

'The configuration of work, home and community in Australia: Research background, context and some early analysis in two master planned communities'

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ABSTRACT

This paper arises from an ARC funded linkage project ('The Work, Home and Community Study'), being conducted out of the Centre for Work + Life. The study is being undertaken with partner Lend Lease Communities. The paper outlines the nature of the study and its goals, and the background literature to the study, along with the changing work, home and community context and some elements of the policy context, in which it occurs.

The seminar presentation will also outline some preliminary issues arising from the first round of focus groups undertaken in two relatively new suburban Master Planned Communities (one in outer-Adelaide, one in outer-Melbourne) although these are not reported in this paper, given their preliminary nature. These focus groups were conducted in order to gain an understanding of the issues faced by women and men in relation to fitting their work, home and community lives together, and to identify particular structures, services and amenities that facilitate a good fit, informing future stages of the research project (a survey, interviews and further focus groups).

Early (and far from complete) analysis confirms findings from existing literature that workers and householders in the study are living in a dual money/time economy that shifts over the life course, and the 'fit' between work, home and community at different life stages is significantly influenced by social and physical infrastructures that bridge work and home domains. The quality of this infrastructure is subject to policy decisions that can affect the lives of people for better or worse.

Introduction

The changes in Australia's labour market and its cities are multiple. More and more women and workers with family responsibilities are joining the labour market. Younger workplace entrants have new aspirations and face a changing life/work trajectory with many more transitions over the life course. The average life cycle now often includes: school to work transition, to independent household, to relationship/children, to divorce (for one in three), to study several times over life cycle, as well as transitions between jobs and periods of job search. Some of these transitions centre around work, others centre around housing, and many relate to both: that is, to

the connections and interplay between work and housing as well as relationship and community formation. Current changes in Australian society create new workplace needs for workers, new community service needs and new housing needs – and new configurations between them.

Major new housing developments are being undertaken on the outer fringes of most large Australian cities to meet demand for housing as cities struggle to cope with increasing populations and/or housing demand. Many of these take the form of Master Planned Communities (MPCs). Master Planned Communities are usually defined as geographically (and sometimes socially) bounded large scale, private housing developments that incorporate varying levels of social and physical infrastructure. They often have a distinctive look and a formal physical entry (Gwyther 2005a). A sub-category of these – but far from all – are ‘gated communities’ built around specific ‘lifestyles’ like golf, or great wealth. Neither of the MPCs discussed in this report are gated communities. MPCs are in fact very diverse on many criteria.

Amongst other features, these communities create new spatial alignments of work and home with important implications for the nature of private and public life and community. Urban and suburban developments – in all their forms - are influencing workforce, household and community relations.

Many studies have analysed aspects of the relationships between social environment and health and well-being. There is also a large and growing body of literature focusing upon the nature of urban/suburban design. Issues like the travel implications of MPCs are also attracting empirical investigation (Yigitcanlar et al, 2005), as is the nature of community generated through MPCs (Gwyther 2005a, 2005b). However, in an Australian context, there have been relatively few attempts at an integrated, wholistic analysis across the multiple domains of work, the household and community, including community services and infrastructure. Further, few take the labour market and work as a primary entry for analysis. That is the purpose of *the Work, Home and Community Study* (WHCS) which focuses upon a small group of eight Australian urban communities.

Changes in work, households and community and their connections are worth understanding better so that community services and communities are better planned, and more robust supports underpin the lively set of transitions that most households and individuals now make over the life cycle.

A work ‘career’, a housing ‘career’ and a relationship ‘career’ are not what they used to be. They are now very dynamic over the life cycle creating changing needs, and different needs from previous generations. These have important implications for policy areas like housing, labour market policy, and community service provision. Forms of social support to assist people to live through these changes – and to dynamically ‘put together’ work, households and communities – affects how well things turn out both for individuals and societies.

Work

The Australian labour market is seeing declining male participation in paid work, increasing female participation, the rise of the busy dual earner household, very significant changes in the hours and days of work organisation (with a ‘new clock’ governing work, home and community time in many locations), work intensification, greater worker mobility, less work security, more change in career trajectories over the life-course, the spatial reorganisation of the workplace with changing technologies of work and changing care responsibilities of workers, and greater emphasis upon skills and education over the life-course (Donaldson, 1996; Campbell 2000, 2001,

2002; Pocock 2003; Watson, Buchanan, Campbell and Briggs 2003; Allen, Loudon and Peetz 2005).

Many of these changes are far from universal in shape. They vary significantly by socio-economic status, and urban/regional location and age, amongst other factors. Gendered patterns of unpaid work have changed much less, although a growing utilisation of market-based care and substitutes for domestic labour are driving some of the increase in paid work participation. Many workers (and those they live with) look for new ways to earn, save time, form and sustain relationships, work, live, and care for each other (Richards, 1990; Johnson, 1997).

Notwithstanding new time pressures, work is often a source of pleasure, reward, achievement and social connection – and more Australians will do more of it (Probert, 2003; Pocock 2005a).

Greater workplace and household mobility fracture some forms of community and households (Stevenson 1999; Bittman 2005). Many workers are looking for new forms of support beyond the extended family (e.g. commodified, non-familial care/services) to facilitate their work and life (Meagher 2002). Saving time through better configurations of work and home, work and essential services, education, community and family connection, are significant worker concerns.

A work/spend cycle affects many households in developed countries, including Australia (Schor 1998, 2004, Hamilton and Denniss 2005). In some households high levels of expenditure are required to achieve the desired work, housing, and community fit. These drive high levels of debt and work participation – at the whole-of-household level (through dual earner households) as well as at the individual level (through extended hours and intensive work).

Changing patterns of childrearing also drive new work and home configurations. Child-friendly work and living is of growing importance (see New Zealand Geographer, 2005). For example, concern for child safety, increased formal childcare use and considerable emphasis on education and other developmental opportunities, mean parents especially seek or value locations which co-locate a range of services or create a sense of ‘safe childhood’ (Pocock 2003).

Work/Home and Sub/Urban Policy

A variety of qualitative research has demonstrated a close reciprocal relationship between working and household life, with the notions of ‘spillover’ from home to work and from work to home now extensively researched (Hoshchild 1997, Williams 2000, Pocock 2003). However, contemporary analysis of linkages between work, housing and urban environments, from the standpoint of workers and residents are rare in Australia. O’Connor and Healy argue this is a ‘serious inadequacy in urban policy’ (2002, vii). Their own spatial analysis of employment and housing linkages (in Melbourne) concluded: ‘housing policy cannot be expressed independently of an adequate understanding of the spatiality of jobs and the nature of job-housing links’ (2002, vii).

Analyses of work and household change could better inform urban policy and planning (Richards 1994; Yates 2002). Urban and housing environments (including aspirations, opportunities, locations, composition, infrastructure and structure) impact on work behaviours, most clearly in terms of physical proximity, time usage, and the contours of social relationships. Essentially, these intersecting domains comprise the resource pool that shapes the amount of choice and control people have over their social lives and the kinds of communities they can create (Seabrook 1984). These trends and tensions register strongly in consumption and community formation experiences.

Consumption patterns reflect and shape experiences and configurations of work, housing, services, and community (Hamilton 2003). Rising consumption aspirations (including housing, and related consumerables and services) drive higher levels of personal debt, which affect experiences of work, household formation, facilities and community fabric (Merlo and McDonald 2002; Pocock 2005b). For example, high levels of indebtedness may require long hours of paid work and drive growth in dual earner households. Recent newspaper reports on the effects of the August 2006 interest rates rises have featured women reluctantly increasing their working hours or returning to work after maternity leave sooner than they would prefer, in order to make ends meet (*The Australian* 3 August 2006, *The Age*, 3 August 2006).

Long hours of work for primary earners may be the result of restricted employment opportunities or infrastructure to support the labour market participation of second earners. These have important social and economic outcomes: on the welfare of children (Norrie McCain and Mustard 2002; Pocock and Clarke 2004a, 2004b, 2004c, Strazdins 2004), on fertility (McDonald, 2001a, 2001b, 2002), on labour supply (Jaumotte 2003), on the accumulation and distribution of social capital, and on the implications arising from low levels of affordable housing (Berry 2001).

Housing and Community

Existing housing-related literature points to difficulties particularly affecting lower income households (Yates 2002) and conflict around social polarization (Peel 1995; O'Connor and Healy 2002; Yates 2002; Gleeson 2004a, 2004b). It also points to a rise in 'yearning for community' and safety, which has led wealthier Australians to spend substantial amounts in the hope of purchasing security and personal meaning, especially through MPCs (Mullins and Western 2001; Mackay 2004; Gleeson 2004b). In Australia and elsewhere these sentiments have been fuelling divisive social trends such as securitisation, fortification and insularity, over the past several decades (Davis 1990; Blakely and Snyder 1997, Gleeson 2006).

A 2004 AHURI study argues current approaches to affordable housing, urban consolidation and social-mixing ignore the 'spatial differentiation of communities on class lines that now exist in metropolitan centres like Melbourne and Sydney, which make uniformly beneficial outcomes from urban consolidation uncertain' (Healy and Birrell 2004). The broader question of the morality and sustainability of inequality is also gaining wider attention (Souza 2000; Hamilton and Mail 2003, Wilkinson 2005). Peel's (1995) study of the history of social mixing in Elizabeth notes planners' best efforts to generate interaction between working and middle class households faltered, with the middle-class eventually leaving the area, while working class residents forged their own cultural and social networks and initiatives.

Past research leaves open what 'community' (which we recognize as a far from settled or unproblematic concept) means to people and how they create it, especially in the context of new housing developments (Gwyther 2005a, 2005b). Is a shared physical space and social outlook sufficient to create community or is a deeper impulse for 'communion' or meaningful relationships necessary? What role does work play in making community today? What difference does the nature of development and its planning make to the creation of community?

Master Planned Communities

In much of the literature, Master Planned community (MPC) developments meet a chilly, even hostile, reception. Their sins are multiple. They are seen by some as encouraging a privatisation or 'emaciation' of the public sphere, applying 'sod off' architecture that 'designs the non-resident

out' and the resident 'in', and contributing to an 'urban distancing' around exclusive social formations. MPCs have also been seen as 'potential instruments of governmentality...rendering the resident quiescent and governable' (see Dowling and McGuirk 2005, p 3 for a summary of these critical lines of analysis).

Unfortunately, deep study of the lived experience of MPCs in Australia is not common. It has also been recognized that MPCs are 'no unitary entity' (Dowling and McGuirk 2005, p 14). These authors, for example, argue for greater sophistication in categorization and analysis of MPCs, including consideration of their 'type' (lifestyle, prestige, security zone), location, scale and mix of housing stock, housing tenure, land use mix, policy context (strong or weak public governance), and the extent to which public elements like common space, collective services and institutions of governance are 'infused with privatism' (or not) (2005).

Gwyther's analysis of two MPCs in Sydney and the nature of the communities they create – a rare example of deep study - suggests that those who live in MPCs do so for a range of motives. Some are looking to escape elements of their *past* housing and community experiences (like lack of safety and unsocial behaviours), and others are *looking ahead* to new experiences and outcomes unconnected to their past (like greater housing-related capital accumulation, new social relationships).

She identifies the 'commodification of community' that is implicit in both the marketing and the mind of the purchasers in relation to MPCs as each promotes or seeks, respectively, 'community' through such developments. For some, this community takes the form of 'immediate familiarity' with other residents (in place of slower developing 'habitual familiarity'). For others it means a kind of pressure-cooker 'hyper-neighbouring' that prematurely burns out proximal relationships (2005a 17). Gwyther finds that the 'community compact' between developer and resident (comprised of both legal covenants and social codes) - while it has the capacity to 'homogenise' residents - 'encourages the development of broad, intra-estate social networks and underpins a more intensive, sustainable sense of community identity than appears to be the case in lesser planned forms of estate' (2005a, p 21). Diverse 'patterns of sociability' are evident in the MPCs Gwyther studied. While her study finds some signs of exclusionary behaviours and social polarization, she concludes that they:

offer residents a sense of coherence and social order and a degree of control over their physical and social environment; that is, a sense of active engagement, rules of belonging and a code of behaviour which provide an anchor for communal and consequently individual identity, and the feeling of predictability from which residents can plan their life (2005b, p 108).

The WHC Study

The Work, Housing, Services and Community Project takes work to the forefront, examining how urban Australian's, are 'putting together' their work, home and community. It explores six questions:

1. What do workers and those they live with seek from their work, homes and communities?
2. What kinds of relationships do they seek *between* their workplaces, homes and communities?
3. How do workers and families build their communities and sustain and strengthen their social fabric?
4. Are these relationships and communities sustainable?
5. What can be learned from experiences elsewhere?
6. What are the policy implications of the analysis for different levels and elements of government, as well as for employers, unions and community organisations?

The study focuses upon eight communities in high and low socio-economic sites in South Australia, Victoria, NSW and Queensland, studying the experiences of men, women and children (see table 1 for sites). These sites include four relatively young Lend Lease MPCs, each of which is paired with an adjacent, older, lower or more mixed socio-economic community. Lend Lease developments are designed to bring together environment, transport, employment, education and community facility considerations and especially focus upon transport and home/work 'self-containment' with the goal of creating 'balanced communities' with a mix of housing types and employment and education opportunities (Lend Lease 2005, Yigitcanlar et al 2005, p 5). Qualitative data have been collected through focus groups in two of these (reported below). It is also planned to conduct a written survey of a stratified group of residents in each of the eight communities (2400 returns planned in total), followed by interviews in each community generating a total of 240 interviews, and a further series of focus groups (including amongst children). The analysis will be set within national data (ABS and HILDA for example).

Table 1 Paired Sites for Qualitative Study

Lend Lease Site	Adjacent Established Site		Lend Lease Construction		No. residences
			Begins	Ends	
Mawson Lakes	Pooraka, Montague Farm	SA	1999	2008	4000
Varsity Lakes	Mudgeeraba	QLD	2000	2008	4000
Caroline Springs	Deer Park	Victoria	1997	2010	8000
Rouse Hill	Kellyville	NSW	2006	2016	1500

The aims of preliminary focus groups were to:

1. Gain a preliminary understanding of the issues faced by women and men in relation to fitting their work, home and community lives together in order to inform the development of the household survey.
2. Identify particular services and amenities that facilitate a good fit between work, home and community.

3. Identify work, social and physical structures that facilitate a good fit between work, home and community.
4. Identify work, social and physical structures that impede a good fit between work, home and community.

The 14 focus groups were conducted with men and women who reside and/or work in two of the study sites, Mawson lakes in South Australia and Caroline Springs in Victoria. Both sites are newly developed residential communities with diverse housing forms, worker populations, household configurations and service provisions.

Focus group participants were recruited from existing resident and business lists, via a general email sent to local businesses and institutions and through notices placed on public notice boards. Lend Lease community development managers conducted recruitment activities at each study site.

In order to have some homogeneity in each group, participants were allocated to one of the following 6 groups:

1. Women under 40 years who lived in the community
2. Women over 40 years who lived in the community
3. Women who worked in the community
4. Men under 40 years who lived in the community
5. Men over 40 years who lived in the community
6. Men who worked in the community

Group size ranged from 1 person (one group only) to 10 people, with the majority of groups containing 4-7 people.

Focus group questions were used as a guide to facilitate a semi-structured discussion. They were designed to address the aims of the study as a whole and phase 1 of the study in particular. They focused on participants' perceptions and experiences of where they worked, where they lived, their communities and the fit between these three things (Appendix 1). Participants also completed a short demographic survey which included questions about service usage and service needs near their home and their place of work. Analysis was carried out using verbatim transcripts of focus groups, notes taken during focus groups and notes made immediately following focus groups.

The sites

The **Mawson Lakes** development has been underway for around seven years, is located 12 kilometres north of the City of Adelaide adjacent to a set of mixed but predominately lower-socio-economic communities. It has natural boundaries (created by transport corridors) and is a fully planned 620-hectare community, expected to provide mostly semi-detached homes for up to 10,000 people in 4,000 residences, and offices for 6,000 employees. It is centred around a lake and a pre-existing university campus, and defence/IT industries. It has a community and retail hub with several school and childcare facilities.



Source: www.mawsonlakes.com.au

Caroline Springs is also centred around a lake with many green spaces, walking tracks and sporting and playground facilities (in common with Mawson Lakes). Caroline Springs has been underway for slightly longer than Mawson Lakes. It lacks the employment and educational depth of Mawson Lakes (and the effects of this were significant in discussion). It is located 25 kilometres out of central Melbourne (also significantly different from Mawson Lakes) and public transport is much less developed in and around the development. It will eventually be a much larger settlement of 8,000 houses, mostly detached dwellings. Residents in Caroline Springs are very dependent upon car transport, and their average weekly income level (\$800-999 in the 2001 census) is considerably lower than in many other comparable MPC developments (Yigitcanlar 2005, p 17). The development has a very low 'travel self-containment' rate of 3 per cent (compared to 11.8 per cent at Golden Grove in Adelaide). This measures the proportion of all car trips captured by local activities (a low number suggests that for most needs, residents leave the area, with important implications for the environment, as well as for time spent traveling and costs: these latter two were of particular concern to most participants).



Source: www.delfincarolinesprings.com.au

Participants

The 68 participants included 33 women and 35 men aged between 19 and 70 years. Eighteen (55 per cent) of the women and 19 (54 per cent) of the men had dependent children, 14 (42 per cent) of the women and 23 (66 per cent) of the men were tertiary educated, 31 (94 per cent) of the women and 32 (91 per cent) of the men were in paid employment, and 12 (36 per cent) women and 25 (71 per cent) men stated their occupation was managerial or professional.

Participants were living in a mix of household types (sole, dual earner/couple, sole earner/couple, retired, with and without dependents). In income terms they included a disproportionately high number of upper and middle-income earners with an over-representation of professional and tertiary educated workers/residents. A number of participants ran their own businesses from home (sometimes in addition to waged work) and several were self-employed tradesmen or contractors.

In political terms many would meet Mark Latham's description of 'aspirational': that is, they had high levels of debt, and had 'moved up'. Most had aspirations for their children and their future life, education and income trajectories.

FINDINGS

We begin our discussion of findings by providing an overview of why people have chosen to live in Mawson Lakes (ML) or Caroline Springs (CS). Thereafter the report falls into seven sections, including discussion of time, the lifecourse, work, home, community, services and finally how these all fit together.

1. Why Live in a Master Planned Community? Many Motivations

The motivations for living in MPCs were diverse. For example, in just one group of five self-described 'early settlers' at ML, motivations included:

- *'falling in love'* with the look
- *'flat land: that was it'* that accommodated a wheelchair
- *'everything I wanted'* all together in one *'walkable'* place, near work, and

- *'I could move up without moving away'* from extended family (having lived in an adjacent suburb).

For others, ML was as close as they could get to a country feel while living in the city, it offered a community, or *'cradle to grave'* accommodation and facilities (children's services, schools, aged care), or it had *'the right house'*.

For some, the issues of safety and friendliness were significant especially in relation to walking safely in the streets, and feeling confident that children would be safe as well as *'speak respectfully'* to adults. A consistent standard of housing and garden was mentioned several times in Caroline Springs. For others, predictable property appreciation was important and this was more commonly referred to by residents in CS.

Affordability was a strong motivator in CS. Green common spaces and the prospect of schools and facilities in close proximity were also mentioned in both developments. Work brought many to ML, although it did not necessarily explain their continued location given that several who had moved there for jobs had been retrenched or changed jobs, but stayed in their housing.

Several people were explicit about moving to a suburb with a reliably consistent *'better class of person'*. As one put it:

Part of our rationale for moving [to CS] was - this is going to sound snobby and I'm not this way - but our last house, I was raised in a commission area and the house we bought was in a housing commission area and it got really [bad], drugs started to come into the streets so we decided we would move. Visually CS was really appealing and we also thought, [you] get a better calibre of people, if you come to Caroline Springs. (FG5, p 290)

Like others in her group, this woman felt that her children were now being raised in an environment where they would mix with the right people, that other adults would look out for them in the right way, and that they would be clear of bad influences: as one father put it *'we look after each others kids'* (FG6, p 313). This line of thinking saw juvenile social capital as being constructed by housing location and potential realized through life in CS as opposed to life in a suburb with lower socio-economic profile *'with syringes and drug deals'*:

I wanted my child to reach the best of his potential, whether it be education, sports, social or whatever, I didn't feel that in that area he would (FG5, p303).

While the motivations for living in an MPC are diverse, there is considerable emphasis upon four features: the consistency of the physical appearance of the development, the co-location of facilities, the feelings of security it offered, and the possibility of joining a 'desirable', relatively homogenous social grouping which conferred the prospect of social capital accumulation and safety.

An Evolving Evaluation: Promises realized and sometimes disappointed

For many living in these MPCs, the potential offered by the developer had been realised and was being enjoyed. However, others spoke of a *'false sense of something really nice'*, and there were concerns that corporate imperatives were being put before the needs of people already resident in the community:

I think it's been lost a little bit, the community sense there was in the start. Now it's a lot of, more financial gains than what the communities really want. And I think at the moment they don't do enough to listen to the community needs. (CS6, p.153)

While it seemed more of an issue at CS, participants in all groups acknowledged that certain groups of people, like teenagers and the elderly, were poorly serviced in these new housing communities. With the exception of certain sporting activities, there was little for these groups of residents to do and, in the case of CS, limited public transport to take them to nearby suburbs with shops, cinema's and other activities. We discuss this further below.

2. Living in an economy of time AND money

Issues of time were pervasive throughout all focus group discussions. Questions around time had a variety of aspects, including:

- *predictable* time
- a *boundary* around work that gave time really free of work
- *common* community or family time
- *enough* time (this was very common in households with children)
- *'good quality'* time especially with children
- not *'wasting'* time.

Commuting time was widely viewed as wasting time, especially if it was perceived as arising from poor road design (e.g. inadequate suburb entry/exit points). Even at a moment when rising petrol prices have been increasing rapidly, *time* was more important than *cost* in the minds of a number of participants:

It's the time. The money, well we can all survive one way or the other. But the time is being wasted, sitting there ... So if I get to spend half an hour playing in the park with my son, [it] would be better spent than sitting there in traffic. (CS 6, p.402)

The attractions of work, home and community facilities in close proximity were obvious in most focus groups – and in most places this attraction was related to the time saved to spend with partner or children at home. Many workers spoke of the growing intrusion of work into their lives, both through spending longer hours at work, and through technologies that took work into home.

It was striking how many long hours workers spoke very tentatively about their capacity to *'hold the line'* in terms of working hours: *'it's not easy to say no'*. A number had *'normalised'* the notion of long hours, so that working ordinary (or formal contract) hours seemed like a *'big ask'*. Many have working lives where the time boundaries are highly elastic and they were more likely to talk about this *'stretch'* as a matter of failed personal time management than excessive employer demands or work overload. There were a number of exceptions, however, especially where personal relationships had been compromised or were at risk (for example, divorce).

In one focus group an IT manager challenged the rest of the group of professional men to *'come clean'* and be honest about the hours they worked: all admitted that in introducing themselves they had understated their hours and ignored the work they did at home. One woman had decided to work part-time in recent months because her friends had complained she never called them: this served as a *'wake up call'* about the draining effects of work.

There were signs of significant *'technological kickback'* against the great flexibilities and expansions of working time and space implicit in the technologies of phone, laptop, and online access at home. Several men (including relatively young men without dependents) had made firm decisions about not taking a computer home. As one sole father put it:

I've made a rule...I won't take the laptop home...the more you bring home the more they expect of you and then they'll expect you to be working 65-70 hours a week. So I think 55 hours is enough.
(FG7, p 102)

A number spoke with concern about the effects of their hours on their relationships and children and on their own well being. This is not surprising given that managers, IT and engineering professionals have some of the highest incidence of long working hours in Australia. However, concern about the intrusive effects of long hours were not confined to these workers. It also extended to self-employed and blue and pink collar workers.

In this context, organising a short commute to work, if at all possible, assumed great significance. In addition, having easy access to retail services, banking, medical, schooling, childcare, restaurants, community activities, volunteer sites, and the whole gamut of activities was very important for many in the study. The *'closer you can be to home and school the better'*, was a common sentiment. It drove housing location decisions for a number, and job decisions were also affected, but not necessarily decided, on this criterion alone. Of course getting all aspects of life in close spatial alignment is difficult. However, getting at least as much as possible (like home and services like schools and shops) in close proximity compensated in some ways for a longer commute to work.

Money

Having enough money was important to participants: *'we all have mortgages'* as a participant at ML put it when lamenting the high prices at the local supermarket. It affected labour market participation rates. For these participants paid employment was usually a necessity.

However, meeting essential needs was not the only work reward. Many participants spoke about a *'positive work engagement'*, *'you get engrossed and the work is interesting and you feel good about getting it done'*. This enthusiasm extended to both professional and non-professional occupations and included women with a number of children. As one immigrant mother of five put it *'I love my job. I love it. I went mad at home'*.

Some very time-poor individuals travelled long distances to and from work from outside ML because of the interesting nature of their work. Indeed the enthusiasm of many for their work was striking: However, a positive work engagement often competed with a desire for more time. *'Loyalty'* to the job, *'interest'* in the work and a desire for personal *'satisfaction'* in the job, all competed with *'time'* for self, family, friends and community. While there were often rewards associated with positive work engagement, many participants spoke of personal and family costs. This contest and ambivalence – or open hostility – was especially present when employees worked long hours against their preference or against their personal health or family well-being:

I would say that loyalty will drive you to retirement, if you don't make time for yourself... I have been worn out, had to take some time off. (CS6 p. 719)

3. Stages over the life course

Participants in these focus groups were all adults aged between 19 and 70 years. We did not, therefore, directly canvass the experience and views of children, teenagers or elderly residents in these communities. Despite this, there was considerable discussion about the experiences and needs of people in these age groups. The issues related to children largely centred around access to schools and appropriate activities for young children in the local area.

On the whole, participants in both ML and CS were satisfied with the facilities and services provided for young children, and indeed these considerations played a major part in their decision to move into these communities: *'it had all the facilities and somewhere that you could bring kids up later down the track'*.

Some concerns were raised, however, about the adequacy of services provided, with a number of women living in CS describing insufficient early childhood services for the population and suggesting this lack of service provision meant that some people were leaving the community for this reason:

Well we knew someone that had actually moved out of the area because she was a young mum and she said that there was nothing for her - it wasn't immediate- she could get into the childcare - but there was a wait for the infant welfare nurse, there was a wait, so she would go back to the area that she lived in which was Melton and utilise the facilities there. She actually moved out, she had another child and wasn't prepared to go through that with the new child.(CS5, p.427)

With respect to teenagers, participants recognised a vacuum of services and activities that was compounded in CS by a lack of public transport to surrounding areas and the city. In both CS and ML, there was a lack of recreational options to meet the needs of teenagers. These provoked concerns about the future of these communities, particularly with respect to the community engagement of teenagers and actual and potential disruption to the community caused by unsocial behaviours arising from isolation and boredom amongst teenagers:

B: That's the end result I think, if you don't give them something to do they'll just get into trouble.

J: They'll be hoons.

S: Like the shops over, you know the shops over at Brookside, we've gone and sat there and got pizza, and sat back in the car and many a time we've seen drug deals done in front of our very eyes.(CS5, p.282)

Life stage was a key consideration when discussing fit between work, home and community. All participants, whether young and single, partnered with or without children or retired, recognised that their needs and expectations for 'fit' were transient and dependent on their stage of life. 'Time', 'money' and 'work engagement' are significant issues throughout the life course and it is necessary that their interaction is explored over time if 'fit' between work, home and community is to be understood. As one young man put it:

*For me, I know up to a certain age you can kick back and relax and after a certain age you've got to push yourself. I mean, when I was at uni I kind of took it a bit laid back, I had a lot of fun. Then you get the lesson, you're not the top of the class and competition kicks in. Then you get the job, you are all really confident then you sit back and think, what do you want in life? Then you can step back down. Now it's like, okay you get your house, you live, you've travelled places, you see how lifestyles are, you see how expensive other cities are. So you [sit] back and you look at the quality of life you get, but then you know you can't enjoy ... once you start having kids you've got to have better homes, schooling is expensive. Then you've got to push yourself again. **So it's sort of like you push yourself and then you step back, you push yourself depending on where you're at in the cycle.** And how much money you have in your bank. (ML10 p.455)*

'Time', 'money' and 'positive work engagement' are interdependent issues at various stages throughout the life cycle. For men and women without children the tensions between these three issues appear manageable, *'It's not really an issue because we don't have kids'*. However, for parents of babies and young children 'time' becomes more meaningful and competes with 'money' and 'work engagement' in ways that it did not before.

I guess, from my personal experience having a family, two little girls, you tend to say, okay, now that you're home you tend not to think about work as much. Before I had kids I mean I would constantly. I'll be thinking about trying to solve a problem in the shower in the morning. You know... but since you have kids and a family and all that, that's all out, that balance is always hard.(ML10, p.390)

This stage in life is typically characterised by increased financial burden as parents commit to larger homes and the costs associated with schooling. For the participants in these focus groups, it is also characterised by a significant social transition, with many parents moving to a new area during this stage and seeking social connection with other parents.

When I moved here I knew nobody... my son was still at [his old school] so I didn't get to meet anybody for three years, then when he finally did move here, he made friends with the older boys, not the younger boys ... So it took ages and ages sort of for us to assimilate in. (CS5, p.154)

Travel, work, time and children

The financial obligations of this stage in life may be met through work. However, work, and the travel associated with work, erode time spent at home and participants talked about time being 'lost' or 'wasted'. Many men with young children were working long and unsociable hours and additional time spent travelling to and from work exacerbated the impact of work on the time they were able to spend at home and in the community. They were very aware of this, as were their partners:

Yeah it's just his hours, he doesn't have set hours. He gets home when he gets home so especially when he was travelling to Rowville. Like on Friday night for the third time in his life he's got home at five thirty and I'd never see him before eight o'clock because of the travel from the other side of town. (CS3, p.173)

For parents of young children and teenage children, paid work was an issue to be negotiated within the household and 'managed' by the individual often in consultation with a partner, as indicated by this father of a teenage boy:

Basically my son sometimes says, "hey Dad can you come home early?" We don't spend as much time as we used to because in the past we used to do it different. We both work full time. Like Rose, she used to have the morning shift and I used to go the afternoon. So what I used to do is work nights for many years, and I accepted this new position over the last 3 years. The new position come with new commitments and new responsibilities so we have to manage it. And she want to reduce her hours of work and spend more time with him, so that's how we decided to balance the hours back again.(CS6, p.659)

Parents ability to 'manage' work, so that it 'fits' well with home and community life, can be facilitated or impeded by formal and informal working conditions. Many participants spoke of working environments that provided flexible working arrangements, but which expected employee flexibility in return. In these work places, the onus is on the employee to 'manage' their work and their time:

I'm trying to limit the amount of work that I take home. This time of the year, its pretty busy ... but, the more you actually do the more they expect, so, I'm trying to find that work life balance. I have got two kids and they are very demanding. So for my wife, on the three days she's there and the other days when she works I need to come home at a reasonable time to try and give her some sanity and try to spend some time with her as well. So I try to do some work on the weekends but it's normally late at night when the kids have gone to bed. (ML14 p. 167)

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Aging in MPCs

At the aging end of the life-cycle, some retirees had moved to ML for their retirement. There was less sign of this at CS, where families with young children were most common. ML retirees were sometimes very active in seeking out and creating new communities and friendships in their retirement (see below). They were clear about the attractions of ML: these lay in the diverse facilities that supported a physically active and socially engaged life-style and the combination of diverse services (including a nursing home, library, walking trails etc).

For some, however, social opportunities were constrained by the turnover in occupancy in their streets, and the fact that many neighbours were dual earner prime aged workers who were usually absent by day. Some lamented the lack of deeper social connection for them in this environment and saw themselves as the informal neighbourhood 'watchers' for their neighbours' properties. However, not all retirees were so distanced.

4. Home

Home had many meanings for participants in these focus groups and it was used interchangeably to refer to the house in which they lived and the surrounding area. Primarily, home was a place to live and bring up children and this was the case for parents and young adults yet to have children, as indicated by this young married woman:

For me it was close to everything, close to the, relatively close to the city and stuff like that. We intend to spend quite a bit of the weekend in there and stuff like that. Yeah it had all the facilities and somewhere that you could bring kids up later down the track. (CS3, p.100)

Regardless of whether they were residents of one of the study sites or not, deciding where to live was a 'lifestyle' choice for the men and women participating in these focus groups. For some, the key consideration was 'convenience', for others it was 'financial security'. Many were primarily concerned with the aesthetic of where they lived and some were willing to forgo a career and high salary for the household/community lifestyle of their choice. As one man said:

It's like taking a career opportunity hit as well as a salary cut coming back here. But at the end of the day it's about lifestyle. (ML14, p.187).

'That enclosed feeling'

Safety was also an important characteristic of 'home' for the participants of these focus groups. Occasionally people spoke of their home being a 'safe investment' in that the covenants placed on contracts ensured a quality location. For most though, safety was about living in a 'friendly' and 'caring' environment where residents looked out for each others kids. Some participants believed this safety came from being isolated from surrounding suburbs and their lower socio-economic profiles:

Just the fact that you know, we can walk around at night and not have to feel like you're going to be stalked. I don't think there's a high crime rate in this area as well. The areas around Mawson Lakes aren't necessarily renowned for being the best suburbs, whereas once you're inside Mawson Lakes, you've got that enclosed feeling, and just the whole, I suppose it comes back to the whole community thing as well, just that people around you are more likely to be the types of people that would look out for you and your house and that sort of thing. (ML2, p.446 our emphasis)

Other participants thought that safety came from a sense of 'belonging' and mutual investment in the community.

Ethnic diversity, belonging and feeling safe

ML residents are located in a community that includes a high proportion of university students, many of them from non-English speaking backgrounds. This diversity was positively mentioned by many residents, including some who actively sought acquaintance with such students and encouraged their local integration.

One participant from a non-English speaking background said that he felt 'safer' when he was in ML than he felt anywhere else in Adelaide, and he particularly valued this aspect of the precinct.

On the other hand, in CS some comments about racial differences suggested a level of discomfort around non-Anglo residents and a keenness to live in a non-racially mixed community.

Location and concentration of services drives housing choice for many

Home is where decisions about work and other aspects of life are negotiated and made. In this context, the location of home in relation to other things was significant for the majority of participants.

Participants were often quick to cite convenience as a significant factor in deciding where they live. Convenience to work and convenience to community services and infrastructure (such as recreation, early childhood education and care services, schools and shops) were salient issues for most participants. The desire for convenience was satisfied for most residents in the focus groups by living in an MPC: 'Everything's here' was a common response to enquiries about why participants live in ML or CS.

For some participants, convenience was undermined by inadequate services (for example, not enough places in childcare or long delays getting an appointment with an early childhood nurse) or infrastructure. Residents in both CS and ML complained about inadequate healthcare provision, especially for women during pregnancy and in the postnatal period. One woman, who was eight months pregnant with her first child, described the lack of choice available to women having babies:

But there's nothing, I mean even to go further out north, like anyone that's further out, there's just nothing for them. I actually go to an aqua-aerobics class at Salisbury for pregnant women and a lot of those women are either going into Calvary or just going with the public hospital at Elizabeth, is as close as they can get. (ML2, p.567)

Despite being relatively close to the city, residents of CS found that traffic problems and lack of public transport inhibited their ability to work in the city:

Yep it is close kilometre wise but there's no train line or any direct transport to the city. You have to drive and then obviously the cost of petrol and parking and everything that goes into the city. (CS3, p.109)

As a consequence, some participants in CS had forgone career advancement in order to work closer to home, while others bore the financial and time costs of a long commute:

Well in terms of jobs that perhaps, for me career advancement and things are important, you can't really find that on this side of the city to be honest, in my experience. (CS7, p.152)

Commuting to the city was not a significant problem for residents of ML because of its closer proximity to the city, and good public transport. However, inadequate internet access inhibited the ability to work from home:

Internet's a big thing actually. That's something that I'm having a bit of a battle with at the moment. We've been trying to get broadband put on at home, cannot get it. (ML2, p.571)

For some, home functioned as an enclosed, privatised space, but one that included extended family - if not local neighbours- in some cases. *'My home is a real entertainer's home'* as one put it, describing her frequent family events with up to 60 guests. With extended family nearby, having a large home was important motivation for living in ML. Despite her initial dislike of the area (*'I used to call it Mickey Mouse, like Disney Land. Everything's so perfect and I didn't like it'*), this mother of two had been won over by her husband and the fact that her house opened onto a park.

A number of residents referred to their suburbs as *'The Truman Show'* or described them as like television studios; they did this with good humoured amusement: it had not stopped them from enjoying the aspects they liked.

5. Community

Community is an important concept for participants and it is used to refer to both place and people. Participants frequently talked about their community in a neutral way, simply defining it as their residential area. At other times they described their residential area in qualitative terms, describing the *'community feel'* and extolling its *'friendly'* and *'caring'* character. When talking about their relationships, participants identified community networks that were located where they lived and where they worked. They also described established community not always in close proximity to either work or home, but a product of childhood, schooling or university friendships. New communities included friends established through new common interests, such as children, a common home location or activities like walking or travelling to and from work.

A common form of community valued by residents was *'being recognised'* and recognising others, as well as acknowledging each other. This relatively shallow form of community activity was highly valued in both ML and CS – in both places, residents found the greetings of acquaintance both common and important. This suggests that designs that create opportunities for *'being seen'*, and *'seeing'* are very important (a combination of shared space, time, and visibility).

Children as social joins

The role of children in particular was very obvious in creating social connections – often at a deeper level than *'recognition'*. The arrival of children created community relationships on many levels, beginning with the mother – either seeking others when at home with a baby or joining other parents as a result of the social connections made by children at school:

A lot of those relationships are around your children...you are driven by those relationships, the networks (FG7, p 276).

These relationships were described as lasting:

The school relationships, friendships that you made out of kids are lasting relationships (FG6, p 990).

It's really good [having a mother's group] - we have met some really good friends from the Mother's Group (FG7, p 134).

Putnam contrasts bridging social capital (which expands social connection) with bonding social capital (which builds closer connections amongst a closed circle in excluding and exclusive social interaction). The Klu Klux Klan is a form of bonding social capital, whereas a residents group, for example, is more typically a bridging activity, expanding connection and social links. Using Putnam's terminology, children act as *'bridging'* social connectors. While their arrival often

creates 'bonding' social connection (that strengthens familial bonds around an enclosed family unit) they are also sources of bridging social capital, it seems, and from relatively early in infancy.

Once again the interaction between 'artificially' created bridges (for example, developer or local government fostering of mothers groups) and more organic 'habitual' relationship development – through relationships formed between mothers around children's peers and friends at school - appears to be at play. Friendships between children facilitate acquaintance and friendship between mothers. While fathers often benefit from these social connections, they appear to sit on the outer bounds. Figure 2 illustrates the path of connection facilitated by child-child friendships.

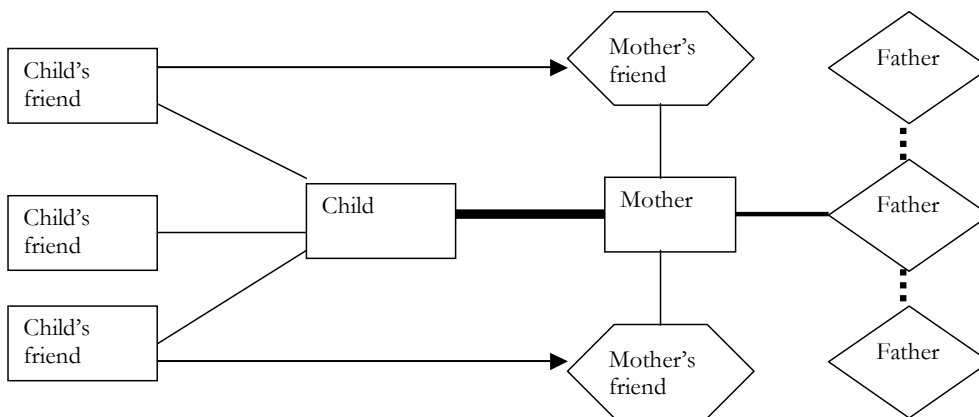
A critical element in the formation of these connections, once again, is time. While the *opportunity* for a social bridge mother-to-mother is created by the child-to-child relationship, *it takes time to realize it*. Without time, the capacity is not clinched. And the same appears to be evident for fathers, whose time is generally in shorter supply.

The role of children as social agents fostering connection was also suggested by its absence in some situations, for example, in the greater isolation that exists for those who do not have these natural bridges in their households: retired and older people, as well as young singles or couples without children. In a number of examples, these residents were rather more socially disconnected or had put in place very deliberate campaigns to make contact and create networks.

Several older residents talked about their dogs as a means to social interaction: walking with a dog created time and opportunity for social exchange and several people formed relationships of at least neighborliness with co-residents around their dogs. Getting out of the house, being visible, having an attractive place to walk, and taking time to use it, combined to create social connection for some, especially older residents.

There are also hazardous moments in these communities, for example when a first baby arrives.

Figure 2 A map of child-based community making



Weak Links and Strong Links

There were some interesting contrasts in community making in the MPC compared to previous housing. For example, a young IT professional woman about to have her first child was attracted

to ML because she felt safe there 'to walk around alone', because it housed people like herself, and because it felt securely bounded. The sense of feeling safely 'enclosed' and 'inside' was important:

*Well, just the fact that you know, we can walk around at night and not have to feel like you're going to be stalked. I don't think there's a high crime rate in this area as well. The areas around Mawson Lakes aren't necessarily renowned for being the best suburbs, whereas once you're inside Mawson Lakes, you've got that enclosed feeling, and just the whole, I suppose it comes back to the whole community thing as well, just that people around you are more likely to be the types of people that would look out for you and your house and that sort of thing. **Whereas you don't get that feeling in Pooraka or?** No, no, because you don't necessarily know, yeah, the types of people that are living next door to you aren't the same types of people as what you are, so you don't necessarily get to know them as well. **Do you think the design also makes it feel safe then, because it's you know, everything's very close together, and small streets?** Could do, but I think also just the whole fact that you know, you've got the big fences around it. It's separated by the train track and you've got the airport on one side, you've got the major roads on the other side, so there's nothing that you know, you're actually separated from those other suburbs.*

However she had only a nodding acquaintance with her neighbors. This contrasted with the much more substantive, mutually supportive friendships she had had in her previous lower socio-economic suburb, amongst a more ethnically and age-diverse population. While her friendships and 'neighboring' were much more superficial in ML, she felt safer when outside her home, though she lacked neighbours she could materially rely upon – the kinds of supports that can be very important on the arrival of a first child.

Infants as social hazards

This young woman was interesting for another reason: her friendships were mostly outside ML (including through her workplace) and she felt she would need to travel for interaction when her baby arrived and she was spending a year at home. Her partner had reduced his working hours from 70 to 40 and cut back on travel as the baby approached, but it was not clear how this young woman (whose extended family were very distant) would find immediate and proximal support when she would no doubt need it.

The issue of the isolation of young mothers was mentioned several times, as was the timeliness of early maternity services. At CS, mothers were very appreciative of efforts to respond to a tragedy and create more support for mothers – but delays seeing a nurse were still long:

They do better now. When we moved in, my oldest was six weeks old and I found things like maternal health [hard]. I had a woman stop me out in the street one day and she said that she was in such a state, she's got a baby in the pram and walked the streets until she bumped into somebody else with a pram because she needed advice from another mother because she was having trouble breastfeeding and her baby was constipated and she had such a bad experience with the health nurse...I mean that's when people do stupid things when they get desperate...That's exactly why the mother's network was set up, someone had actually done something stupid in they drowned their baby [about two years ago]. (FG 5. p409)

Community Makers, Community Takers

Many commented that they knew their neighbors, but the level of interaction with them varied widely from a nodding acknowledgement to sharing meals and caring for each other in the event of an accident or illness.

In these groups of residents, some are 'community makers' while others were 'community takers'. Both communities have seen significant developer-led community creation activities in the form of welcomes, community events and so on. However, in this environment, the personal activity of individuals remained critical to actual community-making (for example, getting to know each other, meeting socially, sharing issues and forms of care). Some individuals set out with planning and purpose to make friends, bring people together and create relationships. Some people did this out of a faith-based commitment while for others it arose out of a circumstance like moving to the suburb after a divorce, or retirement:

*I've made a huge effort because I felt really dislocated. I was married for twenty six years and then [divorced], and moving from a country town to the city was just huge. It was all those problems, emotional problems and not knowing anyone in the supermarket. Those kind of issues were huge to me, really, really distressing. ... So I had to have my network in place. So, to combat that I made the effort to go on the Progress Association Committee and to join things and started going to church. I hadn't done for thirty years and lots of things. I really worked **at it** ... How typical was I? I'd have to say that within the people that I know reasonably typical ... I'd say that Mawson Lakes is a place where your neighbours become your friends and I don't mean that tritely or lightly. It's true. Now I'll just give you an example of that. Last year just after I set up my own business, as a Tai Chi instructor I tripped over my cat, shot through the door and broke my ankle which is just like the worst time you can probably have. But, it was a fantastic story. I was to convalesce at my parent's house but Mum was sick at the same time. So, some of my lovely neighbours brought my bed downstairs next to my office and the church organized food for three weeks and so there I was in my office and I could hobble out with my crutches and open the gate and then neighbours could come and check on me and bring food and all that. Just startling. I invite neighbours to dinner and they invite me to dinner and so we have that lovely networking thing happening (Marie, FG1, p221)*

For many younger people, however, their community lay outside their suburb – in their school and university friendships, and through their workplaces. This was particularly the case for those working full time, either living alone or with another full time worker. These people stated they had little time to develop relationships with neighbours.

Formal and informal social infrastructure

Participants with babies and young children were particularly affected by formal and informal social infrastructures around their homes. Formal infrastructure included mothers groups, play groups, walking groups and, in CS, the mothers' network. These groups provide activity, companionship and support to women who are sometimes geographically isolated from family and old friends.

Informal social infrastructures (net works and friendships) were developed through the activities of young children, particularly through school, sport and children's friendships. As indicated by this mother of three, these social networks and friendships were an entry point into the local community for many women:

*It's only now that I've got Georgia who's younger, I'm actually starting to meet [people]. Mind you we've met people through Jacob's school but when they're all in sport, they live all over the place, it's not in your local walking area, where as Georgia's are all in my walking area, so if I need a baby sitter for an hour to go and get a haircut someone will baby sit, go get a haircut, come back and vice versa. **So you've got that now.** And it's huge, yeah because I didn't have that for five years. **And how old is your youngest again?** Fifteen months. **Fifteen months so you're meeting people after how many years of you being here?** Six. And only because of now I'm in ... like the mother, the baby*

groups, it's very hard when you move here when the kids are a little bit older because the school, once they bit after maybe grade two, [the parents have] already met and sort of developed [friendships]. (CS5, p.158)

Living in a 'friendly' community, where people were 'familiar' to them and they were 'recognised' by others, engendered feelings of 'trust' and 'safety' in the participants of these focus groups. This is conducive to the development of friendships and interfamilial responsibility for children. As one father put it, 'we look after each others kids'.

Physical infrastructure also creates (or blocks) community building

It is clear that the development of social networks and relationships within residential areas has significant positive impacts on individuals, families and communities. These relationships can be facilitated in various ways through mindful planning and provision of physical spaces that encourage informal meeting (such as, parks for children and dogs, playgrounds, school pick up areas that foster social interaction between parents, shops within walking distance of homes, walking paths and other public 'gathering' spaces) and formal social infrastructure that identifies people with similar social needs and brings them together (such as, new parents, singles, teenagers and elderly residents).

While these focus groups indicated that such efforts were being made in ML and CS for women with young children, other groups, such as teens, older people and full time workers, were not well catered for. As a consequence, they and their families, were less able to make efficient use of time and their ability to achieve a good fit between the various domains of their lives and the lives of those who depended on them was diminished. This was illustrated by the experience of one father who found driving his elderly mother around to all her activities and appointments too time consuming in the context of the rest of his life:

[She said] can you drive me here, drive me there. I say, hang on, I cannot do this any more, I have a family. So we all have to share it. (CS6, p. 297)

6. Fitting it all together

This preliminary analysis confirms that the intersections between work, household and community are facilitated by holding all these sectors in view at the same time.

Achieving fit between work, home and community requires a confluence between physical infrastructure and services; formal and informal social infrastructure; working conditions and culture; household arrangements; and individual norms and practices. 'Fit' is influenced by the impact of each sphere on the availability and/or management of time and, in some cases, money. It is also affected by the travel connections between physical spheres.

Amongst focus group participants 19 (28 per cent) of participants spent more than 40 minutes a day commuting to and from work. Twenty-four (35 per cent) of participants spent less than 20 minutes a day commuting to and from work. The majority of participants (74 per cent) used their own car to travel to and from work, with only 4 (6 per cent) using public transport. As discussed above many found commuting, especially sitting in traffic, acutely frustrating.

Others who travelled by public transport described making friends on regular routes (ML).

Physical infrastructure, such as roads, park lands, playgrounds, amenities, retail and business areas, are the foundation on which relationships between different life domains are built - literally and figuratively. Good physical infrastructure facilitates movement between home and other domains of life including work, school and recreation, and it provides opportunity for

social interaction. 'Time' is the price residents pay for inadequate physical infrastructure, as indicated by one woman in CS:

*Well I mean we were looking to move somewhere else. We knew we, we didn't want to live in the eastern suburbs because the traffic over there was going to be far worse and, at that time, on this side it was still reasonably okay. Since then the traffic's got horrendous getting into the city and I think what we saved in time moving closer, it's not really made a difference now because that time is now added to the trip anyhow. **So even though you moved to be closer to the city, the increase in the population around here has increased the traffic congestion which has increased your time?** Yeah. (CS3, p. 117)*

Service availability near home is also of fundamental importance if individuals and families are to achieve 'fit'. Choice and depth of services that cater to the everyday needs of all residents (including teenagers and older people) assists in the task of time management. When asked what services were required near his home, one young man, with no children replied:

I think anything that gives it kind of like a community feel, like your restaurants, and stuff like that, restaurants and parks and stuff like that. Somewhere close by where you can do your shopping, and you don't have to travel far. You know? Service stations are important, I suppose. Everything that has a close proximity. (CS4, p.492)

Working conditions and culture: Fitting life together

Participants were clear about the kinds of work places that facilitated or inhibited a good fit between work, home and community. 'Fit' is facilitated by work places that respect the lives of workers through work place policy and practice. These work places acknowledge the changing needs of workers at different life stages; they provide and promote flexible working arrangements that allow workers to coordinate all the domains of their life; they discourage unreasonable and unsociable working hours and they promote team work in order to ameliorate individual work pressures associated with tasks and time.

'Flexibility', 'good hours' and a 'good boss' were key factors in finding fit between work and other aspects of life but, as this mother of two teenagers describes, flexibility can be a double edged sword and needs to be 'managed' in order to be of greatest value:

***What makes a good boss for you?** The flexibility. Yeah, family friendly. I get to be able to go to the sports day, if I need to have a day off. I'm picking one up from camp tonight at 3.00. So I'm just able to leave and do that, because it's important for all the family. Or able to come in late if you know, if it's the first day of school, and I'm meant to drop them off, or if one of them is sick, I can go duck home and look after them. I don't necessarily have to be in my office to do my work. So I'm able to work from home. **Is that good working from home?** Yeah. It is. I think since I've been able to work from home, I've probably been doing a bit more work from home than what's required. I tend to get into that... now that I can access everything, I'll access it more and more, and yeah, so that's, probably I tend to do the extra hours at home, if I've got some free time, I'll just log on and do my work. **And the family love that do they?** Although they like the idea that I work, and I certainly like the money that I bring in, they do tend to think I haven't quite got that much time. (ML12, p.116)*

Co-location of work and home was enormously beneficial for those participants who had managed to achieve it, and most participants agreed that working near home would help them fit it all together, as one woman who worked at ML said, 'I'd love to be based out here, so I can walk to work, that would be the best thing'. Where co-location was not possible (and this was especially the

case in CS where employment and career opportunities were limited) participants wanted to be able to do tasks, such as banking and post, in the vicinity of their work place.

Household arrangements that affect 'fit'

There was a clear indication in these focus groups that 'fit' between work, home and community was negotiated and managed at the household level as well as the individual level. Although this was particularly evident for families with dependent children, the following exchange indicates that young couples without children had to make decisions about child bearing based on perceived ability to afford the drop in income associated with the birth of a first child:

*I don't plan to have kids too soon. Maybe in 4, 5 years, living off one wage is going to kill us. But hopefully when my fiancé has his own store we can afford to live on just one wage so. **And would you delay children until you thought that it was financially viable?** Yep. (CS3, p.249)*

Many participants spoke about being in a 'partnership' where the obligations of work (and money earning), home and community were distributed between themselves and their spouse. For some the arrangements seemed to facilitate 'fit' for the whole family, as was the case for this father:

For us it's a partnership. She takes the morning shift and I get the night shift. And in between the boys do school so it works reasonably well for us. (CS6, p.570)

For others, an adequate 'fit' for the family was only attained through the long working hours of one parent. For this father of one, a promotion meant that his wife could work part time and spend more time with their son, but there was a cost:

He feel it. I think he feel it more than what I do. I mean I still feel it too because I don't spend as much time as we used to do. I used to finish working nights and ... pick him up from his school and then spend the afternoon with him. Now I come in at night time, I kick the soccer and things like that, or cricket or whatever ... we used to do karate together a few years ago. We stopped doing that. (CS6, p.675)

In other households, 'fit' for the family was the responsibility of the mother and was often associated with costs to career, as was the case for this mother of two toddlers:

I've been at the company for about eight years and used to be in a sort of fairly high level role when I was full time but have taken a couple of steps backwards since I've been part time. (CS5, p.75)

Multiple factors determine how families and households negotiate and make decisions about work, home and community. While many of these relate to structures and practices outside the individual, others lie within the individual.

Individual norms and practices

Individuals hold views and exhibit behaviours that reflect the norms and expectations of the cultures and society within which they live and work. In these focus groups it was evident that individuals normalised work practices that inhibited a good 'fit' between work, home and community. Long hours and unsociable work patterns were normalised through the 'understanding' of partners and peers who were 'used to it', and employers who 'expect it'. A number of participants spoke about reaching a crisis point and implementing a change in their practice, but as this long hours worker suggests, this is not always easy:

I didn't really get much spare time at all for the first 2 years and I realised I had to set my boundary. 8 hours is the norm and if you're outside of that you try to recover those hours if you can. Actually it's a bit of a grind (ML10, p.155)

Changing individual norms and practices to accommodate a good fit between work, home and community cannot be done in isolation. Norms and practices in the work place significantly influence the behaviours of workers, and community and societal attitudes are in a position to condone or reject working practices that impact negatively on individuals, families and communities.

Conclusion

This analysis suggests that great diversity distinguishes the experience and nature of MPCs – both at the overall level of the development, as well as at the levels of the ‘precinct’ and the individual. People come to MPCs for a wide range of reasons - and they decide not to live in them for a similarly wide range of reasons.

Further, the nature of MPCs varies widely. Our analysis leads us to suggest some additional categories for distinguishing different kinds of MPCs, (building on the work of Dowling and McGuirk 2005). These include the depth of the labour market (the mix and volume of employment opportunities), the depth and nature of educational facilities as well as social services and infrastructure, (including those provided by developers, local government and employers), the age of the development, its layers of ‘settler sediment’ and the integration of these successive layers and the household-type mix represented in the development.

Subsequent stages of this study can, we hope, help build a more comprehensive and systematic analysis of life in four MPCs, and – more significantly and usefully perhaps – compare it with the work, home and community fits in other, very different, communities.

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