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Governance and Sustainability in Glasgow: Connecting Symbolic Capital and Housing Consumption to Regeneration

Abstract

To transcend a legacy of slum-living, paternalistic provision and urban decline Glasgow City Council has endeavoured to transform the city's fortunes by a plethora of mechanisms, which have at their core the establishment of sustainable communities. Framed within a policy discourse which emphasises 'cultural and social' as well as 'physical and economic' renaissance, the crux of the Council's strategy has been to stem the migratory tide of affluent households and to empower public sector housing tenants. Drawing on Rose's (2001) 'ethopolitics' we argue these developments in Glasgow reflect the wider emergence of technologies of governance in UK housing policy that seek to realign citizens' identities with norms of active, entrepreneurial consumption.

Key words: Glasgow, housing policy, regeneration, ethopolitics, symbolic capital, active citizenship.

Introduction

'Glasgow's Miles Better'

'Glasgow: Scotland with Style'

Glasgow has had more than its fair share of snappy place-marketing slogans over the last 25 years. Although emphasising a slightly different message, the phrases listed above share one key objective: to present Scotland's largest city as rejuvenated, reformed, and ultimately, a highly desirable and attractive place to live and work. With a legacy of industrial decline, and widespread poverty, changing the image, and more importantly the reality of life in Glasgow, has been no easy task. Nonetheless, the city is now often referred to as a paradigmatic example of economic, social and physical regeneration, as Mooney argues, "Glasgow is widely acclaimed as the bench-mark for other de-industrialised and/or 'second cities' to follow" (2004: 328).

It would be impossible to attribute Glasgow's 'recovery' to one specific strategy or policy; rather, it is commonly agreed that the revival of the city has depended on an approach which has been 'holistic' in terms of addressing social, cultural and economic issues, combined with a shift in the prevailing macro-economic conditions (Amin 2005). A central tenet of this approach has been the creation of 'sustainable communities'. Sustainability has been a concept commonly associated with environmental concerns. Linked to Brundtland's definition of development that "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs" (Brundtland Commission 1987), sustainability is commonly seen as a fundamental organisational principle in urban redevelopment. Crucially, it has been reconstructed to include ideas in relation to 'community', with the creation of "...sustainable communities at the heart of the Community Planning Process"ⁱ (Glasgow Economic Forum 2003: 23). As Raco emphasises:

"A sustainable place is one in which a 'balance' of employment, housing, and social facilities are co-present and available to a range of socioeconomic groups. It is populated by *sustainable citizens* who are politically, socially, and economically active and self-reliant. They are 'non-dependent' on the state and provide for themselves through private sector (market) provisions" (2007: 172).

In terms of housing, Glasgow City Council's policies have bifurcated into two distinct, but inter-related approaches: to stem the migratory tide of affluent households from the area by providing a wider choice in terms of type and tenure (Webster and Binns 2005); and to empower its tenants by diversifying the management and ownership of its public sector housing (Glasgow City

Council 2001). Housing, therefore so long the bane of the city administration given its poor condition and dominance by municipal provision, has been recast as an integral component of the city's recovery.

Taken at face value, these changes may be viewed as positive for the city: social housing tenants benefit from a more localised landlord and decentralised housing management, and physical rehabilitation may attract a more affluent population to the city which, in theory helps to create communities which can exist and reproduce themselves with minimal support and state intervention. These changes however, have been accompanied by a subtle yet pervasive shift in the 'technologies of governance' within the housing arena. Crucially, this demonstrates the recognition within government that regeneration strategies based upon physical improvement of housing alone are not enough to achieve the sustainable, long-term revitalisation of deprived areas; rather, citizens must also be transformed by means of encouraging forms of self-governance which align citizens' self-regulating capacities to dominant norms of conduct (Flint and Rowlands 2003). Ethopolitics – a concept developed by Rose (2001) that relates to the 'politics of conduct' and 'how we govern' – has proven particularly useful in understanding these policies (see also Flint 2003; Flint and Rowlands 2003).

Following this, the aim of this paper is to use Rose's (2001) ideas of ethopolitics to explore the recent changes in Glasgow. The impetus for this paper stems from two separate research studies in Glasgow, which examine two distinct yet connected topics: gentrification and housing stock transfer. The remainder of the paper will comprise four sections. The first will provide a short overview of the housing policy context in Glasgow, the second a fuller discussion of ethopolitics, especially the role of symbolic capital, in advanced liberal strategies of governance, which is then followed by a summary of the research methods used before the presentation of empirical evidence from the two studies.

Glasgow Housing Policy Context

As a city steeped with industrial heritage and the site of some of the worst poverty in the UK, (Bailey and Robertson 1999), Glasgow has a housing landscape that covers a wide-spectrum of dwellings, ranging from poor quality, un-lettable flats in council estates to large, detached houses in the leafy suburbs of the city. With a heritage that combines a 'working class' culture with a strong tradition of paternalist municipal intervention, a change in housing provision was never going to be without difficulties.

With strategic responsibility for the housing development of both social landlords and private developers, the City Council (2003a) produced a Local Housing Strategy (LHS)ⁱⁱ to provide a vision for housing in Glasgow over the coming years. At present there are two leading strategies being pursued in the city: the creation of new private neighbourhoods for owner occupation, and the stock transfer of all public housing. Firstly, since the mid-1990s, the City Council, in partnership with Communities Scotlandⁱⁱⁱ has placed an emphasis on promoting ‘middle market’ homes for owner occupation, especially in areas of disadvantage and dereliction. This has culminated in three key strategies for owner occupation:

- Gro Grants – which provide funding for housing for owner-occupation;
- New Neighbourhoods – which were designated to provide opportunities for developing middle-market family housing;
- Homestake – which is a shared equity scheme to assist first time buyers to get a ‘foot on the property ladder’, usually at the low–middle end of the market.

Secondly, in 2003 the City Council transferred the ownership of its council housing (circa 81 000 properties) to the newly created Glasgow Housing Association (GHA) (McKee 2007). Stock transfer is a policy vehicle that involves the sale of housing from the public (i.e. local authority) to the voluntary sector (i.e. housing association or co-operative). Whilst it is not a new initiative (see for example, Clapham et al 1991), as the largest stock transfer in Western Europe the significance of the Glasgow transfer for the future of Scotland’s public sector housing cannot be under-estimated. Although critics of the transfer have labelled it as an example of ‘privatisation’ (Mooney and Poole 2005), drivers for change are more than just financial. Indeed continued public investment in the social rented sector is to be paralleled by changes in its organisation and management, which in the Scottish context has manifest itself in the policy of ‘community ownership’ (Scottish Office 1999). Somewhat of a vague concept, as Kintrea (2006) highlights, it nonetheless illuminates the ‘people’ as opposed to the ‘property’ aspects of housing stock transfer by emphasising transformations in housing governance.

Advanced liberal technologies of governance, ethopolitics and the ‘active’ consumer

Foucault conceived power as fundamentally productive in nature: as operating by and through individual subjectivities as opposed to against them (Foucault 2003a, 2003b). Here power is not conceptualised as a negative, repressive act arising from the realisation of the will of a sovereign power. Rather it is recognised as something that can be both positive and facilitative, and which is visible through the specific strategies and techniques that bring it into focus (Foucault 2003b).

Importantly, governmental objectives are to be realised not by direct intervention but through the realignment of subjects' identities via the "conduct of conduct" (Foucault 2003b: 138). This word play on conduct represents an older, more comprehensive meaning of governing that encapsulates any attempt to direct, steer or shape human conduct, and which ranges along a continuum from governing the actions of others to the self-management of one's own behaviour (Lemke 2001). It illuminates the diffuse nature of power and how it is exercised through micro-practices of rule that are potentially co-existent within all social relationships.

Rose (2001) has sought to advance Foucault's ideas by emphasising how contemporary technologies of governance involve constructing identities for subjects as active citizens within the context of their communities. This 'politics of conduct' is underpinned by an explicit moral rationality that seeks to invoke responsible and ethical self-government, and thereby reconcile individual behaviour to dominant norms of conduct. This "double movement of autonomization and responsiblization" is significant, for whilst individuals are to be "set free to find their own destiny.... at the same time, they are to be made responsible" for it (Rose 2001: 6), with the state no longer required to address all of society's problems.

Ethopolitics also accords an important role to both culture and consumption in regulating conduct through reference to prescribed 'arts of living' (Rose 2001; see also Flint 2003). Here practises of consumption become associated with identity-creation and the accumulation of 'symbolic capital' (Bourdieu 1992: 118). Symbolic capital operates as a limited resource in which prestige is defined and distinction reasserted through the capacity of individuals to appreciate, choose between and consume goods, including art, food and importantly here, housing. In this way the naturalisation of certain consumption practices are increasingly associated with the moral agenda underpinning the ethopolitics project.

Drawing on these key concepts it is possible to interpret the valorisation and subsequent normalisation of home ownership and the reconfiguration of social rented housing as a technique of governance that has come to fruition at the turn of the 21st century, and which seeks to establish aspirations towards socially accepted norms. Such norms in the UK are characterised by a disposition towards owner-occupation, framed, the natural 'choice' for individuals and both reinforces, and is reinforced by, government rationalities and discourse (Flint 2003). Here, symbolic capital may be seen to accrue to tenures in which "housing consumption confers an identity and status upon individuals, comprising both aesthetic (good taste) and moral (responsible conduct) judgements" (Flint and Rowlands 2003: 217). In this context owner

occupation not only demonstrates the economic capacity of individuals to enterprise their own lives, but is also increasingly ascribed aesthetic and moral value as a ‘naturalised aspiration’.

This governance shift is not unproblematic: ascribing elevated levels of symbolic capital to owner occupation not only results in widening distinctions between housing tenures in terms of economic capital, but also in symbolic terms as tenants of social housing are considered “flawed” (Flint 2003; Flint and Rowlands 2003). Crucially, this makes it easier to rationalise unemployment and anti-social behaviour as failings of individuals to recognise and/or adopt social norms, rather than a mixture of political, personal and structural influences. In policy terms this is manifest in a variety of ways, such as the stigmatisation and labelling of social rented housing as a ‘tenure of last resort’ and is further reinforced by “discourses that pathologise social housing and describe ideal types i.e. ‘healthy neighbourhoods’ with a mixed demographic balance” (Slater 2005: 50). As Bridge emphasised, this “valorisation” of one set of tastes has resulted in the “displacement” of the other (2006: 728). When this is coupled with the ethopolitical style of governance, which uses a strong moral discourse to justify policy and actions, there is a danger that economic and structural causes of deprivation and inequality are overlooked. A prime of example of this in housing terms is the modernisation of social housing via community ownership. This key policy objective of the Scottish Executive seeks to reduce the distinction between private and social acts of consumption by reconstructing tenants as active, empowered citizens who – like owner occupiers – can take responsibility for their own housing consumption, thereby reducing the role of the state.

Research Methods

This paper draws upon the authors’ findings from their respective ongoing ESRC funded doctoral research. Although both authors are concerned with transformations in Glasgow’s housing markets and how this impacts upon governance structures and relations of power, they are nonetheless separate and discrete research projects.

The first study examines the implicit and explicit use of gentrification as a regeneration strategy within Glasgow. Fieldwork comprised two main components: an initial stage involving the development of a taxonomy of urban processes followed by a deeper excavation of four epitome neighbourhoods. This involved a range of qualitative research, including 30 key-actor interviews, non-participant observation and discourse analysis of key policy documents.

The second study is concerned with tracing changes in Glasgow’s housing governance,

particularly tenant involvement in the decision making process, following the city's 2003 housing stock transfer. Fieldwork was undertaken between August 2005 – April 2006 and involved two stages: ethnographic case study research involving three community housing organisations operating in the city, complemented by an external phase of key actor interviews, documentary analysis and (non-participant) observation. Across both stages a range of qualitative methods were employed: 54 semi-structured interviews were conducted with front-line housing staff, local committee members and key actors at the citywide and national level; 5 focus groups were held with tenants outwith the local management committees; and a range of both internal/external policy documents analysed, and meeting/events observed.

Empirical Data

Gentrification, Regeneration and Housing

At the local level in Glasgow, the housing market is complex, demonstrating paradoxical features typical of large de-industrialising cities while at the same time possessing characteristics unique to the area. The tale of the 'ugly industrial metropolis' transforming into a futuristic 'post-industrial' urban environment through means of cultural place-marketing strategies and gentrification-orientated housing policies is now common-place (Lees 2000; Atkinson 2003). The benefits associated with gentrification, state sponsored or otherwise, although disputed by some, is difficult for local governments to ignore (see for example, Cameron 2006).

What the City Council faces, like many urban governments of post-industrial cities, is a difficult challenge reconciling the need to provide good quality, low-cost housing, with the desire to develop or redevelop sites within the city with more expensive housing to attract middle class people, or more specifically young affluent professionals to the city core, and more marginal homeowners and households to the suburbs.

As part of this approach, the City Council has put forward a convincing argument within its 'City Plan' of the structural, physical, social and cultural changes that must take place to ensure Glasgow's role as a "vibrant city" is to be assured (OECD 2002; Glasgow City Council 2003b). The crux of the plan is a need to stem the migratory tide of middle and upper income households from the city to suburbs bringing to the city a more balanced population. Central to this is the policy of widening the choice of building types and tenure options available in the city, which match the rising aspirations and requirements of a modern population. In practical terms this has meant a significant increase in middle and high-end development, with a decreasing role of social housing within the city, highlighted in the Local Housing Strategy Update:

“The overall picture of supply and demand for housing in Glasgow is still of reducing demand for social housing, and of lack of supply of appropriate family homes in the private sector” (*Glasgow City Council 2005: 20*).

A key message that emerges from the urban renewal focus of this and other ‘city-vision’ documents, is the idea that the supply of good quality housing stock for owner-occupation is one of the key resources a town or city can possess and should exploit in order to encourage economic growth in inner urban areas, stimulate the in-migration of higher income groups, and improve of the physical environment. From this starting point, it is not difficult to understand how it might be envisaged that in Glasgow,

“...gentrification [would] supply the upper-end of the market and continue to make structural improvements...[while] the local and regional government look after the rest. This might mean a dual role, stimulating urban regeneration and intervening if and when the area begins to gentrify, to ensure the benefits of gentrification without its inequities” (*Shaw 2005: 183*).

While support for both private and social housing is evident in Glasgow, it is the middle and upper end of the market that has become the key focus in terms of regeneration directives. Although never overtly expressed as such, this represents a gentrifying agenda, in which a middle class population is attracted to an area with the explicit aim of diversifying the city’s population. In terms of policy rhetoric, there is clearly a process of tenure differentiation occurring. Although there are very many physical and practical reasons for this, it may be argued, using ethopolitics framework that some of the objectives associated with increasing opportunities for homeownership are connected with a desire to cultivate subjectivities conducive to advanced liberal economies, through the symbolic capital conferred through home ownership. The limited space in this paper has meant that the discussion will be limited to the three key housing policies GRO Grants, New Neighbourhood Initiatives and Homestake mentioned above.

Gro Grants date back to the late 1990s. Essentially they are a funding scheme administered by the City Council on behalf of Communities Scotland, which supports the “provision of housing for owner occupation in carefully defined social circumstances” (Communities Scotland 2001: 1). This is achieved by providing eligible developers with the minimum level of funding needed to meet the difference between eligible production costs and the sale value of the houses on completion. Grants are only offered in certain areas (selected by the local authority and Communities Scotland). In the first instance, purchasing opportunities are limited to people on low-incomes. On the one hand this goes some way to providing support for people with limited

means to get onto the ‘property ladder’, but it also betrays a logic which imbues home ownership with symbolic capital at the expense of other tenures.

Glasgow’s New Neighbourhoods Initiative is a policy response developed in the City Plan of 2003 (Glasgow City Council 2003b), to overcome the falling demand for social housing in the city, and to help regenerate areas that had particularly high levels of poverty and social exclusion. New Neighbourhoods would include developments of mixed tenure housing as well as integrated infrastructure such as schools and transport links. The original plan nominated four areas of the city shown in Figure 1 below.

Homestake is one of the most recent initiatives supported by Communities Scotland and administered through the City Council. Effectively it is a property-purchasing scheme based on shared equity. It is hoped it will “enable first time buyers and others on modest incomes aspiring to ownership to enter the property market through a majority stake in a home which would otherwise be unaffordable to the” (Scottish Executive 2005: 15). The scheme operates through Registered Social Landlords^{iv} who build Homestake properties as part of their stock in order to sell on a shared equity basis.

Although there is a slight difference in target groups relating to these policies (eg low/middle income) each of these policies has one common theme: to make owner-occupation more accessible to Glaswegian residents. The keystone of this reconfiguration is the desire to create ‘sustainable’ communities, which roughly translated means neighbourhoods that require little or no state intervention to deal with physical and social deterioration. Significantly the goal encouraged by various levels of government from UK central government right down to local authorities, is the implication of citizens in the provision and maintenance of their own homes thus minimising the role of the state.

This is clearly evident in the rhetorical mechanisms present in policy documents. For example, Gro Grants, “...contribute to social inclusion and community regeneration by promoting more sustainable, mixed tenure communities” (Communities Scotland 2001: 2). Similarly, the New Neighbourhood Initiative focuses “on creating attractive new sustainable neighbourhoods by developing a range of housing, undertaking housing rehabilitation and providing new infrastructure” (Glasgow City Council 2003b: 124), while Homestake “will enable first-time buyers and others on modest incomes aspiring to ownership to enter the property market through buying a majority stake (i.e. a share of the equity) in a home which would otherwise be

unaffordable to them” (Scottish Executive 2005: 15), giving credence to the idea that ‘part ownership’ is preferential to ‘no ownership’.

The emphasis on tenure mix and diversity, especially within existing areas of deprivation and ‘social exclusion’, as a solution to neighbourhood decline and population loss is one of the key threads running through these policies. One of the tacit assumptions sustaining this idea is that poorer neighbourhoods are unstable because they lack owner-occupiers; in other words, the physical and social fabric of these neighbourhoods decline because home-owners are missing. As a result, neighbourhood decline and areas of concentrated poverty are increasingly abstractly connected to the tenure of residents rather than wider structural factors at work in the city. As the Manager of one Local Community Planning Partnership warned:

“If you take the reasoning the area is so poor because there is no where for rich people to live, you are running the risk of missing the point, that structural and local factors have combined to create poverty, real problems for people with little or no incomes, and attracting richer people to the area is not going to magically solve their problems” (*Manager, Local Community Planning Partnership*).

Nonetheless, given Glasgow’s relative position in deprivation indexes social housing continues to occupy a significant role in housing the city’s population. The legacy however, of large-scale municipal housing, which has dominated Glasgow’s housing landscape for so long, has been challenged by central government and identified as in need of reform^v.

Reconfiguring Glasgow’s Social Housing: choice, agency and responsibility

Prior to the 2003 whole stock transfer^{vi} in Glasgow housing governance was centralised, bureaucratic and premised on professional bodies of expert knowledge. There was little room for active tenant involvement at the strategic level in this top-down model of decision making. Where tenants were involved it was largely at the local level through estate action groups or neighbourhood forums; there was however a lack of financial resources to implement their locally identified priorities (for further discussion of pre-transfer situation, see McKee 2007).

“...it [going to the housing] was like going to the doctors or the dentists or going to a hospital appointment. Because they were the professionals and they knew better” (*LHO Committee Member, Office Bearer*).

“*How were decisions taken then about local issues? They were taken from the centre by people who didn’t live in the area*” (*LHO Committee Member, Office Bearer*).

By emphasising ‘community ownership’ and thereby community governance and citizen

empowerment, the 2003 Glasgow transfer framework illuminated the social dimension of housing stock transfer. Its fundamental objective was to establish a more bottom up decision making process, in which tenants were both consulted on their views and encouraged to actively participate in decision making. This was to be achieved by fragmenting service delivery via the downward devolution of both autonomy and responsibility for housing management to a plethora of newly created community housing providers: the Local Housing Organisations (LHOs). These are small scale, community based organisations that are governed by a management committee comprising a majority of local tenants. Given the explicit desire for community ownership of social housing, these LHOs – and the tenants within them – have been central to Glasgow’s housing revolution.

“One of the most crucial aspects of the stock transfer will be the development of the Local Housing Organisations. These organisations offer tenants both a real choice and the opportunity to provide housing services which are truly local, accountable and effective” (*Glasgow Housing Association 2001: 3*).

Here, ‘local’ tenant involvement has emerged as the new panacea to address the ‘problems’ of social housing: not only does it promise to overcome the limits of democratic government by establishing tenants as a constituent group in the decision making process, but it also ‘empowers’ tenants to become active consumers who can influence service delivery by exercising choices and making their voices heard. This is significant for tenants are not just active citizens in the democratic process; they are also individual consumers of services. As in other public service areas, social housing is therefore to be imbued with the characteristics of the market and tenants accordingly transformed from passive recipients to active consumers who can take responsibility for their own life outcomes. By mobilising active agency and empowering social housing tenants to act in their own interests, this has the effect of reducing distinctions between social and private acts of housing consumption by reconciling social housing tenants to norms of entrepreneurial citizenship and responsible self-governance.

Crucial here has been the emphasis on elevating tenants’ local knowledge and maximising their actual participation at the community level (for further discussion see McKee and Cooper forthcoming, 2008), for tenant empowerment through community ownership is a strategy of government that can only realise its objectives if tenants willing and actively engage.

“...people have always historically thought that their opinion really didn’t matter...But I think if they see it’s taken on board it encourages them: participation of the greater part of tenants in the area. Because they think they are being taken notice of and therefore there’s a point to it” (*LHO Housing Officer, GHA*).

Yet stock transfer is as much about reconfiguring public services, and addressing the ‘problem’ of dependency on the state, as it is the conduct of recipients of public services themselves (i.e. the tenant). For example in the case of stock transfer, the quasi-private identity of transfer housing associations has required them to become more business like and customer focused in their operations in order to protect the asset base upon which private loans are secured.^{vii}

“It’s only really since the stock transfer...they never called the tenant a customer before. They didn’t have a customer base it was just a tenant and they needed a house” (*LHO Committee Member, Officer Bearer*).

In contrast to the ‘one size fits all’ approach, which characterised the provision of council housing, ‘modernised’ social housing is to be both flexible and responsive to the needs of consumers. Yet providers can only deliver these modernised services from a position of knowledge: as the users of these services, local residents are best placed to evaluate the service and suggest how it can be tailored to suit local needs. Here the functions of tenant participation are potentially diverse, involving deciding, shaping, delivery and evaluation of front-line services. In one case study for example, the association solicited suggestions from its tenants about how to transform an empty property it owned. Concerns voiced by tenants about a lack of social facilities in the locality resulted in the establishment of a new social business: a vibrant and popular café. This is a prime example of an organisation gaining knowledge about its customer base by asking what it wants and responding to that demand. Fundamental to this approach is good communication and a two-way information flow, so that tenants are kept informed about the activities of the association and the organisation itself can reap the benefits of feedback from its customer base.

“*Benefits of involving tenants?* You know you can sit in your office and run services but you don’t really get a true picture of how well it’s being done until you speak to people on the receiving end” (*Senior Representative, Housing Association/Tenant Representative Organisation*).

Whilst it is beyond the scope of this paper to consider in detail whether or not tenant empowerment has been delivered in Glasgow, it is important to note that positive change has been achieved within the limits of the transfer agreement. Through the LHO network tenants now have the opportunity to become involved as ‘active’ citizens in specific spheres of delegated decision making (McKee 2007). Furthermore, policies such as ‘Choice Based Lettings’ and ‘Glasgow Gold’ have sought to encourage tenants, as consumers of social housing, to make rational choices about the services they receive. Whilst the former seeks to mirror market processes in the allocation of social housing, the latter is a reward scheme that provides

incentives for tenants' 'good' behaviour (Flint 2004).

The extent to which tenants of social housing really have a choice and therefore an ability to exit their current service in favour of an alternative provider however remains questionable. The ability to exercise choice is not uniformly distributed but is variable, and contingent on both social and economic capital. This raises the wider question as to what extent transformations in housing governance can really address the deep-rooted and extensive nature of Glasgow's housing problems. There are also potential tensions and conflict between these twin discourses of citizenship and consumerism, for the latter may promote an individualised, depoliticised identity at the expense of denying and frustrating the collective interests of tenants as a whole.

Whether local residents participate as active citizens exercising their rights in the democratic process or as empowered individual consumers within the market – what unites both approaches is that this local governance vernacular has been perceived in only positive terms: a universal good, a radical political project and the way forward in tackling difficult social problems. This brings us back to the rationale underpinning the empowerment agenda: tenants overcoming their powerlessness to become active in their own self-governance (Cruikshank 1999); the effect of which is the realignment of subjects' identities and self-governing capacities with governmental objectives of active, responsible citizenship. However, far from liberating tenants by empowering them to have more control over their destiny, this may regulate individual conduct by extending the terrain of governance even further (Rose 2001; McKee and Cooper, forthcoming 2008).

Conclusion

In both the private and social housing sectors Glasgow's changing housing fortunes are remarkable. Within the city there are two distinct yet related housing strategies underway: these are increasing the amount and opportunities for owner-occupation, and the reconfiguration of the social rented sector through transforming its management and ownership. The evidence presented here represents just a glimpse at the dynamic and changing housing context in Scotland's largest city. In terms of this discussion, four key details emerge:

- Gentrification, taken in a broad sense to mean the creation of space for more affluent users is a key component of Glasgow's regeneration strategy;
- Owner-occupation is encouraged through both local and national policy mechanisms, and is ultimately linked to the creation of 'mixed communities';

- ‘Active Citizenship’ is explicitly pursued in the social rented sector through tenant empowerment and the devolution of control of former council housing to local communities;
- Social housing has become increasingly imbued with consumer-oriented characteristics, which could be seen as an attempt to minimise tenure differentiation between private and social housing and realign social renters’ identity with legitimate consumptive practises.

Each of these is framed in policy as the ‘building blocks’ of sustainable communities. It does not take much deconstruction to conclude that in advanced liberal societies, ‘sustainability’ denotes neighbourhoods and cities that require little state intervention, and in which citizens are to be increasingly responsabilised for their own life outcomes through ‘normalised’ acts of consumption (housing being just one example). Here communities, and the citizens within them, are being ‘empowered’ to act in their interests in order the state does not have to. The authors would argue that each of the dimensions described above can be linked to the national political agenda to reconfigure housing governance by invoking mechanisms associated with ‘ethopower’ such as symbolic capital, consumptive practices and accepted, legitimate codes of morality (Rose 2001; Flint and Rowlands 2003).

Crucially, by emphasising that ‘sustainable communities’ is fundamentally a political construct underpinned by a moral agenda about appropriate norms of conduct (Flint 2003; Raco 2007), this analytical framework provides an alternate and at times more sophisticated understanding of power and how it is implicated in different forms of governance within a variety of fields. While wishing to avoid oversimplification of a difficult and contentious issue, ‘ethopolitics’ highlights the dynamic and at times covert interplay between policy, rhetoric and reality. As the Glasgow case studies highlight, the hyper-legitimisation of owner-occupation, which is evident in many housing and regeneration documents, has resulted in social rented housing being identified as ‘problematic’ and targeted for intervention. Here, community ownership of social housing emerges as a governmental strategy to minimise differential appropriation of symbolic capital, by establishing dominant norms of consumption and responsible self-conduct. However the moral and aesthetic implications of this distinction between ‘social’ and ‘private’ acts of consumption are significant, and may ultimately undermine the legitimacy of social housing in the UK.

Notes

ⁱ Community Planning is a statutory process enshrined in the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003, which aims

to bring together “the public sector, partners and the community” to agree priorities on the planning and provision of services (2003: vii)

ⁱⁱ As part of its revised role in relation to housing in the city, Glasgow City Council was obliged to develop a ‘Local Housing Strategy’, which encompassed a citywide approach to housing supply and demand, which is used in relation to planning applications.

ⁱⁱⁱ Communities Scotland is an agency of the Scottish Executive with delegated responsibilities from Ministers of the devolved Scottish Parliament. Its remit is concerned with housing and regeneration activities.

^{iv} Registered Social Landlord is the collective term for housing associations, co-operatives etc that provide rented accommodation based on housing need and which operate on a not-for-profit basis. They are registered and regulated by the national housing agency: Communities Scotland.

^v In 2004, the owner-occupation rate in Glasgow was 49%, in Scotland, 64% and in the UK 70% (HBOS 2004).

^{vi} Whole stock transfer refers to the sale of the entirety of a public landlord’s housing stock, as opposed to small pockets of it. For a discussion of the history and different types of stock transfer, see for example Taylor 2004.

^{vii} Private loans are integral to stock transfer for they provide the finance by which the acquiring landlord (normally a housing association or co-operative) can purchase public sector housing. Yet these stock transfer associations are not-for-profit organisations, often registered charities, and heavily funded and regulated by the national housing agency: Communities Scotland. They therefore combine aspects of the public, voluntary and private sectors.

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