However, these plans did not come to fruition as the NSW Government decided it was unfeasible, though according to Geoff this decision was less due to financial unfeasibility than it was due to a disagreement between the RWA and LAHC, after the latter

commissioned a masterplan for the estates irrespective of the planning controls drafted by the RWA<sup>13</sup> (interview December 2017).

The redevelopment of the Waterloo estate must be understood within this recent historical context of the origins and operations of the RWA. Indeed, the NSW Government agency responsible for planning the later Waterloo estate redevelopment – Urban Growth NSW Development Corporation (UGDC) – evolved directly from the RWA. The repeal of the 2004 *Redfern-Waterloo Act* and amendments to the 1974 *Growth Centres (Development Corporations) Act* led to the transformation of the RWA into the Sydney Metropolitan Development Authority (SMDA), a city-wide development agency that would oversee State Significant projects. The SMDA became UGDC, which was itself absorbed into the larger agency Infrastructure NSW in July 2019. More significantly, the redevelopment announced in 2015 revisited the RWA’s former plans for public housing in the context of the gentrification that the RWA facilitated. While the RWA is not alone responsible for the gentrification of Redfern-Waterloo, and gentrification long predated it (see Shaw 2000, 2011), it accelerated market revalorisation and intensified gentrification by facilitating the development of new private housing and commercial office space for the services sector, as well as investment in rehabilitation and adaptive reuse. Indeed, gentrification was effectively a stated aim of the RWA.

As shown in Figure 6.8 and Figure 6.9, the median rental payment for a two-bedroom dwelling rose nearly 100% in Redfern and approximately 80% in Waterloo from 2006 to 2019, while median house prices rose approximately 180% in Redfern and nearly 90% in Waterloo. According to ABS Census data, from 2006 to 2016 median household incomes rose from \$1,000-\$1,199 per week in Redfern and \$500-\$649 per week in Waterloo to \$1,750-\$1,999 in Redfern and \$1,250-\$1,499 in Waterloo. As Figure 6.10 shows, the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people residing in Redfern-Waterloo rose between 2001 and 2016, according to the ABS Census; however, their proportion of the total residential population declined as the total population grew (and there has also been a trend nationally towards greater numbers of Census respondents identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander). These figures therefore hint at the barriers faced by Aboriginal people who wish to be among those moving into the new housing being developed in the area. As several gentrification scholars have argued, displacement is not only a physical process of relocation but a process of place re-making as well (Davidson 2009; Lees 2008; Shaw & Hagemans 2015). As Tissot (2018: 156)

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<sup>13</sup> This masterplan was never finalised nor made public.

**Figure 6.7**  
Demolition of the  
Block

Credit: Janie  
Barrett  
Source: Gorrey  
(2019b)

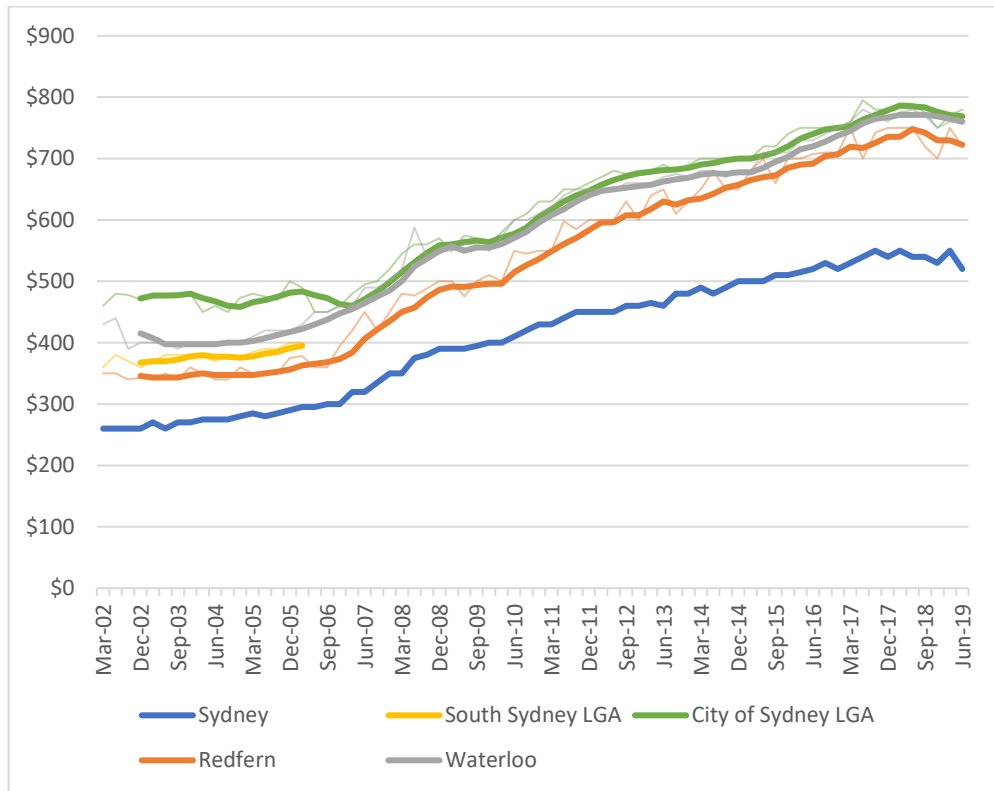


outlines, drawing on Bourdieu, gentrification simultaneously involves social appropriation by a newly dominant group, symbolic appropriation manifest in depictions of the neighbourhood, and material appropriations that transform buildings, commerce, and public space. Each has occurred in Redfern-Waterloo, and this is only partially visible in the statistical representation I have provided here. By facilitating these processes of appropriation, the RWA pursued a settler colonial revanchist mode of gentrification which has combined with more market-led processes to slowly remake Redfern-Waterloo into a middle-class settler neighbourhood.

As such, the work of the RWA functioned to widen the rent gap for the estates. As I outlined in the previous chapter, this is explicitly calculated for public housing in NSW through practices of estimating market rents and market values and comparing them against tenants' rental payments in the techno-discursive construction of public housing subsidies. In the particular case of Redfern-Waterloo, the rent gap is less a model of gentrification than an index for state-led gentrification, highlighting to the state the places from which it can generate the most revenue or leverage the most private investment to fund various objectives or imaginaries. In Waterloo these objectives include but are not limited to the construction of new or replacement social housing, as I explain shortly. In 2015 the revalorisation of land and housing in Redfern-Waterloo was sufficient for redevelopment to be contemplated once again; however, as I discuss in the next section, without government intervention inspired by the reputational gap, this revalorisation was not of a sufficient extent to meet the state objective for the redevelopment to be cost-neutral. The work of the RWA articulated the neighbourhood's unrealised potential while simultaneously stigmatising its present condition, and while BEP2 was formally abandoned, the imaginary of a future Redfern-Waterloo that it produced remained in

**Figure 6.8**  
 Median weekly rental payment for two-bedroom dwelling, 2002-2019. Note: merger of South Sydney and City of Sydney local governments in 2004.

Source: NSW Government Rent and Sales Report No.59 to No.128



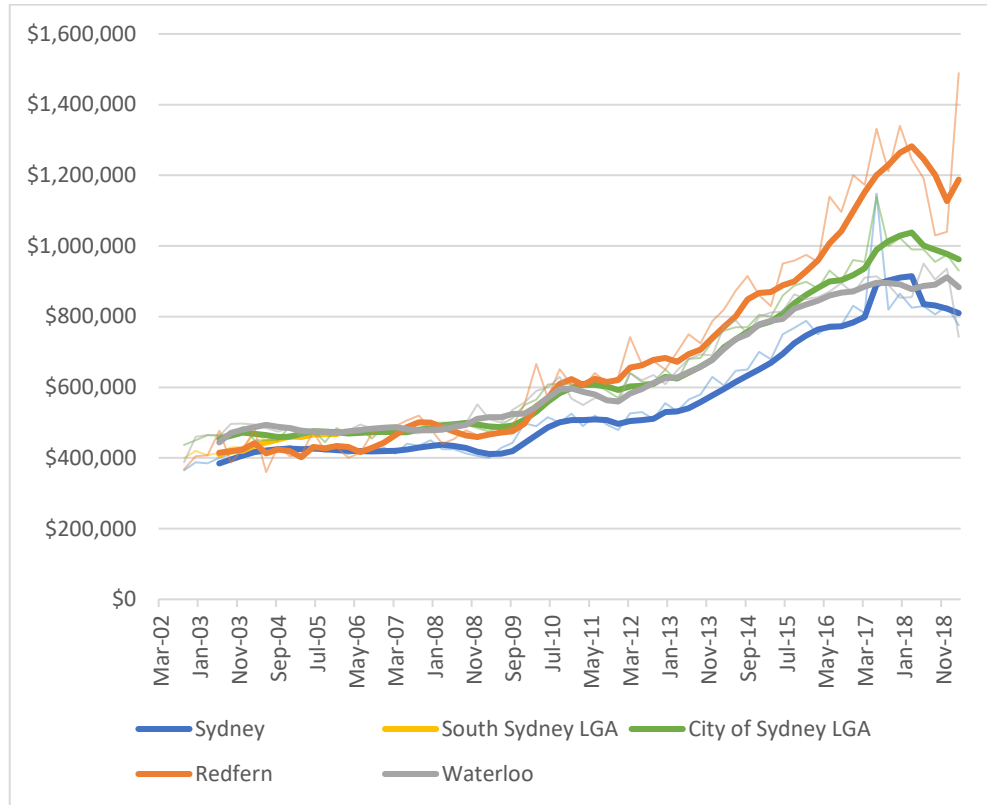
the collective minds of politicians and bureaucrats throughout changes in government and bureaucratic restructuring.

### Back to the future of Redfern-Waterloo with the Waterloo estate redevelopment

In December 2015, the NSW Government announced that it would be constructing a new Metro station in Waterloo and that, as part of this project, the Waterloo estate would be redeveloped. Waterloo became the second major site in the NSW Government’s Communities Plus redevelopment program, established to deliver on several of the objectives of *Future Directions* by redeveloping large estates. Lyn\*, a project manager in the Communities Plus program, described it in an interview as an initiative “to make sure the state gets its best value of its assets” (interview July 2018). Her colleague John\* described Communities Plus as a way of delivering a “better return for the community” by replacing or building additional social housing at no cost to the government in exchange for land for private residential development, thereby also meeting the city’s apparent need for more private housing (interview July 2018). As such, John explained, sites were strategically selected based on their capacity to meet this cost-neutral criterion – sites that were larger, without specific planning controls, and situated within transport corridors. The first major site was the Ivanhoe estate in Macquarie Park – the neighbourhood at the northern tip of the ‘Global Economic Corridor’ and home to Macquarie University, an

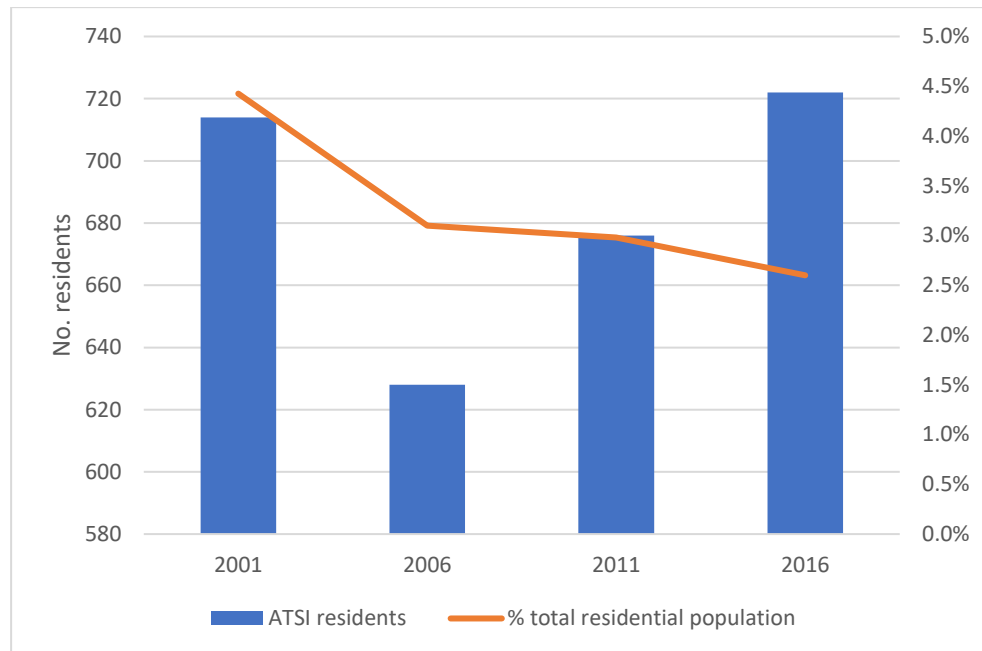
**Figure 6.9**  
Median dwelling price, 2002-2019.  
Note merger of South Sydney and City of Sydney local governments in 2004.

Source: NSW Government Rent and Sales Report No.59 to No.128



**Figure 6.10**  
Changes in number and percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents in Redfern-Waterloo

Source: ABS Census of Population & Housing 2001, 2006, 2011 and 2016



agglomeration of pharmaceutical and technology firms, and a train station that would be transformed into a metro station with the North-West stage of the new Sydney Metro. Ivanhoe’s “excellent proximity to jobs, education, transport and community facilities” (Communities Plus 2017) meant that it could be redeveloped from a 259-dwelling estate to a 3000-3500 dwelling estate, where 1000 social housing dwellings would be paid for through the development and

private sale of 2000-2500 dwellings (ibid.; Zurita & Ruming 2019). Similarly, in Waterloo, the 2012 public housing units were to be replaced with 6500-7200 dwellings, 30% of which would be social housing and built with funds from the sale of the remaining 4000-5000 dwellings.

As I have discussed, real estate in Redfern-Waterloo grew markedly in value during the 2000s and 2010s, increasing the gap between rents paid by public tenants and the value of the real estate they occupied. As I also argued, the work of the RWA articulated a reputational gap between the ‘potential’ of the estates in Redfern-Waterloo and their stigmatised extant condition. In the remainder of this section I outline how the redevelopment of the Waterloo estate was pursued because of both the rent gap and the reputational gap, which were mutually constituted drivers of the project. The Waterloo estate was chosen based on the capacity for redevelopment to be cost-neutral for the NSW Government through leveraging the high real-estate value of the estate. However, this was contingent on state intervention in the form of a new Metro station, which was decided, in part, based on a desire to redevelop the Waterloo estate. In this case of state-led gentrification, the rent gap and the reputational gap are intrinsically connected and mutually reinforcing. Redevelopment was not simply pursued for the realisation of potential ground rents but rather to ‘resolve’ the estate’s stigmatised condition and realise an imaginary revalorised future.

Waterloo public housing tenants received a letter from then-Minister for Social Housing Brad Hazzard on the 16<sup>th</sup> of December, notifying them of the redevelopment. Hazzard wrote that he was

excited to write to you and let you know Transport for NSW has announced a new Sydney Metro station at Waterloo, due to be completed by 2024.

On my visits to Waterloo I have spoken to a number of tenants who have told me they like living in the area, but are disappointed with the quality of the ageing housing on the Waterloo estate.

The new Metro station not only brings fantastic new rapid transport to Waterloo, it means we can redevelop the estate with brand new and more social housing that meets people’s needs.

[...]

The Metro station and the area’s renewal will transform the Waterloo housing estate for the better, building a dynamic new community with great transport, better homes, better facilities and more jobs (Hazzard 2015).

In stating that the Metro “*means* we can redevelop the estate” (ibid., emphasis added) Hazzard separated the decision to build the Metro station in Waterloo from the decision to redevelop the

estate. His letter suggested that the decision to build a Metro station in Waterloo was made without his input, or the input of his Department, and was therefore a separate and prior decision to the decision to redevelop the estate. Subsequent NSW Government documents and public statements likewise framed the estate redevelopment as a decision that was impelled by the Metro station; the Metro station was described as a ‘driver’ or a ‘catalyst’ for the redevelopment. A ‘Frequently Asked Questions’ document released by Communities Plus similarly stated that

The Government is building a new Metro station that will give the best integrated transport outcome to serve the area, and it also means we can redevelop the Waterloo estate with brand new and more social housing that meets people’s needs (Communities Plus 2017).

Again, in the ‘Visioning report’ commissioned during the masterplanning process (KJA 2018), the Metro station was described as an “opportunity to deliver new and improved social housing alongside private and affordable housing, so that more people can call Waterloo home” (ibid.: 13). According to these representations, the decision to redevelop the Waterloo estate was made subsequent to the land value uplift generated by the Metro station. In other words, the Metro station sufficiently increased the rent gap for social housing to be replaced at no cost to the NSW Government, via densification and private residential development. However, these representations misconstrue the inherent connection between the Metro station and the estate redevelopment.

The Waterloo Metro station was not conceptualised prior to and separately from the redevelopment of the estate but was conceived as a component of the redevelopment of the estate. Brett\*, a senior public servant in UGDC, described in an interview that the desire to redevelop the Waterloo estate strongly influenced the decision about the location of the Metro station:

The decision to locate the Metro station where it went certainly was influenced by its catalytic effect on the renewal of Waterloo. So the choice that government faced – and I wasn’t in the room – but the choice that government faced at the time was, do we provide a metro station to Sydney University and meet a transport need there and support the University, or do we locate the metro station at Waterloo and support the renewal of an aged housing estate? And the choice was the housing estate (interview February 2018).

Similarly, John described the Waterloo redevelopment as a “whole of government approach” to “make sure the State gets its best value of its assets” rather than a response to the ‘opportunity’

presented by the Metro station (interview July 2018). This framing is supported by the report by the *Sydney Morning Herald*, which explained that the Cabinet Infrastructure Committee of then-Premier Mike Baird had met to decide the location of a station between Central and Sydenham and voted four-four, with the deciding vote cast by Baird (Saulwick 2016). The Waterloo proposal was supported ahead of the University of Sydney by then-Ministers for Police, Social Housing, and Planning, as well as UGDC. The case they reportedly made was that the station would provide the impetus for the redevelopment of the Waterloo estate. This subtle but crucial difference in the framing of decision-making suggests that the redevelopment of the Waterloo estate was not based purely on the gap between potential and capitalised ground rents, because this gap was actively widened so that the redevelopment could go ahead under the conditions imposed upon it. Rather, the redevelopment of the Waterloo estate was also driven by the gap between the stigmatised representation of its extant condition and the imagined potential that could be achieved. In other words, it was driven by a reputational gap.

Just as it had been under the RWA, the redevelopment of the Waterloo estate (and Ivanhoe estate) was discursively situated as integral to a wider metropolitan strategic plan. In the Greater Sydney Commission's (GSC) Eastern City District Plan, the 'Global Economic Corridor' was renamed the 'Eastern Economic Corridor' and described as the state's "greatest economic asset [...] contributing two-thirds of NSW's economic growth in the 2015-16 financial year" and containing approximately 775,000 jobs (GSC 2018b: 58). Waterloo and Ivanhoe, and their wider urban renewal precincts, were identified as important components of the GSC's plans for "enhancing transport connectivity to and within the Eastern Economic Corridor and removing the barriers to investment and business", and important places for the delivery of a target of 46,550 additional dwellings by 2021 (GSC 2018: 59). The Central to Eveleigh corridor – pictured in Figure 6.11 – was the wider urban renewal precinct incorporating Waterloo and the object of UGDC's Urban Transformation Strategy (Urban Growth NSW 2016). This plan, which included several of the RWA's former strategic sites, was intended to provide "better physical connections across the rail corridor [between Central and Redfern stations], better collaboration between industry and higher education, and greener, more walkable neighbourhoods" (ibid.: 5). The Waterloo estate redevelopment and Metro station precinct was described as a 'top priority' because "[d]espite being part of Sydney's wider economic, innovation and research corridors, Waterloo has not experienced the same degree of growth and investment" (ibid.: 48). The Metro station and estate redevelopment would, it asserted, make Waterloo "a place for local jobs, with 400-800 new jobs close to the Australian Technology Park and growing creative industries. It will

**Figure 6.11**  
Central to Eveleigh  
Corridor plan

Source: Urban  
Growth NSW  
(2016)



be the centre of activity for a more diverse community with a series of accessible community services” (ibid.: 48).

In highlighting the disparity between the estate and its surrounds, and between its extant condition and its possible future, these strategic plans re-articulated and further widened the reputational gap that had been opened by the RWA. The enrolment the Waterloo redevelopment within wider urban renewal and economic growth objectives in such a way implies that the project was driven not only by an extant rent gap but by an imaginary of the multiplication of economic growth, employment, and capital accumulation that it would facilitate. Put differently, the redevelopment of the Waterloo estate appears to have been driven not only by its high real estate value but by an imaginary of its *potential* for additional value to be generated via the Metro station, some of which could be captured to replace public housing. The ‘real’ revalorisation of the market value of the estate that may be produced by the Metro station cannot be known until the land is actually brought to market, which is several years or perhaps decades from the time of writing. It is not inconceivable that, by this time, its market value will have deflated and the redevelopment will fail to be cost-neutral to the NSW Government (or that the shape of the estate redevelopment might change in order to minimise costs to the NSW Government). Yet, as Kallin (2017) similarly identified, potential market revalorisation is represented as inevitable, if not already in the here and now. As such, what motivated the redevelopment of the Waterloo estate in addition to the extant rent gap was a reputational gap between the present stigmatised

condition and an imaginary of a prodigiously and *inevitably* revalorised future. As I discuss in the next section, closing these gaps was articulated as a way of solving the various problems of territory, or, resolving territorial stigmatisation.

## **6.2 Resolving territorial stigma: redevelopment as reterritorialisation**

The redevelopment of the Waterloo estate was articulated as a resolution to territorial stigmatisation in several ways. As I argued in the previous chapter, public housing estates are territorially stigmatised through pathologisation of the politico-institutional practices that constitute them: their concentration of disadvantage, their built environments, and their management by the state. As I briefly discussed, the Waterloo estate redevelopment therefore involves the demolition and replacement of a pathologised built environment, the deconcentration of concentrated disadvantage through social mix, and the devolution of tenancy management to the community housing sector. In the section that follows I unpack these three aspects of the redevelopment in further detail and argue that each can be understood as a form of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation, in that they transform the politico-institutional practices which comprise the estate in order to reshape it socially, physically, and institutionally. As I outlined in Chapter 2, deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation occurs from above with the restructuring of capital and the state (Antonsich 2009; Brenner 2004), ‘emptying’ space of its existing physical and politico-institutional territorial practices and replacing them anew (Sack 1986). Thus, as I briefly discuss in concluding this chapter, the deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation of the Waterloo estate is linked to the neoliberal transformations of the state and the bureaucratic field that I discussed in Chapter 4 and the revalorisation of inner-city land and housing markets that I discussed in the previous section.

### **Deconcentration: Reterritorialisation through social mix**

Several public housing estates in Sydney have been or are, at the time of writing, in the process of being redeveloped as mixed tenure neighbourhoods. As I discussed in Chapter 4, suburban Radburn estates in western and south-western Sydney were the first major sites to be redeveloped according to this social mix model. In each, public housing has been or will eventually be replaced, though in many cases not in the same quantity and in all cases and constituting at most 30% of the total stock of new housing; the remaining 70% is private housing built and sold to fund the replacement social housing. The model for Communities Plus projects is much the same: 30% of dwellings will be social housing and 70% private housing, with a small percentage of the latter reserved for various other models of sub-market ‘affordable’ housing. There is, however, a commitment to no loss of social housing; indeed, in several cases

there is a net gain. As I discussed in the previous section, Communities Plus sites have been strategically selected based on the capacity for these conditions to be met at no net cost to the NSW Government.

The stated rationale for social mix is therefore twofold. Firstly, private residential development funds the replacement of public housing. This may be the primary rationale; indeed, Mark\*, a public servant who had worked on several estate redevelopment projects in the past, saw it as such, and redevelopment as therefore problematic:

you know, whenever you're sitting in a meeting, the most senior people in the room are... the people in charge of development or finance or urban planning. It's not the community renewal people. And my argument was always, you know, *really*, if these projects... there's a question about the *fundamental* objective of the project. If the fundamental objective is addressing disadvantage, then the person leading the project should come from a social policy or, you know, a sociology or social work or *whatever* – from a social perspective. They should be talking about, you know, how you achieve social outcomes, and then they should be bringing in the right person to manage development in line with that objective. The right finance manager, in line with that objective. But it *always* works in reverse (interview July 2018, original emphases).

Tim\*, another former public servant in FACS, held a similar view:

I think it is about just capitalising on sites, predominantly. Um... although you won't, you know – getting someone to say that is near impossible (interview March 2018).

As Tim suggested, such a rationale for social mix is rarely put forward by politicians or (current) housing bureaucrats without a social rationale alongside it. Exemplifying the way in which the financial rationale for mixed tenure redevelopment is smuggled in by a social rationale, former NSW Premier Nick Greiner (now a member of multiple corporate boards) wrote in an op-ed that

Salt and pepper housing [is] just the shake we need

Social reformers rightly argue that many social housing estates do more to perpetuate permanent poverty rather than enable departure from it. [...] Under the “glass half full” model I back, we look not only at what's wrong, but at what's valuable about an older and deteriorating social housing estate – and that's the land that it sits on and its development potential. Then, use that value to offset a public liability. In co-operation with public sector authorities, take a current public housing estate that's in physical, financial and social decline, and fully redevelop it (Greiner 2014: 19).

As I discussed in the previous chapter, social mix is represented as a solution to concentrated and intergenerational disadvantage as well as to crime and antisocial behaviour, interrupting the communication of low aspirations and pathological behaviours that purportedly occurs when disadvantage is spatially concentrated. In other words, mixed tenure redevelopment is represented as a solution to the territory that is produced through past and present politico-institutional practices of concentrating public housing tenants in estates. While I do not comprehensively review the concept in this section, I outline how social mix is articulated as a kind of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation, transforming a social composition deemed inherently pathological.

The circulation of the social mix model globally – irrespective of differences in the physical, social, and politico-institutional composition of estates – stems more from the concept’s common-sense appeal (Darcy 2013; Lees et al. 2012) and agnotological circulation (Slater 2014, 2018) than it does from any substantive evidence bases. Indeed, the evidence base in support of social mix is thin (Arthurson 2002, 2012; Blokland & van Eijk 2012; Manley et al. 2012; Randolph & Wood 2003). The concept has been criticised for mistaking the symptoms for poverty and deprivation for causes (Cheshire 2012; Davidson 2012; Lees 2008; Uitermark 2003) and some scholars have detailed circumstances where social mix has not been in tenants’ interests (e.g. Arthurson 2002; Atkinson 2000; August 2015; Cheshire 2006; Shaw 2012). Its most strident critics contend that the notion of social mix is little more than a cloaking device for state-led gentrification and real estate-led capital accumulation (August 2008; Lees 2008; Shaw 2012), for the control of problematised populations (Uitermark 2003; Uitermark et al. 2007), or for racialised revanchism (Addie & Fraser 2019; Kipfer & Petrunia 2009). Nevertheless, social mix has become a powerful ‘folk concept’ (Wacquant 2008) in discourse on public housing, central to public housing doxa. This is evident in premature declarations of success from a range of actors in the housing field. For instance, Frank Terenzini, Housing Minister under a NSW Labor government, explained in 2010 that his Department had concluded that social mix had “worked very well” (Hobbs 2010: 55), before any major redevelopment projects had been completed, let alone evaluated. Similarly, Tania Plibersek, Minister for Housing in a former Commonwealth Labor government, claimed unequivocally in 2009 that “[h]aving a social mix, where people are also going to work each day, builds stronger communities” (Needham 2010: 3). Such claims, in the absence of any local evidence base, suggest that social mix is an article of faith or common sense, or, more cynically, that the social rationale of mixed tenure is simply deployed to legitimate or obscure its fundamental financial imperative.

Representations of the social rationale for mixed tenure redevelopment in Waterloo were much the same as they have been elsewhere in Sydney: deconcentrating disadvantage would fix problems of concentrated disadvantage, and social exclusion and isolation (Bijen & Piracha 2012; Darcy 2013; Doney et al. 2013; Eastgate 2016). It is notable that such a case was rarely, if ever, put directly to Waterloo tenants themselves: not once during my fieldwork did a public servant or consultant suggest to a tenant that the redevelopment would make them less disadvantaged. However, such claims were often made, in implicit and explicit ways, to the media and in policy and masterplanning documents. The Social Baseline report stated that the redevelopment would “creat[e] a socially cohesive and integrated community”, “reduce concentrations of disadvantage and facilitate a more diverse community [...] through changing the dwelling mix” (GHD 2018: iii). The Visioning report described how the redevelopment would build a “safe, welcoming and vibrant” neighbourhood with “an integrated, inclusive community” (KJA 2017: 6, 10), denying and erasing the existing vibrancy, inclusivity and integration of the communities of the estate (Addie & Fraser 2019). Lyn elaborated in our interview how “over the last 40 to 50 years we have walled off our estates”, creating an “emotional and psychological barrier” (interview July 2017). She bemoaned what she saw as the ‘institutionalisation’ that public housing caused, compared to private renting or home ownership, and explained that changing this mindset was a key objective of the redevelopment. The redevelopment therefore in her eyes represented a “chance to see a ghetto transformed”. Brett similarly encapsulated why the social mix model was being followed:

the lived experience for the tenants is not that good, both in terms of the actual buildings themselves but also its an enormous concentration of social housing tenants with nobody else there. And it creates certain social stigma, but it also creates a concentration of disadvantage which happens, that without doubt it has issues. And if you spend time sort of, say, if you walk around in the evening in wintertime around Waterloo, it’s not a great experience. Uhm and I’ve done that, I actually went there personally to do that and to see what is was like to... to have that lived experience and as a kind of middle-aged bloke, um, you find yourself being on alert because of the environmental issue, see, and for, say, a woman walking ‘round at night, I don’t think it would be a particularly nice experience. But um, so it’s really about regenerating – the housing is a is a big part of it, reducing the percentage concentration of social housing, but also doing it in a way that’s commercially viable (interview February 2018).

Lyn’s labelling of the estate as a ‘ghetto’, Brett’s description of it as “an enormous concentration of social housing tenants *with nobody else there*” (emphasis added), and representations of the redevelopment as an intervention that will make the neighbourhood more ‘integrated’ and more

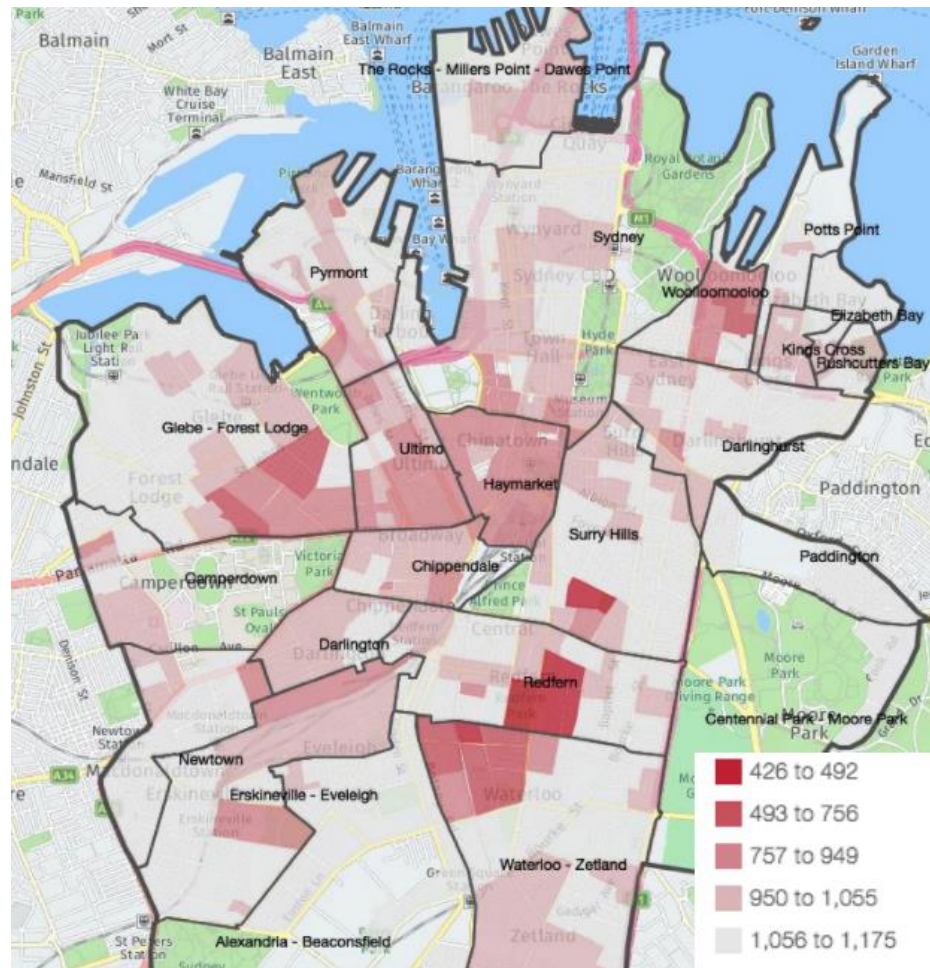
of a 'community', all reproduce territorial stigma by representing the estate as a territory bounded and isolated from the surrounding area in which, as a consequence, social problems and pathologies have developed and become entrenched. The implication is that redevelopment will deterritorialise this problematic territory and reterritorialise it within the wider area, solving its inherent pathologies by transforming its physical, politico-institutional, and social composition.

Statistical and cartographic representations of the Waterloo estate similarly rendered it separate and distinct from the surrounding area. The measurement and mapping of the concentration of disadvantage in the masterplanning process literally illustrated the estate as a distinct, bounded entity within the suburb of Waterloo and City of Sydney. For instance, the Social Baseline report stated that "Based on the 2011 Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage, the Waterloo Estate ranged from 548 to 791, representing a high level of disadvantage compared to the LGA at 1051" (GHD 2018: 19). Similarly, in a somewhat spurious comparison of statistics, it reported that "The average income of Waterloo Estate households was \$474 per week. This is significantly lower than the median weekly household incomes of the Waterloo suburb and LGA of \$1,503 and \$1,926 respectively" (ibid.: 23). A separate Population and Demographics Study (ibid 2018: 27) similarly measured and mapped disadvantage comparatively, as illustrated in Figures 6.12 to 6.14, and subsequently modelled the outcomes of the redevelopment in terms of population, age profile, household structures, and employment, based on data for the surrounding area and recently redeveloped sites in the inner-city. These reports therefore reinforce territorial stigmatisation – 'demonstrating' it through data and statistics (Uitermark et al. 2017) – and submit that deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation of the estate into the surrounding area will solve supposedly inherent problems of territory.

Yet, much as it might be represented as such, the estate is not a bounded territory for which concentrated disadvantage can be straightforwardly quantified. The above statistics that represent the Waterloo estate as a concentration of disadvantage do not precisely represent the area demarcated through the declaration of a SSP. As illustrated in Figure 6.15, all but two of the ABS statistical areas in which the estate lies also include private dwellings. Furthermore, as illustrated in Figure 6.16 and Figure 6.17, public housing dwellings are scattered piecemeal among private dwellings in the Waterloo conservation precinct between the eastern border of the SSP and the Redfern estate to the north-east. The boundaries of the estate itself are therefore somewhat vague and claims about concentrated disadvantage are troubled by the presence of private housing both within the arbitrary boundaries of the estate and immediately adjacent. This extant tenure mix is obfuscated by the use of statistical and cartographic representations, which

**Figure 6.12**  
Map of SEIFA scores  
for relative  
disadvantage,  
produced for  
Population and  
Demographics Study

Source: .id (2018)

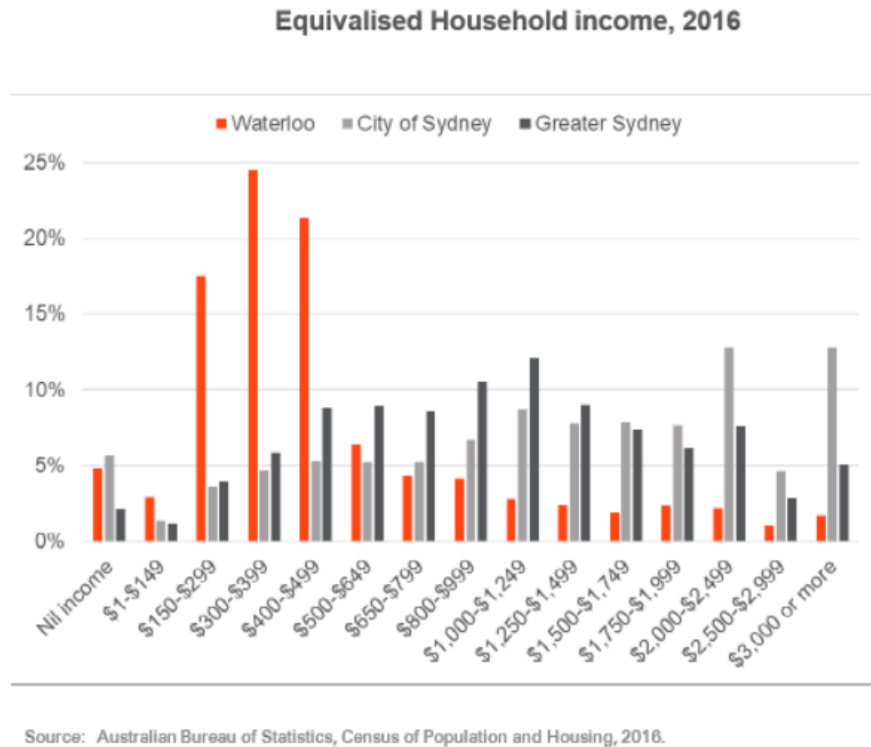


have here been deployed in a politically expedient way to construct an exceptional territory (Uitermark et al. 2017).

As Le Galés (2012) has pointed out, the question of the scale at which social mix is to be understood and applied is crucial but is routinely determined in arbitrary ways. The statistics representing disadvantage for the entire suburb of Waterloo – or for that matter a larger region for which there are no administrative or statistical boundaries – have no more or less inherent validity as representations of concentrated disadvantage and social mix, for while there are elements in the physical environment that can make the Waterloo estate identifiable as such, there are of course no firm, impenetrable physical boundaries that demarcate and segregate its inhabitants. Certainly, it is not a *ghetto*, in the particular way in which Wacquant (2008) implores us to understand it (nor, for that matter, a ‘hyperghetto’). There is no enclosure and no real parallel institutional structure; as I discuss in the next chapter, many public housing tenants in Redfern-Waterloo are mobile, inhabiting and identifying with lived territories that extend beyond the boundaries of the estate. Indeed, tenants living on the edges of the SSP arguably live in closer

**Figure 6.13**  
Figure comparing of  
equivalised  
household incomes,  
produced for  
Population and  
Demographics Study

Source: .id (2018)



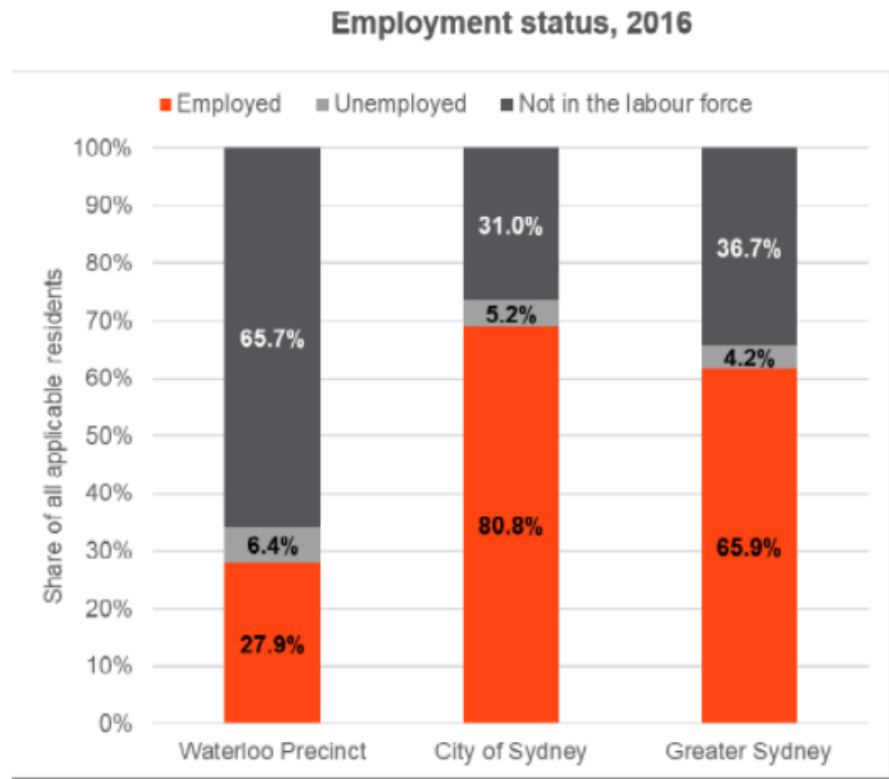
quarters with middle-class home owners and private renters than they do with other public housing tenants. Representations of the Waterloo estate as a territory of concentrated disadvantage presuppose that social lives are lived through the prism of tenure, but the lived territories of tenants prove this false (Gwyther 2009). Nevertheless, representations of the boundedness and isolation of the Waterloo estate, and the problematic nature of these boundaries, proliferated during the redevelopment process and helped publicly legitimate the deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation of this stigmatised territory.

### Demolition: Reterritorialising the built environment

As I argued in the previous chapter, the built form of public housing estates in Sydney is a significant factor in their territorial stigmatisation. Both suburban Radburn estates and inner-city high-rises have been represented as criminogenic and isolating environments and have been derided for their distinctive appearance, which exacerbates and symbolically anchors stigma. Such is the extent of the notoriety of Radburn estates that their redevelopment has been termed ‘de-Radburnisation’ by some commentators. While there is no equivalent term in discourse on the redevelopment of the Waterloo estate, its built form has been similarly represented as isolating, ‘unfit for purpose’, and ugly or aesthetically inconsistent with the surrounding fabric, and the redevelopment has been articulated as a solution to these design problems. In ‘integrating’ the estate into the surrounding area, transforming identifiable public housing into

**Figure 6.14**  
Figure comparing employment statuses, produced for Population and Demographics Study

Source: .id (2018)



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing, 2016. (usual residence)

‘tenure blind’ buildings, and replacing dwellings that are ‘unfit for purpose’ with ones that are ‘fit for purpose’, the redevelopment physically deterritorialises the Waterloo estate and reterritorialises it within a different vernacular

The Waterloo estate follows a grid pattern, albeit with somewhat larger blocks than the surrounding area and with several pedestrian-only routes and access points. For Lyn, these made the estate ‘insular’ (field notes May 2018). She reiterated her observation about the estate being a ‘ghetto’, ‘walled off’ from the surrounding area, in contending that “the streets on the area of the estate are cut off from the surrounding neighbourhood and its stops a connection between the estate and the broader city” (interview July 2017). The Social Baseline Report emphasised the need for the redevelopment to improve ‘connectivity’ (GHD 2018), just as the BEP2 had recommended “new site linkages to maximise permeability within the social housing sites and accessibility to the surrounding neighbourhood” and to improve safety and security, consistent with CPTED principles (RWA 2011: 74). This supposed problem of physical boundedness and isolation is, as I have discussed, hyperbolic at best; where the estate is inaccessible by road it is because those roads (Botany Rd, Elizabeth St, McEvoy St) are major transport arteries, the latter

**Figure 6.15**  
ABS statistical  
areas (SA1s)  
overlaying the  
Waterloo estate



used by many heavy vehicles servicing construction sites and light industry to the south of the estate. Indeed, residents stressed during consultations their desire for this ‘isolation’ from traffic to remain (Elton Consulting 2019; KJA 2018). The Preferred Masterplan (Communities Plus 2019) was described as featuring a “traditional street grid, enhanced with new laneways [to] provide residents with safe and pleasant walking connections” (ibid.: 5); however, the map included in this document and reproduced here in Figure 6.18 suggests that these changes are not substantive. Nevertheless, the representation of the estate as physically isolated, and of the redevelopment as improving accessibility and connectivity, implies that redevelopment is a solution to the problem of territory – in this case, the fictional problem of physically isolating boundaries. The redevelopment thus deterritorialises and reterritorialises the estate by, somehow, improving its connection with the surrounding area.

The six modernist towers of the Waterloo estate are the most visible buildings on the estate and are the most notorious or iconic, depending on one’s disposition. While their appearance and condition were derided as “terrible” by then-Minister Hazzard (Hazzard 2016), some tenants have expressed their fondness for their Brutalist design and even suggested campaigning for heritage protection. Tenants who grew up in Redfern-Waterloo spoke of them as landmarks which they would use to navigate home. Yet making social housing aesthetically indistinct from private housing in the surrounding area was one of the objectives of the

**Figure 6.16**  
Map of Waterloo and Redfern estates (1) and LAHC-owned properties in the Waterloo conservation precinct (2), as of 2011, produced for BEP2

Source: RWA (2011)



**Figure 6.17**  
Private housing within the Waterloo estate

Source: author's own



redevelopment. This was an ‘anti-stigma’ strategy, as the Executive Director of the Communities Plus program Peter Anderson described it:

When you look at some of the social housing properties that we have from the past you will notice that they have a certain stereotype [...] We want to make sure social homes look exactly the same as private homes. That’s important so you can remove the stigma (Saurine 2016: 18).

Anderson made similar comments at a meeting of the Waterloo Redevelopment Group – a monthly meeting of residents, non-government community organisations, and government agencies – telling those assembled that “social housing must look exactly the same as the private housing [...]. Unless we tell you which is the private and which is the social [in a new development], you can’t tell” (field notes September 2017). The importance of ‘tenure blind’ redevelopment was reiterated in the Social Baseline Report (GHD 2018) and Options Testing report (Elton Consulting 2019). It was also stressed by several current and former public servants and CHP staff. For Paul, a project manager who worked on several suburban estate redevelopment projects, this was an unimpeachable principle:

You want absolutely no exceptions ever – all the houses not to look the same, but the public housing not to look any different. You know, you don’t want to identify a little cul-de-sac as that’s where public housing is, so it’s got to be mixed. That doesn’t mean you can’t have three in a row, doesn’t mean you can’t have a little cluster but you should not be able to ride down the street, you know and go, ‘Hahaha public housing’ (interview August 2018).

Similarly, Lauren, a senior public servant in Landcom, emphasised that “You really want to make sure you can’t tell the difference” after redevelopment (interview November 2017). Vicky\*, a senior employee within a large CHP, explained that in the masterplan for the redevelopment that her organisation had successfully tendered for, architects were assigned buildings to design without knowledge of whether they would be private or social housing, to ensure that they would be designed to the same standard (interview February 2018). Such comments recognise the stigmatisation of public housing but imply that is reducible to an aesthetic or design problem that can be solved through an aesthetic transformation. In other words, they suppose that stigma is simply manifest in the perceptions of others, and in the interactions (or absence thereof) between the stigmatised and the ‘normal’ – a conceptualisation not unlike Goffman’s (1963). It is, this supposition continues, caused by the physical form of public housing – its outmoded and austere design and, perhaps, poor maintenance – and duly solved by transforming its form so that it can, per Goffman, ‘pass’ as normal. This is, as should by now be clear, a thoroughly inadequate conceptualisation of territorial stigma. Rather, it is a ‘folk conceptualisation’ of

**Figure 6.18**  
Waterloo Preferred  
Masterplan

Source:  
Communities Plus  
(2019)



territorial stigma which invites a solution in the form of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation of the built form of the estate.

Public housing in the Waterloo estate has also been persistently represented as ‘unfit for purpose’ and replacement social housing as suitably ‘fit for purpose’. These vague characterisations have been made generally without clarification or substantiation. For instance, John reasoned in a REDWatch meeting that housing in the Waterloo estate was “not fit for purpose” because of its age, inaccurately claiming that it had been built in the 1940s, 50s and 60s (field notes January 2019). Irrespective of the fact that most public housing in Waterloo was built in the 1960s and 1970s, and some in the 1980s (City of Sydney 2011), the RWA had just eight years prior designated the high-rises in Waterloo suitable for retention for “some time” (RWA 2011: 54). There were, of course, several maintenance problems, and as Brett pointed out the apartments did not meet contemporary construction standards required under NSW planning policies (interview February 2018), though the same could be said for many private apartments in Sydney. Nevertheless, the claim that the buildings were not fit for purpose functioned to cast doubt over the more fundamental safety and liveability of public housing in the estate. As such, the characterisation of the estate as ‘unfit for purpose’ foreclosed the possibility of repair or refurbishment and enabled the representation of the redevelopment as a project in tenants’ interests. The ‘unfit for purpose’ housing would be replaced with ‘fit for purpose’ housing that met a ‘Silver level’ design standard of liveability. This replacement was thus the third dimension

of physical reterritorialisation, centring on the scale of the dwelling or unit and ‘solving’ homes purported to be inherently deficient.

### **Devolution: Reterritorialising institutional management**

As I have alluded to, the 2012 public housing units in the Waterloo estate were to be replaced with 2140 social housing dwellings, though this figure was disputed by the City of Sydney, who claimed based on separate calculations that there would be 2040 units (field notes February 2019). Per the Communities Plus model, CHPs will partner with property developers in tendering for the redevelopment project, or sections of it. The tender for the redevelopment of the Ivanhoe estate, for instance, was won by a consortium of Mission Australia Housing, Frasers Property Australia, and Citta Property Group. New and returning tenants will lease from the successful CHP (or CHPs), who will provide tenancy management services while LAHC retains ownership of the properties. Few explanations or justifications were given regarding the transfer of Waterloo tenancies to CHPs. However, there have been several cases made for the transfer of public housing tenancies and dwelling title generally, as the NSW Government has proceeded to transfer approximately 35% of public housing to the community housing sector (per the NAHA objectives that I discussed in Chapter 4). Understanding the transfer of public housing in Waterloo thus requires examining the rationales for this wider transfer program. As I discussed in the previous chapter, CHPs have been lauded as better tenancy managers and community builders as well as more efficient, innovative and agile. In short, they have been represented as a better institutional arrangement for providing and managing social housing, by politicians, bureaucrats, media commentators, and representatives of the community housing sector alike. As such, as I argue in the remainder of this section, the transfer of public housing to CHPs represents a third dimension of reterritorialisation, transforming the institutional arrangements of social housing provision and management. However, this reterritorialisation is not only driven by purported efficiencies and improvements: it is also an exercise in state devolution and cost shifting, and an attempt to expand the supply of social and affordable housing through private finance. This transformation, as I briefly outline, has some significant implications for tenants in Waterloo and elsewhere.

CHPs have been credited with better tenancy management and improved community outcomes. As Darcy (1999: 16) identified over 20 years ago, and as I briefly discussed in Chapter 4, discourse on community housing in Australia has long represented it as more ‘community minded’ and ‘community managed’ than the “large, mechanistic and impersonal bureaucracies” of state management (see also Jacobs 2019). Despite CHPs growing massively in size and

becoming increasingly corporatized – and indeed more bureaucratic, as one CHP CEO put it to me in an interview – this discourse is arguably more prevalent now than it was at the time of Darcy’s illuminating critique. For instance, former Minister for Social Housing Brad Hazzard argued for transfers on the basis that

Community housing has shown it is innovative and can help vulnerable tenants to achieve positive outcomes such as securing employment and education [...]. Already more than 28,000 social housing homes are managed by community housing and tenants report very high satisfaction with the level of services offered by community providers (Saulwick 2016: 11).

Similar accounts were given by CHP staff. Vicky, for instance, argued that both the CHP she worked for and the sector generally were delivering better social and financial outcomes than state management:

Government is getting an excellent return in investment for this, and we are delivering better outcomes at an individual and community level than government was achieving. So, we would say based on our experience in that study, yes, community housing delivers better outcomes (interview July 2018).

This rationale for the transfer of housing in Waterloo was repeated by Lyn and John, who explained that CHPs would manage tenancies because of their ability to deliver better tenancy management services, facility management and community management (interview July 2018).

CHP’s innate superiority in tenancy management is purportedly due to their greater agility, efficiency, and innovativeness – functions of both their smaller size and competitive pressures. Wendy Hayhurst, then CEO of the NSW Federation of Housing Associations, contrasted this with public provision in our interview:

You’ve got this *massive* landlord and this amazingly diverse state, so the two don’t go... it’s [public housing] like a giant bureaucracy, it can’t respond to people’s lives at all. So that’s why I don’t support the public housing as much [...] I’m not against it, but if you look at the history of NSW management of their own housing, it’s an appalling state [...] I find it hard to argue at the moment that they should continue to do it (interview January 2018, original emphasis).

Similarly, in a 2015 op-ed in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, Hayhurst wrote that CHPs “offer more efficient and responsive housing solutions than the traditional government-owned public housing model” (Hayhurst 2015: 16). Likewise, former Housing Minister David Borger explained that because the government “manage[s] 126,000 homes and as hard as we try we’re still going to be the Titanic of social housing ... It’s very hard to tack and change quickly and respond to local neighbourhoods” (Wynhausen 2009: 4). Replacing public housing with community housing in

Waterloo is therefore partially undergirded by the doxa of the state's innately inefficient, disengaged, and generally inferior provision of tenancy management and community services. Transforming institutional arrangements by way of devolving tenancy management to CHPs therefore becomes a part of the solution to the problem of territory, and thus part of the reterritorialisation of the Waterloo estate.

The devolution of tenancy management to CHPs also shifts costs from the NSW Government to the Commonwealth Government and, potentially, to private capital. Unlike public housing tenants, community housing tenants have access to CRA, and as such CHPs can charge and receive greater rental revenues per tenant than SHAs (while charging the same percentage of a tenant's income). Consequently, while the NSW Government saves money on tenancy management, the Commonwealth Government spends more money on CRA. However, this is rarely if ever stated as a rationale for transferring tenancies or properties to CHPs. Instead, the possibility of CHPs leveraging private investment has been articulated as another rationale for transferring tenants and properties. For example, the 2014 Social Housing Discussion paper made a case for transferring public housing to CHPs so that they could leverage their assets and income streams:

Unlike LAHC, CHPs and ACHPs are able to leverage their balance sheet, and generate additional revenue streams to cross-subsidise their housing services (e.g. rent from affordable housing). Many CHPs and ACHPs are also registered not-for-profit organisation giving them access to cost savings such as exemption from payroll tax, concessions for GST and exemption from Fringe Benefits Tax (FBT) (up to the applicable cap). With these benefits, CHPs and ACHPs are typically able to run at an operating surplus, however are unable to fully fund the acquisition of new stock or replenishment of end-of-life stock without government grants or alternative revenue streams. For example, in the eight years since 2006, CHPs have been able to borrow (\$113 million) and contribute equity (\$41 million) to government support to acquire or develop new stock (FACS 2014: 81-82).

The Commonwealth Government's report on Regulation and Growth of the Not-For-Profit Housing Sector (Australian Government 2010) outlined similar objectives for facilitating private capital investment into social and affordable housing via CHPs. While scholars such as Yates (2013) and Jacobs & Travers (2015) have cast doubt on the capacity of the community housing sector to raise sufficient private finance for additional social housing, and similar doubts were expressed by the sector professionals I interviewed, a neoliberal fantasy of at least partial devolution of the cost of social housing to private capital seems to be a driver of transfers to CHPs. For instance, it inspired the establishment of the National Housing Finance Investment

Corporation (NHFIC) by the Commonwealth Government in 2018, and its development of an Affordable Housing Bond Aggregator to issue state-backed bonds to enable CHPs to secure cheaper longer-term debt finance (NHFIC 2018).

The rationales for transferring public housing tenants to CHPs that I have so far discussed were rarely if ever articulated to tenants in Waterloo. Indeed, the differences between public housing and community housing were downplayed or even dismissed in public meetings (field notes March 2017, September 2017). There are, however, some significant implications for tenants which, while not the focus of this chapter nor my dissertation generally, do bear mentioning. CHPs are subject to a separate regulatory system and have different internal policies and procedures regarding tenancies and disputes. While tenants transferred from public housing to community housing retain the conditions of their lease, new tenants entering community housing do not have the same legislatively-guaranteed security and rights. Furthermore, many CHPs are affiliated with religious institutions. Charmaine, a community worker and tenant advocate with ISV and the Tenants Union NSW, recounted in an interview some of the challenges faced by tenants of faith-based CHPs, including homophobia:

You know, you have religious organisations managing social housing – some of them are better than others, but there does raise questions around them imposing their own moralities on tenants (interview October 2017).

Charmaine also raised the issue of the Communities Plus tender process prohibiting the state from simply choosing the best CHPs, given that providers are awarded on the basis of the overall development tender they are part of rather than on their record of tenancy management. Similarly, Karen Walsh, then-CEO of housing advocacy organisation Shelter NSW, relayed her concerns about the distortion of CHPs' social objectives due to power imbalances between property developers and CHPs (interview June 2018). A CEO of a large CHP related in an interview their expectation that other providers would selectively allocate more reputable tenants "to deal with the community, the mix of the community in which you're operating", revealing that while "technically there is a list, a social housing waiting list [...] the community housing sector has retained some capacity and flexibility around allocations as long as it can defend it and justify it" (interview March 2018). As Ruming (2015: 194) has pointed out, this approach "has the potential to further residualise tenants being allocated into stock managed by SHAs". Furthermore, tenants who have been transferred to CHPs following redevelopment projects in western and south-western Sydney have experienced problems applying for CRA; Airds tenants whom I interviewed explained that some households had gone into rental arrears because their CRA payments began several weeks after their lease commenced (interview February 2018).

Finally, if the financialisation of the sector were to occur, social housing tenants would potentially be exposed to the risk taken on by their landlords. As such, this dimension of the reterritorialisation of the Waterloo estate (and others like it) has potentially significant implications for tenants that were not adequately articulated to them, and which are obfuscated in housing discourse on the purported superiority of CHP's tenancy management, community outcomes, efficiency, agility, and ability to leverage private finance.

\*

The redevelopment of the Waterloo estate aims to transform the purportedly pathological politico-institutional practices that comprise it. As a 'solution' to its concentrated disadvantage and pathological built environment, the estate redevelopment involves demolishing 2012 public housing dwellings and redeveloping the area as a deconcentrated mix of private housing and community housing – the latter replacing public housing due to its supposedly superior management and capacity for growth. The redevelopment is thus articulated as a solution to the problems of territory: it purportedly resolves the past and present politico-institutional practices that comprise the estate – which are represented as causes of poverty, disadvantage, social isolation, crime, and antisocial behaviour – through deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation. Given the superficiality of these interventions into territorial stigmatisation, one might expect it to simply recapitulate at smaller scales (for instance, see Raynor et al. 2019). It is unlikely that the new neighbourhood will be truly 'mixed', dwelling-by-dwelling, given the problem posed by strata legislation which dictates that buildings must be governed by an owners corporation. Indeed, other high-density estate redevelopment projects housed social housing tenants in separate buildings. Regardless, tenants themselves will likely remain stigmatised and, as I discuss in the next chapter, they have expressed concerns about how this may manifest in the future.

### **6.3 Conclusion**

As I have outlined, the redevelopment of the Waterloo estate has its origins in the state's revanchist response to the 'riots' that protested the death of an Aboriginal teenage boy following a police pursuit. Redfern-Waterloo, which had been undergoing gentrification before this period, was subsequently targeted for 'revitalisation' through a series of interventions that constituted a process of racialised, revanchist, state-led gentrification, which accelerated that which was already underway via changes to planning controls and enrolling public land. The basis for these interventions was not only the market revalorisation that had occurred; they were also based on the stark contrast between the stigmatised extant condition of the neighbourhood and the imaginary of its potential future within the wider Sydney economy. Thus, redevelopment under

the RWA was driven by both the rent gap and the reputational gap. The work of the RWA further widened the rent gap and the reputational gap without fully closing them, as plans for the redevelopment of the public housing estates were abandoned.

After being abandoned by the RWA in 2011, apparently due to ‘financial unviability’, the redevelopment of the Waterloo estate became suddenly ‘viable’ in 2015, with gentrification and the property boom leveraged further by the state through construction of the Waterloo Metro station. While the estate redevelopment was framed as a response to a new Metro station and the market revalorisation this would cause (paying for the replacement of social housing), the station and estate redevelopment were in fact co-conceived. The decision to build a Metro station in Waterloo in order to redevelop the Waterloo estate reveals that the estate redevelopment was not pursued purely on the basis of the rent gap but also on the basis of the reputational gap: the Metro station would further widen the rent gap so that the imaginary of a new social housing, additional housing supply, and associated economic growth and revenue streams, could be realised. As I discuss, this imaginary also involved ‘solutions’ to the territorial stigmatisation of the estate, through processes of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation.

As I outlined in Chapter 2, deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation occur with the restructuring of capital and the state (Brenner 2004; see also Antonsich 2009; Sack 1986). In Chapter 4 I discussed several of these processes under neoliberalised settler colonialism, which are pertinent to the reterritorialisation of the Waterloo estate. Firstly, the marketisation of housing assistance and the residualisation of public housing is directly responsible for concentrating disadvantage in public housing estates. Almost simultaneously, inner-city neighbourhoods like Redfern-Waterloo have undergone immense market revalorisation and extensive gentrification. Furthermore, investment in real estate in Sydney generally and in other post-industrial cities around the world has expanded dramatically, particularly since the 2008 financial crisis, and has inflated urban property values (Jacobs 2019; Rogers 2017). As such, local gentrification and the financialisation and globalisation of real estate have produced a large rent gap and reputational gap between inner-city estates and their surrounding neighbourhoods. Under neoliberal asset management rationalities and calculative and evaluative practices, they have come to be evaluated according to these gaps.

The problems of concentrated disadvantage, poor-quality built environments, and sub-standard state management practices, such as they are, could be solved through a program of public investment in and expansion of the public housing system. It could, for example, involve building tens of thousands more dwellings each year; raising the maximum income allowed for a

tenancy; investing in rehabilitation, repair and maintenance of existing stock and perhaps redeveloping some small sites on a needs basis; and reforming state management to emulate and improve upon the 'best practices' of CHPs. However, according to the neoliberal doxa within discourse on public housing, these are near-impossibilities. What this doxa invites is wholesale deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation of estates – demolition, deconcentration, and devolution to CHPs – in places where real estate values can be leveraged to pay for it. Thus, just as the territorial stigmatisation of public housing has been intensified by neoliberalisation, so too has its 'solution' been one of 'more neoliberalism' (Aalbers 2013), or perhaps *reterritorialised* neoliberalism. Yet despite these openings and foreclosings of public housing doxa, public housing tenants, activists and advocates have critiqued and contested territorial stigmatisation, and deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation, and articulated alternative experiences and imaginaries. It these critiques, contestations, and alternatives that I turn to in the remainder of this dissertation.

## Chapter 7

### Everyday territorial struggles: social practices, counter-representations, and critical responses to redevelopment in Redfern-Waterloo

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The social practices and relations among the public housing tenants and community workers in Redfern-Waterloo contradicted and contested territorial stigmatisation. As I observed, and as tenants and community workers described in interviews, these communities displayed exceptional conviviality, social and cultural diversity, acceptance of difference, and practices of care. These practices and relations enabled many tenants to resist the internalisation of territorial stigma, whether through self-inscription, lateral denigration, or mutual distancing (Wacquant et al. 2014). Importantly, they were enabled by physical and institutional bases: physical spaces like the Waterloo Green, the estate's community rooms and community gardens, affordable third spaces that remained in the surrounding neighbourhood, and crucially, the affordable and secure *housing* that the public housing system provided. In describing these social practices and relations, tenants and community workers articulated counter-representations that contested the dominant representations through which territorial stigma is produced, which I discussed in Chapters 5 and 6. Discourses on antisocial behaviour and social isolation, concentrated disadvantage and social mix, social isolation and exclusion, and dependence, were contested in tenants' and supporters' articulation of counter-representations which regularly highlighted Redfern-Waterloo's exceptional sociability and conviviality, social and cultural diversity, acceptance and care, and independence. Many tenants were also more mobile than discourses on concentrated disadvantage and social isolation or exclusion suggest, further undermining these dominant representations and the purported social rationale of social mix.

When describing the social relations and practices which for them defined living in Redfern-Waterloo, tenants and community workers didn't necessarily invoke the precise, gazetted boundaries of these suburbs, nor for that matter the jurisdiction of the RWA or property boundary of the estate(s). Rather, they described diverse socio-spatial networks that they were imbricated in – networks of relations shared among people living together in Redfern-Waterloo. In other words, they were describing territory from below – spaces appropriated by ensembles of everyday social relations (Raffestin 2012). As I argued in Chapter 2, territory is not only that which is produced and controlled through politico-institutional practices and representations from above, but is also this appropriation from below, overlapping and entangled with territory from above (Haesbaert 2013; Halvorsen 2018). The contradictions of

this multi-territoriality (Haesbaert 2013) – between territorial stigmatisation and lived territory – led to territorial struggles over and against the classification, ordering and control of territory (Tyler 2015). As I discuss in this chapter, tenants and community workers in Redfern-Waterloo struggled against dominant territorial practices and representations through a number of everyday practices and counter-representations.

In Redfern-Waterloo, as in many other stigmatised territories, there was a vast gap between representations of territory and lived territory (Garbin & Millington 2012; see also Bijen & Piracha 2017). This was thrown into sharper relief by the announcement of the redevelopment of the Waterloo estate and reinforced in the subsequent planning and consultation process. The redevelopment project elicited and consolidated more positive perceptions and reflections from Waterloo tenants, some of whom saw the redevelopment as an existential threat to their community, and many of whom were profoundly insulted by the language that was used in the project announcement and subsequent government communications. The redevelopment also enhanced the level of intra-community engagement and facilitated friendships, acquaintances, and allegiances in opposition or frustration. With this enhanced engagement, commonalities emerged in counter-representations put forward by tenants and other community members, circulating as local counter-discourses on Redfern-Waterloo and public housing generally. As I discussed in Chapter 3, my account here is based on interviews and ethnographic observations from a particularly active and vibrant juncture in Redfern-Waterloo, and the sample of tenants and advocates whom I encountered was biased towards the more outspoken, engaged, and place-attached. I therefore make no claims to representativeness but rather discuss, in the second section of this chapter, the responses to the redevelopment that dominated the neighbourhood's counter-public spaces of discussion and debate during the 18 months in which I was closely engaged. These responses coalesced around two critiques: (i) a procedural critique of the redevelopment process and practices and (ii) a structural critique of the fundamental purpose and objectives of the project. Responses to the redevelopment, along with inhabitants' counter-discursive articulations of everyday social relations and practices, confirm that territorial stigma is not necessarily internalised and perpetuated by those who are subject to it; rather, as Jensen & Christensen (2012) argue, an *awareness* of stigmatisation is internalised. Stigma shapes self-descriptions and descriptions of neighbourhood life insofar as it is a point *against* which to articulate them. Therefore, as I discuss in this chapter and the next, territorial stigmatisation in Redfern-Waterloo is contested from below through different territorial struggles.

## 7.1 Social practices and counter-representations of lived territory

The Redfern-Waterloo that is lived by public housing tenants and the community workers is indelibly conditioned by the dominant territorial practices and representations that I discussed in the previous chapters. As I have by now made clear, territorial stigmatisation shapes the social and physical composition of public housing in Redfern-Waterloo and the way in which the state and other institutions intervene in it. However, it does not define the sum total of the experiences and perspectives of tenants. The majority of tenants and community workers whom I encountered spoke in overwhelmingly positive terms about the social relations among their communities in Redfern-Waterloo. Most recognised their stigmatisation without internalising it as such (Jensen & Christensen 2012) and while some were ambivalent, most were frustrated or exasperated by it, seeing it as a fundamental misrepresentation in its partiality or inaccuracy. In response, some asserted the normality of the neighbourhood in contradistinction to its representation as an exceptional territory. A fairly common refrain was that ‘you get that anywhere’ – drugs, crime, antisocial behaviour, etcetera:

Look, it’s a well-known fact: OK, *drugs*. They’re there. It’s more predominant these days than it was years ago. Um... *but* it doesn’t necessarily mean that it’s just here. It’s everywhere... I mean, like, it’s once again... it’s attacking this area. You know, it’s attacking Redfern, it’s attacking Surry Hills, Waterloo. Why? What about... you know, it happens everywhere. It happens out west, it happens... sort of, Bondi – what about Bondi?! (Diane, interview March 2018, original emphases).

You know, there’s a lot of people out there working that are addicted to various types of substances... And they have the affordability to maintain [it]. But we don’t talk about that because it’s convenient to say that it comes with Housing<sup>14</sup> and to provide that stigma and that fear (Heather, interview March 2018).

I think if you’ve got that many people living in one place then of course you’re gonna have suicides and mental problems and drug problems and child abuse (Aelwyn, interview August 2017).

Some attributed Redfern-Waterloo’s exceptionalisation to a small minority of ‘problem’ tenants, or to ‘outsiders’ who were attracted to the area because of these problem tenants or because of the estate’s reputation. There was therefore a degree of mutual distancing or lateral denigration (Wacquant et al. 2014). More often, however, tenants expressed a level of acceptance of such neighbours or such behaviours and a critical understanding of the systemic processes which placed them there. Indeed, acceptance was spoken of as a social practice that distinguished the

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<sup>14</sup> ‘Housing’ is a commonly used shorthand for ‘Housing Commission’

public housing communities of Redfern-Waterloo compared to other places. Thus, rather than seeking to deny the exceptionality of the neighbourhood, several tenants and support workers inverted it, reframing Redfern-Waterloo as exceptionally sociable and convivial, accepting and caring, and socially and culturally diverse.

Convivial social relations and practices of acceptance and care, across social and cultural diversity, contested stigmatising representations and combated lateral denigration and mutual distancing. Tenants and support workers regularly described or articulated these social relations and practices to *directly* contest territorial stigmatisation; that is, they described these relations and practices as explicitly contrary to the dominant, stigmatising representation of public housing estates generally and the Redfern-Waterloo estates in particular. By highlighting the exceptional conviviality and sociability, acceptance and care, and social and cultural diversity of their neighbourhood, and the independence that living there enabled, tenants and support workers contested discourses on antisocial behaviour and social isolation or exclusion, concentrated disadvantage and social mix, and pathological dependence, through locally-circulated counter-discourses on public housing and Redfern-Waterloo. In the remainder of this section I discuss the regularities of this counter-discourse – the common themes which emerged in my conversations with tenants and community workers – and supporting ethnographic observations.

### **Conviviality and sociability**

In contrast to stigmatising representations of antisocial behaviour and social isolation or exclusion, tenants and community workers described Redfern-Waterloo as exceptionally sociable and convivial. Nearly everyone I encountered described experiences of being greeted by passers-by, having conversations with strangers, and frequently encountering friends and acquaintances when out in the estate and neighbourhood. It was my own experience too: strangers would regularly greet me or strike up a conversation in a way that I haven't experienced in any other neighbourhoods in Australian cities. Thus, the conviviality and sociability of Redfern-Waterloo was generally seen to be in contradistinction to other neighbourhoods, particularly those dominated by private housing:

As I'm sure a lot of people have said, it's more community-minded than anywhere I've *ever* lived. I mean, the whole time I was in Potts Point no one spoke to me and as soon as I got here the ladies from downstairs, they all came out to say hello, and say who they were and what they were and how they could help (Anna, interview April 2018, original emphasis).

I think maybe because of the way which things are, like, I mean, I'll go out here and I'll be walking up the street, something... to me it's just all, 'Morning!'

‘Afternoon!’ ‘Hello, how are you?’ Not all the time, perhaps, but... 99.9% of the time you get a response! It’s... there’s just that *feel*. Yeah, that’s what it is, it’s a feeling [...] We have these great... get-togethers. It’s fantastic! You know, we go up there and they’ve got a barbeque for us and you can meet people and talk to them and that. You know, it’s really good. That sort of atmosphere is fantastic. You don’t get that out in the ‘burbs – in the suburbs – unfortunately (Diane, interview April 2018, original emphasis).

For Heather, who had lived in Redfern since 2014, the conviviality of her neighbourhood more than made up for occasional incidents of antisocial behaviour:

I also just like to catch up with people at coffee shops. This is a great place for that and it is a great place... People will stop and have a yarn to you. Yes, there is a level of other things that happen here, but personally, if you mind your own business and you don’t go out of your way to make trouble it’s a reasonably safe place (interview March 2018).

Tenants and support workers thus disputed stigmatising discourses on antisocial behaviour and social isolation; while they did not deny that some problematic behaviours occurred and that there were many tenants who were somewhat isolated, they rejected the implication that such behaviours defined social relations among public housing communities and emphasised the exceptional degree of conviviality and sociability they experienced.

Public and community spaces were vital to the maintenance of conviviality, particularly the Waterloo Green – a public space that was treasured for both everyday encounters and organised community events. The Green provided a material base for conviviality and sociability (Peattie 1998 in Iveson & Fincher 2011): it was a site for barbeques, basketball, and community celebrations; a place where friends and acquaintances would meet and a place where strangers would sit together to chat, or simply say hello to one another. For instance, when I brought a group of undergraduates through Redfern-Waterloo on a field trip and paused on the Green, we were approached by an Aboriginal woman who sat and spoke with us for nearly an hour, describing her attachment to the place and her anger towards the redevelopment. With friends who later came to join us, she generously shared a small part of her culture through song and dance. The Green was a place in which such approaches and encounters were not unconventional; it was, as so many tenants and support workers stressed, an exceptionally convivial place.

In the south-west corner of the Green and on the nearby street corner, small groups would gather daily to socialise, often over drinks purchased from the nearby bottle shop (despite City of Sydney ordinances prohibiting the public consumption of alcohol in the area). It is significant that many of those gathered were Aboriginal people, whose presence in public space

in cities is often deemed legally and socially transgressive (Bird-Rose 2004; Blatman-Thomas & Porter 2019; Cox et al. 2016; Iveson 2008; Watson 2009b). Their public drinking was no doubt perceived by some as a form of antisocial behaviour; however, as one Redfern-Waterloo Aboriginal activist put it to me, no one looks twice at drunken white hipsters exiting the fashionable bars that have proliferated along Redfern St. Increasingly excluded from these private spheres of leisure, the groups appropriated the public spaces of the Waterloo Green and the street corners. Rather than being antisocial, they practiced a form of sociality that contested the discourse of antisocial behaviour and the structural and systemic exclusion of Aboriginal people from public space by asserting their belonging in place. Reinforcing this symbolic appropriation, the Green was known to some as TJ Hickey Park, and an informal sign was erected to commemorate his death.

The Waterloo Green also included three community gardens, pictured in Figure 7.1, which were built in 1997-98 as part of the Waterloo Redfern Community Development Project. For the tenants who tended to the 55 plots within them, the community gardens were a crucial site of social activity and interaction. For Anna (a different Anna to the aforementioned), who had lived in Waterloo since 1972 after migrating from the former Yugoslavia, the gardens were a source of immense happiness:

I love every time when I come in the garden to touch the plants, the herbs, cut the herbs, I like the Rosemary, put in food, making pesto of the rosemary of the food and thats make me happy. And talk with the people also they gardener you know and that's...that's very, very, very, very make me happy (interview June 2017).

Anna and other gardeners were assisted by Phil, a professional gardener for the Royal Botanic Garden's Community Greening project. Phil described the sense of pride and ownership he witnessed among the gardeners:

when they're given a plot, *that's theirs*. Even if it's, you know, technically not, that's their bit of land, that's their space, and it gets *very*... there's very high levels of emotional attachment to that, because they do consider that their garden, their space, you know (interview February 2018, original emphases).

Despite being owned by the state and established with its assistance (via the labour and supplies of the Royal Botanic Gardens and funding from FACS), tenants like Anna had a visible sense of ownership over and attachment to their plots. Indeed, this territoriality sometimes caused conflict among gardeners. Nevertheless, the gardens were a territory of alternative social relations and practices. Not only did gardeners grow their own food, they also shared and traded it with others, and participated in 'working bees' in which they would collectively work to

maintain or remodel the gardens. They were for the exclusive use by Waterloo estate tenants: neighbours in private dwellings were not given access, which Phil felt was important for facilitating tenants' sense of ownership and attachment. Furthermore, the gardens manifested an enormous amount of symbolic and material investment (Queirós & Pereira 2018), contesting territorial stigmatisation by confounding the expectations it sets of the social and aesthetic characteristics of the estate (Garbin & Millington 2014; Kirkness 2014) and by reifying the sense of ownership and possession that many tenants held, the existence of which are denied in dominant representations.

Several other social groups met regularly in Redfern-Waterloo – mostly small groups, both formal and informal, including art groups, knitting groups, chess groups, church groups, and various cultural groups. Many were supported by the local non-government, not-for-profit service providers Counterpoint Community Services (CCS) and South Sydney Community Aid (SSCA), which merged in July 2017. This support was often simply the provision of space: CCS's headquarters, the Factory, provided another a material base for conviviality. Such spaces were especially crucial in Redfern-Waterloo because of its physical and social composition. Kira, employed by CCS to work on issues relating to the redevelopment, explained that

Houses are so small that they need a place, and financially, to go every week and sit in a coffee shop is not viable, so they need something that they... somewhere they can come that's quiet and they can access (interview December 2017).

These spaces were all the more crucial for tenants who felt uncomfortable inviting guests into their homes, as Charmaine, an ISV worker and Surry Hills tenant, described:

communal spaces are really important in social housing communities because it's the place that you can feel safe. So, you can meet with your friends and neighbours without having to impose on their personal space. Lots of people... the interesting thing about people who hoard is that when you meet them you'd never guess, half the time, that they've got like this hoarding... and their place is just full of shite. But, you know, people like that, they don't want to invite you into their space, but they still want to have conversations and connections. So, it's about having those communal areas that are really important (interview October 2017).

While the towers themselves contained community rooms, access to them was sometimes difficult or contentious, particularly for residents from outside the given building. Furthermore, prior to a spate of maintenance work in late-2016 (which I discuss in the next chapter), some community rooms were in a bad state of repair, and at least one was closed entirely. As such,

**Figure 7.1**  
Cook, Solander and  
Marton building  
community gardens  
(top to bottom)

Source: WPHAG  
(2018)



public spaces like the Waterloo Green, NGO-provided spaces like the Factory, and a small handful of private leisure spaces, were crucial to the reproduction of the convivial social relations that, for many, distinguished life in Redfern-Waterloo from other places.

The representation of Redfern-Waterloo as a territory of anti-social behaviour and social isolation or exclusion was neither consistent with my own experiences nor with that of the majority of tenants I encountered. While these issues were present, they did not define social relations among tenants in Redfern-Waterloo. As Cheshire & Buglar (2016) suggest, anti-social behaviour and convivial social relations might be seen as two sides of the same coin, as intense forms of sociality structured by the territorial practices that constitute estates (allocations, design, tenancy management, etcetera). Dominant representations focus on anti-social behaviour rather than portraying *both* antisocial and convivial forms of sociality, thus betraying the gap between territory from below and territory from above. Conscious of this misrepresentation, several tenants emphasised this exceptional conviviality and sociability and thus articulated a counter-representation to explicitly contest territorial stigmatisation.

### **Diversity and social mix**

Discourses on concentrated disadvantage and social mix imply that public housing estates are, for the purposes of social policy and planning, internally homogenous. In other words, these discourses suggest that ‘public housing tenant’ is a social classification through which one can understand and thus intervene in the lives of those classified by it. Many tenants in Redfern-Waterloo rejected this and emphasised the estates’ diversity, particularly their social and cultural diversity. The public housing estates were home to people of many different ethnicities, nationalities, genders, sexualities, and religious affiliations. Furthermore, there was a degree of diversity with respect to class and class identity among tenants, which should not be entirely surprising given the dramatic changes to eligibility criteria that have occurred in the lifetime of some tenants (as I discussed in Chapter 4). Many therefore rejected the narrowly socio-economic lens of the dominant discourse on concentrated disadvantage that equates mixed tenure with social mix, and stressed essentialising effect of this (mis)representation. Many commented that they ‘already have a social mix!’, appropriating the discourse to recognise and celebrate the social and cultural diversity of Redfern-Waterloo.

Kira saw this diversity as something that few people from outside the neighbourhood knew or understood, including her former self. She described the Waterloo estate as a ‘melting pot’ that upended her prior expectations, which, she noted, she had come to be embarrassed about (interview December 2017). A brief statistical overview, presented in Table 7.1 hints at this ‘melting pot’, highlighting the diverse language groups, ancestries and religious affiliations of residents of Redfern-Waterloo. However, this is only a partial picture: Redfern-Waterloo was also a place of *visible* social and cultural diversity. In particular, and unlike most other

neighbourhoods in the inner-city, it was a neighbourhood with a large and visible presence of Aboriginal people. While the number of Aboriginal residents has declined dramatically since the 1970s and 80s, a visible presence was maintained nonetheless via institutions founded during the self-determination movement (including the Aboriginal Medical Service, Aboriginal Legal Service, AHC and Koori Radio), through the establishment of newer institutions like the NCIE, Redfern Jarjum College, and children's service provider Weave, and through informal spaces of sociability.

Clearly this is not the type of diversity or 'mix' implied in the dominant discourse on social mix, but tenants and community workers repeatedly stressed that this heterogeneity mattered just as much, if not more than, a diverse mix of income groups, classes, or tenures. It was valued by people from both minority social, cultural, or ethnic backgrounds and dominant social, cultural, and ethnic groups. For instance, everyday encounters with diverse others were valued by both Diane – a white, Australian-born woman, who noted that she had rarely experienced this in the other neighbourhoods she had lived in – and by Olivia – an Aboriginal trans woman, who described becoming comfortable with the relationships she had established among her community of neighbours and service providers in a way that she felt she mightn't elsewhere:

we don't just have just Aboriginal people, we have Chinese, we have Russians. I mean, some of them are nice, some of them aren't, you know? [...] They're usually friendly, they say good morning, hello. Long as I don't hear what they say behind my back I'm fine [laughs]. They can say what they like, but, you know, the majority of people say, you know, I've had feedback from other people and they... they've said, 'Oh, we've met this lady, her name's Olivia.' 'Oh, yeah, I know her, she's a lovely lady!' You know? Always smiling, always friendly (interview June 2017).

Local NGOs supported various organised gatherings of social and cultural groups and sometimes facilitated encounters between them. Indeed, this was part of SSCA's mission, and with CCS they supported programs ranging from formal events, like English language classes and cooking workshops for different cuisines, to more casual or informal gatherings, like mah-jong games and social get-togethers for particular cultural or linguistic groups, such as the Jewish Russian women's group. Natasha, who at the time of our interview was employed by SSCA, explained that many cultural or linguistic groups kept to themselves and that there preventing social isolation and disseminating information among them could be challenging (particularly during the redevelopment process, as I discuss briefly in section 7.2). Nevertheless, there were

**Table 7.1**  
Indicators of  
social and  
cultural diversity  
in  
Redfern-Waterloo

Source: ABS  
Census of  
Population  
& Housing 2016

<b>Language spoken at home</b>	
English	15,080
Mandarin	2396
Cantonese	795
Russian	707
Other	5612
<b>Country of birth</b>	
Australia	11,473
China	2621
England	1297
New Zealand	808
Other	8253
<b>Ancestries other than 'Australian'</b>	
UK & Ireland	9308
Chinese	3922
Italian	650
German	469
Other	7220
<b>Religion</b>	
No religion	12,089
Catholic	4572
Anglican	1603
Buddhism	1128
Other	4455

several instances of transversal engagement. For instance, Peter – an older white tenant who moved to Waterloo in 2003 – attended a weekly mah-jong game organised by the Indonesian Welfare Association.

Everyday encounters with socially and culturally diverse others in Redfern-Waterloo led to more than just a minimal standard of tolerance. While the much vaunted ‘rub-off’ effect of social mix via tenure mix is largely unproven (as I discussed in the previous chapter), social and cultural diversity arguably did have a ‘rub-off’ effect. As several scholars of multiculturalism have claimed, ‘rubbing shoulders’ with socially and culturally different people, and practices of social

and cultural exchange, can generate possibilities of non-assimilationist integration (Fincher et al. 2014; Wise 2009; Wise & Velayutham 2014). As I have discussed, in Redfern-Waterloo these encounters reproduced convivial social relations, and as I discuss in the next subsection, practices of acceptance and care extended across this diversity and difference.

Redfern-Waterloo was also already ‘socially mixed’ in another sense: as I explained in the previous chapter, the gentrification of the neighbourhood meant that many neighbours to the estate were the kind of middle-class residents that the NSW Government sought to introduce via redevelopment. While not widely articulated, some tenants raised this point. When asked about her views on living in a mixed tenure neighbourhood in the future, Olivia gestured to the existing private apartments across the road to point out that she *already* lived in one (interview June 2017). Jill, a lifelong Redfern-Waterloo resident and prominent woman in the Aboriginal community, also drew attention to the ‘trendies’ that increasingly populated her neighbourhood in our conversation about redevelopment and social mix (interview May 2018). These comments suggest that the territory lived by tenants like Olivia and Jill did not conform to the boundaries of the estates they lived in – a fact which was apparent from the responses of other tenants as well as from my observation of, and occasional participation in, their social lives. A participatory mapping exercise conducted as part of ISV’s capacity building program further illustrated this point. In response to the question ‘Where is your community?’, participants sketched a diverse array of geographies across a map of Redfern-Waterloo. Participant’s lived territories intersected with the estate in many different ways, extended beyond it in many different directions, and for some was non-contiguous. Despite dominant representations that portrayed estates as isolated or segregated from their wider socio-spatial context, the social lives of many tenants extended far beyond, throughout various parts of Redfern-Waterloo and elsewhere. This is a somewhat obvious statement to make, but it is further illustration that the territory that is lived and therefore produced through the social relations that public housing tenants are imbricated in is different to that which is delineated from above, by the state or any other dominant political institution. Put simply, the mobility of tenants through the neighbourhood and city contradicted representations of their concentration, isolation and exclusion to the estate.

Whatever analytic utility is contained in the terms ‘concentrated disadvantage’ and ‘social mix’ is undermined in Redfern-Waterloo. The social and cultural diversity of the neighbourhood, and of the estates particularly, is such that it cannot (or rather should not) be collapsed into a single analytic socio-spatial category in the way that these folk concepts suggest. Tenants’ frustration with the dominant discourse on social mix led them to assertion that their community was already mixed, appropriating the discourse to critique it and to recognise and celebrate the

social and cultural diversity of Redfern-Waterloo. This appropriation of the discourse of social mix was therefore a key component of tenants' territorial struggles. Furthermore, discourses of concentrated disadvantage and social mix are undermined by a mere cursory observation of the social composition of the wider neighbourhood in which the estates are situated, and in which tenants participated. Far from being confined to their estates, the social lives of many public housing tenants extended far beyond, throughout the wider neighbourhood of Redfern-Waterloo and, for that matter, elsewhere. Tenants were therefore already encountering and interacting with middle-class neighbours. As such, the territory lived by public housing tenants in Redfern-Waterloo – the territory produced through social relations from below – contested territory from above, in that it was more socially, culturally, and socio-economically diverse, and more fluid and dynamic than dominant territorial representations suggest.

### Acceptance and care

As well as recognising and celebrating social and cultural diversity, and rather than distancing themselves and perpetuating stigma, many tenants expressed that an acceptance of diverse others prevailed among public housing tenants, including those portrayed as 'undeserving' or 'problem tenants'. Catherine, for instance, described herself as a non-stereotypical public housing tenant (having moved into the estate after retiring from a long teaching career) but was defensive of her more personally stigmatised neighbours:

They [outsiders] think, oh, if you're in housing you must either take drugs or drink, um, thief, be a sex worker. So, all these kind of... these negative things – *they* think are negative -- they attach to [Waterloo]. I mean, I've known some very nice drug addicts in my life. No truly, very nice people (interview March 2017, original emphasis).

Acceptance and care were seen as exceptional to the public housing communities of Redfern-Waterloo. Karyn, a 28-year Waterloo resident, highlighted her community's acceptance of people from many walks of life as one of its defining features:

Oh, what I like about it is kind of the space of the area and the people. Because there are lots of, like, kind of fucked up people here and so they don't judge, they don't judge basically. That's actually what's really nice about it. It's kind of all-welcoming. In fact, that's probably a good description I think. Yeah, it's just like, yeah ok, so it doesn't matter. Like, I saw some guy poo his pants on the street, you know, 'cause obviously he was sick, um... but, it's not like he'd... never go out on the street again; it's like, 'Oh yeah, well that happened'. Um, you know, or someone falls over drunk, you don't write him off, whatever, you know? It's just, it's really quite non-judgemental. That's actually the really nice thing about it. All the people just tolerate each other, I s'pose – at the least – and are friendly and help each other most of the time.

You know, like the weirdest friendships happen there, like the most unlikely people. But yeah, that's quite nice about it. And that's how, you know, so, someone will just end up caring for a neighbour just because they know them. They started going to the shop now and then and they'll end up being the carer and doing all sorts of things. And yeah, I guess that kind of happens because there are unemployed people, so they're available to do the caring. No one... it's pretty crap to quit your job to care for a family member. It's not fair. So, if there's someone to do it who lives next door, that's great (interview April 2017).

Karyn's comments attest to the reproduction of an atmosphere and a set of social practices and norms in Redfern-Waterloo that were different to elsewhere. However, lest I give an overly romantic impression, there were various conflicts or suspicions across difference, complaints about bad neighbours, and stories of isolation. I discuss some of these conflicts and points of contention, in the context of resistance, in the next chapter. Furthermore, it could be inferred that this atmosphere of acceptance was simply the result of tenants' limited ability to choose their place of residence within a chronically undersupplied public housing system. Nevertheless, and recognising again the biased sample of my study, many tenants I encountered expressed a sense of being cared for by their community. Betty, for instance, described the sense of solidarity and care that she felt, irrespective of stigmatising tropes:

People complain that Waterloo is full of drug users. But people who do that stuff aren't all the same, you know... I know plenty of people who use drugs and they'd be the first to come help me if I was in trouble. I'd rather live in Sin City than somewhere full of rich people! If I was ever in a position where I needed a meal, I know about 15 people who'd feed me (#Wlivehere2017 2017a).

Others similarly suggested that care was more strongly practiced among the public housing communities of Redfern-Waterloo. Riley, a 7-year Waterloo resident, related how he and his neighbours would routinely check in with one another to make sure they were healthy and well, and that from this practice they developed a community that would socialise beyond these routine check-ins (interview June 2017). Jerome\*, who moved into a unit in Waterloo in 2003 after a long period of homelessness and otherwise precarious housing, similarly highlighted the care he received from his friends and neighbours:

I've met a lot of people... I find they're good people and I can depend on them if need be... which is not unusual, because my head is always screwed on the wrong way and I'm always askin' for somethin' (interview August 2017).

For Aelwyn, a Redfern tenant of nearly 30 years, the neighbourhood was a place where people "look out for each other", unlike others she had lived in or knew about (interview August 2017).

Laura gestured towards something similar in describing how she felt part of a ‘family’ in Redfern-Waterloo:

it was kind of that once you’d built people’s trust, and it took a little bit of time to be able to build those relationships and trust, but once you did it’s like you’re one of the family. You can’t walk – I get the train in every morning to Redfern, and I must pass five or six people just in that short period who want to stop and have a chat, and different people different mornings, and you just kind of feel that you are part of the furniture (interview December 2017).

As Williams (2017) has argued, an ethic of care is central to the project of justice in cities. As Power and Bergan (2018) contend, care be a form of resistance to the neoliberal governance of public housing. While Power and Bergan focus on the institutional practices of care carried out by actors within housing agencies, in Redfern-Waterloo an ethic of care was practiced by tenants and non-government community and support workers. The everyday practice of care was key to sustaining life during a time of immense fear, frustration, and uncertainty. Care also became a key purpose of WPHAG, if unacknowledged and perhaps unintentional. Weekly meetings were an opportunity for checking in with one another, for asking how people were faring physically and emotionally as the redevelopment process dragged on. Meetings were not only a time and place for organising and strategising but for socialising and making acquaintances – a new space for conviviality and sociability. This conviviality is itself, as Fincher & Iveson (2015) point out, an ethics of care. Furthermore, NGOs like ISV, CCS and SSCA encouraged, facilitated, and practiced an ethic of care both formally, in the programs they operated (which included everything from casual social groups to more intensive drug and alcohol or financial management programs), and more informally, in keeping a caring eye on the clients they interacted with during the redevelopment process to help prevent engaged tenants from burning out. While the work of FACS staff themselves might be construed as care work, several tenants and support workers reported that high rates of staff turnover (among other factors) prevented FACS staff from building the kinds of relationships that NGO staff were able to. Moreover, many practices adopted by NGO staff and tenants themselves were responses to gaps in FACS’s work, and that of other government agencies or contractors. For example, OddJobbers was a grassroots initiative set up to address tenants’ simple maintenance requests by organising volunteers to fix them, so that tenants would not have to wait for FACS contractors to assign and complete the job.

Practices of acceptance and care helped tenants resist pressures toward lateral denigration or mutual distancing. Furthermore, these practices of acceptance and care contested territorial stigmatisation by contradicting representations of antisocial behaviour and social isolation and

exclusion, as well as classificatory demarcations of ‘deserving’ versus ‘undeserving’ tenants. They thus enabled tenants to resist the internalisation of territorial stigma. These practices further illuminated the gap between dominant practices and representations of territory from above and the territory of social relations from below, and constituted an important part of everyday territorial struggles against territorial stigmatisation.

### Independence

Crucially, as Karyn’s above comments attest, care was enabled by the affordability and security of public housing. This point is perhaps self-evident but nonetheless often ignored. Just as care and conviviality require a physical base – spaces in which they can be practiced – so too must they have an economic and institutional one. In other words, people need time and material support to practice conviviality and care. For public housing tenants in Redfern-Waterloo, a material base for conviviality and care were to a large extent enabled by public housing’s affordable rents, in absolute and relative terms.

In contradistinction to discourses on dependence, several tenants described the *independence* that living in social housing in Redfern-Waterloo provided them. Affordable and secure housing in the inner-city allowed them to be independent to care for their physical and mental health, to take up hobbies and leisure activities, to move around the city more freely, to participate in the community, to lead a richer social life; in short, to care for others and for themselves. This is exceptional, given that most housing in the inner-city was unaffordable to them and most affordable housing (including public housing) was less well-located. Most routine needs could be met within a walkable distance for able-bodied tenants, while trains from Redfern station and multiple bus routes (including free community buses) provided access to many parts of the city. This affordable mobility, particularly public transport, was especially important to Heather, who had a chronic back injury. Easy access to trains and buses enabled her to be independently mobile:

You have such accessibility like here for me with an injury. When I go to my cousins in Queensland I have to wait, like, I might get public transport from there then say a bus and a train that takes me forever to get to wherever. [...] Here, like, people say, ‘Why are you living in Sydney?’ And I say because I can be independent in Sydney [...] I can go over there and I can catch buses out or in to certain places. I can go over here to Cleveland Street. I can catch buses going in either direction (interview March 2018).

For Peter, the neighbourhood’s central location was “its most valuable asset – especially for pensioners!”; he could travel by train or bus over 10km over the harbour to either Chatswood or Mosman to play chess, and to the CBD for other services (interview May 2017). For Olivia,

public transport and community buses provided access to nearby commercial and retail hubs where shopping was more affordable, while the local gym, RSL club<sup>15</sup> and pubs were important ‘third spaces’ within walking distance. As well as enabling self-care, the independence granted by public housing enabled several tenants to care others. Karyn, for instance, travelled by train to Woolloomooloo to care part-time for a visually impaired person. She explained that she would likely not be able to continue this if she was required to perform full time waged labour or move to a home – public housing or otherwise – further from the inner-city. As I have argued already, the mobility of tenants throughout the neighbourhood and the wider city contradicted representations of public housing estates as concentrated, isolated and excluding. Tenants’ practice of mobility thereby contested territorial stigmatisation by undermining claims as to the confinement of their social lives within the boundaries of the estate. Rather than conforming to the boundaries of territory from above, the lived territory of tenants was multiple, and distributed much further throughout society and space.

Well-located, affordable and secure housing empowered many public housing tenants to lead lives that, though perhaps relatively austere, would otherwise be almost unattainable. For many tenants this was of far greater importance than issues of crime and antisocial behaviour. Anna described it thus:

I mean, the freedom it allows me and security it allows me, and the *independence* it allows me – it is worth all the other (interview April 2018, emphasis added).

Affordable and secure housing in the inner-city thus enabled many tenants to be *independent to* – to have greater autonomy – as opposed to being *independent from* – a somewhat mythical status that ‘hardworking taxpayers’, who own or are purchasing their homes, are credited with despite, as I discussed in Chapter 4, the various forms of assistance they receive. Thus, the territory lived by tenants was not only one of domination or ‘power over’ by the state but one of ‘power to’ as well (Clare et al. 2016). This was the product of both the social relations of conviviality and care that tenants were imbricated in and the public housing system itself.

Affordability and security are fundamental and self-evident benefits of public housing yet it is rarely described in such terms, other than by tenants (however, see Eastgate et al. 2011; Eastgate & Rix 2015). Tenants thus appropriated the discourse of independence in their territorial struggles, contesting the dominant representation of public housing as a vector for dependence. Furthermore, this independence enabled several tenants to participate more

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<sup>15</sup> Returned Serviceman’s League clubs are popular throughout Australia for their relatively affordable bars and restaurants, as well as, in some states, their poker machines.

extensively in the government consultation process, in NGO-led capacity building and community development programs, and in more autonomous resistance to the redevelopment – all of which I discuss in the next chapter.

## **7.2 Reception to the redevelopment**

The gap between dominant representations from above and tenants' lived territory was brought into sharp relief by the announcement of the redevelopment. The Minister's 'excitement', as he put it, was insulting to many tenants and community workers and was brought up time and again to point out his callous ignorance as well as that of FACS, LAHC and the NSW Government generally. Laura described how affronted she felt by the "patronising, condescending" tone of the official announcement and subsequent information session (interview December 2017). Charmaine believed that the Minister and senior bureaucrats in charge of the project were convinced they were delivering good news to tenants:

I think they honestly thought they were gonna walk into this community and go, 'We're gonna give you shiny new homes' and everyone's going, 'Thank you so much!' Because, you know, from their perspective everyone just whinges about the maintenance, everyone whinges about the drugs and alcohol, we can come in and fix all that with this one lovely development wand and... that's not the response they got. I think they were genuinely taken aback by that (interview October 2017).

When tenants responded with objections, criticisms, or refusal, and asserted their attachment to place, stigmatised images in the minds of bureaucrats were seemingly destabilised. Geoff, a co-spokesperson for community group REDWatch and worker with ISV, related one revealing conversation he overheard:

I mean, one classic conversation I overheard was one of the people from Land and Housing [LAHC] having a conversation with a Russian woman saying, she's saying 'Oh I don't know what I'm gonna [do]...' And he's saying, 'But I don't understand?! Why wouldn't you want to get out of Waterloo?!' (Interview December 2017).

Laura recounted a similar conversation with a LAHC public servant who worked in Redfern-Waterloo and who seemed unaware of the damage the redevelopment would cause to the community:

And someone that I've worked with for a number of years in LAHC came up to me and said, 'What's wrong? You don't look very happy – isn't this great news?' And I just went, 'Well what makes you think it's good news?' And he says, "Cause we get all these new buildings – it'll be lovely!" And I was like, 'And what happens to people in the mean time?' And he just couldn't get why

I was so upset about the announcement of the redevelopment. He was like, as I said, as a LAHC person he's asset-minded... yeah, he's like, 'Less maintenance problems, get rid of the old troubled stock and get new buildings!' And I was more kind of, 'It's gonna tear the community apart and it's gonna break my heart' (interview December 2017).

In the quotes above, the attitudes of public servants reflect the territorial stigmatisation of the estate, both in their own perception of merits of the redevelopment and their expectations regarding tenants' responses. Yet while the redevelopment was by not universally opposed, government practices and procedures were widely criticised by tenants and community workers, particularly the scant and slow release of information and the limited opportunities for substantive consultation and participation. A smaller but nonetheless significant number of tenants were critical of the project fundamentals – its 'drivers and commitments', as they were officially termed – including the principal of social mix (which was interpreted by many as a form of gentrification or 'social cleansing') and the cost-neutral imperative of the project (which determined housing ratios and the transfer of tenancies to CHPs). Both criticisms – procedural on the one hand, structural on the other – were channelled through organised efforts to contest or resist the redevelopment, which I discuss in the next chapter. In and of themselves, as I argue in the remainder of this section, these critiques were a form of territorial struggle, contesting the deficit representation of public housing tenants and asserting tenants' rights and abilities to meaningfully engage with and shape the state policies and interventions that affect them.

### **Procedural critiques**

Tenants and support workers spoke of their shock, offense and confusion upon reading or hearing the announcement of the redevelopment project. It was not that the redevelopment was itself surprising; as I discussed in the previous chapter, redevelopment had been planned in the recent past. Rather, the tone of the letter from Hazzard, and its timing, were perceived as insensitive or negligent at best and cynically calculated at worst. By announcing the redevelopment nine days before Christmas 2015, the NSW Government created an information vacuum while both FACS and local NGOs were operating at reduced capacity. Furthermore, given that the estate's six towers had been designated fit for habitation less than five years earlier, several residents were incredulous when told that their homes were now 'unfit for purpose'. The hostile reaction they received made the Department, in Charmaine's words:

*super* nervous about information control. And so while they were kind of doing all that there was this big vacuum of information. And like I said, some people, as soon as the announcement had happened, had packed up their boxes, they'd packed up their homes thinking they were gonna be out in, you know, a couple of months (interview October 2017, original emphasis).

As Natasha explained, the information vacuum was most severe for non-English-speaking tenants, despite the distribution of information leaflets in multiple languages

that flier says nothing. You know, once someone sees the flier then obviously more questions come up. And then they're like, 'OK, there's a phone number. OK, I'm gonna call', and when they call and then it's like, 'Welcome to whatever', and you know, 'Hello, you've contacted...' – they're already freaking out 'cause they're speaking English. But if they actually wait, at the end it'll be like, 'If you wanna speak in Chinese...', whatever, I'm pretty sure there's like a translating service. I have used it a couple of times for my clients, but no, it's *really* hard (interview July 2017, original emphasis).

CCS organised bilingual educators to engage with Mandarin and Cantonese-speaking tenants and, subsequently, organised specific events for these groups. However, as Natasha and others described, barriers to participation among the diverse residents were cultural as well as linguistic: many tenants who had migrated from nations where state intervention involved more limited consultation did not fully understand, or did not trust, the process that they were being asked to participate in. In any case, insufficient information was a problem for everyone, from the time of the first announcement to the release of the Preferred Masterplan in January 2019. Tenants were most frustrated by the lack of precise information about when and where they would relocate. They were initially advised that relocations would begin in mid-2017 and that some tenants would temporarily move from Waterloo while others would move directly into their new dwellings (though no estimates were given as to how long this 'temporary' period would be). This was later revised to mid-2018, and again to late-2019, with all tenants expected to relocate 'on-site'. At the time of writing, no relocations had yet occurred, and uncertainty was a source of immense anxiety and confusion for many tenants, like Olivia and Jerome:

I would just like to know when *are* they going to actually come in here and say... bring in the boxes and say, 'Let's start packing, we've gotta start packing'. Because like, I want to have plenty of time. I don't want one day to do it, because it's gonna take me six months to do it (Olivia, interview June 2017, original emphasis).

Why build up a new place, move some people into this new place, move the people in the new place back to another new place, and move another group of people into the old new place? You know... [laughs]. No one seems to be able to answer that question. I hope I got... I have it wrong, 'cos that... I mean that's idiotic (Jerome, interview August 2017).

Even with the release of the Preferred Masterplan, tenants were given only indicative time periods for relocation for the precinct they lived in. As Figure 7.2 illustrates, a resident of the

Camellia Grove building, for example, would remain unclear as to whether their relocation was coming the next year or six years into the future.

For many tenants, the dearth of information hinted at the more fundamentally condescending nature of the masterplanning process and its reification of territorial stigma. For instance, Anna described the patronising treatment she received from the then-Minister Hazzard and his staff:

‘You will get this, you will get this’. We adults know this is not true. Don’t bullshit us. Excuse me for the word, but they are, and they make us more angry and more upset. There were... people screaming and talking, you know, and I raised voice and I said to the lady, ‘Come and give me microphone’. And I take the courage and I tell him, ‘I live here 45 years, what about where you will put me after? I am I spend my life here, my child grow up here, my grandchildren grow up here’. I try to speak and he said don’t worry we will looking after you. Now, he is left. Who will looking after me? (Interview June 2017).

Condescending practices continued in the subsequent consultation process, which was ardently criticised by tenants and support workers. It was seen as divisive, overly circumscribed, and superficial. Participants objected to the limited options presented in the questionnaires that were included in the Visioning process – the preliminary consultation process that would inform a series of redevelopment ‘options’, which would in turn be ‘tested’ and inform the Preferred Masterplan. The younger Anna related that “you could only sort of say yes to three things out of 12” (interview April 2018), while supposedly open discussions were carefully controlled by the organisers:

We had one about ‘How do you see your new community?’ And I was like, ‘How is it that you’re asking us how we see our *new* community when you’re about to destroy a current one that we wanna keep? Why are you asking us this?’ ‘Oh, well, you know, this is a consultation.’ So, it didn’t make sense to me, but they – this is LAHC – started treating me, like, with kid gloves. Like, ‘She’s a bit unstable’, or something, because I was saying things like that, and I thought it was a really reasonable concern. But that’s one of the ways, possibly, that they are divisive, when they start going, ‘Oh, look out for her because she’s a bit of a *firecracker*’, or... that’s what I felt like. And that exhausted me a little bit, you know? Just couldn’t speak like... a thinking adult. Infantilisation is another way to be divisive, I suppose – treating everyone like, ‘You don’t understand yet, and it’s going to be really nice for you when it all happens. You might like it!’ You know, that sort of stuff is exhausting (interview April 2018, original emphases).

**Figure 7.2**  
Indicative  
redevelopment  
staging as of January  
2019

Source: Communities  
Plus (2019)



Anna's recalcitrance was a form of everyday resistance to the treatment of public housing tenants as incapable and undeserving, and she was not alone in it. Like others who criticised the redevelopment process, she asserted that public housing tenants are worthy of respectful, good faith consultation, capable of substantive engagement and participation, and owed detailed information about how and when the state intended to disrupt their lives in such a profound way. Anna and other tenants further demonstrated that territorial stigmatisation is not inevitably internalised, whether through self-inscription, lateral denigration, or mutual distancing. They were instead engaged in a territorial struggle, over and against the territorial practises being imposed upon them from above and contesting the deficit representations of public housing tenants. Ultimately, as community workers confirmed in interviews, LAHC and UGDC staff admitted to the poor handling of several consultation workshops, including on the topic of social mix. However, they remained committed to the fundamental change in tenure mix and density.

### **Structural critiques**

Despite the pretence of a consultation process that would provide tenants and other stakeholders with opportunities for input on the planning process and eventual masterplan, the

project's 'drivers and commitments' fundamentally limited the impact their input could have. The financial constraints imposed on the project and the commitment to no loss of social housing predetermined the density and tenure mix of the development. Consequently, during the 'Options Testing' phase, residents were presented with three masterplan options that could only effectively be differentiated by marginal differences in density and green space: the densest option offered 3.97ha of open space and 6900-7200 dwellings, while the least dense option offered 3ha of open space and 6500-6800 dwellings (Communities Plus 2018b). The final Preferred Masterplan, pictured in Figure 6.18, combined elements of all three in a 'mud map' of indicative building heights and the distribution of green and open space across the site. The remainder of the plan was to be published at a later date upon submission to the Department of Planning and Environment and would only be required to be publicly exhibited for 28 days. The Preferred Masterplan received a hostile reception when launched at a REDWatch meeting in February 2019 and inspired the City of Sydney to devise an alternative plan for a less dramatic density uplift and a higher proportion of social housing, including retention of some of the existing towers. However, it bears noting that the City of Sydney, as one of the parties on the Project Review Panel, had remained silent throughout 2017 and 2018 after initially raising some concerns about density in early 2016. Furthermore, the City of Sydney seemingly did not consult with tenants and the wider Redfern-Waterloo community whatsoever before drafting their proposal.

Understandably, cynicism was prevalent throughout the redevelopment process. Karyn compared the process to living in a 'petri dish' into which events and programs were continually applied until tenants became exhausted and acquiescent:

the fact that we are under all these microscopes kind of thing, and the government's got a few microscopes in there and so they're kind of going 'OK, they're doing this so we'll throw in this', or, 'we'll throw in some more capacity builders, like, we'll throw in more staff... just see how much it takes to wear them down or just to win (interview April 2017).

Some tenants simply didn't believe written and verbal guarantees that they would be able to remain or return. For instance, Peter believed that

basically, the New South Wales government, whatever they promise is not likely to happen. You'd have to be very naïve to believe what they say. [...] I think once they've shifted people out they say, 'Oh, you can come back in a few years.' Bullshit. I really don't think they'll do all that (interview May 2017).

Peter and others saw the redevelopment as part of the ongoing gentrification of Redfern-Waterloo and the inner-city more widely. Many recognised the eviction of tenants from Millers

Point as new rationality for governing public housing in gentrifying areas which would inevitably be applied in Redfern-Waterloo. For instance, when the Millers Point evictions were announced, REDWatch released a statement that read:

Millers Point is not within Redfern Waterloo but aspects of the March 2014 Government decision to remove public housing from Millers Point has implications for all of Sydney's public housing that sits in areas that are in high demand by the private market and Redfern and Waterloo are rapidly becoming part of that club (REDWatch, n.d.).

For Karyn, the redevelopment of the Waterloo estate and the evictions in Millers Point both communicated to tenants that “you’re a waste of space and a waste of money” (interview April 2017). Several Waterloo tenants feared they would be relocated ‘out west’ to places that were, in their estimation, far inferior. Riley worried that he and his housemate Jason would be moved west to somewhere unsafe, isolated, and far from the amenities and services they required – hospitals in particular (interview June 2017). Likewise, Peter felt that

the least desirable outcome for me would be to be shifted out to some horrible place out in the sticks like Blacktown. That’d be terrible. Or even past that, somewhere close to Penrith! I mean, you know, further from the CBD... the worse off you are, basically (interview, May 2017).<sup>16</sup>

Forced relocation and displacement of such great distances had not happened in any recent relocation programs, including the Millers Point evictions. Tenants had been relocated within the same region, unless they requested otherwise. However, this is not to say that tenants’ fears of displacement were irrational. As I discussed in Chapter 5, a deserts discourse prevails in representing inner-city public housing as wasteful and inner-city tenants as undeserving their fictitiously large subsidy to occupy prime real estate. This stigmatisation of inner-city tenants is produced in part through comparisons between the inner-city and the western suburbs or non-metropolitan regions where the fictitious subsidy is more modest. The reproduction of this discourse by senior politicians and public servants, as well as by influential media commentators, can easily lead to the interpretation that displacement to the western suburbs is a governmental desire that has simply not yet been realised. As such, territorial stigmatisation can be seen to have undermined trust in policies and procedures that did not (yet) fully reify it.

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<sup>16</sup> Blacktown is approximately 40km north-west from Waterloo and Penrith approximately 50km. While lateral denigration *within* the public housing communities of Redfern-Waterloo was rare, comments like Peter’s were more common. They represent a form of lateral denigration that is different to that described by Wacquant et al. (2014); rather than displacing stigma onto a neighbour, they deflect it onto a similarly stigmatised neighbourhood elsewhere. On the stigmatisation of western Sydney generally see Dowling & Mee (2000) and Powell (1993); on territorial stigma and suburban estates in Sydney see Darcy (2013) and Rogers (2014).

Regardless whether tenants were relocating ‘out west’, elsewhere in the inner-city, or within Redfern-Waterloo, they were concerned about the rising cost of living due to gentrification. While there remained a small number of lower cost shops and leisure spaces, Redfern-Waterloo had become increasingly gentrified, as I discussed in the previous chapter. Several tenants recognised that it was increasingly “a yuppie area – [or] more of a hipster area” (Riley, interview June 2017) and anticipated that the influx of several thousand additional home owner or private renter households would increase their cost of living. For example, Karyn expected that

All the shops will be gone up market because I think the rent will go up, so they’re gonna have to have shops there that have higher prices, I guess. I dunno, it’s a bit clichéd to say ‘the cafes’ but, ahh, we have those already. They’re quite affordable at the moment. That could change, I mean, you know, if people will pay 20 bucks for a sandwich and there’s enough of them then they’ll charge that, you know (interview April 2017).

Rather than solving concentrated disadvantage, most tenants I spoke with saw the redevelopment as either fundamentally or primarily financially motivated: a means of realising a portion of the estate’s market value and shifting the costs of building and managing social housing away from the NSW Government. Tenants were also concerned about the loss of diversity and the erosion of relations of conviviality, acceptance and care by so-called social mix. Karyn, for instance, was concerned that there would be fewer public spaces like the Green for everyday, unplanned convivial encounters. Others worried that their future neighbours would simply have neither the time nor the inclination to socialise with them. Several worried about the potential for discrimination, both interpersonally and in the design of the development. In a workshop on social mix, one participant argued that

there’s that sense that we’re kind of all battlers in it together, we buffer a lot of the behaviours that take place. You know, so, somebody kicks off all the time, we won’t immediately pick up the phone and call the police because we know they’re only gonna kick off for an hour and then the drink will kick in and they’ll fall asleep or something – don’t worry about it. So, I guess my concern is I know from private communities that I’ve lived in, they don’t have that same degree of patience (field notes April 2018).

The diminished number of Aboriginal residents was of particular concern: REDWatch and others lobbied for a portion of Aboriginal Affordable Housing as part of the redevelopment, but at the time of writing had not yet been successful. Adopting a discourse that had been deployed by activists in Millers Point, and around the world, some described the project as ‘social

cleansing’, representing it as an effort to either physically displace or dilute the presence of low-income people and marginalised social and cultural groups.

Tenants thus recognised that the redevelopment would deterritorialise and reterritorialise their lived territory. In critiquing the political and economic rationales of the redevelopment they asserted that the redevelopment was not about ‘fixing’ a problem space but about the revalorisation and reterritorialisation of the inner-city. Many were well aware that the redevelopment was an intervention aimed at realising market values of public land and shifting the costs of providing social housing to the private and not-for-profit sectors. Several also saw the redevelopment as a punitive intervention that deliberately targeted Redfern-Waterloo as a place where low-income and marginalised people had it ‘too good’, as Karyn put it. The evidence from support workers and my own, more limited interactions with FACS and LAHC staff suggests that, rather than being maliciously punitive, individual bureaucrats sincerely believed that the redevelopment was benevolent, having inculcated territorial stigma into their views. However, as I discussed in the previous chapter, LAHC staff also reiterated the necessity of maximising returns on their assets. In Redfern-Waterloo, this meant that public housing tenants would need to endure a period of stress and instability so that a greater value could be realised. Undergirding this set of rationalities was either a wilful ignorance or active dismissal of the social value of the estate to its communities. In this sense, Karyn’s impression, shared by several others, was not incorrect: according to the neoliberal calculative and evaluative practices applied to public housing, Waterloo tenants did indeed have it ‘too good’. The social value they experienced was either deemed a barrier to higher and better use or not registered whatsoever according to these calculations and evaluations. As I have discussed here, tenants criticised and resisted this in their everyday practices and counter-representations, becoming engaged in territorial struggles over and against the practices and presuppositions of the redevelopment. As I discuss in the next chapter, these forms of everyday resistance intersected with several organised modes of territorial struggle.

### **7.3 Conclusion**

Tenants’ lived territory – the product of the ensemble of social relations they are imbricated in – is distinct from, though overlapping and entangled with, the territorial practices and representations of the state and allied actors and institutions (Halvorsen 2018; Raffestin 2012). In other words, the social lives of tenants and community workers illuminate the gap between lived territory and dominant representations (Garbin & Millington 2012) and reveal the multi-territoriality urban space (Haesbaert 2013). The lived territory of tenants and community workers

destabilised territorial stigmatisation: social practices and relations of conviviality and care across diversity and difference contradicted stigmatising representations of antisocial behaviour, social isolation/exclusion, concentrated disadvantage, and dependence. There was, as such, only a limited degree of stigma internalisation, whether through self-inscription, lateral denigration, or mutual distancing. Furthermore, tenants described these social relations in ways that explicitly contested territorial stigmatisation, appropriating dominant discourses and articulating counter-representations in ways that revealed their awareness of their stigmatisation but a refusal to submit to it. These everyday social practices and relations, and their counter-discursive articulation, were a key part of tenants' and supporters' everyday territorial struggles over the redevelopment of the Waterloo estate and against the territorial stigmatisation undergirding it.

The estate redevelopment process, and the project announcement in particular, brought the gap between dominant representations and lived territory into sharper relief. Perceived by many as an existential threat to their homes, communities, and lived territory, the redevelopment appeared to catalyse inhabitants' positive perceptions and descriptions by enhancing the extent of intra-community interaction and engagement as well as place attachment. Tenants and community workers were critical of the redevelopment, contesting both government procedures and practices and the fundamental drivers of the project. Both procedural and structural critiques were mobilised in efforts to organise tenants, to either get a better outcome from the redevelopment or prevent it altogether. As I discuss in the next chapter, everyday resistance was an important precondition to generating more organised territorial struggles (Quierós & Pereira 2018). Yet everyday resistance – critique, recalcitrance, and contrary social practices – was in itself a vital form of territorial struggle.

## Chapter 8

### Organised territorial struggles: over and against the Waterloo estate redevelopment

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Waterloo tenants and their allies pursued a range of strategies to oppose or contest the estate redevelopment. As I outline in this chapter, these organised territorial struggles appropriated space to challenge the progression of the redevelopment and the defamatory representations that undergirded it. They did so both symbolically and materially: they circulated counter-representations that refuted territorial stigmatisation, and they also sought to prevent, forestall or reshape the redevelopment project through strategies ranging from formal engagement with the state to the physical occupation of space.

Resistance by public housing tenants is not new, but as Goetz (2016) observed in introducing a special issue on the subject, it has received somewhat limited scholarly attention (see August 2016; Darcy & Rogers 2016; Howard & Williamson 2016; Leaney 2019; Lees & Ferreri 2016; Norris & Hearne 2016; Raciti et al. 2016). As I have alluded to already, Redfern-Waterloo has for decades been central to Indigenous peoples' struggles for self-determination, particularly during the late 1960s and 1970s (see Anderson 2000; Belleair 1976; Belleair 2007; Foley 2001; Redfern Oral History Project n.d.) but also more recently with the Redfern Tent Embassy, which in 2014 and 2015 protested the AHC's prioritisation of the commercial section of the redevelopment of the Block (see Evans 2015; Greenland 2014a, 2014b; Jackson 2014). Other housing struggles also took place in the 1970s over the development of the Waterloo estate itself, which, as I alluded to in Chapter 4, followed a period of slum clearance that was initially planned to be much larger (Zubrycki 1981; see also Burgmann & Burgmann 1998). Resident organising during this period, and assistance from the Whitlam Labor government, spawned the Inner Sydney Regional Council for Social Development, now ISV, which since 1976 has campaigned for social justice in the area (see *Inner Sydney Voice Spring 2016: Celebrating 40 Years* 2016). Alongside other organisations and groups of residents and activists, ISV contested the BEP1 and BEP2 in the mid-2000s and early-2010s (see Rogers 2016; Squatspace 2009). These prior histories of resistance were a crucial foundation for resistance and contestation that took place during the period of the redevelopment of the Waterloo estate – the focus of this chapter.

In the first section of this chapter I summarise the various organisations, groups and campaigns that were involved in organised territorial struggles during the period of the estate redevelopment and which together constituted a networked counter-public (Fraser 1990; Uitermark & Nicholls 2014; Warner 2002). In the second section I discuss the modes of counter-discursive contestation and resistance that were pursued by different members of this network. In particular, I identify two orientations: toward public address contesting ‘public perception’, on the one hand, and toward counter-public address for the creation and consolidation of subaltern counter-public spaces (Fraser 1990), on the other. I unpack the scales at which counter-discourses (counter-discursive subjects, objects, and orders of relations) have been articulated and argue that resistance to territorial stigmatisation demands counter-discourses that critique the structural and institutional foundations of stigma and articulate alternative social, political, and economic relations, rather than simply presenting a positive local image. In the third and penultimate section before a brief conclusion, I discuss the challenges and dilemmas for resourcing resistance to territorial stigmatisation through symbolic and, particularly, physical appropriations of territory. Resistance is resource intensive but public housing tenants often have limited economic, social, and symbolic capital. Faced with this dilemma, struggles in Waterloo turned to the state, and this strategy ultimately quelled resistance: resistance was territorially encapsulated and temporally delimited (Uitermark & Nicholls 2014), and otherwise frustrated by the state. However, as I argue in concluding the section and the chapter, the state is not monolithic but fractious and contested, as Bourdieu’s concept of the bureaucratic field attests and as Wacquant has stressed also. The challenge for resisting territorial stigmatisation and contesting a redevelopment that reifies it therefore involves (re)locating the left hand of the state with the knowledge that the welfare bureaucracy – including the housing bureaucracy, as I outlined in Chapter 4 – is increasingly governed according to punitive and panoptic logics and rationalities (Wacquant 2009a) as well as a market ethic (Harvey 2007).

### **8.1 A network of resistance**

Territorial struggles surrounding the estate redevelopment took place through a loose network of organisations and groups. This network included some established organisations and groups (several of whom had contested BEP2) and some new organisations and campaigns, and was connected by relationships between individual actors involved across multiple initiatives at once or moving between them. It was also, at times, connected by shared strategies, tactics or objectives; however, there were crucial differences in approaches to organising or mobilising tenants and to expressing critique and counter-claims. Collectively, this network constituted a counter-public in which members “formulate[d] oppositional interpretations of their identities,

interests, and needs” (Fraser 1990: 67) and, aware of their subordinate status, developed counter-discourses and material actions to act upon it (Warner 2002). The different organisations and groups in this networked counter-public (Uitermark & Nicholls 2014) which I overview in this section mobilised resources and participation in different ways, had different relationships with the state, advocated varying degrees of opposition to the redevelopment (from demanding greater consultation to radical refusal), and pursued symbolic and material strategies in differing combinations. In the remainder of this section I summarise these characteristics, before, in sections 8.2 and 8.3, comparatively discussing the possibilities of resistance and contestation they realised and the barriers that confronted them.

### **The Groundswell coalition**

Groundswell was a coalition of local service provider NGOs and NSW peak bodies that formed during the BEP process. It included the aforementioned community development and capacity building organisations ISV, CCS and SSCA, the community legal centre Redfern Legal Service (RLS), and the housing advocacy organisations Shelter NSW, and the Tenants’ Union New South Wales (TUNSW). It also de facto involved the community organisation REDWatch, which had been established by local residents during the RWA era to monitor and disseminate information about planning, development, and other government interventions in Redfern, Eveleigh, Darlington and Waterloo (hence *REDWatch*; see Rogers 2016). Geoff – a spokesperson for REDWatch, editor of ISV’s magazine, and private housing resident in Waterloo – described how the RWA had tried to sow division and distrust among these organisations prior to Groundswell coming together (interview December 2017). The coalition was thus established as part of a strategy for sharing information among the organisations involved and presenting united positions to government agencies. Furthermore, the coalition was also a tactic to try to reduce the risk of backlash that could occur when small organisations challenged or criticised government decisions and practices, given all but REDWatch relied on NSW Government funding. As I discuss further in the penultimate section of this chapter, CCS, ISV, and Shelter NSW received core funding from FACS, RLC from Legal Aid NSW, and TUNSW from Legal Aid NSW and Fair Trading NSW. The organisations that made up the Groundswell coalition therefore opened and operated within formal channels for contesting state government decisions and practices. As I discuss in section 8.3, this relationship with the state presented distinct advantages and disadvantages for organising and mobilising contestation and resistance.

ISV and CCS were a formal interface between government and Waterloo tenants during the redevelopment process. They were thus territorialised, in the sense in which Beaumont & Nicholls (2007) describe the institutionalisation of relations in place. They disseminated information and dispelled rumours about the redevelopment, among multiple language groups. The Winter 2016 issue of ISV's magazine was devoted to explanation and analysis of the estate redevelopment, covering the objectives and process of the redevelopment, the wider government policy context (including *Future Directions* and Communities Plus), the recent history of estate redevelopment and longer history of public housing in NSW, and a range of responses from individuals and communities in Redfern-Waterloo. It also included critical discussions of social mix and community housing. In short, it disseminated detailed information about and critical discussions of the redevelopment and wider policy and planning context but did not articulate explicit opposition to it. In a similar way, REDWatch disseminated information through its website, detailed email newsletters, and monthly meetings at the Factory in which new plans and policies and forthcoming events relating to the redevelopment (amongst other things) would be discussed, often by a representative from the relevant government departments, agencies, or contractors. Like ISV and CCS, REDWatch criticised specific procedural aspects of the redevelopment and provided information that might lead one to oppose it, without explicitly articulating an oppositional politics.

During the redevelopment process, ISV was funded to deliver a Capacity Building program and CCS a Community Development project. Their purpose was to empower and resource tenants to participate in planning and consultation processes however they personally saw fit. ISV organised capacity building workshops on topics including social mix, universal design, masterplanning, and community housing. This program was intended to enhance tenant engagement with the redevelopment conceptually, empower them by providing more detailed information and critical views (as well as the opportunity to deliberate these with other tenants), and thereby mobilise participation at the various stages of the consultation process. Gerard\*, who worked on one of these programs for a period, described it as “giving people the language and tools of urban planning and urban design” so that they might make more substantive contributions in each stage of the consultation (interview, date withheld). There was, he observed, a great deal of engagement and understanding among tenants; however, as I discussed in the previous chapter and discuss further in penultimate section of this chapter, the opportunities for tenants to substantively contribute to the shape and process of the redevelopment were structurally and procedurally limited. CCS and ISV staff advocated for procedural improvements to the planning and consultation processes, successfully persuading

FACS to commit to developing a Human Services Plan, to provide additional information sessions (including sessions in languages other than English), and, with WPHAG, to fund an independent Aboriginal Liaison Officer. They were unsuccessful in lobbying for other substantive improvements to the tenant consultation process, including a Health Impact Assessment<sup>17</sup>. The local organisations involved in Groundswell were therefore able to win some procedural improvements, mobilise tenant participation in the masterplanning process, and, as I discussed in the previous chapter, care for tenants during a particularly tumultuous period. However, as I discuss throughout the remainder of this chapter, the formal channel of contestation that they operated in was seen by some tenants as insufficient to the task of opposing the redevelopment, and they were even criticised by some tenants for legitimating the project.

Shelter NSW and TUNSW were also part of Groundswell, though being funded for NSW-wide policy advocacy and service provision, they were less territorially intensive and more spatially extensive (Beaumont & Nicholls 2007). The two organisations similarly lobbied for changes to government policies and practices. Through public commentary, submissions to the NSW and Commonwealth government, and research reports and factsheets, Shelter NSW and TUNSW have tried to effect changes in policy and discourse on public housing by articulating and circulating a counter-discourse on public housing and the housing system broadly. This counter-discourse, as I discuss further in section 8.2, attempts to reconstitute public housing as an opportunity structure: the object of this counter-discourse is the affordability and security that public housing provides to low-income households. TUNSW's and Shelter NSW's discourse therefore problematises market housing rather than public housing:

First, the private rental housing needed to house the majority of lower income households without them being placed in housing related poverty does not exist [...] The objective of encouraging social housing tenants to exit into the private rental market is simply incoherent in the face of this undersupply of low cost rental (Shelter NSW 2016: 5).

Much gets said about the failings of the social housing system; not nearly enough about the failings of the private housing system, and private rental in particular. But you really cannot have a proper conversation about social housing – much less actually do any of the things the State Government says it wants to do to social housing – without also saying and doing something about private rental. Private rental fails low-income households [...]. It is

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<sup>17</sup> A former FACS employee, who had moved to a different part of the public service by the time of our interview, revealed that FACS had been hostile to the notion of Health Impact Assessment and had attempted to dissuade the Sydney Local Health District from conducting one. Thus, at the time of writing, no assessment was planned.

simply unreal to expect appreciable numbers of households in social housing to happily ‘transition’ into this (TUNSW 2014b).

Their discourse has also contested logics of market valuation of public housing and the techno-discursive construction of the subsidisation of public housing which incorporates this market valuation:

The recommendation that government provide an explicit subsidy that meets the gap between a tenant’s affordable contribution and the efficient cost of delivering social housing is fundamental to a social housing system that is sustainable. We strongly endorse it. However, we are concerned that the recommendation proposes that a market rent is a reasonable approximation to the efficient cost of social housing (Shelter NSW 2017: 4).

When the NSW State Government announced last week that it would sell all the social housing at Millers Point and The Rocks, it highlighted the issue of social housing ‘subsidies’ there. It gave the impression that taxpayers’ money – and lots of it – is being paid to tenants. This is incorrect. [...] The Government’s media release refers variously to subsidies ‘paid’ and ‘funded by the NSW taxpayer’, and ‘received by’ tenants, all in dollar amounts. The truth is that not a dollar of money raised from taxpayers is paid to public housing tenants or otherwise credited to their rent accounts. Not one dollar. Tenants pay money to Housing NSW, not the other way around. The subsidies to which the Minister refers are accounting entries (TUNSW 2014a).

Furthermore, Shelter NSW and TUNSW advocated for changes to estate redevelopment policies and practices, in a report co-authored with the City Futures Research Centre at the University of New South Wales titled ‘A Compact for Renewal’. The report articulated five principles for redevelopment based on tenants’ experiences: (i) respect for tenants; (ii) acknowledgement that renewal has damaging and disruptive impacts; (iii) commitment to mitigate and minimise impacts; (iv) commitment to real engagement; and (v) tenants receiving a fair share of benefits from renewal (Shelter NSW et al. 2017). While the project was devised with the understanding that a version of it would be formally adopted, FACS and the author organisations reached an impasse over its recommendations and principles. Speaking anonymously in an interview, a representative of one of the author organisations related that senior FACS public servants had demanded the preamble to the report be changed to reframe redevelopment as an exciting and rewarding process. As I discuss further in section 8.3, estate redevelopment was one area among several where the relationship between the peaks and the NSW Government was somewhat fraught, leading to concerns about the stability of the peaks’ funding and highlighting the limits of formal channels of contestation.

## The Waterloo Public Housing Action Group

The Waterloo Public Housing Action Group (WPHAG) was a residents' group that formed following the announcement of the estate redevelopment. Initially, the group articulated a position explicitly opposed to the redevelopment; in an early blog post they described themselves as tenants

Who don't want to be evicted or removed by the Baird's [sic] government's gentrification from their Waterloo public housing homes, businesses and community [...] Doing this to any person is criminally violating their human rights and is inhumanly wrong (WPHAG 2016).

Some of the tenants who lead WPHAG were sceptical of local NGOs and reluctant to collaborate with them. "They're not Waterloo" was an occasional remark, insinuating that, because few workers were local public housing tenants, they did not or perhaps could not represent the interests of tenants and the estate. A small but highly engaged group of tenants and supporters became involved and established the Waterloo Tent Embassy in June 2016, occupying the south-west corner of the Waterloo Green, as pictured in Figure 8.1. The name invoked past political occupations by Aboriginal people under the 'Embassy' banner, beginning with the Tent Embassy established outside Parliament house in Canberra in 1972 (see Foley et al. [eds] 2013; Iveson 2016). The Redfern Tent Embassy was one of several subsequent Embassy occupations, protesting the planned redevelopment of the Block from May 2014 to August 2015<sup>18</sup>. Aunty Jenny Munro – a Wiradjuri elder, activist, and key figure behind the Redfern Tent Embassy – was a key organiser of the Waterloo Tent Embassy and a WPHAG member; however, while WPHAG articulated recognition of Aboriginal people's sovereignty, the Waterloo Tent Embassy was not a space of Aboriginal activism as such but for public housing tenants generally. It was occupied day and night for several weeks, drawing attention to WPHAG and encouraging more tenants and other supporters (including myself) to become involved. Tenants and supporters pitched tents, built a campfire, hung signs (as pictured in Figure 8.2), held meetings, and gathered signatures for a parliamentary petition. Developed with the assistance of Jenny Leong – the Greens Member for Newtown, one of the two state electorates the estate straddled – the petition called on parliament to "protect the homes of public housing residents in Redfern and Waterloo" (WPHAG n.d.). It further demanded (i) that the government value residents' security and wellbeing over the estate's development potential; (ii) an independent advocacy service for tenants (which at the time had not yet been funded); (iii)

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<sup>18</sup> The original Tent Embassy helped bring about, among other reforms and initiatives, the Aboriginal Housing Company and Aboriginal Housing at the Block (see Belleair 1976; Foley 2001).

negotiation with residents over new redevelopment plans; and (iv) recognition of the need for more investment in public housing (ibid.). Petitioning continued throughout 2016 at community events and rallies attended in solidarity, though ultimately the petitions were not submitted to parliament. Nevertheless, the space that was physically appropriated through the Waterloo Tent Embassy enabled tenants and supporters to develop a shared political identity, devise political strategies and demands, and practice alternative social relations. It was thus a territory from below in the territorial struggle over the Waterloo estate. It caught the attention of FACS, who subsequently began to engage with WPHAG through formal and informal channels. As I discuss in the penultimate section, this eventually led WPHAG to temper its opposition to the redevelopment and converge with Groundswell in strategic terms.

The Tent Embassy was closed by WPHAG after tensions arose with other users of the space. WPHAG subsequently attempted to mobilise publicity about the redevelopment and their own opposition to it. Weekly meetings moved to the Solander building community room and were open to everyone, attracting a range of supporters including academics, architects, planners, artists, other residents and other activists. Several journalists also attended meetings, some of whom were invited via supporters' social networks. Several wrote sympathetic articles which enhanced public attention and elicited both positive and negative responses on social media (see Rooke 2017; Visentin 2017; Weeks 2017; Zhou 2017) and, in some cases, public and private rebukes of WPHAG members by senior FACS representatives. WPHAG contingents also attended several rallies, including the 2016 May Day rally, 'Action for Public Housing' in September 2016, a 'Save Our Sirius'<sup>19</sup> rally in September 2016, and the International Human Rights Day rally in December 2016. A benefit gig was organised in March 2017, raising awareness as well as funds through sales of tickets, t-shirts and pins. WPHAG also reached out to left-wing unions and the WestConnex Action Group<sup>20</sup>; however, initial meetings did not lead to further collaboration. Besides these strategies for building publicity and solidarity, WPHAG worked with Groundswell to successfully advocate for an Aboriginal Liaison Officer and explored opportunities for legal action, threatening to bring a class action after compiling a log of tenants' maintenance issues with assistance from RLC. In response, FACS rapidly completed a

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<sup>19</sup> The Sirius building was sold in 2019 as part of the privatisation of public housing in Millers Point, Dawes Point and the Rocks. The building was completed in the 1980s to house residents displaced by the limited redevelopment that occurred following the Green Ban placed on the site in 1970s. A campaign against the privatisation was mobilised, though it arguably focused more on its physical heritage value (as an example of Sydney brutalism) than on its contemporary value as public housing.

<sup>20</sup> One of several groups opposing a large motorway project, for which several homes in Sydney's inner-west were compulsorily acquired and green space eroded.

**Figure 8.1**  
Waterloo Tent  
Embassy

Credit: Clare Lewis  
Source:  
Instagram.com/welivehere2017



backlog of maintenance requests, including the repair and refurbishment of community rooms in the Solander and Dobell buildings. WPHAG also solicited a *pro bono* structural engineer's report for the six towers in response to claims that the buildings were 'unfit for purpose'. The engineer rejected these claims, though the report was never finalised.

While WPHAG was able to increase the level of attention to the redevelopment of the estate, they were less successful in organising local tenant opposition to it. After the closure of the Waterloo Tent Embassy, and insofar as their strategy was coherent, WPHAG sought to build publicity and mobilise support and resources from *outside* the estate. As I discuss in the penultimate section, WPHAG leadership was less committed to organising mass participation of affected public housing tenants, and this was a contentious issue. Later, in attempting to resolve this tension and organise more tenants, WPHAG established the Future Planning Centre (FPC) in April 2017, in premises on the estate leased to them, gratis, by LAHC (pictured in Figure 8.3). The FPC was intended to be a base for a loosely defined participatory planning program which had been proposed and commenced by two activist architects. It was initially thought of as an

**Figure 8.2**  
Waterloo Tent  
Embassy signs

Credit: WPHAG  
Source:  
Facebook.com/wph  
agwaterloo)



autonomous space where tenants could, with the help of other WPHAG members, articulate alternative imaginaries and visions of the estate which would then be deployed to contest the redevelopment process and propose an alternative model. The vision of the FPC was therefore of another territory from below, as a kind of counter-public space appropriated for devising and organising for alternative futures. The FPC was open six to seven days per week for any residents or visitors to drop in to contribute or access information; later it was opened less frequently and eventually only on occasion, until the lease was terminated in May 2019. It was decided that whenever the FPC was open there must be at least one Waterloo tenant present – a commitment that proved challenging to meet. The FPC did not meaningfully increase tenant participation in WPHAG and non-tenant members would oftentimes outnumber tenants, causing some tension over representation. Furthermore, over the course of their relationship with FACS and LAHC and in the effort to secure a lease for the FPC, WPHAG leadership gradually tempered their criticism and demands. As I elaborate in section 8.3, this compounded

tensions between tenants who were content to be involved in consultation and tenants who were more determined to refuse the redevelopment. Moreover, a professional consultant formerly employed by LAHC who became involved in WPHAG in September 2017 was particularly divisive and destructive. By the time that the FPC project received funding from the City of Sydney, the team who had initially designed it, along with several other tenant and non-tenant members (including myself), had become alienated from the group<sup>21</sup>. Remaining WPHAG members eventually organised a series of workshops that seemed to mirror those that had been organised by ISV, or NSW Government program itself, and published reports that, like ISV and CCS, criticised the formal consultation and planning processes and elements of the masterplan without articulating opposition to the redevelopment as such.

### **#WeLiveHere2017**

#WeLiveHere2017 (WLH) was a project led by Waterloo resident and home-owner Clare Lewis which included a community art project, social media campaign, and documentary film titled *There Goes Our Neighbourhood* (TGON; Lewis 2018). The art project involved the illumination of the Matavai and Turanga towers with multi-coloured LED lights installed in participating tenants' windows, as shown in Figure 8.3. This was preceded by a social media campaign that “creat[ed] a vibrant archive of Waterloo through portraits & stories on Instagram, news and updates on Facebook and Twitter” (#WeLiveHere2017 n.d.). TGON was aired by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) in December 2018 and documented both the art project and wider campaign as well as some of the activities of WPHAG. WLH sought to destigmatise the estate and its residents by circulating alternative representations that portrayed diversity, conviviality, vitality, and acceptance, as well place attachment among residents. As such, WLH reproduced and circulated, through both written and visual media, similar counter-representations to those articulated by many tenants and which I discussed in the previous chapter.

Unlike established community media publications like the ISV quarterly magazine and *South Sydney Herald* (which I expand upon in the next section), WLH circulated these counter-representations among a wider public. WLH had a comprehensive social media presence (at the

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<sup>21</sup> Several tenants and allies alienated from WPHAG went on to form the Women of Waterloo, or WOW, and in May 2018 led a successful campaign to prevent the closure of the Waterloo library by organising read-ins and protesting at the opening of a new library in newly developed precinct Green Square, where the Waterloo library collection would otherwise have been relocated.

**Figure 8.3**  
The Future Planning Centre

Credit: WPHAG  
Source:  
[Facebook.com/wphagwaterloo](https://www.facebook.com/wphagwaterloo)



time of writing, 3020, 1903, and 1003 followers on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter respectively) through which they shared news, project updates, images of the estate, and portraits of community members. The latter in particular, which were shared through Instagram, were an explicit effort to destigmatise the estate and tenants by confronting and challenging stereotypes.

The portraits highlighted the diversity of the estate by featuring residents of many ages, ethnicities, genders, and religious identities, and occasionally local workers, business owners and residents of private housing. In addition to these portraits – some of which are reproduced in Figure 8.5 and Figure 8.6 – WLH also published images of the estate that were composed in ways that were more sympathetic to its built form, compared to typical low-angle or birds-eye representations of its beige-grey towers. WLH’s social media campaign was, in short, an effort to tenants’ lived territory visible by going inside that which is commonly viewed from the outside or

**Figure 8.4**  
Matavai and  
Turanga towers  
illuminated for  
#WeLiveHere2017

Credit: Nic Walker/  
#WeLiveHere2017



from a distance (Cuny 2017), thereby symbolically appropriating the image of the estate and contesting dominant representations.

The art project was similarly a strategic device for circulating counter-representations. The project, supported by the City of Sydney's Art & About program, illuminated the Matavai and Turanga towers using multicoloured lights that were installed in tenants' windows. Tenants who accepted a light could change its colour to reflect personal emotions or to simply signify their presence; as narrated in TGON, the art project was about "proclaiming locals' existence and their fight to the world and daring the government to demolish a work of art" (Lewis 2018). Bex, a Waterloo tenant involved in WLH, described the lights as "showing people that you do live here, and you matter, and you're all sticking together" (Lewis 2018). The project captured a significant degree of public and media attention, most of which was sympathetic to the campaign and to tenants (some of which I co-authored; see Chatterjee et al. 2018; Rogers et al, 2017; see also McDonald 2017; McNab 2016; Mitchell 2017; Rooke 2018). The spectacle of the illuminated towers was visible throughout the inner-city, leading the curious to WLH's social media channels where they would encounter the aforementioned portraits and other counter-representations that contested territorial stigmatisation. Others may have discovered WLH through social media alone, where images of the estate proliferated thanks to, in part, a competition for best photograph that was organised to attract further attention. The image of the illuminated towers was even co-opted by LAHC, who used a graphic of a tower with multicoloured windows in a

**Figure 8.5**  
Screenshot of WLH  
Instagram portraits

Credit: Fiona Wolf  
Source:  
Instagram.com/weliv  
ehere2017



**Figure 8.6**  
Screenshot of WLH  
Instagram portraits

Credit: Tom Oliver  
Payne  
Source:  
Instagram.com/weli  
vehere2017)



subsequent newsletter, as shown in Figure 8.7. However, this belied government hostility towards the project: senior FACS staff threatened to prevent the launch event on the Green and to terminate their dialogue with WPHAG if the phrases ‘demolished’ and ‘hordes of developers’ were not removed from the narration in the documentary trailer.

The story of the art project was the subject of TGON, broadcast by the ABC in December 2018 after eventually receiving funding from Screen Australia. The film follows tenants Richard, Maria and Bex as they organise the project and challenge several stereotypes of

public housing tenants. Maria, Bex and Richard door-knock the Matavai and Turanga buildings and viewers are introduced to the diverse individuals and experiences that make up their 500 or so tenants within them. Many of them describe their affection for their neighbourhood and community, some their pathways into social housing, and others their fear, frustration or reluctance towards moving. Like the aforementioned social media portraits, the film circulates a counter-representation of the lived territory of the estate, going ‘inside’ to depict it as convivial, accepting, and diverse, and as a vital refuge. Bex and Maria personally contest some of the dominant discourses of public housing, in one scene reading aloud and retorting to disparaging comments on social media. It is notable that both characters are single mothers, that Bex was born and raised in Waterloo and was initially unemployed, and that Maria is a woman of colour: they therefore confront some of the stigmatising character tropes that animate dominant discourses on public housing. In foregrounding counter-representations of lived territory, TGON articulates only a limited or implicit critique of the estate redevelopment rather than a comprehensive critical analysis of the social, political, and economic circumstances that produced it – a criticism which I return to in the next section.

### **The South Sydney Herald**

The *South Sydney Herald* (SSH) is a monthly local newspaper and online platform that has been published by the South Sydney Uniting Church since 2002. Its objectives are “[c]elebrating the lives of the diverse people of South Sydney, inviting discussion on issues of concern and interest, [and] adding encouragement to possibilities for community” (SSH n.d.). The newspaper is distributed throughout the inner south and targets a local audience. Issues relating to public housing therefore occupy a prominent position, especially compared to corporate media or national public broadcasters. Several tenants are involved in the church, which is located on the south-eastern edge of the estate, and SSH functions as a platform for them and others to express their opinions and views.

SSH’s output can be distilled into three categories which align with the strategic objectives described above. First among these is representation and celebration of the neighbourhood’s diversity and conviviality. In 2018, for instance, SSH published a series of interviews with Waterloo tenants of different ethnicities and nationalities, to represent and celebrate Redfern-Waterloo’s diversity. The group were asked about the things they appreciated most about the neighbourhood:

**Figure 8.7**  
Use of WLH imagery  
in Waterloo  
redevelopment  
newsletter

Source: Communities  
Plus (2018a)



[Baba] loves Waterloo and the many friends he has there. He loves the multicultural nature of the area and the proximity to public transport and the city. He likes the fact that Australia welcomes people from all countries and he is very appreciative of Australia's welfare system; the number of services in place to help people like himself, including the telephone translator service, and the letters sent to ensure that people have medical check-ups, dental check-ups, bowel and cancer screening (Singarayar 2018b).

[Fanya] says everyone is so friendly. When she rushes for the lift with her walker, they always hold the lift for her. Whenever she goes into the street, people always say hello and she chats to them. She tells the story of being near a road with her walker and feeling unwell. An Aboriginal man noticed that there was something wrong and came to help her cross the road. Once they had crossed the road, he waited with her and asked if she needed anything else. She said she was so impressed with this behaviour (Singarayar 2018a).

Through such articles, SSH circulates counter-representations of Redfern-Waterloo and the Waterloo estate which portray its diversity, sociability, conviviality, acceptance and care. These counter-representations dually function to contest public attitudes and to recognise and legitimise the lived experiences of tenants, who make up a substantial portion of their intended audience.

Secondly, SSH disseminates information about local news and events. In the context of the estate redevelopment, it published information about upcoming government meetings and workshops, the ISV capacity building program, and reports events and workshops that had occurred. It published a 'Who's who in Waterloo', identifying organisations and groups involved in the consultation, planning, and community response to the redevelopment. SSH also

published introductions to new community development and capacity building workers and to researchers like me. SSH's coverage was essential given the dearth of attention to the particularities of the estate redevelopment in the commercial or 'mainstream' media, and the NSW Government's oftentimes inadequate communications. Finally, and relatedly, SSH was used as a platform for criticising government decisions and practices and for lobbying for changes or reforms. For instance, several support workers were quoted criticising the decision to separate the masterplanning of the Metro Quarter from the estate in June 2018. Michael Shreenan of CCS wrote:

It is ridiculous by any standard to only give three weeks to 'consultation' for social housing residents on the most significant part of the redevelopment. Their talk about social housing residents 'being hard to reach and engage' hides the reality that it is easier for government to ignore them than it is to make sure they have equality and ownership over any planning process that affects their community (Turnbull 2018).

Tenants took to SSH to voice similar criticisms. One tenant, writing under condition of anonymity, published a poem titled 'Merry Christmas, 2015' which captured the contempt which many felt they were being treated with:

Often our opinion  
of others is revealed  
through our inattention  
to small details  
like the Home Brand<sup>22</sup>  
bread and sausages

the Hon Brad Hazzard, MP,  
thought suitable to provide for tenants  
of public housing  
at a barbecue

held to announce  
the destruction  
of their loved homes,  
their lively community,  
to be replaced,

he announced ...  
with a better-quality  
environment  
frequented, no doubt  
by a better-quality  
human being

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<sup>22</sup> A cheap, generic brand of goods sold at Woolworths grocery stores. Select Brand is a slightly more up-market brand.

who buys Select Brand (Collis 2015). By giving a platform to tenants and other members of the community, SSH facilitated their symbolic appropriation of the estate, giving them the means of representation of the territory they lived (cf. Wacquant 2015). SSH also occasionally published more analytical pieces that unpacked the political and economic premise of the redevelopment and housing policy in NSW generally. As I discuss in section 8.2, SSH primarily circulated these counter-representations within the counter-public of communities based around the Redfern and Waterloo public housing estates. It was therefore an important precondition for the mobilisation of tenant involvement in the redevelopment process, whether through participation in the government consultation program, in ISV's capacity building program, or WPHAG.

### Survival Guide

*Survival Guide* was a radio show and podcast hosted by two young Aboriginal people from Redfern-Waterloo who had been involved in WPHAG, Joel Sherwood Spring and Lorna Munro. It was broadcast from May 2018 by Radio Skid Row, a community radio station that focuses on broadcasting (for) marginalised voices. *Survival Guide* received funding through the Community Broadcasting Association of Australia and the University of Sydney, having been originally conceived by my co-supervisor, Dr Dallas Rogers, as a more generic program about tenants' views and experiences. Instead, Lorna and Joel took control of the project; as Lorna put it, "one of the most radical acts is to give someone who's been told to shut up all their life a mic" (Survival Guide 2018a). *Survival Guide* became a platform for theory and analysis of gentrification and settler colonialism that centred Aboriginal peoples' knowledges, perspectives, experiences and histories. Like WLH and SSH, it was a symbolic (re)appropriation of territory from below, reclaiming Redfern-Waterloo as and for a Black community.

*Survival Guide* provided an alternative representation of Redfern-Waterloo that articulates its history as "the Black centre – the crucible of Indigenous self-determination and the political consciousness of Indigenous Australia" (Survival Guide 2018a). As I have alluded to throughout this dissertation, Redfern became in 1960s and 70s the centre of the Australian Black Power movement and movement for self-determination. This space, they go on to describe, provided both cultural and material advantages to Aboriginal people locally as well as "supporting the contemporary political consciousness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people" more widely (Survival Guide 2018b). As Gary Foley (2001: 24) has explained, the history and mythology of this period "influence[s] the way indigenous people politically and culturally deal with white Australia, yet virtually no-one in white academia seems interested in knowing about how and why they might". *Survival Guide* foregrounds Aboriginal peoples' struggles for self-

determination prior to, during, and since the period of the Black Power movement. It explains the synergy between colonisation and gentrification and how the stigmatisation of Redfern-Waterloo led to over-policing and – following the death of TJ Hickey and the subsequent uprising at Redfern station – settler planning interventions intended to reclaim the neighbourhood through gentrification and displacement. Lorna and Joel thus placed the establishment of the RWA and the subsequent 15 years of redevelopment and gentrification in the context of this act of settler colonial state violence:

What was originally triggered by a moment of over-policing and a death in pursuit evolves and is politically manipulated by two successive governments to become a conversation about access and transport, because the way in which the Liberal government understood that it could make a claim on public land is if it had a legitimate stake in developing a Metro station in the area (Survival Guide 2018d).

*Survival Guide* ‘rewrites and rerights’ (Tuhiwai Smith 2012) the history of Redfern-Waterloo around the experience of the Aboriginal community – a history of political struggle, self-determination, territorialisation from below, and – as the program name makes plain – *survival* in spite of the efforts of the settler colonial society and state. As I discuss in the next section, *Survival Guide* articulated explicit opposition to the redevelopment of the Waterloo estate and situated the project within this substructure of neoliberalised settler colonialism, rejecting the possessive and discursive claims of the state.

\*

Whether or not they described their actions as such – and most indeed did – the networked counter-public of organisations and groups that I have summarised in this section contested territorial stigmatisation. They did so on the one hand through counter-representations of the Waterloo estate, Redfern-Waterloo, and public housing generally, that symbolically appropriated them. On the other hand, they contested territorial stigmatisation by criticising and opposing practices that would reify or reproduce it. As such, strategies pursued in the organised territorial struggle over the Waterloo estate were both symbolic and material. In the remainder of this chapter I draw on the empirical material outlined above to critically and comparatively analyse these symbolic and material strategies and tactics, firstly discussing the audiences and scales at which symbolic struggles were articulated and secondly outlining the challenges of resourcing material struggles given the particular conditions of public housing in Australia and its territorial stigmatisation.

## **8.2 Symbolic territorial struggles: contestation and resistance through counter-representations**

The production and circulation of counter-representations were an important strategy for contesting the estate redevelopment and resisting territorial stigmatisation. Symbolic territorial struggles were both objective and subjective; they brought particular realities into sharper relief and attempted to transform categories of perception (Bourdieu 1989), contradicting dominant representations and classifications and thereby symbolically appropriating the image of the Waterloo estate. As I discuss in this section, the discourses in which these counter-representations were formulated were nominally or implicitly addressed to either publics or counter-publics (Warner 2002); either toward contesting ‘public perceptions’ or state policies and practices, or for establishing and consolidating a subaltern counter-public sphere in which political identities and demands could be developed (Fraser 1990). Furthermore, counter-representations were articulated at different scales: the objects, subjects, and orders of their discourse spanned from the local to the structural. As I elaborate below, counter-representations which simply portray local conditions more positively are somewhat limited in their capacity to contest territorial stigmatisation and at times can reproduce it. Such counter-representations of the local must, I argue, be situated within critiques of and counter-discourses on the structural conditions that produce territorial stigma.

### **Public versus counter-public address**

The modes of discursive contestation that I have discussed thus far can be differentiated in terms of the public they address: put simply, *who* they are articulating a counter-representation to, whether by implication or intent (Warner 2002). The particular counter-discourses of the organisations and groups outlined in the previous section are both constituted by and constitutive of counter-public spheres (Iveson 2008; Negt & Kluge 1993). As Warner (2002) writes, members of counter-publics are conscious of the subordinate status of their discourses and identities. Indeed, the circulation of counter-discourses acts upon this subordination, in that the representations they bring into being or into view are intended to be transformative rather than simply replicative (*ibid.*: 88). While there is a circular relationship between counter-discourses and counter-publics, some symbolic struggles in the contestation of the Waterloo estate redevelopment were oriented more toward consolidating a counter-public sphere whereas others were oriented more toward the wider public sphere. In other words, some counter-discourses were embedded in the withdrawal and regroupment of subordinated social groups, from whence they could “formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests and needs” (Fraser 1990: 67), whereas others were part of efforts to project positive representations

and oppositional interpretations into a public sphere to contest ‘public perception’. Rather than mutually exclusive, these orientations are, as Negt & Kluge (1993) note, an inherent tension within counter-publics (see also Iveson 2008). Neither is more valid than the other; rather, I argue, both are crucial strategies within territorial struggles requiring critical consideration.

WLH sought to address a wide public, via social media, the art project, and the documentary film. The project presumes a public that is ill-informed about public housing, ill-disposed toward the Waterloo estate, and therefore unaware, ambivalent, or supportive towards the redevelopment. As I have discussed, social media posts were constructed to contest dominant or stereotypical representations of public housing tenants and the Waterloo estate. The art project was conceived to draw attention to the campaign, through both the visibility of the illuminated towers and the proliferation of their image on social media. Similarly, the documentary was widely accessible by being broadcast free-to-air on the national public broadcaster and subsequently available for online streaming. As Clare recounted to me, the documentary was a

complicated process where one needs to juggle protecting the integrity of the message with creating a piece of entertainment which is informative and powerful. The filmmaker must also protect the privacy and integrity of the people who agreed to participate in the process and there is a moral responsibility that comes with that. We only had 57 minutes to tell a very complex story that unfolded over many years so there were times I was required to simplify elements of the storyline in order to have it fit a television time-slot, as well as so that it can reach a very broad television audience (personal communication 28<sup>th</sup> October 2019).

This simplification was reflected in, for example, the representation of public housing as a place where people “end up” after something has gone wrong in their lives:

Like most public housing tenants, Mary didn’t always need the government to put a roof over her head (Lewis 2018).

Like many of his neighbours, Richard never thought he’d end up in public housing (Lewis 2018).

Such a discourse somewhat simplifies tenants’ diverse and complex pathways into public housing and circumscribes the possibilities of public housing, limiting ones understanding of who it is for, what it is, and what it could be. As I discussed in the previous chapter, this representation does not necessarily reflect tenants’ own views and experiences; public housing in an inner-city neighbourhood like Redfern-Waterloo is seen by many as empowering their independence. As such, in this subtle way, WLH reproduced territorial stigmatisation, deploying doxic

understandings of public housing while also contesting them. As such, discouragement of internalisation, lateral denigration and mutual distancing, and developing a subaltern counter-public, were secondary objectives for WLH; its implicit audience was not public housing tenants but the 'general public'. It therefore primarily contested territorial stigmatisation by articulating counter-representations within this wider public sphere.

Public perception is an important dimension of territorial stigmatisation; however, as I have argued throughout this dissertation, it is produced structurally rather than just interactionally. Recognising this, other organisations and groups pursued different modes of discursive contestation. The counter-discourses on public housing developed by TUNSW and Shelter NSW were nominally addressed to the bureaucratic field: they circulated counter-representations within the discursive sphere of the housing sector, or the network of politicians, bureaucrats, and other housing professionals that govern housing and preside over its dominant discourses. TUNSW and Shelter NSW often sought to legitimise the views and experiences of tenants within discourses of policy and social scientific empiricism, and drew upon empirical evidence and rationalisations to contest policy objectives and discourses. Through their submissions and reports to government, Shelter NSW and TUNSW contested the production of territorial stigma in state discourse, and the policy and legislative interventions that reified it. This was an important dimension of symbolic territorial struggle; however, as I have explained, whether actors in the bureaucratic field were willing or able to engage with the counter-discourses of Shelter NSW and TUNSW is doubtful. TUNSW and Shelter NSW might have instead circulated counter-discourses within a wider public or counter-public in attempting to organise political support for the material changes they advocated for, but, as I explain in the penultimate section, these organisations were funded by the NSW Government to provide policy advocacy and services, and were therefore temporally delimited (Uitermark & Nicholls 2014) to focus on near-term policy reforms and interventions.

The counter-representations circulated through SSH and *Survival Guide* were implicitly addressed towards people themselves subjected to forms of stigmatisation and territorial stigmatisation. By soliciting and publishing material authored by public housing tenants, SSH enabled subordinated groups to express and circulate alternative views of public housing and the Waterloo estate redevelopment. SSH was also an alternative source of information for informing these views. Given that these counter-representations were primarily circulated through a local audience, SSH encouraged resistance to the internalisation of stigma through self-inscription, lateral denigration, and mutual distancing (see Jacobs et al. 2011). It therefore helped to constitute a subaltern counter-public in which public housing tenants and supporters could

collectively develop political identities and demands (Fraser 1990). Yet, as I discussed in Chapter 6, Redfern-Waterloo (and the wider south Sydney region) is highly gentrified, and the middle-class neighbours of public housing are therefore also part of SSH's audience. Thus, the counter-representations circulated through SSH can also be read as attempts to reduce discrimination towards public housing tenants by their middle-class neighbours and to encourage solidarity in their territorial struggles. While it never published explicit calls for opposition to the redevelopment as such, it might be considered a precondition to other forms of resistance and contestation (see Queirós & Pereira 2018).

*Survival Guide* similarly consolidated a subaltern counter-public. In foregrounding Redfern-Waterloo's history as the centre of the Black Power movement in NSW, representing Aboriginal residents and their experiences, and situating the redevelopment in the history of the dispossession and displacement of Aboriginal peoples, *Survival Guide* articulated a counter-discourse in which Aboriginal people were the subject and their sovereignty and self-determination the object. Rather than an effort to change public perception, *Survival Guide* might be better understood as part of the decolonial project of reclaiming history (Tuhiwai Smith 2012) and contributing to the reproduction of a subaltern counter-public sphere through which Aboriginal peoples' identification with and territorialisation of Redfern-Waterloo is reproduced. This is not to say the *Survival Guide* speaks exclusively to Aboriginal people: Radio Skid Row's nominal audience, per its broadcasting remit, spans a wider array of marginalised voices, including people of colour, migrants, refugees, and working-class people generally. However, rather than addressing and contesting a generic public perception, *Survival Guide* calls for solidarity in the fight to maintain and strengthen the presence of an Aboriginal community and identity in Redfern-Waterloo.

The counter-discourses articulated and circulated through the networked counter-public of Redfern-Waterloo took various approaches to the tension between publicity and counter-publicity. Some were more disposed to contesting 'public perception' by broadcasting counter-representations among as wide a public as possible, others nominally addressed the bureaucratic field, and others circulated counter-discourses that helped consolidate subaltern counter-public spheres in which collective political identities and demands could (continue to) be developed against the pressure to internalise stigma. This is, as Negt & Kluge (1993) observed, an inherent, irresolvable tension; neither strategy is necessarily more valid than the other. Indeed, this tension was part-way resolved by the multiplication of symbolic struggles and their networked nature within Redfern-Waterloo: separate strategies were adopted but intersected with and oftentimes complimented one another. However, as I explicate in the remainder of this chapter, this did not

mean the inevitable success of territorial struggles over the Waterloo estate: translating symbolic struggles into material struggles and counter-institutional practices, in the context of severely limited resources for resistance, was a challenge that proved difficult to meet.

### **From local struggles to institutional struggles**

Modes of symbolic struggle can also be differentiated according to the scalar constitution of their discursive objects and subjects. Two broad scales of counter-representation and discourse can be identified within the symbolic struggles over the Waterloo estate. On the one hand, some articulated counter-representations of the local social and physical composition of the estate and the neighbourhood, circulating positive or sympathetic portrayals of the community, the environment, and everyday life. These modes of territorial struggle were closer to the objective symbolic struggles which, following Bourdieu (1989), aim to bring the material realities that have been obfuscated by territorial stigmatisation into sharper relief. On the other hand, some articulated counter-discourses on the political and economic configuration of the estate, the neighbourhood, and the housing system. These subjective symbolic struggles contested territorial stigmatisation by attempting to transform categories of perception (ibid.). Objective and subjective symbolic struggles do not neatly map onto the territorial struggles that took place in Redfern-Waterloo, for there were elements of both in the various struggles pursued. Nevertheless, I argue for the need for counter-discourses within symbolic territorial struggles that move between the objective and the subjective, or from the local to the structural or institutional, and back again, to both refute stigmatising representations of particular territories and to situate this local contestation within critical articulations of the political-economic production of stigma and of possible alternatives.

WLH and SSH articulated and circulated alternative representations of the Waterloo estate or of Redfern-Waterloo based upon the social relations, experiences and perceptions of local public housing tenants. Counter-representations of the estate as convivial, sociable, accepting, caring and diverse contradicted dominant representations of estates as places of concentrated disadvantage, antisocial behaviour and social isolation or exclusion. In other words, the subjects of this counter-discourse were the local community of tenants, and the object their lived territory. By bringing tenants and lived territory into view, WLH and SSH pursued objective symbolic struggle: counter-representations made tenants visible by representing them, their homes, and their communities in ways that contrasted with the dominant denigrative representations, as well as aggregative representations of poverty, disadvantage, crime, and so on that are rendered through discourse, figures, statistics and maps. These counter-representations

‘rescripted’ the dominant representations of the Waterloo estate, “re-ordering [the] normative view by de-locating and re-locating the viewer so that he [sic] sees ‘things’ that he cannot or should not see, under the terms of the norm” (Kirkness 2014: 1291).

WLH also highlighted the varied circumstances that led tenants to reside there, to suggest that the reader or viewer might find themselves in need of social housing. In a radio interview that was quoted in the film, Clare states that there were “a lot of really creative, fascinating people that have just had a little bit of bad luck” (Lewis, 2018). Demystifying tenants and their pathways into social housing can be a useful tactic for contesting territorial stigma; these biographical details narrow the psychic distance between tenants and non-tenants and represent social housing as a public good that anyone might one day need to access (see Jacobs et al. 2011). However, by reproducing representations of public housing as a ‘tenure of last resort’ and estates as places where only the desperate reside, this representation reproduces stigmatisation. There is a clear tension within TGON in its portrayal of poverty and marginality, such as tenants with drug addictions or tenants who hoard. While it does so sympathetically, such representations, in the absence of critical analyses of why such poverty and marginality exists and why it exists in public housing, can nevertheless further perpetuate territorial stigmatisation by simply providing additional material to fuel it. Furthermore, the alternative representations of SSH and WLH can at times affirm the dominant representation of the estate as a territorially bounded community that is naturally distinct and isolated from the surrounding area. There is a fine line between stressing the exceptionality of the social relations among public housing communities and reproducing notions of their isolation from the surrounding neighbourhood.

Objective symbolic struggles like those of WLH and SSG suggest that territorial stigmatisation compels the territorial encapsulation of representational politics (Uitermark & Nicholls 2014): they contest pejorative representations, but their contestation is territorially localised. Thus, while counter-representations of the estate as diverse and convivial contest overtly stigmatising representations, they fail to mobilise attention and resistance to change underlying symbolic and material structures. WLH’s and SSH’s representations of the estate were therefore at times more eulogy than call to action, celebrating a community that would soon be lost – a loss that was, by implication, a foregone conclusion. This is apparent from the name of the documentary, which was changed from ‘We Live Here’ to the more conciliatory ‘There Goes Our Neighbourhood’ after the project was funded and a broadcast deal signed. As I have discussed, these counter-representations were also readily co-opted and depoliticised, as evidenced by the NSW Government’s use of the imagery of the illuminated towers and their

adoption of a rhetoric of ‘vibrancy’: the redevelopment was described in the Preferred Masterplan as a “Celebration of an inclusive and vibrant culture” (Communities Plus 2019: 5). Contesting pejorative local representations by circulating alternative and contradictory ones is not alone an effective form of territorial struggle. If, as I argued in Chapter 4, territorial stigmatisation is undergirded by housing system that privileges home ownership and a substructure of neoliberalised settler colonial capitalism, then counter-discourses must also be developed to contest these structures and the categories and classifications which they engender.

TUNSW, Shelter NSW, and *Survival Guide* articulated and circulated counter-representations of the political economy of housing that contested the structure and substructure of territorial stigmatisation. Shelter NSW and TUNSW’s counter-discourses conceived housing as an object that should be affordable and secure for all. While they similarly highlighted tenants’ place attachment, they emphasised affordability and security as tenants’ primary concerns (Eastgate 2014; Eastgate et al. 2011; Eastgate & Rix 2015). In criticising the NSW Government’s fixation with public housing exits, they contested the discourses of concentrated disadvantage and dependence by highlighting structural and systemic failure of the private housing market to provide affordable and secure shelter for low-income households (Shelter NSW 2015; TUNSW 2014b). Furthermore, they contested the discourse of dependence by challenging the assumptions about the subsidisation of public housing, pointing to subsidies that are directed to homeowners (Shelter NSW 2017) and debunking the concept of a subsidy based on market rent (TUNSW 2013, 2014a). The two organisations called for estimates of market rent and for these fictitious subsidies to be abandoned in favour of a return to ‘economic rents’ or ‘cost rents’ (discussed in Chapter 4) that reflect the real cost of providing social housing rather than its opportunity cost (e.g. Shelter NSW 2015, 2016, 2017). This was a component of the positive vision they outlined for a public housing system that, rather than being increasingly residualised and devolved to private and not-for-profit sectors, could be expanded and made accessible to a wider range of income groups, could compete in quality with market rentals, and could generate more public revenue (Shelter NSW 2015; TUNSW 2015). Furthermore, such as system, Shelter NSW have argued, would generate the type of social mix being pursued through estate redevelopment (Eastgate et al. 2011).

These counter-representations of public housing and its relation to the housing system are at odds with the symbolic and material structures of the public housing system as a ‘safety net’ or ‘ambulance service’ (Fitzpatrick & Pawson 2014). Public housing is represented instead as an essential object and opportunity structure for solving the failure of the market to provide affordable and secure housing for all. Thus, public housing is symbolically reconfigured from a

problem to a solution. Such a counter-discourse is crucial alongside counter-representations of the lived territory of estates, for as I discussed in the previous chapter it is the affordability and security of public housing that enables these practices. By stressing the criticality of affordability and security, in contrast to private market housing, and by debunking the assumptions that underpin discourses of concentrated disadvantage/poverty and dependence, the counter-discourses circulated by Shelter NSW and TUNSW articulate a possibility of a public housing system beyond current policy frames and dominant discourses, and beyond a return to the romanticised post-war period I discussed in Chapter 4. However, as I have alluded to and as I discuss further in the next section, organising a movement that could materialise these radical changes was structurally beyond the capacity of the two organisations given their reliance on the NSW Government for core funding and the organisational activities this funding dictated.

The counter-discourse articulated throughout *Survival Guide* moved from the local to the structural in representing Redfern-Waterloo as the locus of struggles for sovereignty and self-determination against the domination of neoliberal settler colonialism being perpetuated through state-led gentrification and dispossession. *Survival Guide* draws out the connection between the denial and overwriting of Aboriginal people's relationships with the land and the contemporary ignorance of the social, cultural, and political importance of Redfern-Waterloo (to the Aboriginal communities who live there as well as around Australia), which are being dismissed or actively eroded in the pursuit of economic revalorisation. Colonisation and gentrification, it argues, are both fundamentally about a property relation to land that facilitates the "ongoing process of extracting value" (Survival Guide 2018a) and leads to dispossession and displacement of Indigenous people and now non-Indigenous people also. *Survival Guide* also emphasises that the notion of land being 'wasted' is central to both colonisation and gentrification: spaces are sought where value is seen to be unrealised, whether due to the land not being laboured (as falsely claimed by colonising forces) or not being deployed to 'highest and best use' (as claimed about inner-city public housing). Gentrification and colonisation are achieved through strategies of deception, misinformation, and claim-by-proclamation, whereby alternate practices and values are obscured and oppressed. Thus, *Survival Guide* highlighted how colonisation is not just a metaphor for gentrification but how gentrification depends on, and reproduces, settler colonisation (Danewid 2019; cf. Smith 1996). In the counter-representation articulated by *Survival Guide*, Redfern-Waterloo is a window into these contemporary operations of neoliberalised settler colonialism as well as a territory of possibility – a place where self-determination was most visible and reverberates in the political consciousness of Aboriginal people far beyond Redfern (Survival Guide 2018b). By foregrounding Aboriginal peoples' histories, knowledges, and living

presence on the one hand and deconstructing neoliberalised settler colonialism and its ramifications in Redfern-Waterloo on the other, *Survival Guide* constitutes both objective and subjective symbolic struggle and contests both local territorial stigmatisation and the structural and institutional foundations from which it is produced.

As I have argued, territorial stigmatisation does not simply describe the noxious conception or perception of a place by a nebulous, faceless ‘public’; rather, it is a ‘political economy of (de)valuation’ (Tyler 2018) and governmental technology of consent and control (Jensen & Tyler 2015). As such, for any counter-discourse that contests territorial stigmatisation to successfully mobilise the kind struggle required to eliminate it, counter-representations of lived territory must be connected to counter-discourses that critique the commodification and marketisation of housing and their underlying substructure of neoliberalised settler colonialism. While these counter-discourses are not alone enough to challenge territorial stigma and interventions like the estate redevelopment, they can nevertheless articulate and thus construe the object and possibility of material territorial struggle.

### **8.3 Material territorial struggles: challenges and dilemmas for resourcing resistance**

The three years after the announcement of the redevelopment were a period in which both urban development and housing affordability were highly contested mainstream political issues, yet the Waterloo estate redevelopment seemed to be largely uncontroversial among wider publics. It was less contentious, for instance, than the redevelopment of the Sydney Football Stadium, if media coverage and politicians’ public statements are any indication. The estate redevelopment was not addressed by the ‘Everybody’s Home’ campaign, which mobilised a large coalition of civil society and advocacy organisations to build popular support for affordable housing reforms<sup>23</sup>. It was barely mentioned during the 2019 NSW state election campaign beyond the statements of the two local members.

Public housing tenants as a collective possess scarce symbolic capital, which is of course related to their scarce economic and social capital as an increasingly residualised group and is reinforced by their stigmatisation. Yet, as scholars like Negt & Kluge (1988) and Iveson (2008) have stressed, the production and reproduction of counter-publics – through which public housing tenants and allies might contest territorial stigmatisation – is resource-intensive. To

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<sup>23</sup> While the campaign demanded new social and affordable housing, it did not engage with the issue of estate redevelopment. Its gains were ultimately limited following the return of the conservative Liberal-National coalition government which had committed to far more limited reforms than the Labor opposition. In any case, the Labor opposition had neither committed to nor opposed the Waterloo estate redevelopment.

resolve the tension between tenants' relative lack of symbolic, economic, and social capital and their significant resource demands, the organisations and campaigns I have discussed in this chapter mobilised resources in different ways but ultimately shared a reliance on the state. As I discuss in this section, resourcing strategies – particularly vis-à-vis the state – enabled certain possibilities but also imposed certain limitations. Focusing on Groundswell and WPHAG, I comparatively discuss their resourcing strategies and relationship with the NSW Government. Both Groundswell and WPHAG drew upon relations with the NSW Government for economic, social, and symbolic capital in the context of a political constituency with scarce economic, social and symbolic capital. However, WPHAG did so only after initially eschewing these relations to differentiate themselves from Groundswell, before confronting the challenges and dilemmas of resourcing a public tenants' struggle without the state. These state resources enabled forms of contestation but also circumscribed them: drawing again on Uitermark & Nicholls (2014), I describe how the dependence on state resources temporally delimited and territorially encapsulated the possibilities of struggle in Redfern-Waterloo, and otherwise frustrated and destabilised resistance. However, as I discuss in concluding this section, the state is not monolithic and the challenge of engaging the state in campaigns contesting the stigmatisation of public housing is to (re)locate the 'left hand' of the state, given the increasing power of punitive and panoptic logics over the welfare bureaucracy (Wacquant 2009a).

Several of the campaigns and organisations involved in territorial struggles in Waterloo received funding from the state. ISV's and CCS's core funding from FACS provided them the economic capital to mobilise tenants and build capacity for engagement. Their relationship with FACS also provided them symbolic capital to open a formalised channel of contestation over government policies and practices. Charmaine explained that ISV was paid by FACS to 'keep them accountable':

I mean, we're LAHC funded [but] I can tell you that I spend my life going back to LAHC, going 'You guys are bloody kidding!' But I, you know, I'm also conscious that I'm always saying, 'Don't forget, you pay us to keep you accountable', you know – 'that's why we're here. I'm not doing it out of maliceness, I'm not doing it to make your life difficult, I'm doing it because, really, it's my *job* to do this and if I wasn't doing this, you might be out there making all sorts of mistakes' (interview October 2017, original emphasis).

The scope for contestation, however, was circumscribed by FACS: some aspects of the redevelopment were designated 'negotiables' and others 'non-negotiables', with the 'drivers and commitments' of the project included in the latter. Consequently, Gerard believed that there were limited opportunities to contest the redevelopment:

I don't think the community can influence the biggest drivers and commitments of the project because there are so many technical, legal, financial constraints that, for example, um, the financing model is done. The density model is pretty much done. I mean, when you do simple property development maths you know the density has to increase (interview, date withheld).

Groundswell's strategy of formal engagement established clear but somewhat narrow parameters for contestation. Their approach was a kind of 'soft antagonism': they were committed to a negotiated outcome but unable to equally participate in negotiation (McAuliffe & Rogers 2019). While they were able to secure some important procedural changes, Groundswell's financial and symbolic reliance on FACS meant that they were not able to pursue a path of radical refusal without jeopardising their organisational existence. Furthermore, the conditions of their funding – both their obligations to FACS and pragmatic budgetary considerations – delimited their temporal horizon to the immediate needs of their constituency and the near-term state policies and interventions to which they were required to respond to. This temporal delimitation precluded them from fully developing a vision and practice of long-term struggle (Uitermark & Nicholls 2014: 977). Additionally, the local agencies involved in Groundswell – chiefly ISV and CCS – were territorially encapsulated: the spatial delineation of their constituency by the state further precluded them from organising a more geographically disparate or amorphous collective or coalition (ibid.) – of, for example, public tenants throughout NSW, or both public renters and marginal and precarious private renters.

The circumscription of contestation that this relationship entailed was reiterated by FACS's decision to de-fund ISV's Tenant Participation Resource Service and CCS's Housing and Communities Program in October 2018, after the programs had run for 23 and 14 years respectively. The former involved coordinating Neighbourhood Advisory Boards of elected tenant representatives ('precinct representatives') across several estates, who would meet monthly with various government agencies and relevant NGOs to discuss ongoing issues and plans. The latter was a frontline service provision program for public housing tenants in and around Redfern-Waterloo. The two programs were consolidated into the Tenant Participation and Community Engagement Program (NSW Government 2018), which was awarded to the CHP Mission Australia (the housing provider for the Ivanhoe estate redevelopment). Whether this decision was made in order to quell contestation or for purely financial or commercial reasons is difficult to determine. Regardless, the mere fact of FACS's defunding these established tenant support and advocacy programs at a time of great need, and their subsequent contracting of these services through an organisation that had itself been involved in estate redevelopment

and would presumably be involved in future tenders, points to a structural, if not explicitly intentional, hostility towards contestation. A senior employee at one Groundswell organisation, speaking under condition of anonymity, related that with FACS's transition towards commissioning specific projects and programs rather than providing core funding, they had become "concerned that we are under review".

Several tenants in Redfern-Waterloo were cognisant of the limitations of the approach taken by ISV and CCS. Furthermore, many of the tenants who became involved in WPHAG perceived Groundswell as insufficiently independent from the NSW Government and therefore inadequate for the oppositional politics toward the redevelopment that they wanted to pursue. For a cohort of tenants, ISV's and CCS's relationships with the state were delegitimising in the context of resistance politics. These perspectives resonate with Uitermark & Nicholls (2014: 976) critique of civil society as a "part of a seamless web of governance rather than an uncontrollable site of multiple resistances". In the case of Groundswell, as I have argued, both are true: the organisations involved in this coalition both enabled contestation and discouraged forms of struggle that were perhaps more radical, unruly, or unpredictable.

WPHAG was therefore intended to be a more autonomous group for resisting the redevelopment and a vehicle for self-representation. It initially acted outside of the frameworks of formal, state-controlled planning and consultation processes and ISV's capacity building program. The Waterloo Tent Embassy was set up as an autonomous space in which public housing tenants and their allies could collectively deliberate actions and counter-discourses against the redevelopment. So too was the FPC, albeit with the in-kind support of FACS (a cause of tension which I discuss shortly). WPHAG's openness to non-tenant members was a resourcing strategy: the FPC in particular relied on the volunteered time and labour – and the social, cultural, and economic capital – of researchers, architects, artists, and other activists. Non-tenant members assisted with applications for the lease and for a City of Sydney grant, and with refurbishing the space, setting up services to the premises (including internet and electricity), staffing the FPC, and coordinating the alternative planning process, among many other things.

WPHAG's openness also facilitated tenants' self-representation in encounters with journalists, as opposed to typical journalistic reporting that sought comment from formal representative organisations like ISV or CCS. Tenants used this platform to speak of place attachment, conviviality, care, and diversity. Crucially, in their self-representation to the media they also rejected the image of public housing tenants as feckless and incapable subjects for paternalistic governance by the state or civil society. However, their outspokenness elicited stern

rebukes from FACS, including letters to the editor from senior FACS bureaucrats and, at least once, phone calls demanding an explanation and desistance. Furthermore, one of WPHAG's leaders was on one occasion allegedly summoned to then-Minister Goward's office, where he was apparently told that if he and other tenants affiliated with WPHAG continued to express critical views in the media, WPHAG could not expect continued consultation. By initially eschewing the economic or symbolic support of the state, WPHAG was able to circulate more strident criticism of the redevelopment without threat to their resources. However, such hostile reactions from politicians and bureaucrats were disconcerting to some tenants. As Warner (2002) outlines, membership of a counter-public bears risks that can discourage participation; publicising one's status as a public housing tenant bears objective and subjective risks. Francine\*, for instance, was a highly engaged tenant but would not participate in anything that might publicise her identity as a tenant, such as an interview with the media. Despite having lived in public housing for many years and being an active member of her community, she was concerned about the impression on family, friends and acquaintances who did not know where she lived. Others worried that they might receive harsher treatment from FACS (during the relocation process, for instance) if they were too critical, and FACS's public and private responses to outspoken tenants fuelled these concerns. Thus, WPHAG's openness was a somewhat successful discursive strategy but the real and perceived risks of speaking out were limiting factors.

As I outlined in section 7.1, WPHAG's openness to non-tenant members was a resourcing strategy but also a cause of tension among tenants involved. Several tenants felt they lost ownership of the group as it became 'professionalised'. Non-tenants began to equal tenants in number at meetings and events, at times even outnumbering them. Without symbolic boundaries demarcating who could participate and what was expected of them, or at least privileging tenants' voices, many tenants began to feel and eventually were alienated from the group. As I have discussed, one non-tenant member was particularly divisive and destructive: a former consultant employed by LAHC, they gained influence among key members and steered WPHAG towards a more conciliatory approach and a more bureaucratic discourse, emulating the rhetoric of the government and their consultants. This person also attempted to carefully manage the terms upon which other non-tenant members engaged with WPHAG and, ironically, cast aspersions on the ethics of researchers such as myself who had become involved long before they had themselves. However, all non-tenant members were complicit in the marginalisation of tenants within WPHAG. WPHAG's openness was therefore not unequivocally radical or progressive but rather was at times regressive in that it enabled the

further subordination of tenants and marginalisation of their voices. Its openness perhaps prevented it from fully realising its potential as a subaltern counter-public space through which tenants – those with the most to personally lose – could formulate their political identity and flesh out their demands. As scholars like Ince (2012) have argued, exclusion is not inherently conservative or regressive, nor inclusion radical or progressive. In the circumstances, a somewhat more exclusive territoriality might have been a more progressive or radical strategy, building robust participation and democratic decision-making processes, and developing shared political visions and demands, before engaging outsider allies. As Stokely Carmichael is reported to have said, “Before a group can enter the open society, it must first close ranks” (see also Negt & Kluge 1993).

Furthermore, while the resources mobilised through non-tenant members were significant, they were not in themselves sufficient to sustain and scale-up WPHAG’s resistance to the redevelopment. WPHAG therefore sought state government support to continue to mobilise and organise tenants through the lease of the FPC and, later, a \$60,000 grant from the City of Sydney. WPHAG also sought and received state symbolic support, being legitimated as a representative community organisation that the NSW Government obligated itself to consult with. WPHAG therefore developed an ever-closer relationship with FACS and LAHC and leadership became co-opted into a largely tokenistic consultation process. Furthermore, senior FACS public servants on multiple occasions allegedly made veiled threats that WPHAG would be denied or evicted from the FPC when they publicly criticised the project too strongly, as was the case in the trailer for TGON. The FPC may therefore be seen as a vehicle through which the state managed resistance; yet it was also, if only briefly, a territory of tenant counter-power which widened the horizon of counter-public formation and territorial struggle. WPHAG’s limited material resources meant that there were few alternative options that would provide the group with a material base for the production of a counter-public space from which wider opposition to the redevelopment could be mobilised. These conditions were exploited, structurally or strategically, by the state, inhibiting WPHAG’s resistance.

WPHAG leadership and other ‘community leaders’ faced what Collins et al. (2000: 181) termed the ‘paradox of community representation’: they were “beholden to political patrons ‘above’ and claiming to voice the interests of those ‘below’ in the desire to attain the recognition of both political authorities and community constituencies”. This paradox is intensified by the capital scarcity of public housing tenants, including their scarce symbolic capital revealed in their representation as feckless and incapable. Such representations influence the terms on which the state engages with tenants and can compel the ‘community leaders’ – whom the state offers a

rarefied morsel of legitimacy – into such a relationship. Thus, regardless whether such views toward (other) tenants are internalised by ‘community leaders’ – and there were indeed some paternalistic and condescending tendencies among them – they were seemingly compelled to engage with the state in order to obtain resources that would simultaneously enable and delimit contestation. They were forced to accept a more limited horizon of possibility, to accept that their only option was to ‘negotiate’ a better outcome from the redevelopment, despite the enormous disparity in power between them and the state. In this context, ‘community leaders’ could not help but reproduce territorial stigmatisation; they were “conditioned by hegemony [to] accept, at least in part, existing social, cultural, economic and geographic structures” (Garbin & Millington 2012: 2079, citing Mitchell 1991).

As Garbin & Millington (2012) have argued, contestation and resistance may be unable to proceed from ‘beyond’ territorial stigmatisation but are always in a process of producing something other. WPHAG and Groundswell facilitated new and alternative social relations and practices that were opposed to domination and stigmatisation. While they were ultimately not successful in preventing the redevelopment or winning substantive tenant input (at least at the time of writing), they established momentary territories of ‘power to’ (Clare et al. 2018), for practicing conviviality, solidarity, and care, and for developing alternative imaginaries of the future of Redfern-Waterloo. Their actions illuminated that territorial stigmatisation is reproduced *despite* resistance from below. People subject to territorial stigmatisation are not necessarily compelled into internalisation, mutual distancing or lateral denigration, and, contra Wacquant, do indeed develop shared identities and political demands – as I illustrated in the previous chapter also. However, this resistance from below meets active hostility from above, which temporally delimits, territorially encapsulates, and otherwise frustrates territorial struggle (Uitermark & Nicholls 2014).

It should be no surprise that the state, given its fundamental implication within the territorial stigmatisation of public housing generally and within redevelopment in particular, works to frustrate resistance and contestation. This is a crucial insight for resistance and contestation against territorial stigmatisation: territorial stigma is not waiting inertly to be extinguished but rather is actively reproduced in the struggle over the classification and control of territory. Yet, as illustrated in Bourdieu’s concept of the ‘bureaucratic field’, the state is not monolithic but rather fractious and contested. WLH and *Survival Guide* demonstrated that the state can be used to resource contestation and resistance without encapsulating and/or delimiting it quite so intensively: as I have discussed, WLH received public funding from Screen Australia and the City of Sydney, and *Survival Guide* from the Community Broadcasting

Association. They therefore obtained resources from fractions of the state that were less directly implicated in the redevelopment, and in the reproduction of territorial stigmatisation. While these were symbolic territorial struggles as opposed to WPHAG's and Groundswell's material struggles over the conditions and possibilities of the Waterloo estate, they suggest nonetheless that resistance to the stigmatisation of public housing might require (re)locating the 'left hand' of the state, for, as Wacquant (2009a) has identified and as I have briefly argued too, the welfare bureaucracy is increasingly controlled by the punitive and panoptic logics of neoliberalism.

## **8.4 Conclusion**

As I have outlined in this chapter, an array of organisations, groups and campaigns coalesced around the redevelopment of the Waterloo estate to form a networked counter-public from which several different symbolic and material territorial struggle emerged. These symbolic struggles were both objective and subjective, bringing the particular realities of lived territory into sharper relief on the one hand and contesting stigmatising categories of perception on the other (Bourdieu 1989). In this way, symbolic territorial struggles contested 'public perception' and consolidated subaltern counter-public spaces through which tenants – or in the case of *Survival Guide*, Aboriginal people – could develop and consolidate collective political identities and demands (Fraser 1990). The tension between publicity and counter-publicity, articulated by Negt & Kluge (1993) and others, was therefore partly resolved in the multiplication of symbolic territorial struggles.

As I have argued, symbolic struggles simply portraying a positive local image can reproduce territorial stigma while also contesting it. WLH and TGON were illustrative cases, in that they subtly reproduced discourses on exclusion and isolation, and on public housing as a 'tenure of last resort', whilst also circulating counter-representations of the sociality and diversity of the Waterloo estate. Symbolic struggles must therefore try to eschew this kind of territorial encapsulation (Uitermark & Nicholls 2014) by moving between territorially localised counter-representations and critiques of the structural and institutional production of territorial stigmatisation, while also articulating possible alternative social, political and economic relations. In the context of Australian public housing, this means moving beyond celebratory or sympathetic representations of individual estates toward a critique and contestation of the housing system under neoliberalised settler colonialism.

As *Survival Guide* rightly articulates, this must attend to the sovereignty of First Nations peoples: all settlers – home owners and public tenants alike – are being subsidised so long as they live on stolen land. Demands for the expansion of public ownership must also include demands

for the restitution of land to Indigenous people and the provision of Aboriginal community control. The counter-discourses circulated by Shelter NSW and TUNSW are also instructive, articulating that the destigmatisation of public housing requires a radical transformation of the housing system generally, from a market commodity to an affordable and secure service provided to all. However, their reliance on the financial and symbolic capital of the state structurally precluded them from organising of a movement that might materialise such a radical transformation. They and other organisations and groups that contested the redevelopment of the Waterloo estate critiqued state policy, practice and discourse but were structurally resourced *by* the state – a strategic step made in the context of tenants’ limited economic, social, and symbolic capital. This relationship temporally delimited, territorially encapsulated, and otherwise frustrated the territorial struggles of a number of the organisations and groups attempting to contest or resist the redevelopment. As this case demonstrates, territorial stigma is not inert but a process that is constantly and actively reproduced by a range of actors and institutions that are complicit or structurally invested in its reproduction.

A project of destigmatising public housing must, presumably, inevitably involve the state at some point or other. If the territorial stigmatisation of public housing in Australia is understood as an outcome of the housing system under neoliberalised settler colonialism, as I have argued throughout this dissertation, then the enormity of the challenge of resistance demands a reckoning with the state. One of the lessons of the territorial struggles that took place over the redevelopment of the Waterloo estate is the need for cautious, critical and creative engagements with the state, which, as a fractious and contested bureaucratic field, houses some actors and agencies which might be useful in resourcing resistance but others who are invested in the reproduction of territorial stigma. Resistance is therefore not a straightforward task, and it suggests a crucial role for scholar-activists. As I reiterate in the next and final chapter, scholars of territorial stigma should engage with these territorial struggles intellectually and ethico-politically, to better understand and realise their possibilities and identify and overcome their limitations.

## Chapter 9

### Conclusion

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The term territorial stigma does not describe an *objective* ‘blemish of place’ that might arise from the dilapidated physical conditions and deprived social life of a neighbourhood. As I have demonstrated, and drawing on the work of Wacquant, Tyler, and several others, it is first of all a political economy of (de)valuing certain people and territories, and second of all a governmental rationality and technology that is deployed to reproduce relations of domination and subordination within this political-economic order – a way of building consent and exercising control (Jensen & Tyler 2015; Tyler 2018). One of my central arguments in this dissertation has been that the production of territory is fundamental within this dual definition. Politico-institutional practices and representations of territory *construct* stigmatised territories, materially and symbolically. Territorial practices demarcate and mobilise boundaries around problematised social groups or practices, so that territorially-specific interventions can be pursued. At the same time, these boundaries are represented as pre-given and their contents *inherently* pathological, obfuscating their active construction within processes of state and market restructuring. As such, the ‘territory effect’ (Brenner & Elden 2009) reproduces and disguises the structural and systemic causes of disadvantage, poverty, deprivation, and various other symptoms of inequality and injustice, by constructing them as innate problems of territory. Yet territory, as I have argued, can also bring resistance into focus. A second of my central arguments has been that territory is also the locus of resistance from below (Schwarz & Streule 2016), as inhabitants symbolically and materially appropriate space in ways that contradict and contest their dominant classification and control from above. Accordingly, I have used the term ‘territorial struggles’ to draw attention to contestation of territorial stigmatisation in both everyday and organised genres.

In concluding this dissertation, I recapitulate my core contributions with respect to the aims and research questions I outlined in the first chapter. In the first section I distil my argument regarding the production and consequences of territorial stigma in the context of public housing in Australia. In the second section I extend this focus on the consequences of territorial stigma to outline the significance of territorial struggles, as well as the challenges and limitations of resistance. In the final section I reflect on some of the limitations of territorial stigmatisation as a concept and suggest some directions for both future research and the struggle for public housing.

## 9.1 The production of territorial stigma and consequences of categorisation

In the introduction to this dissertation I articulated one research question relating to the production of territorial stigma and another relating to its consequences:

- Why are public housing estates in Australia stigmatised? What are the elements or features of public housing and of estates in particular, compared to other housing tenures and forms, that animate territorial stigmatisation?
- What are the consequences of territorial stigmatisation? How does it shape policy and planning interventions? How is it deployed or articulated in discourses on these interventions? How is it experienced by those who are subject to it and how do they understand territorial stigmatisation?

The estate as a territory is produced through a range of physical and politico-institutional *practices* that manage and control who inhabits it and how they live: social housing eligibility criteria, planning and design, tenancy management, etcetera. The *representation* of estates is also part of their territorial production: discourses on their concentrated disadvantage, built environment, and state management represent estates as inherently pathological. Territorial stigmatisation is evident from these discourses. Tenants are additionally stigmatised as variously ‘undeserving’ – undeserving a ‘taxpayer subsidy’ altogether or undeserving the particular real estate they inhabit. Stigmatisation and territorial stigmatisation have together functioned to obscure the structural and institutional origins of public housing problems and to build consent for a range of neoliberal reforms and interventions. These reforms and interventions have introduced marketised logics and rationalities as well as punitive and panoptic ones, including the demolition and redevelopment of estates as mixed tenure neighbourhoods and the devolution of state management to the not-for profit and private sectors. In short, as I outlined in Chapter 5, territorial stigmatisation has been routinely deployed to legitimate the neoliberalisation of public housing in Sydney and NSW.

However, as I outlined in Chapter 4, the political-economic devaluation of public housing has a longer history than the story of neoliberalism. The symbolic and material superordination of home ownership, I argued, undergirds the territorial stigmatisation of public housing. Put simply, public housing is stigmatised in relation to home ownership, and this superordination of home ownership is a longstanding feature of Australian settler colonialism. Settler colonialism in Australia has been and continues to be underwritten by white possession via property, primarily as real estate (Blatman-Thomas & Porter 2018; Moreton-Robinson 2015; Rogers 2017) and made widespread through state policies and discourses that incentivise home

ownership. Home ownership invests its subjects into the structure of settler colonialism and enrolls them into its ideologies and myths. Thus, as I have argued, echoing Blatman-Thomas & Porter (2018; Porter 2018), scholarship on territorial stigmatisation, and housing and urban scholarship generally in Australia and other settler colonial societies, must engage more deeply and rigorously with the present and ongoing structure of settler colonialism. This is a challenging task – my attempt to do so in this dissertation is by no means perfect – but it is a vitally important one. Housing and urban scholars working in settler colonial contexts must recognise them as such and work to understand how historical and contemporary movements in the structure of settler colonialism have shaped the objects and subjects of their analyses.

Nowhere is this more pertinent than in Redfern-Waterloo. Here, the symbolic and material devaluation of public housing, governmental rationalities relating to ‘undeserving’ tenants and their unique ‘subsidy’, and stigmatising representations of estates as inherently pathological territories, are all combined with the stigmatisation of the Aboriginal community and of urban Indigeneity (Blatman-Thomas 2017; Hugill 2017). As I argued in Chapter 6, the redevelopment of the Waterloo estate, beginning with then-Minister Hazzard’s infamous announcement in 2015, was a response to a rent gap and a reputational gap (Kallin 2017; Smith 1989), both of which were widened during the racialised, revanchist, state-led gentrification program carried out by the RWA after the death of an Aboriginal teenage boy following a police pursuit. The subsequent market revalorisation of Redfern-Waterloo *and* the circulation of new imaginaries of its future – set against stigmatisation, and a growing gap between social and market rents which is techno-discursively constructed as a ‘subsidy’ – enabled the NSW Government to develop a plan for building a new Metro station in Waterloo which would further increase potential ground rents and thereby fund the redevelopment of the Waterloo estate. Thus, as I have argued, estate redevelopment was driven by both a rent gap – between potential and capitalised ground rents – *and* a reputational gap – between the territorially stigmatised present and an imaginary, prodigiously revalorised future – over a decade-long period, both of which have inextricably racialised foundations.

The territorial stigmatisation of public housing makes alternative solutions to the problems of disadvantage, poor building quality and maintenance, and sub-par management practices almost inconceivable. Few people are making cases for the dramatic expansion of public housing to house a wider range of income groups alongside up-scaled investment in maintenance and tenancy management. Even critical scholars are often failing to articulate such alternative solutions (a point which I return to later in this conclusion). Instead, the doxic ‘solution’ to these problems of neoliberalism – or neoliberalised settler colonialism (Tomiak

2017) – is more neoliberalism, or reterritorialised neoliberalism. As I outlined, the redevelopment of the Waterloo estate involves total deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation, ‘resolving’ territorial stigmatisation by demolishing all public housing (despite the RWA’s 2011 assessment that most of it was fit for purpose), ‘deconcentrating’ concentrated disadvantage via social mix (despite the pre-existing predomination of middle-class home-owners and private renters at the edges of the estate and throughout the neighbourhood), and devolving tenancy management to CHPs (for dubious reasons of efficiency, innovation and improved management, as well to shift costs to the Commonwealth Government and, potentially, the private sector). The Waterloo case thus highlights how territorial stigmatisation is both deployed to gain consent for particular interventions and more fundamentally, as a form of doxa, structures what these interventions can be.

## **9.2 Responses and resistance to territorial stigma**

In addition to the research question I posed regarding the consequences of territorial stigma, I also articulated a question vis-à-vis contestation and resistance:

- How is territorial stigmatisation contested and resisted, both by those who are subject to it and those who are not? What are the opportunities and limitations to resistance? What might the ‘destigmatisation’ of public housing entail?

Drawing on Tyler (2013, 2015), as well an emerging literature on resistance to territorial stigma and a range of scholars who have theorised territory as the appropriation of space from below, I have used the term territorial struggles to describe the everyday and organised appropriations of space by inhabitants that contradicted and contested the classifications, hierarchisations, and domination through territorial stigmatisation. *Everyday* territorial struggles take place as inhabitants of stigmatised territories appropriate space through their everyday social relations and practices, in ways that contradict stigmatising representations and help inhabitants resist the internalisation of territorial stigmatisation. Indeed, many Redfern-Waterloo tenants described these everyday relations and practices – of conviviality, sociability, diversity, care and independence – in direct contradistinction to dominant stigmatising representations. Importantly, the spatiality of everyday relations and practices was distinct from the territorial boundaries produced from above; in other words, tenants’ lived territory did not conform to the official boundaries of the estate or neighbourhood. Their mobility across these boundaries further highlights the gap between territory from above – practiced and represented – and territory from below (Garbin & Millington 2012; Brenner & Elden 2009).

The estate redevelopment cast this gap into sharper relief. As I outlined in Chapter 7, in enhanced intra-community interaction and place attachment. Many tenants and community workers were highly critical of the project and a significant number were opposed to it. They contested the procedures that were followed and the practices and discourses adopted, understanding their condescension and superficiality as a kind of reification of stigma. They also contested the fundamental drivers of the redevelopment, with many articulating a critique of social mix as a form of gentrification. Despite assurances against physical displacement, several tenants expressed fears that they would either be physically displaced regardless (which was not unfounded, given the public statements of politicians and influential media commentators portraying tenants as undeserving of their homes in gentrifying neighbourhoods) or that they would be socially or socio-economically excluded from the redeveloped neighbourhood. Redfern-Waterloo tenants therefore recognised their stigmatisation and the consequences it bore without internalising stigmatisation – an important observation that is contra Wacquant but cognate with Jensen & Christensen (2012), among others. For many tenants, stigma was something *against* which to articulate self-descriptions and accounts of their everyday lives. Furthermore, their procedural and structural criticisms of the redevelopment – voiced not only to me but to neighbours, the media, and the public servants and consultants who populated consultation and engagement sessions – contested the representation of public housing tenants as incapable and undeserving.

Everyday territorial struggles like those I outlined above were also an important precondition to organised efforts to contest the redevelopment of the Waterloo estate and resist territorial stigmatisation (Queirós & Pereira 2018). These *organised* territorial struggles involved an array of organisations and groups which collectively constituted a kind of networked counter-public (Uitermark & Nicholls 2014; Fraser 1990; Warner 2002). The various strategies within this network involved symbolic or material appropriations of space to contest dominant representations and develop new, or consolidate, collective political identities and demands. However, the successful struggle against internalisation and some smaller victories notwithstanding, these struggles were unsuccessful, insofar as they did not prevent or substantively reshape the estate redevelopment project.

In attempting to build the kind of power that might effectively contest the redevelopment, symbolic territorial struggles over the Waterloo estate faced the tension between public and counter-public address (Negt & Kluge 1993): some contested territorial stigma by addressing ‘public perception’ while others addressed subaltern counter-publics. Neither is a more valid or effective mode of symbolic struggle than the other but rather, as the Waterloo case

has shown, can be pursued concurrently within the multiplicity of struggle. Another tension that emerged was between territorially-localised counter-representations and counter-discourses on public housing generally. I argue that symbolic struggles must move between scales to not only cast local conditions in a different, more positive light (a strategy which alone can reify territory from above, if not territorial stigmatisation itself) but to situate these counter-representations in a critique of the political and economic production of territorial stigma and its structural foundations, and to articulate new perceptual and conceptual categories for a transformed system of housing provision (Bourdieu 1989). As Uitermark & Nicholls (2014) point out, resistance becomes limited when it is territorially encapsulated; symbolic struggles must confront the wider symbolic and material structures through which territorial stigma is produced and seek to mobilise material resistance *across* classifications of population and territory.

There are, similarly, challenges and dilemmas for material territorial struggles, revolving around the economic, social, and symbolic resources or capital that resistance requires (Bourdieu 1989; Negt & Kluge 1988). Material territorial struggles in Waterloo confronted these dilemmas by engaging with the state and thus similarly became territorially encapsulated and/or temporally delimited (Uitermark & Nicholls 2014), and otherwise frustrated by the involvement of a state that is implicated in the reproduction of territorial stigma. As I outlined, the state was able to exploit internal divisions (whether wittingly or unwittingly) that were conditioned by territorial stigmatisation, as ‘community leaders’ appeared to be compelled to compromise more ambitious demands and more radical and horizontal politics in order to legitimate their representation of a political constituency.

The experience of material territorial struggles in Waterloo points to another key contribution of this dissertation: territorial stigma is not static but is constantly and actively reproduced. Resistance must confront the reproduction of stigma in anticipating opposition from the powerful actors and institutions that are complicit in it or profit from it and, in particular, should engage cautiously, critically, and creatively with the state. The state is not monolithic but fractious and contested: some fractions are more complicit and maintain a larger interest in the reproduction of territorial stigma than others. Critically creative modes of engagement must therefore be explored beyond conventional engagements with the welfare bureaucracy which, as Wacquant (2009a) has compellingly outlined and as I have reiterated, has become increasingly absorbed into the punitive, panoptic, and marketised logics and rationalities of neoliberalism. In other words, activists and organisers should look to parts of the state less implicated in the reproduction of territorial stigma, as well as looking beyond the state, when

developing resistance-resourcing strategies to fight for a public housing system and for housing equality and justice.

### **9.3 Directions for research, and where to for/from Waterloo?**

As I have already stressed, future scholarship on territorial stigmatisation should continue to centre territorial struggles, critically engaging with them to understand the possibilities and limitations of resistance. While these possibilities and limitations will, of course, vary depending on historical and geographic contexts, my analysis here suggests that while contestation and resistance can flourish, there are some structural conditions that can limit struggles against territorial stigmatisation. Firstly, territorial stigma saps symbolic capital from those subject to it. This can further entrench the deprivation of economic and social capital and therefore make resourcing resistance exceedingly difficult, by both impoverishing inhabitants themselves and, through invisibilisation or delegitimation, deterring solidarity. Secondly, territorial stigma encourages territorially-localised struggles that contest local (mis)representations and practices through, for example, the circulation of positive counter-representations, or opposition against individual, territorially-specific interventions. In other words, the territorial encapsulation of resistance can be structural to territorial stigmatisation. While local struggles are certainly not without value, they can reproduce territorial stigmatisation by reaffirming territory from above in asserting its singularity and innateness, even if such assertions are articulated in contradistinction to stigmatising representations. Thus, as Garbin & Millington (2012) observe, resistance to territorial stigmatisation can struggle to proceed from a position ‘beyond’ it.

This also raises a question of ‘where’ we locate resistance. As I suggested in discussing the counter-discourses of Shelter NSW and TUNSW, resistance to territorial stigmatisation can and should also involve political activism and demands at the multiple institutional scales that govern public housing, rather than being territorially-localised or situated solely *within* stigmatised territories. This is somewhat more straightforward when it comes to symbolic struggles or discursive politics, as opposed to material struggles and counter-institutional practices: physical appropriations and prefigurative politics are easier at the local scale and do not simply ‘scale up’.

Research should also engage with territorial struggles on an ethico-political level and, more generally, reflexively interrogate the ethics and politics of researching stigmatised territories. As I argued in Chapter 3, stigmatised people and territories are often over-researched. Further research can perpetuate symbolic violence directly and fuel stigmatisation when it gives insufficient (or insufficiently critical) attention to the political-economic production of stigma and struggles against it. Scholar-activism is one approach for navigating these issues, centring

struggles intellectually *and* ethico-politically. This was the approach that I tried to take in researching this project: I attempted to follow an ethic of ‘situated solidarity’ (Nagar & Geiger 2007) and a ‘politics of resourcefulness’ (Routledge & Derickson 2015; Derickson & Routledge 2015). This was both intellectually and politically productive and helped limit the amount of research fatigue and symbolic violence that was being perpetuated. Yet it was in many ways unsuccessful: our collaboration was not sustained for as long as it could have been, and we were unable to fully transcend researcher/researched binaries and move toward more transformative ends. In part this was due the particular material conditions, individuals, and other circumstances that were partly structured by stigma but partly agentic. It was also due to the uncertainty I felt about my role and responsibilities among an activist group of public housing tenants and my fear of appropriating their struggle. In retrospect, I see it as within the role of the scholar-activist, but by no means limited to them, to aid and encourage a group like WPHAG to clarify their politics and specify their objectives and strategies, including the responsibilities of ‘outsiders’ within them. While I do not disagree with Routledge & Derickson (2015) in their encouragement of would-be scholar-activists to be open to ‘being moved’ into action and to not be overly analytical or cautious, some critical forethought, and an nuanced understanding and practice of reflexivity, are required for scholar-activist work to be effective on ‘both sides of the hyphen’ (ibid.: 391).

Territorial stigmatisation is a powerful concept: as I hope I have made clear, it can be drawn on to explain much about how and why certain spaces and places become devalued, and what consequences this can engender. Nevertheless, its explanatory power is not total. One limitation I wish to highlight is what I see as an inability to explain subtler and more nuanced instances and forms of devalorisation. For instance, urban development and planning discourses on ‘revitalisation’ and ‘place making’ often intimate a kind of deficit among places that are not explicitly or overtly stigmatised. Given the trendiness of the concept (which I admit to being complicit in), territorial stigmatisation has been overstretched into range of contexts where stigma is less obvious. It is intellectually and politically unwise to label ‘stigmatised’ every place that is spoken of in anything but celebratory language. The work of Weber (2002) and Rogers (2014), among others, on the production of urban obsolescence could be productively brought into closer dialogue with the work on territorial stigmatisation to grapple with such subtler forms of devalorisation and revalorisation beyond the more overtly stigmatised territories of estates, ghettos, camps, and so on.

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As I write this conclusion, the ground has not yet been broken for the redevelopment of the Waterloo estate. Though the Metro station construction is well underway, it is not inconceivable that the redevelopment will not proceed. With a downward-trending housing market in Sydney, for apartments in particular, and recent reports of building defects that have made several new apartment buildings unliveable, the redevelopment of the Waterloo estate may once again be abandoned or may look very different to its current roughly-sketched image. As I have discussed already, the City of Sydney has proposed an alternative masterplan: less dense, with replacement social housing constituting 50% of the new development alongside 20% ‘affordable’ housing and 20% market housing. However, while in many ways superior to the NSW Government’s Preferred Masterplan, the lack of community participation in the City’s plan and its *prima facie* acceptance of redevelopment and new market housing mean that it too is structured by territorial stigma.

Whatever the outcome for the Waterloo estate, territorial stigmatisation will likely continue – perhaps recapitulated at smaller scales in a mixed tenure neighbourhood (e.g. Raynor et al. 2020) or perhaps intensified elsewhere, such as the Redfern estate. Furthermore, tenants who live long enough to see the project’s completion – and there are sadly many who will not – will likely return to a neighbourhood that scarcely resembles the one they were previously a part of. While they may not be physically displaced, they may well be alienated from the social life of the neighbourhood as it becomes more middle class and more expensive to participate in. For the Aboriginal community this is especially concerning: as I write, the NSW Government is yet to respond to a call for 5% of new housing delivered through the redevelopment to be allocated for Aboriginal Affordable Housing. It therefore seems sadly likely that the Black presence in Redfern-Waterloo will continue to be marginalised through physical, social, and symbolic appropriation, if not direct displacement (Tissot 2018).

Advocates for public housing in Australia are on the back foot, seemingly able to make only minimalist demands for, for instance, 5% Aboriginal Affordable Housing, or 30% inclusionary zoning on the redevelopment of public land<sup>24</sup>, or new private financing mechanisms for the community housing sector, or simply the end to privatisations and demolitions. I do not wish to criticise these demands as such but to make the point that countering stigmatisation, as some have sought to do, requires a bolder and more ambitious politics of articulating and prefiguring what public housing could become. The expansion and transformation of the public

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<sup>24</sup> A demand that the Sydney Alliance – a coalition of unions, community group and churches – unsuccessfully lobbied for in 2017.

housing system can and should be a core component of the solutions to the multiple and intersecting crises faced in Australia and elsewhere. Firstly, and most obviously, building a public system that begins to rival, and eventually outrivals, private renting and home ownership is an essential part of addressing poverty and inequality, which is increasingly structured by home ownership for occupation and investment (Adkins et al. 2019; Christophers 2018). Secondly, the way we settle in cities and regions, through housing, is a major driver of climate change and environmental destruction, fuelling high rates of energy and water consumption, producing enormous amounts of waste (both domestic and construction), and eroding arable land (Gleeson 2008; McManus 2005; Steel et al. 2012). A publicly owned, built and managed system of housing powered by public renewables and integrated with public transport – and which may include some redevelopment or adaptive reuse projects, driven by social and environmental justice rather than commercial imperatives – is surely more likely to address this crisis than a market-based solution (see Cohen 2018). Thirdly, but by no means least of all, a public system which steadily erodes home ownership might go some way towards recognising Aboriginal peoples' sovereignty and land rights and paying the rent<sup>25</sup> for the past 270-plus years of settler colonial occupation – but only if we actively make it so (Crabtree 2013). We might imagine a system that pays a portion of revenues to Traditional Owners as well as upscaling Aboriginal Housing and more firmly embedding principles of self-determination.

Such a system seems, and perhaps is, a long way off. Part of the problem is the territorial stigmatisation of public housing: its numeric marginality, material deprivation, and symbolic delegitimisation. But the solution to territorial stigma is not redevelopment and 'tenure-blind design', or simply illuminating the positive aspects of the daily life of estates: the solution is the transformation of the housing system, and the society and economy in which it is situated. The post-war period demonstrates that such a dramatic break from trend can occur; however, we should be wary of romanticising this period, particularly given its racialised and gendered exclusions and its core function in reproducing capitalism for a new era. There were moments that suggested that an alternative path was possible: governments responding to the demands of activists and handing over some control to communities, like they did in Redfern-Waterloo. We can take inspiration from this past, but rather than thinking nostalgically about it we should critically interrogate it to understand how we might *today* open up and realise new opportunities

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<sup>25</sup> 'Pay the Rent' is a common call among Aboriginal activists demanding that the settler society make historic and ongoing recompense for the ongoing theft of the land from Aboriginal people. See <http://decolonizingsolidarity.org/2015/05/20/pay-the-rent/>

for housing that is affordable, secure, and high quality, and which serves equality, social justice, and self-determination.

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