New Urbanist Housing in Toronto, Canada:

A Critical Examination of the Structures of Provision and Housing Producer Practices

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Abstract

This thesis critically examines the planning and design movement known as 'New Urbanism' from the perspective of how the housing is produced. Generally, New Urbanism is concerned with promoting the power of design to counteract the negative effects of modernist land use planning on social interaction and suburban sprawl. More particularly, this thesis questions the existence and character of any underlying regulatory, structural and ideological parameters supporting New Urbanism as 'best practice' in housing production. In contrast to much of the literature on New Urbanism, this thesis engages primarily with the 'producers' – rather than consumers – of housing which purports to be New Urbanist in character, design or social significance. The emphasis is placed on a detailed account of how and why New Urbanist housing is being created in specific contexts, rather than on the minutia of its aesthetic characteristics and consumer appeal.

The practices of the producers of New Urbanist housing (including, for example, developers, homebuilders, planners, designers, politicians, investors and various private consultants) are investigated in order to problematise the normalisation and standardisation of housing production processes, in light of the situated nature of housing provision. In order to undertake this research, a relational approach to theorising residential land development, and housing production in particular, is adopted. The 'structures of provision' model is used to frame the empirical investigation, and in turn, the model's own conceptual limits are tested.

The empirical focus for this thesis research is Toronto, Canada where four case study sites are investigated and fifty-seven semi-structured interviews conducted with a range of actors both directly and indirectly involved in the creation of New Urbanist-inspired development projects. Two of the sample projects are situated in greenfield locations outside the administrative boundary of the City of Toronto, and two are situated in brownfield locations on formerly developed lands, both within the urban core of the City of Toronto. The contrasting contexts of the study units have been purposefully selected to explore the possibility of multi-factor causality involving contrasts of place, process, time, and social interaction.

Underpinning this empirical research is the contention that the structures of provision model provides a useful approach for framing housing production research. However, it is argued that the evaluative power of this approach is limited by its inability to adequately account for *how* and *why* the New Urbanist form of provision has emerged, been legitimised, and normalised as 'best practice' within Toronto. In an unorthodox move, the final chapter of this thesis takes the level of theorisation enabled via the empirical framework of the structures of provision a step further to address this shortcoming. This is done by applying a 'rationalities' perspective to the investigation of how and why New Urbanism has become such a powerful force within Toronto's development cultures.

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Chapter 1

Framing the Issue – Why New Urbanism Here and Now?

Introduction

The planning and design movement known as the New Urbanism has increasingly become a social and material force both within the development industry and the arenas of urban policy. The self-promotion of New Urbanism as the pre-ordained 'end state' of humankind's process of trial and error to attain truths of 'good city' form has obscured the reality that New Urbanism is but one of many possible approaches to urban form and design available to address the situated conditions of a given time and place. Much of the available literature on New Urbanism – be it from the disciplines of geography, planning, design, architecture or sociology – centres on the macro issues of the possibility of building 'community' or conversely on the micro issues of design details and codes in the battle against urban sprawl. Regardless of the oft-debated merits and demerits of the movement in relation to its idealist aesthetic principles and socio-economic doctrine, New Urbanist visions are being materialised in built examples throughout the world. Because of this, I contend new questions are required. These need to be grounded in the situated production and use of this particular built form. They need to question the normalisation of New Urbanism in form and policy and query whether or not producers, consumers and policy makers have been lulled into accepting New Urbanism at the expense of alternative forms of creative urbanism. In some respects, this thesis is not about New Urbanism per sé. Rather this emergent form of urbanism (with much popular

currency) has been used as a lens to investigate more ubiquitous processes involved in the normalisation of housing provision practices into ritualised and routinised 'best practice'.

The urban region of Toronto, Canada has been chosen as the geographical context of this thesis research (undertaken between 2001 and 2004) for a number of reasons (as outlined in Chapters 3 and 4 more specifically). The most obvious reason being, the visible prominence of New Urbanist-inspired housing projects that have emerged since the mid 1990s[1]. This began with the construction of a few high profile 'experiments' in greenfield development, and continued more recently with the production of projects (variably) labelled as New Urbanism on urban brownfield and infill sites. The neo-Victorian and neo-Georgian design principles, complete with rear laneways and detached garages, front porches and verandas are common aesthetic features evident across the spectrum of the development projects, ranging from high-end condominiums to 'affordable' housing schemes of stacked or row townhouses.

On the surface, Toronto appears to be yet another locality where the seemingly global reach of this planning and design movement has taken hold. But New Urbanism's reach is more ubiquitous in Toronto's cultural landscape than the *prima facia* design presence suggests. Toronto's unique social, political and economic dynamics, past and present, have and continue to influence the rationalisation of New Urbanism as constitutive of the 'good

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[1] The development sites investigated as part of this thesis each have a distinct history of conception, approval, and construction. The oldest project, Cornell, was conceived in 1988/89 while the most recent project, King West Village, was conceived in 1997. The period of time under study therefore extends from 1988 through 2004, when only King West Village had been completed in full.

city' and of 'good planning' or 'responsible building'. The questions that emerge are how and why this particular rationalisation has occurred within Toronto? Why now? And what are the consequences of following this development pathway? More particularly, the situation in Toronto led me to question:

What underlying regulatory, structural and ideological parameters are promoting New Urbanism in Toronto? How and why is it now seen as the 'best practice' alternative to sprawl and a solution to social disaffection?

In posing these questions within this thesis, my intent is neither to discredit nor promote New Urbanism, but rather to understand how it has emerged, been legitimated and invariably contested within and through the regulatory, structural and cultural constraints on new private housing provision in the Toronto region. This thesis thus attempts to demonstrate how the assumption that Toronto has been enveloped by a global movement belies the specificity of the contextual conditions operating in Toronto, and the recursive relationship these have with the practices of housing producers operating therein. I will argue therefore that it is the contextualised practices of these development actors that constitute, not just affect, the emergence, legitimisation and hybridisation of New Urbanism in Toronto.

This research situates itself as a point of departure from previous work on land development, housing, and New Urbanism. Particularly those which neglect to view the processes of provision of built form, especially the production of housing, as a social process. I contend that in order to begin to understand the deeper significance (and consequences) of urban development decisions which support the normalisation of New Urbanism we

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need to adopt a relational approach, which critically examines the active contexts of the production, consumption and exchange of this form of housing. To do so, an adaptation of Ball's (1983) 'structures of provision' conceptual framework is utilised as a means of ordering the material 'reality' of New Urbanist housing provision in Toronto.

1.1   What is New Urbanism?

A wealth of literature exists debating the claims, merits and limitations of the planning and design phenomenon known collectively (but not universally) as the New Urbanism. Yet, New Urbanism remains an elusive and slippery concept. One is hard pressed to decipher what exactly, if anything materially or idealistically speaking, *it* is. Depending on an author's positioning within the current debates surrounding the trend, New Urbanism is cast as a design and planning movement, a paradigm, an approach, a model, a technique, a social doctrine, and an alternative form of urbanism. All of these conceptualisations encompass some form of discussion surrounding New Urbanism's proponents' stated and implied claims that elements of 'traditional community' can halt, stall or even eradicate the perceived problems associated with modernist suburban sprawl, including social disaffection and environmental degradation[2].

Proponents of the New Urbanism or neo-traditionalist planning and design may be found throughout the world, but by far the most prominent adherents to the cause are situated within the North American context. The United

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[2] Talen (2002) however contends that none of the twenty-seven principles of New Urbanism as represented in the Congress for the New Urbanism's (CNU) Charter for the New Urbanism explicitly relates to community.

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States of America, named by many as the birthplace of the movement, finds many of its supporters rallied together under the banner of *The Congress for the New Urbanism* (CNU), which was formed in 1994, as "an international organisation dedicated to the replacement of sprawl with a neighbourhood-based alternative" (Duany et al. 2000: 253)[3]. In its 1996 Charter, the CNU detailed twenty-seven principles, which it asserts should guide public policy development, practice, urban planning, and design. These principles can roughly be sorted into three broad themes or objectives: regionalism, community and sustainability. Capitalising on the rhetorical power of these 'elastic terms' (DeFilippis 2001) New Urbanism, as an umbrella concept, has fast become a favoured form of residential development since the late 1980s in North America and increasingly in other parts of the world.

The remainder of this introductory section outlines *who* the New Urbanists are and what they contend and condemn vis-à-vis their antagonists within academic and popular literature, and concludes by highlighting my interpretation of what is missing from the current New Urbanist discourses. In particular, I attempt to draw critical attention to the lack of literature devoted

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[3] The CNU, according to its co-founders Duany, Plater-Zyberk and Speck (2000), was modelled in terms of membership, format, and Charter on the CIAM (Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne) series of conferences convened in 1928 by an international coalition of architects, urban designers, planners, engineers, journalists, attorneys, public servants and citizens. CNU supporters believe that "CIAM more than any other single organisation can be credited or blamed for the shape of the modern city. While CIAM writings loosely promoted the concept of neighbourhood, it was the drawings and early buildings produced by its members that had the greatest long-term influence" (Duany et al. 2000: 253). Many of the actions and political lobbying carried out by the CNU mirrors the earlier efforts of CIAM. CIAM developed the Charter of Athens, which advocated linking functionalism with economism through four design principles: 1. well-ventilated residences near green spaces; 2. separation of residences from workplace, with industry located outside the city-proper; 3. exclusive cultural sectors near residences; 4. separation of transport from pedestrian uses. Le Corbusier, also attempted unsuccessfully in 1929 to get a League of Nations resolution on the Charter of Athens (cf. Duany et al. 2000; Le Corbusier 1929; Holston (1989); Mumford 2000). The extent to which New Urbanism has retreated from its initial statements of rejecting modernism to that of reclaiming it as a resource for positive change (using traditional forms along 'natural' zones or transects) is expanded on briefly in Chapter 7.

to questioning the dynamic and inseparable contexts of production and consumption for this emergent form of housing provision in particular times and places.

1.1.1 The New Urbanists

The most prominent proponents of the New Urbanist movement are not urban theorists or academics as such, but rather private sector planning and design practitioners. In particular, architects/designers Andrés Duany and Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk are widely associated with the 'traditional neighbourhood development' (TND) designation. Peter Calthorpe, another well-known New Urbanism proponent is equally recognised for his more urban focused 'transit oriented development' (TOD) approach and regionalist perspective. Duany and Plater-Zyberk and their associates have developed (and trademarked) a series of design 'smart codes', which create or maintain what they characterise as an appropriate built form of 'traditional character' located along the rural-urban continuum (cf. Duany and Talen 2002; Duany 2000; Duany 2002), which can be seen in contradiction to modernist functional zoning. The 'smart code' is based on the concept of the 'transect' which has emerged in the last five years as a key component of the New Urbanist lexicon and is seen as the means of integrating the long-range perspective of comprehensive planning and the short-range physical problems addressed through zoning (Talen 2002). Citing it to be born out of the ideas of Geddes (1915), McHarg (1965) and Alexander *et al.* (1977), the concept of 'transect' has been appropriated by New Urbanists as the key analytical tool to reconcile the competing poles of urbanism and environmentalism (Duany 2002: 254). The transect is proposed by New

Urbanists as a natural law of ecological diversity which is appropriated to explain the 'natural' variety of human living arrangements and settlement patterns across a spectrum of six zones ranging from wilderness, to rural, to suburban, to increasing density and an urban character. The 'smart code' is therefore a system for planner's to 'score' the essential characteristics of the transect zones – the underlying assumption being that these characteristics together form the basis of a healthy urban region (Rugare 2002). More cynically, perhaps, one could argue that planning's new role becomes that of policing 'the natural'. The popularity of the transect notion as a qualification for divergence from the early visions of New Urbanist projects and the problematic manner in which New Urbanism collapses social, cultural and economic theory with ecological theory (cf. Rees 2003:102), (including the controversial ideas of the Chicago School), is taken up further in Chapter 6.

The few names mentioned above do not exhaust the list of New Urbanism proponents but they do represent a wide contingent of followers of their principles and approaches, including the concept of the transect. Collectively, the New Urbanists have come together as like-minded professionals avowing to transform the urban and suburban landscape and eradicate the effects of modernist planning's facilitation of metropolitan decentralisation through the organisation of urban life and land into functional zones[4]. The various ways in which this common goal is expressed will now be briefly expanded upon.

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[4] Somewhat ironically the New Urbanists' promotion of the 'transect' is seen as a way of emulating the qualities of relative simplicity and administrative convenience epitomised in the traditional zoning framework (cf. Rugare 2002). This could indicate to some readers that New Urbanism is reproducing modernism 'through the back door'. Again, this is revisited in Chapter 7.

1.1.2 Good v. Evil in the Built Environment

The prime target of much of the New Urbanist discourse relates to conceptualisations of *sprawl*. Sprawl is represented as the 'bad growth' facilitated by conventional zoning and the separation of residential land uses and building types from all other 'incompatible' forms of land use. Such a pattern of development has according to New Urbanism (as well as various other movements, most notably the environmental and sustainable transport movements) been enabled by the proliferation of automobile use, and has come to be known derogatively as 'suburbia'. The New Urbanist remedy to sprawl is the neighbourhood, which the proponents contend is the natural unit of human agglomeration (Duany *et al.* 2000). However, prior to expanding on the promotion of an arguably out-dated physicalist concept of neighbourhood planning (cf. Madanipour 2001), it is useful to engage with some of the literature on sprawl and how it intersects with New Urbanism[5].

Kunstler (1996) for instance, writes:

> "The model of human habitat dictated by zoning is a formless, soul-less, centreless, demoralising mess. It bankrupts families and townships. It disables whole classes of decent, normal citizens. It ruins the air we breathe. It corrupts and deadens our spirit" (1996: 50).

This emotive description of sprawl demonstrates the way in which the term often eludes formal definition, and is capable of lending anecdotal support to any number of social and economic movements. Similarly, Peiser (2001: 275) 'decomposes' sprawl as "the catch phrase for everything that is bad

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[5] It is necessary to note as well that sprawl significantly prefigures in the context of the history of planning as a formal discipline in both the United Kingdom and North America. Rational town planning emerged largely as a reaction to the issues related to the rise of the industrialised city and its concomitant metropolitan expansion via suburbanisation. Hence, sprawl, and New Urbanism's problematisation of it, has resonance for professional planners trained in planning history and theory.

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about urban growth today – congestion, blight, monotony, endless development, and ecological destruction." Sprawl's component characteristics can, according to Peiser (2001) be separated into those that are part of the development process (such as speculative land ownership and scattered development) and those that are an end result (such as monotonous development, poor infrastructure, and environmental degradation). Another widely quoted treatise on sprawl is Galster *et al.* (2001), wherein sprawl is defined as a condition of land use that is represented by low values in one or more of the following dimensions: density, continuity, concentration, clustering, centrality, nuclearity, mixed uses, and proximity. Galster *et al.*'s (2001) analysis of the social science and planning literature suggests that sprawl can be grouped into six general definitional characters:

1. "Sprawl is defined by an example, which is seen to embody the characteristics of sprawl, such as Los Angeles;
2. Sprawl is used as an aesthetic judgment about a general urban development pattern;
3. Sprawl is a cause of an externality, such as high dependence on the automobile, isolation of the poor in the inner city, the spatial mismatch between jobs and housing, or loss of environmental qualities;
4. Sprawl is the consequence or effect of some independent variable, such as fragmentation of local government, poor planning or exclusionary zoning;
5. Sprawl is defined as one or more existing patterns of development. The most frequently mentioned are low density, leapfrogging, distance to central facilities, dispersion of employment and residential development, and continuous strip development; and
6. Sprawl is defined as a process of development that occurs over some period of time as an urban area expands" (2001: 682).

The literature on sprawl demonstrates how the term is used to represent several combinations of patterns of land use, processes of urban expansion, causes of particular land use practices and consequences of those same practices (Galster *et al.* 2001). However, within Galster *et al.'s* typologies is an underlying normative discourse, wherein sprawl is seen as the opposite of

some kind of natural order or control enabled through planning. In each of these conceptualisations sprawl is presented, to some degree, as an aberration that results from human misjudgement or error in planning or zoning, with the latter presented as natural and right (when done properly). Other literature turns the normative table on sprawl and 'accepts' it as reality – and it could be argued celebrates its emergence as the quintessential 'post-modern' metropolis (cf. Garreau 1991; Soja 2000).

With this elastic definitional context in mind, it is easier to understand how New Urbanism (itself a mixed metaphor) has appropriated the ambiguity of sprawl for its multi-dimensional appeal. The most common position on sprawl stated by proponents of New Urbanism is that building something other than sprawl – for instance a 'traditional town' – is effectively illegal, due to the restrictive functional zoning codes common in suburban areas (Kunstler 1996; Kelbaugh 1997; Duany *et al.* 2000). Conventional zoning codes, it is argued, are essentially plans for sprawl. Duany *et al.* (2000) insist for example that such codes:

> "...are hollow at their core. They do not emanate from any physical vision. They have no images, no diagrams, no recommended models, only numbers and words. Their authors, it seems, have no clear picture of what they want their communities to be. They are not imagining a place that they admire, or buildings that they hope to emulate. Rather, all they seem to imagine is what they *don't* want: no mixed uses, no slow-moving cars, no parking shortages, no overcrowding. Such prohibitions do not a city make" (2000: 19).

What is needed in the opinion of New Urbanists is more compact development that is mixed use and walkable (Calthorpe 2000). What is promoted, then, are neighbourhoods – or more accurately the provision of the 'choice' to live in neighbourhoods. The New Urbanists suggest that the only historically demonstrated alternative to sprawl is the traditional

neighbourhood. This assertion is intrinsically tied in with their promotion of continuity with the past. Such continuity manifests itself both in the architectural forms of New Urbanist development and in the movement's normative statements on contemporary society. Despite its moniker, then, New Urbanism is not presented as 'new', neither in terms of form nor idea. As Langdon (1994:123) describes it, "New Urbanism is a set of planning and architectural forms based on development patterns common before the Second World War."

The proponents of New Urbanism reify the position of the movement as the natural culmination of human trial and error in planning and architectural history, citing influences of a wide range of planners, architects and theorists spanning the last century and even earlier, including Howard, Geddes, Osborn, Unwin, Jacobs, Mumford, Lynch, Sitte, Alexander and Krier (Krieger and Lennertz 1991; Duany and Talen 2002; Duany 2002)[6]. While the New Urbanists are keen on portraying their approach as representing the best of the usable past, they are not so clear on relating these 'remembered ideas' succinctly with the claims and principles of the current movement, and they are even more opaque on which criteria the selection and adaptation process rests. (With the relatively recent exception afforded to the appropriation of the theoretical and scientific history and legitimacy of the 'transect' concept from ecology.) Nevertheless, New Urbanists decry the current state of conventional suburban architectural form and design as monotonous, 'cookie cutter' and short-sighted, and for not recognising the experiential value of 'chronological connectivity'. Thus as Kunstler declares:

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[6] Duany has recently 'sanctioned' the development of a New Urbanism Time Line (cf. www.nutimeline.net)

"Connection with the past and the future is a pathway that charms us in the direction of sanity and grace. The antithesis to this can be seen in the way we have built things since 1945. We reject the past and future, and this repudiation is manifest in our graceless constructions. Our residential, commercial and civic buildings are constructed with the fully conscious expectation that they will disintegrate in a few decades" (1996: 45).

The New Urbanist approach to addressing their concerns and perceptions of a demoralising built environment and formulaic architectural output found in 'suburbia' is to adopt a largely aesthetic position. However, despite the nostalgic appearance and theming of many developments built as examples of New Urbanism, its proponents state that this aesthetic position is not about the definition of style, particularly a revivalist style (Moule and Polyzoides 1994). The essence of creating 'community' for New Urbanist proponents is rather, they contend, predicated on the primacy of the role of buildings, design and architecture, not plans and plan making (Scully 1994).

1.1.3 'Who are the People in Your Neighbourhood?'

The base assumption of New Urbanist social thinking is that residential proximity and regular face-to-face interaction promoted in their design doctrine fosters 'true' community. It would be wrong to suggest that New Urbanists do not recognise that this assumption is basically stating that people's behaviour can be controlled or channelled into desirable forms through the manipulation of physical design. New Urbanists do acknowledge what others have called the 'physicalist fallacy' (cf. Gottdeiner 1994), but largely dismiss the debates surrounding social and physical determinism as semantic banter. As Calthorpe (1993: 9) laments: "unfortunately, it is just as simplistic to claim that the form of communities has no impact on human behaviour as it is to claim that we can prescribe behaviour by physical

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design." New Urbanists, like Calthorpe, believe that planners, architects, designers, developers, politicians, and citizens alike, have hid behind the physicalist fallacy as a means of reinforcing the status quo and surrendering to the inevitability of suburban sprawl and liberal individualism. The building of walkable neighbourhoods, according to Calthorpe, may not get people out of their cars, and building front porches and neighbourhood parks may not create more integrated convivial communities. Nevertheless, he asserts, "people should be given the choice" (Calthorpe 1993:10).

This promotion of 'choice' forms the basis of many other writings on New Urbanism, both questioning and asserting that the 'traditional neighbourhood' is what housing consumers actually prefer (cf. Audirac 1999; Myers and Gearin 2001) despite continuing to buy homes in conventional suburbs. The suggestion is that this 'preference' favours environmental and social sustainability. Other works have concentrated on persuading the development and building industries that the demand for "dense, walkable residential environments is bound to grow substantially for the foreseeable future" (CNU 2001: 3). The consensus in this regard being that good urbanism is more than a fad, and that by creating residential developments which are mixed use, diverse in building type, tenure, and affordability, pedestrian-friendly and generationally-supportive, then, the current trends for favouring such developments can only expand with increased exposure to the product (CNU 2001).

1.1.4 Institutional and Political Power

New Urbanism makes substantial promises. As Falconer Al-Hindi (2001) summarises:

> "New Urbanism promises much more environmentally, economically and socially sustainable lifestyles, friendlier and more genuine communities, and better physical and social environments for families. In other words, it promises urban and suburban utopia: truly livable suburbs and restored urban communities, through urban planning and architectural design" (2001: 206).

The promises therein have proven attractive to a variety of societal groups and associations, the result being that state/provincial and national policy makers have recognised the public saliency of the principles espoused by New Urbanism.

The manner in which New Urbanism has gained institutional and political power via its influence on planning, housing, and social policy frameworks merits particular mention. As Lindstrom and Bartling (2003) state: "contemporary sprawl did not appear overnight" and yet, "while critics of sprawl have existed since the inception of modern suburbanisation, it is only in the past decade [sic] that the issue has attained a sustained level of prominence in national and local policy contexts" (2003: 209). Sprawl has inarguably been selected as *the* cross-cutting issue capable of promoting effective coalitions of interests, significantly involving both those not interested in upsetting the dominant patterns of sprawl (e.g. automobile manufacturers, the energy industry, housing developers, manufacturers and retailers cf. Lindstrom and Bartling (2003)) as well those determined to eradicate sprawl (e.g. city and suburban officials finding it difficult to accommodate demands for infrastructure; downtown corporate, philanthropic

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and civic interests; minority and low income community representatives; environmentalists; 'smart growth' advocates; and countryside protectionists cf. Katz 2000)).

The ability of New Urbanism to align previously antagonistic relations of individuals and groups is not purely down to the profoundness of its principles, but to the universalistic appeal of the movement's (unspoken) supporting ideals. New Urbanism seeks to ensure wide-ranging appeal across existing cultural, political, economic and social categories, with as little sacrifice as possible, actualised via reforms that are largely tenable from within the existing structural parameters of the dominant institutional (regulatory, administrative, civic management) paradigm. In addition, New Urbanism's emphasis on appropriating the 'usable past' to justify intended actions provides a 'common sense' confidence boost to those more sceptical members of society who are persuaded by the fact that 'it' [i.e. neighbourhood] worked before. Finally, New Urbanism implicitly promotes a formulaic applicability of the endorsed principles regardless of geographical, cultural or temporal externalities, while simultaneously qualifying a dubious grafting of sociological and ecological theory onto practical (i.e. knowable) and technocratic (i.e. do-able) solutions through a series of 'truth' claims.

The protagonists of New Urbanism have acknowledged that some of these 'universalising' ideals were modelled after the success of the [North] American environmental movement in getting its visions onto the political agenda. In kind, New Urbanists have bolstered their tactics of promoting

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'good growth' via a regionalist perspective[7] by tacking this onto the already established baseline of reforms achieved by environmental activists over the past half-century. Duany *et al.*'s (2000) justification for taking the environmental movement as New Urbanism's catalyst is illustrative of the manner in which the movement has manoeuvred its way into the political mainstream:

> "While environmentalists had to overcome centuries of misunderstanding of the natural world, the urbanists task is not so daunting. After an aberrant period of only fifty years, America should not find it particularly difficult to return to its tradition of community-making. Many Americans still live in real neighbourhoods, and even more remember them vividly from childhood. Here, unlike environmentalism, no sacrifices are necessary – no shorter showers, no sorting through rubbish – only a willingness to lead a more varied and convenient life, in the kind of urban environment that has successfully housed the human species without interruption for thousands of years. Environmentalists are beginning to understand the compatibility of these two agendas. Now that they have achieved some significant victories in the protection of flora and fauna, they are extending their purview a bit higher up the evolutionary tree, to the protection and projection of the traditional human habitat: the neighbourhood" (2000: 150-151).

By naturalising the neighbourhood as the lost art of community-making, New Urbanism projects the common sense nature embodied in its design-based principles onto a variety of political agendas, including urban growth management, regeneration, social cohesion, and affordable housing. A closer examination of the political alignment of New Urbanism and the emergent Smart Growth policy agenda in the case of Toronto is undertaken in Chapters 5 and 7.

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[7] The regionalism espoused by Duany *et al.* (2000) involves two fundamental steps: 1. the question of how suburbs (which are largely accepted as inevitable) can contribute to the well-being of the city; 2. the acknowledged interconnectivity of city and suburb. This conceptualisation of the region is seen as a crucial precursor to the successful application of the principles contained in the Charter in so far as the lack of a regional vision nullifies any attempt at neighbourhood-oriented design predicated on a mixture of uses and walkability if the population living there are dependent on their cars to go outside of the neighbourhood.

1.2 The Critics Have Their Say

The grandness of some of New Urbanism's promises has left it open to critiques from academics and professionals alike. Generally speaking, the form of critique varies from sympathetic scepticism to outright denunciation. Variations also exist in terms of the level or scale at which critique is lobbied. More specifically, some critiques target the micro level of design details such as porches and rear alleys; while others target the macro level claims related to political ideology, cultural landscape, identity politics and class and race relations.

At the sceptically supportive and micro level Ford (2001) directs his concerns toward the relationship between behaviour and design. To do so he has set out to evaluate the details of New Urbanist design 'piece by piece' through empirical observation. He has begun this process by evaluating the perceptions and uses of rear alleys in older, settled communities – a design feature which he believes to be "one of the most controversial elements associated with neo-traditional design" (2001: 268).

Other sympathetic analyses of New Urbanism question the basis of historical precedent used by New Urbanist designers. In particular, Hamer (2000) clarifies that most of the places which New Urbanist supporters (such as Langdon 1994) cite as inspirational for design techniques and ideas for creating 'livable communities' are actually designated preservation areas or historic districts. The point Hamer makes is that such places look so good and are capable of being imitated only because of the preservationist 'museum-like' care and protection they have been granted, a characteristic

which has itself been the subject of criticism for promoting an eerie familiarity and sameness in historic districts. Hamer (2000: 115) suggests that New Urbanists "seem to assume that such neighbourhoods have weathered these vicissitudes of their own accord and because of some superior innate and organic or natural integrity and strength in their design." An additional point Hamer raises is that despite the debt of gratitude New Urbanists should hold for the existence of historic districts in the promotion of their *own* existence, they, like the late 19th century and early 20th century writers on planning in Europe (notably Sitte, Unwin and Geddes, and later Lynch in North America), are not primarily interested in 'places'. Their concern has rather been to "discover permanent truths of 'good city form' that transcend these and are only discernible through distilling the essence of many places" (Hamer 2000: 118; cf. Shibley 1998; cf. Southworth 1997). The suggestion here being that the 'heritage' of design that New Urbanists are relying on for inspiration is both an idealised and relatively modern tradition, which has been selectively preserved and 'historicised'. It can be argued that rather than distilling the specificity of place and the naturalness of neighbourhoods as 'community,' New Urbanists have rather naturalised the *discourse* of urban morphology.

1.2.1 A Rose by Any Other Name

The suggestion by Hamer (2000) above that New Urbanism, like its oft-quoted predecessors, downplays the situated nature of 'place' implies to some critics that what is being suggested is that place identification can be fostered and replicated through channelling of the 'truth' of good city form to any location. Mulvihill (2002) for example, questions this suggestion that feelings of community can be replicated if the specific design style can be

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faithfully copied. "Most of New Urbanism resembles trying to grow a rose by studying the patterns of its leaves and petals. It doesn't work. You have to study the seed, and the soil within which the seed is grown" (Mulvihill 2002: 8; cf. Marshall 2000: xviii).

The implication of New Urbanism's presentation of itself as the 'end state' of some predetermined goal of creating community is in Mulvihill's (2002) opinion obscuring the reality that New Urbanism is but one of many possible approaches that can be chosen to address a specific set of circumstances. This questioning of the non-situated nature of much of New Urbanism's promises for social reform has led others, such as Talen (1999) (who is herself a proponent of New Urbanism) to question whether or not any number of other design creeds could produce the same result via a different philosophy. Talen's assessment of the social doctrine of New Urbanism involves a critical engagement with social science literature on 'community' and New Urbanism's selective appropriation of certain strategies and theories. She concludes that New Urbanists need to clarify the meaning of 'sense of community' as it relates to physical design. In particular, she notes that while some empirical research supports the notion that a sense of community operating through resident interaction is related to environmental factors, it remains unproven that there is a direct causal relation. The suggestion being that the perception of a sense of community is more often than not mediated through any number of other variables, incidental to the physical environment (Talen 1999).

1.2.2 Community Lost

Perhaps the most contentious area of debate surrounding New Urbanism derives from the questioning of the social reform promises that the movement unapologetically or unmodestly makes. Such claims have drawn critical responses from some of the most prolific academic writers on urban sociology and geography today, including Harvey (1997; 2000), Smith (1999) and Soja (2000), all of whom indirectly elaborate on the implications of New Urbanism in light of larger social transformations such as communitarianism, neoliberal revanchism, and spatial restructuring, respectively. To engage with some of these critiques let us first consider two possible misconceptions in the New Urbanist social doctrine.

First, the promotion of the [American] small town as a model for local community is questionable in itself, as it is by no means a universally held ideal (cf. Talen 1999; Shibley 1998). Sociological research has highlighted that territorially-based forms of social association may run counter to the natural tendency of modern social life, and that as Gans' (1962) work suggested, social interaction is more likely a factor of homogeneity than locale. Second, the promotion of community and the need to 're-gain' the community that has been 'lost' may, as Talen (1999) muses, have been miscalculated on the part of New Urbanists. It is the combination of these two possibilities that Harvey (1997) elaborates on in his short article entitled *The New Urbanism and the Communitarian Trap*.

While cautiously generous to the commendable aspects of New Urbanism, including the regional outlook, and the liberation of street and civic

architecture for the benefit of superior environmental quality, Harvey questions whether 'community' is actually what is being chosen by consumers of New Urbanist residential developments. Rather, he suggests consumers (those who can afford it) have chosen merely the *image of community*; that they have been persuaded to believe that "neighbourhoods are in some sense 'intrinsic', that the proper form of cities is some 'structure of neighbourhoods', that 'neighbourhood' is equivalent to 'community', and that 'community' is what most Americans want and need (whether they know it or not)" (Harvey 1997: 2). The underlying problem with this persuasion, for Harvey, is that New Urbanism "builds an image of community and a rhetoric of place-based civic pride and consciousness for those who do not need it, while abandoning those that do to their 'underclass' fate" (1997: 2). Thus, 'community' becomes as Young suggests, at once the "fusion of subjects with one another, which in practice operates to exclude those with whom the group does not identify" (1990: 227).

The danger with New Urbanism's promotion of community, as suggested by its critics, is that it is enhancing rather than eradicating social disintegration by producing sites of "exaggerated differentiation" (Madanipour 2001:183). This differentiation is between those who have the freedom (i.e. consumption capability) to choose where and how they live, and those who do not. In addition, the promotion of 'diversity' in New Urbanist literature has been criticised for only emphasising economic diversity, not ethnic and racial diversity (cf. Hanlon 2002). This exclusion of 'others' under the banner of the *spirit of community* (cf. Etzioni 1993) conceals, according to Gordon and Low

(1998:10) the "heterogeneous processes, sets of relationships and power inequalities" endemic to the production of urban space.

1.2.3 Social Capital

Other critiques of New Urbanism build upon this questioning of the movement's social assumptions by relating them to contemporaneous debates on social capital[8] and civic disengagement (cf. Reeve 1997; DeFilippis 2001; Fine 2001; Short 2001). Such debates are widely associated with Putnam's (2000) notion that we are 'bowling alone.' The separation of issues of exclusionary architecture from social ideology is difficult to draw. The so-called 'architecture of community' promoted by New Urbanists implies to many that the architecture is not so much determined by the community, but "rather it is the architecture or its image that determines who constitutes the community" (Lehrer and Milgrom 1996: 63). Thus the claims of New Urbanists that community is the answer to recovering lost civic engagement is to some critics (such as DeFilippis 2001) a misguided agenda based on faulty reasoning of the likes of Putnam who do not fully understand the issues of power and identity politics in the production of 'communities'. The implicit claim in these critiques is that despite the New Urbanist disdain for the suburban physical and social landscape, New Urbanist development is itself guilty of reinforcing two complementary trends associated with suburban form:

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[8] See also the symposium edited by Hutchinson and Vidal (2004): "Using Social Capital to Help Integrate Planning Theory, Research, and Practice." Journal of the American Planning Association 70(2): 142-188. With contributions from Judy Hutchinson and Avis C. Vidal (editors); Robert Putnam; Ivan Light; Xavier de Souza Briggs; William Rohe; Jennifer Gress; and Michael Woolcock.

1. "The general reorganisation of 'cultural space' around different lifestyles related variously to careerist orientations, family orientations, 'ecological' orientations etc., and constrained by income and life-cycle characteristics; and,
2. The increasing tendency for people to want to withdraw into a 'territorially defended enclave' inhabited by like-minded people, in an attempt to find refuge from potentially antagonistic rival groups" (Knox 1995: 209).

The landscape produced is what Knox refers to as the 'mosaic culture' of the suburbs, which consists of "an archipelago of similar suburban communities" (Knox 1995: 209). This is an argument echoed by some in regards to New Urbanism, and has led many to re-dub the movement as the *New Suburbanism* (cf. Lehrer and Milgrom 1996; Scully 1994).

1.2.4 Our Common [New Urbanist] Future

On the issue of environmental sustainability several authors have expressed doubt in New Urbanism's ecologically progressive posturing. Hayward (1998), for example, is critical of the coalitions of 'environmentalists' forming around the notions of 'smart growth' and new regionalism – including mass transit advocates, urban planners, downtown political business interests, and suburbanites – all of whom, he suggests are interested in one thing, shutting the development door behind themselves. In a similar vein, Zimmerman (2001) argues that while the language and rhetoric of New Urbanist 'environmentalism' seems progressive, in practice, it is politically conservative and does not equal a more sustainable pattern of urban development. In short, the sustainability agenda of New Urbanism, Zimmerman suggests, is a shallow version based on defending middle class amenities and lifestyles, with 'nature' being used to defend the essence of the idealised suburban dream (2001: 249).

Corresponding with Zimmerman's analysis of the appropriation of 'nature' by New Urbanists, is Till's (2001) filtering of New Urbanism's environmental rhetoric through the institutional setting and history of the planning profession, thus culturally situating the discussion of why *this form of nature* is being promoted now. In her analysis, the representation of nature actively produced by New Urbanists has confused consumers sense of green politics with green marketing. The linkages between discourses of sustainability and the appropriate development of urban form represent a growing number of studies and commentaries which either directly or indirectly relate to New Urbanist planning and design approaches, such as the compact cities debate in the UK (cf. Jenks *et al.* 1998; Breheny 1998).[9]

1.3 Taking New Urbanism Seriously

Clearly the critiques mentioned above have raised several contentious and important issues surrounding the emergence of New Urbanism – which it must be realised is a social and physical force to be reckoned with. As Falconer Al-Hindi and Till (2001:192) state: "through its critique of modernist planning and suburban sprawl, the paradigm has directly influenced how places to live are produced today." Furthermore, what began as a set of ideas amongst a few architects working in different contexts has "become a full-fledged urban planning movement that is widely known outside as well as inside planning and architectural circles" (Falconer Al-Hindi 2001: 204).

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[9] Some authors, such as Davoudi (2000), have argued more generally that whether planning takes on a technocratic versus strategic stance in relation to environmental sustainability is largely dependent on which discourse of sustainability is being adhered.

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Lewis Mumford once cautioned that one must not underestimate suburbanisation's architectural results or its great human attraction because "in fact, no adequate image of the emerging city will arise until these are both finally reckoned with" (1968: 117). Ironically, Soja voiced similar cautions about prematurely dismissing New Urbanism, as it "represents a better future for the post-metropolitan built environment than many of its 'default' alternatives" (2000: 250). Regardless of the relative merits and demerits of the idealism of the movement, New Urbanist visions are being materialised in built examples throughout the world. Therefore, new lines of inquiry surrounding the production and rapid normalisation of this emergent form as constitutive of the 'good city' need to be followed. In particular, the over emphasis in the current literature on housing consumer preferences needs to be balanced by an investigation into the productive practices of development actors in the proliferation of New Urbanist projects.

A handful of writers as early as the mid-1990s recognised the need for deeper questioning. Notably, McCann (1995) stated that:

> "The central questions are: why are these neo-traditional developments taking shape now; why are they portrayed by their architects and developers in the way they are; and why are they attractive to consumers? This perspective on the production of a new urban form affords an understanding of the relationship between urban planning movements of the past, the rhetoric of contemporary designers and developers, and the changing consumption patterns in suburban housing markets" (1995: 211).

To address these questions McCann utilised Bourdieu's (1990) concept of *habitus* (the system of values, dispositions and practices that constitute and are constituted by a societal group) to argue that the commercial success of neo-traditional developments can be explained due to both the restructuring of the suburban housing market into niche markets and the role of affluent

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homebuyers intent on creating a *habitus* and appropriating symbolic capital (McCann 1995). This being said, however, McCann's early article concentrates largely on situating neo-traditional design professionals within the convergence of two planning traditions, urban aesthetics and social utopianism. So, while McCann stresses that "production and consumption cannot be split apart in the analysis of neo-traditional built form or in the analysis of wider economic restructuring" (1995: 229), his work is not itself an empirical demonstration of how to do this. In addition, McCann's article focuses only on the "curious construction of traditional urban forms on greenfield sites" (1995: 211). Thus there is a need to update the groundwork started by McCann and to evaluate the *still curious* construction of 'traditional' urban forms on greenfield sites, as well as those more recently being promoted and developed on urban brownfield and infill sites.

Contemporary debate surrounding New Urbanism has only now begun to accept the challenge posed by McCann's (1995) 'central questions'. Falconer Al-Hindi and Till (2001), for example, assert that there is a need for an interdisciplinary research agenda which concentrates on three areas requiring further research:

1. "More empirical research which attempts to answer questions such as: What are the different understandings of New Urbanism for different expert groups (and within groups) and why? What principles seem to be accepted and which ones seem to be rejected? What institutional barriers exist at various scales that may result in poor implementation? Can the ideal of participatory democratic planning processes be furthered through movements like New Urbanism?
2. Examination of New Urbanist infill projects as a means of gaining a more comprehensive understanding of New Urbanism's contribution to urbanism as a whole.
3. Ethnographic research on neo-traditional towns in particular evaluating the perspective of prospective buyers and the experiences of residents" (Falconer Al-Hindi and Till 2001: 197-98).

The most constructive element of McCann's early work however has still been overlooked in the supposed challenge of the interdisciplinary research agenda highlighted above. This element is his promotion of research which attempts to question not just the promotional value of nostalgic images and picturesque neo-Victorian facades, nor just the exclusionary purchasing power and preference-based actions of housing consumers, nor the exploitative nature of land development. Rather he challenges researchers to question all of these as a totality: the production, promotion and consumption of New Urbanism as a form of housing provision, land development, and more broadly the production of urban space. Indeed in recent works, McCann (2002: 2) has further suggested that "if we want to take New Urbanism seriously, we should stop thinking, talking and writing about New Urbanism." By which he means that attention needs to shift away from the minutia of the movement (its design principles and idealist built form) to viewing it as "a carefully constructed, dynamic and strategically deployed political discourse" (McCann 2002: 2). Similarly, Rees (2003) sympathetically argues that in order for the movement's potential (as a "pluralistic space for real conversation about places and good living" (Shibley 1998:10-11)) to be realised, "New Urbanism should problematise New Urbanism each time a project begins; otherwise, the styles, derived from traditional or classical design, will become mere stereotypical reiteration" (Rees 2003: 100). Which, as Rees contends "will, in turn, feed the already rather aggressive critiques of style over substance that New Urbanism has already generated" (2003:100).

This is the primary point of departure argued within this thesis. In order to take New Urbanism *seriously* I contend that it is necessary to look more

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closely at the seed *and* the soil (cf. Mulvihill 2002: 8) of New Urbanism. Put another way, in order to understand the normalisation and dissemination of New Urbanism as a global phenomenon it is necessary to 'de-universalise' New Urbanism – to look more closely at the contexts and practices that have supported its normalisation as 'best practice' at specific times and in specific places. More importantly perhaps, my research is not just another 'critique' of New Urbanism. It neither seeks to support nor reject the movement. But instead proposes to take up and expand upon McCann's challenge by looking at New Urbanism from the perspective of the oft-neglected processes of production within housing and urban development analyses. From this vantage point, a unique contribution to the understanding of how and why New Urbanism has become such a powerful social, political and increasingly material 'force to be reckoned with' in the context of Toronto (and beyond) will be theorised based on empirically grounded primary research.

1.3.1 The Relational Challenge

Taking New Urbanism 'seriously' thus necessitates looking more generally at the production and consumption of urban housing provision as a social process. This perspective emphasises that the actions, practices, behaviours, and conceptualisations of development actors (producers and consumers alike) actively constitute – rather than influence or merely affect – the development process, and hence the nature of built form. New Urbanism is now a recognisable force in the housing, construction and development industries as well as in the institutional context of planning, design and urban policy making. As such, it has material as well as ideological relevance. Additionally, however, it is key to note that discretionary action on the part of

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various social agents intervening in the processes of housing provision serves to promote New Urbanist forms of development and in so doing neglects and/or rejects alternative built forms in specific locations.

In order to understand how and why New Urbanism has emerged and changed over time in Toronto, it is necessary to look at the situated nature of housing provision within this context. To do so a relational approach to theorising land development and housing production processes and outcomes is desirable. As a starting point, it is crucial to identify the key agents and constraints (structures, regulations, financial risks, technological pathways, etc.) involved in housing provision in order to attempt to demonstrate how from many development and design possibilities, one actuality emerges.

It is common to typify the housing provision process as constituted by three primary aspects:

1. *"Residential land development.* Land has to be acquired, the appropriate regulatory permissions sought and the site prepared with infrastructure so that homes can be built on individual serviced plots. With redevelopment sites, this may require the demolition of an existing structure or wholesale land reclamation.
2. *Housing production.* This entails the actual building of dwellings – from sub-structure to completed and fitted-out superstructure.
3. *House marketing and sales.* Completed housing is transferred to the ultimate users, either through sales to individual homeowners or via some type of landlord. This process involves sales in various types of owner-occupied markets (for example speculative, pre-sales, or one-off contracts with owner 'builders') or in rental markets" (Ball 2003: 902-903).

Such typification, however, undermines the significance of contextual conditions in situated processes of housing provision. Moreover, models of land development and housing production which attempt to typify

development activity across time and space have a tendency to de-activate 'context' as merely the static container of the 'reality' of the urban marketplace. A relational perspective makes no *a priori* assumptions about the social relations in the processes of land and housing development. It does not assume that the provision of built form can be reduced to the schematic detail of interaction and negotiation nor explained in terms of "distributional struggle" (Ball 1986b: 463) in an otherwise static or closed (i.e. equilibrium-based) context. A relational perspective highlights the situated, constraint-based nature of actions, ideas, decisions, practices and norms embodied within each unique form of building provision, thus demanding situated empirical investigation of these re-activated contexts.

1.4 Structure of the Thesis

This relational challenge is taken up through my emphasis on framing a new approach to looking at New Urbanism – one that problematises, rather than reproduces, the normalisation of New Urbanism as a cultural and material force[10]. In order to take up McCann's (2002) challenge to stop talking *about* New Urbanism I have used the 'structures of provision' empirical model as an ordering framework to identify the constraint-based practices of housing producers operating in Toronto and have situated this exploratory framework within a culturally-evaluative lens, as discussed in Chapter 2. The iterative research design process and the methods used to enrich this grounded approach are described in detail within Chapter 3. A reflexive analysis of the

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[10] This thesis directly engages, then, with the social v. economic debates occurring within land development and property research literature (most notably the interchanges in *Urban Studies* between Guy and Henneberry (2000; 2002) and Ball (2002)).

fifty-seven semi-structured interviews I conducted in Toronto is also provided in Chapter 3.

The current lack of academic and policy attention given to the consequences of unproblematically accepting, and indeed promoting, the New Urbanist form of housing provision over and above other alternatives begs situated study of processes and outcomes and the relations within and between. The emergence and swift proliferation of New Urbanist-style development projects in Toronto makes it a prime locale to concentrate an examination of the contextual conditions that actively constitute the rationalisations of urban (and suburban) 'reality'. Chapter 4 thus begins by situating my empirical investigation of New Urbanism in Toronto within an examination of the contextual dynamics of the city and its urban trajectory, including the exaggerated cultural divisiveness perceived to exist between the city and suburbs. The latter part of this chapter outlines the distinct narratives of production generated for each of the four selected case study development projects.

Analysis of the empirical component of this research is primarily provided within Chapters 4 and 5, wherein the conceptual framework enabled by the structures of provision approach is used to attempt to map out the constraint-based relations of actors intervening in the processes of New Urbanist housing production in Toronto. Specifically, Chapters 4 and 5 seek to underscore the cultural, regulatory and structural constraints on housing producer practices in each of the selected development processes and to identify commonalities evident across the cases.

Chapter 6 concludes the empirical focus of the thesis by revisiting the conceptual framework of the structures of provision approach developed in Chapter 2 and critically reflecting on its utility and limitations in addressing my primary research questions. In so doing, Chapter 6 systematically identifies those aspects of New Urbanist housing provision in Toronto requiring further theorisation beyond the capabilities of the structures of provision framework. The potential contribution of an alternative theoretical framework is introduced as a means to move the research beyond the practical and conceptual limitations of the core thesis.

In an unorthodox move, Chapter 7 is an immanent critique and extension beyond the main body of thesis, which seeks to explain those aspects of New Urbanist housing design, planning, and construction 'best practice' not fully addressed by my adaptation of the structures of provision approach. An alternative approach is outlined, which is enabled by the rationalities perspective. In addition to this extension, this final chapter discusses the research implications from the point of view of policy relevance and the highlighting of possible new directions for future research.

In summary, the thesis as a whole problematises new questions and possible theorisations regarding the emergence, legimitisation, and normalisation of New Urbanism in Toronto whilst directing theory and research on New Urbanism towards a critical cultural analysis of housing provision at the level of practice. It is, then, an explicit attempt to draw much needed critical (not necessarily negative) attention to the taken-for-granted nature of the regimes of routinised and ritualised practice which give New Urbanist form its social

and material shape, and in so doing impact the physical and cultural conditions influencing future urban development in Toronto.

Conclusion

The proponents and critics of New Urbanism alike have yet to fully engage with McCann's (1995) challenge to analyse this emergent urban form as a function of production, promotion and consumption activities. Rather, critiques have overly concentrated on one of these at a time, with the result being that current critical commentary can seem either too general or too narrowly focused. Ford (2001) in particular has criticised critical geography's attack on New Urbanism and has identified five major weaknesses in the geography literature:

1. "An overemphasis on critiquing the rhetoric found in what, for the most part are blatantly promotional materials;
2. A failure to adequately differentiate between criticisms of New Urbanist projects and those that could easily be aimed at all new, large, master-planned projects;
3. A nearly exclusive focus on huge, new, isolated and usually only partly completed projects at the expense of sensitive urban infill;
4. The reliance on a diverse bag of theoretical orientations that often take on too many issues that are peripheral to the study of New Urbanism per sé; and finally,
5. Taking a stance in which 'critical' virtually always means negative" (2001: 270).

The weaknesses outlined by Ford are in my opinion quite valid, and I have consciously attempted to avoid each of them through the design and conduct of this thesis research. The investigation of why and how New Urbanism has cemented itself within the urban development narrative of Toronto has been undertaken as a means of taking up McCann's research challenge. More significantly, however, this thesis is put forward as a means of providing a theoretically-informed empirical basis for problematising the contradictions

inherent to the normalisation and dissemination of the discourse of New Urbanism as 'best practice' in a variety of spatial and cultural contexts, despite the situated nature of each unique form of building provision.

In order to explore the situated nature of New Urbanist housing provision in Toronto I have selected the structures of provision land development model as a basis for my conceptual framework. The challenge set before the structures of provision approach is to provide a useful empirical tool for conceptually 'mapping' out the relations of New Urbanist process and outcome. However, the real test for this framework is whether or not it also can provide an evaluative basis for directing the trajectory of further theorisation on how and why New Urbanism has become a force to be reckoned with in Toronto's urban development and building cultures. The following chapter outlines my rationale for employing the structures of provision framework and highlights how I intend to bring to this largely economic perspective a culturally evaluative lens.

Chapter 2

Operationalising the Conceptual Framework

Introduction

The *production of space*, according to Knox (1995: 222), "refers to the way in which new systems of territorial organisation, land use, transport and communications etc., (actual or imagined) arise, along with new ways of representing them." As the literature reviewed in Chapter 1 has demonstrated, New Urbanism has fast become one of the most influential and replicated spatial forms produced in multiple locations, under multiple social, economic and political conditions and contexts. With New Urbanism framed as part of the production of space, it is clear that a narrowly focused research agenda that disregards the situated cultural contexts actively constituting relations of production, consumption and exchange in housing provision cannot attempt to answer the questions of how and why New Urbanism is happening 'here' and 'now'.

Within this chapter I argue that what is needed to adequately address some of the research shortcomings outlined in Chapter 1 is a relational approach. Such an approach is not merely a framework for 'understanding' New Urbanism as a situated form of building provision constituted by the intervention of various social actors in the process of housing production, but it is also an argument for problematising New Urbanism as such. By problematising New Urbanism as a situated form of building provision, the normalisation of the principles of New Urbanism espoused by the likes of the

CNU as a formalistic checklist of 'best practices' in all residential development becomes equally problematic. The remainder of this chapter therefore presents the theoretical framework operationalised through the empirical investigation of the social relations and cultural contexts within which the situated provision of New Urbanist housing in the Toronto city region occurs.

This evaluative framework is not an attempt to slot my case study units into a ready-made schema for analysis and interpretation but rather to question and attempt to decipher if, how, and why distinct or differential inter-relations in the provision of New Urbanist housing in brownfield and/or greenfield contexts exist. The comparative reference point of 'location' or 'type' described as *greenfield* or *brownfield* has been retained in this thesis because of the legitimacy afforded to this symbolic and physical 'divide' by industry, policy and decision-makers, and (some) consumers. The currency of the 'brownfield first' and 'greenfield second' (Murdoch 2004) discourse has permeated the planning, development and policy frameworks operating at all levels in Toronto. Thus the focus of my empirical investigation on testing the legitimacy and scope of this matter-of-fact (or *black boxed*) binary at the level of producer practices and constraints has been deemed a necessary frame of reference for my research on New Urbanism. In particular, this comparative framework is used in order to evaluate New Urbanism as a form of housing provision within the existing contextualisations employed by development and planning actors. These actors may use the greenfield/brownfield binary as a way of relating to 'other' forms and

processes in order to lend ideological support to their own. This will be elaborated upon in more detail in Chapter 7.

2.1 A Relational Approach to Understanding Residential Land Development

Relational approaches in socio-spatial inquiry have been promoted in recent years from a variety of geographical disciplines. For the sake of simplicity I am using the term 'relational' to reflect my own acceptance of the conceptualisation of 'reality' as constituted of and by the practices of interaction with which, as humans we engage. That is to say, following Massey (2004: 5) "that we do not have our beings and then go out and interact" but rather our identities are constituted in and through our interactions and engagements. More importantly, a relational perspective acknowledges that the formation of subjects or identities forged through 'relations', by default, also includes "non-relations, absences and hiatuses" (Massey 2004: 5). As such relational 'reality' is not rooted or static, but it is rather "mutable ongoing productions" (Massey 2004: 5). A relational perspective, thus, highlights the significance of constraints on practices of interaction rather than merely accepts the social production of space as a series of typified processes of interaction and negotiation (largely based on economic relations) played out in front of a static, inactive contextual backdrop of the 'city' or 'culture'. So I will now focus on how and why a relational approach is particularly salient to studies of residential land development and housing provision, and how it provides greater potential insights than the traditional land development models which tend to

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reproduce the dichotomies of: *production* versus *consumption*; *social* versus *economic*; *structure* versus *agency* and; *reality* versus *ideological effect*.

Nicol and Hooper (1999: 58) stated that:

> "All too often housing production is seen only from a consumption perspective, in terms of the total number of new units available for distribution whether via the market or in various 'socialised forms.' The process of production, and its implications, has all too often suffered from neglect."

Even amongst those studies that attempt to model the processes of production, the results might be stilted and one-dimensional, with causal relations under-explored. Healey (1990) stated that during the 1980s many land development and property studies focused largely on institutional forms of explanation. Expanding on this she asserted: "the interests and strategies of actors and the nature of the relationship between them are identified, but the link to what generates these interests and strategies often weakly developed, though usually noted" (1990:4).

Moreover, with the 'cultural turn' in sociological and geographical thought, studies began to focus on the *cultures of development* pervading the working and personal lives of homogenised and often de-contextualised groups of actors (e.g. estate agents, developers, builders, and consumers). However, few studies, then and now, attempt to view production-oriented processes in conjunction with culturally generated relations of actors and decision-making. Even more rarely have such studies attempted to empirically model such relations as a social process. Healey argued that a research agenda that attempts to do so, rightly re-problematises the taken-for-granted market-

based explanations for the "conversion of economic and social processes into land use change and built form" (1990:7).

I anticipated that the explanatory power of using a relational approach to investigate New Urbanist housing production processes and practices would be found in the wide identification of the structures and actors operating in a given context. Furthermore, I hoped, following Page (1996: 183) that this would "provide the first steps in understanding the processes involved" and "show the many determinations that have combined together" to enable New Urbanist housing.

2.1.1 Modelling the Processes of Land Development

The range of literature that exits on land development processes, and specifically on the modelling of such processes, is extensive. The overviews provided by Gore and Nicholson (1991), Pratt (1994), Healey (1991; 1992) offer starting points from which to discuss the relative merits and limitations of four major classifications of land development models or approaches in relation to my thesis research. Gore and Nicholson (1991: 706) succinctly summarised these as the following:

a) **Sequential or descriptive approaches**: these depict the development process as a chronological sequence of states at each of which certain events occur.

b) **Behavioural or decision-making approaches**: these emphasise the roles of different actors in the process and the importance of the decisions they make in ensuring its smooth operation. Although they often retain a sequential format, events are generally presented as secondary to decisions.

c) **Production-based approaches**: these portray the development process as a specialised form of productive economic activity, and

tend to view it form the perspective of the economy as a whole – that is, they tend to be macro-economic in flavour.

d) **Structures of provision**: in this approach it is contended that different types of development are characterised by different institutional, financial and legislative frameworks, and as such the search for a generally applicable model of the development process is futile. Instead, each type of development is seen to have its own distinctive 'structure of provision', whose features may be built into a separate model. This implies that eventually there will not be just one model of the development process, but a comprehensive set of specific models.

To address the research questions posed by this thesis, the *sequential approaches* are too non-analytical and imply that development processes can be simplified into a series of linear events, the likes of which can be depicted one-dimensionally within a flow chart. The primary weakness here being little or no relational value is represented, either *of* events or *between* them. The 'property pipeline' is an example of this type of approach. According to Pratt (1994: 34) this approach conceptualises property development "on the basis of the sequential transition of land through various discrete 'stages' in its development in a strict chronological order." As Pratt (1994) noted, analytically the emphasis is placed on 'land' rather than the process of property development. Similar to the production-based approaches, pipeline models rely upon an unproblematic acceptance of stimulus-response forms of agency amongst development actors (both producers and consumers), with little or no attention paid to the influence of conflict or constraint on action.

In relation to the *behavioural approaches,* whilst I have a genuine interest in the 'roles' of different actors in development processes, this interest is not narrowly focused on the individual or group decisions made irrespective of other considerations and constraints on the decision-making activity. The

behavioural models of land development, be they individualistic or interactionist (Pratt 1994), do not fully account for the relations (conflicts and collaborations) between actors, and they do not adequately address multi-role actors. Such approaches also may be overly functionalistic in that the decisions or behaviours of individual actors may be de-contextualised, and relevant constraints may be minimised or even overlooked. Gore and Nicholson (1991: 711) state that many behavioural models "are hybrids, merely interpolating the position of actors at relevant points within an otherwise sequential flow." One example given by Gore and Nicholson (1991) holds significance to my own research. It is Bryant *et al.'s* (1982) individualist model for the conversion of non-urban land to urban use in the Canadian context. I could argue, for example, that in the case of New Urbanist housing development on greenfield sites in Toronto, the following process is anticipated:

	Nonurban use	Nonurban use with pressures for change	Urban interest seen in land purchases; land use is transitional	Active purchase of raw land	Active development	Active purchase of developed land
Primary decision agents	Farmer	Farmer Land dealer	Farmer Land dealer Developer	Developer	Developer Builder	Builder Households Industries Firms
Secondary decision agents		Financier	Financier	Financier Lawyer Realtor Planner Politician	Financier Lawyer Planner Politician	Financier Lawyer Realtor

Figure 2.1: Bryant *et al.*'s (1982) land conversion process

What Figure 2.1 suggests, however, is that decisions and events of the development process are unproblematically linked to specific actor 'types' or roles and responsibilities at subsequent stages in the process. This type of model, while descriptive and perhaps helpful at the data gathering stage of research tells us nothing of the form of development and how that influences the actors involved and individual decisions made. Nor does this model tell us anything about the relations between the actors or leave room for the possibility of multi-role actors.

What this model depicts is an idealised version of events and actors (or interests) for a generic development process, which seemingly exists constraint-free. Gore and Nicholson label such an approach as a 'closed system' wherein there is "no consideration of the role of external factors and the ways in which they might influence decisions and events at different stages" (1991:713). Other, arguably more 'sophisticated,' behavioural models (such as Drewett's (1973) 'land development process' model; Barrett and Whitting (1983); and Malone (1985)) have attempted to link relations between events, decisions, actors, money and risks – but in general the causal relations of linkages are not explained and the results remain descriptive. These latter models possess the serendipitous sense of a 'choose your own development adventure', wherein actor A makes decision B, which allows the process to proceed to outcome C. All with little or no discussion of the context in which variations of decisions, interactions and negotiations are occurring.

Some of these approaches, such as Malone's (1985) model of archetypal roles and relationships characterising private-sector property development (see MacLaran (1993; 2003) and Drewett's land-development process model (1973)) concentrate their research attention on 'developers' as the key actors in the entire property development process. As such they may prematurely omit indirect 'development interests' from their conceptual, and perhaps more importantly, their empirical lens. Finally, these models seem limited in their ability to extrapolate from their descriptive nature the significance (or insignificance) of a specialised type of development – in this case, New Urbanism.

Some discussion of the behavioural models has occurred because of my obvious interest in the thoughts, words and actions of development actors in the processes of building provision. However, the analytical weaknesses of such approaches, limits their applicability as an evaluative framework beyond that of data collection and organisation. Ostensibly, the *production-based approaches* hold an equal degree of instant attraction, which is also diminished by epistemological constraints. The economistic emphasis of the production-based approaches detracts from the value of these models for my research, which attempts to make no *a priori* assumptions about the causal relations of 'circuits of capital' and 'commodity production' within the processes of development over and above any social factors. Additionally, the structural determinism endemic to the production-based approaches, like the sequential approaches, tends to oversimplify the processes and leaves little room for the role of human agency.

More particularly, production-based approaches are weakened in their explanatory value by the ontological pre-determinism of the primary abstraction of capital relations. All other social relations are seen as constrained, embedded within, or grafted onto the flows of capital. As such there is a gulf between the generalised abstractness of the models and the specifics of the mechanisms and technological pathways through which particular development activities occur (Gore and Nicholson 1991). The emphasis remains in many production-based approaches on 'outcomes' rather than process (cf. White and Allmendinger 2003).

Healey's (1991; 1992) institutional model for analysing the property development process sits somewhat uneasily between the interactionist behavioural and production-based approaches. It attempts to "combine the understanding of structuring forces within the tradition of political economy with an appreciation of the detail of the social relations surrounding events in the development process" (1992: 36). Healey's model consists of four levels of analysis, the first three being empiricist in nature: first, mapping the process in operation (events, agencies and outcomes); second, identification of roles and power relations; and third, assessment of strategies and interests of actors to identify what governed the way roles were 'played' (i.e. the resources, rules, and ideas governing the development process being studied). The fourth level of analysis consists of the theorisation of the social relations constituting the strategies and interests of actors and the resources, rules, and ideas available to them (1992: 36). The intent of this fourth stage in the analytical framework is, according to Healey, (1992: 37) "to make the connection with the social relations expressed in the prevailing mode of

production, mode of regulation and ideology of the society within which development is being undertaken."

While Healey's approach is attractive in terms of providing a framework for undertaking empirical investigation (i.e. the first three levels of analysis) it seems overly deterministic in its insistence that there is an observable separation of the development process from the prevailing or underlying structures of capital accumulation, regulation and reproduction and that the research potential enabled through the institutionalist approach is its ability to re-connect the lines of linkage. More specifically, the approach seems to accept the perspective that the 'development process' takes place *within* this 'prevailing mode' not that it is part and parcel *of* it. Additionally, Healey's approach does not seem to seek to problematise reified assumptions of the prevailing deterministic mode of production and regulation as a given 'reality'. Because of this positioning of the researcher prior to even beginning the empirical stages of analysis it seems that what can be *observed* and *described* is how actors "reproduce, reinforce and transform social relations" (1992: 37). Yet, a causal explanation of why the social relations are reproduced, reinforced and transformed remains uninformed. In this sense I feel that Healey's approach does not fully attend to the study of development as a transformative social process which may or may not be determined by the dominant mode of production or ideological ethos, but active in *determining* the emergent 'reality' of society by rationalising practices and mentalities emerging within society in conjunction with new alignments of interests (cf. Isin 2000).

In short, I have a problem accepting Healey's statement that social relations 'surround' rather than constitute events in the development process. I agree, therefore, with Hooper's (1992: 47) questioning of Healey's interpretation of the political economy literature stressing the primacy of the 'structural dynamic' involved in the development process, either in terms of the logic of circuits of capital or the capitalist sphere of production. Hooper (1992) warned that such an emphasis in analysing development processes creates a 'false problematic': "the artificial juxtaposition of a structurally-determined capitalist economy with the (contingent) non-economic conditions of existence of this economic sphere" (1992: 47). The methodological priority given to the realm of production subtly expressed in Healey's approach is something that I have consciously sought to avoid in the adaptation of any of the existing models of development.

This leads me then to the final type of modelling approach considered for my own research: the structures of provision approach, which stresses the inter-relationship of processes of production, consumption and reproduction as constitutive of the empirically constructed (as opposed to theoretically deduced) 'structures' of situated social relations involved in the provision of built form. The relatively non-deterministic nature of the *structures of provision* approach, as I will argue in the next section more succinctly, suits the framing of my research. This approach, originated in the work of Ball (1983; 1986; 1986b; 1988; 1998), adequately – but not perfectly – reconciles my interest in relationally investigating production, exchange and consumption processes related to New Urbanist housing. The term provision encapsulates this triad, which together can be considered as a social process

(Pratt 1994). This approach also stresses the importance of the "vacillating relations between human agents that provide their driving force" (Gore and Nicholson 1991: 726). Thus such an approach, acknowledges (unlike the prescribed agency attributed to actors in the production-based approaches) that development actors remain free to take discretionary actions and decisions, which have repercussions for all other agents at work in a given structure of provision (Gore and Nicholson 1991).

2.1.2 Ball's 'Structures of Provision' Evaluative Framework

The 'structures of provision' approach promoted by Ball has, despite some limitations, been selected as the primary conceptual framework for my empirical investigation of New Urbanist land development in and around Toronto. This is because it is neither profoundly economistic, nor is it overly behaviouralistic. Rather, this framework, although understated, acknowledges that cultural and ideological factors in the provision of (New Urbanist) built form(s) may or may not have a basis in material aspects; and that these may be contingent rather than necessary relations. Furthermore, the relational nature of the approach is able to accept and engage with these material and economic activities as embedded within broader, yet situated, cultural contexts. The analysis of which *requires* empirical investigation of both material and cultural expressions. More specifically, in Ball's approach, the determination of what constitutes a 'structure of provision' is how social agents intervene in the physical processes of provision, which include: the production; allocation; distribution; consumption; and reproduction of housing.

Some definition of terms is necessitated here. For the purposes of this research 'production' refers to all stages or phases involved in the process of conceptualisation, construction and completion of housing. This encompasses the assembly of land, finance, building materials, labour, and necessary planning and development permission to produce buildings for use and investment purposes (cf. Healey and Nabarro 1990). The production process also includes design and landscaping and the completion of 'model' or show homes/buildings for the purpose of marketing the end product, usually to an as yet undetermined buyer.

'Allocation' refers to the actions taken to decide on the placement and assignment of the development site in general, and specifically the types of buildings deemed appropriate for the site and its constituent areas. Allocation envelops issues of: needs versus ability-to-pay demand; siting restrictions based on land availability; and development feasibility. These issues are often intimately linked with regulatory frameworks of planning and building policy.

'Distribution' is here used to represent all aspects or processes involved in the existence, pattern and arrangement of residential land development activity throughout a given area of land. Distribution factors may also be linked to issues of 'surplus' production and the wholesaler-style marketing of speculative land development to meet demographic changes and niche consumers with the ability to pay a premium for housing.

'Consumption' refers to the consumption of housing and lifestyle (material and social) as a commodity, and the ways in which this consumption interweaves with social activity in situated contexts. The meanings or perceptions of these situated 'places' or specialised 'spaces' may change depending on who in the structure of provision is being asked (e.g. producers, advertisers, retailers or consumers). Finally, 'reproduction' is used in reference to the material and social process in which the continuation of situated 'social life' maintains the production and consumption of value and the formation and development of ideologies.

According to Ball's formulation of the relational model, the creation and use of built form involves particular sets of social actors defined by their 'economic relation' to the physical process of provision itself, wherein each historically specific set of social actors can be defined as a structure of building provision (Ball 1986b). With respect to investigating structures of provision, then, some formulation of the nature of the 'social relations' between actors must be made. For Ball, the basis of these interrelationships is in understanding the economic roles of particular social actors, their influence on each other, and evaluating the factors determining such economic mechanisms. Ball, however, emphasises that such factors do not need to be 'economic' in and of themselves. The functional, political and historical linkages within and between any particular structure of provision and the wider social environment are thus interdependent and cannot be understood in the absence of one or the other. As I will expand upon later, my own appropriation of Ball's framework argues that practice cannot be separated from context.

The conceptual framework provided by Ball (1986b: 448) highlights "the existence of specific sets of historically specific and country-specific social relations involved in the creation and use of particular types of buildings." Ball has developed this model or approach as a means of overcoming the functionalism of previously utilised development models. The latter often placed emphasis on the consumption of building structures at the expense of a closer examination of social relations endemic to the broader process of 'provision'. Whilst functions need to be addressed, according to Ball, they need not become the totality of explanatory research:

> "Built structures obviously have certain physical peculiarities which make it possible to identify them as such. But, in capitalist societies, those physical characteristics in combination with the dominant social relations of those societies create unique forms of provision. To remain at the level of functions ignores the peculiarities that this uniqueness creates" (Ball 1986b: 454).

In addition, Ball (1986) stresses the importance of examining the social and spatial competition, struggle, and constraint involved in building provision. For Ball these can take three possible forms:

1) Conflicts between the social agents involved in a structure of building provision;

2) Conflicts involving one or more of those agents and wider social and economic processes; or,

3) Competition between agents in different structures of provision (1986b: 456).

Competition between structures of provision implies that the existence of one structure of provision affects others. This also emphasises the fact that there exists a dynamic process involving constantly changing economic, political and social conditions affecting forms of situated building provision. The challenge for my research in these terms, then, is to uncover what conditions

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exist (or existed) for New Urbanist housing provision in Toronto. Of particular theoretical and empirical interest to me at the outset of this research was the relational significance of 'design' in the operationalisation of Ball's approach. Design and architectural features incorporated into the provision of buildings, and in this case housing, are only cursively addressed by Ball (cf. 1983:136). As such, the challenge of this research was to apply a model (largely founded in economic relations), which does not address design much beyond its sales and marketing value to a form of building provision and an accompanying social doctrine, which is undeniably design-led.

I have three caveats concerning my use of Ball's 'structures of provision' approach as a conceptual framework. First, as mentioned previously, the research I have conducted on New Urbanist housing provision in Toronto is not an attempt to slot New Urbanism in Toronto into a ready-made schema, such as Ball's (1986) model for the structure of provision for owner-occupied housing in Britain. Rather the challenge before me was to test the limitations and opportunities of the structures of provision approach by determining the distinctive relational aspects of provision which exist in Toronto for New Urbanist development situated on brownfield sites in contrast to those situated on greenfield sites in the suburban fringe. Put another way, I envisioned the theoretical value of the structures of provision approach to be found in its ability to provide an ordering framework for empirically investigating the contingent and constraint-based relations of housing producers in their active situated context.

Second, and related to the first caveat, is that time and resource constraints on the research design have necessitated the 'rationalisation' of the structures of provision framework to focus my investigation on the production processes and the social interventions and cultural expressions endemic to these. This does not however imply that the remaining processes of provision (i.e. allocation, distribution, consumption and reproduction) have not been considered. Rather, the empirical focus placed on production should be viewed as the lens through which I was able to critically examine 'provision' as a whole, with the caveat being that any conclusions must be viewed in light of the particular orientation of my research design towards the production processes. Nevertheless, the bracketing out of some interview participants and potential actors in the research design and analysis process has occurred for the sake of analytical clarity. This was not done with the intent of elevating production over consumption in terms of research merit or relevance in understanding development and urban change in general. The impetus for focusing on production from this frame of reference was to elaborate on a side of the New Urbanist debate, which has hitherto been only marginally discussed.

Third, the emphasis within Ball's (1986b) work which I have carried forward into my own research is that the built environment is not a passive backdrop or container to other social processes. Despite the simplicity of this statement, it is something which academic research on housing and land development has in the past often neglected. Underpinning this point is Clapham's (2001) statement that actors are not merely the passive ciphers of structural forces, nor do they have universal or simplistic motivations. Yet,

despite the apparent congruity of Ball and Clapham's statements, there is an epistemological gulf that divides them. The difference in opinion on what best constitutes an appropriate 'institutionalist' approach to understanding housing and land development processes forms the basis of this difference. The significance of the debate surrounding the possibility of integrating the social and the economic in property and land development research has emerged as a central point of theoretical departure for my own research on New Urbanism. To engage with this theoretical implication more closely, in the next section I provide an overview and critique of the recently ignited debate between Ball (2002) and Guy and Henneberry (2000; 2002), concerning the relevance and usefulness of cultural explanations in property and development research. Following this discussion I will expand on my own theoretical intentions to get beyond the conceptual *black boxes* of 'economy' and 'society' by outlining a new theory of action which situates the exploratory value of the structures of provision framework within a culturally-evaluative meta-framework.

2.2 Economic v. Social in Land Development Research

An empirical investigation of residential land development processes that acknowledges the importance of economic activities embodied within the circuits of capital and class relations cannot alone account for the totality of why and how built environments are produced and used. The situated, contextual or 'cultural' relations and implications must also be empirically investigated. The challenge of this simultaneous investigation of economic and cultural aspects of situated land development is to do so without privileging one set of relations over the other – or for that matter assuming

that such 'relations' are indeed mutually exclusive and observable in isolation of one another. Indeed, I would stress that economic *and* cultural constraints in the form of ideas, resources and rules – or *rationalities* – are part of the interwoven social processes of housing provision. Thus, to seek to isolate one set of constraints from the other as a means of social explanation is futile.

However, practically I must start somewhere, thus the 'structures of provision' approach, as outlined above, provides the underpinnings for a materialist analysis of the institutional, financial and regulatory or 'structural' processes within which the provision of particular housing types occurs, and it does so without ignoring "the social agencies engaged in such structures" (Gore and Nicholson 1991: 725). However, it does not in practice appear to emphasise an equally weighted investigation of cultural 'structures' that may influence and constrain the developmental strategies and practices of relevant actors. Indeed, Ball's own conceptualisation of cultural parameters presents them as unnecessary factors of 'reality' which influence the nature of the 'market responses', but do not determine the basic (relatively stable) features of supply and demand (Ball 2002: 1455).

Of currency within the realm of economic geography and in particular land and property development research is a debate concerning whether or not disproportionate attention is given to economic aspects within the development process at the expense of 'the social'. In the context of these debates the work of Guy and Henneberry (2000; 2002) and Ball (2002) are particularly important for my own research. It will become apparent within this

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subsection why the work of these authors is crucial to the framing of my own conceptual framework. However, I would like to point out at the outset that the economic versus social debate is problematic because it at once challenges the notion of the dualism, but in doing so also reproduces it. The effect, I argue, is the reduction of the debate to the level of semantics. Neither Ball nor Guy and Henneberry, regardless of their critiques of one another's approaches, in my opinion, succeed in getting beyond the deterministic discourses sustaining the ontological position that structure (economics and capital) and action (society) occupy separate, even if complementary, realms of 'reality'.

So, how should research move on from this point of debate? Institutional theories have attempted to grapple with these tensions by encompassing a diverse range of concepts and theories. But as Brandsen (2001) explains, what they generally share is the recognition that actors operate in different kinds of environments. These are not only economic, but also cultural and social in nature (Scott 1992). Actors are not only related to others by scarcity and material needs, but also by shared values, beliefs and norms. Institutions can therefore be understood as:

> "A routinised set of working practices and everyday operational activities associated with norms and values [that] is conceptually distinct from the organisational arrangements that actors have to operate within"
> (Rydin 2003: 39)

Theories of institutions have applied to, for instance, how working practices based on long-term interaction amongst organisations, agencies, associations or individuals, may become so familiar and matter-of-course that they are continued despite the waning of benefits (e.g. profit-making or

innovativeness). Alternatively, notions of 'how things are done' may become so enshrined in people's practices that any challenge to the norm, even if the benefits of changing are apparent, may be resisted (cf. Brandsen 2001). Institutional theories thus enable reflexive research on conventions and normalised practices in a variety of social, spatial and structural contexts.

Ball (1998) represents his 'structures of provision' approach as one of several theories of institutions. In his own description of the approach he states:

> "A structure of building provision refers to the contemporary network of relationships associated with the provision of particular types of building at specific points in time. Those relationships are embodied within the organisations associated with that type of building provision, and they may take a market or non-market form. 'Provision' encompasses the whole gamut of development, construction, ownership and use. In fact, this institutional approach does not have to be limited to the built environment" (1998: 1513).

In Ball's perspective, both organisations and markets involved in building provision form the 'structure' of that provision. Thus for Ball (1998: 1514), "there is no dichotomy between agency and structure." Furthermore, Ball's use of the term 'structure' is not intended to have any structure-agency connotation, but is rather synonymous with the terms 'form' or 'type' (Ball 2002: 1465). Additionally, Ball (1988) acknowledges the dynamism of the interactions involved in the ever-changing nature of a structure of provision. In his words:

> "What is clear from the development of housing provision over the past 50 years [sic] is that structures of housing provision have been changing substantially. Often the changes are not consequences of government policy but of shifts in the nature or roles of agencies within a process of provision and the subsequent reaction of others to those changes. Such dynamic interaction is continually occurring, so structures of provision never stay constant. They cannot, in other words, simply be described and used as the backdrop against which the real discussion of housing policy and consumption can be undertaken. The evolution of housing policy and consumption are occurring in a continually changing environment" (1988: 30).

The essentialisation of any one 'agent of change' determining how housing provision takes place is avoided in research, according to Ball, by putting any aspect of housing provision into the context of how provision actually works rather than of some idealised construct of how it is believed to work. Ball's focus stresses empirically realistic interactions and processes, not implicit *a priori* assumptions about structures of housing provision. All social phenomena, according to Sayer (1992: 28) have a crucial material dimension. Ball's approach enables in some respects, then, a re-socialisation, rather than the de-socialisation, of spatial inquiry feared by the likes of Philo (2000) and Thrift (1991; 1996) with the advent of the 'cultural turn.' These fears being that 'the social' has become deconstructed as merely discursive effect, and empirical social worlds of inquiry have been overly replaced with axiomatically derived 'over-wordy worlds' (Thrift 1991).

Yet before overstating the re-materialising benefits of Ball's 'structures of provision' approach, it must be acknowledged that, like me, there are those who have reservations with Ball's treatment of so called non-economic relations. Based on Ball's description of the structures of provision approach as an institutional theory one would expect an openness to the explanatory power of non-economic based relationships for investigating housing and property development issues as outlined by Brandsen. However, Ball has been quick to criticise those researchers and academics that attempt to *integrate* the economic and the social in property research. Chiefly, Ball's (2002) criticisms have been directed at Guy and Henneberry (2000) in response to their (rather sympathetic) critique of Ball's own approach.

Guy and Henneberry's (2000) article in *Urban Studies* made three primary comments on the trajectory of property development research from an institutionalist perspective, taking the works of Healey and Ball as reasonable attempts but lacking in practice. They argued:

1. "That the economic structuring of development is a product of and, in turn, affects social processes;
2. That social structures and processes are as important as their economic equivalents in 'explaining' property development;
3. That there is a need to develop an understanding of property development processes which combines a sensitivity to the economic and the social framing of development strategies with a fine-grain treatment of the locally contingent responses of property actors" (Guy and Henneberry 2002: 1471).

Ball (2002), in turn, reacted by claiming that Guy and Henneberry's paper was an attack on the value of mainstream economic approaches. He claimed that their approach – which he termed the 'cultural explanation' – and the application of it in their own empirical work, falsely or unconvincingly emphasised exceptional behaviour on the part of particular market agents (based on *a priori* assumptions by the researchers). Regardless of his defence of the economic paradigm, Ball took issue with Guy and Henneberry's (2000) characterisation of his approach as flawed because it maintains a clear division between the realm of economic structures and that of social agencies or institutions, without addressing "what shapes what" (Guy and Henneberry 2000: 2405). In opposition to Ball's argument for seeing the relationship between economic and institutional processes as a 'continuum' (cf. Ball 1998), Guy and Henneberry (2000: 2405) contend that what is needed is "a perspective which views the economic and the social as two interrelated aspects of a wider process of urban change in which structure and action are recursively linked." The basic premise of the latter's research agenda is according to the authors to examine how the actions of

the development actors are both framed by contextual factors, and serve to shape contextual structures (Guy and Henneberry 2000: 2408).

While I agree with the tone and sentiment of Guy and Henneberry's intervention in theory and method, I would like to spend a moment reflecting on their own discursive construction of the concepts of 'the economic' and 'the social' to extrapolate a critique of their implicit conceptualisations of 'culture' and 'context'. Their conceptualisation of culture is in some respects little different than that of Ball's, other than that Guy and Henneberry contend that 'it' needs to be addressed rather than neglected or seen as an 'effect' of and on what can be assumed to be a relatively stable sets of economic (market) relationships (cf. Ball 2002: 1456 and Guy and Henneberry 2002: 1473).

The notion of a 'cultural explanation' plays a key role in my own adaptation of the structures of provision approach and how, following Ball's instruction on the usefulness of the approach, I have "developed a means of incorporating institutions into broader explanatory theories" (Ball 2002: 1466). I will later propose a broader explanatory theory, which at once demonstrates that 'the economic' and 'the social' are chaotic conceptions or black boxes, and provides me with the theoretical and empirical grounding to openly question the discursive formulation of these concepts and move beyond them. In so doing, I am attempting to achieve the contextual 'fine-grain' treatment of development processes that Guy and Henneberry have intimated and provided the theoretical ground work for, but have perhaps not fully achieved in their own application.

In general, I feel that Guy and Henneberry's approach to integrating the economic and the social in dynamic temporal and spatial contexts, while initially appealing, does little more than suggest that 'culture' is the cumulative reality of unproblematically defined and separated 'economic' and 'social' realms. Despite their intentions of shattering the structure-agency dualism in favour of a duality, they are still actively searching to comprehend the relationship *between* structures and action – 'what shapes what' seemingly forming the basis of their own research. For me this suggests that regardless of their professed aversion to maintaining the divide they may inadvertently promote the binary by suggesting that cultural institutionalism provides the link, where political economy proved problematic in Healey's (1991; 1992) attempts to use institutionalism as the mediator between structure and agency. Guy and Henneberry's own research is focused on property markets and property actors' *responses* to markets. Their conceptualisation of 'culture' however does not seem deep enough, however. Rather it tends to sit as an appendage to the economic reality of market structures. Culture, in my reading of this work, appears to be reduced to 'responses' and the structure-agency divide is 'resolved' as more or less a one-way process of action-reaction (or stimulus-response) behaviouralism, which admittedly the authors acknowledge has temporal and spatial implications on the constant (re)formulation of economic structures[11].

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[11] In particular I do not want to suggest that Guy and Henneberry have not considered the interrelations of structure and agency in their own approach in light of these concerns. They do in fact offer a similar critique of Healey's institutionalism as I have of their own, wherein they write: "the analysis appears one-way. Structural outside forces impact upon and are moulded by local agency, but there is no apparent route by which the recursive analysis of local agencies' effect on wider structural forces and processes can be pursued (2000: 2403). Rather, I want only to suggest that their cultural institutionalism is unconvincing due to their epistemological positioning which implies that culture is still seen as an 'effect' of an underlying structural (economic) reality.

Thus, while Ball viewed their intervention as an attack on economic analysis I view it sympathetically as a form of nuanced economic analysis. One that goes beyond implying that actions of development actors are merely forms of economically stimulated behaviour, but nevertheless simply adds a relatively undefined conceptualisation of 'culture' to the structural frame of reference. It is an approach that only goes so far as to acknowledge 'context' as a passive backdrop to structural process. Guy and Henneberry's (2000) approach does not seem to significantly get beyond the value of researching social interactions as more than a means of "identifying in any detail how economic processes *frame* local development practice" (2000: 2403) [emphasis added]. They contend that, "without this explication it is difficult to consider the ways in which locally contingent factors interact with these wider forces to produce specific material outcomes" (2000: 2403). This conceptualisation of 'local' and 'wider forces' seems a bit chaotic and the desire to link them still drawn to the necessity of 'economic relations' in order to understand why and how built environments are produced. This leads me to question if and how this institutionalist approach is significantly different from Ball's assertion that economic relations are what coalesce within a 'structure of provision'.

The separation of process and outcome is as problematic to define in empirically grounded research as the abstraction of structure and agency is in axiomatically derived research. Guy and Henneberry (2000) recognised the problems of causality in proposing that: "if the entities are contingent upon context and at the same time form part of and reproduce that context, how do we define them without prejudicing the outcome of the research?" (2000: 2412). The authors further queried: "which outcome should be

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attributed to the actions of entities and which to the context within which they operate?" (2000: 2412). Again, my critique of Guy and Henneberry hinges on an unqualified use of 'context', which suggests that it is seen as little more than a container. If space and society are a duality – simultaneously the medium and outcome of one another (Pratt 1994) – then why is it necessary to reduce the search for causality to a single question of what determines the 'outcome'? Is it human agency or its 'context'? In this manner, Guy and Henneberry do not appear to view context as constitutive of and by human practice but they assume that 'context' is the structural reality of the market. Moreover, in their conception of the interrelationship between structure and agency they are happy to relegate 'context' the determining role in mediating between the two: "one layer of agency can become, in another context, the next layer of structure and so on" (2000:2413). It seems somewhat contradictory to infer that 'context' is a passive container and backdrop to human agency yet also contend that it is the mediator between structure and agency. Like Guy and Henneberry, I privilege context (temporal and spatial), but I do not see this as the end point of a 'cultural explanation' of housing provision or land development processes.

The view of property development processes (as reduced to the operation of property markets) stressed by Guy and Henneberry (2000) suggests that a cultural explanation is achieved by 'exploring' the *integration* of 'the economic' and 'the social'. Such an approach is potentially hindered, however, by a reification of the 'property market' and by the application of it to "better understand the ebb and flow of development opportunities and the contingent nature of local development pathways *which shape* the relative

competitiveness of local urban and regional property markets" (2000: 2413) [emphasis added]. The recursive 'shaping' of opportunity, choice, technological innovation, and working practices by a taken-for-granted 'context' of market competition is at risk of being forgotten, or at best downplayed in significance.

While questioning the attempt of property researchers to think outside of 'the black boxes', I have perhaps rather controversially in this chapter stated my commitment to utilising Ball's 'structures of provision' approach as a conceptual framework. I would like to briefly then defend my position in this debate in the hopes that it will set the stage for presenting my own theory-of-action for getting beyond the dichotomies of social versus economic and structure versus agency. To do so I am going to employ Ball's (2002) own defence of the structures of provision in response to Guy and Henneberry's (2000) article, to illustrate the extent to which the debate between these researchers could be interpreted as two ways of saying the same thing.

Ball (2002) argues for the importance of institutional analysis within property market research "not as an alternative to existing economic approaches as Guy and Henneberry would argue but rather as a complement to them" (2002:1454). I am at a loss (as were Guy and Henneberry (2002)) to comprehend how Ball's reading of Guy and Henneberry's paper would not be seen as a treatise arguing exactly the same position. Nevertheless, keeping with Ball's reaction to Guy and Henneberry's 'cultural explanation', Ball (2002) defends his structures of provision approach in the following manner:

"My suggestion for examining institutional influences on property development is to specify a structure of provision (SoP), which describes the organisations involved in the provision of a building type, the 'rules' that influence each organisation and the interrelationships between various elements of the SoP" (2002. 1465)

...

"By specifying the inter-relationships between organisations, the SoP helps to avoid a tendency in institutional research to over emphasise one institutional element (for example, Guy and Henneberry's property investors) or interface (for example, developers and local planners) and neglect wider relationships in a SoP and the ways in which they influence each other...[and] reliance when specifying a SoP does not have to be placed on only one cause of institutional structures" (2002:1466).

Despite Ball's own decision to avoid or bracket out 'cultural' factors because they are unimportant to his particular line of questioning or to his conceptualisation of what is being examined, the structures of provision approach does not expunge the existence of culture at all. Instead, I would argue that it actually promotes a grounded approach to robust empirical research. Rather than pre-supposing that simple supply-demand economic 'models' can explain away social phenomena or that actor behaviour determines the relatively constant state of competitiveness in localised 'market' realities, Ball's approach does not predetermine that these representations 'explain' the material outcome (i.e. built form).

Guy and Henneberry's 'cultural' institutionalism appears to suggest that culture is synonymous with 'context', which the authors infer is a chaotic container or backdrop to the reality of property markets that nevertheless plays a crucial role in mediating market structures. However, their argument seems less convincing than it possibly could be because it appears to maintain 'context' as a noun rather than a verb (Law 1994) – as an effect rather than an active and significant social process or collection of processes. The interface of culture and capital in Guy and Henneberry's work suggests

that they conceptualise these concepts as separate yet interconnected forces. It suggests that a research agenda, which investigates both 'the social' and 'the economic', will provide a better explanation of property market development. Perhaps this is true, and on the whole this sounds initially appealing or straightforward. However, this is not the same as a relational approach which does not assume that culture or context exist apart from economic relations, nor one which avoids attributing causal relations to either structure or agency. Guy and Henneberry (2002:1473) suggest that the interface of culture and capital is representative of the competing forms of rationality that "govern property markets and urban development". Unfortunately, their conceptualisation of culture seems under-defined and a supplemental frame of reference to the taken-for-granted structural reality of property markets.

The value of a culturally evaluative framework to investigating land development, and in particular housing provision, is however vital to the empirical and theoretical foundations of my thesis research. Therefore, the adoption of Ball's structures of provision approach has not been taken without due consideration to its economic roots. I am confident in the decision to utilise the approach to examine the contextual relations constituting housing provision processes because it is merely a conceptual framework. As such, it is able to be adapted to various social theories – but in and of itself it is not a theory. Rather, the delineations of its usefulness and explanatory power are subject to the tastes and objectives of the individual researcher. This, for me, provides the empirical and theoretical manoeuvrability necessary to undertake critical research based on few if any

a priori assumptions. My use of the conceptual framework has of course been subject to adaptations, which bode more succinctly with my own theoretical and methodological interests in operationalising a culturally evaluative non-deterministic research design.

The theory-building explanatory power of *linking* the structure of provision approach with a cultural study of housing producer practices suggests a holistic and empirically realistic (or grounded) approach to researching the provision of New Urbanist housing in a situated yet active context. It is, however, difficult to speak in these terms without falling into epistemological traps. Section 2.3 of this chapter attempts to elaborate more succinctly on how my own theory-of-action has evolved from a re-constitutive mapping of the various fragments of the economic v. social debate in economic geography. This re-constitution stresses the importance of a non-absolutist conception of the built environment, and 'space' in general, as neither purely an outcome of social nor economic processes (Pratt 1994: x). It does not contend that the social phenomena of built form can be 'explained' by simply combining investigations of a social and economic nature and (re)presenting them as providing a holistic understanding of the processes of development. The relevance of 'context', in this respect is then that it becomes a 'verb rather than a noun' (Law 1994). It is more than the "impassive backdrop to situated human activity" but is "a necessary constitutive element of interaction, something active, differentially extensive and able to problematise and work on the bounds of subjectivity" (Thrift 1996: 3). 'Culture' in this sense is also redressed not as 'responses' to economic structures but as ideas, technologies, practices, resources, and rules which

transform or *order* human conduct in such a way that these cultural practices become matter-of-fact and normalised ways of being and doing. In essence, 'culture' can be viewed as the self-regulation of all aspects of society, including the production of urban space. The remainder of this chapter is dedicated to outlining what I have termed a culturally evaluative framework for researching the New Urbanist structure of provision.

2.3 Cultural Explanations and Housing Provision

Housing, in general, is allocated on a basis of need or the ability to pay, so it may exist as a basic human right as well as a capital asset or commodity (Smith 2000). The production of housing is usually also closely associated with labour market changes, economic restructuring, and welfare restructuring – and is therefore spatially unevenly distributed. As Bramley *et al.* (1995: 2) characterised housing, it is "generally fixed in its location, and attributes of that location (e.g. amenities, access to particular facilities) are consumed jointly with the housing itself." Yet beyond these economic realities, housing is culturally and symbolically important as the embodiment of 'home'. For these reasons and others, it is impossible to separate housing and land development processes from the cultural landscape.

I use 'culture' in the broadest sense here to refer to 'ways of life', but culture also envelops the "institutionalised restriction to particular practices of conduct, judgment, taste and evaluation" and as such it can be perceived as a medium for the "cultivation of practices of transformative self-regulation" (Barnett 2001:13). Extrapolating this conception of culture to a geographical inquiry of housing provision is fairly easily illustrated. The existence of a

house, or any building, as a physical or material object does not depend upon the conception of it as a 'home' or 'office' or 'slum' despite these being the common symbolic functions ascribed to such objects in society. As Sayer (1992: 33) explains, "manufactured objects such as gold coins or fast cars are constructed out of intrinsically meaningless objects, but signify certain concepts in their design, use and function." So while the cultural and active context of beliefs, judgment, taste, evaluation and meaning are obviously non-material, "they usually require some material mode of objectification if they are to communicate and function in a stable manner" (Sayer 1992: 33). For Sayer this means that practices, material constructions and systems of meanings are reciprocally confirming. With this in mind, an investigation of the material reality of housing production cannot be divorced from the immaterial reality of the design, use and function of the house as 'home' or the one dimensional blue-print of the structure plan as 'community'.

A further argument for removing the distinction between production and consumption of housing was put forward by Bourne (1981) wherein he stated that:

> "Housing production brings together a variety of 'inputs', while the occupancy of that housing provides a series of 'outputs'. These inputs and outputs in turn can be conceived as representing housing services i.e. as benefits (or disbenefits), for builders, owners and renters. Clearly different kinds of housing, in different locations, require very different inputs and deliver very different services to those who own or occupy it. It is the role of the market, the housing agency, or whatever system of allocating housing is used to match these inputs and outputs" (Bourne 1981: 14).

To elaborate briefly on Bourne's argument, housing supply (production) consists of a combination of a set of inputs which include the material facility, capital, land and labour, as well as the so called "standard 'factors' of production which reflect the particular set of relationships in the means of

production in that country combined with location (accessibility) and a local environment or neighbourhood" (Bourne 1981: 14). From these inputs, Bourne explains, 'flow' a series of services as outputs:

1. Shelter – a place to live and protection from the elements
2. Equity – for owners in terms of financial return on a major asset in their personal investment portfolio
3. Satisfaction and status
4. Environmental attributes and services which arise as externalities (effects external to, but impacting on the house itself)
5. A level of accessibility to work, shopping, friends, leisure etc., (see Bourne 1981: 14)

The concept of a 'flow of services from housing' removes the traditional distinction between producers and consumers of housing in the sense that owner-occupiers, for example, are always both producers (in terms of labour and capital and/or land inputs), as well as consumers by virtue of the social relations their occupancy (outputs) enables.

Jackson (1985: 3), stated that:

"Housing is an outward expression of inner human nature: no society can be fully understood apart from the residences of its members. As Lewis Mumford has noted, 'the building of houses constitutes the major architectural work of any civilization.' Obviously, the particular type of man-made [sic] setting that results is a function of the interrelationship of technology, cultural norms, population pressures, land values and social relationships, but even within rigid environmental and technical restraints a variety of physical patterns is possible" (1985:3).

Within this variety of possible physical built forms, New Urbanism is but one of them. Yet, how does such a material form come to be labelled 'New Urbanism'; and through what contextual relations is its emergence enabled? Furthermore, how have the symbolic meanings ascribed to New Urbanist housing changed, and been changed by, the practices of housing producers?

In recognition of these questions, there is a need to understand the systems of meanings and practices of those producing and reproducing the processes of development. Such a research agenda supports McCann's (1995) assertion of the relevance of Bourdieu's *habitus* in understanding the production and consumption of 'neo-traditional' developments. Much of human behaviour is unconsciously undertaken, as opposed to based on some form of unrestrained individualist rational choice. Actions are often mediated through a learned accommodation to familiar circumstances (Sayer 1992: 15). Bourdieu suggests that humans become socialised not through norms but through the cognitive process of internalising the social structures around them (Swingewood 2000: 214). This is to say that individuals in society 'transpose' the objective properties of their contextual surroundings, such as the hierarchy of the workplace, the traditions of a religion, the local history of their hometown etc., into mental frameworks which then condition perceptions, meanings and understandings of everyday life (Swingewood 2000: 214). Actions, behaviours, and decisions (or practices) are conceptualised as possible because they are inherent to these mental frameworks. The ability to act is enabled or guided by a practical sense, by what might be called 'a feel for the game' (cf. Bourdieu 1988; Swingewood 2000). The concept of *habitus* is then a system of 'durable and transposable dispositions,' which enable people to understand, interpret and act in the social world in a myriad of changing contexts; thus simultaneously organising and perceiving practices (Swingewood 2000: 214).

This brief discussion of *habitus* is important because it "situates ideology at the level of practices and habitual attitudes as sets of embodied ideas," which

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are "not expressed but are sedimented in people's styles of getting about their daily lives" (Sheilds 1991: 32). As such, it demonstrates that by investigating housing producer practices in light of the structural and cultural constraints on their actions, ideas, and resources I am better able to empirically engage with ideology on the level where it operates as a kind of 'practical rationality' that is "immanent in an historical system of social relations and therefore transcendent to the individual" (Thrift 1996:15). This however, forces me to engage with yet another theoretical black box underpinning the epistemological debate between those promoting a social and cultural research agenda in relation to land development and those defending the economic paradigm – *ideology*. Ideology is here understood not as an effect, representation or distortion of 'reality' but as constitutive of what the world is made up of. That is to say that ideologies are "not simply told, performed and embodied in agents, but rather speak through, act and recursively organise the full range of social materials" (Law 1994:109).

Economic approaches, including Ball's, tend to view ideology as a false consciousness added onto, or an intervention into, the 'real conditions' of human existence, which are inherent to the means of production, such as class, the market, or the state. Cultural approaches on the other hand attempt to exercise the notion that ideology is a matter of discourse and that "all discursive practices are inescapably 'worldly'" (Gregory 2000: 370) in that they are constitutive of generalised systems of ideas and power relations or a collective consciousness which permeates the social order. What may be overlooked in some of these cultural studies is the materiality of social practices (again reflecting the recoil of Thrift and Philo and others who are

concerned that the cultural turn has begotten a form of discursive reductionism). In acknowledging the materiality of 'reality' one may adopt a relationally materialistic perspective which refuses to adopt a single epistemological standpoint. One which sees materialism (production and consumption) from a relational rather than dualistic point of view, wherein no *a priori* distinction is made between the macro social (or structure) and micro social (or agency) (cf. Thrift 1996: 25 and Law 1994: 134).

The point here is that there are epistemological traps related to the reproduction of the 'appearance versus reality' impasse reached in the social versus economic debate. It is perhaps necessary to stop speaking (literally) in terms of the dualisms and start attempting to move beyond – to look contextually deeper as a means of engaging with wider social networks through which ideological or discursive practices become normalised and "incorporated within concrete physical arrangements" (Murdoch 2004: 51). Within this meta-framework an understanding of what constitutes 'culture' and 'economy' and what materially and immaterially divides them in the active context of development processes can be critically problematised, rather than assumed as given and reproduced.

The means by which I am proposing to get beyond the *black boxes* of the social versus economic debate is through re-conceptualising my investigation as one of relationally examining New Urbanist housing provision as both process and outcome (or again, as Massey (2004) terms it 'mutable ongoing productions'). It should be emphasised that 'outcome' does not imply that the physical built form is the end point of process – process continues beyond

the 'production' in the concrete sense with the consumption and reproduction of built forms over time and space. But this does not ignore that there are obvious material or concrete natures to built form. To enable this re-conceptualisation, I am proposing that rather than becoming entrapped in the long-running debates over agency and structure, appearance and reality, social and economic, production and consumption, it is appropriate to approach an investigation of land development, or more specifically housing provision, from an outlook which seeks to flesh out the structures of provision and explore the cultural practices[12] reproducing the material context of housing development processes.

The emphasis is here not on questioning whether or not social agency is embedded within structure or vice versa, nor on whether or not the driving forces in housing and property markets are social or economic in nature. Rather, the framework under construction via this research is an iterative re-conceptualisation of process and form enabled through an investigation of contingent relations in the development process of New Urbanist housing, as examined through the evaluative mapping of development actors' practices as situated within the active contexts of specific times and places. Together this approach, I believe, illuminates not only the discursive ways in which different development actors conceive of 'New Urbanism', but goes further to explore how and why these conceptualisations have emerged as the prescriptive response to urban sprawl and social disaffection.

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[12] 'Cultural practices' in this instance, are understood as those practices or technologies for the transformation of individuals into subjects capable of governing or 'conducting' themselves (Barnett 2001: 14).

Conclusion

Healey (1992:33) stressed that any approach to analysing property development processes needs to avoid "implicit context-dependence" and should be applicable to different forms of building provision under different political and economic regimes. This is a tall order for a single all-encompassing approach to analysis, the likes of which led Hooper (1992: 45) to criticise it as a call for the construction of a grand or meta-theory, which 'transcends context' but at the same time demands situated theory. The situated nature of housing provision at best problematises, if not negates, the expectation of a single theory-of-action capable of analysing all forms of development. The simplification of complex and contingent relations within and between actors in the development process to a search for 'patterns' of relations to be theoretically-linked to pre-determined macro-level 'structures' of capitalist production underestimates the potential extent of the dynamism of process and outcome in any single type of building provision. Hence, Ball's insistence that the search for a generally applicable model of the development process is futile, and instead, empirical and theoretical investigations should concentrate on compiling a comprehensive set of specific models for different types of development.

It is this notion of the distinctiveness of each situated 'structure of provision' that attracted me to Ball's approach, despite his own economic application of the conceptual framework. Ball's approach to institutional theorisation via the 'structures of provision' perspective acts as "a 'research motivator' (why not look at these issues!), rather than a 'research adjudicator' (they are right/wrong!)" (Ball 2002: 1466). A culturally evaluative adaptation of the

conceptual framework, I believe, further enables a wide mapping of all possible actors, events, and relations in the active context of different social, economic and political conditions, and the constraints on such relations. Such a scope of inquiry promotes the asking of deeper questions about process and form and the social relations present throughout both. It is not however an attempt to elucidate any grand theories. It is an attempt, rather, to contribute mid-range theorisation on the processes and outcomes of New Urbanist housing provision to a range of literature and academic debates which have largely neglected production.

The use of the structures of provision framework helped me to engage with 'culture' and 'context' without black boxing them or unproblematically reproducing the dichotomy between 'the social' and 'the economic'. The search for causality at the level of structure versus agency has become less important than the investigation of where and how relations operate within the context of the situated processes of provision. By empirically examining the regimes of practice of producers I am better able to connect with the problematisations and prescriptions for reform that have coalesced into the unquestioned 'ways of doing things'.

The structure of New Urbanist housing provision can be understood as the empirically observable contextual relations embodied in the stabilisation of sets of facts, debates, alliances, assumptions and aspirations for where and how people live into normalised regimes of practice. These practices frame new, as well as transform existing, rationalities about the 'good city', 'good planning' and 'responsible building'. Having now outlined my conceptual

framework, the remainder of this thesis seeks to problematise the processes of normalisation that stabilise the discursive networks of actors and practices promoting the material objectification of *New Urbanism* in the form of housing. The following chapter seeks to explain the connections between the research design and methodology and the theoretical trajectory of the thesis as a whole, while also addressing the contextual specificity of the Toronto case study.

Chapter 3

Research Design, Methods and Reflexive Analysis

Introduction

The early framing of this thesis focused upon literature related to the social 'production of space' (following Lefebvre 1991) and spatiality (following Soja 1989; 1996). Within this framing, my specific focus on New Urbanist development and housing provision was driven by a desire to understand how and why the *concrete space* (or everyday life) of New Urbanist developments emerged and was normalised in relation to the practices of *abstract space* (i.e. political, economic, regulatory and cultural constraints). The existing literature available on New Urbanism (even that which is critical) often hints at the need to look at this emergent built form from the perspective of problematising the production of space (cf. Gottdeiner 1994; Knox 1992; 1995) yet rarely follows through with an in-depth empirical investigation of the phenomena in this vein. This lack of empirically derived theorisation suggests that the processes of building provision are not conceived as a social process *in toto*. The over-reliance in the critical literature on axiomatically-derived theorisations, even those which I would favour, such as the post-structuralist investigations of power relations endemic in the privileging of expert knowledge in the fields of planning and architecture, for example, tend to fall short in acknowledging the active role of 'context' in recursively constituting the practices which form, legitimise and/or challenge such relations.

In operationalising the structures of provision empirical model, I have attempted to bridge this gap between theory and research practice. The relational analysis of processes and outcomes employed in this research, therefore, highlights new theoretical and policy implications extending far beyond the context-specificity of the case study units themselves. The purpose of this chapter is to outline the research design and methodology that was employed to empirically open-up the concrete and abstract conceptual fields of the social 'production of space' in New Urbanist housing developments. Implicit in this approach is the intention of doing research which resonates with a number of geographical sub-disciplines, including land and property development research, housing studies, urban planning and design in order to both draw new linkages across these exaggerated divisions and to highlight new or previously neglected trajectories for further research.

This chapter outlines the methods used and provides the theoretical and empirical rationale for doing so. The strength of this research design lies in its iterative nature formulated through an adaptation of grounded theory and corpus construction techniques in the collection and analysis of *in vivo* (empirically-derived) and theoretical themes. In addition to the 'technical' aspects of my research design covered within this chapter, I stress the process-oriented nature of the data collection and analysis phases of my research. To comprehensively do so I provide a reflection on my research as process-in-action within section 3.4. To reiterate here, however, I have consciously attempted to get a sense of the level of *reflexive awareness* (Murdoch and Pratt 1993: 425) amongst the individuals involved in my

research. In other words, I have sought to ascertain how self-aware of their 'identities' as developers, planners, architects, designers, politicians, contractors, financiers, residents, etc., in the production of space the interviewees were. It would be remiss in my theoretical approach if I did not therefore also take into account my own role as a researcher and recognise the need for reflexive knowledge production.

Reflexivity in research and writing on society recognises that as a researcher I am myself an actor "building society and thus power relations" (Murdoch and Pratt 1993: 424). This questioning of my positionality and those of others involved in the social phenomena I am investigating recognises that "an adequate conceptualisation of the social world has to include the activity of researching it; the researcher is not just observing from a point of detachment" (Cooper 2001: 11). Reflexive awareness of personal, professional, conceptual and theoretical frameworks profoundly affected what I chose to research, the research questions posed, and the methodologies I used to collect and analyse data. This same reflexivity guards against the possibility of either *theoretical arrogance*[13] or its converse *methodolatry*[14] predetermining in advance the answers, and thereby jeopardising the validity, rigour and relevance of my research.

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[13] Cooper uses the term 'theoretical arrogance' to reflect the problem in social research whereby researchers allow theoretical or conceptual concerns to overwhelm all other considerations. In this situation theory becomes an end in itself, with the result being that theoretical considerations prescribe in advance what the researcher will find when he/she starts investigating: there is no possibility of surprise (see Cooper 2001: 10-11).

[14] In contrast to the theoretical arrogance, Cooper describes the other danger in social research as methodolatry – a term used to describe instances when concerns about techniques and methods of research overwhelms all other considerations. In this case, concerns with methods can actually take over the research agenda and can in effect take the place of theory (Cooper 2001: 10).

My primary objective in this chapter is to adequately detail the framework used to undertake the empirical component of my research. The presentation of the steps in the process illustrate the rough sequence of actions taken by me as the researcher, but they also convey the cyclical-nature of the research process, thus stressing that it is far from linear, and that theory and method contingently co-evolve.

3.1   Iterative Research

The basic starting point for determining the information requirements and research methods necessary to address my primary research questions had to deal with the: who, what, where, when and why of New Urbanism in Toronto. In short, I needed to determine how to ascertain, collect and qualitatively measure such problematic and theoretically-laden parameters as ideology, structure and regulation with respect to the proliferation of a particular 'style' of built form. To inform my own understanding of the historical, chronological and genealogical descent and emergence of 'New Urbanism' and its proponents, influences, critiques, and ideological underpinnings, my research began with an extensive literature review spanning a breadth of material on urban theory from the late 19th century to modern day planning, policy, urban history and design. Chapter 1 of this thesis is only a portion of the range of literature actually used to inform my inquiry, and for brevity and conciseness its focus has been framed on New Urbanism literature to date rather than an exposition of the movement's genealogy.

Beyond the consultation of hundreds of texts dealing with planning and design and human urban organisation, the majority of my information requirements needed to come from primary rather than secondary research. In investigating ideology or cultural values, norms, beliefs etc., a first-hand account of relevant actors in the housing production process was vital. Furthermore, the information presented in secondary documentation did not provide the richness of contextual detail I required. Moreover, the amount of existing literature on New Urbanism that is based on secondary sources, overwhelmingly, indicated a genuine need for primary research in this field of inquiry. Again, the way in which the existing literature base is divided into protagonists and antagonists of New Urbanism, I believe, is largely due to the reliance of many commentaries on second hand sources. On the one hand the supportive commentaries of the movement rely quite heavily on consumer preference surveys and third party contracted research, both fully framed with the biased intent of proving the benefits of New Urbanism. Nearly all such studies still cushion their results within the security of historical precedents found in urban planning and architectural theory. Conversely, the critical camp relies on debunking the weak theoretical linkages put forward in New Urbanist promotional material with deeper theoretical and academic conceptualisations. My contention in this debate, however, is that a relational approach to looking at the socio-spatial processes of provision for New Urbanism in Toronto demands (not merely privileges) primary research due to the contingent nature of the situated social relations in question.

In brief, my information requirements consisted of the following:

- A working knowledge of the actors involved in the provision of residential forms of New Urbanist development;
- A set of purposefully selected sites to undertake a comparative study of practices and structural constraints; and
- A well-developed corpus of information and text dealing with relations of process and form and the investigation of if and how these relations are altered by contextual factors (e.g. brownfield v. greenfield).

In meeting these requirements a form of corpus construction was used to operationalise the theoretical concepts developed and debated in the relevant literature on New Urbanism, and more generally, land development and housing provision. Corpus construction (following Bauer and Aarts 2000) is a way of viewing research design as a cyclical process. The basis of corpus construction is similar to grounded theory (following Strauss 1987; Strauss and Corbin 1990) in the sense that it allows for preliminary empirical and theoretical investigation and analysis with full recognition of researcher bias and/or ignorance in framing the research questions in the first instance. Through 'snow-ball' style pilot or preliminary data collection, such as pilot interviews, the researcher is able to develop an account of, and the format for, those elements that need to be addressed by the research (e.g. class, gender, occupation, ethnicity, power hierarchies etc.). From this initial round of interviews a portion of the overall subject may bring to light other criteria or areas which need to be empirically investigated further.

This step-wise development of a body or corpus of data continually fed back into further restructuring of my research design, until I was satisfied that the field of inquiry on the given subject had been "saturated" (Bauer and Aarts 2000: 34). This approach to the research design helped me overcome hurdles associated with worrying that I had not developed an adequate sampling frame or had overlooked significant social representations or social

strata, functions, or categories due to my own lack of knowledge of housing development processes and New Urbanism, or due to my own bias.

The iterative nature of the corpus construction approach to research design minimised the problems associated with determining who, how many and what fields of inquiry should be addressed as part of my research, but it did not eliminate problems associated with lack of access to either people, documents, or alternative sources of information. Early planning and co-ordination of sources and materials were the only ways of overcoming these problems, which as discussed in section 3.4, I was able to achieve with varying degrees of success.

3.2   Case Study Approach

After weighing the pros and cons of possible qualitative methods to address my research questions, (in particular the 'How?' and 'Why?' questions related to New Urbanism's emergence in Toronto), the case study approach was selected. As Yin (1994: 1) argues: "In general, case studies are the preferred strategy when 'how' and 'why' questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events and when this focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real life context." A more detailed rationale for taking this methodological approach and the implications of its use forms the basis of the following three subsections.

3.2.1 Why a Case Study?

The phenomenon under analysis is residential development characterised (by some) as 'New Urbanism', a label which implies that there is a differential nature to this form of housing provision than that characterised (again by some) as 'conventional'. As such, the normalisation of New Urbanism as a 'best practice' in the process and governance of housing provision is the primary area of interest in my empirical analysis. This line of questioning involves a significant range of possible actors both directly and indirectly involved in the provision of residential space. As such, a method for data collection and analysis is necessitated which does not predetermine or falsely cut-off this variety of agency nor simplify the inter-relational nature of the practices and constraints experienced across and between this range of potential actors. An open-ended form of inquiry was therefore crucial to provide the scope of inquiry and depth of detail at the contextual level of each actor while still providing an insight into wider structural process-oriented relations. The case study research strategy satisfied these considerations because it is focused on understanding the dynamics present within single settings and can involve single or multiple cases while enabling multiple levels of analysis (cf. Eisenhardt 1989; Yin 1984).

In light of the popularity of New Urbanism-influenced residential development in and around Toronto, the city was selected as the primary case study location. In addition to other factors highlighted later, the rapid rate of new house construction and recent political discourse surrounding the future of the city and its region (and the role of residential development in this future) influenced this selection. In Toronto, four case study units were purposively

selected (cf. Silverman 2000) based on a variety of criteria as discussed in subsection 3.2.2. All four sites incorporated 'elements' of New Urbanism into their design, planning or marketing. Two of these sites, Cornell in the Town of Markham, and Montgomery Village in the Town of Orangeville, were produced on greenfield sites in the urban fringe. The sites and the processes of production which ensued to create them were compared and contrasted with one another and additionally with two study sites (The Beach and King West Village) situated on brownfield lands within the urban core of the City of Toronto.

The four sites were explored first through the gathering of secondary sources of information available from a range of printed materials (i.e. planning documents; marketing and promotional material; media coverage etc.). This background research was followed with an intensive process of interviewing relevant actors (which were identified by the iterative process of structuring and re-structuring the research design in a step-wise progression) over a time frame of approximately eight months, from January through August 2003. The interview component of the case study was also supplemented by a desk-based study of related policy, documentation, and literature from an Anglo-North American international perspective. The combination of these approaches served to strengthen the analytical triangulation of my research by providing multiple perspectives from which to investigate my research questions (cf. Hoggart *et al.* 2002: 121).

The value of using a case study framework with sub-units of differential locations throughout the city region was that I did not restrict myself to

generalising findings from a sample to a larger population, but rather explored the unknown or under-researched attributes of a particular social phenomena in order to enrich academic and professional debate. The focus of my research well-suited the case study approach in that it was not intentionally ethnographically-motivated, meaning that my main interest was not in undertaking a detailed study of the life and activities of a particular group of people (Orum et al. 1991: 4). I chose development sites which had been partially or totally completed; and opted for the comparative value of multiple sites of study, rather than the depth of detail that may have been possible in a single project investigated through ethnographic research techniques.

I would argue that my research intentions, and therefore methods, were more closely aligned with investigating the occupancy or socio-biographies of particular social types or roles (e.g. developer, architect, planner, politician, builder, real estate agent, community leader etc.), which would involve the examination of a number of people to capture the richness associated with that role (Orum et al. 1991). One qualification in this regard is that my study was more than a collection of descriptive narratives garnered from interviewing any one 'type' of actor. The participants involved in this research project were not selected based solely on their 'archetypal' role in any generic 'development process', but rather based on the significance accorded to their involvement in the process as relayed to me via background research and from a variety of other actors or by the significance of their personal motivation for involvement. I did not enter into this research with the intent of theorising about the 'roles' of various actor 'types' in New

Urbanism but rather to determine the relations which exist between context, process, and form in the production of New Urbanist developments.

In summary, the contextual richness of the data collected via the open-ended case study approach using qualitative interviewing techniques, could not have been matched by any other form of qualitative method, especially not a structured survey format. As mentioned, the value of undertaking an ethnographic study of New Urbanist development residents or producers would have meant limiting the scope of inquiry to one site or case study location, which may have its merits, but for the intentions of my research, the comparative scope was the most appropriate form of investigation.

3.2.2 Case Selection

It would be illogical for me to state that my selection of the cases in the Toronto region was not informed by my personal experience of living in the city, and working in the planning and environment field. The determination that the case study approach was the most applicable to the form and range of information required to address my research questions helped to frame my preliminary selection process of possible study sites. Several development projects in the region were visited, which from media accounts, real estate promotional materials, and planning literature coverage had been identified in some way or another as 'New Urbanist'. The first criterion was that I wanted a purposively sampled selection of four development sites, two of which needed to be brownfield projects, and the other two greenfield. A second basic criterion was that all four study sites must have at least a single phase completed and occupied by residents for at least two years. This is because I

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wanted to have some indication of the 'outcome' produced and the process-related involvement of residents in the reproduction of the lived space.

All of the potential sites made known to me via secondary and preliminary primary research were visited and photographed and I assessed them based on a combination of previous knowledge; observable implementation or deviation in outcome from the 'official stories' or intentions of the producers; size and scale; age; as well as marketing and sales schemes. I also attempted to select projects where any single developer interest was not involved in more than one of the sites. This last criterion is somewhat problematic, because it suggests that I have given undue consideration to the determining role of 'developers'. This was not my intent. Rather I was trying to avoid the significance of one powerful developer's (as there exists in the Toronto market a 'select list' of well-known land developers and consortiums) practices prejudicing the study results either in their favour or to their detriment. In hindsight however, the selection of one brownfield project and one greenfield project initiated by a single developer/land owner, which are then compared and contrasted with another might have produced interesting alternate insights.

The basic selection process for the individual case study units was based on a purposive sample of sites, which provided comparative value in relation to all of the following criteria:

- Location
- Ownership
- Municipal involvement
- Marketing and sales
- Size and scale
- Identity and reputation

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- Building types and tenure
- Planning and design

The four sites eventually selected exhibited *prima facia* comparative value based on the above-mentioned criteria. The purpose of selecting sites located in different locations and on different 'classifications' of land use (brownfield v. greenfield) throughout the urban region was to add a deeper level of inquiry to my research. I was questioning not only if the processes of provision were altered due to location, thus supporting the argument that housing provision is situated and context-dependent. But, more specifically, the possibility that there may exist causal relations between the state of land prior to development and the built form and processes under which it gets produced. In this way, then, I was looking to maximise the variation of relations to compare and contrast one greenfield development process with another, and one brownfield with another, as well as compare and contrast greenfield versus brownfield development processes. Furthermore, it should be noted that the decision to base the selection of comparable development projects on either side of the greenfield-brownfield binary was necessitated by the prominence of this division in policy, industry, and consumer-oriented discourses on development and housing. To *not* take up these fields (even if to test the validity of their abstracted 'separation') would have meant that I ignored a potentially significant factor in the normalisation processes related to New Urbanism.

One criticism of my selection process (which I encountered from some interviewees) was that I did not factor in a 'foil' for the New Urbanist development projects (i.e. a 'deviant case' following Silverman 2000: 107). I

did not include a so-called 'conventional' development project as one of the primary research sites. Admittedly the research may have benefited from this comparison, but it should be noted that through meeting with various development actors to discuss their involvement in the New Urbanist projects the number of 'example sites' grew. This is because the majority of the interviewees were not exclusively involved in the single project I approached them to discuss, nor were they just involved in 'New Urbanist' projects. Therefore, constant reference was made to other development projects with which they were previously, simultaneously, or intending to be involved. In addition, it was rare to speak to a development actor who did not have a wider awareness of development activity outside of his/her own projects. So while the core selection of four primary projects was maintained throughout the investigation, I gained supplemental access to the processes and contextual details of not only these projects but also others with which interviewees had interactions or dealings. Additionally, this breadth of information beyond the imposed 'limits' of my own remit provided a forum to ask participants to compare and contrast their working relationships, daily practices, conflicts and constraints from their experiential knowledge of the two (or arguably more) 'types' of development This in turn illuminated the various conceptualisations of what constitutes a 'New Urbanist' development vis à vis a 'conventional' development.

3.2.3 Pilot Study

A key step in the development of my research design, in keeping with the grounded theory or corpus construction approach, was the inclusion of a pilot case study to, in effect, 'test the waters' in terms of who to approach, what to

ask, and how to analyse the data. I have included this under the Case Study section to briefly indicate the reflexive value of this phase in my research design. The inclusion of a pilot study based on semi-structured interviews in the preliminary stages of inquiry allowed me to engage with similar behavioural groups which would be interviewed in the core empirical research. More specifically, the pilot study was used as a strong strategy for discovery in order to:

- Identify the main groups to be sampled and help define them;
- Get acquainted with phrasing and concepts used by possible respondents (especially those professionals involved in finance, engineering and construction who often use terms specific to the technological applications in their respective fields, such as formulas and equations);
- Establish the range or variety of possible opinions, attitudes, beliefs concerning the topic of inquiry and/or related issues;
- Possibly form or inform the researcher's hypotheses about the motivations underlying behaviour, attitudes, or ideologies (see Fielding and Thomas 2001: 124-125).

The pilot study component of my research (described in Appendix C and supported by the list of interviewees provided in Appendix A) consisted of a detailed study of a single large-scale housing development project situated near Braintree, County of Essex, United Kingdom. The different legislative, welfare and administrative systems of governance in the UK and Canada aside, the relevance of the UK pilot study was very instructive for formulating an interview schedule for semi-structured interviews to be conducted with similar groups of actors in the Canadian context (see sample interview schedule in Appendix B).

Additionally, however, the differences in governmental structures were key supplemental (yet primary) research, informing my comparative review of international forms of housing provision and New Urbanism's seemingly

prolific replication under disparate contextual conditions. The Canadian-UK comparison, although beyond the scope of this thesis, holds a particular significance in light of the historical relations between the two countries, especially as they relate to the development and changes made to the respective planning systems. Furthermore, with respect to the 'New Urbanism' taking root (according to many observers) in the United States – which is yet another system of government and planning regulation – the comparative scope of inquiry generated by an international research agenda is undeniable. I believe the Canadian case study may be pivotal to the problematisation of New Urbanism's proliferation, due to Canada's relations and unique historical co-evolution with the US and the UK. The Canadian system of government and planning regulation is neither a duplication of the British central government system nor the American state system, but possibly a quite unique amalgam of the two. This unique positioning may hold significant implications for the New Urbanism debates.

Suffice to say, for the purposes of this thesis, the pilot study of Great Notley Garden Village in Essex was essential to the formulation of the research design and pivotal to the undertaking of the Toronto case study. Appendix C elaborates on the specific lessons (methodological and conceptual) that the pilot study brought to the Toronto research process. In particular, the pilot study checked the operational effectiveness of my sampling frames, approaches to informants to secure involvement, interview method, questions, and recording of responses (cf. Hoggart *et al.* 2002: 183).

3.3   In-depth Interview Process

The type of engagement I aimed to achieve with the development actors interviewed entailed 'getting beyond the official line' (cf. Duke 2002) of their respective institutional frameworks. I attempted to ascertain how each participant conceptualised New Urbanism and made it 'knowable' in and through their own everyday practices (be they professional or personal). The key method for engaging with the actors in this way was the interview. It is my contention that in fitting with the corpus construction process of step-wise research design, the most suitable form of interviewing is the semi-structured interview. As expressed in relation to the pilot study, the value of semi-structured or unstructured interviews is again the strong strategy for discovery enabled through their utilisation. This value did not cease when the preliminary or pilot interviews were completed. Each successive interview offered potentially new sources of further information or alternative lines of inquiry.

The real value garnered from the semi-structured interview process (as opposed to a structured questionnaire or survey) was that I was not only just able to ask what and why certain decisions, attitudes, or behaviours were taken by actors, but the open-ended nature of the interview promoted a conversation-like interchange wherein I could question why these actions/inactions/practices were taken over other, alternative options or viewpoints. In addition, the interview provided a forum for the participants to question me, as the researcher, about my own biases, impressions, motivations and intentions. The conversations which resulted from these interchanges were some of the more revealing interviews, both in terms of

the process of interviewing, and in terms of the substantive issues I went into the interview prepared to discuss. More importantly the semi-structured nature of the interviews meant that 'surprises' were manifold and my interviewing skills and approach had to be flexible enough to accommodate the contingencies of each conversation.

The administering of interviews for this research was conducted with individuals as opposed to groups because I wanted to illuminate the ways in which individual perception, self-awareness, values and beliefs related to the structural production and reproduction of the governmental and regulatory system within which housing producers operate. However, despite this intention, upon arriving to conduct pre-arranged interviews with particular individuals, there were instances when the given individual introduced other actors into the interview dynamic. All of the interviews were audio-recorded and the participants were ensured that their anonymity would be protected, and the recordings of the interviews kept confidential. The majority of interviewees, however, stated that they were not concerned with their names being used. For ethical reasons, I have decided to not name the participants in the thesis; a decision partially taken due to the fact that formal signed consent forms were not utilised but verbal agreements of the conditions of interview conduct were negotiated. All of the interviews were later transcribed for my own analysis purposes and as an evidential record of the interview in order to safeguard my own interests as the primary researcher, as well as those of the participant interviewees.

3.3.1 Selection of Participants

A total of fifty-seven interviews were conducted across a range of development actors involved in the four primary case study units of analysis. Appendix A provides a listing of all the interviews sorted by case. In order to determine the initial contact list of 'relevant' actors from which I built up my iterative interviewing process, I conducted initial information gathering sessions or meetings (unrecorded) with the 'area planner' from each of the municipal governments within whose administrative boundaries each of the four selected projects were located. These bureaucrats were initially sent a formal letter on university letterhead requesting assistance with my research, and they were asked if they would be willing to briefly meet to informally discuss possible contacts and provide an initial 'snapshot' or background to each of the development projects. A request to access planning application files was alluded to within the initial contact letter. However, on the whole this was not readily granted without a 'gatekeeper' (e.g. the planner responsible for the file would bring it along with accessory documentation to the meeting but only for its value or as a personal 'memory jogger'). There was only one occasion when I was free to read through the file independent of the planner. This guarded access to the documentation available on each of the project sites was not unanticipated, as my own training as a planner had instructed me that access to a lot of the information in these files would require a formal application through the federal *Freedom of Information Act*. The planners with whom I made initial contact with were all aware of my own educational and employment background and so this may have influenced their level of professional candidness both to my benefit in some instances, and in others

not. The level of trust that was reached with these contacts seemed to be more based on my 'status' as a student rather than as a professional peer.

During these initial meetings I enquired as to which politicians were active (or passive as the case may be) in the process of development and planning permission for each project site. I was also, on the whole, able to get contact names for the majority of the developers and builders involved in the formal planning permission process for the development applications. At times some of the 'first-contact' planners would only mention a particular actor (such as a builder or developer) in passing because they did not feel that my talking to them would be 'beneficial'. In all such cases, this actually spurred me to seek out these actors to ascertain not only their own involvement but to attempt to understand why the planners' views of them were negative. Often the first few interviewees suggested other people that they felt would be useful to speak with – these included private consultants (architects, designers, planners, marketers etc.); local active residents or community leaders; as well as other municipal employees or politicians. These initial contacts also provided a key service by directing me to individuals whom I would not normally have known about their involvement in the process or whom had proven difficult to track down on my own initiative due to changes in employment or intra-institutional transfer.

Other interviewees were contacted on the basis of my secondary research into the four study projects via local and regional media sources; online resources; and documentation and marketing materials. These were often professional organisations or associations; residents groups; transnational

design professionals; or local community agencies. When contacting potential interviewees whom I had determined through my secondary research to be 'relevant' I often only had a corporate or business name, not an individual person. So in these instances I based my initial point of contact on seniority, 'ownership' or observable directive 'power' in the development process (including land acquisition, site selection, project management etc.). If the site, project, or strategic manager was unidentified for a particular developer or builder I would, for example, send an initial contact letter to the president or chief administrator of the company or head of the relevant firm or department asking to speak to them directly or their delegate.

Duke (2002) argues that gaining access to elites (corporate, institutional political etc.,) can be problematic as they have the power to create barriers, shield themselves from scrutiny and resist the intrusiveness of social research. But she suggests that these problems have been exaggerated in the methods literature.

> "Access is sometimes easier for researchers who have existing links with those in power. A researcher's 'street sense' is important. Successful research supposedly correlates with the researcher's personal knowledge and connection to the worlds about which they are writing" (Duke 2002: 45).

In my particular case, while I did not have personal knowledge of, or contacts within, the private development and building industry in Toronto, I did have prior professional experience and contacts in the related field of urban planning. I had also previously interacted with similar development and design actors in relation to planning permission processes within which I was a decision-maker. From this knowledge base I knew the generic corporate structure of development/building companies and their basic operational

hierarchy. Knowing the right terminology and relevant divisions and/or departments enabled greater ease of access past the secretarial and administrative 'gatekeepers'. Upon reflection this thesis research process involved a series of unconscious intersections between my personal biography and my research interests (which again is taken up more directly in section 3.4). The difference, however, that my own knowledge base and professional background made in my ability to gain access to potential interviewees is more difficult to assess than it is to identify (cf. McDowell 1998). Once 'in the door' the intersection of age, race, gender, academic credentials, funding, research and professional experience, and personal connections all took on more concrete roles in defining my own status *and* the relationships I developed with each individual interviewee. The interview process and by default its analysis must be seen from the point of view of both the 'situated knowledge' acquired and the relation this has to the contingent nature of my research access (cf. Ward and Jones 1999).

3.4   Reflections on the Interview Process

My decision to use interviews was guided by the attested appropriateness of intensive interviewing when research seeks to unravel complicated relationships or slowly evolving events.

> "The approach is warranted whenever depth is required. Conducted sensitively, intensive interviews can facilitate the explanation of events and experiences in their complexity, including their potential contradictions. This can lead to insight far beyond the initial imagination of the researcher" (Hoggart *et al.* 2002: 206).

The overall benefit of employing in-depth qualitative analysis in my study of New Urbanism and housing producer practices in Toronto was that meanings

and actions were explored through primary data collection. In this way I avoided the reliance on secondary information, which abounds on New Urbanism, but is both a proxy measure of concepts and tainted with other researchers bias in interpretation (Hoggart *et al.* 2002). The range of conceptualisations of what 'New Urbanism' was amongst the interviewees in this research alone proved more insightful than all of the existing literature summarised in Chapter 1. From these emergent and primary conceptualisations I was able to iteratively design and re-design the conceptual framework of the structures of provision to tap into areas of potential significance that I had no *a priori* assumptions of their relevance (e.g. standard formulas for the efficiency of lot layouts and plans; the distancing of design professionals from the movement in favour of decidedly 'urban' projects; and the exaggerated division between greenfield and brownfield development practices).

Despite the iterative nature of the primary research design, certain dynamics within the interviewing process can be generalised. First, contact must be made and some form of response obtained. Second, a time and place for the interview to be conducted must be negotiated. Third, the participant must be aware of his/her position as a 'tool' of inquiry and be prepared for the conditions of participation (informed consent). Fourth, both the interviewee and interviewer must be prepared for 'surprises', as arrangements in advance of a particular meeting can be influenced by any number of external factors – such as bad weather, long commutes, or some form of personal or organisational 'emergency'. The remainder of this section seeks to discuss these stages in more detail by first briefly discussing the contact-response

rate and its impact on the study and then outlining my rationale for using semi-structured interviews as opposed to more structured forms of encounter with the research subjects. This is then followed by a more personalised reflection on the recognition of my own influence on the research process and specifically on the generation of interview data.

3.4.1 Contact and Response

Table 3.1 illustrates the breakdown of interview participation. A total of fifty-seven interviews were conducted out of a total of ninety interview requests. Of the thirty-three interview requests that did not result in an interview, seven were denials, nineteen were no-responses, and four were cancelled. In terms of the impact that these failed interviews had on the overall research process, and possibly the outcome, the most relevant are the four cancellations. Three of these were with key figures in the development process: two politicians, and the third with a resident group representative. On the whole, The Beach investigation was affected the most by the cancellations with a Toronto mayoral candidate and former politician involved at the time of the development cancelling a scheduled interview, and the project manager for the primary builder involved in the project not making herself available after several attempts (including scheduled interview dates) on my behalf. The second politician to cancel was the Mayor of the Town of Markham, the reason being that he felt I was already speaking with the 'best people' from the Town to discuss Cornell's development. However, it is also noteworthy to mention that The Beach and Cornell yielded the greatest number of conducted interviews despite these cancellations. It is also important to consider that in the case of each cancellation I was able to arrange an

interview with someone else from a similar presumed 'position' as the persons who cancelled. Therefore the cancellations appear to have had limited overall effect on the outcomes of the study.

The seven denials were largely received from peripheral actors who felt that their involvement was not 'deep' enough to warrant an interview – the concern being that they would be 'wasting my time', and implicitly suggesting that this would also be wasting their own time. The number of unresponsive requests overemphasises, perhaps, the value of these interviews. I made a point of 'casting my net' as wide as possible and many of those people who were sent an initial contact letter were in a sense 'back-ups' to ensure that at least one person from a certain strategic position (such as the development company or builder) within the process was reached and interviewed.

The net effect of these non-responses, then, was marginal in terms of the breadth and depth of interests I was able to engage with. One exception, however, was the inability to make contact with the developer (Law Development Group) who was the original private developer involved with Cornell. It is difficult to assess how important this particular interview would have been, but it is regretful that it was not conducted for the historical relevance in the 'story' of Cornell. The investigation of Cornell garnered the greatest number of 'no responses' but this should also be seen in light of the preliminary research on Cornell revealing the largest number of potential contacts in the first instance. It is worth noting as well that the drawing up of a list of potential contacts was a necessary step in this process, but one, which on reflection, was very partial. I should emphasise therefore that these early

lists were constantly expanded as the interviewing process progressed, so the initial lists of contacts did not limit the selection of interviewees adversely. The primary sources for the identification of the most relevant contacts were the municipal planners involved in negotiating planning permission in each of the development projects.

The volume of information obtained through the in-depth interview process necessitated the bracketing out of some responses and respondents from the main body of this thesis analysis. In this case, the focus has been placed on the themes to emerge from the interviews conducted with respondents considered to be the 'producers' only. This categorisation primarily includes municipal planners, politicians and other public officials, private sector developers, builders and industry representatives, as well as planning, design, architectural and marketing consultants. The responses from peripheral actors, such as real estate agents, community groups, residents and other private interests have been accounted for in Chapters 4 and 5, but the significance of their involvement has been relegated to their interaction within the processes of housing production. See Appendix B for a sample interview schedule for the case example of Montgomery Village (which incidentally provided the greatest interview-request to interview-conducted ratio, with ten out of a requested eleven interviews taking place).

Table 3.1: Interview Process and Participants

Case Study Site	Interviews Requested	Interviews Conducted	Requests Denied	Requests Unresponsive	Interviews Cancelled	Actor Type	#	Male	Female
Cornell	30	18	1	9	2	Regional Planner	1		1
						Municipal Planner	2	2	
						Planning/Design/Architectural Consultant	4	4	
						Marketing Consultant	1	1	
						Municipal Politician	1	1	
						Former Provincial Bureaucrat	1	1	
						Resident/Ratepayer's group member	1	1	
						Trade Association Representative	1	1	
						Builder/Developer	6	4	2
Montgomery Village	11	10	0	1	0	Municipal Planner	2	2	
						Municipal Politician	1	1	
						Municipal Politician/Resident	1		1
						Planning/Design/Architectural Consultant	2	2	
						Resident/Homeowner's group member	1	1	
						Trade Association Representative	1	1	
						Developer	1	1	
						Builder	1	1	
The Beach	32	18	4	6	2	Municipal Planner	3	3	
						Municipal Policymaker	1		1
						Municipal Politician	1		1
						Former Municipal Politician	1	1	
						Planning/Design/Architectural Consultant	3	3	
						Community Centre Director	1	1	
						Editor of community newspaper	1		1
						Resident	2	2	
						Real Estate Agent	1		1
						Trade Association Representative	1	1	
						Builder/Developer	3	3	
King West Village	17	11	2	3	0	Municipal Planner	2	2	
						Municipal Politician	1	1	
						Municipal Policymaker	1		1
						Planning/Design/Architectural Consultant	2	2	
						Resident and Real Estate Agent	1	1	
						Trade Association Representative	1		1
						Builder/Developer	2	1	1
						Facilities Planner	1	1	
Totals:	90	57	7	19	4		57	46	11

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3.4.2 The Art of Conversation

In conducting the interviews I was conscious of my intended use of the material and information garnered from the exchange of ideas with each interviewee. Specifically, I was searching for a "nuanced understanding of the meanings of social acts and a greater appreciation of interacting and contextualised rationalities that impact on behaviour" (Hoggart *et al.* 2002: 202). I was thus very conscious of the importance of honing my skills of listening. I think my interview transcripts reveal that I was fairly successful in keeping my personal comments to a minimum. I found it most beneficial to allow the interviewee (if they were inclined to do so) to lead the conversations. I only intervened in guiding the conversation if the interviewee seemed to be veering beyond the scope of my inquiry. The intent of the interviews was to allow theory to emerge from the data. The semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed the interviews to be open-ended yet focused on the phenomena of study.

The primary utility of the interview format employed was that my own lack of knowledge or awareness of particular processes, policies and regulations, or practices in general, did not mean that these important aspects did not get discussed. However, this should not be read as indicating that I did not *prepare* extensively for each interview. Rather, the interview prompts were consciously designed with an informed idea as to what type of information I might gather within a given interview. As Plummer observed, "designing an interview schedule for an unstructured interview is very largely a matter of designing ideas about the right probe at the right time" (Plummer 1983:97).

An interview schedule or prompt sheet was brought to each interview and placed on the table, between the interviewee and myself. However, most of the interviews remained free-flowing with little if any need to refer to the prompts. Flexibility and ease of rapport were my motivation for using this form of interviewing, coupled with the fact that the types of questions and issues I wished to investigate were not suited to a rigid or structured encounter (i.e. structured interview) or an impersonal superficial encounter (i.e. survey or questionnaire). In short, I was better able to "search, clarify and probe" to ask why a particular response or lack of response was told 'that' way (Reissman 1993: 2).

In terms of the success of my methods, then, the interviews were an extremely strong strategy of discovery in a line of inquiry that has had few previous empirical studies completed. Most importantly, I believe I was able to explore more deeply with the interviewees their respective motivations, beliefs, perceptions, strategies and relationships in the development process and their everyday life than would have been possible using a more structured form of data collection. Additionally, the personal rather than institutional or organisation 'official lines' were what I was attempting to tease out from the conversations with interviewees, so the face-to-face meetings took on conversational rather than formal tones. In this manner I was able to build a rapport and a level of mutual trust with the interviewees. This was not equally accomplished across the spectrum of participants – some were more critical or sceptical of my intentions than others. However, the interactions with these interviewees proved equally enlightening about the perceptions and conceptualisations these actors formulate and reproduce in their social

practices. Some of the more sceptical participants guised their scepticism in terms of empathetic gestures towards me (or more specifically towards how they perceived me – as a 'young' female student), referring to a place and time that they could relate to in their own life biography. Some participants even voiced concerns for me 'wasting my time' researching something that they could 'answer' in less than five minutes, (usually by way of reference to simplistic understandings of the urban 'market') or suggested that New Urbanism was a 'red herring' or distraction from what was 'really happening'.

3.4.3 Getting in the Door

Negotiating access to private development and building professionals and private consultants in the fields of design, planning, architecture, and marketing proved to be less difficult than anticipated. The formal contact made via a letter on university letterhead seemed to open some initially hard to locate, let alone open, doors. Dealing primarily with private development and building companies meant that little about them was in the public realm. Having said this, there seemed to be a different level of 'transparency' for private corporations in Britain versus Canada. In the Canadian context, even finding phone numbers and addresses involved a considerable degree of investigative work via the Internet and a succession of 'cold calls'. Once a contact name (even if only the president or Chief Executive Officer etc., mentioned in a news article or brochure) was found and contact made, on the whole, most of the private companies were willing to assist. The disadvantage of 'getting in the door' by accessing high up the corporate hierarchy was that it was often difficult to attain information and genuine reflection on certain issues, such as finance. This is perhaps because these

high-ranking individuals were either not directly involved in securing finance or they were very candid about this aspect of their involvement in a given project. Questioning of financial activities was in most cases only undertaken when a 'friendly,' more informal conversation was achieved, usually with a project supervisor or planner who seemed better informed and less guarded on both factual and personal aspects of the development process.

As the interviewing process expanded in scope and scale the ease of accessing the most relevant interviewee was aided by other interviewees across the spectrum of participants. This was enabled because many development actors seemed to know other actors (even if involved in a different project than the current one under discussion), and if only on a professional level. Thus, if I could say to a potential interviewee that person X had said he/she would be a good person to speak with, then the potential interviewee was more willing to meet with me. These 'personal sponsorships' were a strong tool used in drafting the initial contact letters to potential interviewees.

Other 'leads' came from my own past associations with work colleagues at the Provincial and local levels of government. My own background in urban planning proved many times to be an 'ice-breaker' with some interviewees; especially those that suggested an air of scepticism about 'book learning' as opposed to practical experience. However, my current status as a student seemed to get me into places and meetings with elite professionals, who under other circumstances (e.g. if I had remained in my previous planning and policy positions) would not necessarily have given me the benefit of their

'valuable' time. I believe that I was at times seen as fairly innocuous and unthreatening due to my student status. For some, I think my own position in society as a 'student' promoted them to view me as a vessel into which to download their own academic experiences and knowledge. In many ways, then, I had to straddle two strategies of self-presentation (cf. McDowell 1998; Desmond 2004) – both as one of 'them' (i.e. a professional 'expert') and as a naïve student (i.e. a relative 'layperson'). The advantage that this dual positioning enabled was that it provided a unique vantage point to challenge or validate the types of answers elicited (McDowell 1998: 2138) by moving back and forth between the two.

Duke described her fieldwork as an ongoing process throughout which gaining access and establishing rapport involved "multiple levels of gatekeepers including personal secretaries, other respondents and often security guards" (2002: 45). The significance of 'gatekeepers' emerged throughout my own fieldwork process. Often when I would contact senior staff members of a public agency or a private company, or if I requested an interview with more than one person from the same company, it was not uncommon for a personal assistant or a secretary managing the organisation of the daily activities of a number of executives to respond to the personal letter sent to his/her supervisor. The intermediary role played by personal assistants affected my interviewing schedule on a number of occasions. In one such situation, when a personal assistant discovered that I had already arranged an interview with another member of staff from the same municipal office, she took it upon herself to suggest that interviewing her boss was not necessary, and cancelled a scheduled appointment. There were at least two

other occasions when personal assistants intercepted an unconfirmed interview date and cancelled the meeting altogether in the interest of 'time' on behalf of their employer. In both of these cases, I was not able to speak directly to the person I had hoped to interview to explain the significance of their participation.

An additional obstacle occurred when, despite my initial contact letters clearly stating that I was interested in speaking directly with the person to whom the letter was addressed about his/her personal position, role, experiences, reflections etc., the primary interviewee invited someone else into the interview setting without my prior knowledge. This occurred on three occasions, and it significantly affected the degree of rapport and comfort I was able to develop with any of the persons present at these interviews. Under these conditions, the conversations tended to stay on a superficial level, merely regurgitating 'official lines' or professional platitudes about the process. Duke (2002) observed of her own research on prison policy networks that these situations appeared to be related to concerns about consensus and often linked to a (real or perceived) lack of knowledge on the part of the intended interviewee.

As regular practice in all of the interviews conducted I asked the interviewee if he/she could provide names and contact details of others they thought were pertinent to interview. This question enabled a lot of valuable information on interaction: who knew whom?; who valued whom?; who networked with whom?; who were major actors?; and who were peripheral? As Duke (2002) similarly observed of her process, I too was often confronted

with the question from interviewees: 'who else have you spoken with?' Ethical concerns about my naming other interviewees were minimised by the insistence of most participants that they did not mind if I used their names in connection with this research. Those who did mind I could easily avoid mentioning their names, as the question was usually asked of me as an initial interview 'ice breaker' which helped the interviewees 'place' themselves in the context my other contacts. So in these situations I was quite open with potential interviewees about this. In most instances, however, it was not necessary for me to provide names, but rather to say, for example, 'a project manager for Cornell from company X'. Additionally, the network of actors involved in the development process for a given study project was constrained to a limited number of people with whom I could have possibly spoken. Furthermore, all of the development companies and builders and even public bureaucrats and consultants were widely known to one another. This close-knit network of actors was what I needed to gain access to, and the provision of the names/roles from other participants to new and potential interviewees increased their comfort level in speaking with me and made my research appear more transparent. Finally, the confidentiality and anonymity issues with my research were far more relevant in the writing-up stages where exposure (through publication etc.) beyond the 'network' of involved actors was a concern.

The interviews I conducted were largely an exercise in balancing 'fact finding' with personal and experiential knowledge and reflection. In many instances, the contextual or descriptive detail of the individual development project overtook the evaluative intent of my inquiry. In these instances the

interviewees would concentrate on the minutia of the site or the design details. In still other instances, often high-level bureaucrats were less willing to offer up personal opinions or make any judgments that had not already been accorded as 'official' or legitimate. The challenge in both these situations, then, was for me to guide the interview to more personal perceptions and conceptualisations. This was often enabled by taking cues from the interviewee's own use of terms, phrases or concepts, such as: 'design'; 'community'; and 'sustainability'. I would ask them to expand on how they define these concepts and if and why they are relevant to the project or to a discussion of New Urbanism more generally. This challenging or deeper probing of interview responses was particularly useful when it appeared that I was being 'spoon-fed' the good news story of a particular corporate interest or policy framework. The apparent 'openness' exhibited by one particular developer interviewed as part of the Pilot Study was a particularly challenging situation, in which I needed to push quite hard to be able to get beyond the platitudes of 'honesty' being portrayed to convince me of the companies extraordinary efforts to be socially and environmentally responsible. My own experiences were very similar to those outlined by Desmond (2004) in her research on genetically modified organisms and the environment, wherein she reflected that such over-the-top efforts to give the researcher everything he/she needed (including taxi rides and lunches) were in fact "mechanisms of co-option" (2004: 265).

3.4.4 Balancing the Highs and Lows of Self-presentation

Upon reflecting on how access to potential interviewees was negotiated and how my own involvement in the interviews impacted the process I would like

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to discuss my own perceptions of how gender, age, and appearance affected the interviews. As Table 4.5 indicates the vast majority of the interviewees were male – a factor that may have been influenced by the number of interviews conducted with participants in the private development and house building industry (as opposed to those in the public sector), an industry that is still arguably male-dominated. The manner in which I felt that many of the male interviewees' perceived of me as a 'nice looking young lady' was underscored by the number of comments made in relation to myself as a potential consumer of their respective housing products. For instance, on a number of occasions I was asked how old I was, then to be followed with a statement to the effect of: "one day you will find a husband and get a house and have kids, once you've finished with all this education". Still other interviewees amplified the significance of my age and assumed 'Generation X' mentality to normatively equate me as an upwardly mobile potential condominium or loft purchaser, who has turned against the suburbs and wants the excitement of city-living, or the best of both worlds. Comments such as these drew out some very interesting value statements and generalisations about not only what the interviewees were involved in creating but who they perceived these homes to be for.

While some of the interviewees appeared to patronise me on the basis of my age, gender and appearance, on other occasions I felt belittled on other levels, largely dealing with my status as a student. On the whole, in most negotiations to interview someone it was a very professional or friendly phone conversation to determine a mutually amicable date, time, and location. On occasion, however, the power play of personal assistants

'guarding' the time of their employers surmounted into very condescending interchanges, as if to suggest perhaps that I was the equivalent of a thirteen-year-old schoolgirl conducting a social studies 'project'.

In addition, the implication that as a student I was somehow expected to be unquestioningly open to unsolicited 'constructive criticism' or personal advice is worth brief mention. There were innumerable times in the interviewing process when interviewees would comment on their personal educational and research experiences, and invariably equate this with my own current situation. Many offered advice on what to do when I entered the 'real world' of work – meaning outside academia – at once neglecting to acknowledge that I had worked quite extensively before returning to university to undertake my doctorate or accepting that my decision to 'work' in academia is just as 'real' as any other career decision. Duke (2002) similarly noted that in her research it was not uncommon to hear comments such as:

> "'So you will be doing a semi-structured interview then?' and 'when I was doing my MA...' or 'I did some research myself a few years back'...In effect, the research process could not be mystified and my performance as a researcher was transparent. I was on display, exposed and therefore could be judged" (2002: 52).

And judged I was. Not by everyone equally, but particularly by those professionals who had a more 'international' sensibility, self-awareness, or scope of experience. Many such professionals offered their personal insights into what they thought I should be researching. This influenced the content of the interviews in quite a particular way. For example, less aggressive interviewees would in the process of thinking about a comment and voicing it, stop mid-sentence to 'reveal' that they had just hit on something that needs researching (which on most occasions I could confirm for them that it had

been researched elsewhere). However, the content of the interview would invariably return to this 'insight' and again revolve around how to undertake a 'really good study'. These individuals were not, however, the ones whom I felt were judging the merits of my research prior to having a full understanding of its intent. Those that were, often had a preconceived notion of what I was researching and therefore judged it on the basis of what they deemed worthy of research and what was not. On the whole it was those development professionals who had a university level education that at times appeared to feel threatened by the fact that I had more education than they did, despite their obvious position of professional power within their own organisational structure.

3.4.5 Field Work Timing: elections, SARS, blackouts and snow!

Quite important to any reflection on the fieldwork process is the timeframe in which it was undertaken. Following Desmond (2004), interviewing during moments of political sensitivity impacts not just access to interviewees but the quality of information exchanged. I was in Canada to negotiate, conduct, and analyse the interviews from January 2003 through September 2003. During this time several social and political processes or events transpired which bore relevance to my research, either directly or indirectly. For instance, during this time the election campaign for a new Mayor of the City of Toronto got underway. Two key politicians active at the time of the development processes for The Beach and King West Village, whom I had intended to interview, were now active mayoral candidates. This put considerable limitations on their availability and willingness to participate in my research. However, despite one cancellation, both initially accepted my

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request and I partially attribute this to the fact that they were attempting to optimise their public involvement and exposure at a critical time in their respective campaigns.

In addition, during this time a well-documented political scandal involving one of the mayoral candidates whom I did interview was brought to media attention. Luckily I had conducted the interview already with this particular person, but it is quite likely that had I not, he would have cancelled as well. Also during my fieldwork period, a new conservative Premier of Ontario was appointed after the resignation of the strong neo-liberal conservative leader. This indicated that a provincial election would soon be called and thus the status of the recently introduced Smart Growth agenda was brought into question. Because of this, interview discussions regarding the existing and proposed policy changes at the provincial level were very fluid and non-committal on both sides of the development table. The added political 'uncertainty' at the provincial level did, however, fuel the desire of interviewees to discuss the debate surrounding the ongoing public consultation component of the provincially appointed 'Smart Growth Panel'. So general awareness amongst the interviewees of urban planning and growth policy issues was high and much of the interview content revolved around the interface of development industry practice in the emerging regulatory climate of 'smart growth'.

Two other social 'events' played a relatively minor role in affecting the smooth-running of my intended field work process – the SARS epidemic[15]; and the north-eastern North American 'blackout' lasting for several days in August 2003. SARS had created an atmosphere of semi-panic amongst the general public who were being discouraged from shaking hands with one another or visiting institutional settings. Both of these activities played a considerable role in the comfort level attained with interviewees from a variety of positions in society. It was not uncommon during this time for either the interviewee or myself to hesitate to shake hands in greeting one another. (More, I hope, out of consideration of the external hysteria than for any actual fear of infection.) The notable absence of a handshake seems quite trivial, but on reflection I feel that this level of personal contact makes the interview process a more 'natural' and humane encounter of two people getting to know one another and discussing issues of relevance to both the researcher and the subject. I would not suggest that SARS negatively affected the outcome of my research, but it definitely affected the attainable comfort level with interviewees. In particular an interview at a large medical institution was clouded by the sanitary precautions needed to enter the building and make it past designated access points.

Less of a constraint on my research, due to its timing close to the end of my fieldwork, the summer 'blackout' occurred minutes after completing an interview with a development interest involved in King West Village, Toronto. The mayhem on the streets that ensued made it impossible for me to leave the city for two more days! While I did not have any more interviews

[15] On 23 April 2003, Toronto was designated as a hotspot by the World Health Organisation for the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) virus and an international travel alert was initiated, causing much local and international concern and stigmatisation.

scheduled for the ensuing days in the dark, the social, economic and political 'recovery' of the city as a whole continued well into the weeks following the actual blackout. Government offices remained closed for an extended period of time in an effort to conserve energy and restore the power grid's full capacity. These closures affected my ability to follow-up on a few previously conducted interviews during which I had been promised access to secondary documentation. In one instance follow-up contact was never achieved and so I lost out on gaining that secondary information.

I also cannot discount the affect that the climate in Toronto during the time in which I conducted my fieldwork had on the process of negotiating and confirming interviews and actually conducting them. Arriving in Canada in January and beginning interviews in late February and early March, following a solid month of researching contacts and negotiating meeting times, meant that unreliable winter weather could add travel time or mean the sudden cancellation or rescheduling of interviews. At times these 'reschedules' never happened after repeated attempts to do so. Over the summer months negotiating access to potential interviewees was complicated by the fact that many people scheduled their annual leave from their jobs during this time. As such scheduling around vacations became a constant variable – and it often meant that interviewees would instruct me to call back in three or four weeks time to remind them and at that point they would set a date. The implication of this scenario was that these postponed calls would often consist of me re-introducing myself, my research and my intention to interview these individuals, all over again.

3.4.6 Interview Duration

The highly charged political climate in Toronto during this time made it difficult to confirm interviews with high profile political individuals. Yet, the eagerness of some to come across well to a student from the esteemed 'London School of Economics' often prompted these 'important people' to set aside valuable time to speak with me. The duration of these interviews varied considerably, however. In particular, scheduled interviews with politicians and some high-demand design consultants ran as short as twenty-five to thirty minutes despite the fact that my contact letter indicated that the interviews could be expected to run approximately forty-five minutes to one hour (or more). The longest interview lasted for two hours and forty minutes, but ironically yielded relatively little research value. One possible explanation for variance in relevance and the time differential relates specifically to the interviewees themselves. For instance, in a short thirty-minute interview with one design consultant having an ongoing involvement with Cornell, I was able to touch on all of the elements I was interested in accessing and he gave a very personal insight into his actions and motivations. This individual had however, been interviewed on countless occasions by students, researchers and news media representatives about Cornell and other projects. He had, himself, conducted similar research and was therefore familiar with the interview format and research process. He easily moved into the appropriate level and depth of discussion with me, whereas in the two-and-a-half hour interview with a homebuilder, it was apparent that he was not used to being interviewed, and that he was less familiar with the debates in academic or professional literature. This did not mean that the latter's contribution to the research was less valued, but that it was far more

promotional of his own business and personal interests and less reflexive about his practices than the design consultant.

On the whole, however, the majority of the interviews conducted were approximately one hour to one hour and thirty minutes in duration. The interviewing process, in general, taught me that as a researcher I needed to be prepared to accept that some interviewees will only have a predetermined amount of time available to give and that any interview has the potential to be unexpectedly truncated or interrupted. The semi-structured nature of the interview format I used helped me considerably in being able to adapt to the given situation of each interview, by enabling me to quickly focus on the key areas of inquiry that I had prepared for my interview schedule.

3.4.7 Location Matters

Often the timing of the interview and the rapport developed with the interviewee was directly related to the location of the interview itself. On the whole, the majority of interviews were conducted in an office setting, usually that belonging to the individual interviewee. On occasion, the interviewee would decide that it would be best to conduct the interview in a meeting room or boardroom located within the office complex. Three interviews in Toronto were conducted in public places – two in a coffee shop and the third in a hotel café. In the pilot study interviewing process conducted in Great Notley, Essex, one interview was partially conducted inside a noisy pub after a ride-along tour of the project and similar projects in the area. A further interview in Great Notley, though not planned to take place in this venue, occurred on a November evening sitting on a picnic bench outside of the locked

'community' building within which the interview was scheduled to be conducted. If and when any interviewees wanted to show me around the project and discuss it as we went along, I always insisted on also having a time when we could sit down for an interview as well. Other than one developer in the UK pilot study all of those interviewees who took me on a walk-and-talk session were residents of the given project under investigation. Several interviews with residents or residents involved in a local ratepayers' group took place in their homes. On one occasion a well-known design professional in Toronto was also interviewed from his live-work space in the King West area of the city.

How does the location impact the process? Those interviews conducted out-of-doors or in a public place, such as a busy coffee shop or a pub caused the recordings of the interviews to be very difficult to transcribe due to excessive background noise. During these interviews, I was conscious that this would be the case and therefore I had to adapt my interview method to include more writing of notes, which took away from the informal conversation-based discussion that most of the interviews were able to achieve. However, it was also noted within the process of interviewing in these public spaces that the interviewees were more open to reflexively discuss the institutional structure within which they work and how they 'feel' about these constraints and/or opportunities (cf. McDowell 1998). Being outside of the 'ears and eyes' of the workplace seemed to unfreeze certain personal perceptions and conceptualisations that did succeed in getting beyond the 'official line' or business slogan.

Those interviews conducted in an office setting, I feel, gave the interviewee a sense of control in the process as they to a large extent got to determine the type of room in which the interview would take place. Often when it was located within a large boardroom or meeting room the interview took on the dynamic more in keeping with a business presentation than a conversation amongst equals. But again, equals we were not in many cases, as again the perceptions of me as an unthreatening student had mixed reactions. Some interviewees maintained an air of superiority of experience over me, while others, in a sense, 'dropped their guard' and revealed quite personal and genuine reflection. Those interviews which were conducted within the interviewee's personal office space behind a closed door were interesting in many respects because the interviewees often seemed to take pleasure in showing the amount of work piled on their desks and the scattered plans, photographs, and renderings of their next big 'project'. Seeing and speaking to these people in what could arguably be described as their (professional) 'domain' was quite revealing about their daily practices. In addition, it was not unusual for a phone call or personal assistant to interrupt the interview for a period of a few minutes, during which time I would pause the recorder. These interruptions served (intentionally or not) to give the impression of how busy and important these professionals were.

Similarly, when interviewing participants in their home the setting of the interview was largely beyond my control with respect to seating arrangements and recording practicalities. Interviewing within someone's home also made the process feel much more invasive. Whereas in some of the interviews in an office environment it may have felt like I was part of a

business transaction, it was hard to imagine a situation other than the researcher-researched role when I was speaking with interviewees in their 'private' homes. In these situations it took a bit longer on my behalf to reach a level of comfort with the interviewee and I think this impacted negatively on the depth of issues covered.

Many of these issues surrounding where the best 'place' is for an interview were complicated by the fact that I asked the participants where they would like to meet or where it was most convenient for them. However, it was unlikely that many of those I contacted would have participated if it meant that they had to travel to meet me in a set location of my choosing. Elwood and Martin (2000) assessed the issues surrounding interview locations based on two types of concerns:

> "[P]ragmatic considerations such as choosing places that participants could find and travel to and that were conducive to conversation; and concerns about power relations between participants and researchers, specifically with respect to the ways that choosing a location such as our university offices might constitute our own position as that of 'expert' "(2000: 649).

Elwood and Martin (2000) found little in the methodology literature to guide their inquiry into the implications of interview sites, however, they argued that interview sites and situations are inscribed in the social spaces that geographical researchers are seeking to learn more about and therefore play an important role in the research process.

> "We suggest that the interview site itself produces 'micro-geographies' of spatial relations and meaning, where multiple scales of social relations intersect in the research interview. Careful observation and analysis of the people, activities, and interactions that constitute these spaces, of the choices that different participants make about interview sites and of participants' varying positions, roles, and identities in different sites can illustrate the social geographies of a place" (Elwood and Martin 2000: 649).

The relevance of these 'micro-geographies' of the individual interview process, as well as the micro-geographies of interviews across a group of actors, is something that I did consider in my research design process. Yet, on reflection I would say that aside from the noise factor and the issues with recording in a public space, I was not as attuned to some of the ethical issues and interpretive influences of place on the data collected during the interviews. While I did take account of the location in my writing up of the interview material (i.e. transcripts), its impact did not play a significant role in the thematic coding of my interviews. The previous reflection on the impacts of 'placing' the interview provides the most amount of detail on the issue to be found within this thesis. However, the implications, it might be argued, could have been carried through more systematically with an emphasis on the power relations endemic to the spaces of research within the qualitative analysis process. My own experiences (good and bad) from the interviews conducted in Toronto and Essex, as described within this chapter, have spurred me to take the 'place' of interviewing more seriously in future research.

The intent of this section was to provide a space for reflection within this thesis on my own influence and role in the research interview process. What it has demonstrated is that access, timing, and location are key elements of the qualitative research process. It has also illustrated how my own research design, iterative as it was, had considerable room for improvement in how I incorporated a reflexive analysis of the interview process, in terms of power, gender-relations, age and occupation, within the primary analysis. While some of the reflections here were surprising even to me at the time of writing

them, I do feel that my research design has maintained a level of transparency and integrity that consistently accounted for the fact that social research is always affected by the interactions between interviewer and subjects and their particular interpretations. I am reminded of McDowell's (1998: 2139) comment that: "in research that depends on interviewing – whether of elites or other groups – the papers and books that result are in the end nothing more or less than a story."

3.5 Qualitative Data Analysis

In the collection and analysis of data garnered through the interview process I used a variation of grounded theory, as alluded to previously in this chapter. Sections 3.2 through 3.3 dealt primarily with the collection of data following the 'principle' of corpus construction, so the focus of the current subsection is on grounded analysis. On a general level, in analysing the interviews I attempted to draw categories or themes from the abstract theory available in the literature as well as 'emergent' categories arising from the interview transcripts themselves. The close reading and re-reading of the interview transcripts, my research notes, and the collected secondary documentation was undertaken with particular emphasis on the primary interview transcripts.

3.5.1 Thematic Coding

A line-by-line reading and highlighting of key words and phrases from the text was undertaken of the interview transcripts with the intention of illuminating a comprehensive list of preliminary conceptual themes that 'fit the data'. According to Strauss (1987: 28):

"These concepts and their dimensions are as yet entirely provisional; but thinking about these results in a host of questions and equally provisional answers, which immediately leads to further issues pertaining to conditions, strategies, interactions and consequences. As the analyst moves to the next words, next lines, the process snowballs, with the quick surfacing of information bearing on the questions and hypotheses, and sometimes even possible crosscutting of dimensions".

This initial stage of analysis or *open coding* (cf. Strauss 1987; Strauss and Corbin 1998) stresses the importance of distinguishing participant concepts (terms used by the interviewees) from the theoretical, those concepts derived from my own interpretation (Baxter and Eyles 1997: 510). Strauss (1987) uses the term *in vivo codes* to refer to those "taken from or derived directly from the language of the substantive field: essentially the terms used by the actors in that field themselves" (1987: 33). In my process, I took these key words or phrases and made a category for them. In essence I gave them a name in my own words, but kept the original text of the interview with the newly named category. These initial categories or themes were compiled as a list of themes to emerge from each individual interview. The need to separate my own interpretive registers from the actual words, actions, and practices of the actors being interviewed proved invaluable in the writing up of this thesis and ensured greater transparency throughout the data gathering and analysis process.

The grounded theory approach states that a range of questions and reflections should be written around these emergent categories that take the shape of *theoretical memos*, which are provisional attempts to draw out connections, problems, and questions. The value of these memos as a research diary allowed me to track empirical observations and observe how cumulatively these affected my changing conceptualisations of the research

design as a whole, and to note the impact these thoughts had on successive interviews. The process was therefore extremely iterative in nature and the flexibility this enabled meant that I was not 'thrown off course' by twists or surprises in terms of accessibility to interviewees or the substantive content of our conversations. All of these factors became part of the ongoing analysis process. Rather than requiring me to overcompensate with secondary sources or attempt to account for factors of *error*, these 'results' provided new directions for the research frame of reference that may not have otherwise been followed if a less flexible form of interview and analysis procedure had been employed.

The continuous re-reading of the transcript sections dealing with the emergent categories was another source for drawing together preliminary or provisional connections across the actors and the cases. The notes in the margins of the transcript texts of each interview helped me to develop the schedule or prompt sheet for subsequent interviews. Formally, a provisional comparison across the actor-generated themes was conducted in order to compile a list of case-specific categories or themes. With two sets of themes to work with: the actor-specific themes and the case-specific themes, I operationalised the comparative nature of my initial research design. The four study units were compared and contrasted on the basis of the emergent thematic categories. Grounded theory involves the early use of a provisional coding system across the study units, ensuring that analysis is not something that is 'started' only once the fieldwork is completed. To enable this dynamic coding framework, further close reading of the transcripts occurred wherein the list of case-specific and actor-specific themes were compared to one

another. This comparison did not seek to quantify or rank the 'order' of themes but rather looked for patterns, variations, and consistency in activity or thinking expressed within the case-specific categories of all four units. This provisional coding of all the fields yielded a list of twenty-two cross-cutting themes or categories. Three data sets therefore were produced in total from the grounded approach employed: actor-specific; case-specific; and cross-cutting. In contrast to other methodological approaches (such as positivism's hypothesis testing for falsification) the grounded approach, I believe, allowed me to garner a breadth and depth of social detail in the words and actions of the actors under study themselves. The difficulty that emerges from the grounded approach is the sheer amount of information collected. The ongoing coding, analysis, and research design, however, made it quite obvious to tell when a particular subject area had reached saturation. In approaches that seek to test the replicability of results the emphasis is not on the social process or phenomena of study itself, but the accountability of the research frameworks' ability to 'represent' this. The rigour and validity test for my thesis is found in the clarity and complexity of the iterative design and the transparency in the derivation of the findings. The fact that these considerations are actively part of the grounded approach to researching human subjects is a clear advantage over other methodological approaches, which rather than embracing the unexpected, resign themselves to 'explaining' away the externalities and exogenous findings after the fact.

Throughout this iterative process I maintained the direct relationship between the thematic categories (from all three data sets) and the actual supporting

text from the interview transcripts[16]. From the emergent themes it was then possible to look for 'core themes', which accounted for much of the variation in patterns of behaviour, activity, and intention or general thinking across the empirical study participants. Chapter 4 engages with the actor and case-specific themes to emerge from the research which are implicitly centred around the inter-related processes of emergence, legitimisation and contestation. Chapter 5, which is focused on the 'producers' of New Urbanism, surveys the manifold cross-cutting themes. These themes revealed themselves to be grouped into three core categories: regulatory constraint and opportunity; industry practice; and personal and professional contextualisations.

Together the three data sets and the core themes have been used to identify connections between structural (macro) process-oriented properties and interactional (micro) process-oriented properties. The supplemental memos and notes compiled in conjunction with the interview transcripts themselves and the categories and themes helped me to take these and see how well they did or did not fit with the conceptual framework of the 'structures of provision' as an explanatory tool (rather than a theory). Conclusions on the

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[16] It should be noted here that, where available, I did collect secondary data from supplementary material and documentation. However, there was considerably little of this related specifically to each of the four chosen study sites. Considerable background material was collected from municipal sources, including Official Plans and Zoning documents. It was not uncommon, however, for such documents to be outdated, in the process of review or as yet not implemented, so direct reference to the subject developments was not always present. Other sources of secondary data included the unsolicited provision of documents by the various interviewees who had some kind of role or authorship in the production of a given document. In addition, several government-produced documents on the strategic guidance of future urban development and growth were consulted. The primary point I would like to make here however is that the grounded approach to qualitative analysis acknowledges the role of secondary sources and abstracted themes from relative literature. As such the incorporation of secondary sources has been accounted for within the larger framework of qualitative analysis discussed in this section of the thesis. In particular, references made to secondary documentation within the interview transcripts have been systematically coded in the ongoing analytical framework.

utility of the conceptual framework form the basis of Chapter 6. Reaching this

point in my analysis signalled to me that I was ready to begin the challenge of

theory-building – the ability to comment, with empirical evidence to support it,

on the contingent relationships between New Urbanism as process and

outcome. More specifically, this stage involved trying to answer the difficult

questions that emerged in the earlier stages of analysis – such as, what is

the correlation between process and place? And, are the ideational

properties of New Urbanism incongruent with the practical 'reality' of the

producer's institutional and regulatory resources, constraints and

opportunities? Chapter 7 takes up these challenges.

3.5.2 Theory-building

In general terms, the analysis process I undertook for the primary empirical

component of this thesis research roughly followed Stroh's (2000)

description:

1. Read/listen to each interview through in full in order to get an overall feel for its whole content and what the concerns of the participants were.
2. Circle words and phrases that seemed to recur in the text. Using this approach, if a participant say, kept coming back to questions, issues or particular experiences, these would be clearly highlighted ready for the next stage
3. Using the circled words and phrases begin to link these together. Begin the actual process of coding, categorizing the words and phrases and also the more abstract argumentative structures at work in the interview.
4. Begin the theory-building stage of the research as begin to link codes together, in order to ascertain what general themes were emerging from the text.
5. Extract the most pertinent codes on which to focus for the thesis (following Stroh 2000: 211).

The process of theory-building is therefore part and parcel of qualitative

analysis. This underlines the inter-dependency between theory and method.

But what is theory? As Gilbert (2001:17) states: "theory highlights and

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explains something that one would otherwise not see, or would find puzzling. Often, it is an answer to a 'Why?' question." Gilbert concludes that theory can be used as an explanation. With this in mind then, let me reiterate what I am seeking to explain. The answer to this underscores the significance of the research questions I originally posed. My research questions are two-fold: they ask 'what?' and 'why?'. However, through the process of conducting the research, the explanatory power of the fieldwork and the conceptual framework employed, revealed that it is the 'how?' questions that provide the most compelling and significant trajectories. Nevertheless, for the moment let us recall my primary research questions:

What ideological, regulatory and structural parameters are promoting New Urbanism in Toronto? And, why is it now seen as the 'best practice' alternative to sprawl and a solution to social disaffection?

Within these questions it is evident that certain *a priori* assumptions have informed the formulation of the questions themselves. For instance, in asking 'what' conditions are promoting New Urbanism I am in effect postulating that New Urbanism is being promoted and that underlying this promotion are mechanisms connecting ideas, regulations, and institutional 'structures'. Second, the 'why?' question suggests, rather than asks, if New Urbanism is seen as a 'best practice' alternative to sprawl and social disaffection. The step-wise nature of the corpus construction approach has, however, helped to ensure the validity of the research despite the researcher bias evident within the original questions posed prior to my investigation.

The empirical research revealed for example that it may not be valid to say that 'New Urbanism' is promoted in Toronto (see Chapter 5's discussion of

the conceptualisation of New Urbanism) because there is no single or clear conceptualisation of 'it' amongst those involved in producing such developments. Second, the interviews also revealed that saying it is 'best practice' might have overstated the significance of 'New Urbanism' to industry actors (see Chapter 5 discussion of industry practices). However, the questions also helped to illuminate the chasm which exists between what development actors perceive they are doing and the wider reproduction of governmental rationalities about where and how people should live. This latter statement demonstrates the 'theory-building' enabled through this research on New Urbanism in Toronto. As such, it at once demonstrates how the questions posed (problematic as they may be) have resulted in an iterative construction of a corpus of empirically derived information from a step-wise production of a list of contextually specific actors. As well as the inductive leap made by me, the researcher, in drawing together lines of connectivity within and between *in vivo* codes through my own theoretical categorisation of the emergent themes.

Together these 'steps' in the analysis process enable me to reach explanatory 'conclusions', which relate the emergent themes in the context of the four sites of investigation in Toronto to the conceptual framework of the structures of provision. This emphasis forms the basis of Chapter 6 wherein the 'structures of provision' framework is reflected upon and the primary conclusions of the thesis presented. In brief, this reflection sees the exploratory utility of the framework maximised yet eventually set aside due to its limited explanatory value in this study. The next step in the theory-building phase of this research thus sought to illuminate what the conceptual

framework 'missed' or neglected in the Toronto case study and how to use these identified gaps to bring value-added theoretical relevance to the idiosyncratic narratives of the study units. This additional step also introduced a discussion of alternative literature to enhance the explanatory value of the conceptual framework. Chapter 7 highlights these and other contributions to the on-going process of theory-building. Overall, the contribution of this thesis should be viewed from the perspective of problematising the taken-for-granted aspects of building provision, and in this vein I intend to ask new questions as much as make definitive judgments (cf. Philo 2000).

From formulating the research questions through to the theory-building phases of the research design, I have attempted to, as transparently as possible, demonstrate the cyclical nature of the grounded approach to researching social phenomena. Furthermore, in undertaking a comparative case study approach I have minimised the impacts of researcher bias on the study's effectiveness to address the research questions. Eisenhardt (1989: 546) states that the strength of theory-building from case studies is the likelihood of generating 'novel theory'.

"Creative insight often arises from the juxtaposition of contradictory or paradoxical evidence (Cameron & Quinn 1988). As Bartunek (1988) argued, the process of reconciling these contradictions forces individuals to reframe perceptions into a new gestalt. Building theory from case studies centres directly on this kind of juxtaposition. That is, attempts, to reconcile evidence across cases, types of data, and different investigators, and between cases and literature increase the likelihood of creative reframing into a new theoretical vision. Although a myth surrounding theory building from case studies is that the process is limited by investigators' preconceptions, in fact, just the opposite is true. This constant juxtaposition of conflicting realities tends to 'unfreeze' thinking, and so the process has the potential to generate theory with less researcher bias than theory built from incremental [normal science] studies or armchair, axiomatic deduction" (1989: 546).

This 'unfreezing' of my own preconceptions about New Urbanism, and housing provision in general, occurred in an equally step-wise direction as each new interview presented new possible lines of inquiry and the potential re-framing of the research as a whole. The challenge was to generate a corpus of emergent themes from the interviews with which to draw continuities and discontinuities of ideas, actions and processes in a focused manner, which critically addressed the limits of my proposed research questions, but was able to provide direction to outline the lines of inquiry for further research.

Conclusion

This chapter has emphasised the iterative nature of the research design process, which was based on the data collection approach of corpus construction, with its step-wise quality. The collection and analysis of the interview transcript materials was thus enabled through an adaptation of grounded theory, wherein the challenge was to capture the theory-building capacity of the *in vivo* themes while acknowledging the influence of my own abstraction of these themes in relation to my personal knowledge-base and engagement with relevant theory. In writing this chapter and upon reflecting on my own assumptions, the extent to which theory and method are inextricably connected has been emphasised. The grounded nature of my research design, I believe, rescued this project from my own ignorance or bias concerning a myriad of different processes, actors, and ideas co-present in the massively oversimplified conception of the generic 'development process'. Holdaway's (2000) comments on the interconnectivity of theory and

method thus really came to life through the process of designing, and more explicitly, carrying out this research:

> "Methods of research used by social scientists must be designed to document adequately the richness and diversity of meanings people attribute to phenomena. They must allow us to document the ways in which meanings are constructed, negotiated within particular social contexts and become regarded as taken for granted. Our methods of research must therefore allow us to suspend belief in the givenness of phenomena, to perceive the frailty of the social world and to appreciate the ways in which that frailty is created into what is taken for granted and has integrity for the people we are studying. Our methods of research follow from an understanding of the subject matter of the social sciences. Theories of social science imply methods and methods of research imply theories" (2000: 166).

In undertaking this research and particularly in detailing the thought processes and decision-making that made it possible, I realised early on that I was myself the primary instrument of inquiry. I interacted directly with the study participants; I gauged how to behave or proceed at any given moment; I made the judgment calls on what to take note of or record; and I constantly re-evaluated how a particular line of inquiry did or did not offer promise for answering the research questions I posed (cf. Locke et al. 2000: 99). All of these issues required ethical consideration and had the potential to influence the validity of my thesis.

Undertaking the pilot study interviews prior to my core case study was one approach to ensuring that oversights in ethical consciousness concerning issues of privacy, informed consent, accountability and transparency in the research process, confidentiality of data, and the determination of how the data would be presented and used after the research was completed, were dealt with in advance so that such concerns did not threaten the validity of my research. The pilot study was also a crucial tool for discovery in relation to the breadth and depth of detail that I was able to access from my

interviews in Toronto with various development actors. Chapter 4 will introduce the development narratives of the four selected cases as constituted in and through the socio-economic and political context of Toronto's ongoing urbanisation processes.

Chapter 4

Why Toronto? Why New Urbanism?

Introduction

Why choose Toronto for a case study? In attempting to answer this question, this chapter is devoted to setting the geographical context of the research and providing a rationale for selecting Toronto as the primary case study location based on historical, cultural and politico-economic factors affecting the emergence of New Urbanism in Toronto's private housing system. The format of this discussion follows several major areas of concern in the discursive and physical 'construction' of Toronto's residential built form. Before addressing these concerns a brief overview of 'where' Toronto is and my rationale for choosing Toronto as a site of study is provided.

Following this Toronto-wide profile, the remainder of this chapter looks specifically at the contextual details of the four primary study sites selected for investigation, based on the criteria outlined in the previous chapter. The intent of this second part of the chapter is to demonstrate the uniqueness of the combination of events and relations constituting each situated development process. More significantly, this chapter seeks to emphasise that within this diversity it is possible to begin to identify a patterning of institutional, regulatory, and cultural constraint undulating throughout the processes of emergence, legitimisation and contestation of the concept and material form of 'New Urbanism' in each of the four study sites. To clarify then, my objective is not to discredit or bolster New Urbanist claims about

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design, planning, social cohesion, or environmental sustainability but to understand how the 'principles' and 'visions' of New Urbanism are operationalised within and through the means (financial, technical, institutional, regulatory etc.) available to the producers of new housing in and around Toronto. Rather than assume that all New Urbanism is the same, the empirical evidence presented in this chapter seeks to establish the ways in which design principles differ from development visions/intents and how both can manifest in diverse material results.

4.1   Why Toronto?

'Where' Toronto is, spatially and temporally, is perhaps as important, even synonymous, with why it was selected. The 'Greater Toronto Area' (GTA) [17] is purported to be the largest and fastest growing metropolitan region in Canada and the fourth largest in North America. For the purposes of this research the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) definition is the most appropriate because it includes all four of my selected case study sites. (See Figure 4.1). The actual economic, political and social influence of the city of Toronto, however, extends beyond the confines of any arbitrary demarcation. Physically, Toronto's expanse is constrained to the south by Lake Ontario, but the economic significance of the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence Seaway system is undeniable in Toronto's history and urban evolution.

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[17] This moniker is 'unofficial' in relation to administrative association due to the fact that the list of municipalities considered part of the GTA varies according to which level of government, social organisation or professional association is defining it.

This image has been removed as the copyright is owned by another organisation

Figure 4.1: Toronto Census Metropolitan Area

The current population of the GTA is approximately 5.1 million with the City of Toronto consisting of 2.5 million people. Toronto's late 18th century emergence and growth in population, as well as national, and international economic and social significance was initially explained "in terms of the exploitation of minerals and timber from the Ontario heartland and its proximity to emerging American markets" (Williams 1999:12). The rapid expansion of the city continued throughout the 19th century with Toronto becoming the heart of Canada's most industrialised and developed region (Walks 2001). Economic and population expansion after World War II was fuelled in the city and emerging suburbs by international migration, partially

bolstered by the elimination of immigration criteria-for-entry based on race, ethnicity and country of origin in the late 1960s (Croucher 1997).

Today Toronto is widely considered to be one of the most multi-cultural metropolitan regions in the world (according to the United Nations; cf. Berridge 1995 and Croucher 1997) and for a period during the mid 1980s and 1990s Toronto often topped 'quality of life' lists for the best places to live and work (*Fortune Magazine* 1996). The adage of 'the city that works' became a popular way to describe Toronto for the 'progressive' urban reforms it witnessed throughout the late 1960s and early 1970s. This positive 'press' heralded Toronto "for its progressive social policies, particularly in the area of housing; for its clean, safe streets; for its state-of-the-art public transportation; for its reformed metropolitan government; and, consistently, for its atmosphere of ethnic and racial harmony" (Croucher 1997: 320). All of these claims of 'Toronto the good'[18] were largely made knowable through the contextualisation of Toronto in relation to 'other' North American cities, primarily those in the United States which had increasingly throughout the post-war period of urban decentralisation experienced the 'hollowing out' of their urban centres. In contrast to cities like New York and Detroit or Chicago, Toronto's suburbs did not emerge as the exclusive domain of the middle classes; the city maintained a residential stronghold amongst the upper, middle and working class populations. This is not to say that Metropolitan Toronto (formed in 1953 which integrated the City of Toronto and the five

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[18] Following Milroy *et al.* (1998) in the 1960s Toronto was known as 'Toronto the Good' in reference to its reputation for being safe and clean, while in the 1970s the city was often called 'the city that works' because unlike its American counterparts the downtown had not been gutted and city services still functioned effectively. However, the first reference to 'Toronto the Good' occurred in the mid 1880s following the religiously motivated civic reforms to clean up the city championed by Mayor William Howland.

surrounding municipalities into a federated municipal form) did not experience a period of stagnation in terms of employment and population, which by the mid 1980s had been increasing in those areas outside of 'Metro'. Sprawling development patterns throughout the wider GTA became a subject of academic, bureaucratic, professional and environmental debate but it largely rested on the emergent 'fear' of economic, social and environmental decline (Isin 1998). These fears remain, and 'sprawl', particularly defined by residential development patterns and pressures, has become a major political platform upon which local and provincial agendas have called for new urban reforms to 'stop sprawl' and facilitate compact 'smarter growth'.

This climate of a perceived need for systemic changes to how and where residential development and its supporting infrastructure are planned, designed and built has given way to a wave of support throughout political and economic circles, including contingents of the development and housing industry, for re-using derelict and underutilised urban land or brownfields. While this is the case, massive tracts of greenfield (often former prime agricultural) lands are still being developed into extensive housing projects. In the 1990s the popularity of New Urbanism in the United States began to influence private developers and public officials looking for 'alternatives' to the oft-demonised 'bland' and 'unsustainable' nature of the suburban form of housing in the GTA. Several 'experiments' with New Urbanism received planning permission in the mid 1990s and they began to be constructed in phases beginning in the late 1990s. Cornell in the Town of Markham, and Montgomery Village located in the Town of Orangeville, were two of these

early 'experiments' that received much media and popular attention at different points in their respective development history. By the late 1990s and the beginning of the current decade the proliferation of housing developments throughout the GTA which have taken cues from Cornell and other early 'prototypes' of the new generation of 'master planned communities' had burgeoned. Furthermore, the rise of 'community building' as a professional responsibility and social desire had been naturalised not only as media and marketing hype, but as a normative statement on how the GTA should address the equally hyped evils of sprawl and the lamented decline of 'neighbourhoods'.

Toronto's experimentation with New Urbanism has now extended from the suburban context to that of the city itself. New-build construction within the City of Toronto has increased in recent years, with over thirty-percent of all new construction in 2002 occurring within the current boundaries of the city (Hemson Consulting Ltd. 2003). The promotion of infill and brownfield development within Toronto has resulted in an unprecedented amount of new homes being constructed in parts of the city that had previously suffered from a shortage of affordable and adequately sized homes. Much of the new construction has been in the form of medium density single and stacked town houses, which attempt to 'mimic' the vernacular of the older Toronto neighbourhoods within or adjacent to which they are situated. However, the majority of the new construction statistics relate to the massive boom in high-rise condominium development, which has occurred in the last five years within the city.

The mere existence of the debates surrounding sprawl and housing densities (cf. Bourne 2001) suggests that Toronto offers an appropriate site for research on housing development and producer practices. The added bonus of the notoriety that the GTA has attracted in connection with New Urbanism in the Canadian context (in particular centred on the Town of Markham; cf. Gordon 2002), offers a variety of possible lines of inquiry particularly focused on why New Urbanist developments have emerged within this context. My research interests in Toronto and specifically on New Urbanism in Toronto have been influenced by many of the historical and current debates surrounding the urban landscape and the social, economic and political dynamics of the region. However, the particular line of inquiry I have selected geared to the *production* of New Urbanist housing in Toronto was motivated by a reflection on New Urbanism in juxtaposition to Toronto's post-war urbanism, and the palpable cultural divisiveness which exists between 'the city' and its 'suburbs'.

4.1.1 Post-War Urbanism

In 1944 the *National Housing Act* was amended to stimulate new house construction, promote community planning, encourage full employment, and support economic growth (Friedman 2002: 31). Following the war, homeownership was actively encouraged by all levels of government and between 1946 and 1970 the number of total dwellings in Canada doubled from three to six million (Friedman 2002: 31). In the mid-1950s one of the first and by far the most influential large-scale suburban developments in Canada was conceived for north east of the then 'City of Toronto' – Don Mills, Ontario. Dubbed the 'mother of all suburbs' by one journalist, Don Mills

celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in May 2003. Don Mills was a response to the post-war housing demand and a reaction to the poor quality of homes created as part of the immigration-fuelled construction boom. The concepts of neighbourhood, green space, connectivity and curvilinear streets guided the design of the 'total community' which would instantly house 30,000 people and provide industrial and commercial employment for 25,000 more (Martin 2003).

Don Mills has been described as the Canadian Levittown in reference to the massively influential tract housing development on Long Island in the United States. Like Levittown, Don Mills was a response to the demand from an under-housed booming populous, but it was also an experiment in new building techniques and materials. Pre-fabricated building and house components became increasingly popular with builders and the house-buying public, so much so that the ubiquity of design resulted in "the virtual elimination of the architect from the building process" (Friedman 2002: 32). Furthermore, Don Mills represented the first time that a private developer had agreed to assume almost all the costs of servicing the development site, thus taking the financial liability off the shoulders of the municipality, and concreting the municipality's role as little other than a planning regulator. According to Sewell (1993: 95):

> "Since the municipality bore little risk, it had little reason not to permit the developer to do exactly as he saw fit. In one simple stroke, [the developer] had totally changed the rules of development. Now, the only developers municipalities need concern themselves with were those large enough to provide funds for all services demanded by the municipality."

To Sewell (1993), Don Mills therefore represents a significant watershed in municipal planning in Toronto, and indeed in Canada, wherein planners

became in effect 'rubber stampers' catering to the whims of large, wealthy developers. For Sewell (1993), this shift of power in the development process intricately intertwined (or confused, as the case may be) the question of 'good planning' with corporate success (cf. Harris 2004). Many would argue this is the true legacy of Don Mills. As such, Sewell (1993: 95) suggests:

> "Don Mills was the first and last example in Canada of a plan proceeding because it was thought to be 'good planning'. Henceforth, approval seemed more a function of paying servicing costs the municipalities demanded, and because developers thought they had something they could market."

Unlike Levittown, however, Don Mills *was* conceived as a 'new town' or new 'community', whereas Levittown was an impressive feat of mass production based on an "unending collection of streets lined by repetitious and inexpensive houses" (Sewell 1993: 81). Don Mills' legacy and its impact on successive mass-produced housing projects (new town and other) has, despite its visionary inclinations to promote an inclusive design encouraging a range of housing forms and prices while maximising the amenities of public open space, become the default form of suburban development. A form which dictated the practices of the housing industry and public planning system for subsequent decades. The notion that making curvy streets and building big houses on wide lots at low densities would make them wealthy was apparently the take-home message that most private development interests garnered from the Don Mills experience. And as such, "subdivisions with those characteristics, and not the finer details of Don Mills have been proposed on the edges of virtually all Canadian cities over the following five decades" (Martin 2003: G13).

4.1.2 Crises and Management

Large scale, comprehensively planned 'communities' like Don Mills and its later sister-project Erin Mills, both located on the then urban periphery of Toronto, at once redefined 'sprawl' and epitomised it. Seen in striking opposition to the processes under which the 'city' organically grew and how small unserviced, scattered developments (cf. Harris 2004) haphazardly emerged on the landscape, these new town projects were conceived as 'tidy' and 'carefully planned'. Sprawl was re-positioned then as a threat to the domestic bliss and private property values (McMahon and Miller 1998) that corporate planning and development could achieve, but there was also an inherent aesthetic qualification that it was not sprawl if it was a carefully planned community. These early developments of the 1950s and 1960s share an uncanny similarity in approach to the conceptualisation of 'sprawl' as bad unless it is well-planned sprawl suggestive within New Urbanism. The fine line in conceptual terms between growth and sprawl has long hovered over Toronto's urban trajectory. If growth is inevitable, as the New Urbanists imply, then is 'sprawl', as Hans Blumenfield, the then Deputy Commissioner of Planning for Metropolitan Toronto suggested as early as 1957, not just 'premature' or the as yet 'unserviced' form of development with which planning must grapple to give it shape? This question, and many others like it, are today still making headlines in the urban and local press and being debated amongst building and development industry associations and organisations, environmental agencies and activists, professional associations and political pundits.

The debate has largely polarized, however, into a question of city versus suburbs; a fuzzy dividing line which has been essentialised in local culture via the simplified telephone area code system (cf. Harris 2004). Toronto and the GTA are served by six distinct area codes. However, it is often thought that the 'city' elements of Toronto are designated as dial code '416', while the remainder of the GTA is designated as '905'. This division has become part of the local vernacular, so much so that the local media can easily refer to something inside Toronto as 'the 416' and something outside as 'the 905s' without any explanation of these categorisations. The city-suburb divide is complicated by the existence of what are now considered to be 'inner suburbs', the older suburbs within the former Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto, which were amalgamated with the former City of Toronto to form the new City of Toronto in 1998. As juxtaposed to the 'outer suburbs', largely denoted as the '905s'. With re-urbanisation and gentrification occurring within the inner city and the continued middle-class suburbanisation of the outer suburbs, the inner suburbs have witnessed a decline in socio-economic vitality (cf. Murdie 1998). An outdated housing stock largely made up of post-war suburban housing tracts and public housing developments has begun to deteriorate and employment has continued to de-industrialise and extend into the more affluent outer suburbs.

Headlines in *The Toronto Star*, the most read daily newspaper in Toronto, have read: "Boom time in 905"; "City, suburbs swapping traits"; "GTA's 416, 905 still two solitudes"; "Life in suburbia costs more than you think"; and "From farmland to city sprawl, in one swoop". Behind all of these stories is ambivalence towards the suburbs as a 'place' but a surprising degree of awe

at the emerging 'reality' of Toronto's suburban future. "The change from a dominant older city surrounded by smaller suburban ones to a looming suburban giant overlooking the city is a significant event in the history of the evolution of this area" (Carey 2002:1). This comment came in response to the release of the 2001 census data from Statistics Canada, which revealed that in the five years between 1996 and 2001 the area surrounding the City of Toronto grew at an average of seventeen percent, which was more than four times the rate of the city's growth (Carey 2002:1). These growth pressures worry politicians and economists alike, that Toronto's infrastructure, community facilities and emergency and social security systems will not be able to deal with the projected increase in a dispersed population.

This dichotomy between city and suburb is however far more complex than some of the newspaper headlines suggest. The '905' suburbs are not all populated by middle-class whites reacting to the noise, congestion, crime and ethnic diversity of the '416'. There is a growing commitment amongst public bodies and private development interests to make the suburbs less like the suburbs. But scepticism looms over the feasibility of the outer suburbs intensifying enough to be closer to the ephemeral urban ideal epitomised in the older City of Toronto neighbourhoods, which were once themselves considered 'desolate' suburbs (Gorrie 2002). The influence of the automobile on the design of residential spaces has for some critics pre-empted any opportunity to redesign and redevelop the 'sprawling' suburbs. The crux of this debate has largely indicated that there is not much of a debate at all – nearly all interests are united in the rationalisation of the

'current' situation – that being, until the pattern is altered, city and suburb will continue to polarise.

However, there is another trend which has in fact greatly influenced my own interest in researching the 'New Urbanism' occurring within the city, not just the suburbs. This is that suburbanisation is not just occurring within the '905' but the city itself appears to be 'suburbanising', not in the post-war sense of multiplication by subdivision but through re-development, intensification and urban regeneration. The boom in condominium development and big box and car-oriented retail centres and large-scale infill single-family housing projects on former industrial lands are introducing a suburban element into the urban context. Keil (quoted in Gorrie 2002: 4) states:

> "The city is being cleaned up, commercialised. 'Disneyfied'. People are more segregated. More space is reserved for those with money. Most people in the new condos have suburban mindsets. They get into their homes through a parking garage and security system, and interface with the city through large-screen TVs. When they go out, it's to Starbucks or some other suburban-style chain rather than locally owned cafes and stores."

The 'urbanisation of the suburbs' or the 'suburbanisation of the urban' may seem little more than semantics, but there is no doubt that the GTA (both the 416 and 905) is a city region in transition. Any fears that Toronto's downtown could 'hollow out' the way that American cities did in the late 1960s and 1970s, are unfounded. With thirty-percent of all building starts situated within the city Toronto remains vibrant and steadily growing. The land availability within the City, due to de-industrialisation, suggests that it could accommodate a growth of 540,000 to 660,000 people over the next thirty years (Carey 2002), or even one million people, as forecasted by the City of Toronto's current Official Plan.

The identification of 'sprawl' as a bad thing has thus had a long history in Toronto's urban evolution and the various responses to the perceived problems facing suburbia and the central city alike – lack of affordable housing, crumbling infrastructure, congestion – have in recent years become part of the 'smart growth' agenda. With the attention focused on the importance of 'managing' suburban growth the corollary political attention is on intensifying and redeveloping disused urban land.

> "Arterial intensification and sub-centre development are favoured as a way of accommodating changing housing needs without disrupting existing neighbourhoods, whilst the Ministry [of Municipal Affairs and Housing] is also searching for better integration between suburban residential and employment zones and transport/transit initiatives. However, many local communities are reluctant to consider more compact development standards" (Williams 1999: 83).

This is roughly the context within which the development actors, public and private, involved in creating all four of the development projects selected for this research have worked within and reproduced. Regardless of the mental-divide-made-physical along Steeles Avenue (the northern boundary of the City of Toronto), competing conceptualisations of what it means to be a 'good city' within the regulatory, institutional and cultural constraints of the 21st century are being played out in Toronto's urban and suburban landscape.

4.1.3 The Future of 'Toronto the Good'

Toronto's days as 'the city that worked' and 'Toronto the good' have slid from prominence in recent years, as many of the formerly downtrodden American cities Toronto was once cast in opposition to have been 're-born' (such as Portland, Baltimore, Chicago etc.). The conceptualisation of decline and renewal is omnipresent in the mental and physical construction of Toronto as

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a city, even when it is focused on the decline and renewal of other cities. Donald's (2002; 2002b) regulationist approach to answering why the 'city that worked' stopped working provides a well documented overview of the major periods of stagnation and instability which by the 1980s had upset the balance that Toronto had managed to achieve through its institutional managerialism. Particularly enlightening is Donald's reflection on the how the *discourse* of the 'city that works' carried Toronto far beyond the localised functioning of the mode of regulation under the Fordist regime of accumulation[19].

What made Toronto a good city was said to be its safety, cleanliness and friendliness – to some this translated into a boring or dull city lacking the grittiness, danger and vitality of places like New York or Chicago. Yet, who decided what made Toronto good in the 1960s; and who judged it as 'working' in the 1970s? What makes a city good? Moore-Milroy *et al.'s* (1998) examination of 'who says Toronto is a good city' summarised the literature available on good cities as brief and incomplete, with "few studies expressing the complexity of the interaction of form, economy, social factors and other elements of city life" (1998:1). The authors cited however one writer, Haworth (1963:57) who proposed that each official or unofficial city practitioner carries an image of the good city in the *mind's eye.*

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[19] Donald's (2002) analysis is not specific to the trajectory of urban development in Toronto but it addresses the manner in which increased state activity in postwar private life eased the pro-suburban-city development mood through the transition to a Fordist space economy (cf. 2002: 2139). In addition, Donald's analysis identifies the early roots of the ideological support for action to control growth and save central neighbourhoods (as championed by Jane Jacobs) and points to the irony of how the institutional structures introduced under urban-driven programs in the 1950s (e.g. the metropolitan form of government and a regional public-private economic development commission) but disbanded in the nineties, "are now seen as part of the solution to present-day challenges of municipal fragmentation, lack of regional economic coordination, sprawl, and urban-suburban warfare" (2002: 2149).

"It may be unsystematised and unconscious but, he asks, how could practitioners expect that a good city could result from their efforts without it? How could they support or reject changes to the city if they were not guided by reference to some sort of an ideal, abstract whole?" (Moore Milroy *et al.* 1998: 1).

What is the ideal, abstract whole in the mind's eye of the producers of New Urbanist housing in Toronto? Does attempting to make the 'good city' have to be altruistic? Can it not also be profitable? With Don Mills came the watershed when the power dynamic shifted in favour of the wealthy developers as the real decision-makers with regard to how and where Toronto grew. Little has changed in this respect – but the private development industry is now building New Urbanist housing on greenfields and in the city. Why are they doing this without being 'regulated' to do so by public planning authorities? Is it coincidental that development actors, planning officials and homebuyers are seemingly sharing the same or similar 'mind's eye' visions of the 'good city'?

The purpose of highlighting these theorisations and questions is to underscore the relevance of the research I have discussed in this thesis and why Toronto was selected as the case study location. I am attempting to illuminate how Toronto's past, present and future are intricately bound up in processes of rationalisation of what constitutes a good city and good planning. More significantly, I am trying to illustrate how New Urbanism in Toronto is not a 'break' from modernist planning and development but a continuity of situated governmental concerns. The story so far: What is perceived as a problem? Sprawl. What is perceived as a failure? Suburbia. And, what has emerged as a solution? Largely, 'Smart growth' and 'New Urbanism.' Research focused on Toronto's housing producers in 2003 may

seem idiosyncratic in nature, but the implications for a deeper questioning of why and how New Urbanism emerged in Toronto and how relevant an 'event', or rather 'process' that was and is, shatters the contextual-specificity of the research and illuminates some wider inferences about contemporary urban processes.

I have attempted to, albeit briefly, detail Toronto's urban evolution as it has been represented and socially constructed. I have specifically focused on how this 'evolution' relates to historical and ongoing rationalisations of what it means to be 'Toronto the good'. An exploration of Toronto's post-war urbanism in juxtaposition to the emergent problematisation of 'sprawl' and the conceptualisation of 'suburbia' as a social and economic 'failure' have been used to demonstrate the need for deeper questioning of how and why the specific 'responses' to Toronto's urban question(s) are being naturalised in the ambiguous machinations of 'Smart Growth' and 'New Urbanism'.

4.2 Regulating Development in Toronto

The planning system in Ontario is legislated through the *Ontario Planning Act, 1990*. Under this legislation municipalities are given planning authority to determine how land within their administrative boundaries is used as well as where and how future development will occur. There are ostensibly two processes which municipal planning plays a role in regulating: the land subdivision (development) process; and the house building process. The key tools for doing this are the Official Plan and Zoning By-law. The Official Plan is the guiding policy document that gives implementation power to the functional zoning of land within a municipality. Zoning By-laws codify the

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Official Plan policies, giving them legal effect; thus zoning is the "foundation of power for municipal control of urban form" (Beasley 2003: 42). Since all proposed land divisions and building proposals must comply with both the Official Plan and the Zoning By-law, applications for amendment are often required, the final say on which is determined by the elected members of the municipal council with recommendation provided by planning staff. This gives politicians (at least in their estimation) the ability to make the planning process *"long and tortuous"* (Interview # 47, Former City of Toronto Councillor)[20] for a developer or development which they do not favour. This influence is however constrained by the existence of a unique and contentiously influential municipal appeals body.

The system of regulating land use instituted within Ontario's municipalities is referred to as development control, wherein property owners must apply for a permit to undertake proposed development change in order for allowable conditions to be established (Hodge 1998: 258). According to Hodge, development control in Canadian planning practice was first promoted by British planners who emigrated to Canada to take up senior planning positions. In the British context development control was favoured over zoning as it provided for greater local autonomy in the consideration and implementation of community plan making and development on a case-by-case basis. As such it was initially conceived as an interim measure to be used during plan preparation, wherein "each proposal for development, buildings or subdivisions could be reviewed to ensure consistency with the aims of the emerging plan, and a development permit was issued as

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[20] For ease of differentiation from textual quotations, all interview transcript quotations will be presented in this thesis using italic font.

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warranted" (Hodge 1998: 258). In Ontario such permits are known as *site plan control*, a term which underlines the optimal intent of the process, as the focus of development control is on the building rather than its use. Use and the building envelope are, according to Hodge (1998), at this stage in the development control process largely presumed to be relatively non-negotiable as they have already been regulated within the Zoning By-law.

Site plan control is often used for relatively small developments or single buildings, or changes (e.g. infill development within the urban area) but in the case where large parcels of land are subdivided to create new parcels this invokes the need for subdivision control. Following Hodge (1998) subdivision control has two basic components:

> "On the substantive side, this tool attempts to obtain high quality physical environments. It does this by subjecting plans that propose the subdivision of land to an appraisal of their content according to planning and engineering standards. On the procedural side, subdivision control operates as a monitoring process, with prescribed steps and with respect to all public bodies having an interest in the outcome of the proposed land subdivision and subsequent development. The latter formal side is necessary because of the constraints that this scrutiny places on the ownership rights of those proposing the subdivision and of the ultimate owners of the subdivided parcels alike" (Hodge 1998: 262).

While not necessarily mutually exclusive in any given development scheme, on the whole, subdivision control is a much more involved and lengthy process than is site plan control. Consequently, many plans of subdivision suffer from poor design quality in favour of utilitarian efficiencies of lot yields (often at the expense of natural features, social amenities and rational street patterns). It should be noted however that neither zoning, site plan control, nor subdivision control are themselves strategic plans for how a city should develop, but "rather the means by which the community's planning objectives

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are linked to the development process, that is, linked to the aims, inclinations and decisions of those individuals, firms and organisations that may wish to develop land" (Hodge 1998: 278). In light of this characterisation it is fair to say that land use regulation in Ontario is reactive or negative in its approach and is very much dependent on the initiative of individual developers to go beyond the minimum standards set out in the regulations. In other words, while land use regulation can legally prevent undesirable development, it has been largely ineffective in promoting desirable development.

As the remainder of this chapter attests, each of the case study examples of New Urbanism in Toronto have in some form or another attempted to redress the conditions constituting the network of complex relations between land use regulation and the situated development process.

4.3   Description of the Cases

As explained in Chapter 3, the four study sites were selected based on several attribute-based criteria, the most obvious being the categorisation of two sites as *greenfield*[21] development projects and two sites as *brownfield*[22] development projects. The contrasting contexts of the study units were purposefully selected to introduce and test the possibility of multi-factor causality involving contrasts of place, process and actor interaction.

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[21] Greenfield can be defined as development on land that has experienced no prior construction or installation of infrastructure (such as sewer and water), which in the Toronto area has usually been agricultural in nature.

[22] Brownfield is defined as development on land which has had a previous (often industrial) use, and may harbour contaminated soils requiring some degree of 'clean-up' prior to any new development undertaken on the site.

On a general level, all four sites have recently been developed into large-scale housing tracts, which have (consciously and unconsciously) incorporated elements of New Urbanism into the design and planning stages of the production processes. In each case, a first phase of construction has been completed and occupied from three-to-six years by residents who purchased homes directly from the builder/developer. In the two brownfield study sites, construction has largely been completed, whereas in the greenfield study sites, both plans are based on a multiple phase construction process over a large area of land with subsequent phases yet to be marketed, sold, and constructed.

Figure 4.2 below, illustrates the general location of the four study sites within the context of the urbanised area of the Toronto region, as documented through satellite imaging. As is visible from this figure, the two brownfield development sites known as 'The Beach' and 'King West Village' are firmly located within the urbanised area administratively known as the City of Toronto, whereas 'Cornell' in the Town of Markham is located at the periphery of the urbanised area. 'Montgomery Village', the second greenfield development, by contrast, is located beyond the contiguous urban area extending north and west of the City of Toronto. Montgomery Village is located within the administrative boundaries of the Town of Orangeville, which as Figure 4.2 depicts is a self-contained urban agglomeration surrounded by a comparatively 'rural' context characterised by a range of agricultural, pastoral, isolated commercial and industrial, aggregate mining and residential activities.

This image has been removed as the copyright is owned by another organisation

(Source: See Ontario Grow)
<u>http://www.smartgrowth.gov.on.ca/userfiles/HTML/nts_2_5186_1.html</u>

Figure 4.2: The urbanised area of Toronto and region (light blue) and the location of the four case study development sites

By examining the narratives of production[23] for each of the case study units within this chapter, I argue that the meaning of New Urbanism has been conceptualised, reproduced and normalised, and at times questioned and contested, by the housing producers interviewed for each development project. Together these phases of 'becoming' illustrate the dynamism and situated nature of the processes of production experienced and enabled by the producers. The value of this argument is that while it is grounded in the recollections and understandings of the producers involved in specific projects, it is able to interact with the theoretical underpinnings of land development studies and promote the notion that New Urbanism as a design

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[23] The production narratives contained within this Chapter are my own interpretation of the development processes for each of the study projects as consolidated from various sources, including planning reports, committee meeting minutes, and interviews with those actively involved in these processes. It should be noted that in all cases there is not a written record of the development process so the interpretation herein is original and any errors are my own.

and planning approach is mobilised by different, at times competing actors, and framed by dynamic social and technical contexts, structures and constraints. As such it can be argued that the ever-changing 'meaning' of New Urbanism necessitates a conceptual model of development processes, which not only acknowledges but privileges, the role of 'context' in the constitution of spatial practices. The emphasis is here placed on the acknowledgment that producers, even in a greenfield situation, are never dealing with a 'blank slate'. All development activity must exist within an active, yet situated, cultural, institutional and regulatory context. New Urbanism is unique in its attempt to exploit and develop flexibility within the conventions of modern development practice and policy, but this revolutionary propensity has not emerged unscathed or unaltered. All of the case study sites illustrate the tendency for New Urbanist visions to be transformed into something of a hybrid of process and form; a tendency which will be revisited in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6.

The remainder of this chapter, then, introduces the four case units by first providing a visual representation of the development site and/or plan and a statistical overview of their respective development trajectory. The order in which the cases are presented holds little analytical significance other than I have grouped the two earliest projects together, which are both examples of greenfield New Urbanism produced within the suburbs of Toronto. Whereas the two most recently produced projects are both situated on urban brownfield sites within the City of Toronto, and these have likewise been grouped together. So the order of presentation is primarily chronological, but it also maintains the comparative framework of *greenfield v. brownfield* (i.e. in

terms of location, forms and process). What follows for each case description

is my interpretation of the production narratives.

4.4   Cornell, Town of Markham
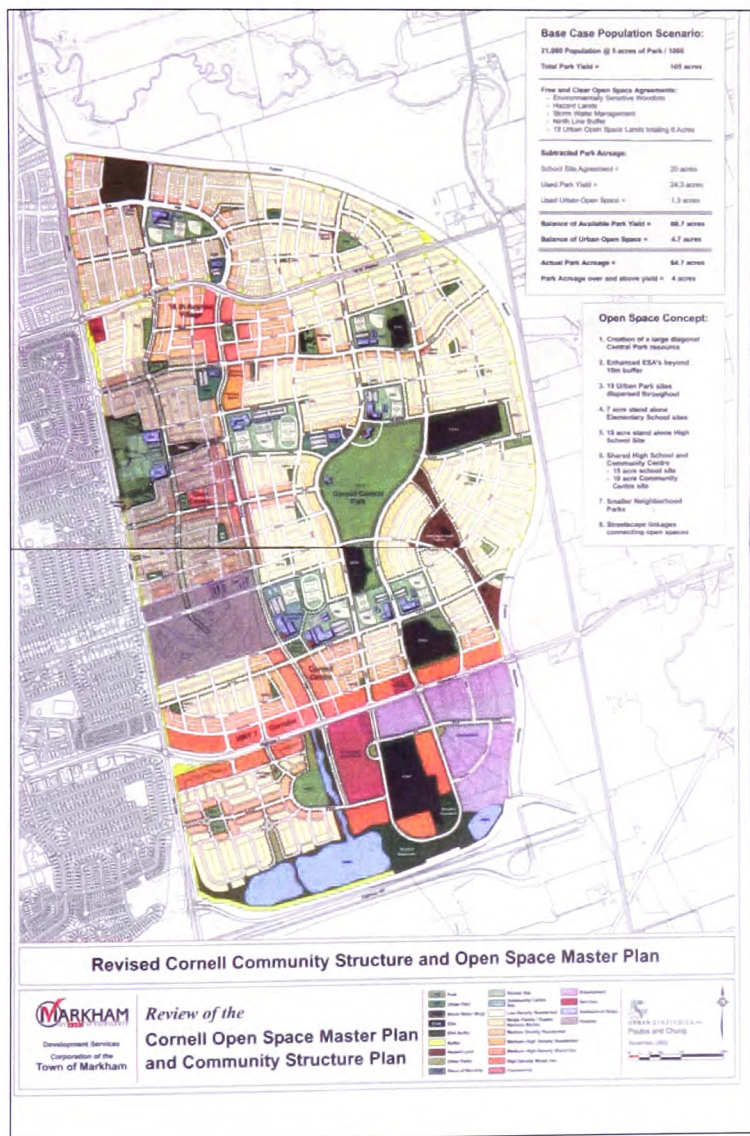
Figure 4.3: Cornell Conceptual Plan (Source: Town of Markham, 2002)

Table 4.1: Cornell Statistics

Date Conceived	1988/1989
Location	Town of Markham, Ontario. Situated on previously agricultural land near to the north-eastern edge of the municipal boundary, adjacent to the Rouge River Valley.
Area	973 hectares
Anticipated Number of Units	Approximately 10,000

Type of Units	53% low density (LD); 26% medium density (MD); 21% high density (HD). NOTE: LD typically includes ground-oriented forms such as singles, semi-detached and townhouses; MD typically includes forms such as townhouses, 'stacked' and mixed/multiple unit buildings and low-rise apartment buildings; HD typically includes mid to high-rise apartment buildings, some of which may also include non-residential uses typically on the ground floor
Anticipated Population	Approximately 30,000 over a 15-20 year time period
Status in 2004	The initial phases of development are completed with approximately 1300 homes and a current population of roughly 3,000. New construction is ongoing and future phases are currently under draft approval from the Town of Markham.

4.4.1 Putting Developers to the Test

Cornell began as an affordable housing demonstration project in the mid to late 1980s and was originally known as the "Markham 500". The 500-acre parcel of land was initially owned by the Province of Ontario and consolidated by them for the purposes of contributing land to a proposed second major airport scheme being considered by the Federal government. When the airport plan was shelved and these lands deemed redundant, the Province decided to use the available government lands as a test-site for demonstrating what private development interests (developers and homebuilders) could do to improve the affordability and availability of the range of housing types and tenures. At that time the Town of Markham, within whose administrative boundaries the lands were situated, was experiencing severe homogeneity (in terms of design and form) of its privately produced housing stock. This was seen as a problem because it suggested that potential socio-economic growth within the Town might be hampered by an inadequate stock of affordable homes to support employment in the local and regional area. The concern at the municipal

level was that people were being forced to move away from Markham, and/or unable to move there, because of the price of homes and the lack of diversity in type and tenure. This local context of a perceived housing problem and the availability of a large area of greenfield land, provided the impetus for the provincial Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing to initiate a joint venture with the Town of Markham.

In 1989 a formal agreement was negotiated between the Government of Ontario and the Town of Markham. A joint development proposal for the lands was to be drafted which would demonstrate directions in which the private sector could alter urban form in order to promote affordability and availability, while maintaining a profitable business for builders and developers. Planning and design consultants were hired by the Town of Markham with their fees paid for by the Province. According to early project co-ordinators, a reputable Toronto planning and design firm, which had substantial experience with 'suburban' development was hired (Interview # 19, Former Provincial Bureaucrat). A due diligence planning process ensued including statutory public consultation; and a proposed plan was brought forward which attempted to exhibit a range of densities that had not previously been achieved in Markham. The pattern of the plan, however, was not considered radically different than the 'norm' for Markham at the time, which was 'suburban streetscapes', with curvilinear roads and cul-de-sacs. Fears that this proposal merely presented 'more of the same' prompted the project co-ordinators from the Province to begin to look for more innovative ideas in urban development and design. Although presented as only one possible alternative urban development form and approach, New Urbanism,

which was steadily gaining a reputation in the United States, struck a chord with the municipal planning staff at the Town of Markham, local politicians and ratepayer groups involved at the time. The original consultants' conventional plans were set aside, the contract with the local firm terminated and a call for 'New Urbanism-friendly' consultants was issued.

The adoption of the New Urbanist approach characterised by the promotion of 'traditional' urban forms and humanly scaled neighbourhood development patterns found its 'vision' in the conceptual designs proposed as part of a North American competition by the Miami-based firm of Duany Plater-Zyberk and Associates (DPZ). This vision was based on the definition of New Urbanism as:

> "A planning approach which incorporates the best features of 19th and 20th Century small towns while addressing modern concerns such as traffic, pollution and urban sprawl. The emphasis is on designing a community that is diverse in use and population, is scaled to the pedestrian, can accommodate both private automobiles and transit, and has a well defined public realm – the streets, open spaces and public buildings" (Cornell Development Group 1996).

Largely credited with pioneering the New Urbanist movement in the United States, Andrés Duany and his partner/wife Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk in 1992 and 1993 initiated a series of design visioning sessions involving a varied group of stakeholders concerning the Markham site. Around this time the size of the project was expanded from the original 500 acres to 750 acres and eventually to 973 hectares in order to make the site more in tune with the 'natural' borders defined by environmental features and existing infrastructure in the vicinity. Under the provincial government of the day (which had in 1990 changed leadership from the centrist Liberal Party to the social democratic New Democrat Party) the housing initiative became known as the "East

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Markham Project" and provincial resources directed towards it increased. The name "Cornell" was eventually selected and the Cornell Development Group formed to carry the project through planning permission (draft plan approval) and eventually implementation.

In 1994 the draft plan approval for the development of 10,000 units and an anticipated population of 30,000 was granted. The New Urbanist conceptual design of the community developed by DPZ involved an exhaustive process of regulatory amendments in order to permit alternative design and development standards for new features not previously incorporated into large-scale housing developments in Markham (or elsewhere in the Toronto region). Chiefly these features included the use of minimum setbacks from the road to the house, the creation of narrow rear laneway access roads, detached rear garages and accessory dwelling units or 'coach houses'. (See Figures 4.4 and 4.5.) These design elements were considered by DPZ to be 'traditional' attributes of small towns and neighbourhoods in existence prior to WWII, which from a design and social and environmental standpoint were considered to be part of the necessary turn away from modernist sprawling housing based on multiplication by subdivision. The final draft master plan for Cornell was approved as an amendment to the Official Plan of the Town of Markham, and a Secondary Plan for Cornell was established. Under the Secondary Plan, site-specific regulations were developed, including a zoning by-law and design guideline, the latter being closely enforced by the appointed control architect.

Figure 4.4: Rear laneway access and garages

Figure 4.5: 'Coach house' accessory dwelling unit over top of garage

The intention of the project co-ordinators at this time was for the newly approved draft plan to proceed through implementation by first securing the finances needed to build the required infrastructure and servicing schemes and then to commence the controlled sale of building lots (by the Town of Markham) to private house builders. However, in 1995 yet another change in the provincial government gravely impacted Cornell's trajectory as a demonstration project. In June 1995, the Progressive Conservative Party was elected into power. The neo-liberal approach of this government radically cut all social and affordable housing programs and initiatives and promoted the selling of redundant provincially owned lands and projects to private interests. The government also initiated the transfer of previously government-sponsored programs and/or funding responsibilities to ill-prepared and under resourced local municipalities.

The Cornell lands were eventually sold in 1996 to a private development consortium, Law Development Group, fronted by Larry Law, who agreed to maintain the New Urbanism embodied in Duany's conceptual plans and already sanctioned in the approved municipal planning and zoning documents. Under Law's project management, the first neighbourhood in

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Cornell (Phase One) was constructed by four homebuilders, including Law himself. Poor management and building co-ordination and timing problems plagued Law's development and construction of Phase One – proving a financial failure for nearly all involved. Several interviewees speculated that Law was not prepared financially or organisationally to take on a project of this magnitude and experimentalism. Most notably, these problems resulted in the dissolution of Law Development Group and the ownership of Cornell reverting to the primary investors originally backing Law. The only completed phase began to be occupied by residents in 1998 and it consisted of approximately 1100-1300 homes and a population of approximately 3,000 (Interview # 12, Planning Consultant). The homes within this first phase consisted of a range of townhouses, semi-detached homes, single detached homes and a central 'Muse' building containing flats over top of a large commercial space. All of these homes incorporated a variety of Victorian design elements as illustrated in Figures 4.6 and 4.7.

Figure 4.6: Neighbourhood Centre building with apartments over top

Figure 4.7: Victorian-inspired designs of homes

Subsequent phases of Cornell are currently (2003-2004) being brought forward for planning permission and active development is again taking place after a period of inactivity compared with the rest of Markham which has

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experienced a building boom of other (arguably) New Urbanist residential developments. The Town of Markham is said to have approximately ten secondary plans accommodating 150,000 people, which together are considered by some researchers (cf. Gordon 2002; Gordon and Tamminga 2002) to be the largest concentration of new communities planned with traditional neighbourhood design principles in North America. Markham Town council has subsequently retained Duany as the control architect for the remainder of Cornell, and a new Open Space Master Plan and Community Structure Plan (Figure 4.3) has been created by the design consultants Urban Strategies Inc. The Town of Markham has also now adopted the New Urbanism approach for all new development in the Town, and it actively promotes itself as "Canada's Centre of Excellence for New Urbanism".

4.4.2 Return of the Community Builders

While Cornell's early intentions as a demonstration project faltered with the pull- back of the Province's involvement, the notion did not completely vanish from the private developers' perspective. Cornell has enjoyed a resurgence of big name development companies and homebuilders interested in taking part in the future phases of development. Public officials with the Town of Markham and builders and developers alike repeatedly mentioned the value of Cornell as a 'test site' for new housing products. New Urbanism in Markham is as much a physical construct as it is an intuitive one, and the significance of being involved with Cornell's development has been promoted as a form of corporate social responsibility. The translation of this corporate discourse to physical form has been accommodated by the promotional re-

branding of those builders and developers involved in Cornell as 'community builders' whose definition of community is far more simplistic than the ageless debates in urban sociology (Bell and Newby 1978; Tönnies 2001 (1887); Park 1925; Young 1990 etc.). 'Community' has come to mean 'life-cycle' housing, accommodating consumers of all ages, and lifestyles. The value of Cornell for these narrowly interpreted 'community builders' is that it provides a relatively proven market (given the sales success of the first phase) for the introduction of alternative housing designs and types. As the senior municipal planner for the Town of Markham describes, the outlook of some 'research driven' developers and builders is:

> "... they are looking ahead to their corporate future, and they are telling us that they see that their future is not in four bedroom single detached homes for the standard nuclear family, that there are a lot of markets that are going to represent the growth sector of their products. And they will include things like four-plexes, the live-work units, markets to young people, old people, two singles buying a house together, that sort of thing. And Cornell is an opportunity for them to test these products because Cornell as a community accepts this type of product very well and also that this product fits very well into a rear-lane based environment. So they want to try a lot of different things in Cornell because they think that a lot of those products are what they are going to be building in ten years time and they want to get it right..."

> (Interview # 23, Senior Municipal Planner)

For the private development interests involved in previous and future phases of Cornell, the 'test site' approach has demonstrated to them that Cornell has the power to "in part, influence everything else that gets built in the Greater Toronto Area" (Interview # 16, Homebuilder); and it has demonstrated that the all rear-lane based concept is not competitively viable when replicated 'en masse' in any one development. The so-called 'sex appeal' of the uniqueness of Cornell being all rear-lane based, however, is upheld by developers and builders seeking to capitalise on the provision of a diverse range of new housing products while maintaining the sales momentum,

reputation and value of a built and occupied first phase. In the perspective of these development interests the 'blood spilled' in the creation and construction of the first truly experimental phase of Cornell has paved the way for a new generation of relatively risk-free niche marketing and profit making. So in this sense market positioning is key and design is a means of achieving this position.

From the regulatory and institutional perspective, the Town of Markham has legitimised the New Urbanism principles espoused by Duany and the CNU by instituting design guidelines and alternative development standards to accommodate the design features of Duany's concept plan. Beyond this administrative role, the Town has taken on the dual role of defending the original 'vision' and also liasing between 'market' interests and residents where problems arise in the production process. Interviewees commented on this dual role as being characterised by three distinct actions.

First, the Town of Markham has sought to liase with builders and buyers to act as an intermediary to ensure customer satisfaction – with 'customers' referring to both the current and future residents of the Town *and* the developers and builders doing business in its administrative borders. The idea being that future investment (both corporate and residential) in Markham should not be dissuaded due to poor communication and a reputation of municipal unresponsiveness.

Second, the Town of Markham has actively pursued a relationship with private development interests that will promote its reputation as a

municipality that is 'in line with the market'. The Town of Markham has 'committed' itself to New Urbanism, with Cornell following the principles of New Urbanism "*as best it can within the constraints of the market*" (Interview # 23, Senior Municipal Planner). Town planners envision Cornell as the prototype for communities of the near future as markets change, issues change, and development is forced to become more transit supportive and land efficient. Builders and developers, likewise, know what to expect from the Town of Markham, and the 'products' being produced there (and increasingly elsewhere) are supportive of New Urbanism generally, and Cornell's unique draw of consumers[24] specifically.

Finally, the Town of Markham has defended the vision of 'pure New Urbanism' that Cornell is said to represent. The Town has been applauded by many of the interviewees for its 'commitment' to the vision and for keeping Cornell 'pure.' For many this equates with the Town's insistence on maintaining the rear-lane based design feature and encouraging neo-traditional architectural styles. The residents' association president credits Markham staff and municipal council for being strong advocates of Cornell, "*not as a New Urbanism experiment, but as a proved lifestyle*" (Interview # 21, Ratepayers' Association President). This 'proved lifestyle' is often equated with the 'cherished' parts of old Toronto where Victorian architecture and higher density housing with rear lane service roads are common. In this

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[24] The largest volume homebuilder in Canada who is currently involved in a new phase development of Cornell claims to have determined that the geographical 'draw' of potential buyers in Cornell is the most dispersed buyer profile. On the whole it has been calculated by them that the purchasing public for most residential developments lives within a certain radius from the site regardless of its location. It is often the case that a builder will sell 80% of its homes to purchasers living within six postal codes or 15 minutes drive from the site of the new development. If in a conventionally designed development the builder is selling to 80% of the market, Cornell will be selling to it is claimed 10% of potential buyers but that percentage will be drawn from across the Greater Toronto Area and beyond (Interview # 16, Homebuilder).

sense then, both the greenfield producers and the brownfield producers have emphasised urban forms of the not-so-distant past as 'ideal'. From a financial standpoint (including that of the current residents of Cornell), supporters want the Town of Markham to maintain the Cornell 'formula', for fear that if it is changed then the ten percent draw of the market will fade because Cornell will no longer be 'Cornell'.

Despite the professed statement of Cornell not being an experiment by the residents' association president, the development's embodiment of 'pure New Urbanism' has largely relied on this 'test site' identity and reputation since its inception. On a positive note, however, it appears that the initial intentions of the Provincial mandate for the 'Markham 500' has, despite the political setbacks, come to fruition, with the site demonstrating how private developers can provide a new, although debatable, range of housing options in terms of product type, tenure and form. Cornell's New Urbanism has been validated (in the marketplace, in regulatory documents, and in an institutional mindset) in essence by being the precedent-setting vehicle that is 'Cornell'.

4.4.3 The Cornell Brand: 'the real thing'

Cornell is the jewel in the Town of Markham's New Urbanist approach to town planning and design. The emphasis on Cornell, with its mere 3,000 residents has however bred some tension with the remaining 228,300 residents of the town. In the history of Cornell's creation, quite a lot of tension has arisen with the neighbouring residential areas to the west of the development site. The Province's initial plans for an affordable housing demonstration project were not well received by residents adjacent to the

lands, who believed Cornell was to be a large scale *"subsidized slum"* (Interview # 19, Former Provincial Bureaucrat).

For some, this first impression apparently still holds. Changes to the plan of Cornell had to be made to accommodate objections from existing area residents to semi-detached homes being built, which would face onto the street that their own homes backed. The municipal ward councillor whose constituency extends considerably west of Cornell, described the situation as being one wherein the older neighbourhoods viewed Cornell as low income, high density and generally substandard to their own 'suburban ideals'. Yet it was the children of these residents who began buying the first homes in Cornell because it was one of the few affordable options in the Markham area. This relationship has changed slightly in recent years with the development of several new residential communities in Markham that have also incorporated New Urbanist 'features' and densities. However, the contested nature of what 'New Urbanism' means to Markhamites and private development interests, alike, is exacerbated by the Town of Markham's staff and council view of all other projects except Cornell as less than 'pure' and lower-form derivatives of Cornell.

Currently the success of the first phases of Cornell in the marketplace has greatly increased the selling prices of the homes to the point where the same young families, singles or couples that were buying the homes when Cornell was first marketed would not be able to do so today. Diversity in the size of homes being produced and the diversity of the population of buyers have also been critiqued, with terms like monoculture, homogeneity and 'new sub-

urbanism' lobbied at its promoters (as discussed in Interview # 18, Ward Councillor, Town of Markham; Interview # 19, Former Provincial Bureaucrat; Interview # 27, Architectural Consultant).

The Town's formalisation of 'New Urbanism' as its planning doctrine has influenced the acceptance of developers and consumers to this form of housing in this localised context. The self-acknowledgment or rather 'branding' of Markham with the New Urbanist label has been a conscious political decision to which the market actors have been hesitant yet still willing to adhere. The degree to which developers and builders are willing to undertake a New Urbanist project in Markham is reflective of the perceived risk associated with selling to a known market niche versus attempting it in an unproven market elsewhere. However, builders are themselves contesting the original design 'vision' of the homes in Cornell by stating the necessity of maintaining competitiveness in an increasingly normalised market for New Urbanist-inspired design features in what are largely deemed to be conventional developments.

On a general level, however, the proliferation of this type of housing has lessened the degree to which Cornell has been singled out from the remainder of the existing Town, both socially as an enclave and politically as a minority population over-represented by political interests on the local municipal council. The amount of vested interest on the part of the Town of Markham in the 'success' of Cornell has played a dramatic role in the market acceptance and promotion of other New Urbanist-inspired development projects despite these all being viewed in comparison to the 'real thing',

which is Cornell. So, Cornell has had a somewhat potted history of minor contestations but on the whole has enjoyed a fairly straightforward process of legitimisation from public and private interests alike. The Provincial and local municipal political interests undoubtedly playing substantial roles in this process.

4.5 Montgomery Village, Town of Orangeville
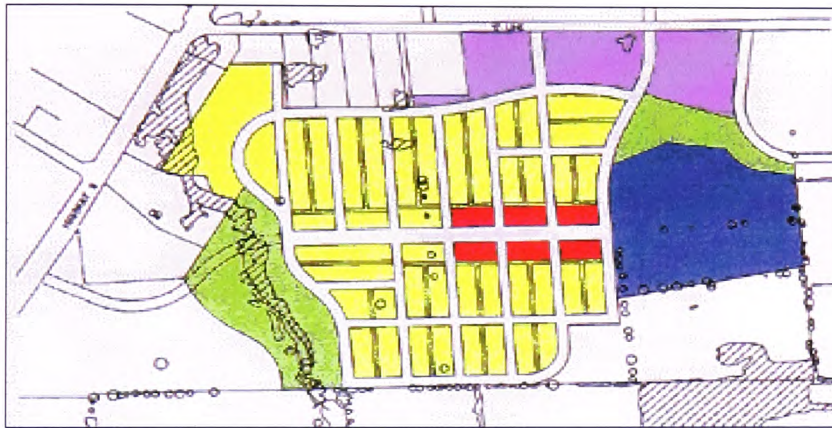
Figure 4.8: Montgomery Village Conceptual Plan
(Source: Town of Orangeville, 1993)

Table 4.2: Montgomery Village Statistics

Date Conceived	1991-1993 (Approved 1993)
Location	Town of Orangeville, Ontario. Situated on previously agricultural land at the western edge of the municipal boundary.
Area	57 hectares
Anticipated Number of Units	750 originally intended, but actual number to be constructed is only 429
Type of Units	274 Singles and 155 Townhouses (all but 80 singles in Phase 5 have rear lanes)
Anticipated Population	Approximately 2200 originally intended, but will actually be approximately 1250
Status in 2004	Phase 1-4 fully completed and occupied; final Phase 5 is under construction and is completely 'conventional' built form (no townhouses and no rear lanes)

4.5.1 'Snapshot' of What Could Have Been

Montgomery Village, located in the Town of Orangeville eighty kilometres north west of downtown Toronto, is along with Cornell, considered one of the first New Urbanist developments in Canada. Montgomery Village was developed by a single landowner/developer, River Oaks Group. In the late 1980s the Group submitted a proposed plan of subdivision for a conventional form of suburban residential development for the 250-acre parcel of land. River Oaks Group is a family-owned company that has been in operation for more than forty-five years. Marvin Green is the second generation of River Oaks and it was he who brought forward the idea of using the Orangeville site as a pilot project to introduce what was then referred to as 'neo-traditional' design. The developer therefore shelved the initial conventional layout of the proposed subdivision and hired a very reputable Toronto-based design team (now known as Urban Strategies Inc.) to drive the creative aspects of the new scheme, which included the introduction of alternative development standards for the Town of Orangeville to consider for planning permission. The new form consisted of more than 600 homes proposed within and alongside a mixed-use neighbourhood centre or 'Main Street' built following a 19th century grid pattern and architectural and design features. The original draft plan approved in 1993 by the Town of Orangeville consisted of single detached homes, semi-detached homes and town houses all of which incorporated front porches and rear laneway access and detached rear garages. Compared to Cornell however, Montgomery Village's homes were smaller and more affordably priced with less exaggerated architectural and aesthetic treatments. Figures 4.9 and 4.10 illustrate the simpler nature of the original 'traditional' phase of Montgomery Village.

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Figure 4.9: Understated yet 'traditional' home designs

Figure 4.10: Rear laneway access with detached rear garages

The early intention of Montgomery Village's developer was to market it as the first 'tele-community' in Canada – wherein each house would be pre-wired for internet capability with the intent of promoting home occupation and decreasing commuter congestion. With the downturn of the economy in the mid 1990s recession period, Montgomery Village began to falter from an economic point of view, and neither the technological element nor the neo-traditional vision survived unaltered. Only a fraction of the originally intended 'Village' homes were constructed following the initial vision. River Oaks Group eventually sold off its remaining building lots within the pre-approved draft plan of subdivision to a local builder who in each successive phase of development altered designs, types and sizes of homes further and further away from the now widely acknowledged 'New Urbanist' vision. In particular, the builder gained planning permission from the Town to maintain the rear laneway access road but to attach the garages to the rear of the homes (See Figure 4.11) or to give purchasers the option of no garage but still rear laneway access. The result is a confused collection of homes with detached and attached rear garages, or no garages but small storage sheds located next to a rear driveway or parking pad. (See Figure 4.11 and 4.12).

Figure 4.11: Rear of home with laneway access and attached garage

Figure 4.12: Rear streetscape depicting mix of garage/storage options

The result of the loss of the original vision is that currently in 2004, Montgomery Village consists of a small grid based 'snapshot' of the original vision, within which the proposed mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented Main Street concept has given way to all residential and increasingly lower densities. The impact of the new builder's design changes in relation to the rear laneways and garage placements is that the functionality of the homes has largely been reversed with the main access point to the house (as in many conventional development designs) gained through the protruding attached garage directly into the home. Subsequent phases of Montgomery Village have returned to completely conventional designs with wide lot frontages and attached front-facing three and four car garages.

4.5.2 Too 'Strange' for Orangeville

The legitimisation of New Urbanism in Montgomery Village's development process was less supported from public bodies and far more developer-driven than Cornell's inception. The Town of Orangeville played a decidedly more 'reactive' role in Montgomery Village than did Markham with Cornell. Based on the accounts of municipal planning and administrative officials,

municipal politicians, the primary developer and the current builder, Montgomery Village digressed considerably from its intended planning and design vision. It would be fair to say that the New Urbanist vision for Montgomery Village was never completely validated, neither in the marketplace nor at the institutional level of the municipality – its legitimisation as *the* appropriate form of urban development never materialised.

When originally conceived by the developer, Montgomery Village was viewed as a pilot study to "*test drive a neo-traditional type of subdivision*" (Interview # 33, Chief Administrative Officer, Town of Orangeville). The term 'pilot project' accompanied most of the early discussions of the proposal and its intents, but it soon became obvious to senior planning staff at the time that they should "*drop that type of prefix*" for two reasons. First, the Town and the developer were proceeding with the project's implementation; it was no longer just a proposal on paper. Second, the town planner of the day did not like the connotation of a neighbourhood in the Town being considered 'an experiment', stating: "*what if it doesn't work? We're not going to tear it down, there will be people living there*" (Interview # 33, Chief Administrative Officer, Town of Orangeville).

When River Oaks Group hired the design consultants to prepare the concept plan and alternative design standards for Montgomery Village the 'strangeness of the plan,' with its neo-traditional approach, was received with mixed opinion by municipal staff and politicians alike. At the time, around 1992-1993, planning staff were excited to entertain a 'different' or alternative method of developing as the interest-of-the-day amongst practitioners in the

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GTA was very much focused on the most cost effective way of bringing new housing forms to the market. However, the 'difference' between the proposed Montgomery Village plan and the types of development that potential buyers in the local real estate market and the local council were more familiar with proved to be 'too much'. Despite the draft approval of the plan of subdivision for the first phases of Montgomery Village, the downturn in the economic viability of the proposed mixed-use Main Street boulevard, and continued resistance from municipal engineering and public works officials to the alternative development standards required to accommodate the lot layout and rear-lane access roads, precipitated a 'compromising' of the New Urbanist vision.

Contra to the legitimisation of the New Urbanist vision promoted in the original plan, Montgomery Village, as a process, seems to have helped to re-legitimise conventional 'suburban' housing development in the Orangeville real estate market. The 'snapshot' of New Urbanism found in the original phase of the development project has provided a 'straw-man' for local conventional house builders and marketers to point to as too small, too dense, and out of tune with what 'the market wants'. Montgomery Village's five phases spatially depict the changes to the 'vision' experienced over time, as instigated by the 'localness of the market' (which according to the municipality, the developer and the current builder, is geared to the demographics of potential buyer profiles).

4.5.3 Broken Promises and New Urbanist NIMBYs

The compromising of the New Urbanist vision for Montgomery Village has been perceived by residents of the early phases of the development as more than a series of market-driven decisions. Rather, these changes are viewed as broken promises on the part of the developer. This situation persists with the recent formation in 2003 of the Montgomery Village Homeowners Group, formed to object to the proposed development of a discount food store on land adjacent to the 'neo-traditional snapshot' area of Montgomery Village. The real objection is not with the promised development of shopping amenities, but to the 'discount' nature of the commercial development and the perceived image this will cast on the 'community'. Not to mention the fear that a discount store will lower the current residents' home values.

Resistance to change is something that has plagued Montgomery Village since its inception. Municipal engineering and public works staff's reluctance to approve of the alternative design standards introduced for Montgomery Village's incorporation of rear laneways and garages, in particular, provoked resistance. In the intervening years since the standards were introduced they have been significantly 'relaxed'. Engineering concerns were greatest around the extra servicing needed to clear the narrow laneways of snow in the winter months and the lack of areas to pile the snow. This remains a contentious issue within the municipal political organisation today. This complaint, in particular, has supported a critique of New Urbanism as being inappropriately 'imported' from Florida and other southern climates of the United States. The resistance to the alternative form of Montgomery Village from some municipal staff and politicians and some local residents led one design consultant to

remark that a developer would have to have *"rocks in their head to go to Orangeville to make a New Urbanist project"* (Interview # 35, Planning and Design Consultant). This same consultant commenting on the localness of the housing market in Orangeville also stated that, simply put: *"people did not believe in the village qualities of the proposed development, it was just a suburban subdivision that was 'weird'."*

In light of these issues in Montgomery Village it can be stated that this development project sparked a very localised debate regarding the suitability of 'importing' design solutions from other contexts. While the local people involved in the multiple disputes about rear laneways and snow removal etc., may not express it in these terms, this development process demonstrated that the universalisation of New Urbanism is not a sweeping force unproblematically accepted in equal measure for its social or environmental benefits. Rather, what Montgomery Village indicates is the degree to which the meaning of New Urbanism and its component design principles are locally constructed based on myriad contextual conditions, and therefore locally contested on the grounds of these same and transformative mindsets.

4.6 The Beach, City of Toronto

Figure 4.13: The Beach Conceptual Plan of development site
(Source: MBTW Group, 2002)

Table 4.3: The Beach Statistics

Date Conceived	1995-1996 (Approved 1996)
Location	City of Toronto, Ontario. Situated on former Greenwood Raceway site in south eastern Toronto, and adjacent to the Lake Ontario shoreline.
Area	Approximately 36 hectares
Anticipated Number of Units	1036
Type of Units	219 singles, 154 semi-detached, 157 townhouses, 506 condominium units (and 150,000 sq. ft of commercial)
Anticipated Population	Approximately 2500
Status in 2004	Final phase under construction, expected completion 2005

4.6.1 Capturing the 'Essence' of the Beaches

'The Beach' development is located on the former site of the Greenwood
Raceway (formerly Woodbine Racecourse) operated by the Ontario Jockey
Club since 1881 and owned by the club until 1994. The former racetrack site

and current residential development site is directly west of the neighbourhood variably known as the 'Beach' or 'Beaches' by local residents. This area is one of the most desirable neighbourhoods in the City of Toronto offering a vibrant mix of residential and retail/commercial uses. 'The Beach' site is centrally located with high real estate values associated with its proximity to public transport, lakefront and community amenities, and reasonably easy access to the central business district of Toronto. (See Figure 4.14.) When the Jockey Club decided to sell the racetrack lands a large parcel of developable urban land became available – a situation which does not often arise within the city, wherein the norm is small scale infill development opportunities.

This image has been removed as the copyright is owned by another organisation

Figure 4.14: City of Toronto central business district and area map

King West Village development site is located on the west side of the CBD and The Beach is located to the east of the central area of the City (denoted by the two white stars).
Source of figure: http://www.city.toronto.on.ca/torontomaps/pdf/visitor_map_screen.pdf

Prior to the Jockey Club selling the lands, the former City of Toronto (i.e. pre-amalgamation) had conducted a series of studies to strategically evaluate the development potential of the site, should it become available. Upon the public notice of sale, the decision as to what should be done with the site was not unanimous. While there was little debate that the lands should be converted to accommodate some form of residential development, the amount, location, type and form were disputed amongst City staff, politicians, local residents and the owners. A key local politician wanted the City to purchase the lands and develop a large-scale urban park and sell parcels of the property to private condominium builders with the intended vision of a 'towers-in-the-park' community. Following the formation of a Mayor's Task Force to assess the feasibility of the City purchasing and developing the lands, the decision was made not to purchase the land but to promote a large park as part of any development proposal submitted by the new purchaser.

In 1994 sale of the site was under negotiation between the Jockey Club and River Oaks Group (the same developer responsible for Montgomery Village). However, the sale fell through and in 1995 E.M.M. Financial Corp. purchased the site and its parent company Metrus Development Inc. (the largest land development company in Canada) provided the development management. When Metrus took over management, the site consisted of 82 acres of land with 500,000 square feet of existing building, which included a seven-storey 360,000 square foot grandstand with a seating capacity of 15,000 and 100,000 square feet of horse barns capable of housing 500 horses. There were also 37 acres of paved parking lots (Metrus Development Inc. 2002). Demolition of the site was undertaken in 1995 and continued for thirty-six

months. The 'brownfield' remediation process was one of the largest and most technologically advanced of its time in Canada.

By this stage in the development process Metrus and its hired consultants had devised a vision of a new residential community that fit with the City of Toronto's stated requirements for re-development of the racetrack lands. In particular, the City insisted on better connections to 'significant areas' of the city, which were at the time isolated from their surroundings by the physical barrier of the racetrack. The City's report on the lands noted that:

> "The Greenwood racetrack occupies a sizable amount of land between the low-density neighbourhood to the north and the waterfront. It is a key public area and important destination, yet pedestrian entry points and through routes are not only limited in number, but also lack pedestrian scale and amenity. Any future use of these lands would have to improve both the visual and physical relationship between the racetrack and its urban surroundings. When planning for a site like this, it is desirable to ensure that the area is well integrated with surrounding urban patterns, for example, by extending the grid and to ensure that built form, open space and the street and block layout all support and enhance the quality of the environment" (City of Toronto 1996: 7).

The 'vision', although not ostensibly labelled by its designers as 'New Urbanism', shared many of the principles espoused within the CNU Charter. The inspiration for The Beach was said to be:

> "To create a *place for people* – a compact, environmentally-friendly, mixed-use development with all of the building blocks for daily living and qualities of life. The vision involved a rich community life, strong pedestrian orientation, residential ownership options, an integrated open space system and core retail services linked clearly to the adjacent, existing neighbourhoods, transportation system and open space system. To make the vision a reality, the project designers employed human scale, accessibility, diversity, views, a strong pattern language, a series of gathering spaces, and an integrated pedestrian bicycle system. To make the reality extraordinary, the community was designed as a desirable *destination* and the *journeys* within it as memorable experiences" (Metrus Development Inc. 2002).

The primary design features of the homes and buildings within The Beach are porches and verandas, narrow lots, traffic calmed streets, rear laneway access roads, detached rear garages, and multiple pedestrian pathways. The emphasis of design has been placed on mimicking or capturing the 'essence' of the surrounding Beaches neighbourhood. Figures 4.15, 4.16 and 4.17 depict some of the architectural forms constructed on the site.

Figure 4.15: Pedestrian pathways

Figure 4.16: Large homes with porches and verandas

Figure 4.17: Waterfront facing town homes with dynamic colour scheme

The homes constructed in The Beach have proven in fact to be attractive to many former 'Beachers' living in the older established neighbourhood to the east. This has included both families requiring larger homes, and 'empty-nesters' and 'singles' looking to downsize or get onto the property 'ladder', yet all wanting to remain in the general area. The most striking feature of the development is its obvious 'newness,' as new build on this scale is rare in such an urban location. Despite the attention to design detail and the attempt of the control architects to transpose the 'feel' of the Beaches to the new development, many local area residents do not accept the new neighbourhood as part of the wider Beach community, and characterise it as 'Pleasantville'[25] or the 'Plywood Palaces.'

4.6.2 'More Toronto', naturally

The Beach development is widely perceived amongst local development interests, design and architectural consultants, and city staff and politicians as a model of the 'type of community' and residential development encouraged by the City of Toronto in its newly approved Official Plan. In particular, the idea of neighbourhoods connecting to other parts of the city in a form and fit that is compatible with existing parts of older neighbourhoods is strongly supported. However, as one city planning manager pointed out, *"finding a hundred acres in the city and having the opportunity to develop it in this comprehensive way is not going to happen very often"* (Interview # 44, Former Area Planning Director, City of Toronto). But the fact that this opportunity did arise on the former racetrack lands has made The Beach a destination for potential property investors, urban regeneration developers

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[25] Alluding to the film of the same name.

from other parts of North America, students of urban planning and design, as well as many curious Toronto tourists. In this sense, the irony is that what is sought to be normalised is the exception rather than the rule in Toronto's development profile.

The uniqueness of the site's size and location belies the simplicity of the project according to some of the producers involved in its creation. Amongst the front-line development and design actors involved in The Beach, the sentiment was expressed that it could not have evolved into much else than it did. This is partly due to the design guidelines co-operatively created by the City and the developer's design team, which largely pre-determined that the grid system of streets north of the racetrack lands must be extended into the new development and that the new area must be well connected for pedestrian passage through to the adjacent waterfront. To city planning and design staff, the project was largely seen as just "*replicating the context of Toronto*" (Interview # 44, Former Area Planning Director, City of Toronto), and as such it was 'easy' to plan. The planning consultant hired by the developer remarked in fact that "*it was really a no brainer, you could put a chimpanzee in a cage to design that plan*" (Interview # 45, Planning Consultant). Thus, The Beach's replication of the established street and block fabric as key to promoting pedestrian-oriented 'neighbourhoods' connected with the existing urban streetscape, has legitimised this *new urbanism* (in the purely descriptive and physical sense, in recognition of the producers' aversion to calling it New Urbanism) simply as *more Toronto*.

In addition, the argument has been made that 'more Toronto' in the form of infill and redevelopment of vacant and disused former industrial lands, is what is needed to meet the housing requirements for a fast growing city and region. The population of the City of Toronto grew by nearly 100,000 between 1996 and 2001, and it is the centre of one the largest city regions in North America which itself has grown by nearly 100,000 people a year for the last five years. One-quarter of the population of Canada[26] in fact lives within a 160-kilometre radius of the City of Toronto (Statistics Canada 2001). At the local scale, the new development at The Beach provided a sizeable amount of newly constructed large homes, a feature that the wider Beach neighbourhood lacked. The unavailability of so-called 'mid-to-high end product' in the area and the overall desirability of 'living in the Beaches' has seen the exorbitant increase in value of small, former cottage dwellings – the result being that the local housing market in this area jumped from these small but high priced homes to homes valued in the millions of dollars. 'The Beach' development, therefore, while expensive compared to the city-wide average, filled a void in the local real estate market demand. However, it has also promoted a palpable degree of local resentment of those living in the development by pre-existing residents as a rich enclave or pocket of affluence occupied by high income, well-connected urban elites.

The design consultants behind the conceptualisation of The Beach's vision of 'community' contend: *"the best of the structure and character of the existing Beaches neighbourhoods was integrated into concepts for the new Beach Community"* (Interview # 42, Planning, Design, Architectural Consultant). The

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[26] Statistics Canada's 2001 Census 'estimate' for the national population was 31,021,300, which is considered to be more accurate than the official census 'count' of 30,007,094 recorded for census day 15th May 2001.

mixing of housing types, designing of a variety of ownership options, conceptualising mixed-use buildings on the main arterial road, and developing special multi-unit buildings overlooking Lake Ontario were all undertaken as a strategic design-led vision for maintaining the wider Beaches neighbourhood's reputation as the *"the closest thing to small town living you will find in the city"* (Interview # 48, Local Real Estate Agent; Interview # 47, Former City Councillor). In this sense, then, The Beach found legitimisation in the confluence of suburban and urban idealism of what 'good living' entails in terms of inherent 'quality of life values' and in the designers' ability to transpose these 'feelings' into physical form.

4.6.3 Real v. Wannabe Beachers

The colloquial terms of *"Pleasantville"* and the *"Plywood Palaces"* ascribed by local area residents to The Beach development are as much a critique of the design features and colours of the homes as they are its distinctive 'newness'. The nature of the development's 'otherness' has led to questions of whether or not it would ever 'become' part of the Beaches proper. There is a palpable divide between the new development and the older established Beaches community located east of Woodbine Avenue. While the new development area has attracted many former Beachers (some estimates are as high as 70% of the residents of the new development are former Beachers), the older area residents are quite vocal about their disdain for the new neighbourhood and they make it clearly known that it is not part of the 'real Beach'. One community observer remarked that the older residents look at the new development area as it if is gated, and the result is that it is

perceived as an 'island' of new homes and people unto itself (Interview # 41, Community Centre Director).

Some believe that the homebuilders' marketing strategies are partly to blame for the current rift between old and new:

> "The builder sold lifestyles and not houses, when you watched it develop, they had these huge signs 'walk your dog' and you would see a nice family with a golden retriever of course...they were selling lifestyle and people pay through the nose for lifestyle" (Interview # 41, Community Centre Director).

The fact that the surrounding neighbourhood residents saw the development being constructed, and knew from the sales centre and marketing signs the prices of the homes that the new residents were paying for this 'lifestyle,' became part of the problem. The area is seen as a rich enclave and the area locals resent any complaint that emerges from the new residents concerning issues such as traffic, noise, pollution etc., feeling as they do that these are all aspects of living in the Beach/Beaches and that the new buyers should have been prepared for such 'urban' inconveniences. As a long-time resident of the Beaches area and a current resident of the condominiums facing the waterfront in the new development commented: "this community has to serve its apprenticeship, it has to sort of buy its way into acceptance" (Interview # 49, Resident).

The Beach development has also been contested on the grounds that it is not a 'community' and for many in the wider area this is exacerbated by the homogeneity of the residents living there, in terms of ethnicity and income. The absence of a school within the development (although a site is designated) has also been interpreted by observers from the wider area as

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limiting the 'community identity' that the development needs in order to become part of the Beach. Historically, this part of the city has largely defined community identity by neighbourhood school catchment area, and the lack of a community school for this new neighbourhood means, to some, that it is not quite a 'community'.

The Beach community's development and acceptance suggests that most of the contentious issues relate to residents interaction within and between the two neighbourhoods – the new one and the old. This finding on the one hand indicates that for this particular development project a cohort study of the residential communities would be in order. But, I would like to stress that in relation to my study this level of very localised contestation is significant for what it lacks rather than what it makes obvious. The lack of formal political contestation that this project received in the planning and development stages is particularly relevant. There were public meetings concentrated on the local residents' fears about what the status of the new electronic gambling facilities (which were part of the land development negotiations between the Ontario Jockey Club, the new landowner (Metrus) and the City) would entail. The size and nature of the park was the next real source of debate. However, at no stage was the form and design of the residential component of the project really contested in a formal sense. Again, the rationalisation of this development as being a naturalistic continuation of the existing urban fabric largely facilitated the political acceptance of the new development aided by its design coherence based on mimicking the Victorian urban vernacular. However, the community backlash suggests that design consideration for local meaning can only go so far in achieving local

integration of new and old housing (and inhabitants). While the neo-Victorian designs were based on local history and context, the popular meaning of this 'packaging' has for the most part been erased and replaced with new definitions of community and identity beyond that which is read-off from the architectural or aesthetic form.

4.7   King West Village, City of Toronto
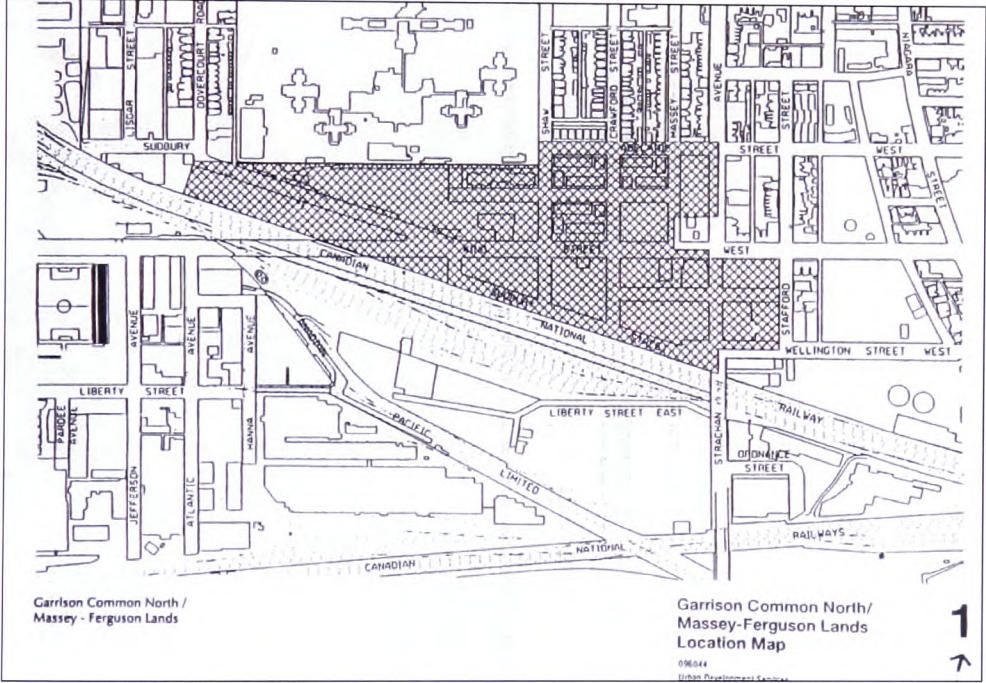
Figure 4.18: King West Village development site
(Source: City of Toronto, 1997)

Table 4.4: King West Village Statistics

Date Conceived	1997 (Approved 1997)
Location	City of Toronto, Ontario Situated on former Massey Ferguson industrial site in south western Toronto adjacent to a main rail corridor.
Area	Approximately 11 hectares
Anticipated Number of Units	900
Type of Units	Condominium stacked townhouses and high rise loft buildings
Anticipated Population	Approximately 2100
Status in 2004	Completed

4.7.1 New Urbanism by Default not Design

Located in the south-western portion of the City of Toronto (See Figure 4.14) in a former heavily industrial area of the city, the 35-acre Massey-Ferguson manufacturing lands sat abandoned for nearly ten years after the company declared bankruptcy in 1986. The one-time headquarters of the giant agricultural machinery producer has since been partially re-developed into what is known as 'King West Village'. Situated on a series of oddly shaped parcels of land to the north and south of King Street West, the lands are adjacent to major rail lines leading into and out of the city. Despite this unlikely location for a new residential community, situated so closely to former and current industrial uses, and with its northern property line bounded by the grounds of a large mental health and addiction institution, King West Village has developed into a 'trendy' urban village. This has been undertaken through the environmental remediation of the lands, the transformation of old industrial sites into new loft buildings, and the re-development of vacant lands into high-rise condominium towers and medium density three and four-storey stacked townhouses. See Figure 4.19 and 4.20.

Figure 4.19: Stacked townhouse condominium units

Figure 4.20: Rear laneway access road and incorporated garages

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The ten-year period during which the lands lay dormant and minimally re-developed were occupied by a series of planning and zoning regulatory changes which attempted to grapple with the tension the former City of Toronto was experiencing between preserving industrial and employment lands or allowing them to be developed by residential and commercial interests. King West Village is now viewed by many City staff members, politicians and consultants working in the area to have directly resulted from the introduction of flexible zoning regulations for this area in the mid 1990s.

Similar to the situation with The Beach's development origins, the City's objective with King West Village was to integrate and extend the urban fabric of the surrounding area onto the site. The two primary developer/builders involved in King West Village, Urbancorp and Plazacorp, attempted to mimic the residential character of the surrounding neighbourhood, but neither contends that it was their intention to design a 'New Urbanist' community. Nevertheless, the development project incorporated the revival of pseudo-Victorian and Georgian architectural features, utilised narrow rear laneways and garages, and promoted neighbour interaction through the incorporation of front porches and communal amenity areas. While the Victorian nostalgia was used as a marketing tool by the developers, project managers from each company contend that the resulting designs are the outcome of market demands, City planning requirements, and the costs associated with urban land development.

4.7.2 Selling the City to Those Who 'Already Know It'

Whereas The Beach was created under the spotlight of local and city-wide media interest and public curiosity because of the history of the racetrack site, the environmental clean-up operation undertaken, and the general level of interest in waterfront development activities, King West Village, itself the outcome of a complex history of events, actors, and interactions seemed to develop relatively unnoticed. The construction of King West Village by the two primary developers/builders was given planning permission quite quickly in 1997 because, as with The Beach, the development would extend the city grid pattern of the surrounding neighbourhood onto these disused lands, serving to simultaneously intensify the land use. The scale of the development was viewed by local residents to the north and east of the project site as an extension of their own neighbourhood and a marked improvement over potential industrial or commercial uses. The location of the site is, however, crucial to understanding how the regulatory framework of the City of Toronto legitimised the 'vision' of King West Village as an urban village to accommodate an anticipated population of 'urban professionals', the majority of whom would be singles with no children. In actuality, the development has not become a haven for upwardly mobile urban professional singles – the current population of King West Village consists of a number of families with children and young couples who are first-time homebuyers attracted by the reasonably priced condominium units in such close proximity to downtown and amenity areas.

The area of the city in which King West Village is situated had for a number of years prior to its re-development been the subject of policy debate within

the City of Toronto. Pressure existed for policy-makers to maintain the city's industrial base for future employment needs but also to accommodate market-driven development pressures. In the mid 1980s it was unclear whether the market would tend towards residential or industrial/commercial in this area of the city. The result was that the City introduced a form of 'wait and see' zoning which designated the Massey-Ferguson lands as "Industrial-Residential". In the mid 1990s this zoning policy gave way to an even more flexible initiative which effectively relaxed all zoning and density restrictions in this part of the city (and a similarly de-industrialised area along King Street on the east side of the city) in order to encourage the utilisation of lands which were sitting idle since the 1970s and 1980s. This initiative known as the "Two Kings" basically enabled, with the exception of any noxious industrial uses, any residential, commercial or light industrial use in any combination and mix as long as developers adhered to built form and heritage preservation guidelines. The City largely views the growth of King West Village area as part of the 'ripple effect' felt from this flexibility of planning and zoning regulations. In some respects, then, the vision for King West Village had been legitimised in a regulatory sense, before it was conceptualised in the plans and designs of the private development interests.

While the developers had rather short-sighted design aspirations – founded more on selling homes/units than creating 'community' – the physical form of the development is a compact, medium density streetscape of stacked town house-style condominium units which accommodate a mix of household compositions, lifestyles, and income levels. Whereas the intention of The Beach was to resonate with the local reputation of the area as 'small town

living in the big city', King West Village's creators promoted the 'realities' of urban lifestyles in the city. Their marketing staff used the city as a selling feature and relied on potential buyers already 'knowing the city' and capitalising on the convenience of urban amenities, including public transport, public parks, public libraries etc. It was initially expected that the purchasers of units in King West Village would largely be drawn from the population of young working singles living in rental accommodation, wanting to own their own home but not willing to give up their urban lifestyle for that of the suburbs, despite the availability of more affordable homes. What surprised City policy and planning staff, local politicians, and the developers themselves, was the significant number of buyers who 'returned' to the city after moving to the suburbs. The perceived 'infusion of people living downtown' has become the mantra of public and private development, planning and design interests in Toronto, and King West Village has become a sort of poster child for mid to high-density urban housing forms supportive of land intensification, urban quality of life indicators, mixed affordability and a public transport supported live-work balance.

4.7.3 'Wait and See' it Gentrify

The vision of King West as a trendy urban village for professional singles living the 'city lifestyle' has been subject to criticism and concerns that this 'gentrification' is affecting the socio-economic demographic of the area and spatially transforming the 'sense of place' in the neighbourhood. When re-development began in the area of King Street West there was a lot of illegal living activity taking place, primarily by artists and designers who could not afford separate living and studio space within the city limits. When the City

relaxed its zoning regulations it became an issue of legalising some of these live-work spaces. Fire code regulations however made many areas impossible to legalise, and many loft residents in old warehouses and abandoned industrial buildings were not requesting to be legalised for fear that they would be refused and then forced to vacate their homes/studios. With the legalisation of loft living though came a new phase of redeveloping heritage buildings and warehouses into upscale lofts; the net result was that many of the original illegal lofters were priced out of the area. They originally relocated to the south of King Street further west but this area is now too undergoing a large-scale redevelopment.

The King West Village area of the city has been characterised by some private design and planning interests as a 'good news, bad news' situation. For example, a local resident and prominent urban designer remarked that:

> "The good news is that there continues to be a market for people who want to live downtown and the market is responding to that. But I think the bad news is that the City has completely lost its ability to work on neighbourhoods – to work on public realm – which there is neither the will or the money and increasingly even the expertise to do that. So what you are getting is just an almost random collection of mostly high-rise point blocks and some stick built town houses without any public space, without any shopping, without any amenities, without any of the things that go into making neighbourhoods."

> (Interview # 58, Urban Design Consultant).

There was a sense amongst some of the interviewees that the private sector had provided all the dynamic energy that is present in this 'regeneration' of the former industrial belt area and the City had fallen short on its end. The 'wait and see' attitude taken by City planners and policy makers with respect to this part of the city has thus both been seen as a positive attribute in the formation of the emerging identity of the area, and negative in the sense of it

being too *laissez-faire* and lax in terms of ensuring that a range of forms, tenures and amenities were developed.

Conclusion

From the out-line sketch of the chronology of 'events' leading up to and/or supporting the development of the four study sites provided above, it might be possible to claim that each development process constituted a series of chance events. As such it is difficult from my perspective as the researcher to speak in general terms about the relations within and between actors intentions and the physical outcomes of 'place'. However, individually and collectively it is possible from these cases to make some empirical conclusions as to what processes validated or made these particular projects possible. That is to say, what 'legitimised' these projects? To legitimise means to make something 'valid' or 'allowable', so a primary facet of this research seeks to understand what has legitimised the 'New Urbanist' visions in the context of Toronto. I think it is useful to summarise some initial observations to aid in an interpretation of how New Urbanism has been differentially conceptualised, standardised and implemented (and transformed) within the study sites.

In a regulatory sense, the *Ontario Planning Act, 1990* legitimised each project in terms of providing flexibility in the legal interpretation of planning and zoning possibilities. Yet, process-wise, each project involved a choreography of public-private interactions amongst regulators, policy-makers, financiers, developers, bureaucrats, designers, marketers etc., involved in the rationalised system of 'housing provision' within the GTA. While the idealised

interpretations of the 'development process' reflect this 'rational action model' the narratives of these four development projects tell quite different stories. For within this structured system a series of dynamic and flexible 'scenarios' or processes of ongoing production took place, and the actors found different ways to maximise the chances of meeting their own intentions with varying degrees of success.

The two greenfield sites, Cornell and Montgomery Village, for example, sought validation both from the market and regulatory stand point by employing a rather positivistic approach. There was the proposition of a 'problem' (a housing crisis); a 'test' site was selected; and an experiment was devised to test the hypothesis that there was something better than the current 'norm' in housing provision, and furthermore, that this could be achieved from within the existing operating framework of the building market. Like any experiment, the development actors attempted to anticipate externalities but in an uncontrolled 'environment', outside of a laboratory, many forces were at work, including: climate, financial security, local market acceptance, and changing political agendas.

The two brownfield sites, on the other hand, did not need seek legitimacy through experimentation but through the naturalisation of the disused lands into the pre-existing 'organicism' or vernacular of the idealised late 19th or early 20th century 'urban fabric' of the surrounding areas. In these developments it was not necessary to propose the 'vision' as an alternative, nor proposition it as *the future* of urban housing development; rather, the

producers' aims were unabashedly to 'mimic' the existing city, which was already accepted and legitimised.

In each case, as the vision moved from discourse to physical form, contradiction, uncertainty, doubt and cynicism tended to emerge. The idealised allocation and distribution of New Urbanist-inspired housing (or rather 'communities') cannot be actualised by market forces alone and so the case examples demonstrated the intersection of multiple social, economic, political and cultural practices actively constituting the differences between intentions and outcomes.

As an 'ideal type' New Urbanism could be interpreted as a generating formula or mental construct in that it gives people the means to make meaning (Franklin and Tait 2002). What this chapter has tried to illustrate in descriptive terms is how the actors in each of the four development processes created their own meaning of New Urbanism and their own conceptualisation of what the new 'community' or 'neighbourhood' would be. The formal planning, design, and implementation of a development vision involves moving from the abstract principles of a design and planning doctrine, to the two-dimensional plan, to the physical construction of a built urban form. Along the way, this transfer from ideal type to material form involves an uneven process of translation, acceptance, promotion and/or rejection. The trajectory of each of these development projects was largely decided based on the processes of legitimisation that either confirmed or contested the fit between the ideal 'vision' and the practical constraints on actualising that vision.

The differential degrees to which New Urbanism was legitimised in these four contexts has been outlined in this chapter, but this account has not explained how or why the normalisation of this form of housing provision proliferates relatively uncontested in one context yet not in another. Underlying this chapter, then, are deeper questions concerning the nature of the relationship between the universalism of the design ideals enveloped in the New Urbanism movement vis-à-vis the local context of the actual development processes. Chapter 4 has provided an initial overview of the contextual conditions constituting the distinctive production narratives for each of the case studies. The challenge for Chapter 5 is thus to demonstrate that despite the idiosyncratic nature of each case's specific development process commonalities in constraint-based practice operate across the different locations. The subsequent chapters will grapple with whether or not these constraints are specific to the New Urbanist form of housing provision operating in Toronto.

Chapter 5

The Producers of New Urbanism in Toronto

Introduction

This chapter explores the 'practices' of housing producers (i.e. developers, builders, planners, politicians, and design, architectural and marketing consultants) in Toronto based on how those interviewed in all four of the case study units reflected on their individual and institutional motivations, interpretations, intentions and actions in the particular project(s) for which they were involved. 'Practice' is here used in the nature of discourses that produce objects (cf. Foucault 1989; Borden *et al.* 2001) – the 'objects' in this instance being the four development sites and any written, visual, and/or verbal supporting materials and documents. The challenge before these producers was to bring about new form(s) of development requiring alternative design and planning standards (i.e. against the norm) while working within a largely static regulatory framework and the slow-to-innovate institutional framework of the development and building industry. The themes that emerged from the interviews with producers involved in the four case study sites have thus been categorised into three frames of cross-case significance or 'patterning': i) regulatory practice; ii) industry practice; and iii) personal and professional contextualisations. Each of these frames will be discussed in turn. In this classification, the extent to which practices are based in the past (i.e. experience, perception etc.) yet enacted in the present is evident. However, these are reflections (and as such are historical in nature) of how the producers have conceptualised this interplay of past,

present and emerging discursive rationalities for action. Practices are therefore the form through which I have attempted to observe and connect with the ideological supports or discourses that constitute actors' thinking, provide reasons for action and convey a comprehensible story (Beauregard 1993: xi). Hence, what makes up their 'reality'.

The physical construction of New Urbanist developments in Toronto exists within the context of networks of relationships amongst specific actors, institutional arrangements, and legal and regulatory constraints (MacLaran 2003). The aim of this categorisation is to explicate or unpack the material and cultural practices engaged within and between structures and norms (cf. Amin and Thrift 2002). The mediation between choices available, collective values and the ability to act, for me, reflects then the contingent nature of the processes of provision within which these producers operate. This chapter thus provides an overview of the reflections of the producers involved in the creation of these places within this situated network of relations, interactions and constraints. The emphasis here is on raising themes for discussion which illustrate, from the producers' perspective, the dynamism of development practices as inherently social processes.

5.1 Regulatory Practice

State-instituted forms of planning are the codification and normalisation of particular economic, social and political conditions. Those publicly representing housing producers in Toronto generally felt that these practitioners operate within a highly regulated and taxation-based system. This first section attempts to expand on the main areas of regulatory

'constraint' stressed by the producers involved in New Urbanist housing developments, and the development industry as a whole. In particular, the regulatory context affecting development practices has been the source of political and economic debate between policy and decision makers and the development industry for more than a decade.

The relationship between the type and distribution of urban form and the costs of maintaining it (publicly through taxation and privately through fuel and energy costs to the consumer etc.) has been at the core of several major urban political reform agendas under successive governments both at the city and provincial level. The most recent in Ontario, and the GTA more particularly, is the introduction of a Green Belt Plan.[27] The discussion below of the interview themes related to the regulatory constraints on the development practices of housing producers emphasises that the desire for change in or to 'the system' is tempered by a candid admission that neither the public nor private development interests really want 'change'. This is because such change will disrupt the 'business-as-usual' code of understanding, or the "engineered certainty" (Amin and Thrift 2002: 26), that has emerged within and between the development industry and its regulatory framework.

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[27] The influence of these proposed and concurrent changes to the political and socio-economic framing of the need for new urban development 'restrictions' is elaborated in subsection 5.1.3.

5.1.1 Municipal Planning, Policy and Administration

The history of separating land uses into industrial, residential, commercial, institutional and open space zones[28] over the last five decades or so has been challenged by New Urbanist planning principles which encourage the mixing of uses, building types and tenures. The contention on the part of New Urbanist proponents interviewed in Toronto was that traditional zoning operationalises a partial set of development options, and this promotes the ease with which developers and builders can standardise their 'product' according to the category of land use allowed. Thus, the New Urbanist promotion of 'choice' in type, tenure and mix of uses is reified through the critique of modernist zoning. The producers interviewed argued that current zoning and building standards do not yield the desired 'diversity' of character, place, and people that most design practitioners wish to create in a New Urbanist development (Interview # 12, Planning Consultant). Some suggested that it is easy to get 'chipped back' to 1960's style conventional suburban subdivisions by conforming to the zoning and building standards currently in place in most municipalities in Ontario:

> "All you have to do is let a traffic engineer tell you that snow ploughs have to have bigger radii, the roads have got to be wider, you know if you took everyone's criteria you would be right back to the formula we were all designing to that I got sick of in the 1980s."
>
> (Interview # 12, Planning Consultant)

The technical tools provided through the zoning system have, however, in the cases investigated in Toronto provided a degree of security for developers should their New Urbanist visions not materialise in the marketplace. Flexible zoning is often introduced which enables the developer to build either

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[28] The formal planning 'system' was described in more detail in Chapter 4's section 4.2.

commercial or residential uses according to market demand. In the case of Montgomery Village, the original vision of a neo-traditional 'Main Street', with commercial/retail uses on the ground floor and residential and office use above, did not materialise, but the developer did not have to go back to the Town Council for a zoning amendment permitting him to revert all the land in this area to ground-oriented residential.

According to the developers interviewed, four things were commonly cited as 'essential' in order for a non-conventional development project to be financially successful:

1. The lot dimensions and configurations functionally relate in economic terms to the high cost of land that the developer has paid (i.e. if it is not going to make a profit through maximising lots per acre then they will not develop it);

2. Economic and social value is added through design (i.e. 'community' and 'neighbourhood' identity is fostered through design details and aesthetic treatments, as well as through the promotional marketing of the 'product' as more than the material form of the house);

3. An approvable and 'do-able' engineering and planning strategy is negotiated (i.e. time constraints are not detrimental to the quickest possible return on investment – this can be affected by the degree of standardised materials, labour, techniques employed; and by the degree of familiarity with similar projects on the part of the developer, builder and the municipality);

4. Flexibility is built into the design so that if the original 'vision' is wrong the developer can build something else (i.e. the conditions of subdivision or development include a flexible zoning clause).

Municipal planning plays a crucial role in facilitating all of these factors, but especially the last two factors. The means to facilitate risk minimisation on the part of the developer/builder, in particular, depends on the public sector dissolving the departmental silos endemic to its bureaucracies in order to promote speedier planning permission and less intra-institutional conflict.

Few municipalities have effectively managed to do this. The Town of Markham is often cited as a good example of a municipality that has been able to acquire the 'jack of all trades' project management skills required for overseeing a New Urbanist development through design, approvals and eventual implementation. Markham has altered its administrative structure to enable more interaction between planners, engineers, public works, parks, housing and economic development staff by having each of these divisions report to the same commissioner. The success of this restructuring has been the inability of a single department or staff member to 'roadblock' an entire development scheme. While the common perception is that New Urbanism demands a radical re-think of municipal planning systems, the evidence from these case studies suggests that little more was needed than a tweaking of the zoning restrictions to allow for greater flexibility, and a re-shuffling of administrative responsibility within the municipal organisational structure. However, existence of such flexibility leaves the creativity of future development subject to the degree of risk an individual developer or builder is willing to take, and can result in plans reverting to the least creative, but most marketable design option. Hence, the promulgation of what has been referred to by some interviewees as 'facsimile' New Urbanism.

While the planning authority for approving or rejecting any given development application initially rests with the municipal planning committee of a council, and finally with the entire municipal council, there is an appellant body to which the developers or third parties can appeal the municipality's decision. This is the Ontario Municipal Board (OMB), a quasi-judicial appeals tribunal made up of provincially appointed board members. In recent years the

number of appeals by development interests to the OMB has greatly increased, with some developers submitting motions to appeal before the effected municipal council have delivered decisions on planning applications. The ability of developers to lodge these premature motions to appeal is a direct result of an amendment to the *Planning Act, 1990* which enabled direct appeal to the OMB and eliminated an intermediary referral to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The alleged misuse of the appeals process has many on both sides of the 'development table' enraged. Municipal planning departments and councils feel that their planning authority is usurped by the OMB which is widely perceived as 'developer-friendly'. However, developers point out that it is often not in their interest to unquestioningly appeal a declined application because the OMB decision is final (Interview # 68, Head of Government Relations, Greater Toronto Homebuilders' Association). If the Board upholds the municipality's decision to deny an application then the developer is left with no room for negotiation or revision. Developers contend that they resort to the OMB because of opposition from municipal councils or individual councillors that are unfairly biased by personal and political agendas (Interview # 68, Head of Government Relations, GTHBA). It was not uncommon in this study for both developers and municipal officials to define their working relationship by whether or not an OMB appeal was initiated.

5.1.2 Development Charges

In Ontario there is a fee system imposed on developers to help pay for various types of capital works and municipal services needed to support new development. 'Development charges' are established through the by-laws or

policies of local municipalities, regional municipalities (where applicable), and the public and separate (Catholic) school boards. The formulas used to calculate development charges imposed on developers vary from municipality to municipality. There is a contentious debate within and between private sector development interests and public sector administrations as to the way in which charges are calculated.

From the developers' perspective increases in development charges hinder creative innovation in terms of designing a range of housing product types and forms (including New Urbanism). The cost-benefit analysis that developers undertake follows the general logic explained below by a planner/project manager from the largest developer in Canada:

> "...any business tries to maximise its yield, that is just the nature of business and we would do the same thing, but when you start having increases in development charges there is a potential that instead of having 5 units on a stretch of land you might say maybe I will do 4 units because I have got to spend $20,000 to pay to the region and pay all these charges. So you get back to your cost benefit analysis and you start to weigh in the cost you are paying to the government and so what that ultimately does is make you start saying I don't need that 5th unit, I can just make these 4 units a bit wider, then the next step is sprawl."
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> (Interview # 15, In-house planner for Developer)

Development interests also state that development charges are 'the easiest tax' because (local and provincial) governments are basically "taxing someone who doesn't live there yet" (Interview # 68, Head of Government Relations, GTHBA). Developers commonly note that in practice the initial up-front fees associated with development applications are essentially passed on to the homebuyers in the price, which industry and trade representatives contend negatively affects affordability.

"And that is just development charges, which is the largest component in terms of tax, but we also have the federal Goods and Services Tax (GST) and the land transfer tax which is a provincial tax that you pay on resale but you pay on new also, provincial sales tax on the building materials – all these things add up and we quote that 20-25% of the price of any new average house in the GTA is taken up by tax to government at all levels."

(Interview # 68, Head of Government Relations, GTHBA)

The impression given by development industry representatives interviewed is that while developers and builders obviously make a profit, the current tax situation exacerbates the already tight margins within which builders and developers must operate. The public sector, and increasingly popular, belief that 'growth should pay for growth' is something which many within the industry feel needs to be better defined, as they are concerned that public authorities (i.e. municipalities) will keep adding on new charges for agencies, programmes and services which may not be directly impacted or necessitated by the development projects being proposed by developers/builders. The developers interviewed stressed the point that the current situation is one in which new developers are penalised for the inefficiencies of older development which place equal, if not more, stress on the efficiency of the urban management system than new growth.

As a planning control mechanism, development charges have been cited by many interviewees on both sides of the development table (i.e. public sector planners and politicians and private developers and builders) as a strong disincentive for New Urbanism. One example of how this is the case was repeatedly recounted to me in the interview process. In a New Urbanist development in Oakville, Ontario the builder wanted to build town homes with a rear lane and rear garage design, however above the detached garage the builder hoped to construct a living unit (much like the coach house concept

depicted in Figure 4.5 in Chapter 4). The municipality defined this garage/accessory unit as a separate unit from the house and as such levied a separate development charge on this building – in effect making the developer/builder have to pay twice for what could only legally be sold as a single unit (i.e. town home with detached garage/coach house). Similar stories were recounted by interviewees about multi-unit designs such as 'quad' buildings, which occupy the same land area as two semi-detached units but provide four family-sized living units, not being built due to the double costing formula associated with the common average cost development charge formula used by municipalities (e.g. Interview # 16, Homebuilder). Development charges, it is argued by industry interests, do not account for the intensified land use and density accommodated by such designs. Instead, they effectively price the innovative forms out of competition. In such situations, builders and developers often decide that it is not worth the effort to construct these designs under this system because few homebuyers will pay more or the same for a unit within a quad design than they would for a semi-detached home. The result is that 'innovative' multi-unit, mixed tenure housing forms are constructed only where, despite higher land costs to the developer, the potential volume of units can be maximised to obtain the most profit. In locations (or markets) where there is little economic incentive and indifferent development charges a developer/builder will not take on the risk of failure to sell a multi-unit dwelling if there is a guaranteed sale of a less dense, detached dwelling.

Thus, public officials interviewed (particularly planners and politicians in Markham and Orangeville) *also* felt that development charges, as they are

currently calculated, act as a disincentive to higher density, more compact urban development, and specifically New Urbanism. In Cornell, for example, the challenge is to introduce in the new phases what the local planner called *"next level product"* which includes, higher density, larger and mixed-use units (Interview # 10 and # 23, Senior Planner, Town of Markham). The indication received by the Town of Markham from builders and developers is that the development charge for these 'products' is unfair, and these developers/builders have expressed the desire to build more higher density units but feel that the development charges do not support this. Municipalities, like the Town of Markham, are quick to suggest that the Town's development charges are the smallest component of the total development charge, and that it is the school board's calculations which are generally perceived as the most unfair. However, the latter are *"out of our* [i.e. the municipality's] *control"* (Interview # 23, Senior Planner, Town of Markham).

While public and private interests involved in residential development express dissatisfaction with the current development charging system in Ontario many of those interviewed candidly stated that despite the vocal decree of unfairness, neither side of the development game really want the system to change. As one builder stated: *"the industry complains about development charges but it doesn't necessarily want them to change because then it wouldn't be able to keep on doing what it is doing"* (Interview # 37, Homebuilder). On both sides of the table, then, a degree of comfort and predictability has given way to standardised forms and processes and formulaic designs and plans, with both knowing that infrastructure and

services will exist for future development. One study on development charging in Ontario noted in fact that it appears that development charges have been designed to finance low-density growth while reducing the financial risk to municipalities (Tomalty 1997).

In theory, development charges are considered one way of fostering more compact urban form by encouraging landowners to consider the private and social costs and benefits of development when making choices about location and density. In order to accomplish this, a 'true cost-based pricing' (Blais 1996) approach is implicated which charges developers less for higher-density projects intensifying an already built up area than for low-density projects on the urban fringe. In practice, however, studies (such as Tomalty and Skaburskis (1997)) indicate that development charges in the Toronto area are usually structured on an average cost basis, which exacerbates the supply of low-density housing. Therefore in the average cost approach no differentiation is made on a building unit-to-land ratio and administrators avoid the complexity involved in calculating the estimated level of infrastructure and services required by each new development.

While from the perspective of environmental and social objectives for increasing the efficiency of land use it would appear that the current form of development charging does in fact facilitate 'sprawl', it needs to be noted that the rationale behind the introduction of the Development Charges Act, 1989 was not for use as a planning control tool. Development charging was and is a revenue-producing tool based on an abstract estimation of the level of service and infrastructure required to meet future development growth. Thus,

it is not about the quality of land use but about paying for services. Furthermore, revenue-generating fees are handled at the municipal level not by planning staff but by the finance or clerk's department, by staff with little experience or knowledge of land use policies and planning objectives. If pressures from industry associations forced legislative changes to the act it is unlikely that the use of development charges as a site specific planning tool for encouraging more efficient land use would be a mandatory tactic. Rather, municipalities could perhaps be given the option of instituting marginal cost pricing based on a unit-to-land ratio. In this scenario it is most likely that the option would be taken up by already 'urban' municipalities; those feeling the increased pressures from crumbling post-war infrastructure and services and who may have already or will shortly expend their supply of urban land.

So within this regulatory context, it might be argued that New Urbanism is relatively 'radical' or 'revolutionary' from the point of view of challenging the structural norms and limitations on development options. How producers have managed to exact these marginal changes to the existing rules and regulations affecting development practice needs to be further reflected on in terms of the co-emergence of Smart Growth related policy promotion. Smart Growth policy and new government-driven development control plans have begun to work in tandem with New Urbanist design-led planning to promote more efficient urban form. The following subsection will discuss the emergent framework currently serving to shape regulation further in favour of New Urbanist forms of housing provision in Ontario, and particularly the Greater Toronto Area.

5.1.3 Smart Growth

Closely related to the discussions and debates surrounding development charges and urban intensification is the notion of 'Smart Growth' as a political and economic agenda in Ontario. Smart Growth is an emerging discourse announcing that new visions and approaches are needed to promote and manage urban growth, and that the way to achieve this is through the removal of existing market and governmental *"distortions"* (Interview # 29, Developer), which have favoured the decentralisation or 'sprawl' of employment and residential land uses. The main contention behind Smart Growth is that current growth patterns undermine urban economies and broader environmental objectives while exacerbating social divisions (Katz 2002). Smart Growth is not anti-growth – it is promoted as the middle way between no growth and bad growth and has largely emerged in response to urban decentralisation and the costs associated with maintaining failing dispersed infrastructure.

Former Ontario Premier Mike Harris outlined his (neoliberal) Progressive Conservative Provincial Government's Smart Growth vision in 2001 by remarking:

> "I am determined to see our children inherit cities, communities, neighbourhoods – an entire province – that is efficient, that is as strong as possible and that has a quality of life second to none... Our vision will help encourage growth. It will make sure that all regions of Ontario – from our smallest towns to our largest cities – can reach their economic potential. And it will help keep Ontario strong, growing and ready to compete in the 21st century" (Ontario Smart Growth Secretariat 2001: 2).

This vision was based on the promotion and management of growth through the operationalisation of three general principles:

- Sustaining a strong economy
- Building strong communities
- Promoting a healthy environment

Economic growth and competitiveness played central roles in the initial Provincial mandate for Smart Growth. The implication being that all growth was good. The quality and type of economic growth was not addressed, merely the wealth and prosperity it generates. Additionally, economic growth in Ontario's Smart Growth agenda has largely been discussed in terms of 'unlocking gridlock' and as such has focused on transportation corridors and the importance of expanding and enhancing the movement of goods and people, and improving border access to the United States (see Central Ontario Smart Growth Panel 2002).

The recent change of government in Ontario during October 2003 from the Progressive Conservative Party to the Liberal Party brought with it a change in strategy for growth management. While still loosely under the banner of 'Smart Growth', the current government in December 2003 initiated two proposed Acts which have ramifications for the development industry and its regulators: the *Greenbelt Protection Act (Bill 27)* and the *Strong Communities (Planning Amendment) Act (Bill 26)*. The former is a preliminary step towards legislating a permanent 'Golden Horseshoe Greenbelt'. The Act, recently approved in June 2004, introduced a temporary moratorium on new urban uses outside of existing urban boundaries. The second recent change, amongst others, sought to prevent appeals to the OMB which relate to developer requests for expanding urban boundaries which municipal councils have rejected, thereby strengthening municipal planning authority in this regard.

Smart Growth in Ontario is primarily a policy-orientated debate, yet it is an important consideration when discussing New Urbanist residential development in the Toronto region. This is because many of the pro-Smart Growth documents produced by the provincial government and other public body publications often include photographs and profiles of recent greenfield developments in the suburban fringe and/or redeveloped brownfield sites within Toronto that are described as examples of New Urbanism. These developments predate the 2001 'Made in Ontario' version of Smart Growth, and yet they embody to its proponents a concrete manifestation of Smart Growth efforts before the policy framework has even been deployed. Successful implementation of a Smart Growth agenda therefore appears a foregone conclusion to policy-makers and other proponents.

> "Smart Growth and New Urbanism are synonyms, there is no difference. In order to fulfill the Smart Growth or New Urbanism principles you enter into the political arena, so the implementation of Smart Growth is financial."

(Interview # 21, Cornell Ratepayers' Association President)

From the words of a current residents' association president and recently unsuccessful candidate for ward councillor in Markham, it is clear that the connection between Smart Growth and New Urbanism is apparent even to those outside of the inner circle of development interests. Those more directly involved in producing new residential developments, however, are more dubious about the merits of the popularised notion of 'smart growth' in Ontario. Representatives of the development trades embodied within the Greater Toronto Homebuilder's Association (GTHBA), for example, summarise the position held by many of the developers and builders[29] and

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[29] For clarification, this representation of the homebuilding industry is based on the majority of development interests, which are NOT producing New Urbanist housing by choice. Some

public and private planning and design professionals as well – that in Ontario 'we are already building smarter'. This contention is bolstered by figures which place Toronto in the forefront of urban areas in North America building at higher densities with thirty-percent of all new home sales in the GTA within the City of Toronto (Interview # 68, Head of Government Relations, GTHBA).

"So we argue to government that we already are building smarter, the densities are already higher, people are already buying condos, thirty percent of home sales are already in the central core, we are growing by 100,000 a year – we are going to have to have growth. People have to live somewhere. If you want to stop growth, to be provocative, to stop urban sprawl – stop immigration – just stop it and there will be no more growth."

(Interview # 68, Head of Government Relations, GTHBA)

This tongue-in-cheek suggestion that the only way to stop sprawl (read as growth) is to stop immigration is, of course, far from what the industry wants. Immigration provides not only a skilled labour force for new construction, but it provides a primary market for the producers' 'product'. The second contestation that builders and developers in the industry have with Smart Growth is that they collectively have said that the public sector needs to make strong decisions on where infrastructure is needed and the industry representatives say the market actors will then deliver housing where public investment in infrastructure is guaranteed. While all three levels of government have reacted positively to this point of view, collectively, the development industry is still opposed to the proposed governmental tactic of imposing urban boundary expansion restrictions. The reason for this opposition is cited as being that such artificial boundaries to where development can and cannot go 'never work', because consumers are

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may be producing it in order to profit from the niche market segment which has opened for this type of housing, however, the majority position held by the GTHBA members is the wish to maintain the status quo of 'how things are done' based on the rationale that it is already better than in most parts of North America (in terms of building densities).

offered less and less 'choice', house prices increase dramatically due to constrained supply yet continued demand, and development just skips to further, less urbanised, areas of the city region. The development interests question who is going to pay for these extended infrastructure requirements. The inference from the statements on Smart Growth and development charges by producers is that a true cost-based approach to urban growth control is preferable to a regulatory one that seeks to control infrastructure and servicing costs by implementing urban boundary restrictions and/or limiting lot sizes (Blais 1996). Private development interests, in particular, feel that such initiatives 'distort the market' by raising land prices through limiting supply, and restrict the ability of 'the market' to respond to consumer demand, thus reducing competitiveness. A true cost-based price mechanism on the other hand is said to improve the efficiency of the market and resource allocation.[30]

Cornell, The Beach, King West Village and Montgomery Village have all been upheld as examples of 'Smart Growth' in the Toronto region. And yet they can be equally criticised as disconnected 'pockets' or 'islands' of smart growth. This criticism is more relevant for the suburban contexts where there is an obvious juxtaposition between 'old urbanism' and 'smart growth' or 'new urbanism'. The disconnection between transportation options and living arrangements in these new developments is a clear indication that new development in isolation from other public realm functions is not 'smart'. In

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[30] It is interesting to note that as early as 1996 the Ontario Government commissioned a report for the Greater Toronto Area Task Force (prepared by Dr. Pamela Blais) to assess the relative costs associated with different urban form alternatives for accommodating anticipated growth in the GTA. One of the conclusions of that report was that true cost-based pricing for revenue generating approaches such as development charges or user fees could correct current market distortions, which in effect subsidise low-density suburban growth by artificially lowering the cost of inefficient land development (Blais 1996).

the urban sites – The Beach and King West Village – on the other hand, it has been argued by the producers that these developments were 'smart' by default and that indeed they could be nothing but 'smart' because of the function of land prices in the city (following Interview # 53, 56, Policy Planner, City of Toronto; Interview # 47 former City Councillor, City of Toronto; Interview # 43, Developer). Developers seek out options where there is a minimum infrastructure investment required and where they can maximise the number of units per hectare of land purchased.

In short, the recent debates surrounding Smart Growth in juxtaposition with the ongoing production of New Urbanism, elicit the question of who is in control of urban development processes in Toronto – public or private interests? The link between development practices and policy frameworks is undeniable. The kinds of residential buildings that get built in various locations across the GTA, for example, largely depends on the decisions already being made by builders, developers, financiers, homebuyers and regulators (Metropole Consultants 2003). This tension between public and private roles and interests is a recurrent theme throughout this thesis and it will be further examined and expanded on in Chapter 6 and Chapter 7. Let us first examine, however, if and how the current practices of industry actors, in particular, contingently constitute the operational tools and objects, which (formally and informally) normalise (to varying extents) New Urbanism in Toronto.

5.2 Industry Practice

This section seeks to explore the institutionalised practices of the producers interviewed which emerged as significant in understanding the current status of New Urbanism as a force, and concrete form, in the housing development industry. From the discussion below it is evident that development industry actors believe that what they are doing is 'giving consumers what they want'. However, all attest to the fact that they are doing so while working within the constraints imposed by the high cost of land and the functional relationship this has within the context of the regulatory system described in the previous section, and more importantly the perceived 'market distortions' which result. In terms of design and the actual outcome of the built 'products', constraints imposed by the land market clearly result in certain design features being taken up over available alternatives (cf. Evans 1991). In addition, demand for design changes increase market acceptability and competition vis-à-vis the mainstream housing market. At this level of analysis it could therefore be argued that from the industry perspective, New Urbanism is more a function of market acceptability than that of the power of design to facilitate urban reform.

5.2.1 Hybridisation of New Urbanist Housing 'Products'

Homes are inevitably reduced to 'products' in the discourses of development and planning for new housing projects. Only one interviewee, a consultant architect not directly involved in any of the case studies, questioned the use of this term in the industry and beyond:

"...it is always strange to talk about 'product' when you are talking about housing – but that is how these people think of it, it is a unit, a product. It is like an automobile you have to make it and design it, it has to have features, has to have colour and attitude and lifestyle."

(Interview # 67 Architectural Consultant)

The analogy of the automobile industry was a recurrent statement amongst the producers, particularly amongst developers and builders. The underlying sentiment being that 'production' itself requires the producers to standardise in order to make the 'product' affordable to build and to sell. The variance in conceptualisations of what constitutes New Urbanism (described in the following section 5.3) in a housing development project is complicated by the desire of private development interests to standardise materials, designs and layouts. The replication of new design standards across the Toronto area in new housing developments could be critiqued as promoting a new form of 'cookie-cutter' housing, only now with design elements popularised by New Urbanism. This includes: porches, mid to high-end townhouses, narrow lots or the 'wide-shallow' lot configuration, detached or recessed garages, neo-traditional detailing and architectural facades. Yet such commonalities of aesthetic detailing in a wide variety of housing developments are characterised by those involved in acknowledged New Urbanist projects as less 'pure' and deficient replicas of the 'real thing'. The contention in the Town of Markham for example, is that Cornell has 'raised the bar' for all other more conventional developments in the town.

There is a growing contingent of developers and builders who have by choice purchased land or lots in housing schemes, such as Cornell, but are now seeking to 'modify' the design and layout of the lots and housing 'product'. The main argument is that having a large housing development which is

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entirely rear-lane based with detached garages is not competitive. Those who are fighting to 'maintain the original vision' of Cornell, for instance, likewise agree that beyond the context of Cornell (because of its historical precedence), they would not undertake an all lane-based development again. The costs associated with creating a lane-based concept is said to be in the range of an extra CDN$10,000 per unit, driving builders to construct smaller product to maintain competitive upfront investment costs with non-New Urbanist products (Interview # 14, Marketing Consultant; Interview # 68, Head of Government Relations, GTHBA). Costs alone are not the only factor cited by producers for wanting to modify the built form and streetscape. Many developers and builders interviewed questioned the forced mutuality of the principles of New Urbanism and that of the rear-lane design concept. Development interests have suggested that 'the market' is demanding a diversification of housing products in New Urbanist developments. This includes larger, more expensive homes with attached rear garages or 'front-loaded' garages which are recessed from the front of the house and the street.

With Andrés Duany cited as the 'yardstick' by which to measure a development's 'New Urbanism', many producers are quick to point out that Duany himself is not against larger homes and front-loaded garages. Duany's concept of 'transect' (cf. Duany and Talen 2002) is often cited as justification for developers' calls to 'diversify' New Urbanist housing. The notion of transect has been interpreted by the producers to mean that as a plan moves out from the neighbourhood centre where densities are high and laneways are dominant, and there is a mix of uses, it gradually fans out into less dense,

larger homes, where the size and configuration of the lot makes it economically and aesthetically possible for front driveways and garages to be accommodated in unique ways. In Duany's words: "urban looking at the core and suburban at the edge" (quoted in Warson 2001 www.building.ca/lkmj01ur.htm). To the producers pushing for modified forms, municipal acceptance of the 'transect' concept means that they are able to build homes more competitive with the remaining mainstream market of conventional housing constructed in the GTA (estimated to be 98% by the GTHBA). For the other producers who have become involved in New Urbanist developments precisely for the pricing premium based on the particularity of the rear-lane design, this change is seen as jeopardising their ability to sell more expensive and innovative design units, which maintain the original vision. The ultimate fear is the dilution of the product type to the point where it is only marginally distinguishable from other (conventional) developments.

Generally speaking, two processes are implicated in what I will call the 'hybridisation' of New Urbanist housing products:

1. The promotion of New Urbanist design elements and the rise of 'community building' as opposed to mere 'homebuilding' in most new housing developments, even those considered to be 'conventional'; and

2. The 'dilution' of New Urbanist 'products' in on-going New Urbanist or alternative development projects.

These two processes, in turn, bring to bear questions of whether or not these phenomena are specific to the Toronto regional context, and if so what this means for the future of New Urbanism in Ontario and specifically the GTA.

Some interviewees have suggested that in Canada (as opposed to the United States) New Urbanism is just a passing movement. Partial explanation is pinned on the industry as a whole becoming more able to build at higher and higher densities while maintaining or encouraging elements of 'community', which is what municipalities and developers both want. The result is that in nearly any new subdivision in the Toronto area 'bits and pieces' of New Urbanism can be seen. One design consultant remarked that he believes what has happened is *"that the people processing plans (i.e. municipal planners) got a kind of 'facsimile' of New Urbanism that they felt was good enough"* (Interviews # 11 and 35, Planning and Design Consultant). A private development planner working for the major landowner trying to get permission to modify Cornell's built form stated:

> *"You do see more and more of that everywhere you go, there is an influence of understanding the value of those kinds of principles in designing any community that are beginning to show up everywhere. And there are communities that would not qualify as a New Urbanist community, but increasingly you do get those kinds of considerations in at least some component of a subdivision."*

> (Interview # 17, Project Manager for Developer/Builder)

This facsimile version of New Urbanism seems to be impacting on the long-term feasibility of the so-called 'pure' examples of New Urbanism in Toronto, which must contend with the same or similar 'market' constraints. These constraints include land availability, land costs, development costs, and speed of development approvals and construction. Thus, many developers contend that they would not undertake a New Urbanist project, if that meant it being one hundred percent rear-lane based, unless they were forced to. Few suburban municipalities are in a financial or taxation-based position to force developers to do something that industry-estimated figures suggest is against

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ninety-eight percent of the market. No statistic was offered by any of the interviewees to describe the percentage of the market that could be characterised as 'facsimile' New Urbanism. However, in Markham alone there are at least four other large-scale housing developments (in addition to Cornell) which have been planned with New Urbanist design principles, each accommodating more than 5000 units, most of which have already been sold, built and occupied, while Cornell lagged with only 1200 units constructed after five years (Interview # 26, Planning Consultant; Interview # 14, Marketing Consultant; see also Gordon and Tamminga 2002). Yet, it is Cornell alone that epitomises for the Town of Markham, its leadership in adopting New Urbanism as a planning philosophy. This narrow characterisation of what 'counts' as New Urbanism alone suggests how the industry's quoted two-percent figure (said to represent the share of New Urbanist developments in the Toronto regional market) is somewhat questionable.

5.2.2 Risk Management

Brownfield and greenfield developers have certain inherent risks that they take each time they venture into a residential development. The costs of environmental clean-up on brownfield sites, for example, can escalate beyond original expectations once the remediation process has begun. In these situations if developers do not maximise the number of units per hectare, or do not capture the most efficient per foot street frontage, then pre-development costs associated with clean-up might outstrip the profit margins. A study conducted by Gyourko and Rybczynski (2000) revealed that practitioners from the development and finance fields *perceived* the level of

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risk associated with New Urbanist developments to be higher than conventional projects, and that the mixed use concept was the basis for that perception. Interestingly enough, in that study the perceived risk for urban infill projects was low, while for greenfield 'suburban' projects the perceived risk was high.

> "The relatively high perceived risk for most New Urbanism projects imposes relatively high required rates of return, which in turn requires these projects to generate cash flow quickly to be financially attractive to investors. In addition, the development of multiple uses – or multiple product types – in a single project is viewed as inherently more difficult to evaluate and implement. Financiers consequently favour larger, more experienced developers for multiple-use projects in general and New Urbanism projects in particular" (Gyourko and Rybczynski 2000: 733).

While the risks associated with New Urbanist development projects were quantified in various ways by the producers interviewed few mentioned difficulty in securing investors. The financial insecurity appeared to arrive more from unforeseen delays in construction and owner occupancy. However, the notion that financiers (including banks) favour large more experienced developers for New Urbanist projects and that there is a lower perceived risk with urban infill (because of the perceived willingness of existing 'urban' communities to accept high densities), as suggested by Gyourko and Rybczynski (2000), may help explain the recent changes in the competitive field of developers – wherein large conventional development companies and builders are becoming more active in mixed use 'urban' projects.

The risk of building a 'product' that does not sell is always present in any development. Design consultants attempt to minimise this risk by prompting developers to ask for zoning approval for a mixture of building types (usually

a mix of single detached, semi-detached and town homes) so that if the marketplace changes, the developer can switch types without affecting the vision and without increasing the completion time of the development. Homebuilders have some security in this sense because they only build the units as they are sold. If lots do not sell, the builders have the option to sell them for infill and other development opportunities. The risk involved in development from the point of view of developers and builders investigated in Toronto was expressed as ensuring *"you are not left holding the dirt"* (Interview # 16, Homebuilder). The amount of time it takes for a development to get planning approval is crucial, and the length of time it takes to build the homes and get them occupied is equally sensitive. The faster a developer can 'get in and get out' the less risk of delays impacting the up-front capital required for any development.

Changes to the current rates of interest on mortgages affects all development, and some speculate that New Urbanism may be less adaptable to significant interest rate increases. This is said to be due to the extra costs associated with constructing what is, in effect, two service roads (when rear lane-based designs are employed), as opposed to one service road in more conventional subdivision layouts. As with any price proposition, New Urbanism, at the level of design, costs more to make, and is therefore priced higher relative to the amount of land it covers than conventional layouts. Sceptics of New Urbanism interviewed felt that higher interest rates on mortgages will affect the willingness of the estimated ten-percent draw of potential buyers to purchase less house and property for more money in the name of design and lifestyle preference. However, the current low rate of

interest on mortgages is also a challenge to New Urbanism's chances in the

present marketplace. This is exemplified in Montgomery Village, where

potential buyers had more money to spend and for that, they wanted more

house and more land, which led the developer to sell his remaining building

lots to a conventional house builder and forego the New Urbanist vision for

the project as a whole. Box 5.1 provides a breakdown of recent market

indicators and the effects these have on development practices.

Box 5.1 Defining the Urban Housing Matrix

Several of the developers/builders interviewed suggested that what exists in the GTA is a hierarchy or ordering framework of relative 'affordability', which operates on the distortions of the market and regulatory procedures, such as development charges. For these producers, Montgomery Village represents a low-order market, while The Beach represents a high-order market. This urban matrix is based simply on the economics of consumer purchasing power geared to average household incomes and the uneven distribution of wealth.

Example:

The median household income for all households in the Toronto Census Metropolitan Area in 2001 was CDN$59,502 (Statistics Canada). The estimated 'buying power' of the average purchaser is approximately CDN$200,000 (with the provisions of the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's (CMHC) first time homebuyers' mortgage plan). Montgomery Village's location in the Town of Orangeville dictates that the predominance of households with more buying power is minimal and as such the $200,000 figure is determined to be 'the local market'. The developers working within this market then determine the 'complexity' of the type of project that will sell in this context. Montgomery Village was planned and designed in its original New Urbanist vision to meet this market segment of potential first time homebuyers.

From the perspective of financing, however, few producers felt that getting

bank financing or private investor backing was an issue for the New Urbanist

projects. Rather what the financial creditors were concerned with were the

same issues they would be concerned with for any new development

venture: namely a quick turn around on their investment enabled through

speedy draft planning approval and plan of subdivision or site plan

registration (Interview # 17, Project Manager for Developer). Beyond the planning approvals, however, the time requirements needed to actually construct a New Urbanist development are greater, particularly with detached garages which necessitates that builders have two separate construction schedules, one for the houses and one for the garages. The tightness in terms of space between the houses and the detached garages also means that in order to manoeuvre building materials and erect scaffolds and the like, the house must be completed before the garage can be started. Unless the municipality is willing to issue the builder with two separate building permits (i.e. one for the house and another for the garage), then the builder cannot let the purchaser occupy the home until the garage has also been completed. This means that closure on the sale of the home and property is delayed and the builder might not recoup the up-front costs of construction in the desired timeframe.

5.2.3 Design, Marketing and Innovation

Design and marketing tend to go hand in hand. As one design consultant stated, the private development industry is starting to catch on to the 'principle of community' and designing for the people living in a 'community':

> "A lot of builders are now starting to understand that to build a house you have to understand community, to sell a house you have to understand community. You have to understand more materials and all these things, and it is becoming more accepted. The better quality builders have already put an effort into that. And you will see that their marketing in the end will pick up on this."

(Interview # 42, Landscape Architecture and Design Consultant).

Innovation in building types is now focused largely on providing life-cycle housing in a single 'community'. The notion is that a range of age groups,

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income groups and lifestyles can be accommodated without the need for people to move away from the development because of a change in their social, economic or cultural situation. The inference here is that development actors tend to share a limited interpretation of 'community' as constituted by the provision of material amenities supportive of a generational mix of consumers. Designs have also moved towards increasing the flexibility within the floor plans of the home interiors, with for example the use of moveable non-load bearing walls. Other similar innovations have been introduced to promote live-work units which also allow for flexibility and specialisation over time as needs change, including the use of multiple deeds for a single property which can then be subdivided into residential or commercial rental opportunities (Interview # 63, Developer/ Builder).

Designing and marketing from the 'inside-out' is one way that such considerations have been expressed by the interviewees involved in the four study sites. However, others expressly stated that New Urbanist developments need to be marketed and sold from the 'outside-in' – that is, marketing the 'community' and down playing the 'product' (i.e. house) itself. The emphasis here is on getting potential buyers to buy into the 'package' or the 'neighbourhood' concept. Floor plans and the advantages of them are marketed in conjunction with the conceptual vision of the development. For example, homes with more windows facing frontward for 'eyes-on-the-street', and the design of front porches for promoting interaction with neighbours. In addition, low and no maintenance building and decorative treatments are employed in recognition of the fast-pace of 'modern lifestyles'. A marketing consultant commented that:

"...typically in Toronto it has been builder fighting builder on a product by product basis, that has typically been the way the market worked here. Only now has 'community' come to the forefront on front-loaded as well as rear-loaded product – only now is community being pursued in the American style of marketing."

(Interview # 14, Marketing Consultant)

The 'community' emphasis has gone beyond mere marketing of homes to the wholesale re-branding of development and building companies. Many now refer to themselves not as homebuilders or developers but as 'community builders'. Part and parcel with this re-naming is the desire amongst private development interests to improve the image of the industry as a whole. Several developers expressed their desire to be 'leaders' in the community building business as well as their hope that other developers strive to be the same – *"because one bad apple paints with a pretty big brush in this industry"* (Interview # 43, Developer/Builder).

The ability of developers and builders to 'push the envelope' in terms of design is constrained, however, by the standardised nature of much of the materials and construction techniques employed in large-scale tract housing developments, especially by large volume builders. Efficiency in land use and resource (i.e. money, time, labour) mobilisation remains key to any new development project, New Urbanist or conventional. A formulaic standard for measuring the efficiency of all plans for a development is employed in the industry based on the saleable lot frontage expressed as a ratio of the lots created per unit of street front. The logic behind this practice is that streets cost a given amount to construct per metre, and the revenue side for any development is only found in the saleable lot frontage. Consultants are asked by developers to calculate the ratio of the length of lots to the length of the street and the resulting metric indicates whether or not the plan is efficient.

For many design consultants this statistic falsely represents the 'ideal' plan consisting of long streets with no corners and an infinite number of houses.

Box 5.2: Saleable Lot Frontage Calculations of Plan 'Efficiency'

Ideal formula for saleable lot frontage efficiency:

2 X 214m = 428 m

or

2:1

Example taken from an actual developer's draft plan submission for planning permission for a component of Cornell:

For a Street length of 214 m, the developer has accommodated a total lot frontage comprised of a mix of detached, semi-detached, and town house dwellings amounting to 215m on the west side of the street and 209m on the east side of the street.

This means that the combined street frontage amounts to 424m, therefore, this part of the plan is a mere 4m shy of 100% efficiency, but this length of street is 2 m too small to accommodate the minimum lot frontage permitted for a town house (6.0m).

In this scenario the saleable frontage of two-times the length of the street or a 2:1 ratio is considered to be the "*developer's dream, no waste...just perfect*" (Interview # 67, Architectural Consultant). See Box 5.2 for an actual calculation of saleable lot frontage incorporated within a draft plan for part of Cornell. On the ground, this means uninterrupted blocks of streets and houses and minimal 'events' such as corner stores, coffee shops, parks etc. In the broader sense, then, designers often feel that this equation is all that truly matters to a developer and as long as design parameters do not disrupt the ability of the developer to maximise his/her saleable lot frontage then he/she is more willing to experiment with alternative designs of housing product. In relation to New Urbanism, it seems contradictory (to the

movement's critics) to apply this form of standardised (quantitative) formula, based on modern volume house building practices to produce an outcome which is intended to mimic traditional early 20th century 'neighbourhoods' in aesthetic, social, and essentially 'qualitative' terms.

It has been said that the construction sector is the 'snail of innovation' (Ball 1999) and that builders 'don't build like they used to.' Interviewees involved in the building, development and design industries, as well as public officials, unanimously suggested that this is not the case in Toronto. The industry can 'build anything' and 'build better than they used to'; there are the skills and materials available to build the finest detailing and carved woods – "*but not at the price point a market builder is willing to pay*" (Interview # 67, Architectural Consultant). The tendency is for builders to tender contracts with construction companies who use standard off-the-shelf catalogue pieces and materials, such as troughs, columns, and facades. There is a time pressure involved in tract housing construction which precludes the inclusion of materials which are going to take weeks to order and produce before they can be used on-site in a development's design. In addition, designers and architects feel that builders no longer intuitively understand the principles of design. One architectural consultant remarked on how the construction industry has changed since the turn of the century:

> "*I have seen architectural drawings from some of the historic buildings downtown that comprised maybe three sheets of drawings, there were no details, no elevations that showed the intent – maybe one wall section that showed the profiles. But the builders and the stonemasons knew what that meant. There was more of a shared understanding of these things. But today you can get the most awful interpretations of what you draw even with the amount of detail given. So that is the system of cultural problems that we have in that there is no sensitivity to these things.*"

(Interview # 67, Architectural Consultant)

The 'building culture' to emerge in Toronto is not significantly different in other respects from its historical predecessors. The use of standardised building materials and plans is not new – even in turn of the century homes in Toronto many such structures had little to do with design considerations and more to do with economic efficiencies. Many homes, for example, were sized to fit the dimensions of available cut lumber and several homes may have been constructed simultaneously by a single builder on the same street in order maximise the use of necessary materials and labour (cf. Harris 2004). The manner in which design strategies "mesh with a combination of technical, organisational and commercial considerations in the messy social context of development" (Farmer and Guy 2002: 19) will be further elaborated in Chapters 6 and 7.

5.2.4 Competition and Market Changes

The divide between development interests (developers and builders) who are by reputation perceived as being 'suburban' and greenfield-oriented and those who are 'urban' and infill producers has begun to blur in Toronto. Many of the big-name development and homebuilding companies, which built their fortunes by transforming agricultural lands into homes are now involved in development projects in the city centre, often on brownfield sites. Some 'urban' developers and builders welcome the competition and see it as a form of 'free advertising' for their own products which they feel are superior in design, functionality and lifestyle because of their decidedly 'urban' intuition and experience (Interview # 63, Developer/Builder).

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Interviewees were divided on whether the blurring of 'urban' and 'suburban' development interests suggested a suburbanising force creeping into the city, or the inverse. The recent restructuring of the administrative boundaries of the newly amalgamated City of Toronto has led many urban producers to fear that the situation is as likely to be the former process as it is the latter. The market popularity of higher density housing products, such as townhomes and stacked townhomes, both within the city boundaries and outside suggested to some interviewees that greenfield developers are becoming more familiar with an 'urban' product and therefore the context of the land on which it is located is becoming less of a concern. Figures 5.1 and 5.2 illustrate the similarities between suburban greenfield development and urban infill development. The Toronto housing boom is also seen as being so inflated at present that the demand for new housing construction (increasingly in the city) downplays the risks associated with such developers going into relatively 'unknown territory,' in a physical and regulatory sense.

Figure 5.1: Cornell detached home

Figure 5.2: Toronto semi-detached infill in vicinity of The Beach

5.2.5 Working Relationships between Public and Private Sector Producers

The interaction of private development interests with public municipal officials invariably means that any discussion of working relationships straddles the two categories of industry practice and regulatory practice. Working relationships varied according to context and actors involved in each development study site and production process. On a very general level it appeared to be the case that the original 'vision' or intent to do 'something different' spurred the developer or landowner to undertake the less conventional housing projects. The conceptual vision was usually conceived by a design and/or planning consultancy. These consultants often then formed bonds with one or two sympathetic municipal planning officials. Conflict generally arose in the struggle of these newly allied public and private designers and planners to convince other municipal staff (most notably engineering and public works departments) that the alternative design dimensions of streets, parking, and lot configurations were not an engineering impossibility. The second battle usually entailed convincing the municipal politicians that a 'change from the norm' was not political or socio-economic suicide. In those situations where it was an uphill battle, municipal staff and politicians administering the planning process were reluctantly convinced to reactively 'fit' zoning and development standards to the private interests' pro-active design and planning proposals.

In addition, many private interests involved in consultant work and some of the municipal planning officials interviewed were candid in their remarks that part of their 'role' in the process was to protect the developer and builder.

These individuals saw it within their role to ensure that what they were asking of the private sector was not too far removed from the 'realities' of the Toronto area marketplace. The scenario in which changes to the development and design standards are private sector-initiated eliminates the possibility that a municipality will be blamed for failing to protect the market interests of the developer. The ultimate goal is a 'win-win-win' situation – for developers, the municipality, and the residents. One city politician stated that while this is the ideal a 'win-don't lose too badly-win' scenario is acceptable:

> "Somebody says that politics is the act of the possible, so therefore you can't ask for a kind of vision of an area that the market is not going to deliver, because then nothing is going to happen, and nobody wins from that. Or you can't ask or give the developer everything they want without any controls, but on the other hand you cannot give the community member a park because they will want a park everywhere; there is a balance. So you basically try to tell everybody what is possible and try not to reach unanimity but a broader consensus and the closing of the differences."

> (Interview # 61, City Councillor)

'Compromise' and 'consensus' were key terms used by all actors involved in the production of the four developments. The New Urbanist practice of conducting a design visioning workshop with the stakeholders early in the conceptual stage of the development process often proved to be the forum for the compromising of 'ideals' as well as consensus-building across interests. The general impression of the interviewees in these four sites, particularly in Cornell and The Beach, was that there was not the stereotypical 'us versus them' situation in which public and private development interests were in relationships pitted with conflict. Surprises in terms of working relationships appeared to arise *within* the circle of private developers involved in large scale, multi-landowner planning schemes, such as Cornell. In that particular situation one development company believed it

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had the support of another in approaching the municipality and the control architect about modifying the product – only to be 'surprised' by their competitors' vehemence for 'maintaining the vision' (Interview # 17, Project Manager for Developer).

5.3   Personal and Professional Contextualisations

Development actors relate to one another by shared values, beliefs and norms, and at the organisational level those working in planning, design and development come to share notions of 'how things are done' (Brandsen 2001). Each individual actor, however, brings to his/her professional role and position a contextualised orientation based on previous experiences, perceptions and beliefs, values and opinions. A significant component of my research has attempted to unpack the dynamic processes involved in the convergence of personal and professional rationalisations and conceptualisations into 'matter-of-course' practices amongst development actors. This section summarises the various ways the producers interviewed made use of "abstractions and the transfer of knowledge from one area of experience to another" (Basten 2004): 93). Comparative references, distinctions, and 'othering' were common ways in which producers conveyed their impressions. For example, New Urbanism was conceptualised by referring to what is *not* New Urbanism (i.e. it was conceptualised as 'suburban' not 'urban'). In addition, binaries were set up between American and Canadian development and planning; and Andrés Duany, one of the acclaimed co-founders of the American New Urbanist movement, was praised, chastised *and* objectified as a 'yardstick', often all within a single interview with one individual.

5.3.1 Rationalities, Motivations and Experiences

Getting beyond the 'official line' of many of the producers interviewed was difficult. It was striking the number of times, for example, that when public sector participants were asked for a personal opinion, they would defer to the stated or publicised opinion of a higher-ranking official or the 'visionary' mind behind the conceptual plan. A particular example of this was noted during an interview with one high ranking municipal planning official for the Town of Markham, who when asked for his personal opinion on the request from some developers to 'modify' the form of the lots and homes in the upcoming phases of Cornell, immediately deferred to his conceptualisation of Duany's perspective:

> "Well we had Duany back in 2002 and basically he, with input from the landowners and the public and the town, committed that he was not opposed to front load provided it was done under certain circumstances to provide a large lot product – he uses the phrase transect – you know, starting with the neighbourhood centre, then higher densities, mixed uses, then progressing out to the edges lower density, so he would see a role for front loaded larger products at the edges. So it is in that spirit that we have been in discussion with one of these new owners as to possible components."

> (Interview # 23, Planning Commissioner, Town of Markham)

Difficulty in attaining a personal view or belief was experienced with private sector actors as well, as many builders and developers were quick to offer the corporate *ethos* as the answer to probing questions on their intentions or motivations. For instance, one builder when asked about the relevance of design simply stated that their advertising slogan for many years had been *"better living by design"*; adding that the company's motivation is always to *"create the best curb appeal."* This same interviewee replied that the company accomplishes this vision through *"building the best designed homes by utilising the best innovations in construction materials delivered in a timely*

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fashion to the purchaser at an affordable market-driven price" (Interview # 20, Homebuilder).

Getting beyond the slogans and sound bites was difficult, but not impossible. Several developers and builders were quite open in their personal reflections on New Urbanism and its role in the regional real estate market. Key to these reflections appeared to be the discussion of the prominence of 'rear lanes' and 'rear loaded garages'. In nearly all cases, statements were made based on personal experiences in the past working on other development projects (either New Urbanist or 'conventional'), and current or past living experiences and preferences. For example, a project manager from the largest land development company in Canada commented that he had grown up in Markham and his 'reality' was that Markham was and is a dormitory community, where people may live but work elsewhere. If he was moving to Markham today, he stated he would expect to live in a single detached home with a garage in front: "*that is what I am accustomed to or what my preference would be*" (Interview # 15, In-house Planner for Developer). And yet his company, under his project management, is now involved in developing a portion of Cornell that is entirely rear lane, and detached rear garage based. Similar dislike of the rear lane characteristic of many New Urbanist projects to-date was expressed by planning and design consultants who have had personal experiences of living in either Toronto or other cities throughout the world where rear laneways existed. Often childhood memories of growing up in these areas have cast a negative light on the value of producing lane-way based developments. Many expressed personal concern with such areas becoming 'slums' and sights of multiple social

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problems – such as vandalism, graffiti, assault, and theft (Interview # 26, Planning Consultant; Interview # 14, Marketing Consultant). It is impossible, however, to determine how much these images and impressions have been re-coloured by these producers' current professional stake in the development process, as many are involved in building non-New Urbanist projects competing with the New Urbanist site(s) in question.

Some industry actors also expressed a personal motivation and preference for prioritising their professional involvement in what they termed 'urban' projects. This expressed preference, interestingly enough, was not limited to only those practitioners already involved in development projects in urban centres such as Toronto. The developer responsible for conceptually creating and developing Montgomery Village in Orangeville, expressed his personal affinity not only for living in the city but also for now only getting involved in what he termed "*high order pieces*" in the city (Interview # 29, Developer). The preference for being involved in specifically urban projects was expressed by two other very prominent 'urban thinkers' in the Toronto design community. Their prioritisation of city projects seemed to stem from a combination of job satisfaction and previous bad experiences with designing for suburban projects. In both cases, however, such a preference seemed to be influenced by their unanimous appraisal of the biggest trend in recent years being the *return* of people living and investing in the city. The promotion of their own business enterprises as 'urban' in focus, therefore, appeared to have financial as well as more personal benefits. Both had however worked on a number of New Urbanist projects throughout the Toronto area and had been early supporters of the movement, and yet both

have now attempted to distance themselves from New Urbanism as a label and 'suburban' development as a practice, citing the latter as unrewarding, less interesting and often disappointing (Interview # 11 and 35, Planning and Design Consultant; Interview # 58, Design Consultant).

Only two private sector producers expressed a preference for New Urbanism in housing development. One was a developer/builder involved in the first phase of Cornell and the other a planning and design consultant who has worked on Cornell since its early conception. Both practitioners believe that in their own professional capacity they were 'doing New Urbanism before it became New Urbanism', and as such their promotion of good design and building practices is just a 'natural' extension of their personal philosophies of what makes a good 'community'. For both, as with others (specifically those involved in planning and design), the "acid test" of any project is "would I live there?" (Interview # 12, Planning Consultant). In this statement alone, the relevance of personal opinions, beliefs, tastes, and norms about design, social interaction and lifestyle preferences were undeniably part of professional decision-making and a normalisation of 'accepted' practices.

5.3.2 Conceptualisations of 'New Urbanism'

Not surprisingly no *one* conceptualisation of New Urbanism emerged from the interviews with 'producers' of the four selected housing developments. More specifically, it was evident that clear distinctions exist between 'urban' and 'suburban' contexts and actors. When faced with the question of when is a development 'New Urbanist' and when is it not, many of the interviewees formulated responses based on location and architectural characteristics.

The general characterisation was that New Urbanism exists in the 'suburbs' not in the city; new housing in the city is just a continuation of the existing 'urban fabric':

> "It is hard to know whether things are happening and somebody gives it a name, or if it is a name and therefore things are happening. I think this was a case where it was an understanding in Toronto as to the way neighbourhoods should develop, and therefore they were developed that way. It is not really a planned community in the sense of somebody coming in with a new concept, this concept is really the old concept in Toronto...Once you get into the fringes of Toronto you start to get more rural, that is where the New Urbanism is probably more of a true test."
>
> (Interview # 61, Ward Councillor, City of Toronto)

The contention of many of those interviewees involved in the creation of 'New Urbanist' developments on greenfield sites was that such projects were primarily about putting the 'urban in the suburban.' In discussing the influences for the conceptual development of both Cornell and Montgomery Village the examples of old and 'loved' parts of Toronto, such as Cabbagetown and the Annex, were commonly stated.

> "...we just went back to what I call Cabbagetown or west Toronto, you just can't see the difference between the two [referring to Cornell and Cabbagetown]. I look at west Toronto where they are lane based products, 2-3 storey homes, fairly close together, the distance between them is like a metre or two, there are garages on the land at the back, so what is this New Urbanism? – that is just west Toronto."
>
> (Interview # 18, Ward Councillor, Town of Markham)

In the city examples, the opposite was not the case – public and private development actors involved in the creation of The Beach and King West shied away from any characterisation of these developments as 'New Urbanist', as if the term itself suggested the reviled presence of suburbanisation within the city. Several producers, however, acknowledged the existence of New Urbanism as a design and planning influence at the

time of developing the plans for these sites that was 'looked into' but not heeded specifically.

> *"We looked at it - it would have been short sighted not to look at what they did. Because you always think of different ways of doing zoning by-laws and aiming in that direction. We had gotten all the information from the planners for Cornell to look at, but when it comes right down to it, the development that we were dealing with here was from my point of view just good city building, and it was expanding the fabric that was already there."*
>
> (Interview # 62, Former Area Planner, City of Toronto)

These characterisations are not surprising when one examines the nature of the descriptions of what 'constitutes' New Urbanism. Actors involved in the urban contexts of The Beach and King West Village, as well as those involved in the more 'suburban' contexts of Cornell and Montgomery Village, consistently described New Urbanism by its face-value aesthetic attributes – rear lanes and garages, porches, and Victorian or Georgian pastiche. While most acknowledged the social commentary embodied within the Congress for the New Urbanism's Charter principles and its varied supporters, at the level of individual development sites, few conceived of New Urbanism as more than the sum of its individual design features. In fact, the descriptions of the development processes for all of the study sites suggested that each of these developments while different than the 'norm' of the 1980s and early 1990s were little different than other development projects with respect to pragmatic constraints on materials, contractors, timing schedules, necessary planning approval and public notice. In recent years, the difference between so called 'New Urbanist' projects and other concurrent housing developments has blurred, suggesting that the producers of housing in general have adopted similar designs and efficient lot frontage configurations.

In short, what is seen by many greenfield housing producers as a revolution in suburban land development and progressive municipal planning is viewed as 'old news' and passé to many urban professionals and practitioners. However, not all greenfield producers feel that the municipal adoption of a New Urbanist approach to planning is progressive; rather they feel it is suppressive. Some producers, particularly developers and builders and by association their paid consultants (or vice versa), believe that New Urbanism as an approach to urban design is positive, but that when it becomes dogmatic about individual design elements such as rear lanes and detached rear garages it ties the hands of developers and builders both creatively and economically:

> "New Urbanism in the mind of some is about no driveways and no garages on the street. That doesn't mean no cars on the street... it is about the public spaces and the presence in and around the public spaces and it is about neighbourhood centres, where there is an identifiable centre where people can go to and relate to, and none of those things, with the exception of the laneways and the rear loaded garages – I can't argue with any of them, they are all components of good urban design."
>
> (Interview # 26 and 45, Planning Consultant)

This same issue did not emerge as a concern in the two brownfield sites located within the boundaries of the old city of Toronto, largely because the rear lane housing form not only pre-existed in this part of the city, but its existence was the basis for extending this form into the new development opportunities. The evidence appears to suggest that in the context of the pre-amalgamated City of Toronto, it was not so much a case of New Urbanism being a 'no brainer', but more the case that land prices and historical precedence made the designs associated with New Urbanism uncontroversial. This also meant that such a housing form, while not without issue, was not seen as an extreme alternative to some distinct 'other,' such

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as more conventional suburban tract housing. In the older suburbs of Toronto which under amalgamation in 1998 became part of the new City of Toronto, so called 'urban' designs and housing forms, whether labelled New Urbanist or not, are still often contested by local neighbourhoods and politicians.

5.3.3 Andrés Duany: 'snake oil salesman'?

When discussing New Urbanism it is rare for Andrés Duany's name not to emerge. The case study participants were no exception. It was only in relation to King West Village that no mention of Duany was made. The general sentiment regardless of actor type appears to be that Duany is part guru, part salesperson, and part evangelist. One planning consultant involved in Cornell and The Beach remarked of Andrés Duany: *"he is a charismatic speaker and he is also a bit of a demigogue. The first time I saw him in action - and that was a long time ago - I would have characterised him as a snake oil salesman"* (Interview # 26, Planning Consultant). In addition, reflections on Duany's personality, his ideas and his business approach often entailed a mix of praise, disappointment, and cynicism. Despite the mixed feelings on the man and what some have termed his 'crusade' it was clear from the interviews that Duany is considered the 'yard stick' by which to measure any New Urbanist development project.

At the level of praise, Duany has been credited with 'selling' his (and the CNU's collective) principles of good urban design to politicians, and getting them to embrace the principles and to take a different approach to policy and planning. Disappointment was expressed primarily in relation to Duany's

unfamiliarity with the Canadian climate variables[31] and with the development process in Ontario, in particular as it relates to land cost-per-unit formulas and to financing. Duany's involvement in a number of Canadian projects has not been uniformly successful. One prominent architectural consultant remarked that he has warned municipal officials about hiring Duany's consultancy DPZ on the basis that his projects *"start off on a high note, lots of excitement, this is what Duany brings to this, great showmanship, lots of great visuals, but then when it gets into implementation, it is not as nice as what you might have expected"* (Interview # 27, Architectural Consultant). Part of this disappointment stems from the role that Duany often plays in his projects – he is usually only involved in creating the 'vision' or the conceptual plan for the development. He is not involved in the writing of the planning and zoning documents, nor in the building and construction. As the representative from the largest homebuilder in Canada summarised the situation: *"You can't base an economy on personal vision"* (Interview # 16, Housebuilder).

This sentiment that Duany is more visionary than pragmatic practitioner is evident in the cynicism expressed by a number of interviewees. Many acknowledged that it is not so much the man and his vision that are at fault but the singular-minded nature of some of his adherents. For example, the insistence of the Town of Markham that Cornell be all rear lane based in order to 'maintain the vision' is viewed by many involved in the production of Cornell as being closed not only in relation to 'market' demand for alternative designs and lot configurations, but also to the achievement of the wider goals of New Urbanism, namely diversity of people and housing type.

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[31] DPZ and Company Inc. is based out of Miami Florida. The company first gained international recognition as the designers of Seaside Florida.

Still others expressed cynicism about the actual contribution that Duany's involvement in Toronto area projects has made:

> *"He is an electric speaker. I am not sure he is that great though, really. Winston Churchill was a great speaker, but out of that came his ability to be Prime Minister. Duany is the same thing. What has Duany come up with? He has only come up with west Toronto, and we already had west Toronto... but boy what a speaker, so charismatic."*

(Interview # 18, Ward Councillor, Town of Markham)

Despite such mixed impressions of Duany emerging within the interview process his ability to promote 'west Toronto' or 'Cabbagetown' as an option in the suburban context of Cornell, for example, has proven to be a profitable business for him, and New Urbanism indeed a 'marketable product' in the Toronto region. One source estimated that for a seven-day design charette[32] process, Duany's consultant's fee is in the range of US$300,000, and as this interviewee put it, *"he is doing them all the time, it is the same story over and over again"* (Interview # 14, Marketing Consultant). At each charette new images and photos are created, but cynics of Duany marvel at the fact that no matter the location or context of the new development site, the pictures all look the same − *"he has the same people generally and they generate the same similar images, friendly looking, and everyone gets on side and it is*

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[32] A design 'charette' is the method of planning which Duany Plater-Zyberk & Company, Inc. has adopted and developed in their 'traditional planning practice'. According to the company's website: "the term is derived from the French term for "little cart" and refers to the final intense work effort expended by architects to meet a project deadline. At the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris during the 19th century, proctors circulated the studios with small carts to collect final drawings, and students would jump on the "charette" to put finishing touches on their presentations minutes before the deadline. The excitement of anticipation overcame the fatigue of the previous hours of continuous work and that same level of excitement characterizes the modern charette. Today, designers still gather as an atelier, typically in a single space, often on the site of the project, to study and develop proposals in a concentrated period of time. What is new to the process is the participation of the full community of the projects' constituents. The charette provides a forum for ideas and offers the unique advantage of giving immediate feedback to the designers while giving mutual authorship to the plan by all those who participate." (http:// www. dpz.com/ services charettes private.htm).

great...it is a more 'attractive' urbanism" (Interview # 27, Architectural Consultant). Duany himself has been quoted as saying that his intention in his Canadian projects, (most notably Cornell), has indeed been to *"make density look good" (Interview # 19,* Former Provincial Bureaucrat; cf. Warson 2001).

5.3.4 Planners 'in line with the market'

References to the 'market' were commonplace across the case study units and across actor types. What differed were the contexts in which the comments would be made. For example, the market was seen as a distortion of economic and social realities by some (including design professionals and a minority of developers); a sliding barometer of personal and societal affluence by others (including real estate agents and marketing consultants); and the supreme 'actor' determining what gets developed, where, and for whom, by still others (including the majority of developers, builders, municipal staff and politicians and several consultant planners and designers).

A common contention amongst those in the development and building industry was that builders will only build what 'the market' demands and therefore what sells. The irony in this statement is obviously that if the majority of the housing industry only builds a limited range of housing 'product', and there is a high demand for new housing, then, virtually any form will invariably 'sell'. The implication here is that while New Urbanist developments are said to only make up approximately two-percent of the urban housing market in the GTA (Interview # 68, Head of Government Relations, GTHBA), the developers who undertake these projects do so to

capitalise on a 'niche market' of potential buyers who are looking for 'choice' in the housing marketplace, and who are willing to pay a premium on something that is 'different'.

When these producers were questioned about the two-percent estimate sounding suspiciously low considering the form and design of many of the newest housing developments in the Toronto area, not surprisingly the suggestion was met with disagreement. One reason for this reaction is that if New Urbanism as a marketable niche product can be said to have become mainstream or elements of it incorporated into most new housing developments, then the pricing premiums are threatened and profit margins tightened. This is the crux of the debate currently facing Cornell's planners and designers, developers and builders in their discussions about modifying the form of the housing in forthcoming phases of development. It is also affecting existing residents, who are equally concerned that if Cornell loses its uniqueness the 'market' value of their homes will be jeopardised[33].

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[33] While the primary focus of my research has been on the 'producers' of New Urbanism in Toronto I did interview several residents within each of the four projects. While these respondents have largely been bracketed out of the analysis, the existence of a real 'community' of people living within these developments, and their involvement in the ongoing production/reproduction of these sites should not be disregarded. In three out four of the projects studied a homeowners or ratepayers group or association existed. During the course of the study, in fact, Montgomery Village, which had previously not experienced such mobilisation of its residents, saw one emerge in response to a proposed commercial development adjacent to the residential area. Cornell has a well-established ratepayers' association which is actively involved in consultations with the Town of Markham as well as the individual developers and builders who are proposing new phases at Cornell. The Beach has had a scattered history of groups forming and re-forming. Currently a ratepayers' group exists for the area but its representation of the community as a whole has been called into question. King West Village is the only study site not to have some form of residents' group in existence. However, this absence may be misleading because the development has a condominium board with representatives from the different components of the project. While my study did not directly investigate the dynamics of these groups, considerable data was collected from interviews with producers and residents on how these groups are perceived by the housing producers, in particular municipal politicians. In Cornell and The Beach, local ward councillors have each claimed that they were responsible for 'creating' the groups. The act of initiating these community groups is not entirely selfless. In the case of Cornell, for example, the local councillor commented on how so much of his time in the early phases of development was occupied by liaising between residents and the builders/developers – to

The situation in Cornell highlights a broader aspect of the discourse on 'the market' to emerge from the case study units. This is the collusion of public and private interests in the form of shared vocabularies, rhetoric and rationales. In the case of the Town of Markham, for example, one developer/builder remarked how *"it is always nice to see when a [municipal] council and its staff are in line with the market"* (Interview # 16, Homebuilder). For others this relationship has confused previous perceptions of developers as 'bad' land-hungry capitalists and municipal planners as defenders of the 'public good'. All four of the developments investigated for this study call into question whether it is the public sector interests or the private development interests leading 'the market' towards housing forms consistent with or similar to the principles of New Urbanism. To the supporters of New Urbanism as a social doctrine as well as a design and planning phenomenon, the splitting of hairs in terms of why it is occurring is less important than the fact that it is occurring.

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the point that he characterised himself as a 'complaints manager'. So the formal establishment of a residents' association was one way for the politician to find a balance between dealing with Cornell-specific issues and handling his constituent responsibilities in the remainder of his ward. In establishing residents' groups, local politicians are essentially 'mobilising' the residents into a self-actualising body of influence, so the initiative is potentially beneficial to the politician because it lessens his/her burden of responsibility, but it may also serve to mobilise a cohesive opposition to the politician's power and control within the ward. For residents, mobilisation into a formal group is often complaint-driven with the usual target being the developer or builder responsible for problems associated with the first year of living in what is essentially a construction site. Beyond these issues many view the groups as a forum for social cohesion; as a 'community' centred around a series of planned social events, meetings, and Internet notice and discussion boards. However, when issues of structural problems with the housing arise or shoddy trades work is uncovered beyond the time period in which the developer/builder is still actively involved in the site, residents are less likely to mobilise against the developer for fear that negative attention would make it harder for them to sell their homes. Beyond the individualised concerns of the local municipal councillors a growing awareness of the value of what are perceived to be 'non-political' associations such as a residents' group amongst public officials at the municipal level and with private development interests was palpable. Both groups are concerned with creating an atmosphere of competitive advantage for keeping current residents content while ensuring future residents (e.g. investors, tax base contributions) are not dismayed from moving to the area by poor communications or 'customer relations' between the tripartite interests: developers, the municipality, and homebuyers.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided an analytical overview of the interpretations and understandings of New Urbanist housing producers reflecting upon their practices in relation to industry and regulatory norms and structures. On the level of personal and professional contextualisations, the interview process revealed that the development actors are not operating within a vacuous notion of 'community', in contrast to the criticisms often lobbied at New Urbanists. Each actor in his or her 'professional' capacity is operating within their own rationalised conceptualisation of 'New Urbanism' as constituted by the wider contextual conditions of organisational and institutional activity and constraint. Context, according to Freeden (2001: 8), "contains and tames creativity". Each actor is dynamically involved in the 'morphology of ideology', which entails unlimited flexibility and permeation of overlapping and intersecting concepts allowing for indeterminable ideational combinations (Freeden 2001). This is evidenced by the ability of producers, in their contextualisations, to use the conceptual ambiguity of 'New Urbanism' to oscillate between material (i.e. design features) and social parameters (i.e. community) while still maintaining or reproducing the matter-of-fact discourse of 'the market' and the determining role played by high land costs (and market-savvy municipal councils) in the actualisation of specific housing designs. This manifest itself in the strong opinions of Duany and of New Urbanism as being 'suburban' by nature, which in turn gave rise to an equally strong 'urban' backlash to the suggestion that New Urbanism was a force operating within the 'city' proper.

In terms of industry practice, the institutionalisation of flexibility via what I have termed the hybridisation of New Urbanism was significant. The producers' comments revealed the blurring or merging of 'urban' and 'suburban' markets and development actors, and the re-branding of the development industry as 'community building'. Compromise, consensus and flexibility in regulatory and industry standards and approaches were highlighted as a means of limiting developers' risk. This demonstrated a tendency of public and private development actors to implicitly or even unconsciously support the production of a 'facsimile' version of New Urbanism – based on stylistic or aesthetic attributes, which market interests were confident would sell based on simplistic supply-demand principles and past trends. This suggests that the production of New Urbanism in Toronto was a consequence of the relations between market acceptability, historical precedence, and the technocratic aspects of design rather than a revolutionary design breakthrough.

Within the regulatory realm it is increasingly unclear who is leading whom with respect to public versus private interests in New Urbanist development activities. With more plans and schemes based on 'community' orientation, the question of whether or not the public sector policy is leading the market or just responding to it arises. The case examples demonstrated how public planning and zoning documentation are often written to fit the developer's leadership in terms of 'vision' and design. In addition, the debates surrounding development charging and Smart Growth as a policy response further blurred the archetypal roles often attributed to the 'development game' with the public planning officials pitted against private developers and

builders. The suggestion has been made that the culture of mutually-consented predictability and certainty which has developed between municipalities and development interests works against the possibility of deep rooted changes to the regulatory context within which development in and around Toronto occurs. In short, the regulatory climate in Toronto has enabled 'engineered certainty' for producers in conventional 'status quo' housing provision. The influence of New Urbanism on this framework has been the instituting of greater flexibility in existing zoning regulations to safeguard public and private interests against poor market performance. This 'tweaking' of the existing regulatory context has not radically altered a reliance on the private sector development industry to deliver innovation in design. This same industry, however, actively campaigns against the current system of regulatory burden (especially development charges), which it believes hinders design innovation. Yet if this regulatory context were significantly altered the development industry would not be able to maintain 'business as usual'. Hence, it is very interesting to observe how the industry representatives quickly fall back on the historical discourse of Toronto being 'the city that works' by updating this mantra to apply to the current climate of proposed growth restrictions (i.e. Smart Growth, urban boundaries etc.), epitomised in the contention that 'we are already building smarter' than 'other' cities in North America.

Together the three lenses of observation used to frame the practices of the producers of New Urbanism in Toronto suggest that the normative emphasis on institutional and/or structural constructs (e.g. the plan efficiency ratio and urban matrix etc.) and regulations (e.g. development charges, zoning by-

laws, urban boundary restrictions etc.) leave little room for creative housing innovation. Therefore, any innovation in housing provision that does occur (including New Urbanism) is not necessarily the radical challenge to 'the system' (i.e. anti-regulation) that it attests to be, but is merely, perhaps, the *de facto* degree of creativity enabled or shaped by these contemporaneous constructs and regulations.

These constrained practices should be viewed as providing the situated context for the social, economic and political conditions of the 'structures of provision' in action. The next chapter returns to this framework of provision to present conclusions on the relational nature of the social processes of production exemplified within the Toronto case study sites. In particular, Chapter 6 questions if and how the constraints on practices of the producers outlined within this chapter, serve to typify the processes of provision (into 'ideal' type scenarios) for New Urbanist housing in Toronto. The following chapter will also present my conclusions on the utility of the structures of provision framework in explaining these relations between process and outcome.

Chapter 6

Evaluating the New Urbanist Structure(s)
of Provision in Toronto

Introduction

My research began by asking the questions: *What underlying regulatory,*
structural and ideological parameters are promoting New Urbanism in
Toronto? And, *How and why is New Urbanism now seen as the 'best*
practice' alternative to sprawl and a solution to social disaffection? I have
argued that current literature relating to New Urbanism has inadequately
addressed the inherently situated nature of housing provision and the
localness of development practices amongst housing producers. Moreover,
very few studies have attempted to answer why New Urbanism has emerged
in particular places at particular times. Extending this critique beyond the
New Urbanism literature, I have argued that while supply-demand or
stimulus-response type land development models may be used to typify the
development process involved in housing provision, these do not adequately
activate local context as more than a static container of anonymous
economically-driven relations, nor explain the uniqueness of the interrelations
of *process and outcome* within a particular form of building provision. Such
work is often limited by voluntaristic and idealist conceptions of 'process'
and/or 'outcome' and may not account for constraints on the practices which
actively constitute the relations within, between and external to these two
black boxes.

I have used a relational approach, the 'structures of provision' conceptual framework, which draws upon the constraint-based nature of development actor practices in the production of New Urbanist housing in order to demonstrate that despite its universalisation as a global planning and design movement, New Urbanist development, like all forms of building provision, is an inherently situated social process. Chapter 4 concentrated on the case-specific relationship of process and place and in large part demonstrated how each of the four study sites is a unique combination of chance events. However, Chapter 5 demonstrated that across the cases there is a commonality of constraint-based practices simultaneously operating at the levels of regulation, institutionalism, and personal and professional ideology.

This chapter concludes the empirical component of this thesis by revisiting the conceptual framework of the structures of provision framework outlined in Chapter 2, which was developed and defended by Ball (1983; 1986; 1986b; 1988; 1998; 2002) for its validity in evaluating property and land development processes. My initial attraction in using the structures of provision framework was its apparent ability to identify and 'map' a unique structure of provision, or multiple structures, for New Urbanism in Toronto. The identification and determination of this uniqueness, it was anticipated, would provide the empirical evidence to answer such questions as:

- If New Urbanism in Toronto is merely a niche marketing of otherwise 'conventional' forms of housing provision then what are the implications for New Urbanism as a force influencing urban policy and planning in a variety of international contexts?

- If New Urbanism in Toronto is a unique structure of provision, then what are the implications for development as a whole within the city region?

- And, was the fact that the investigated development projects were New Urbanist a determining factor in their existence; or was the uniqueness of the New Urbanism label and its accompanying ideology applied post hoc?

The challenge that I set for the structures of provision framework was one of identifying and mapping out the schema of relations involved in the provision of New Urbanism in Toronto *as well as* critically evaluating the practical 'depth' of the significance of this form of provision in this context. In other words, I was looking for answers to how much, to whom, and why it mattered that these housing developments were 'New Urbanist'. Admittedly, this was a tall order for a single model to achieve, and as this chapter concludes the exploratory value of the approach was much easier to exploit than was its evaluative capacity.

This concluding chapter of the empirical part of the thesis thus expands on the strengths and weaknesses of the structures of provision approach encountered through the use of it in framing my study of New Urbanist housing in Toronto. My informed critique of Ball's approach specifically attempts to account for the inability of the structures of provision framework to adequately evaluate how and why New Urbanism is currently so prominent in Toronto. In identifying areas of weakness within the structures of provision approach, I have attempted to isolate the unique attributes of New Urbanism that demand further theorisation in order 'explain' their emergence, proliferation, and modification. Of particular relevance in this conclusion are the relations within and between prevailing 'market forces' and the adoption of new design canons. The implication of this critique is that Ball's approach has reached the limit of its usefulness as an evaluative framework within this

research but has nonetheless enabled the theoretical trajectory of the study to significantly evolve beyond the limits of this thesis, as outlined in Chapter 7.

6.1   Social Interventions

My investigation of the production of four planned communities labelled in practice as New Urbanism in form or type reinforced the significance of the relations within and between the following:

i)   The development industry (including developers, builders, labourers, investors, marketers etc.);
ii)   Private-sector planning and design professionals (including consultant planners, designers, architects etc.); and
iii)   Public-sector officials (including municipal planners, engineers, building inspectors, policymakers and local politicians).

6.1.1 Development Industry

The range and significance of development industry actor involvement in each of the four projects differed considerably based on the size of the project, its location, the notoriety of the project, and the specifics of land ownership and transaction. While in each case Official Plan and zoning regulations anticipated the allocation of lands for potential residential use, the distribution of housing forms was largely determined by private developers and their commissioned design and planning professionals, who acted as the creative directors of the development processes. Builders (i.e. those who were not also the primary developers) generally conformed to the distributive rationale pre-ordained by the developer, who would have acquired planning permission. Thus, the house builders worked within the design guidelines put in place by the developer's control architect in joint agreement with the

municipal planners and engineers. The exterior design, configuration and layout of individual homes were however within the creative remit of the builder. The empirical evidence demonstrated that volume house builders were inclined to seek out standardised designs and materials. Yet builders regularly experimented with new 'products' and tested the bounds of market acceptability within the parameters of 'New Urbanist' projects, while continuing to use the conventional formulas for determining the efficiency of a proposed plan.

6.1.2 Private Planning and Design Professionals

The introduction of planning and design professionals to the development process for New Urbanist projects was undertaken to bring legitimacy to the 'grand visions' of the developers and to rationalise these wishes into manageable, profitable projects. In the projects investigated the primary role of these professionals was to convince their public sector counterparts of the merits (i.e. public good) achieved by granting permission to their client's application. Significantly, in all instances, the establishment of a good relationship between the planning and design consultants on the one hand, and municipal planning staff or politicians on the other, was key to the timely delivery of planning permission. This dialogue between public and private 'experts' simultaneously instilled the confidence of the developer, builder, and investor that a project, despite its 'alternative' label, could be completed and sold quickly and profitably.

Planning and design consultants were involved in the allocation of the range of housing types and tenures deemed to be feasible in relation to pre-existing

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or formative regulatory constraints outlined within Official Plans and Zoning By-laws. These professionals played a major role in deciding the distributive pattern and aesthetic detail of each development inscribed in the technical legitimacy of master plans and alternative design guidelines. The intent of these documents and processes, as viewed by the professionals interviewed, was as a means to dilute the 'strangeness' of an alternative development and to placate the 'knee-jerk' reactions of conventional development-minded clients and municipalities by delivering the vision in a form that was accepted within current institutional practice. Cornell and Montgomery Village both demonstrated, however, that strict adherence to the initially proposed alternative design standards and 'codes' without any flexibility in the evolution of these projects would have placed their developers/builders in an inferior market position. So the private planning and design professionals acted as linking agents between the market-minded pursuits and under-developed design know-how of land rich developers, and the technocratic, politically cautious mindset of municipal staffs and councils.

6.1.3 Public Officials and Politicians

Municipal planners were often the 'sympathetic ears' within the local government framework defending the planning and design merits of the New Urbanist projects. Planners found themselves acting as liaison officers, at times jointly with the private consultants hired by the developer, in negotiating communication between other municipal staff (particularly engineers and public works managers), politicians and the private development interests. In contrast, politicians became more involved in the implementation stage of the development projects when existing or local area residents (i.e. constituents)

became vocal about issues with the construction activities, such as noise, dust, machinery-on-site or builder workmanship. In this sense, politicians acted as 'crises managers' balancing the concerns of old and new residents with the customer relations necessary to maintain a good working relationship with development interests. Together, municipal actors were less pro-active than their private sector counterparts, in terms of creative interventions in housing provision due to the perceived liability issues that might result from pushing the development industry 'too far' in any one direction, and possibly away from the known risks of the mainstream housing market.

6.2 Contextualising Constraint

The relational interventions recapped above compel the context-specific conditions underscoring the uniqueness of each of the four development processes investigated. From this analysis I have identified seven common constraints on New Urbanist provision. These constraints (which are in many ways interconnected) both embody the rationalisations of the housing producers interviewed and actively mediate the conflicts, tensions and collaborations observed through the following frames of reference:

    i)   Within an individual New Urbanist project;
    ii)   Between New Urbanist producers and wider social processes and;
    iii)   Between New Urbanist producers vis-à-vis those involved in other
            contemporary forms of provision (in most cases, those considered
            to be 'conventional').

The seven constraints identified from the analyses provided within Chapter 4's emphasis on the case-specific narratives of production and within

Chapter 5's focus on the patterning of practices across the cases are briefly summarised below.

1. **Risk management:** The need to dilute perceived and real financial risk is pervasive to any development process, but the magnitude of risk involved in developing, building, and selling New Urbanist 'products' remains a heightened concern for housing producers, both public and private. Institutional, technical and monetary requirements for a New Urbanist project may differ from conventional forms of provision, and as such a perception of increased risk is usually presumed. In addition, the time it takes to convince municipal officials, technical staff, and financiers that it is a manageable risk may in fact deter the project from proceeding to implementation.

2. **Conformity v. innovation:** Design can either 'make or break' a development project, both in terms of market acceptance and industry accolade and reputation. All creative decisions are part of risk management and they involve a balancing of the desire to be innovative (i.e. introducing new products, designs, forms, materials, technologies etc.) and the security of conforming to accepted 'norms' of provision (i.e. producing products and designs which are proven in the market place). The pressure to standardise house designs and materials is nonetheless present in most (if not all) development interests' business plans, and New Urbanist producers, while conscious of the importance of 'vernacular' design also seek to standardise as much as possible. Producers are also keen to 'test' their products in the pursuit of new opportunities for standardisation.

3. **Market acceptance:** The increasing popularity and acceptance of higher density forms of housing both within the City of Toronto and its suburbs continues to decrease the risk associated with developments which include, at least, the prima facia New Urbanist housing forms and design elements. These basic components are in many ways becoming the new standardised products. Yet consumer acceptance of New Urbanist housing is influenced by many market factors, including location. Within the heated market of the Toronto urban area the demand for new construction is great enough to minimise the risk of not selling. But as development projects extend out into the urban periphery, the market acceptance for New Urbanism is tempered by competition from more affordable prices for larger homes on larger parcels of land, as well as by social and cultural reservations to higher density living. In short, high land costs is a major constraint on design and innovation, the nature of which is closely tied to the risks associated with a new 'product' in an untested market.

4. **Structuring of choice:** The contention that developers and builders will 'only build what the market demands' is often presented as a matter of fact. Alternatively, this statement is chastised for enabling the development industry to maintain the status quo. Both of these

characterisations, however, fail to address how 'choice' in terms of housing form and design is socially negotiated. The creation of 'options' and the manufacturing of 'demand' precede market acceptance for any form of housing. Yet the development industry and public sector alike seem to oversimplify the linear transference of market research into accepted and standardised building practice.

5. **Pressure for change:** The reliance on the accepted premise that builders only build what the market demands has in many long-term New Urbanist development projects been replaced with the statement that this niche market 'demands diversification'. The pressure felt by producers (and consumers) is one of balancing the desire to maintain market competitiveness whilst simultaneously 'maintaining the vision.' The competing aims are not as different as they may at first appear – they both arise from concern for market acceptance. The former is an attempt to capture a larger percentage of the mainstream housing market, while the latter is an attempt to maintain the price premiums of a now reasonably well-established niche market segment. The results of these tensions can be seen in the built forms constructed over varying time horizons, wherein the New Urbanist form oscillates between characterisations as 'pure', 'facsimile', 'modified', and even 'conventional'. Together these represent the active hybridisation of New Urbanism over time and space.

6. **Sustainability:** New Urbanist development projects are often drawn into characterisations of 'sustainable community building'. Sustainable community building is not purely the domain of New Urbanism but is common throughout the environmental movement, which New Urbanist proponents have argued is their primary influence. Sustainability has been taken on in the development industry as a design issue and a marketing tool, epitomised in the re-branding of building companies as socially and environmentally conscious 'community builders'. The promotion of compact urban development, the heightened expectation for public transportation use, and the efficient use of existing urban infrastructure has been incorporated (to varying degrees of success) into most New Urbanist plans. However, the proliferation of the majority of New Urbanist development into greenfield land remains contradictory to the espoused sustainability credentials.

7. **Reinforced dichotomies:** The idealised separation of greenfield and brownfield development processes and projects has reinforced the urban-suburban divide in the housing market and industry. The acceptance of New Urbanism in the suburban context as being the sustainability-conscious process of 'putting the urban in the suburban' is tempered by the implied inference that New Urbanism in the urban context represents a suburbanising influence on the urban. This divide has been systemically exaggerated via the political and planning

frameworks of consecutive provincial governments and local government attitudes towards planning and development.

Together these seven interwoven constraints (which variably compel and restrain producer actions and development processes) fall into three empirically derived primary areas of interest in the search for answers to my foundational research questions and for which explanations were sought within the conceptual framework provided by the structures of provision. These three areas centre on issues of location, change over time, and the transformative tastes, values and aesthetics inherent to conceptualisations of 'design'. The following section highlights the implications of using the structures of provision approach in addressing whether or not the physical characteristics and dominant social relations of a specific time and place can account for the 'peculiarities' of New Urbanist built form and its replication, modification and dissemination into other spatial contexts. In particular, it argues that the constraints identified above are not exclusive to New Urbanism, and as such it has not been possible to conclusively identify and 'map' out New Urbanism as a distinct or novel 'structure of provision'. Rather what these cross-case empirical findings suggest is that New Urbanism is a locally situated variant of the existing (yet constantly evolving) conventional structure of housing provision operating within Toronto.

The remainder of this chapter assesses the utility of the conceptual framework employed thus far, and from these empirical conclusions, directs the need for further theorisation regarding the processes of normalisation.

6.3 Implications of Operationalising the Framework

Ball (1986b: 457) states that the analysis of structures of provision is "a means of ordering and evaluating particular sets of empirical material rather than an explanation in itself." In addition, he contends:

> "The analysis enables the potential influence of a particular set of social relations on certain events to be considered. The conclusion might be that those social relations have considerable or little role to play for the issue in question: they do, however, stop the provision of the built environment from being ignored" (1986b: 457).

In using the structures of provision as a means of ordering and evaluating the empirical material gathered from the four in-depth studies I concluded that *context* is crucial.[34] Unlike most of the other land development models discussed in Chapter 2, the structures of provision approach takes context seriously as an active force rather than passive container. Recall from Chapter 2 that Guy and Henneberry (2000) asserted the need to integrate the 'economic' and the 'social' in dynamic temporal and spatial contexts – a sentiment with which I am in full agreement. However, Guy and Henneberry's use of 'context' as a passive container yet active mediator of and between structure and agency seemingly left little room for a real integration of social and economic conditions of a particular time and place. Rather, what this enabled were two investigations of exclusive realms (the social and the economic) that were then brought together to explain one another's

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[34] It should be noted again that my use of the 'structures of provision' framework as an ordering framework is ontologically and epistemologically different than Ball's conceptualisation of an 'ordering framework'. Whereas Ball stresses the utility of the framework for ordering or managing the empirical information collected on a particular form or type of development which he then 'explains' using neo-classical economic principles and theories of the 'real' nature of economic relations. I view the structures of provision approach as part of a larger process of human rationalisation wherein its formulation is actually one of many possible means of ordering 'reality' – which is constituted by the processes, practices, interactions, interventions etc. that the framework itself helps to identify.

existence. But when context is viewed as the constitutive reality of human practice, there is, in my opinion, no need to divide the social from the economic or structure from agency, nor is there necessarily reason to search for the causal mechanism(s) operating between the two realms. The structures of provision conceptual framework supports this understanding of context, but it has not yet helped to explain the nature of the observed (rather than assumed) relations.

The empirical analysis framed by the structures of provision approach demonstrated that the emergence and normalisation of New Urbanism in Toronto is not fully explained or typified by researching the locally contingent *responses* of the development actors. This part of the investigation was however useful because it problematised the emergence and dissemination of New Urbanism as a distinctive type of housing provision, rather than merely accepted its existence as 'given'. However, the empirical analysis alone did not 'explain' the specificity of the material outcome associated with New Urbanism in Toronto.

My investigation of New Urbanism in Toronto yielded several key observations, which again underscore the significance of context. Time and location continuously emerged as primary factors constituting the conditions driving both process and outcome in each of the four studies. The changing 'roles' of actor relations both internal to a single development process, as well as external across the spectrum of development projects undertaken within the Toronto region in recent years was significant. The transference of public and private sector planning and design professionals into and out of

the respective 'sides' of the development table spoke directly to the theme of a blurring of the lines separating planning for the 'public good' from the assumed 'reality' of the market. It also alluded to Ball's (1983: 232) statement that the planning system is "not a public constraint on private interests but a place where private interests compete."

The temporal context was significant in terms of the political/regulatory framework of the planning system in Ontario. Each development process investigated changed dramatically over the course of its conceptualisation, implementation and construction, with each development phase affected by the political climate of the day. For some projects these changes in political attitudes, in conjunction with changes in local market acceptance, meant that the original visions and plans once viewed with scepticism as too 'different' or 'strange' were now seen by some as the new conventional forms of housing provision. The competitive field of development 'players' was determined to have narrowed and the clear divide between brownfield and greenfield, urban and suburban developers, builders, and to some extent products, to have been eclipsed. Location and timing thus emerged as the driving forces behind the emergence and hybridisation of New Urbanism in Toronto, over and above the more-researched significance of neo-traditional design and its explicit social determinism.

These empirical findings support my contention from Chapter 2 that a research agenda focused on consumption may not have revealed the same degree of significance afforded to the temporal and spatial context of production. These proved to be as crucial in the formative outcome of a New

Urbanist project as the minutia of the actualised design features. More compellingly, a consumption-oriented approach might not have identified the interrelatedness of the consumption of design and the situated complexity behind the production of the material form being consumed. The structures of provision approach to looking at the processes of provision, as a whole, thus, effectively demonstrated that consumption and production must be investigated jointly as a social process. Furthermore, my empirical research has demonstrated the need, following Pratt (2004: 520) to "transcend the production-consumption couplet, along with its siblings, culture-economy and social-economy, and to fully apprehend their multi-faceted situatedness in terms of space-time-matter." Yet at the end of my empirical analysis, using the structures of provision framework, several questions remain unanswered.

6.3.1 Directing Theorisation

Does a single structure of provision exist for New Urbanism in Toronto? Can two structures of provision be identified – one for brownfield New Urbanism and one for greenfield New Urbanism? Or are each of the four development processes investigated so unique unto themselves (based on the breadth and depth of actor intervention in the physical processes of production) that each embodies its own locally contingent structure of provision? Or is, as I have suggested, New Urbanism a derivative of a wider structure of provision for conventional housing? The empirical work demonstrated, however, that identifying the *structural* nature of a 'structure of provision' is less important than the determination of the significant processes of change constantly at work within, between and upon the provision of what is commonly identified as residential New Urbanism. The significance of this statement is both a

critical reflection on my research design and on the ability of the conceptual framework to answer my research questions. In short, I investigated the four developments from the perspective of the current time and place – but each project has a unique history and an as yet undetermined future. It is very difficult (and perhaps presumptuous) then to speak of the combined nature of these four project sites and processes as a well-defined static 'structure' of provision. I have thus deemed it necessary at this stage in the research to theoretically engage with explaining how process and outcome changed over time as each agent intervening in the physical production of the projects acted to ameliorate constraints in their own best interest along the way. The empirical component of my study, therefore, has directed my theoretical shift in focus towards tapping into *how* the different actors have throughout the course of the development processes made sense of their work and involvement through particular ideological supports (cf. Bentley 1999: 73) and rationalisations.

Ball (1998:1515) stated that the problem with the structures of provision approach is the historically contingent nature of a structure of provision. This "makes it difficult *a priori* to define them, and say when and how they should be used." This is exactly the predicament I have found myself within from the researchers perspective. Yet, while it might be difficult to 'define' in abstract terms the existence of a distinctly New Urbanist structure of provision, the identification of a particular form or type of housing is possible based on physical peculiarities unique to that form. My empirical research demonstrates that appearances can be deceiving. Behind each project is a different set of social relations acting over time in a series of unique

processes, yielding variant forms of housing, which based primarily on physical features and supported by ideologically loaded marketing of 'community' values, conformed to the popular conceptualisation(s) of New Urbanism (e.g. those espoused in the Charter for the New Urbanism).

The conflict and collaboration between agents involved in the early 'pure' New Urbanism experiments have in some locations (primarily where the market forces – notably land costs and availability and consumer acceptance – were favourable) led to the introduction of New Urbanism-friendly planning controls, private sector-led design quality guidance, an increased willingness of investors to finance New Urbanist projects, and consequently the narrowing of the field of development actor competition across the brownfield-greenfield divide. As well as these internal changes, external social, economic and political forces have brought about further adjustments to the structure(s) of provision. Most notably, the replication of a new compact 'urban' form of housing provision that is arguably influencing and influenced by Smart Growth policy initiatives; as well as, civil society's growing acceptance of the environmental sustainability agenda. Tables 6.1 and 6.2 attempt to simplify the contingent nature of the development processes while acknowledging the 'patterning' of process-outcomes observed in the field in Toronto.

Table 6.1
Provision Scenario 1: Supportive Contextual Conditions for New Urbanism

Process	Favourable Conditions	Outcome
Land allocation and housing distribution	Public sector involvement in land consolidation; single landownership; medium to high land values (proximity to city) but high housing demand, therefore market acceptance for density; large market of consumers; attractive redevelopment opportunity (prime location i.e. waterfront) or greenfield site.	Near to clean-slate development as possible (either on greenfield and brownfield sites), wherein the land is assembled, there is a clear ownership framework and fewer 'players' involved. And the acknowledged need for new housing and a new type of development has been accepted in a political and market sense.
Conceptual planning and design	Perceived 'housing' problems with existing stock (e.g. affordability issues, failing infrastructure, mismatched life-work balance); efficient saleable lot frontage street/lot plan; design consultant led-design guidance; market acceptance of higher density living units; key early 'buy-in' of municipal engineers, planners and politicians to ensure quicker planning permission – which will induce investor support.	Convergence of urban v. suburban housing markets and forms with greater acceptance of designs which are more compact and smaller on less land which is understood by developers, builders, municipal actors, and consumers to be a function of high urban land costs.
Regulatory constraints	Flexible zoning; urban-minded municipal council and bureaucracy; favourable development charges for variety of higher density forms and 'product' types; absence of existing municipal documentation (e.g. alternative design standards etc.) enabling private design professionals to take lead or joint-involvement in their production; introduction of local and provincial policy reforms supporting more compact development (e.g. Smart Growth).	Public-private co-determination of design and planning regulation flexibilities. In effect the zoning and building standards are custom-fitted to suit the proposed development rather than the inverse. This is further supported by the introduction of statutory reforms favouring mixed use, compact urban form.
Consumption and Reproduction	High demand for new housing; identified niche market segment allowing for price premiums on homes; profitable resale opportunities for purchasers; opportunity for developers and builders to 'test' their products within a niche segment allows for production of new standard forms and designs; selling of 'community' not just homes; good mortgage rates favourable to new home buyers but not too low that will encourage potential purchasers to go further into suburban fringe for more house on more land for less money.	Incentive to maintain the New Urbanist 'vision' to sustain niche market competitiveness. But a range of physical 'outcomes' are still possible within this frame of mind, as the 'vision' is based on competing notions of what New Urbanism is – thus the tendency for characterisations as 'pure' v. 'facsimile'.

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Table 6.2
Provision Scenario 2: Unsupportive Contextual Conditions for New Urbanism

Process	Unfavourable Conditions	Outcome
Land allocation and housing distribution	Speculative development in an untested suburban market requiring planning and zoning amendments to allow for development to proceed without the assurance of municipal support for more compact forms of development to ensure competitiveness with conventional; scattered smaller population in suburban fringe where potential for drawing potential niche market purchasers is less secure.	Developer-driven selection of site to actualize 'vision' which is directly competitive with other forms of speculative development for conventional suburban housing.
Conceptual planning and design	Locating development site within a relatively stable housing market of uniform type, tenure and form wherein 'innovation' in design terms does not conform with the mainstream market of housing purchasers. This limits the scope for design potential. Maximization of saleable lot frontage is considered the primary design determinant.	Alternative designs and plans are seen as 'too different' or 'strange' in the political and local real estate arena, increasing the developer's risk in continuing the project as initially envisioned.
Regulatory constraints	Suburban-minded municipal planning authority and council that is unfamiliar and sceptical of the 'urban' character of the proposed designs. Introduction of new design guidelines and engineering standards is conflict-ridden and the municipal planner is the only supportive public official. This is a condition wherein the design consultant and developer are in a constant position of 'convincing' the local council that what they are proposing is in the interest of the 'public good' as well as the market.	Even if planning permission is approved and the alternative designs and standards are codified in guidance documents there is greater potential for them to be relaxed or ignored or over-ridden due to political conflict poor market performance. The municipal role is reactive rather than pro-active and the development industry in this scenario takes few design risks because of the amount of pre-planning permission 'steps' involved in preening the municipal structure to accommodate the alternative form of development within the existing regulatory framework.
Consumption and Reproduction	Low mortgage rates promote purchasers maximising their investment by buying a bigger house further away from the inflated urban land and housing market. This is not a favourable market to 'test' new housing products where there is a smaller market of potential niche market purchasers to begin with, and a population of consumers who have no economic incentive to purchase a higher density unit than is necessary given the local market conditions.	Promotes a return to suburban local market conformity – low-risk conventional designs on larger lots with lower density configurations.

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Despite the oversimplifications exhibited in Tables 6.1 and 6.2, the empirical investigation of New Urbanism in Toronto revealed that structures of provision are never static, but are continually subject to pressures for change (Ball 1986), therefore 'outcome' is a fluid concept. As Ball (1986) asserted, these pressures can take an economic form and appear as the product of impersonal market forces, such as low mortgage rates supporting demand for larger homes and lots in Montgomery Village. Or they can take a political form and lead to legislative change, such as the introduction of the new greenbelt plan at the provincial level; or more locally, revisions to the outdated Official Plan for the Town of Markham to reflect the Town's decision to have New Urbanism as its driving planning principle.

> "At the same time as it is subject to internal change, no form of housing provision is isolated from the society in which it exists. Instead, it will be affected by wider societal pressures as well as by the agencies directly involved. In order to understand the reasons for change in a particular structure of provision, its links to wider society must be considered. Change may arise through internal contradictions or because of political action, and could result in collapse when the form of housing provision can no longer be sustained" (Ball 1986: 158).

The projects identified as New Urbanist forms of provision in Toronto each contained contradictions and tensions forcing change from the original intentions of their producers. No project escaped these tensions, yet these pressures were not uniformly distributed. In the two brownfield projects these pressures did not significantly alter the development path from inception to completion. However, the milieu of city actors was already amenable to infill activity and compact, dense development by virtue of land market constraints and the regulatory planning framework operational within the institutionalised practices of the former (i.e. pre-amalgamation) City of Toronto.

The pressures for change were more prevalent in the greenfield context of Cornell and Montgomery Village, where two potential outcomes were observed. First, the Cornell process demonstrated how the internal contradictions, tensions and unexpected collaborations which emerged and were altered over the course of the development process culminated in the current debates over requests from some developers/builders to modify the 'product' to make it more competitive with conventional developments. Some actors saw this as New Urbanism's natural evolution to meet the demands of the mainstream market of housing consumers; others viewed it as dilution of an idealised 'pure' New Urbanism. Second, Montgomery Village provided a clear example of the collapse of the New Urbanist form of provision due to the inability of this type of housing to sustain itself in the face of internal contradictions and political action at a very localised level.

The following section expands on the significance of active spatial and temporal contexts in understanding the emergence and typification of New Urbanism as observed in Toronto within the conceptual limits imposed by the structures of provision framework.

6.4 Engaging with Active Spatial and Temporal Contexts

Ball (1998: 1514) stated that: "structures of provision are subject to continual change, arising from factors like market pressures, changes in technologies, tastes and policies, and because of the strategies of the organisations involved." He further asserted that "there is no *a priori* weighting of the importance of these potential influences – the answers can only come from specific investigation (if at all)." In the previous sections of this chapter I have

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stated that while using the structures of provision approach helped me draw out the relations between agents involved in each individual development project (and to point out that no project is undertaken within a cultural vacuum), I was not able to 'explain' or define the existence of a singular or multiple structure(s) of provision for all New Urbanism in Toronto. I partially attribute this shortfall to the ambiguity surrounding the *in vivo* conceptualisations of what New Urbanism is amongst the producers interviewed, and the difficulty this ambiguity posed for me in relating intentions to place over the history of each development project. This section will, therefore, look more closely at the significance of time and space (and matter) in my empirical findings thus far.

6.4.1 Spatial Context: Greenfield and Brownfield Processes

The empirical investigation revealed that the idealised separation of the greenfield and brownfield development processes, at least at the level of social relations, is exaggerated; yet the divide continues to be reproduced (through word and action) by those involved in either or both types of development activities. The number of former 'greenfield' developers and builders getting involved in 'urban' infill and brownfield projects led many producers to acknowledge that the competitive field has changed considerably over the last five to ten years. In relation to New Urbanist 'form' which is usually characterised by higher density, compact layouts and neo-traditional design, this change in competition has been attributed to the precedent being set by the 'frontier' experiments in greenfield New Urbanism (such as Cornell and Montgomery Village). The sentiment that the 'blood has been spilled' has come to be understood by producers involved in these and

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other similar projects, to mean that the early mistakes and institutional hurdles in the industry and regulatory sense have by and large now been overcome. The way has been cleared for a new generation of low-risk niche marketing and profit-making by a much wider contingent of developers and builders who have conveniently re-branded themselves 'community builders'.

This has also meant however that the original risks associated with cracking a new design and a new product line, which involved a dependency of developers on professional designers and architects, has now produced a new range of standardised house designs which enable replication in different locations, urban and suburban alike. Noteworthy in this conclusion, however, is the fact that in both the greenfield context (Cornell and Montgomery Village) and in the brownfield context (The Beach and King West Village), regardless of the replication of similar design forms in other areas of the city and its suburbs, the original visions were seen as the 'pure' New Urbanism. In greenfield situations this by default (i.e. because 'nothing' was there before) meant that the first phase of construction was upheld as the 'original vision', which 'should be maintained'. But, in the city, where the design intent was to replicate what was already there – old Toronto – it was old Toronto which was upheld as the 'pure' or 'real thing'. As such it was the pre-existing areas of Toronto that retained their value and reputation as being better than any new construction attempting to approximate its 'sense of place' or 'essence'. This position was continually reified by interviewees commenting on how Toronto developers/builders were 'doing' New Urbanism before it was labelled as such, because New Urbanism is merely old Toronto writ large.

The implications of the idealised development practices associated with greenfield versus brownfield processes shed light on the attitudes towards New Urbanism within urban and suburban contexts. According to Tiesdell and Adams (2004: 37), due to their inherent simplicity, greenfield sites can be developed in a formulaic and mechanistic manner, producing cost-efficient layouts which are in turn replicable, thereby decreasing the need for and expense of skilled designers. In the case of Toronto, high-end design professionals were engaged by the developers regardless of whether or not it was a brownfield or greenfield situation, and yet all of the developers and builders still sought to produce cost-efficient layouts and employed standardised design elements, albeit design 'features' influenced by the vernacular architecture of the surrounding residential areas. Ensuring the cost-efficiency and marketability of the plans and design layouts of all of the development projects was, according to the design professionals involved, a primary component of their role in the process.

Tiesdell and Adams (2004: 43) contend that the UK experience of brownfield development (with its inherent investment in better design as a development necessity rather than choice) has begun to feed back into greenfield development processes. I would argue that in the case of Toronto this was not a one-way flow of knowledge and practice. Rather, the brownfield processes investigated within the city, due to the uncommon nature of their size, were just as likely to take on many of the so-called formulaic mechanisms and cost-efficient layouts and replicated design features commonly attributed to greenfield development. The Beach, in particular, was developed by a greenfield developer and the primary builder was also a well-

known greenfield volume home builder. In addition, the cultural clash between the new and old Beach neighbourhoods was postulated by some of the interviewees to have resulted from the existing area residents observing the new community 'take shape' via this rationalised 'suburban-style' assembly and construction of materials, labour, and technology. When the output was then heavily marketed as part of this pre-existing wider urban 'community,' palpable resentment emerged.

6.4.2 Temporal Context: Hybridisation

The internal and external relations (conflicts, contradictions and collaborations) between New Urbanist producers and with the wider social processes intervening in the production of New Urbanist housing, as highlighted in Chapters 4 and 5, are what give structure(s) of provision an inner dynamic. As Ball (1986b: 457) has remarked, they have a history and "that history is recorded in attempts by social agents to overcome difficulties produced by conflict and to ameliorate in their own interest contradictions within structures of provision." These processes of 'overcoming' and 'ameliorating' give rise to pressures for change, hence the implication that a structure of provision is never static.

In the physical sense this internal dynamic is visible through the variations in the outcomes of a development process over time. Each of the studied projects in the Toronto region, while broadly similar in a design and marketing sense, upon closer examination of their respective development narratives indicated that the physical outcomes have changed over time, in some instances even completely collapsing the intended 'vision'. The degree

to which this variation occurred depended in part on the length of the development process in general and whether or not this length of time was anticipated or unexpected (e.g. a phased project produced over a lengthy time horizon, such as Cornell vis-à-vis slow sales of the first phase in Montgomery Village).

Two processes of transformation and change in New Urbanist housing form within Toronto were identified previously in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5. First, design features or elements from the early examples or 'experiments' in neo-traditional New Urbanism (primarily house design details, rather than conceptual plan details) have been (selectively) reproduced within conventional or mainstream housing developments. Such development projects were commonly labelled by interviewees as 'facsimile' New Urbanism. Second, with the widened sphere of developers and builders involved in New Urbanist-influenced projects, pressure mounted for the need to 'modify' New Urbanist 'products' in order for them to be more competitive. I have suggested that these twin processes comprised an observed 'hybridisation' of New Urbanist form in Toronto.

The notion of a 'hybrid' building or more accurately the active process of hybridisation underscores the relevance of the contingent nature of contextual conditions pressuring change in the process and outcome of any development project. To expand on the notion I will use the empirical findings to draw attention to some key issues that conceptualising change over time as a form of hybridisation imparts. It is necessary, however, to ground this discussion in previous work on the sociology of buildings and design practice.

In particular, the work of Guy (2002) and Farmer and Guy (2002) on sustainable buildings is relevant. According to Guy (2002: 8), buildings rarely conform to a singular technical model or any one social vision; they are generally a hybrid, the product of a compromise between several, perhaps, conflicting interpretations of 'good' design by the various actors involved. In the Toronto projects, compromise seemed to be dictated by market-oriented or structured interpretations of 'demand', often at the expense of innovation in design. The conceptualisation of New Urbanist buildings as complex hybrids compelled my research on this form of provision to take account then of the situationally-specific responses to, and rationalisations of, the competing challenges of social and ecological sustainability and economic development. It also challenged the structures of provision framework to attempt to account for how these are shaped by "widely differing motivations and competing social commitments of the actors involved in particular design and development processes" (Farmer and Guy 2002: 12). Three discourses on the process of hybridisation emerged as particularly significant in my empirical research on the producers of New Urbanism in Toronto.

6.4.3 Three Discourses of Hybridisation

The empirical findings stressed the significance of how and why social commitments and motivations of individual and organisational actors changed over time – or more specifically over the course of the development processes. The processes of change occurring within a single development project (such as Cornell) and across the regional housing market suggested to some of the producers interviewed, a dilution of 'pure' New Urbanist form (or the facsimile versions thereof). By contrast, a hybrid logic suggests that

these development processes and material forms cannot be readily interpreted by static functionalist models, either of performance or social ideology (i.e. sustainability or capitalist development). Nor can explanations be found in individualist or internalistic perspectives on design paradigm shifts and innovation (Farmer and Guy 2002: 19; Guy and Shove 2000: 68).

Given my stated position above, the attempt to explain what is visible 'on the ground' by suggesting the existence of an ideological spectrum of New Urbanism (wherein a hierarchical perspective on built forms and ideological supports are conveniently tied together) is far too simplistic an explanation to describe the complexity of an actively *hybridising* form of provision. Nevertheless, many of the producers interviewed in Toronto repeatedly 'explained' to me the 'simple answer' to the *why* questions related to this social phenomena in such a fashion. Generally speaking, these actors used three discourses to 'explain' the pressures for change 'acting upon' any New Urbanist project. These ranged from simplistic market-location functions to the reframing of naturalistic ecological laws. These discourses are described below.

1. The urban market matrix discourse

This characterisation generally conformed to a simplification of the urban land market as a linear model, wherein as development extends out from the urban area, where there is a land-price driven acceptance of compact 'urban' design, the market and social acceptance of urban forms and densities diminishes.
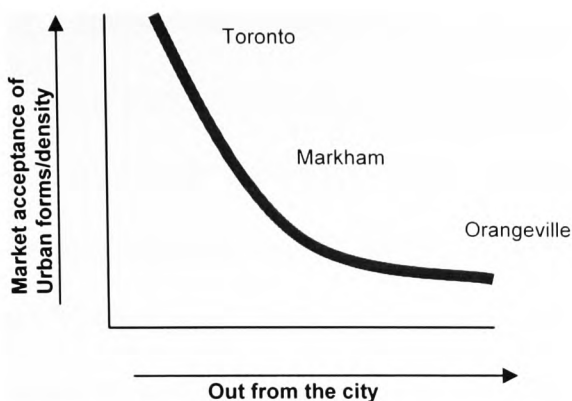
Figure 6.1: Market determinants for variation in design acceptance

This conceptualisation hinged considerably on the market being viewed as a series of economic distortions propped up by a biased system of (randomly selected) regulatory and institutional constraints, including indiscriminate development charges and pro-development mortgage financing and lending schemes. In this view, Toronto was seen as an accepting market for high-order design schemes and projects, whereas Markham was seen as a mid-range market, keen to improve economic and social efficiency by maximising existing infrastructure and services via the introduction of master planned communities. Yet in a mid-range location such as Markham, this form of development was only attractive to a niche market of housing consumers willing to accept the increase in density for the urban amenities and services it supported. Finally, Orangeville represented the low-order design and development potential for 'urban' forms because there were no financial or regulatory incentives for the market to accept higher densities and compact, alternative forms. It should be noted however that while this conceptualisation was presented as if it explained *everything* about why New Urbanism's acceptance is based on the differentiated buying power of particular local markets – it failed to account for those areas of the urban market which would be classed as the inner suburbs of Toronto. These are

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areas of relatively depressed housing prices, disproportional decline in the existing building stock of mid to high-density dwellings, high demand but poor supply of public transportation, and a concentration of urban poverty. The curve on the diagram above might be more accurately depicted by a dip between Toronto and Markham, but as these areas were likely not high on the agenda of development interests keen on appropriating the buying power of high-order urban consumers and commercial investors, it was not surprising that they were overlooked.[35]

2. The sustainability discourse

The entwined circles diagram below, representing conventional (sub)urbanism, New Urbanism and Smart Growth, was used by a developer/builder involved in producing *only* New Urbanist development and infill projects to describe the current design-policy-development interface. This model acknowledged that 'on the ground' in Toronto existing and newly produced conventional forms of development co-exist alongside New Urbanist projects.
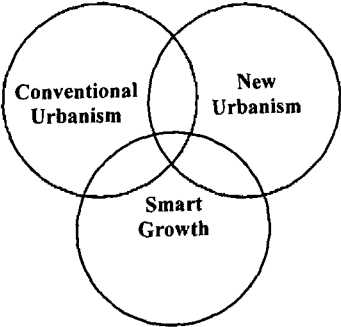

Figure 6.2: Venn diagram of sustainability – triad of conventional urbanism, New Urbanism and Smart Growth

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[35] It should, however, be noted that not all areas of the so-called 'inner suburbs' are uniformly poor. There are concentrations of wealthy inhabitants and areas scattered throughout these parts of the new City of Toronto.

Where conventional urbanism and New Urbanism overlap, the contention was made that this was preferable to maintaining the status quo of functionally separated (suburban) conventional development. Thus, there was an acceptance of elements of New Urbanism finding their way into conventional processes of housing provision in the short term (i.e. the facsimile New Urbanism). However, an incompatibility was seen between conventional development's sprawling nature and the economic, social, and environmental sustainability agendas that were seen as part of smart growth policy initiatives. Where the three circles connect was represented by this particular developer as the ideal – a scenario in which existing forms of (unsustainable) development were (re)connected to new projects designed following New Urbanist principles in support of smart growth policies. So in many ways this discourse was more normative than descriptive of the current 'reality' of urban development and housing provision as a whole in Toronto.

3.   The urban continuum discourse

Two ways of explaining the variation of New Urbanist form as operating along a linear continuum were employed across the housing producers interviewed in Toronto. At times the following two explanatory discourses were combined, other times they were considered to be mutually exclusive.

I. Ideal form to dominant market form continuum

The first model is based on a similar market logic to that of the first discourse of hybridisation, but instead of representing market acceptance of design and density as a curve diminishing with distance from the city centre (i.e. high-order), this model depicts New Urbanism as a series of ideal types on a continuum of traditional form to conventional form. This continuum does not

privilege a location-dependent variable in a line of regression along the continuum. Rather it suggests that a variety of exogenous variables (herein not determined) could influence the transition from ideal type to more conventional (implicitly suggested suburban) forms. All that is explicitly implied in this discourse is that market forces dictate this diversion from the 'pure' New Urbanism, which is only inferior to the authentic forms of traditional (i.e. pre-WWII) housing. It is also explicit that pressure for change is unidirectional.

Traditional Urban Form (e.g. old Toronto)	Pure New Urbanism	Facsimile New Urbanism	Conventional Development
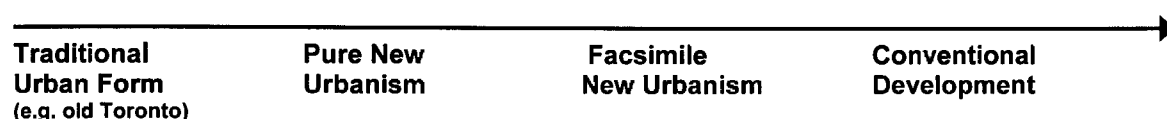
Figure 6.3: Ideal form to a dominant market form

II. Transect ecological continuum

The characterisation of New Urbanism as part of a continuum from traditional to conventional form in the context of Toronto's housing market was often used in conjunction with the qualification of this progression from urban to rural as consistent with the 'natural' principle of incremental density variation. This 'principle' was described via the use of the 'transect' concept, which has recently been adopted by New Urbanist proponents (cf. Duany and Talen 2002).
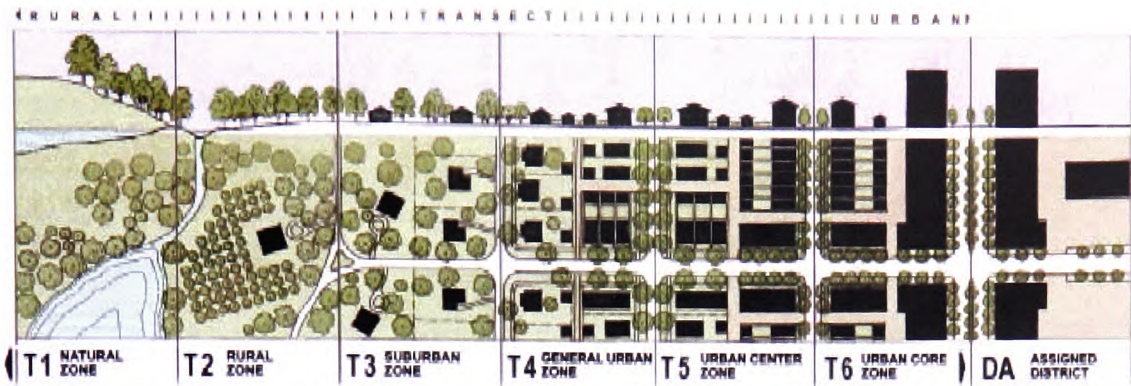
Figure 6.4: The transect diagram

According to Duany (2000) the transect is an ecological concept which provides a geographical cross section through a sequence of environments, in this case those representing human habitat, by increasing density and immersive urban character. Along this continuum from wilderness to urban core there are distinctive design elements that correspond with the desired and accepted degree of density, distribution of land uses and open space. The producers of New Urbanism in Toronto (particularly in the context of Cornell) have taken this concept on as a general explanation for the need to 'diversify' the density and character of the lands within the development plan according to this 'natural' propensity to lose density and compactness as development extends out from the (urban) centre. So again, this fits with Duany's ideal for New Urbanist development projects being urban at the centre and suburban at the edge.

The variation in how producers rationalise the process of hybridisation as: i) a mere function of the urban marketplace; ii) an interim stage en route to urban sustainability; or iii) a naturalistic principle of human ecological variation, underscores the desire of producers to simplify the ever changing context-of-action that they find themselves part of, in order to make sense of it (and by

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extension to convince me, the researcher, that they know what they are and are not doing, and why). However, in so doing, they create new pressures for change through the myriad relations and considerations encompassing technical, aesthetic, financial, ecological and organisational patterns of power.

Yet, the discursive 'models' employed and described above demonstrate a number of areas in which producer knowledge of their own context appears to be narrowly conceived. First, they imply a simplistic understanding of the 'market' – one, which for the most part, denies or downplays external interactions in the shaping of contextual conditions pressuring for change. Second, they say nothing about the roles played by the organisation of land and development processes, more generally, with little if any mention of the regulatory constraints on these processes. Third, Smart Growth (and its various policy incarnations) is problematically equated with 'sustainability'. Finally, the highly-criticised Chicago School model of 'human ecology' has been unproblematically repackaged in the rhetoric of environmental sustainability and upheld as a scientific principle or truth claim for the aesthetic, moral and social ordering of society via the essentialism ascribed to zones of 'urban character.' The following section concentrates more closely on the aesthetic dimension specific to the relevance of design in New Urbanist provision in Toronto, and comments on the utility of the structures of provision approach to explain this relevance.

6.5   The Relevance of Design

The replication of neo-traditional design elements and features associated with New Urbanism in greenfield and brownfield projects, and even more significantly in projects labelled as 'conventional', implies that design is a key component of market positioning, rather than merely "an aesthetic adjunct to it" (Ball 1983: 137). But as the three discourses discussed above implicitly suggest, it is not that easy to separate marketability from aesthetics. Developers and builders become involved in New Urbanist projects (in addition, perhaps, to other more personal reasons) as a means of projecting products into profitable gaps in local (and internalistically conceived) markets. The 'blood spilled' over Cornell and Montgomery Village made the prediction of market gaps for New Urbanist designs in the GTA easier for more recent producers of this form of housing. The success of housing sales in Cornell or other New Urbanist developments in Markham, for example, clearly demonstrated that there was a local (even if somewhat dispersed) market acceptance for this type of housing. Likewise the slow sales in Montgomery Village compared to more conventional housing indicated that the local market there did not accept New Urbanism.

These two extremes demonstrate that the market acceptance of particular housing designs can breed conformity, lack of choice, and may stifle innovation. Strong sales of particular types of houses indicates 'market segments' (Ball 1983) which developers and builders then take up in their market research processes – in essence they search for ways of maintaining this market segment. Consequently, one design innovation may carry the design process of a single development company or house builder for many

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years, until that market segment changes. Canada's largest volume homebuilder, Mattamy Homes, for instance, has made its reputation on the back of its introduction and reproduction of the 'wide-shallow' lot configuration in the early 1990s[36]. This suggests that New Urbanist design features/elements could be seen rather simplistically as new conventions mapped onto existing ones.

Ball (1983:136) wrote that "obviously the purchaser's interests and tastes influence the ability to sell a house, but there is no necessary correspondence between consumer needs and tastes and speculative house builders' interest in design". Most of the development industry representatives interviewed in Toronto stated that design was very important because it sells their 'product', but they cautioned that like any good on the marketplace, design has its own price points. Thus underscoring Newby and Turner's (1999) contention that the exercise of taste does not equal an exercise of free will. There are always constraints (in this case economic) structuring housing choice. In addition, the choices made both by producers and consumers in terms of design represent the reconciliation of two competing drives – the drive to conform and the drive to be different (Newby and Turner 1999: 36).

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[36] Mattamy Homes popularised the concept of wide lots in Canada following on from the success of the concept in California for some 30 years. The Mattamy formula included not only a wide-shallow lot configuration, but also a corresponding house design. This design promoted a wider frontage, providing a stronger streetscape without protruding garages but with large front porches. The interior floor plan of the homes was square by virtue of the new lot configuration, thus enabling shorter hallways and a maximisation of living space. The overall design result was a large, very open design with more windows that are larger than in previous home designs, and a concentration on a street facing orientation.

The aesthetic values of design choices can be subsumed by the standard industry belief that design costs money and for this reason it has the potential to reduce the overall profit margin if it is not 'kept in check'. Design quality is therefore a result of cost-benefit and risk analyses on the part of developers, investors and occupiers. The balancing of these variables results in two possible approaches to design: a) an 'appropriate' view (which refers to the minimum amount of investment in design necessary to secure that the development is bought and used); or b) a 'sustainable' view (which refers to the perspective that it makes sense to invest in better quality design in the long-term, socially and economically) (Carmona *et al.* 2002:148). The majority of the development interests interviewed in Toronto fit into the first category, while several of the design professionals and only one developer could be characterised as constituting the latter.

My adaptation of the structures of provision approach for assessing New Urbanist housing development started from the premise that development is a messy social process, thus, design as a key component in development was also approached and investigated as a social process. My acceptance of design as a relational concept acknowledged that 'design' embodies the material expressions of the "forms of value sought by competing stakeholders and by the process of interaction between them" (Carmona *et al* 2002: 149). More specifically, I felt that the designs that got actualised in the built form of New Urbanist development projects or other forms of provision demanded a closer examination of the degree to which the range of design skills and expertise, the resources of developers and investors, and the aspirations of owners and future users weighed into the design process (cf.

Punter 1999). From an institutional perspective design can be examined as a contested arena of competing professional interests – e.g. architects, consultant planners, municipal planners and engineers, marketing consultants, land developers and homebuilders. While the popular characterisation of design as a social process has been to place design in this confrontational light, the Toronto case studies illustrated that the development industry, private design professionals, and public planning officials and politicians alike were all thinking more about design quality as a necessary pre-requisite for development than had been the case in the recent past. This finding supports Carmona's (2001) work on housing design quality and policy in the UK, wherein he suggests that to get beyond confrontation and compromise two hurdles need overcoming: 1. the housebuilding industry's product-oriented disregard for context; and 2. the contextually unresponsive and rigid control mechanisms used by planning authorities (Carmona 2001: 280).

The Toronto findings suggested that this systemic disregard for context in relation to design has begun to be addressed, in that despite the fact that houses are invariably reduced to 'products' the acknowledgment is present that the actual product is more than the physical materiality of the house itself. Rather, the 'product' that is being delivered to the housing consumer is now seen to comprise a "complete environment with aesthetic appeal" (Barlow 1999: 34). As the development and building companies re-brand themselves as 'community builders' and municipalities take on 'sustainable community' planning agendas this shift in outlook can be observed. However, it still remains difficult to separate the significance of design in

terms of marketability vis-à-vis aesthetics, and it is increasingly difficult to assess whether these shifts in attitudes towards design, in the context of Toronto's housing provision, are being led by either (or neither) the public sector or the private market.

Using the structures of provision approach as an exploratory tool did not empirically demonstrate if and how the design choices in New Urbanist projects were the consequence of policy changes, or rather what Ball (1988: 30) identified as "shifts in the nature or roles of agencies within a process of provision and the subsequent reaction of others to those changes." Similarly, while the empirical evidence suggested that it was private design professionals who were initiating innovations or design changes, unless other professionals, agencies, institutions, and the development industry as a whole willingly took them up and used these designs in their own practices, then new or alternative 'forms' or 'types' of housing never reached the production stage. So, while the structures of provision analysis illustrated the conflicts, collaborations and competition between different actors involved in design decisions, it did not 'explain' how and why New Urbanist design values have resulted from these collusions. Nor did it provide an insight into the social order stabilised through the actualisation of these designs over and above any the alternate design visions. Chapter 7, as a theoretical extension of the thesis, attempts to further engage with these aspects of design's relevance. In particular it will take up Bentley's (1999) contention that this process of translation, or as he terms it motivation, occurs via the forces of creative-destruction, wherein many possibilities become one actuality.

Conclusion

This chapter assessed the value of the structures of provision approach as a 'research motivator' and as an information-gathering and organising tool by summarising the empirical conclusions, and more importantly the notable lack of certain conclusions reached via its use. My original assumption of the need to 'map' out the existence of a single or possibly multiple structure(s) of provision for New Urbanism in Toronto, was thus replaced with the empirically-derived contention that more important than this abstract mapping is the framing of how within an understanding of the contextual conditions actual forms of provision take shape and change. While it is possible that I would have reached the same or similar conclusion employing other conceptual frameworks, I am doubtful that these would have provided as clear an indication of the areas requiring further theorisation (i.e. so early in the grounded analysis process) as was enabled through the relational nature of the structures of provision approach.

The empirical conclusions revealed that pressures for change on any form of provision are temporally and spatially context-dependent, and that unique material and social incarnations or 'shades' of what is typified as 'New Urbanism' result from the struggles and collaborations between actors involved in the development process, which in turn give rise to new pressures for change. In Toronto a hybridisation of New Urbanism over time and space was observed. It was also demonstrated that the binary between greenfield and brownfield development has begun to dissolve in the face of market and regulatory changes. Thus calling into question the reinforced separation of the two 'types' in popular media as well as development and planning related

policy. With respect to design, the relational nature of the structures of provision approach demands that design be seen as a social process wherein design choices and the capacities of various actors to actualise them are structured by competing demands for conformity, innovation, aesthetics and marketability. The New Urbanist designs actualised in the built projects in Toronto are thus understood as the "momentary outcome of a temporally and spatially specific combination of conditions, circumstances and priorities" (Guy and Shove 2000: 110). Despite the situated nature of housing provision I have attempted to simplify the process-outcome relations with respect to the identification of favourable and unfavourable conditions for New Urbanist housing provision (Tables 6.1 and 6.2).

The structures of provision conceptual framework was profoundly important for its ability to flesh-out the network of influences, interactions and constraints on the social interventions in the processes of production. In this way the structures of provision framework adequately addressed the first part of my original research question: *What underlying regulatory, structural and ideological parameters are promoting New Urbanism in Toronto?* However, quite a lot of theorisation is still needed in order to understand how and why the institutional relations implicated through the identification of the constraints on producer practices (illustrated through the empirical analysis in this thesis) are so significant within the context of Toronto's urban development trajectory. Theory is also needed to explain the contradiction inherent in the structures of provision approach's ability to demonstrate the dynamically contingent nature(s) of spatial and temporal contexts constituting social relations in development processes, yet its relative inability to explain

why 'on the ground' in the Toronto region, one housing development is increasingly indistinguishable from the next. What remains unexplained then, is how the conditions and circumstances described in this chapter and the preceding two chapters arose in the first instance and were stabilised through the framing of 'common sense' interpretations or 'best practice' courses of action. Hence, the inevitable conclusion that the structure of provision framework was not adequately able to answer the second part of my research question: *How and why is New Urbanism seen as the 'best practice' alternative to sprawl and a solution to social disaffection?*

Building forms, canons of good design and best practices thus require further examination based on how the influences and constraints identified within a structure of provision act upon individual actors' actions, aspirations and motivations in such a way as to produce urban changes which "exhibit a certain regularity of patterning at particular times and places" (Bentley 1999: 64). Rather than ending the thesis with the identification of the need for further theorisation, the final chapter of this thesis takes up the theoretical challenges highlighted by the empirical conclusions presented thus far. More specifically, Chapter 7 is put forward as a means to demonstrate how an alternative 'meta-framework' might be used to explain the contingent modes of ordering within which regimes of routinised and ritualised practice give social and material shape to the ever-changing structures of provision in Toronto, including the New Urbanist variant. In so doing I will now set aside the exploratory nature of the structure of provision framework in favour of the evaluative power of the rationalities approach.

Chapter 7

One Step Beyond:

Exploring Rationalities of New Urbanist Development

Introduction

In Chapter 1 I stated that my research was an attempt to take up McCann's (1995) challenge to analyse New Urbanism relationally from the perspective of the simultaneous processes of production, promotion and consumption. The suggestion was made that existing research on New Urbanism had suffered from an over concentration on one of these aspects at a time. Critical geography's 'attack on New Urbanism', in particular as highlighted by Ford (2001), was said to be characteristically weak in the following respects:

- Overemphasising the critique of New Urbanist rhetoric;
- Failing to adequately differentiate between criticisms of New Urbanist projects and those that could be aimed at all new large master-planned projects;
- Near exclusive focus on huge, new, isolated and usually only partly completed greenfield projects at the expense of urban infill;
- Relying on a 'diverse bag of theoretical orientations' that take on too many issues that are peripheral to the study of New Urbanism;
- Taking a stance in which 'critical' more often than not means negative (following Ford 2001: 270).

So, have I managed to overcome these weaknesses? By taking a relational and grounded approach to the research design process and analysis I have attempted to make as few as possible a *priori* assumptions about New Urbanism and the theoretical orientations which might apply. I have neither attempted to promote or reject the rhetoric, social doctrine, or design canons self-ascribed by New Urbanist protagonists, but have rather sought to assess

how these aspects of the wider movement relate to the situated constraints on housing production in Toronto. My grounded emphasis on the importance of place and time in understanding why and how New Urbanism has emerged and proliferated in Toronto necessitated a comparative framework which looked at a range of differently sized housing projects at varying stages in their respective development processes (e.g. representing different degrees of completion and resident habitation). In addition, the projects investigated were situated within suburban *and* urban contexts on both greenfield and brownfield (infill) sites, and these were indirectly contrasted with the norms of so-called 'conventional' developments within the GTA.

Despite addressing such critiques of existing geographical accounts of New Urbanism within the framing and design of the thesis I have, nonetheless, concluded that my conceptual framework was not able to account for the many peculiarities inherent to the emergence of New Urbanism in Toronto during the early 1990s. As Chapter 6 explained, while revealing the constraints on New Urbanist housing provision generally, the structures of provision model did not explain why New Urbanism has proliferated to the extent that it could be argued that nearly all new housing developments in the past decade have been influenced by its existence in the marketplace and by the legitimacy afforded to it in local and provincial policy agendas.

Chapter 6 exhausted the utility of the structures of provision conceptual framework to 'explore' the empirical conceptualisations of New Urbanism in Toronto. In contrast, this final chapter marks a clear break from the empirical component of the thesis research and directs the theory-building explanatory

trajectory of my analysis beyond the core thesis work in order to outline a new way of understanding the normalisation of New Urbanism in Toronto. In a sense, then, this chapter represents a 'step beyond' the thesis and focuses on an alternative way of thinking about housing provision from the perspective of 'rationalities'.

This chapter effectively closes the thesis by presenting some of the implications of my research as a whole for further work in the fields of New Urbanism, housing and built environment research more generally. In brief, by framing the structures of provision conceptual framework (which formed the core of the thesis) within a 'meta-framework' of an urban rationalities perspective, I can enable what I have consistently contended is necessary: a culturally-evaluative lens which privileges the significance of context-in-action. My intent in framing this theoretical extension in this way is to underscore the need for more empirical research on different forms of housing or building provision (including New Urbanism) and as a means of demonstrating the associated risk of eclipsing alternative forms of creative urbanism if New Urbanism becomes a matter of social and political indifference. The stifling of creative urbanism is, I contend, a negative consequence of unproblematically continuing to legitimise context-specific dominant urban rationalities via the promotion of universalistic (i.e. context-denying) checklists of 'best practice' approaches to planning and development. Furthermore, within this final chapter I intend to demonstrate that in the case of Toronto the promotion of New Urbanism as 'best practice' has been enabled through the recursive translation of the already emerging dominant rationality of urban efficiency with the 'technologies of government'

enabled through the inscription of New Urbanist design principles and their codification within Smart Growth policy reforms.

7.1 A Rationalities Approach to Understanding Housing Provision

Rationality, according to Dean (1999: 11) refers to "any form of thinking which strives to be relatively clear, systematic and explicit about aspects of 'external' or 'internal' existence, about how things are and how they ought to be." Following Foucault, Dean expands on this by stating that there is a multiplicity of rationalities – that is different ways of thinking in a fairly systematic manner, of making calculations, of defining purposes and employing knowledge. Dean's (1999) conceptualisation of multiple rationalities emerges from the governmentality literature wherein to be 'rational' refers to the attempt to bring any form of 'rationality' (i.e. the identification of problems, issues, prescriptions for change and solutions) to bear on the systematic calculation of how to regulate, control and shape human conduct through particular sets of norms towards a variety of specific ends.

My own use of 'rationalities' here follows more closely Rose and Miller's (1992) use of the term as the changing discursive fields, moral justifications and normative notions for the most appropriate divisions of responsibility for various sectors of society. Such divisions are based on perceived 'problems' and associative 'prescriptions' for change through the mobilisation and organisation of social life. An example of how such an outlook can be operationalised is to take popular concepts and policy frameworks such as 'urban regeneration' and 'sustainability' as socially constructed rationalities

describing normative notions of how society should look and function that are formed and made knowable or 'real' by the problematisation of what they are responding to (e.g. urban decline, pollution, sprawl, economic competitiveness, loss of nature etc.) These are all rationalisations of perceived problems and solutions. From the conceptualisation of problems emerge fairly coherent sets of ways of going about doing things, which can be termed 'regimes of practice'. Regimes of practice can be seen as institutional practices in the sense that they are the "routinised and ritualised way we do things in certain places and at certain times" (Dean 1999: 21). But regimes of practice are not synonymous with any individual or particular 'institution' or 'system' (e.g. housing is a regime of practice that is not only linked to the 'owner occupied housing system', or the 'public or social housing system' but to the 'planning system', the local government institution and public agency organisations, economic development frameworks, social welfare strategies and systems, home mortgaging and financing systems and schemes etc.). The rationalities approach, then, is inherently 'relational' because of the focus on such regimes of practice. Society and individuals do not exist outside or external to their interactions and relations. These relations forge identity and subjectivity, and in the process this makes reality 'knowable' and 'problematic'.

The analysis of particular regimes of practice has five primary aims:

1. "It seeks to identify the emergence of that regime;
2. It seeks to examine the multiple sources of the elements that constitute it;
3. It follows the diverse processes and relations by which these elements are assembled into relatively stable forms of organisation and institutional practice;

4. It examines how such a regime gives rise to and depends upon particular forms of knowledge and how, as a consequence of this, it becomes the target of various programmes of reform and change; and
5. It considers how this regime has a technical or technological dimension and analyses the characteristic techniques, instrumentalities, and mechanisms through which such practices operate, by which they attempt to realise their goals, and through which they have a range of effects" (Dean 1999: 21).

Thus in turning my attention to housing provision as a practice of reason within which regimes of practice have emerged and intersected with one another, one gets the sense in which structures of building provision operate within a wider framework of governmental rationalities – or assemblages of doctrines, notions, ideas, aspirations and norms of how people should govern and be governed. In a similar vein to the five aims of the analysis of a regime of practice, by investigating the 'rationalities' within which New Urbanist housing provision occurs, I contend that the structures of provision approach, while admittedly rooted in an epistemology which is fairly incongruent to governmentality, nevertheless provided a workable framework for unfreezing the conditions governing where and how people live and the material and institutional formations of how they were 'housed'. Thus my 'linking' of the two frameworks should not be seen as complementing 'the economic' with 'the social'. But rather as an attempt to place the structures of provision analysis for New Urbanist housing in Toronto within a meta-framework of rationalities which seeks to specify the parameters for the organisation and mobilisation of the social body at a particular time and in a particular place.

In this way it is difficult to make any assumptions about what is micro social (the structure of provision, the institutional practices etc.) and what is macro social (the 'rationalities'); neither is there a need to place a causal

explanation on one or the other, because in my conception of how they relate they are in fact both part of the same social phenomena. Regimes of practice (within which I would locate the structures of provision) "partly comprise the forms of knowledge and truth that define their field of operation and codify what can be known" (Dean 1999: 29). What cannot be made knowable or 'real' cannot form the basis of a feasible alternative. Such a framework of analysis therefore involves looking at the individual and group practices and conditions of the structures of provision by calling into question the identification of problems with current or past strategies by sectors in society involved in the 'housing' regime of practice. Furthermore, it entails examining how the techniques and practices of these 'producers' are unified, rationalised and routinised in relation to sets of objectives, diagnoses of existing failures or social ills, forms and schema for evaluation and prescriptions for reform and change.

Rationalities are discursive. Discourses are in this sense, following Law (1994: 109), conceived of as "self-reflexive logics". Discourses must be 'materialised' in time and space. This process requires the assembling of heterogeneous resources and technologies to translate governmental rationalities (i.e. the shaping of reflexive conduct) into routinised or normalised modes of action (Murdoch 2004: 52). This way of approaching New Urbanism thus starts from the premise of its existence as a 'practice of reason' undertaken by a variety of actors bound up in a variety of institutions and systems, which through a myriad of tactics, techniques and technologies (such as zoning, design standards, urban boundaries, housing projection statistics, mortgage rates, architectural and building standards, technical

and/or social jargon etc.) seek to translate particular rationalities to a desired physical and social outcome. Yet in operationalising this approach it is essential to note that in attempting to engage with actors' perceptions, values and aspirations, as expressed through their normalised practices, it is misleading to reduce these practices to the values and objectives which the actors claim or presume to underlie them. Value claims, such as in the case of New Urbanism, the 'value of community' or the 'naturalness of the neighbourhood', must be scrutinised as components of the rhetorical practice of organising and mobilising specific rationalities for governing human conduct (cf. Dean 1999).

Dean (1999:34) states that "values, knowledge and techniques are all part of the mix of regimes of practice but none alone acts as guarantor of ultimate meaning." This means that an overemphasis on one aspect of practice, such as the stated claims of those involved or the texts and documents produced by a movement's proponents, is problematic at best. The relevance of the epistemological positioning of researchers and their research questions introduces the significance of contrasting a rationalities approach grounded in theories of government (which problematises the regime of practices which support New Urbanism's normalisation) with that of a contemporaneous study of New Urbanist developments (which naturalises the discourses of New Urbanism without questioning how and why they have emerged in particular contexts).

A recent study of New Urbanist inspired developments in Canada, New Zealand and Britain provides this contrast. The researchers claimed to bring

to the fore a framework for engaging with discourse, culture and ideology in the emergence of dominant planning and design visions. The authors (Thompson-Fawcett and Bond 2003) contend that they have succeeded in examining the processes producing these new landscapes as material and social entities, and have revealed the constitutive role these landscapes play in the process of establishing and reproducing social relations. All of this they assert has been revealed through their analysis of the 'intentions' of those who were involved in promoting the New Urbanist concept in the study sites selected, as set against the stated criteria for 'success' or ideological 'faithfulness' to the discursive 'urbanist' movement as a whole. From this perspective the authors claim to have uncovered that:

> "The desired physical, social and economic and procedural outcomes are being pursued on the ground with varying degrees of faithfulness in our chosen Dorchester, Toronto and Auckland urbanist manifestations. In these three urban landscapes it is possible to view the concrete application of the ideas and ideologies of the urbanist movement amidst the influences of the power alliances embroiled in negotiating urban transformations" (2003: 173).

The methodological approach used to reach this conclusion employed a series of matrices detailing how the 'intentions' of those involved in creating each study site fulfilled or failed to fulfill a checklist of 'urbanist criteria' as determined by the authors' interpretation of *faithfulness* to the principles promoted by the Urban Villages Forum and/or the Congress for the New Urbanism. This approach thus entailed a comparison of intent versus intent. This emphasis in the end revealed very little about the concrete outcome of each of the development sites, because while it was acknowledged that outcomes might differ from intent, no discussion of how or why this was so was elaborated within their study. In addition, it seems to be assumed that it is possible to fully describe 'intentions' for an entire project or process

through a checklist of statements. This alone reveals very little about how and why the individual 'intentions' of a group of varied actors directly and indirectly involved in the development process (implementation but not construction) aligned to enable this inscription into a selective prescription for how and where people should live and work.

The value of Thompson-Fawcett and Bond's (2003) study appears to remain at the level of 'discourse' analysis, with the notion of 'landscape as text' being inexplicably grafted onto the taken-for-granted reality of New Urbanism as a 'planning vision'. It failed however to problematise how and why the New Urbanist discourses emerged in the first instance in specific places and at specific times. Rather, their analysis began from the perspective that New Urbanism is here now, so how is it being used and what is influencing its application? Thus, the conclusion reached by the authors that the concrete application of ideas and ideology varies from some idealised 'pure' reality of New Urbanism seems to, despite claims to the contrary, make this 'reality' even more matter-of-fact and knowable. This again relegates ideology to the level of 'effect' or a distortion of reality.

It is not enough, however, to question the link between written criteria and spoken intentions without engaging with the emerging and competing rationalities of the wider social body within which the New Urbanist doctrine and its various applications, 'expert' knowledges, and technologies take shape. Thompson-Fawcett and Bond (2003) thus see 'discourse' as referring merely to the thoughts, the minds, or the subjects who use it – but not to the practical field in which it is deployed (cf. McHoul and Grace 1993). I believe

Thompson-Fawcett and Bond's analysis is limited in scope by the 'geographical imagination' and epistemological framing of their research. The end result is that the conclusions are read-off from existent theory (and more significantly promotional literature on the part of New Urbanist supporters) more than they appear to be the result of the empirical study of the practical fields of interaction of the actors' intentions and the physical outcomes produced in the development processes.

By contrast, the non-deterministic or non-reductionist nature of a rationalities approach, following Murdoch (2000: 505), is beneficial because it "draws our attention to the 'politicisation' of some 'unpolitical' or 'technical' practices, largely because particular rationalities are operationalised through particular technologies." As such the practical fields and the forms of rationality which inhere in them become the foci of inquiry. Such an approach further recognises that "the strategies, interests and actions of individuals and organisations are not *automatically* determined by dominant social and economic forces" (Adams *et al.* 2001: 219 [emphasis added]). People still have the choice to accept, be indifferent, or respond to such forces and the ability to challenge and transform them (Adams *et al.* 2001). There is then the recognition that there are contingent 'modes of ordering' in society, wherein patterns of practice exist in the loose sense of 'contexualised rational action':

> "Where individual actors are assumed to have some logical consistency in the pursuit of their goals, whereas the nature of those goals (the preference of the actors, including the social norms they adhere to) is not assumed a priori by the researchers but is open to empirical investigation, where the social and institutional context is of crucial importance" (Somerville and Bengtsson 2002: 124).

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Yet the search for 'patterns' or consistency in practices only goes so far in explaining the social phenomena of housing provision of any particular type. Actors involved in the development process need to be able to anticipate outcomes some of the time in order for their actions to ever succeed (Law 1994: 107). So at a general level the notion of 'rational action' can be conceived of as simply, people generally do things for a reason, even if unconsciously. A rationalities approach does not dismiss this sense of 'thin rationality' (cf. Somerville and Bengtsson 2002), nor does it deny the validity of an empirical approach to theory-building which "instead of searching in vain for general laws" settles for "middle-range theorising based on social mechanisms or patterns of the type if a then sometimes b" (Somerville and Bengtsson 2002: 124-125). The value of this research approach, echoed in my own, is therefore not its extrapolation to a generalised probability of occurrence, but the ability to use the observed chain of events and actors' reasoning in one situation to predict the possibility of these events and social processes occurring in other similar contexts. This type of research suggests that further situated empirical and theoretical work testing the 'similarity' of process and outcome in different forms of housing provision is necessary. The theory-building potential of a single situated study is therefore greater than the sum of its parts but not in the sense of falsely presuming a meta-theoretical 'law' of provision in all similar contexts.

In seeking to uncover and open up for examination the practices of reason or rationalities socially and materially constructing New Urbanism in housing provision out of a variety of possible outcomes, I have not presupposed that the built environments under investigation conform to a singular technical

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model or any one particular design or social vision. The rationalities approach supports the possibility (and in fact anticipates) that the physical outcome does not mirror the conceptual intent of the producers. And more significantly, it acknowledges that the housing produced under the moniker of New Urbanism more than likely was formulated from a 'hybrid' (Guy 2002) of rationalities – the product of compromise between several, often conflicting perceptions of good design or planning and 'best practice' by various actors involved in a given network of contextual relations.

The questions which can be asked change dramatically in light of this re-conceptualisation of the processes and outcomes of development. For one, is New Urbanism in the development sense really that peculiar a form? Or have the dominant rationalities governing what are perceived as urban problems and feasible prescriptions created a technical (economic and social) lock-in with respect to 'choice' in housing design, form and function? Such questions come to bear within a framework that seeks to both flesh out the structures of provision and explore the cultural practices and rationalities reproducing the material context of housing development processes. 'Cultural practices', in this instance, are understood as those practices or technologies for the transformation of individuals into subjects capable of governing or 'conducting' themselves (Barnett 2001: 14).

7.2 Rationalities of New Urbanist Development in Toronto

In moving beyond the structures of provision conceptual framework I am now able to direct my attention to explaining the linkages between the theories of government, which underpin a rationalities approach, and the empirical

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context of New Urbanist structure(s) of provision studied in Toronto. To do so I find it necessary to recall the practices and conditions revealed through the structures of provision lens. However, these will now be critically addressed in relation to the identification of problems with current and/or past governmental programmes or strategies by sectors in society involved in the provision of housing. This examination entails a deeper questioning of how the practices of producers are unified, rationalised and routinised into 'best practice' via their relation to sets of objectives, diagnoses of existing social, economic, and political shortcomings, and the declaration of prescriptions for necessary reform and change which emerge. The purpose of using the rationalities approach is to examine how the influences and constraints identified via the structures of provision framework relate to the individual and collective actions, aspirations and motivations of housing producers in such a way as to effect urban change which exhibits a certain regularity of patterning (but not static typologies) at particular times and places (cf. Bentley 1999).

The remainder of this final chapter seeks, then, to explain the contingent modes of ordering within which regimes of institutionalised practice recursively shape and are shaped by the constantly changing New Urbanist structure(s) of provision in Toronto. To begin, it is useful to restate the contextual cues discussed in Chapter 4, which geared my research interests towards the production of New Urbanist housing in Toronto in the first instance. The research questions were directly motivated by the visibility of this emerging form of housing in juxtaposition to Toronto's post-war urbanism and ongoing debates about the cultural divisiveness between the city and its

suburbs.[37] The following subsections seek to build on this point of view to explain how the contextual conditions in Toronto have manifest in the proliferation of New Urbanist housing. It is necessary first, however, to ground my use of the rationalities approach within its theoretical trajectory in order to provide a foundation for moving beyond the framework of existing work on New Urbanism and urban development, more generally.

7.2.1 Grounding Toronto's Rationalities in Theories of Government

For Foucault, the 'problematic of government' is the questioning of 'how to be ruled, how strictly, by whom, to what end, by what methods, and so on" (Foucault 2001: 202). Government thus becomes a case of determining the "right manner of disposing things so as to lead not to the form of the common good, but to an end that is 'convenient' for each of the things that are to be governed" (Foucault 2001: 211). The ends to which we attempt to govern can only be met by employing certain tactics or techniques in order to arrange 'things' in such a way that the desired outcome (such as compact urban form) can be achieved. The analysis of governmental technologies is therefore an important component of the problematic of government. Following Rose and Miller (1992: 175) governmental technologies are the "complex of mundane programmes, calculations, techniques, apparatuses, documents and procedures through which authorities seek to embody and give effect to governmental ambitions." Planning design, and housing as disciplines and discourses can therefore be viewed as particular practices of reason undertaken by a variety of public and private authorities and agencies

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[37] This personal rationalisation of the 'situation', it should be acknowledged, was partly formed through my own education and professional involvement in the fields of planning and environmental policy.

which through various tactics and technologies seek to translate particular urban rationalities to a desired outcome.

So if New Urbanism is viewed as a programme of government that has emerged within and through the activity of shaping human conduct, then the desired ends and means of how society should be governed need to be viewed from the perspective of being bound to the identification of difficulties and failures of previously existing programmes of government (Miller and Rose 1992). As such, the vocabulary of terms such as 'sprawl', 'suburbia', 'sustainability', 'neighbourhood', 'transect' etc., can be viewed as providing the articulation of the governmental ideals to which adherents of New Urbanism believe the social order should be 'conducted'. And from these terms we can begin to assess the context-specific emergence and normalisation of governing rationalities for what the 'ideal' vision of Toronto entails. The concentration on housing producer practices is but one realm within which to examine the formation and constantly shifting focus of urban rationalities because 'practice' is always based in history but enacted in the present (Bourdieu 1990).

In the case of Toronto we have seen that from a regulatory and industry perspective the rationality of *urban efficiency* has driven the articulation of what is obviously 'inefficient' in terms of urban land development, and particularly housing. Urban de-concentration has been labelled as the overriding cause of Toronto's fall from grace as the 'city that works' (see Chapter 4). The costs of servicing a sprawling urban metropolis have reached the level of crisis management in Toronto's political and economic

structures (and reached a level of municipal, provincial and federal state concern due to unprecedented infrastructure demands). A social acceptance of the need to respond with suitable reforms that are both market-responsive and state instituted has emerged. The identification and vocalisation of 'sprawl' as something that is 'bad' or growth as 'inevitable' makes possible a kind of translatability between the objects of government (e.g. human land uses and built form) and the acceptance and desire for "prescription and cure by calculating and normalising intervention" (Miller and Rose 1992: 183). It is the technologies of government, such as planning and design documents, building industry statistics, and urban state of environment reports etc., that translate abstract rationalities (such as community, social capital, regeneration and sustainability) into the realm of daily lived experience and make it possible for alliances to form through what Miller and Rose (1990), following Callon and Latour (1981); Callon (1986); and Latour (1986) call a "delicate affiliation of loose assemblages of agents and agencies into a functioning network" (1990: 9-10).

As alluded to in Chapter 1, the forging of alliances is a common characteristic within the New Urbanist discourse and it is this same 'networking' effect that is enabling and encouraging indirect mechanisms of governance through the programmatic technologies of a de-formalised or marketised planning and development control system operating in Toronto. The blurring of the traditionally assumed development roles of private and public actors has been witnessed through my analysis of producer practices in Toronto. Additionally, the empirical evidence suggests that the historicised physical and social divisions between 'the city' and 'the suburbs' have been obscured.

Indeed from a market perspective, competition and the field of development actor involvement in recent years has significantly collided from the once distinguishable realms of greenfield and brownfield development. The implicit suggestion in this conclusion is that these changes are due in part, perhaps, to the lines of force enacted within and through New Urbanism as a programme of government influencing all forms of housing provision. Moreover the normalisation of this particular programme of government has occurred so swiftly in Toronto due to the co-emergence of a dominant urban rationality of urban efficiency within the same spatio-temporal context.

The coalescing of actors under the banner of New Urbanism can be described as the formation of a 'functioning network.' Networks can converge into allied political forces. These network-based forces are not just the aggregate of practices and technologies, nor merely the mutual legitimisation of similar movements consciously undertaken in order to gain new adherents. The co-dependence across discourses occurs because within and between them sets of actors have convinced others that their problems or goals are closely linked and that each can achieve their perceived 'vision' by working together (Miller and Rose 1990). So, it is not merely that social associations and movements have come together as a group of like-minded individuals or associations with similar or mutual interests (that of promoting urban efficiency) under the umbrella of New Urbanism. The convergence is a much deeper 'construction' rather than 'representation' of allied interests and shared rationalities. This construction of interests is enabled through a process of 'translation' (Miller and Rose 1990 following Callon and Latour) within which:

"One actor or force is able to require or count upon a particular way of thinking and acting from another, hence assembling them together into a network not because of legal or institutional ties or dependencies, but because they have come to construe their problems in allied ways and their fate as in some way bound up with one another. Hence persons, organisations, entities and locales which remain differentiated by space, time and formal boundaries can be brought into a loose and approximate, and always mobile and indeterminate alignment" (Miller and Rose 1990: 10).

The alignment of the rationalities and normative programmes embodied within New Urbanism has been achieved in Toronto (and arguably elsewhere) primarily through the use of language and rhetoric. The activity of government requires that people have a way of knowing and talking about what are perceived to be problems before a proposed 'solution' can emerge and disseminate across space and time. Put another way, agency is only possible because it is "generated by and located within relatively regular patterns in the networks of the social" (Law 1994: 107) and unless one can anticipate outcomes some of the time, then actions (i.e. reforms) will never succeed.

Shared vocabularies, theories and explanations have thus promoted the identification and linked association in Toronto of New Urbanism and other movements such as environmentalism and Smart Growth into a networked governmental force enabling certain forms of social, economic and political rationalities to be brought about in an indirect manner (Miller and Rose 1990). Shared vocabularies consisting of such terms as 'sprawl', 'community', 'growth', and 'mixed use,' have the ability of transforming individual and group concerns into matter of fact or taken-for-granted 'realities' that form linkages with other claims of governmental failure or shortcomings elsewhere.

To illustrate this point, consider the proposition that within the operating of the rationality of urban efficiency in Toronto from the late 1980s onward, a governmental network has taken shape and has set in motion a series of fiscal, social, and policy reforms to attain efficiency. Consider too, that less than fifteen years ago the discussion and production of new build, mixed use, high density, pedestrian-friendly developments outside the boundaries of the pre-amalgamation City of Toronto was seen as novel and 'quaint'; a short time later such developments have been "made normative, if not yet dominant" (Branch 2003: 27). Why this has happened and how, is tied into mapping out the 'alignments' (Rose 1999) of rationalities or 'overlapping self-interests' (cf. Sayer 2001) amongst actors involved in the processes of housing provision, including governing and regulating authorities, the production and construction industries, financial institutions, sales and marketing representatives, local groups and associations and housing consumers.

These overlapping interests have taken the rationalisation of the ambition to regain the lost attribute of 'urban efficiency' and fashioned from this a view of current and past housing provision as a problem, objectified in the ambiguous conceptualisations of 'sprawl', and embodied in the demonisation of the material forms attributed to 'suburbia'. The nature of the problems with sprawling development are easily recognisable to us today exactly because of the manner in which they have become matter-of-fact: automobile dependency; loss of countryside; ecological degradation; liberal individualism and consumerism; loss of community; separation of land uses into functional zones; and lack of affordable housing etc. From the identification of these

problems in Toronto emerged the promotion of a preference for two co-related responses (which I would say have themselves now reached the status of rationalities in Toronto):

i) The urbanisation of the suburbs and;
ii) The revitalisation of the urban

The prescription for attaining these ambitions has by and large been to turn to design and tightened controls on urban development in and around Toronto. These prescriptions manifested themselves in the new forms of building provision encouraged on suburban greenfields and urban brownfields. Compactness of form, efficient lot layouts, grid street patterns, pedestrian-orientation, and transit-supportive design and planning became cornerstones of all new developments. The 'strangeness' of these concepts to the suburban social and political mentality was softened by the treatment of these new types of development as 'alternative' and 'test sites' or 'experiments' (as in the case of Cornell and Montgomery Village). By contrast in the urban context of the city centre, de-industrialisation had left behind large parcels of prime urban land in various states of contamination and dereliction. The production of compact 'city' homes on these cleaned-up sites was not a hard sell to politicians or development interests, nor to the ready market of urban consumers anxiously in need of new build relatively affordable homes. In the urban brownfield developments the form of housing provision was seen as a naturalistic continuation of the 'urban character' or 'fabric' that the interim industrial land use had, albeit temporarily, interrupted.

At the time that these new forms of development were being planned and designed (late 1980s and early to mid-1990s), New Urbanism was not yet a

'household' name. It is interesting to note, in fact, that the principle-based nature of the movement's popularity was only inscribed into the Charter for the New Urbanism in 1996. By this point all but one of the four projects examined in this thesis had been granted planning permission. Nevertheless, the label of New Urbanism attached itself to these developments and the 'checklist' of principles attributed to New Urbanism became a mechanism for shaping housing producer and consumer design preferences. Thus the early projects labelled as New Urbanism in Toronto have become material embodiments of the subsequently inscribed principles of the international movement. More recently, policy reforms have been introduced in Ontario under the banner of Smart Growth to again capitalise on the ready-made 'good planning and design' examples of New Urbanism in the context of urban brownfield and suburban greenfield development. The emphasis on the quantitative (economic) measurement of urban and suburban phenomena (cf. Talen 2003) underscores the policy orientation of Smart Growth in juxtaposition to the aesthetic and social tenets of New Urbanism. In the context of Toronto, Smart Growth has invariably come to mean intensification of existing urban spaces and uses (Bunce 2004). Again, Smart Growth, like New Urbanism, supports the reproduction of the rationality of urban efficiency through its promotion of the preferred antidote to 'sprawl' as being the twinned efforts to urbanise the suburbs and revitalise the city.

The dominance of the rationalities supporting and supported by the urbanisation of the suburbs and the revitalisation of the urban (and the prescribed solution embodied in the principle-based programmes of New Urbanism and Smart Growth) have not gone completely uncontested. The

prescriptions for reform have elicited a backlash to the suggestion that the city and its suburbs are 'swapping traits'. The suggestion that the recent boom in condominium developments, big box car-oriented retail centres and large-scale single family housing projects on former industrial lands are introducing a suburban element into the urban context has been met with considerable ire from urban housing producers (particularly public planning officials and private design professionals). The correlation of many of the new housing projects in the city with New Urbanist design principles (historically associated with suburban greenfield projects) has in large part caused many urban planning and design professionals to distance themselves and their work from the movement. A stated distinction has begun to emerge between 'urban' projects and the New Urbanist ones.

This confuses the suburban housing producer perception that New Urbanism is based on mimicking 'old Toronto'; and yet, at the same time it clarifies that urban design and planning professionals in Toronto are not interested in reproducing old Toronto but are looking for new forms to support new emerging or shifting rationalities of the ideal city. This is potentially driven to some extent by market indicators showing a 'return to living in the city', but it is also in part a reaction to the negative connotations of social polarisation that have been lobbied at New Urbanist projects in the United States, in particular. This implies a shifting of alliances within and between the structures of housing provision in Toronto and again emphasises how useful the structures of provision approach can be to demonstrate changes in practice over time in conjunction with the formulation and reformulation of urban rationalities.

7.2.2 Formation of 'Best Practice'

In order to understand the normalisation and dissemination of New Urbanism I believe it is necessary to uncover the rationalities favouring the descent and emergence of New Urbanism over and out of the variety of possible programmes of government in particular contexts. Moreover, to begin to understand why New Urbanism is becoming so prolific in Toronto it is necessary, following Guy and Farmer (2002), to account for the social structuring of both the identification of urban environmental, economic and social problems and their resulting embodiment in built forms through multiple technical development pathways. Such pathways include 'governmental technologies' through which institutional regimes of practice seek to embody and give effect to governmental ambitions, including the inscription of 'principles' of good planning and design into strategies of 'best practice'. The labelling of techniques, materials, approaches etc., as 'best practice' lends an ethical responsibility of producers to conform to particular 'ways of doing things'.

The principles espoused by New Urbanists are powerful because they offer a coherent doctrine. Beauregard (2002) postulates that principles are 'truths'. More specifically, "they attempt to capture basic values and relationships whose validity is unassailable and whose desirability is (near) universal. They are embodiments of the essential elements of the 'good city'" (2002:188). The common-sense nature of New Urbanism is in part made possible via the inscription of principles into various documents and images because of the shared language, theories and explanations deployed. The doctrine is discursively reinforced by the interdependency of the principles within and

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between the tenets of New Urbanism's network of alliances: "any one leads to the others" (Beauregard 2002:189). This consistency is of critical value, because the intention is not only to attract new adherents, but also to establish a clear alternative to competing rationalities. Yet, truth claims are always from some point of view or another and therefore always only partial, and implicit to them is the exclusion or marginalisation of other claims (Beauregard 2002).

The link between development practices and emerging 'best practice' oriented policy frameworks is undeniable. As the previous discussion of rationalities and governmental networks attempted to explain, New Urbanism has not proliferated merely because its principles embody a commonality of interests in society, but rather because the actors who hold these common interests recognise that by converging they constitute a stronger political force for achieving specific ends – which in Toronto appears to consist of shifting the exercise of power from governmental practices of the state to governmental practices operating throughout society. The promotion of New Urbanism as the 'best practice' alternative or response to sprawl, and its corollary social disaffection, has thus been enabled again by a process of translation of allied interests in support of the mutually reinforcing rationalities of urban efficiency, urbanisation of the suburbs, and revitalisation of the urban. This, as I stated earlier, involves the identification of problems with previous or concurrent regimes of practice in housing provision.

Best practice or 'conventions of normal practice', as observed via the interviews with housing producers in Toronto, tends to de-contextualise

individual or collective professional practice from the immediate conditions within which the producers engage. As such 'best practice' promotional material often connotes houses as interchangeable technical products, broadly comparable in terms of function, form and design. The reasoning behind the self-reinforcing promotion of the New Urbanist way of doing things as 'best practice' fits with Guy and Shove's (2000) account of a similar logic for the promotion of building for energy efficiency. This being that "the technology exists, the knowledge is there, it is easy to demonstrate and show, and if adopted by all those involved in producing homes, it would lead to a significant improvement" (2000: 94) of in this case urban efficiency, which has itself been rationalised as an optimal goal in the context of Toronto. This being said, each producer calls upon his or her own 'repetoire' of practices in judging the utility or value of each promoted 'best practice'. In the Toronto case study this point was underscored by the way New Urbanism was conceptualised (by the public officials largely as a social good, and by the industry representatives as a series of technical design elements); but more specifically as enabling different kinds of advantages and disadvantages in terms of the work that each producer needed to do. So whether or not a particular practice or innovation is taken up by other actors working on other projects and replicated more widely (as has clearly been the case with New Urbanism in Toronto) depends on whether or not it is perceived as having advantages in terms of their own desires, by those who have the power to choose it over any alternatives which might be available (Bentley 1999: 64). In the Toronto case study it was evident that some developers and builders assessed their taking up or dismissal of New Urbanist ideas and practices based on economic factors. In contrast, many

design professionals weighed the advantages and disadvantages associated with undertaking a particular 'type' of project based on their professional reputation and desire to be known for doing innovative work.

Bentley (1999) suggests that this process of getting others to adopt a particular way of doing things is a process of typification. But he stresses that the agency of each actor and that of a collective of housing producers is not an automatic machine, but rather a *cultural struggle* "whose outcome depends on the particular strategies and tactics deployed by the parties involved, and on the alliances that develop between them" (1999: 64). This has been a key factor in the rise of New Urbanism as 'best practice' in Toronto, as it illustrates that those whose interests have aligned in favour of New Urbanism have 'won out' in this cultural struggle and as a consequence their preferred practices have been adopted and replicated and transformed into reinforcing strategies of 'best practice' more so than the available alternatives. This process of typification via the abstraction of particular practices into 'best practice' needs also to be accompanied by ideological supports which allow those who are 'constrained' to take up these best practices to rationalise them as 'good design', 'good planning' or 'responsible building' within their personal and professional repetoire of acknowledged practices. These ideological supports can be crucially important for both maintaining the status quo or for opposing it (cf. Bentley 1999).

The translation of aligned interests into stabilised norms of 'best practice' depends on affirming the ideological supports of certain strategies over and above others, and in so doing depends on the crushing of those ideological

supports favouring competing rationalities. This entails then a degree of creative-destruction in the case of New Urbanism. The destructive process occurs via the problematisation of current or mainstream development and design practice as being fundamentally flawed, and at its base the root of all the major social, environmental, economic and political concerns with suburbia and urban sprawl. The constructive process in turn initiates the postulation of preferred responses and prescriptions which lead towards the promotion of development and building practices which are 'good' in the mainstream building culture's own acknowledged terms (Bentley 1999: 206).[38] Through this typification of building practices and their deployment

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[38] In promoting the constructive component of this twinned process of creative-destruction Bentley (1999: 206) offers a very interesting observation in relation to ideological supports, which I think speaks directly to New Urbanism. He states: "it is no easy matter to launch such a process of radical, cultural change against the pervasive opposition which it must face from short-term economic interests. A great deal of moral commitment is required of any individual who hopes to resist these pressures...this kind of commitment is greatly strengthened if the person concerned has a sense of belonging to an imagined community of like-minded people, standing shoulder to shoulder within an established and well-rooted tradition." The self-promotion of New Urbanism by its protagonists as the culmination of over a century of planning and architectural theory, citing influences of the likes of Howard, Geddes, Osborn, Unwin, Jacobs, Mumford, Lynch, Sitte, Alexander, Krier and so on (see www.nutimeline.net for Duany's personally endorsed "Time Line") adds credence to Bentley's observation. In addition, the formation of the Congress for the New Urbanism institutionalised the rootedness of the 'moral commitment' to New Urbanism in the creation of a real and imagined community of like-minded practitioners. It is also interesting to note that Bentley singled out those who go against Modernism as being particularly 'radical' and to some extent foolish. The original proposition of the New Urbanist movement was its rejection of the functionalist division of land uses and the promotion of sprawling development that modernism had wrought. "Most designers in practice still see themselves as members of the imagined community of Modernism. To an important extent the members of this community recognise one another through their shared use of particular aesthetic codes; but this is also a community within a panopoly of heroes, sacred books and the like, which powerful traditions usually have. To ask designers to abandon the support this tradition offers is to ask a lot, and a programme of cultural change which makes this demand will appeal only to the brave and the foolhardy" (Bentley 1999: 206). The point can be taken here that New Urbanism in spite of its criticisms for being the 'new suburbanism' and a new face for the status quo could then be seen as 'radical' and its proponents, namely Duany, the foolhardy individual who championed it as such. Even Duany, however, has retreated in his attack on Modernism and stated publicly that New Urbanism is not at odds with Modernism (cf. Warson 2001) but rather a complement of existing aesthetic codes with new (or remembered) ones. This retreat coincides with Bentley's further suggestion that "as far as possible we have to rather seek our new typological repetoire of forms and working practices within the Modernist tradition itself...to reclaim Modernism as a resource for positive change, therefore, we have to identify those positive aspects, which constitute the best current raw material we can call on for working towards better loved places" (1999: 206). This statement could have been written by Duany himself.

into real material artefacts (houses) the social actions involved in these processes of creative-destruction are concealed behind what Gieryn (2002: 42) describes as "interpretive registers that focus on instrumental efficiency, cost or possibly aesthetics." The formulation of 'best practice' reinforces the context-neutral objectification of houses as 'products' with functional attributes and aesthetic trimmings that lull producers and consumers alike into an acceptance of housing as a *black box* – "without any need or perhaps a possibility of awareness of its internal workings, a thing whose contents have become a matter of indifference" (Gieryn 2002: 44).

7.2.3 Conceptual Implications of New Urbanism as 'Best Practice'

The principles of New Urbanism are not particularly 'new'. It is argued by its adherents that the movement's antecedents can be found in various forms of planning and design thought and policy direction over the last century. As Bentley (1999) suggests, this is a crucial component in the lending of ideological support to a 'radical' challenge to the cultural mainstream of the building and design regime(s) of practice. However, what is commonly acknowledged within the literature is that what is 'new' is the way in which the adherents have managed to enlist the support of disparate interest groups. As each interest takes up the banner of New Urbanism a new dimension or meaning is added to the already elusive concept. The implication of this is that the social, political and economic roots of New Urbanism in Toronto have been around for decades (if not longer). In the last few years, however, state-instituted forms of government, private investment and corporate strategy have converged making a new kind of planning and development possible (cf. Canadian Urban Institute 2001).

The provision of 'choice' is a guiding principle of New Urbanism – be it choice in housing, lifestyle or transportation. The dualism of 'no growth' versus 'bad growth' and the middle ground found in 'smart' or 'good' growth centres on this notion of 'choice' or the provision of alternatives. Yet inscribed into the widespread adherence to the principles New Urbanism is the unquestioning commitment that private and public interests are making, to what some have described as a formalistic, almost ritualistic set of norms, practices and policies for achieving the planning vision (Young 2001: 29). Thus the limited universe of 'choice' is constituted by and through the rationalisation of the ideal urban 'vision'.

Beauregard (2002:188) cautioned that the principles of New Urbanism "represent a self-delusion and a dangerous political ploy that stifles alternative urbanisms." While harsh, this accusation was meant as "a caution regarding the application of codes and principles to community development. It reveals the difficulties of capturing local variation and history and points to the importance of who plans and the point of view they espouse" (2002:188). Likewise, the danger with the adoption of the market-oriented rationalities of the new planning and development processes enabled through New Urbanist approaches is that "once we accept a specific formula as the way to the vision, there is little room for the free play of ideas, for competition between concepts, or for vigorous debate that should be as diverse, broad and complex as the problems that face us" (Young 2001: 29). The interdependency of the principles of New Urbanism, despite what the adherents promote, may not encourage choice. Rather, it could be argued that they have stifled it through the naturalisation of a 'middle way' – equally

palatable to public and private interests – prescribed through the reduction of planning to a checklist of 'best practices' designed to implement a formula (Young 2001).

Planning, according to Murdoch (2000), attempts to manage space but can only do so if it harnesses development processes that lie beyond its immediate control. State-instituted forms of planning are therefore the codification and normalisation of wider rationalities (beyond and including those of state-actors) about how and where people should live and work based on situated economic, social and political conditions. The promotion of New Urbanist development is favoured as one possible means of governing urban development actors (including consumers and users) to promote a more effective form of urban management, one that is funded and led by the private sector under the rubric of the 'logic of the market.' In this way, it has been argued, the promotion of coined phrases such as 'community building' and 'urban regeneration' as planning strategies has effectively been made into a technique of governance (Rose 1996). This has occurred perhaps because the scope of debate for considering alternative urban forms and governmental strategies has been rationalised by state-instituted policies that have adopted the same use of language and rhetoric as the private sector design-led New Urbanism discourse. In the Toronto case study we have seen how these terms and concepts have now become part of the commercial branding and marketing of not only the housing products, but the producers themselves.

As the adoption of New Urbanist-influenced policy frameworks throughout North America and the United Kingdom indicates, state intervention via planning has not retreated in the sense of governing how and where people live and work. Rather, the promotion of such policies and practices suggests that we are not experiencing 'less government' but rather a shift in the techniques, focus and priorities of those who govern and those being governed to the social rather than statutory realm (Isin 2000; Barry *et al.* 1996). This shift has occurred in part through the rationalisation of practices and mentalities already emerging throughout society in conjunction with the new alignment of groups and classes (Isin 2000). A new planning and development has been made possible by the transition from state instituted programmes of planning for functional uses to private sector led programmes of urban design and master planned communities. This emergent programme of planning and development, I would argue, is consequently one that no longer sets planning in opposition to the market, but actually puts it on the market.

7.3 Research Implications

Several unexpected insights emerged from my use of an empirically driven framework for theorising the emergence and proliferation of New Urbanism in Toronto. To recap briefly, the embedding of the structures of provision framework within the rationalities meta-framework helped me to engage with 'culture' and 'context' without black boxing either, nor unproblematically reproducing the dichotomy between 'the social' and 'the economic'. The search for causality at the level of structure versus agency also became less important than understanding *how* relations operate within the active context

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of the situated processes of provision. Further, by empirically examining the practices of producers I have been able to better connect with the rationalities (or the problematisation of social ills, the identification of failures of self-regulated conduct, and the prescribed solutions or modes of reform) that have coalesced into the unquestioned 'ways of doing things'. Finally, from this approach to mid-range theorisation of a patterning within the New Urbanist form of housing provision, I have suggested that the coherence into new *black boxes* of such notions as 'sustainability', 'community', 'mixed-use' etc., implies that these social formations have reached the status of 'facts' in society. These obscure the existence or absence of contestations, conflicts, collaborations, alliances and alternative ideas that may have gone into their translation into 'best practice'. In other words, their matter-of-factness has obscured the "host of resources and entities [that] are stitched together in ways that make them hard to challenge" (Murdoch and Abram 2002: 14).

Of particular interest in this thesis research has been the problematisation of the processes of normalisation and legitimisation of particular producer practices, which in a seemingly unconscious fashion ensure the stability of particular rationalities (such as the marketisation of planning or the moral and aesthetic responsibility to 'build community', both in support of the broader rationality of urban efficiency) as powerful 'modes of ordering' (Law 1994). These modes of ordering are observable across a range of institutions and networks implicated in the material objectification of New Urbanism in the form of housing. Most importantly, this research demonstrated some of the ways in which professional culture predisposed housing producers in Toronto "to frame situations and problems in particular ways; that is to analyse them

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according to specific categories, to synthesise them into specific structures, and to represent them in specific verbal, graphic or numerical ways" (Fischler 1995: 21).

7.3.1 Policy Relevance

In this thesis, I have not 'prescribed' any policy directions or 'solutions' as such, nor have I promoted or rejected New Urbanism as a possible development and policy pathway. However, the implications of the research on existing and formative policy frameworks – such as 'Smart Growth' in North America and 'Sustainable Communities' in the United Kingdom – are real. The conceptualisations of New Urbanism (as with those of smart growth and sustainable communities) differ broadly from actor to actor and vision to vision. Yet a diverse societal network of powerful actors and policy makers continues to form around the world united in a significantly rationalised perception that the prescription for sprawl and social disaffection is to be found in designing 'convivial communities'. This urban vision is increasingly presented as attainable if a series of 'best practice' checklists or development toolkits are followed and replicated.

This reliance on the formalistic and ritualistic 'community toolkits' needs to be questioned on the basis of what these inscriptions *cannot* prescribe or predict. These guidelines cannot be expected to account for the situated myriad of complexity and dynamism intrinsic to the social interactions, interventions, and constraints, which actively constitute the processes producing and reproducing our built environments. There is then a need to question whether policy and decision makers are falling into the trap of

replicating the patterns on the leaves and petals in the quest for the rose – but neglecting the seed and soil in which it is planted.

The primary policy implication of this thesis is therefore that it points to the potential dangers of ignoring the contextual dynamics of a given time and place in housing policy coordination, while, unconsciously perhaps, reifying a select set of 'truth' claims via the unquestioned (yet highly selective and non-transparent) validation of certain social values as 'principles'. Policy and decision makers may, therefore, be unintentionally closing the door to alternative forms of housing provision emerging in context, which could potentially meet and even exceed the 'successes' achieved to date by New Urbanism's replicable 'template' for community-building. Thus each time a development scheme or strategic development related policy is proposed there is a need to question the taken-for-granted assumptions about society (i.e. where and how *we* should live) that these 'guidelines' are founded upon, and seriously debate the implications of adopting these based on an informed knowledge of the local (contextual) conditions for housing provision. For this reason such questions regarding privileged urban discourses, political and ideological alliances, alternative development pathways, and design innovation vis-à-vis de-facto creativity might be best posed during development control and strategic planning formulation processes whenever and wherever the universalised goals and objectives of New Urbanism are primed for reproduction.

The attention paid within this thesis to the constraint-based practices of development actors intervening in the processes of housing provision

highlights the recursive nature of context and practice. Such findings can inform the differentiation of development alternatives from re-packaged formulations of the status quo, and provide a forum for genuine debate about the future of urban form in our cities and towns. The abstraction of New Urbanist principles and design checklists into 'best practice' industry and policy standards and codes deserves closer scrutiny each time it is proposed on the basis that, as demonstrated in this thesis, 'best practice' de-contextualises developer actor practices and serves to stabilise the social actions necessary to recursively reproduce and transform the dominant urban rationalities. If we operate in a non-reflexive urban policy framework we run the risk of curtailing a progressive multiplicity of urbanisms, which challenge rather than secure (potentially) regressive matter-of-fact rationalities.

This is not meant to suggest that New Urbanist-inspired development practice and policy agendas are necessarily misguided, for as Healey (2002) contends:

> "...if many urban areas are experiencing a diffused power context and an unstable environment of economic, social, cultural and political opportunities and values, then a strategic governance capacity becomes a valued piece of infrastructure for very many city-dwellers, as it helps to reduce the terrain of uncertainty and conflict in which they exist. It becomes a key resource through which competing governance forms may be challenged and changed. It can help to disperse power, to empower and to destabilise discourses and practices which have got stuck in mono-vocal grooves or sectorally separated" (2002: 1787).

However, the more New Urbanism is 'talked about', the more it is reproduced and normalised. The real and awesome power of New Urbanism does not, therefore, lie in the specifics of its land management reforms or its superiority of design for 'communities' rooted in traditional and ecologically-buoyed

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forms, rather it lies in the ubiquitous way in which "it carries force as an informing idea, permeating the mentalities and identities of city-dwellers as they imagine who they are, where they are and what they might do" (Healey 2002:1789). In the process, it seems design and planning have become increasingly appropriated as the vehicles for packaging, selling, and disseminating the discourse of New Urbanism.

7.3.2 Further Research

On reflection, in many ways my thesis is not about 'New Urbanism'. I have neither attempted to support or reject the claims or principles of the design and planning movement, but I have acknowledged the significance of this movement in the current climate of urban development and governance. I have not attempted to be prescriptive (in the sense of proposing specific policy reforms) but this thesis *is* normative in that I am appealing for urban development actors to problematise New Urbanism and all forms of emergent urbanism as cultural expressions constituted through recursive interactions of context and practice, activated in the spatial and temporal specificity of development processes. To understand these processes then, research should to take practices, ideas, resources and constraints seriously – not as responses to or effects of the reality of capital and market systems alone – but as constantly active contextual forces in the patterning of development and urban change. Such an approach suggests the need for research on the built environment to be relational in design, empirically driven, and open to the contingencies of process and outcome embodied in the simultaneous and interwoven rationalities of production and consumption.

In light of these normative statements, further research on New Urbanism could seek to address more specifically *how* in each empirical case the 'final product' or outcome obscures the existence and/or absence of contestations, conflict, collaboration, alliances and alternative development ideas. This approach would further underscore the value of identifying the technological and practical pathways *not taken* as much as those that are. Thus highlighting the ways in which the problematisation of issues in society, such as sprawl, are constructed as much to conceal the negative impacts of proceeding down a certain urban development pathway (i.e. disruption of the status quo) as to reveal the positive aspects of the favoured prescription for reform (i.e. mixed use, community, sense of place etc.).

The empirical findings from this research, including the emergent significance of the hybridisation of New Urbanism in Toronto, prompted me to promote a shift in research focus from the 'why' questions I initially started with to the 'how' questions that a rationalities perspective could address by making explicit the way we govern and are governed via an investigation of regimes of practice. This shift in theory-practice emphasis elicits the need for further empirical study which concentrates on how built environments are assembled and used by paying closer attention to the language, practices, and techniques through which society seeks to self-regulate. By understanding our current 'way of doing things' it is possible to highlight new ways to do things and open the arena of urban development to greater debate. To begin with then, further research on New Urbanism should ask how the practices of producers of this type of urban form function in relation to other practices and forms and back onto themselves. Additionally, a more fine-tuned research

protocol might focus specifically on which conventions of design, planning, and urban policy are taken-for-granted or contested, and how so.

While the above-noted research avenues are interesting in and of themselves, they all however fall within a wider framework for future research that I would like to develop. One which more specifically connects with the policy implications of 'best practice', design-led planning and development strategies. In particular, I am keen to further investigate the increasing visibility of private development and design professionals in urban policy formulation. This framework emerges from the identification within the thesis research of the significance and role of design and innovation in the regulation of culture and governance, and in particular the increasingly strong impact of the broadly defined development industry on urban policy, research and practice. Such a framework would investigate private building and development interests as active participants within normative urban policy coordination and implementation. Drawing on a range of interdisciplinary literatures (including Thrift's (2005) notions of 'soft capitalism' and 'reflexive business knowledge'), this framework would accommodate a major research project designed around an organisational mapping of relations within and between self-ascribed 'innovators' in the land and housing development industry with those of public and private research and policy networks on the urban built environment. Together the practices of these actors and networks could be analysed in relation to the network of people, sites, and social arrangements connecting them to national, regional and local urban policies (e.g. The Sustainable Communities Plan, The London Plan, The Urban Task

Force, The Revised Essex Design Guide, The Code for Sustainable Buildings etc.).

Conclusion

Underscoring these implications for further research is an emphasis on how the primary research enabled through this thesis has demonstrated the need to empirically and theoretically shift attention away from the immobile, fixed or even imaginary spaces of New Urbanist 'ideal' forms. Property and land development research needs to focus on the real life dynamism embodied in the spatialisations of the activated contexts of daily and institutional practices *in situ*, rather than remain transfixed on the descriptive nature of the transplantation and universalisation of these practices, divorced from the situatedness of their emergence and application. In other words, I contend that in order to understand the universalisation of New Urbanism (as a global movement) it is necessary to first 'de-universalise' the processes enabling its normalisation in specific contexts. By focussing on what housing producers 'actually do' I am intimating that New Urbanism in Toronto is more a matter of local interpretation of contextual conditions than of the setting of universal goals or truth claims (cf. Guy and Moore 2005).

In undertaking this research I often encountered those who said 'why are you looking at New Urbanism – it is already over researched.' For many of these people my response found little resonance. I would reply that their point of view was precisely my point in researching it; that we have in essence 'accepted' New Urbanism and become complacent about its relevance to the current and future structuring of our urban environments. I hope my research

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has promoted the need to reflect on the reality of the current advanced liberal society in which not just planners and policy-makers, but other agents in urban development processes (both producers and consumers) actively constitute and formalise practices consistent with temporally and spatially situated, (yet constantly evolving) rationalities of problem definition and prescription for social reform. The cautionary note I wish to reiterate is that such reflection is absolutely necessary so as not to stifle debate regarding alternative practices and progressive urban rationalities.

Recall for a moment what one Toronto politician reflected:

> "It is hard to know whether things are happening and someone gives it a name, or if it is a name and therefore things are happening. I think this was a case where there was an understanding in Toronto as to the way neighbourhoods should develop and therefore they were developed that way."
>
> (Interview # 46, Ward Councillor, City of Toronto)

Thus, to attribute the dissemination of New Urbanism in Toronto to the 'radical' break championed by Andrés Duany and his supporters as a linear adoption of superior design canons, building principles, and consumer preferences from another spatial context (i.e. the southern United States) is too simplistic an explanation. The 'break' constructed by Duany and other New Urbanism proponents is itself a rationalisation for the normalisation of their own institutionalised practices, and as such should be viewed genealogically, not as part of a linear history (i.e. timeline) of mutually exclusive events or planning and design antecedents. Rather than characterised as a distinctive, radical or revolutionary break from the social order, New Urbanism needs to be seen as the descent and emergence of ideas, practices, norms and constraints in relation to the "continuities within

discontinuities" (MacIntyre 1990: 214) of past, present and future contextual conditions constituting a situated appropriation of knowledge and a situated set of interpretations which come to be called 'truth' (May 1993: 76).

Housing producers operating in the context of Toronto were not simply 'indoctrinated' into the New Urbanism's ideological definitions of situations and problems. Such ideological constructs were much more than a false consciousness. Rather, they were part and parcel of the active context of the constraints these actors experienced in their daily practice (Ligget and Perry 1995). Thus, New Urbanism in Toronto emerged as part of a messy social process in which the simultaneous nature of creative-destruction in the realm of private design and building cultures conveniently meshed with the local conditions underlying the emergent rationality of urban efficiency, and with it the desire to reform mainstream practice to respond to the identified need to urbanise the suburbs and revitalise the urban. The abstraction of New Urbanist principles into 'best practice' further stabilised the social actions necessary to recursively reproduce and transform these dominant urban rationalities.

The social and policy implications of unproblematically legitimising New Urbanism as 'best practice' devoid of contextual specificity and in the absence of real debate about the future of urban form remain to be fully seen. However, they may prove as problematic and seemingly irreversible to future generations of urban policy and decision-makers as the current issues of social disaffection and suburban sprawl are within our contemporary dominant urban rationalities.

Appendix A

Case-specific Interview Listings

Pilot Study: Great Notley Garden Village, Braintree, UK

Interview Number	Personal/Professional Characteristics of Interviewee
1	Councillor, Braintree District Council
2	Technical Director, David Wilson Homes
3	Head of Planning Services, Braintree District Council
4	Resident of Great Notley
5	Founding Members, Great Notley Garden Village Residents' Association
6	President, Clerk and a Councillor, Great Notley Parish Council
7	Former President of Parish Council who is also a local resident and active community actor
8	Associate Director of Strategic Projects, Countryside Properties plc
9	Editor and webmaster of Great Notley Garden Village newsletter and website
Note: These 9 interviews have not been counted within the 57 interviews conducted for the primary research of the thesis as outlined in Table 3.1 in Chapter 3.	

Case: Cornell, Town of Markham

Interview Number	Personal Characteristics of Interviewee
10	Senior Planner and Project Manager, Town of Markham
11*	Planning and Design Consultant
12	Planning Consultant
13	Developer/Builder
14	Marketing Consultant
15	In-house Planner in Development Company
16	President of Land Development for Volume Homebuilder
17	Project Manager for Developer/Builder
18	Ward Councillor, Town of Markham Council
19	Former Provincial Bureaucrat
20	Homebuilder
21	President of Cornell Ratepayers' Association
22	Homebuilder
23	Planning Commissioner and Senior Planner, Town of Markham

24	Planner, Regional Municipality of York
25*	Head of Government Relations, Greater Toronto Homebuilders' Association (GTHBA)
26*	Planning Consultant
27*	Architectural Consultant

Case: Montgomery Village, Town of Orangeville

Interview Number	Personal Characteristics of Interviewee
28*	Architectural Consultant
29	Developer
30*	Head of Government Relations, GTHBA
31	Mayor, Town of Orangeville
32	Councillor, MV resident and former Mayor, Town of Orangeville (one person)
33	Chief Administrative Officer (former Planning Director), Town of Orangeville
34	Planning Director, Town of Orangeville
35*	Planning and Design Consultant
36	Resident who is member of the Montgomery Village Homeowners Group
37	Builder

Case: The Beach, City of Toronto

Interview Number	Personal Characteristics of Interviewee
38	Homebuilder
39	Area Planner, City of Toronto
40	Resident
41	Community Centre Director
42	Planning, Design and Architectural Consultant
43	Developer/Builder
44	Former Planning Director for South District, City of Toronto
45*	Planning Consultant
46	Ward Councillor, City of Toronto Council
47	Former Ward Councillor (Mayoral candidate at time of interview), City of Toronto Council
48	Local Real Estate Agent
49	Resident involved in Residents' Association Formation
50	Editor, Beach Metro Community News
51	Builder
52*	Head of Government Relations, GTHBA
53*	Policy Planner, City of Toronto
54*	Architectural Consultant
55*	Planning and Design Consultant

Case: King-West Village, City of Toronto

Interview Number	Personal Characteristics of Interviewee
56*	Policy Planner, City of Toronto
57	Director of Facilities Planning and Development, Centre for Addiction and Mental Health
58	Design Consultant who is an area Resident
59	Developer/Builder
60	Local Real Estate Agent who is a resident of King West Village
61	Ward Councillor, City of Toronto Council
62	Former Area Planner, City of Toronto
63	Developer/Builder
64*	Architectural Consultant
65*	Head of Government Relations, GTHBA
66	Area Planner

Other (i.e. non-case specific)

Interview Number	Personal Characteristics of Interviewee
67*	Architectural Consultant
68*	Head of Government Relations, GTHBA

Note: Where indicated with an * these interviewees have been directly involved in more than one of the cases investigated and have therefore been counted more than once to indicate the individual contribution of information provided for each specific case.

Appendix B

Sample of Semi-structured Interview Schedule

Overview

The semi-structured nature of my interviews with housing producers meant that the content, format, length, and conditions under which the interviews took place varied according to respondent preference, availability, candidness, and previous interview experience.[39] Rather than duplicate the actual prompt sheet brought to each individual interview, in this Appendix I have chosen to reproduce a sample schedule from an interview with a planner in the Montgomery Village case unit. This example is not intended to simplistically group interviewees according to generic archetypal actors (i.e. planner, developer, designer, builder, politician etc.) but to illuminate how I used my own assumptions about an actor's 'role' in the development process to initially 'guide', but certainly not determine, the interview process across the different actors. Similar prompts were tailored to each interviewee in kind. One caveat to the provision of this sample schedule is that the formal presentation and full sentence formation exhibited should not be interpreted as indicative of the format or nature of the interviews themselves. All of the interviews were very much conversation-based, and in most instances my use of the interview prompt sheet was limited to ensuring that I had covered six key areas:

1. Background or history of the project from the given interviewee's perspective. This included the: who, what, where, when and why of the original 'vision'; and if and how these changed over time;

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[39] Note: all of the interviewees had previously agreed to partake in a recorded interview with me, which would range in length from approximately 45 minutes to 1.5 hours.

2. Personal/professional involvement of the interviewee in the development process and their own perceived motivations for involvement;

3. Reflections on the process. This covered issues of constraint, conflict, surprise, collaboration, co-operation and a general discussion of working relationships. Regulatory and institutional frameworks were discussed in relation to the impact of these on the interviewees working practices;

4. Personal/professional conceptualisations or contextualisations of New Urbanism and related issues/ideas;

5. General comments on the project, the processes, limitations, reflections, regrets etc., as well as comments on 'New Urbanism' in their own terms, and;

6. Additional 'leads' regarding further potential interviewees, actors or processes requiring examination.

In contrast to a fully structured interview or formal questionnaire, the conversation-based interviews conducted with the various actors allowed me to work from my own basic knowledge of development processes (largely informed by my own professional training and employment in the Toronto area as a planner and policy analyst) to engage with the actors' own narratives of process and outcome. What resulted were very candid discussions of the relations and disconnections between financial, social, institutional, regulatory and political concerns and constraints of which I was often unaware. The step-wise nature of the iterative or grounded approach taken within the interview process generated an amazing richness of detail, but in order to guarantee the rigour of this research the analytical framework imposed on the interview transcripts had to strictly separate the *in vivo* themes (direct words and phrases of the interviewees) from my own interpretive or theoretically-derived registers.

Sample Interview Schedule:

Interview: Planner, Town of Orangeville

Date: Monday April 7
Time: 10 am
Location: Town of Orangeville offices

1. Greeting and thanks. Mention that this is my first interview relating to Montgomery Village. I have downloaded some information from Town website and other sources, but am generally interested in hearing the municipal planning perspective on the process involved in developing the site. And particularly, interested in the relationships between different actors – such as planners, designers, developers, builders, consultants, politicians, residents etc.

2. Process and Planning.
   - Can you briefly describe the process that was involved in creating Montgomery Village – how and when did it begin and why? Who involved? How was Council approached? Was Dufferin County involved at that time?
   - What motivated the initial plans for the area? Was the town a pro-active force in deciding on how the development would proceed? (or was it developer-led, County-led etc.) Who was involved at this point? Did the players change? What was the developer's vision?
   - What reactions did the plan receive (by council, public, media, developers, builders, realtors etc.)?
   - Any conflicts arise during the process? Opposition groups? Public participation process (meetings etc.)? Were there any land ownership conflicts – hold outs to sell?
   - From the Town's position how important was Montgomery Village - was it a case of meeting housing needs, providing alternative living spaces, work-live arrangements, bringing in other services to this part of town, boosting growth and local economic development)?
   - How important or relevant was the design element of the development – was it always meant to be New Urbanism – what or who motivated the adoption of this approach? How did it get implemented? Hurdles?
   - Design standards, alternative development standards – how did developers and builders react? Did public react to type of housing proposed at all?
   - Wired community – status.
   - Can you comment generally on the working relationships you have experienced or witnessed between planners, councillors, County staff and councillors, developers, builders, legal and financial interests, public? – any conflicts, collaborations, cooperation - any surprises – good or bad?
   - Are there any noticeable rifts in terms of Montgomery Village vs. rest of Orangeville?
   - Has Montgomery Village influenced the way other areas of Town are developing? How and why? Or why not?
   - New sports facility – was this always part of the vision – role of province in this Super Build project ?

3. Personal and Professional impressions of Montgomery Village.
   - Is it a community in its own right? Will it be? Was this the intention of

council and planners to create community?

- Was what was promised by developers and architects/designers met? Will it be?
- What are your expectations for Montgomery Village – what role do you see it playing in the Town, the County or the general GTA? (shopping, commuter zone, affordable housing, live-work, mix use, life-cycle housing, young family area etc., new centre in town)
- Affordability? House prices, what were sales like? Who is moving into the area – are they originally from Orangeville area or from where? Work in city or locally etc.- demographic?
- Has a local residents association or ratepayers group begun? Why? What have been their issues? Contact?
- What issues and opportunities do you think are ahead for Montgomery Village? Are there problems on the horizon?
- What are some of the impacts of Montgomery Village? Can you see these in the area already?
- Have seen pictures of Montgomery Village held up as example of Smart Growth in support of the Province's recent mandate or agenda – was this something that was foreseen? Ahead of the game? Impressions of what Smart Growth means and how is different from what you have been doing here? Is it a case of bringing the urban to the suburban?
- In your opinion is Montgomery Village a success story? - or will it be? What will be needed to make it one? Are developers and builders readily coming to the area and willing to take on alternative development standards – is this becoming norm?
- What is the current status of the development – in terms of developer/builder responsibility (assumption by town) etc. – sports complex?

4. Can you suggest any local groups/persons that it would be good to talk with. Any consultants who were involved? I have arranged to speak with the design consultant on this project and Cornell, and I have sent a letter to River Oaks. Anyone involved in the marketing of the area for business or housing sales? (Chamber of Commerce etc.).

5. Any general comments on Montgomery Village – the plan, the process, the people. Or any general comments on New Urbanism and the approach taken in this case? Is it pure New Urbanism – or influenced, modified, etc.?

Thanks and close

Appendix C

Pilot Study Research

Introduction

As alluded to in subsection 3.2.3, a key component in the framing of the research design for this thesis was enabled via the undertaking of a pilot study prior to conducting the primary fieldwork in Toronto. The pilot study component consisted of a detailed study of a single large-scale housing development project situated near Braintree, County of Essex, UK. The project site which is, in effect, a new town is known as Great Notley Garden Village (GNGV), and is distinctive for its neo-traditional design and 'sustainable community' properties as promoted by its developers, Countryside Properties, plc and codified in the revised regulatory document *The Essex Design Guide for Residential and Mixed Use Areas* (1997).

This brief Appendix is intended to provide an overview of the contextual details of the Great Notley development project and my use of this particular case study to flesh out the possibilities for utilising the empirical framework of the structures of provision approach. Additionally, the pilot study process aided in improving my interviewing skills and assessing important factors in case study research, such as: accessibility to information and sources; time constraints; technical familiarity; and identification of potential research participants and ethical issues in undertaking research on professional and

personal practices of housing producers[40]. The primary purpose of this Appendix is to outline the lessons learned from the pilot study process in investigating a form of development very similar to those I proposed to research in Toronto. Note therefore, that this Appendix does not aim to provide a complete assessment of the substantive details of this preliminary research, as the latter is best suited within a supplemental publication beyond the scope of the main body of the thesis.

Context

Great Notley Garden Village is located north east of London very near to Braintree, Essex (see Figure C-1). The development site is eight miles north east of Chelmsford and is adjacent to the A120/A131; additionally, both the M11 and Stansted Airport are thirteen miles away via the A120. The greenfield site consists of 465 acres which have been planned and designed to be consistent with the developer's conception of a 'balanced community'. In particular, the driving focus behind GNGV has been the promotion of the development as a self-sufficient and sustainable community, which maintains a high quality of life for its residents by providing the following:

- An ongoing programme of community involvement that includes an active Community Association, Village liaison Group and a Charitable Trust;
- A high quality urban and landscape design clearly evident in house designs and street patterns that emulate traditional English villages and reflect and strengthen the character of the local landscape;
- Pedestrian friendly neighbourhoods enhanced by traffic calming measures throughout the residential areas of the village and a network of pedestrian and cycle ways;
- Landscaping integrated at the design stage, including a 100 acre country park and a network of green spaces to give the village a degree of local distinctiveness seldom achieved in such new developments;
- An innovative approach to sustainability, including a lake that doubles as a reed bed filtration system for surface water run-off and the UK's first sustainable school;

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[40] Many of these factors are considered in more detail in Chapter 3 and have therefore not been repeated here.

- A strategically important new community that has achieved national recognition and local success (Countryside Properties 2002: 7).
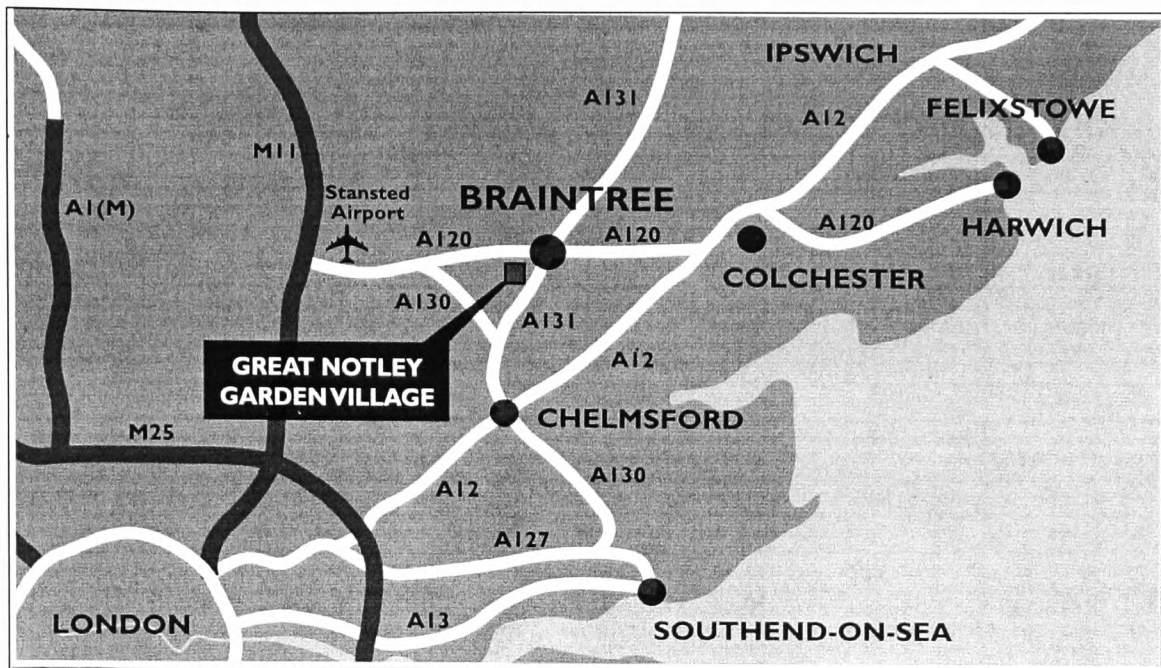

Figure C-1: Great Notley Garden Village general location (Source: Countryside Properties 2002)

The anticipated population for the completed GNGV is 7000, housed via the construction of 2000 new homes (estimated population of 5000) and the contiguous merging of this new site with that of an older development dating from the mid 1970s comprised of 2000 persons in approximately 800 homes. The new components of the emergent 'Village' are then 2,000 mixed tenure dwellings; a 400,000 square foot business park; a neighbourhood shopping centre; community and leisure facilities; motorists service area; and 180 acres of open space (See Figure C-2). The planning and design of GNGV has been based around the creation of three distinct traditional 'hamlets' each of which is meant to have its own unique identity and vernacular architecture (based on the Flemish influence of traditional 'Essex' designs, see Figure C-3).
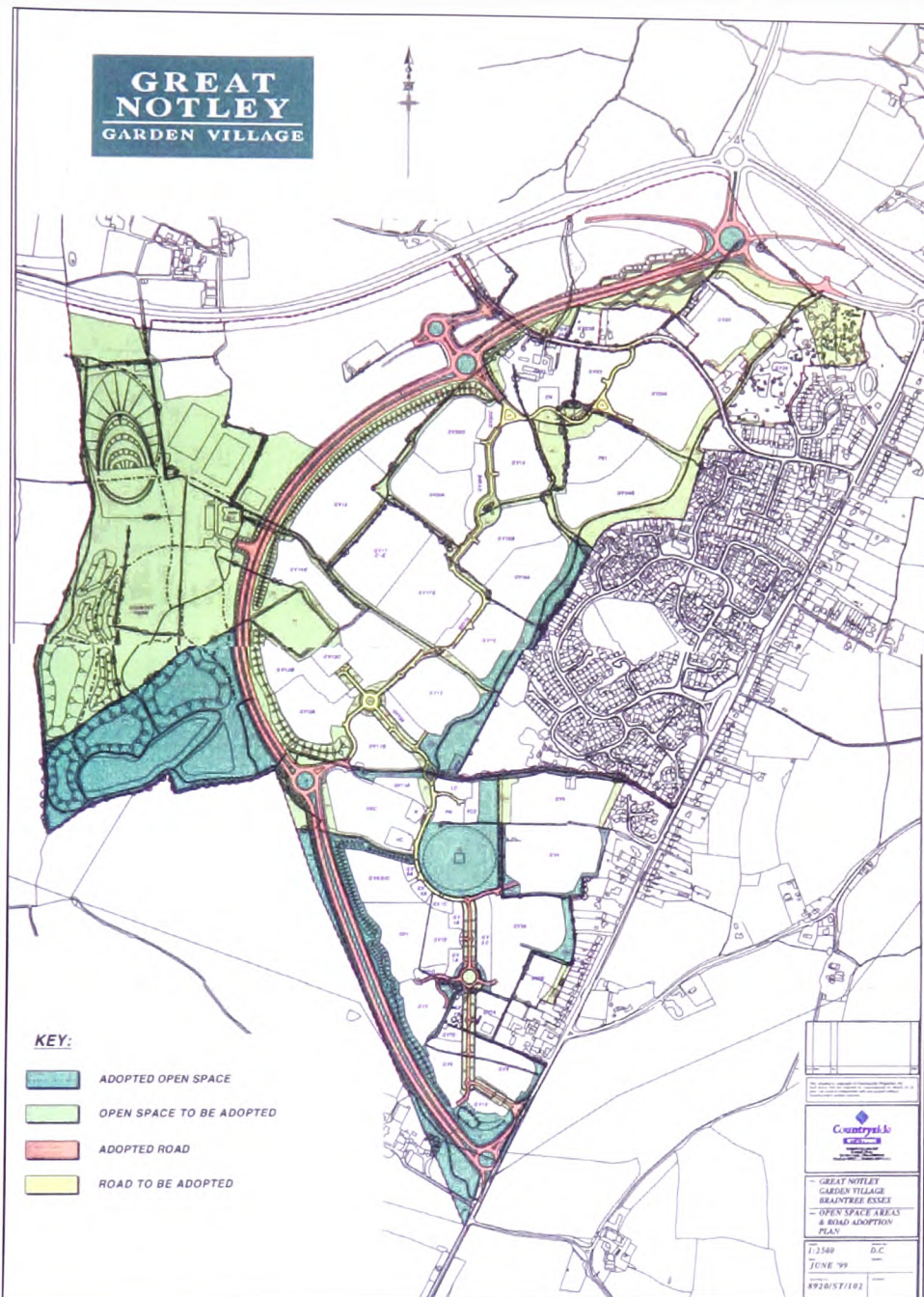
Figure C-2: Great Notley Garden Village Conceptual Plan
(Source: Countryside Properties, 1999)

Background

In the mid-1980s Essex County Council, based in Chelmsford, apportioned

Braintree District with the task of accommodating approximately 10,000 new

homes over the next ten-year plan period. Prior to the mid-to-late 1980s

Braintree District Council tended to allocate new housing sites in what the

current Head of Planning described in an interview (Interview # 3, Head of

Planning Braintree District Council), as a fairly *"broad brush"* manner. In short, allocation and distribution were arbitrarily dedicated to small sites dotted about the whole district but clustered as much as possible around the three largest towns, Braintree, Halstead, and Witham.

The intent of this approach was to *"spread the pain"* (Interview # 3, Head of Planning Braintree District Council) of meeting housing allocation quotas thinly across the district. By the mid 1980s, however, the political and social climate began to turn against this *"scatter gun approach"* (Interview # 3, Head of Planning Braintree District Council) to housing allocation, and a new approach to building 'holistic' communities started to emerge. Great Notley is a result of this transition period, and for this reason it is both regarded as a model and as a unique experiment (in terms of scope and scale) that will most likely not be undertaken again in the near future. According to the planning professionals interviewed, this transition to holistic community planning impacted industry practice nationally as well as regionally, with many large major homebuilders forming tentative mergers into development consortiums. These consortiums began to put forward proposals for major new communities of varying sizes usually in the range of 3,000-5,000 units.

Figure C-3: 'Essex Vernacular' designs in Great Notley Garden Village

According to those interviewed about the planning and development process for GNGV, it was during this period that Braintree District Council undertook a process of finding appropriate sites for housing development options under this new community-based agenda. The Council approached the landowners in and around Braintree, most of whom by this point in time had option agreements on their lands with developers, to submit proposals that met with the criteria of being a new community that was *"not just a housing estate."*

> *"But a community of housing, employment, retail, open space, leisure – the whole thing. So that was our vision, that there should be a community rather than an anonymous housing estate with no facilities."*

(Interview # 3, Head of Planning Braintree District Council)

This was in itself a significant shift in the way in which housing was developed in this part of the country. Few developers made presentations to the District Council identifying potential development sites and the manner in

which their proposal met with the stated planning criteria. Prior to this experience, the Council would look at a potential site and do various forms of analysis and feasibility studies, allocate the lands for development in the structure plan, and then notify the public of the planning change. *"In this case we actually asked the developers to tell us why their site should be developed"* (Interview # 3, Head of Planning BDC). A special committee of councillors was selected which was different from the normal planning committee because it was deemed necessary to separate this decision on the conceptual nature of the development proposal from that of the formal planning related decisions on site selection. Countryside Properties, plc came forward with a proposal to extend a peripheral site on the edge of Braintree, which was accepted by the committee as the best proposal.

The development site was adjacent to an existing 'anonymous' housing tract devoid of amenities and facilities. The development land itself was considered low-grade agricultural pastureland in the possession of landowners keen on actualising the 'hope value' of the land through development. The relationship with the landowners was particularly noteworthy because the sale of the land had not officially changed hands from the farmers to the developer. The District Council made it clear that the development project would be subject to the provision of infrastructure, open space, community amenities etc., which would act as a kind of tax on the land value. So instead of the landowner selling the land to the developer at the full residential land value, he/she in effect had to settle for the residential value minus the reduced value per acre for other land uses.

This bargaining position, according to the Head of Planning, allowed the District Council to dictate the minimum value-added aspects of the development project and to negotiate a substantial Section 106 agreement (a total of £20,075,000). While the Section 106 agreements are enshrined in planning law as voluntary, Countryside Properties agreed (according to their Strategic Director, Interview # 8) to this planning gain contract because of the distinctiveness of 'the product' and the niche that the project would garner in the local and extended greater London market. In fact, it is estimated by the District Council representatives with whom I spoke that there is a £10,000-20,000 price premium on the homes in Great Notley as compared to other developments in the District. This is attributed to it being the early forerunner in 'holistic community planning' enabled in conjunction with the Section 106 agreement. By 1991 Outline Planning Approval was granted for the completion of 2000 homes. Countryside Properties, as the primary developer and builder, at this stage sold off parcels of the development site to other builders and construction began in March 1993. In 1996 GNGV was voted 'Best Development in Britain' in the What House? Awards. More recently Countryside Properties, plc has been ranked first amongst the thirteen leading listed homebuilders in the UK for its efforts in 'building towards sustainability' (WWF-UK 2004).

Methodological and Conceptual Lessons for the Primary Case Study

Seven in-depth interviews (and two email-based interviews) were conducted with actors involved in the development processes responsible for creating GNGV. It should be noted that the preliminary selection of potential interviewees related to Great Notley was based on testing out my early

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formulation of an adaptation of the structures of provision framework. More specifically, I based contact around the information requirements needed to flesh out the social relations intervening in the processes of provision as identified by Ball (1983; 1986; 1986b). Recall from Chapter 2 that these processes are: production, allocation, distribution, consumption and reproduction. So the pilot study enabled me to test out the validity of the structures of provision approach as an empirical, not just conceptual, framework.

Table C-1 outlines the interviewees (by occupational title or 'type' to maintain anonymity) and the methodological issues that these revealed, assisting in the identification of possible fieldwork hurdles in the Toronto study. Additionally, each interview assisted in the on-going formulation of the conceptual grounding for my research on the normalisation of New Urbanism.[41]

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[41] It is noteworthy to mention that this pilot study did not involve any interviews with privately hired design consultants responsible for the conceptual plans of the new community. This is distinctive in the sense that this work seemed to be done within the corporate community of Countryside Properties, whereas in the Canadian projects, private design professionals were central figures in the development process, and were the primary intermediary between the developers, builders and public planning authorities. Follow-up research on GNGV (informed by the completion of the primary case study in Toronto) is needed to assess the degree to which the conceptual designs of GNGV were conceived in-house and whether or not privately hired design consultants were introduced by any of the developer/builders, and or contracted for the revisions to the Essex Design Guide.

Table C-1: Pilot Study Interview Implications

Interview Participants	Methodological Implications Revealed	Conceptual Implications Revealed
Associate Director, Strategic Division Countryside Properties, plc	A lot of valuable information was provided during a personal tour of GNGV and other area developments. This interaction was not recorded other than through hand-written notes. The formal interview was conducted en-route at a noisy pub/restaurant which interfered with the clarity of audio recording. Follow-up communication was offered but when I did try to clarify something the response was very slow to come. Being aware of the amount of time a respondent can reasonably dedicate to the researcher is important in making sure that time is maximised by favourable conditions for an interview. The interview transcript alerted me to be mindful of leading the potential responses by providing 'options' in the questions posed.	The manner in which this company has made it their 'business plan' to avoid standardisation as a means of seeking out market potential rather than capitalising on known market price indexes etc., illuminates the range of building 'cultures' that can exist in a localised housing market. The relevance of research within the corporate ethos of the company is itself interesting for its desire to acquire a level of academic rigour and validity to promote the company and its developments as an evidence-based working case study in sustainable residential development which promotes high quality of life for residential consumers while satisfying (and exceeding) the financial demands/interests of the companies shareholders.
Technical Director, David Wilson Homes, plc	The original interview respondent was not available when I arrived to conduct the interview. A selected 'substitute' was presented who did not have a first-hand working knowledge of the specific project. So much of the detail was hypothetical, based on general development processes. However, the original contact did come in part way through the interview, and the combined interaction of the two strategic personnel made this interview exceptionally insightful and indeed very candid.	The candid nature of this interview revealed the unique hierarchical relations in the building industry of those that wish to be innovators and those that are content to follow when it is no longer within their control to resist change. The desire to standardise forms and practice was strongly demonstrated in the institutionalisation of the so-called 'Wilson Way', which can be seen in sharp contrast to Countryside Properties ethos of making their own market in order to be unchallenged leaders of the 'next' housing challenge.
Braintree District Council, Head of Planning	Institutional memory and contextual detail was presented in this interview in a balanced mix of personal/professional insight and historical description. This respondent was able to provide a broad overview that helped to identify the major 'players' and opened up opportunities for me to be involved in upcoming closed-to-	The distinctive co-emergence of GNGV and the revised Essex Design Guide provided a very intriguing line of inquiry related to issues of design control and industry practice. The question of who was leading who was illuminated and the blurring of public interest with private market interests made

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	the-public meetings between the developer and the public and community bodies involved in the on-going development process.	evident.
Braintree District Council, Councillor	As a Councillor involved pre and post GNGV's development, this perspective was a tempered account of a local resident charged with acting on the best interest of an enlarged 'community' of new and old residents. The tensions that arose in this position provided a distinct take on the 'success' of the proclaimed promises of the developers and the local planning authority.	This interview helped reveal the degree of public v. private interaction in the development process and how GNGV's development represented a shift in the 'way things were done'. However the personal insight provided by this respondent indicated that there is a difference in how the District planners perceived the acceptance of the development with that of how local area residents reacted to the increased ex-urban population.
Parish Council Chair, Secretary, and Councillor (3 individuals)	A newly formed Parish which merged a pre-existing local parish with the new development area has resulted in a very interesting 'political' climate of us v. them. While useful for ascertaining local motivations for buying a home in the development and micro-level concerns of daily living – this interview demonstrated that researching this level of involvement in the development process was of minor significance to the overall research questions. This interview and the following two were highly charged discussions about the 'warring local factions' of the Parish Council, the Community Association, and the Residents' Association.	Mobilisation of local residents into formal political forums and lower tier government bodies in charge of day-to-day concerns of 'community' members was raised as a potential area of investigation. However, this focus on largely consumption-oriented issues demonstrated little potential for advancing research findings in response to the posed research questions.
Residents' Association Founders	While very interesting and helpful for providing a counter-balance to the rhetoric of development 'professionals', this interview indicated that this level of involvement was not extremely helpful in answering my proposed research questions (for this thesis). This interview was undertaken in the private home of the Secretary of the Association. Upon arrival I found that I was actual meeting with 3 members of the Association, which made the interview overly long and it was	Again the mobilisation of local residents was investigated, but this level was seen as quite different from those that got involved in the formal system of the Parish Council. The Residents' Association was a small group of self-selected community representatives whom many other parties did not believe represented the interests of the community as a whole. The outlook of this mobilisation was reactionary based on developer-

	much more difficult to contain discussion to the aspects of the association's existence that I was interested in.	consumer relations.
Former Parish Council Chair, Local resident	Due to unforeseen circumstances this interview ended up being conducted out of doors on a cold evening in the company of my own companion. This atmosphere completely altered the formality of the process and it was very much just a conversation amongst three people. It was very difficult to remain on topic.	This interview demonstrated that local knowledge is upheld as important by a variety of development actors. In this case the interviewee was someone whom the District planner, the Parish Council, and the Residents' Association respondents had all mentioned as 'the person to talk to'. This person's involvement at the local political level and as an area resident had made her quite a powerful intermediary between the developer and the residential community representatives.

In summary, the key lessons that I took away from the pilot study which assisted in further framing the empirical and conceptual study of New Urbanism in Toronto were that this type of development process underscored the complex forms of dynamic tension within and between development, planning and design as disciplines and professions. In particular, the relationship between actors on both sides of so called 'the development table' in this case found them all to be contemporaneously interested in working towards improved design quality control (be it self-regulated through market forces, voluntary, or statutory). To me this indicated that the institutional practices of these actors (despite the historical perception of antagonism between the practitioners) have converged within the individual and collective framing of the 'difference' that New Urbanist development processes embody to each individual actor in his/her own repetoire of accepted 'best practices'. So for my thesis, trying to understand what this convergence entailed and how it took place became primary interests in the investigation of processes of normalisation of New Urbanism.

Second, the leadership role taken by Countryside Properties, plc in this project indicated that design-led planning is dependent upon innovation within the building industry and that the state response in this case has been to reward innovation, while reaping the socio-economic benefits that can be achieved within the existing regulatory framework (namely in the UK via the Section 106 agreements). The search for similar relations between industry innovation and risk management and the regulatory structures of planning and building regulations in the Toronto context were therefore added to my frame of reference. In particular, the relations between industry actors were identified as significant in the sense that 'innovation' to one developer/builder could be seen as part of a corporate social responsibility of working towards 'sustainability', while to another it could be seen as maximising the replicability of their standardised 'products'. Yet, despite these different starting points, the industry actors seemed equally committed to the building, and selling, of 'whole environments' or 'communities', not just tracts of houses.

Methodologically speaking, the pilot study demonstrated the need to maximise favourable conditions for interviewing, and particularly, recording. Thus limiting the degree of noise, distraction, and even unnecessary participants were highlighted as key preparations through the seven interviews conducted in Great Notley. The benefits of beginning my interviews by contacting and 'de-briefing' with the local planning official demonstrated that I should take advantage of my own personal knowledge and background in planning to open up potential opportunities for getting beyond the 'official line' of bureaucracies and corporations. Additionally, this

professional rapport allowed me to obtain hard to find personal details on private development actors involved in the projects under analysis. This protocol of meeting with senior planning staff was carried over into the Toronto case study with similar success. Finally, the pilot study interviews conducted with local residents and resident groups/associations demonstrated that while this area of consumer-oriented study had supplemental value to the main aims of my thesis, it did not yield significant substantive findings in addressing my research questions. This helped me to commit to focusing my research in Toronto on the producers of New Urbanist housing.

Implications for Further Research

To reiterate, the purpose of this Appendix was to present a brief overview of the utility of the pilot study research conducted on Great Notley Garden Village. However, in undertaking this preliminary research several intriguing lines of inquiry were highlighted which I believe warrant further investigation. Amongst these possibilities for further research is a closer examination of Countryside Properties, plc as a distinctive market innovator in the emerging socio-economic and policy context of 'sustainable community development'. Secondly, the co-emergence of the revised Essex Design Guide and the development and construction of GNGV demands further investigation to flesh out the lines of interaction and the dynamics of public/private relations in housing governance. Finally, while the governmental structures, contextual details, and sheer number of case studies involved undermined the feasibility of comparing the UK pilot study with the Canadian examples of New Urbanism investigated in the main body of this thesis, further research could

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elaborate on this comparison. In particular, a comparison of GNGV in the UK with Cornell in Canada may prove a worthwhile pursuit.

Conclusion

The pilot study conducted in Great Notley Garden Village proved an extremely vital element influencing the research design of the primary case study in Toronto Canada, both methodologically and conceptually speaking. Its undertaking has also provided several intriguing lines for further inquiry relating to the relational dynamics of public and private development actors in the emergent design-led planning policy context of the contemporary UK.

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