

Community in a Master Planned Community: The Experience of Older Residents

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Abstract

This paper presents preliminary results of research into how older people might contribute to, and benefit from the establishment of community in a new 'master-planned community' (MPC), a 'post-traditional' successor to the traditional Australian suburb. The phenomenon of older people moving to MPCs and participating in the establishment of a new community flies in the face of orthodox portrayals of retirement, which often describe a choice between prolonged ageing in place or migration to an aspirational destination with other like-minded retirees. The MPC is heavily marketed for its potential as a community of place, invoking the imagery of a 'return to neighbourhood', an ideal favoured by various policy makers and social commentators.

Qualitative research into the establishment of community is underway at Springfield Lakes, a new MPC on the edge of Brisbane. Preliminary findings will be discussed, focussing on the roles and successes of the Springfield Leisure Group of older residents in building community and social capital, and the implications for the wider community of place.

The research forms part of a wider University of Queensland Australian Research Council Linkage project Building Sustainable Social Capital in New Communities, in conjunction with the property developer Delfin Lend Lease.

Keywords

Master Planned Communities, older people, social capital, suburbs, post-traditional society

Introduction

The phenomenon of older people moving to a new outer suburban housing development and participating in the establishment of a new community flies in the face of orthodox portrayals of retirement, which often describe a choice between prolonged ageing in the lifelong home or migration to an aspirational destination with other like-minded retirees.

Master Planned Communities (MPCs) are a form of new residential development often marketed for their potential as a community of place, invoking the imagery of a 'return to neighbourhood', the communitarian ideal also favoured by various policy makers and social commentators.

Researchers from the University of Queensland are investigating the establishment of community at Springfield Lakes, a new MPC on the edge of Brisbane. The research project is an Australian Research Council Linkage project, with the linkage partner Delfin Lend Lease, the private sector developer of Springfield Lakes.

My own part in this research is as an APAI PhD candidate studying older residents (those at or near retirement age) and their role in the formation of community in Springfield Lakes. Much government policy on ageing, residence and community is focussed on goals such as 'ageing in place' (Olsberg et al. 2004), 'active ageing' (WHO 2002) and 'productive ageing' (Andrews 2002; Howard 2001). The 'local community' is seen as a central platform for the successful implementation of these policy goals. The conclusions drawn from this study will be used to add to knowledge about the role of older people and community in contemporary Australian society and to inform developers and policy makers about how housing estates might be better planned and designed in the future to both attract and retain older residents and about the potential for local communities to both support, and benefit from, their older residents.

This paper presents some preliminary results of research into these two questions:

1. What motivates older people to move to Springfield Lakes?
2. How are older people creating and maintaining social capital within and outside of Springfield Lakes, and inside and outside of their own age cohort?

Following some background and commentary on community, place, class and age I will provide some illustrative examples from a case study of the Springfield Lakes Leisure Group, an association of predominantly older residents of the Springfield Lakes development. I will discuss these findings, highlighting the successes that the group has had in forming a 'community within a community' and conclude with some views on how the project will progress.

Background

To meet demand for new housing, a significant number of new private-sector initiated housing estates or Master Planned Communities (MPCs) have been established in Australia and particularly in South East Queensland in recent years. In order to attract buyers in a competitive market, developers are offering potential residents the prospect of 'community' when they move into a development, in addition to the normal range of amenities and services. The following examples are taken from property developers' websites:

"[residents can enjoy] a special place where fulfilment and community spirit are a way of life" (Delfin Lend Lease 2004a).

Another large developer offers buyers:

“a community for residents to enjoy and be a part of, just like the good ol' days, when you knew your neighbours...” (Stockland 2004).

Whether or not the efforts of developers to ‘create’ community have been successful has not been subject to empirical scrutiny in Australia, particularly against the backdrop of changing structural and institutional dynamics in a ‘post-traditional’ society — a term used by European social theorists such as Beck (1992), Giddens (1991) and Lash (1994) to refer to both the freedoms and uncertainties in contemporary society created by the fragmentation of traditional structures such as class, family and career. In other words, the increasingly reflexive, or self-conscious choices that the individual must make during the life course as the certainties and determinism of traditional structures are falling away.

This paper focuses specifically on the older residents of Springfield Lakes — those at or near retirement age, and the roles they might play and the obstacles they might face in contributing to the establishment of a sustainable community, that is, an enduring community of place sustained by its own by the efforts and participation of residents, without the persistent interventions of developers or government.

Master Planned Communities

As an indication of the current level of population growth in South East Queensland (Greater Brisbane, Ipswich, the Gold Coast and the Sunshine Coast), there are approximately 150 new named suburban developments being marketed in various forms and states of development (*The Courier Mail* 2005). Many of these estates would fit the loose definition for a Master Planned Community. While there is no standard definition of an MPC, for the purposes of this study they can be described as large integrated housing developments, characterised by mixed land use, and developed by a private sector company (Minnery and Bajracharya 1999). Restrictive covenants are used to regulate building and aesthetic standards. Artefacts such as artificial lakes, elaborate entries and uniform landscaping and signage are all used to create a sense of difference from competitors and to appeal to a particular market sector (Gwyther 2002). The developer may also intervene to assist in the establishment of community groups and associations such as sports clubs, playgroups and neighbourhood watch groups and also provide the impetus for community events such as fairs, fun runs and markets.

Springfield Lakes, a new suburban MPC located 20 kilometres southwest of Brisbane, is a greenfield site in development since 2001 by Delfin Lend Lease. There are currently (as at March 2005) about 1200 homes occupied by approximately 3000 residents, with a planned eventual population of 30,000 people by 2020 (Delfin Lend Lease 2004b).

The selection of Springfield Lakes as a site for this study was the result of liaison between Delfin Lend Lease and the University of Queensland, resulting in the awarding of an Australian Research Council Linkage grant in 2002 to study the development of 'sustainable social capital' in Springfield Lakes. The inclusion of older residents as one focus of the study was in response to a belief by the research partners that a 'multigenerational' community was an important component of a diverse community, and an important factor in the sustainability of the community as a whole.

'Multigenerational', is taken to mean a population characterised by a cross-section of age groups within the boundaries of Springfield Lakes. If that idea is to be extended to a 'multigenerational *community*', then older people should have a subjective awareness of membership and involvement in that community and they should be able to contribute to, and profit from reserves of social capital — the benefits individuals and communities derive from norms of trust and reciprocity (c.f. Bourdieu 1986; Coleman 1988; Putnam 2002).

While it is acknowledged that 'multigenerational' includes children, an empirical investigation of the involvement of children, except from the perspective of older people, is beyond the scope of this study. Initial soundings and discussions with the developer indicate that approximately 20 per cent of the population of Springfield Lakes is somewhere at or near retirement age (as at March 2005), and a census-style survey will be conducted by the project on the population of Springfield Lakes in 2005.

Community and diversity

Definitions and uses of the word 'community' are so numerous as to make the term almost empty of meaning. At its most basic it can be taken to mean a collective of people with something in common (OED 2005). The positive associations of the word have made it a favourite of politicians and policy makers and it is often misused or used in an ideological sense to imply mass acceptance, with "great potential for mystification of social issues." (Bryson and Mowbray 1981, p. 255).

Bourdieu provides a description of a collective in his explanation of the concept of social capital, but it could also be used as a definition for the type of community which provides its members with material and social benefits beyond the symbolic or fleeting:

“...the possession of a *durable network* of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – in other words – to membership of a group which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively owned capital, a 'credential' which provides them with credit in the various senses of the word.” (Bourdieu 1986, pp. 248-9 [author's italics])

This requirement for durability as a qualification for community is supported by much urban sociology, which has frequently demonstrated that community formation and the generation of

norms of trust and reciprocity is a slow and complex process dependent on subjective and structural factors such as homogeneity of age and outlook, cultural background, pre-existing networks and residential stability (e.g. Bryson and Winter 1999; Crow et al. 1995; Crow et al. 2001; Gans 1967; Richards 1994; Sampson 1988).

Diversity

If the conditions for community rely on some form of homogeneity or common purpose, then the pursuit of diversity within a residential development may seem problematic.

The developer of Springfield Lakes has expressed the desire to achieve social diversity, in terms of age, family composition and socio-economic status in its planning of Springfield Lakes, in the belief that diversity is conducive to community sustainability. As a way of achieving this diversity, there is a range of housing styles and affordabilities offered in Springfield Lakes ranging from 'affordable' cottage-style houses on small blocks (< 300 m²) to more imposing dwellings on large blocks (700m²). This range of housing styles and prices may account for the greater diversity in both age and also socio-economic status of residents in Springfield Lakes in comparison with more traditional suburban developments with their more homogenous sizes and styles of housing.

The developer's belief in the positive aspects of a diverse community is supported by various urban planners who point to the sustainability benefits of diverse communities such as the prevention of demographic shift and the reduction in stark socio-economic and cultural differences between adjoining areas or suburbs in large cities (Randolph 2004). The idea of achieving diversity in a planned community through incorporating multi-generations is not a new concept. Planners and developers have been promoting the benefits of diversity dating back to the establishment of garden cities in the UK in the 19th century (Bosman 2004), the ideas of Ebenezer Howard and John Ruskin (Horrocks 1974; Lang 1998).

But the assumption that diversity is conducive to community, or that community can somehow be 'created' through the thoughtful planning of housing, demographics and amenity (Katz 1994) is inconsistent with most sociological thinking on community, which makes problematic both the definition of the concept and the grounds for its establishment. (Katz 1994; Talen 1999). Herbert Gans, in his classic study of Levittown, a new suburban community in New Jersey, almost 40 years ago puts the project of 'creating community' into pragmatic perspective that still resonates today:

"My argument here is not with Levittown, then, but with critics who seek to find a social unit in the community where none exists, and with romantic city planners, abetted by nostalgic social critics, who want to 'revive' a sense of community that never was save in their imagination, instead of planning for the effective functioning of and improved

living conditions in those aggregates to which we give the name 'community'" (Gans 1967, p. 146).

Much policy and marketing discourse on community conforms to Gans' critique of utopian or nostalgic idealisation of community and his problems with arbitrary definitions and idealisation of community, and threaten to overshadow or devalue the more material and enduring aspects of communal association, the type that might generate social capital and improve living conditions for residents.

Class

The consideration of class and its relevance to the situation of Springfield Lakes is significant as it is class, or one of its derivatives, which has traditionally provided clues to any unity of purpose and outlook for the residents of a community.

Traditionally in Australia, the suburb in which one lived was a reliable indicator of social class and, it could be argued, is still largely true for much of urban and suburban Australia. Well known case studies of suburban Australia such as those conducted by Bryson and Thompson (1972) and Richards (1990) were dominated by issues of homogeneity and class struggle. However, MPCs do not grow organically or even in direct response to a consumer-driven need. They are developed by entrepreneurial entities based on developer-assessed need and supported by a comprehensive marketing campaign. The planning process to some extent determines the erosion of traditional class boundaries, but only because the developer has gauged that the market will react to this arrangement. In other words, the developer is constructing a non-traditional suburban offering in response to what it believes is a non-traditional market by offering a range of products for a range of abilities to pay. If the rate of house and land sales in Springfield Lakes is any indication, this seems to be working.

If there is any unifying social characteristic or homogeneity among the residents of Springfield Lakes, it may be based on something other than economic class. There is a wide disparity of housing styles and prices at Springfield Lakes, ranging from the 'affordable' to the exclusive. Why economically better-resourced residents have chosen Springfield Lakes, rather than a more traditional or established symbolically elite location may point to the need to investigate issues of cultural as well as traditional economic class (Devine and Savage 2005; Pakulski and Waters 1996).

Ageing

The older residents of Springfield Lakes are the focus of this study particularly the ways they might be approaching their retirement years and some of their possible attitudes and behaviour toward housing choice and community.

Springfield Lakes and the third age

The time from retirement to frail old age is often referred to as the 'third age', a term first used by Laslett (1996) to describe a lengthening period of good health following retirement. The possibility of more disposable income and an expectation of a 'productive' retirement, all combined to promise the older person a time of renewal and self-fulfilment after retirement (Bernard and Phillipson 2004). The third age is a post-traditional conceptualisation of the self that sees the biography as a reflexive or self-conscious project to be actively 'worked upon' and constructed. While the third age may not be an adequate model to describe early old age for those for whom the separation of work and leisure and the neat exit of grown children has not been the case, it still represents an aspiration for many of those entering their retirement years (Gilleard and Higgs 2000).

The third age is very much a product of its time, culture and political economy. Featherstone and Hepworth (1989) and Rowland (2003) recognise the temporal factors that determine the characteristics of particular ageing cohorts and their significance for the complexion of an ageing generation in a particular period in history. The characteristics which are attributed to older people are often attributed to the developmental characteristics of human ageing rather than the characteristics of a particular cohort, although this may be changing with the labelling and characteristics popularly attributed to generations such the 'Baby Boomers' and 'Generation X'.

Altering patterns of kinship and friendship, changing and fragmenting family structures and socio-economic issues such as changing retirement ages and the scaling back of pensions and other government benefits all contribute to the challenges that older individuals face in continually constructing or reconstructing their own identities as traditional social structures and institutions disappear and change. The effects of consumerism and the 'commodification of community', particularly the effects of marketing on older people are (e.g. Featherstone and Hepworth 1989; Phillipson 1982; Phillipson 2003) may also be important factors in older people's residential choices and social networks.

The housing aspirations and choices of older people

Quantitative studies suggest that older people (over 55s) may have moved from inner suburbs to new outer suburban developments to escape from, or cash in on, the increasing costs of inner city housing, or to 'downsize' to newer more manageable housing (Stimson et al. 1999; Vintila 2001). The reasons behind the choices of older people to move to Springfield Lakes will be as varied as the individuals researched, but the common thread is that they have all chosen to live in a 'mainstream' house in a 'mainstream' suburb (Hanson 2001), in contrast to the following models, common to much of the ageing literature:

1. The 'left behind' inner city and rural localities where older people are overtaken by gentrification or decay
2. Localities, typically older suburban areas, where a large proportion of the population is ageing as a cohort in the homes they have occupied for many years
3. The 'retirement destination' locality inhabited in a purposeful way and either formally or informally limited to older residents. (e.g. Golant 2002; Lucas 2002; Phillipson et al. 1999; Randolph 2002).

Much of the literature on older people's decisions to move to a new location is quantitative and concentrates on economics, health, lifestyle and family. In order to better understand the reasons for older people's moves to a suburban MPC, phenomenological accounts of divorce, widowhood, retirement, leisure or special interests (Unruh 1985), as well as cohort characteristics, need to be explored.

Ageing and community

Most characteristics of the dynamics of community formation for older residents are probably similar to that of any group within a new community, that is, community formation takes time, some form of commonality and residential stability (Crow et al. 1995; Sampson 1988). Australians move house on average once every five years, a rate which only slows marginally as people age (ABS 2001). Increasingly, older people are either the agents or victims of social change, associated with phenomena such as divorce and the geographical dislocation of kin and friends. The possibility of a 'lifestyle' and the desire to construct a rewarding retirement or third age are all factors that might draw an older resident to the promise of community.

Social capital, or the benefits individuals and communities derive from norms of trust and reciprocity (c.f Bourdieu 1986; Coleman 1988; Putnam 2002), particularly local social capital, may be of particular importance to older people who are at greater risk of having individual relationships fall away as they move from young old to 'old old' (the fourth age), and lose access and contact with previous associational and relational (non-geographical) social networks. In terms of quality of life, strong social relationships and durable social roles have been found to be more important than even health and physical wellbeing as people enter late old age (Bowling et al. 2003; Fry 2000; WHO 1999; Wiggins et al. 2004)

The freedom, or need to choose, in the context of the establishment of community in Springfield Lakes could foretell either the rejection of community for the freedoms that come with an individualised existence (Bauman 2001), or perhaps the reflexive, self-conscious construction of community as part of a deliberate strategy to attain the various benefits that come with social networks.

The research — Springfield Lakes Leisure Group

I will be taking an interpretive, largely qualitative approach to answering these two research questions:

1. What motivates older people to move to Springfield Lakes?
2. How are older people creating and maintaining social ties and social capital within and outside of Springfield Lakes, and inside and outside of their own age cohort?

Qualitative data will be supplemented by data collected by the wider ARC project, such as a census-style survey of the entire community to determine basic demographic data.

Participants for semi-structured interviews so far have been recruited from the Springfield Lakes Leisure Group, an association originally established in 2003 at the initiative of the developer, who provided seed funding and opportunities for fund raising activities. The group exists to provide a social outlet for residents of Springfield Lakes and organises regular social outings, day trips, dinners and other recreational activities. The group is now largely self-sustaining with a membership of approximately 100, comprised almost exclusively of over 55s. The group is incorporated and holds monthly meetings, ostensibly to organise leisure activities although these meetings have sometimes been used as a forum to discuss and debate issues of concern as they apply to the community for example, the responsibility of the developer in relation to the number of rental properties that are appearing in Springfield Lakes.

Towards the end of March 2005 I had conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews with 12 members of the Springfield Lakes Leisure Group in eight interviews and also conducted participant observation of the group on two extended group recreational outings and also observed a number of group monthly meetings. Ages of the sample ranged from 47 to 74, with the majority of participants aged around 60. There were eight women and four men in the sample. Five of the participants were born outside of Australia (all from Western Europe). Eight respondents were married, two were widowed, one divorced and one single. However, this tends to mask accounts of previous divorces and bad marriages. None had a tertiary education, although two men had post-secondary technical qualifications. Participant observation involved extended outings with approximately 30 older members of the leisure group, whose demographics are similar to that outlined for the interview sample. The preliminary findings and discussion that follow are based on interview and participant observation data, with all direct quotes taken from interviews.

Preliminary findings and discussion

What motivates older people to move to Springfield Lakes?

All of the participants had made a considered decision to move to Springfield Lakes and could clearly articulate the reasons and motives that led to the move.

Most had moved from South East Queensland, with one from interstate and one from overseas. The reasons for moves differed with each respondent and ranged from unsatisfactory family arrangements, a wish to be in Queensland for retirement, a desire to be closer to relatives and friends to a belief that buying and living in Springfield Lakes would be a good investment decision. However, overlaid on most of these motives was a view that Springfield Lakes 'suited' the person, that they somehow felt comfortable with the decision to live there:

"I always said that I'd like to come here to keep an eye on mum and dad when they got old, and I'd been up to stay with a girlfriend who...said 'I know a place called Springfield Lakes, why don't we go and have a look?'. So that's what brought me down here to have a look and as soon as I came down and saw the lake, I thought 'oh this looks lovely' and so I bought a [block] the next day, went home...and had to sell up everything madly..." (#1)

"Here is a bit more relaxed. It's very intimate. There [previous suburb] in the night, there was too much noise, too many breaking trees and vandalising and a lot of break-ins and everything...It's a lovely place to live. Very quiet, and the people seem to be very friendly." (#12)

"Our view was that when we came up here after we'd retired, we had this block of land and we were looking at a house to put on the block of land, a house that suited us. We were up here about six weeks and went to every display village in Brisbane...We wanted a house that suited us, not a ready established house or something smaller, and we wanted a bit of yard that we could move into." (#6)

"...it's just cleaner, out further, away from the rat race and everything is still close Ipswich, Brisbane my daughter lives at Oxley. I've got a brand new grandson. I've got everything I want." (#4)

These accounts of moves to Springfield Lakes indicate a break from the traditional 'born and bred' pattern of settlement and community into a more reflexive or post-traditional (e.g. Beck 1992; Giddens 1991; Lash 1994) arrangement where the individual makes a selection from a wide range of choices based on a combination of factors including lifestyle, status, aesthetic and economic reasons.

It is tempting in this vein of thinking to ignore social structures and institutions and how they colour the lives and choices of individuals both in everyday activities and more profound life choices. The act of living in or leaving Springfield Lakes is a choice, but with constraints.

To assume that the individual has unfettered freedom to construct an identity through strategies of self improvement and the acquisition of status markers ignores the very real brackets that must be drawn around agency by the individual's habitus: the set of dispositions acquired over a lifetime and which shape his or her position in the fields of employment, family arrangements and residence (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). It is habitus that shapes the individual's perception of what is suitable, comfortable and acceptable.

The economic resources, or capital, of participants varies considerably within the friendship group of the Leisure Group. There were accounts of struggles to meet monthly financial commitments alongside accounts of multiple investment properties and frequent overseas travel. This disparity in levels of economic capital among a relatively close knit group of older people might indicate a need to investigate cultural, rather than traditional economic class reasons for why people might choose a similar geographic residential space with which they are comfortable, or where they feel 'suited'.

The almost unanimous reference to the question of 'renters' points to a concern by residents that their aspirations in moving to Springfield Lakes might be threatened by the presence of people renting, rather than owning, property who were perceived to be lowering both the tone and security of the community:

"It's not because they're renting, that's got nothing to do with it, I couldn't care who it is. It's got nothing to do with that. They've gone to all the trouble of making a nice area and then ruined it by putting all the rentals, so many, in that one area. They should like put...owners should outweigh the rentals." (#3)

"And there's rentals in here, and we were told there'd be no rentals in this section. But there are. And you see, that's what [the developer is] saying and they just come in and change it. They lie to you — they just say they've changed their mind." (#1)

How are older people creating and maintaining social capital within and outside of Springfield Lakes, and inside and outside of their own age cohort?

It was clear from participants that social networks were spread over varying distances, with old friends and extended families located in various parts of Queensland or Australia, and in at least half of the cases, overseas. None of the participants had spent their working lives close to Springfield Lakes.

Social contacts in the Leisure Group were of significant importance to all of those interviewed. All had joined as a result of the efforts of the developer either through information provided at company-arranged 'welcome nights' or via information in newsletters and other mail-outs. Each of the participants recognised a need to become involved locally, to meet other people as part of their strategy of becoming settled in their new environment:

"[The developer's community liaison officer] probably told me about [the Leisure Group] at the welcome night. I decided to come and meet the other people...I like to get out and meet people." (#4)

"That's the other thing we liked here. We joined the club — we drove from the coast up here to come and walk twice a week. ... [the Delfin community liaison officer] sent us a letter, sent us a letter saying there was a leisure club setting up." (#2)

"We thought why not — we met our neighbour over the back fence, tripped over her. They were at the same stage as us...At that meeting we first learnt about the leisure group...so we started going to that, we thought we may as well start meeting some people from the neighbours." (#7)

There were multiple affirmations of the importance that the leisure group has played in the quality of life of its members:

"It's the people here that's stopped us. We lived down the coast for 20 years and we never knew no one. We've been here for two years. If we leave here we'd have to make new friends again, and we mightn't make new friends again...its hard to have good friends these days, there are no airs and graces, we're all in the same boat. If they want to drop in they can, there's no 'I've got more money than you have". (#2)

Among the leisure group, there was some quite notable evidence of the benefits that accrue from social capital:

"...[two other older members of the leisure group] have told us that when we sell, if [24 year old daughter] wants to stay around the area then she is welcome to stay with them...they will look after her and everything." (#11)

"...the leisure group gave me a lovely thing of dried flowers [while she was recovering from an illness], that was nice". (#4)

In one particular case, the Leisure Group has had a significant impact on the life of a member of the wider community:

"The Leisure Group has helped a couple of families, a couple of people where they had a car accident...where one of them has lost a child, very devastating, the leisure group has raised some money and...we had a few barbeques just to raise a bit of money to

help the family, help them to mow the lawns for six months and the lady had somebody coming in and cleaning her house..." (#11)

All accounts of the Leisure Group include some degree of gratitude for the friendships it has provided and in some cases cite the Leisure Group as a factor in any decision to remain in Springfield Lakes in the long term. But for almost all of the participants there was a lack of social contact with other members of the community apart from immediate neighbours. The contact with neighbours tended to be of the, 'close but not too close', or friendly 'boundary setting' variety (Laurier et al. 2002):

"Yes, and these neighbours, they're very friendly, they've already helped us with things, and all that sort of thing, and we're trying to do our best to help them if we can." (#12)

"Yeah, we get along with them [neighbours] alright, only to talk to them sort of thing...we've had a few drinks with them." (#6)

Springfield Lakes' relative geographic isolation is exacerbated by its very erratic public transport links, probably adding to the isolation of those for whom transport is a problem due to age, health or limited financial resources. Almost all of those interviewed had chosen to live in Springfield Lakes, despite its distance from established and friendship and family networks. Although for many, personal networks have become so dispersed that it ceases to be a factor in the decision about where to live. For these people, the geographically proximate social network offered by the leisure club fulfils an important role in quality of life, a theme that came out quite strongly in interviews.

Conclusion

Residential localities are often seen more as sites for 'performing identities' (Savage et al. 2004, p. 29) rather than as closed, bounded places that necessitate membership of a community as a prerequisite for place-membership. However, from the preliminary findings of this project, the location-specific Leisure Group has been an important resource for its members in constructing an identity as residents of Springfield Lakes, and as a developing source of social capital.

It is too early in the research to start making confident conclusions about the nature of the habitus of the older people of Springfield Lakes, or for that matter, the members of the Leisure Group. While economic class might be an unreliable marker for commonality among its members, there may be a certain cultural uniformity about the membership, sharing features of habitus as a consequence of age cohort levels of education and life experience. The fact that none of them had been sufficiently attached to previous communities to remain there may also be a feature of worth investigating for what it says about attachment to community and indeed the need for geographical community as people age in a post-traditional society.

I will continue to document the progress of the leisure group and its members, as I believe it is a phenomenon that has important lessons for other similar residential situations, particularly given the more reflexive nature of residential choices for older people in post-traditional society and the decreasing certainty with which older people can rely on traditional networks of life-long friendship and familial support. Many people move house for other than social reasons and the ability to join a community of like-minded people could prove to be a great advantage in establishing the levels of local engagement and social capital needed to lead a more fulfilling life. There is still little evidence of the prospects for the formation of a 'multi-generational' community, none of the participants had either the avenues or the motivation to seek social contact outside of the leisure group or immediate neighbours. But the majority of the residents of Springfield Lakes have lived there less than two years. The Leisure Group appears to be one of the success stories for the developer's community program and one that perhaps can be duplicated in similar future developments.

The leisure group is only one part of the story of the older residents of Springfield Lakes and in subsequent research the net will be cast wider in order to identify and document the stories of those with different social accounts of moving to and living in Springfield Lakes. By conducting research into the situation of the older residents of Springfield Lakes, I aim to highlight some of the wider societal and institutional factors influencing the establishment of community in master planned developments, and what bearing the involvement of older residents might have on the complexion of community and the levels of social capital in post-traditional suburban developments.

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