Suburban Dissent

Defining Neighborhood Space and Place in Perth, Western Australia

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■ **ABSTRACT:** This article discusses a Western Australian community's campaign against the development of a disability justice center in their Perth neighborhood. The history of the location provides context for an examination of the campaign that draws on the mainstream and social media reporting of the protests. Taking a spatial approach to the analysis situates the disability justice center as an unwanted place within the neighborhood space as imagined, created and reproduced by the residents. The center was, in effect, socially produced by the social relations and political economy of the campaign long before it was a built reality. While politics lay at the heart of the protests, the analysis reveals groups that were marginalized by the campaign and excluded from the community. The campaign brought the community together to protest against the inclusion of anomalous others in their neighborhood, but at the expense of the potential occupants of the disability justice center, many of whom are Aboriginal people. I argue that protests can bring people together and reinforce the idea of community, but protests also reveal who is excluded—inadvertently or not—and may compromise the rights of these "others."

■ **KEYWORDS:** campaign, community, disability, human rights, marginalization, place, politics, protest, space

As I drive down the quiet suburban road, on a watery winter morning, I glimpse the small cluster of buildings I pass on my right, hidden as they are among the tall shady eucalyptus trees. There is no signage to indicate the purpose of the buildings, just a fleeting impression of brick walls and four-meter-high fences thinly camouflaged by a landscaped entrance. As quiet and unobtrusive as the site seems, this article reveals it to be both the cause and the outcome of an often-bitter community conflict aimed at preventing the then conservative Western Australian (WA) state government from building two disability justice centers (DJCs) in the neighborhood. A DJC is the WA government's response to recognition that some people charged with a crime may lack the intellectual capacity to comprehend that crime, much less to understand the justice system and criminal trial process. They are considered too vulnerable to be in the prison system, where they currently languish, but legal and medical authorities believe they are unsuitable to be released into the community (DSC 2014b).

The WA government undertook a program of deinstitutionalizing all people with intellectual disability in the 1960s and 1970s (see Cocks et al. 1996). They were first transitioned to hos-

tels and training centers that were effectively small, if somewhat more progressive, institutions. Most people with an intellectual disability in WA are now supported to live in the community with their families or in suburban group homes. There are, however, people who fall through the cracks of diagnosis and the associated support that might prevent them from committing a crime and/or being accused of a crime and being imprisoned. These are the people who are most at risk of finding themselves in the justice system, being classified by the WA government as “mentally impaired accused” (MIA) and designated for confinement in a DJC.

They are subject to a process that epitomizes Michel Foucault’s “techniques of normalization” that emerged out of the development of penal codes in nineteenth-century Western societies in conjunction with the application of psychiatric knowledge to the “abnormal” (1999: 25–26). Foucault (1979) argues that “techniques of normalization” are the product of judicial and medical knowledge, and that a new power of normalization has emerged, often evident in courtrooms, where it calls on legal and medical “experts” to support it. The scope of this issue is demonstrated by research conducted at a youth detention center in WA that found 89 percent of the occupants (aged 11 to 18) had “at least one domain of severe neurodevelopmental impairment” (Bower et al. 2018; see also Passmore et al. 2018). Because of the historical impact of colonial dispossession and ongoing embedded racism, Aboriginal people are overrepresented in the youth and adult criminal justice system and as candidates for residence in the DJC.

The community at the center of the conflict I address in this article is composed of up to six working-class suburbs that fall within or adjacent to the Town of Bassendean (2020) and approximately 10 kilometers from the Perth city center. I aggregate the suburbs as West Guildford. It is suggestive of Benedict Anderson’s “imagined political community” applied to the neighborhood, rather than the nation (1991: 6)—a naturally occurring bond between people residing in the same neighborhood but with the potential to manifest politically in an electorate that reliably votes for the progressive Labor candidate in state elections. In May 1999, a pamphlet distributed by the local state member of parliament and the mayor described it thus: “In purely geographic terms this unique area represents a convergence of soils and a confluence of waters but it also encompasses the coming together of people and ideas . . . We hold a vision for [an Aboriginal and European heritage] centre where we can build a connection with our environment, our history and with each other” (Carter and Brown 1999).

How could an area with such an idyllic evocation be the same location as the neighborhood at the center of the DJC conflict? The first clue is that the description appeared on a pamphlet to promote a protest march against the building of a prerelease women’s prison facility in the neighborhood. This suggests a history of suburban dissent and contested space—when a geographic location becomes a site of conflict over power and resources (Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003b: 18–19). To answer the question and understand its broader implications, I needed an approach with scope: to include the memories of the earlier neighborhood protest and the history of the area, the language of the protests, and to understand what these memories, traditions, and heritage values can reveal about how race, class, gender, and disability are inscribed on the neighborhood. Understanding that memory, language, and history affect how these cultural inscriptions are constructed and maintained or modified, I have adopted a spatial approach to show that protests, while they can bring people together and create a shared sense of community and purpose in their collective claiming of rights, can also reveal who does not belong—either by design or by default—thus compromising the rights of the excluded “others.” This approach is apt, since this conflict arose in response to the government’s planning decisions and there is a history of post-settlement planning and development issues in the area. Setha Low (2016) argues that a spatialized approach to culture allows for an examination of physical spaces and the places within them to show how history is embedded in a location and embodied and main-

tained, re-created, or subverted through social relationships and political economy. I invert this somewhat by examining the history of the neighborhood and its conflicts, and the language of the protests, to show how this is embedded in neighborhood ideas of their space and place and embodied in the social relationships and political economy of the residents.

To begin, I conceptualize the DJC as a locally unwanted place situated within the neighborhood space—as evidenced by the conflict. I follow with an outline of a spatialized approach to culture, and an overview of the history of the area—revealing connections and consequences for the DJC conflict and, then, how it unfolded. My analysis draws on themes common to Mary Douglas's ([1966] 2002) anomalies, Vered Amit's (2012) disjunctures, but most particularly Setha Low's (2011, 2016) social inequities, to understand how the rights claims of the neighborhood protesters impinge on the rights of people who are already marginalized, and seemingly lacking a place of their own. Low (2016) identified social relations, in which I include class and race, political economy, and cultural history, as scaffolding the social production of space in gated communities, and, as I will show, aspects of each of these were evident in West Guildford.

Language and discourse analysis is a key method for achieving these understandings. As such, the research material is garnered from the ephemera of the protests and various television, print, and social media sources that reported on and facilitated public comment on the unfolding conflict via their online forums. They are also the primary source of knowledge and opinion that informs the residents of the affected suburbs. I supplemented these sources with my own reflections as a past resident of the area.

Space and place are often used interchangeably (Ingold 2009), but before continuing, it is helpful to draw the distinction I apply here: the neighborhood can be considered a place within the WA state space, and each home a family place within the community or neighborhood space. Neighborhood space is embodied in the sense that it is literally the home place of residents where they should be able to experience the emotions and feelings of safety, security, and belonging that make their place a family home. This is also true for people with disability, although there will be houses and community places within the neighborhood that are inaccessible, particularly for people with physical impairments. Residents are free to take holidays, visit friends and family, or work in other parts of the city. They may also be immigrants or overseas residents with visas allowing them to study or work in Australia.

Spatializing Culture

Mary Douglas ([1966] 2002) argues that cultures deal with anomalous groups by redefining them, often as dangerous, and seeking to control them and instill order—through the use of ambiguous symbolism, and avoidance. Amit uses disjuncture as, effectively, the opposite of community—a failure to achieve community, either deliberately or inadvertently. She suggests such “disjunctures” can be ambiguous but are useful “for thinking about the desires, possibilities and practices through which people seek to modulate or rework their social relationships” (2012: 42). Amit identifies “time, space, deflection and redefinition” as four areas that are useful for maintaining or enforcing a disjuncture (35). These “themes” of identification and (re)definition, and spatial and temporal control were evident in the disjuncture created by the neighborhood where the DJC is located, as I will show, and they have utility for understanding the community's campaign against it. In effect, a tripartite disjuncture formed between the government, the neighborhood, and the anomalous potential MIA occupants of the DJC.

Amit's (2016) attention to space can be further linked to Low's approach of spatializing culture and its potential to uncover “inequality and social segregation as well as using this knowl-

edge for remediation, especially on behalf of those who are marginalized, oppressed, or injured by exclusionary policies” (2011: 390). Amit’s approach is centered on transnational space and mobility as experienced by different groups of people, including business travelers and tourists, and how this is structurally reproduced or agentively challenged over time. This can disrupt accepted notions of community and lead to disjunctions. Low (2008), however, draws attention to the lack of political rights experienced by many of her informants. Low’s (2016) approach to spatializing culture involves ethnography of a location, as much as the people who inhabit or frequent it, to consider how the location is socially produced and supported physically, politically, and historically, and how this is achieved through social relations, practices and institutions.

Spatial analysis in the field of disability is usually concerned with distribution of illness and disability, and the availability of medical and support services, rather than applied to social issues (see, e.g., Lakhani et al. 2019). Low differentiates physical urban space as socially produced through a combination of “social, economic, ideological, and technological factors,” whereas symbolic space is a social construction experienced by people through their “social exchanges, memories, images and daily use of the material setting” (Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003b: 20). An analysis of conflict and resistance such as that shown by the neighborhood at the center of the DJC campaign shows how such social production and construction proceeds. The elements of both begin to emerge in a précis of the history and social developments that led to the WA government’s decisions regarding the original plan for two DJCs and the final decision to build only one in the neighborhood at the center of this campaign. Just as the dominant political party in Low’s Costa Rica field site sought to convey its progressive ideology by redeveloping Parque Central in San Jose but the local citizens found it “unattractive and unsafe” (2000: 202), so too did the WA state government seek to implement a progressive ideology in West Guildford that the residents imagined to be unattractive and potentially unsafe.

West Guildford is not a gated community. It is a part of the coastal plain on which the city of Perth sprawls from north to south. There is a passenger train line through the neighborhood, but most travel in the area is on the network of roads that cater to public buses and the city’s residents’ love of motor vehicles—especially four-wheel drives or sport utility vehicles.¹ The same principle of seeking to keep unwanted groups of people out, however, seems to apply here as it did in the gated communities where Low (2008) conducted her research. She argues that the language of urban fear encodes social concerns about race, class, and gender—to which I add disability—and reinforces the “visual landscape of fear [and prejudice] created by the walls, gates, and guards” (2003: 403). I have noted elsewhere, however, that containment can be as much about keeping undesirable people out of a space as keeping them in their place (Avery 2020). As such, Low’s study of gated communities, as a way of keeping unwanted people out and the climate of fear and insecurity experienced by the residents, resonates with many aspects of the DJC campaign. We are both approaching the central problem of spatial marginalization but from slightly different angles: Low from research conducted in physical space with its occupants, and I from research conducted on protests aimed at defending physical space. In this sense, the protests are somewhat of a metaphorical gate—the protesters’ attempt to shut the DJC plan down and keep the MIA out of their neighborhood.

The approaches of Amit and Low facilitate a joint examination of neighborhood space that reveals how the DJC conflict simultaneously strengthened community bonds on one hand and created Amit’s disjuncture on the other. Drawing on both, but focusing on Low’s spatialized approach to culture, I show how this neighborhood asserted its political rights to determine how their community space was used, and how this further diminished the rights of an already marginalized group of people. This article also highlights the need to routinely include disability alongside race, class, and gender in any cultural analysis. My discussion of the campaign

and how it unfolded draws attention to a social issue, and the power and structural factors that create and/or maintain that issue, rather than taking a purely objective position (Low and Merry 2010: 208–209; Ortner 2019). As such, my critique of these protests is aimed at highlighting the evident paradox, inequity, and injustice in order to add to the pressure for change and reform.

History

The West Guildford space is produced by atomized suburban houses in their fenced yards situated on ribbons of sealed streets. It is politically produced by stratum of local, state, and federal laws and regulations that have accrued since the colony was first established in 1829. These cartographic grids formed by suburban development suggest a place that has been carved out of uninhabited natural space but that is a particularly white, Western colonial assumption—a selective cultural history. Australia has been Aboriginal land for more than 60,000 years, and the neighborhood at the heart of this study is Whadjuk Nyungar country. It is a location of significant Aboriginal heritage value that is deeply embedded with myth and creation stories (WA 1999: 757 (Kim Hames, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs)); Parker cited in Pryer 2000).² The land was colonized in 1829, and the neighborhood is now composed of less than 3 percent Aboriginal people (ABS 2018).

In February 1835, with seemingly guileless ignorance of more than 60,000 years of existing indigenous law and land use, a meeting of Swan River Colony settlers raised several issues, including the “strict enforcement of the land regulations under which the colony had been formed” (Bourke 1987: 97). The settlers came together to express their grievances about fines that were levied against landowners who had not spent sufficient money developing their land allotments, and the waste of public money on poor infrastructure. Later that year, the plank that served as a bridge across the Swan River at West Guildford was replaced by the colony’s first bridge, but the fines were still applied (98). This meeting was the first recorded instance of West Guildford residents uniting to challenge the government of the day for what they believed was right for their community (61, 324, 329). This is the neighborhood at the heart of the campaign against the DJC.

The 1835 meeting might have been portentous, but it was not until 1998 that the residents of West Guildford united to protest against the conservative Liberal WA government’s plan to build a minimum security prerelease women’s prison in the neighborhood (WA 1998a: 1963 (Peter Foss, Attorney General)). Three hundred people attended a protest rally against the prison plan, and the local council conducted a survey that indicated 95 percent of residents were against the proposal—notably, because of the proposed site’s Aboriginal heritage value (Town of Bassendean 1998). At that time, there was a small Nyungar Aboriginal community adjacent to the proposed prison site, and Aboriginal people were among the first to object to the women’s prison proposal.³ They argued the area had significance to Aboriginal people because “it was used by the Dreamtime serpent, the *Wagyl*,” and it is a registered Aboriginal heritage site (Lampathakis 1998). The Aboriginal significance was later confirmed to the satisfaction of parliament (WA 1999). A subsequent ethnographic report concluded that if the prison went ahead, it was “anticipated to cause spiritual harm to a significant number of indigenous people, to their ancestors, to the land, and to their successors” (Pryer 2000). The acknowledgment of the heritage significance of the site encouraged the campaigners and another round of community protests was organized, including the presentation to parliament of a petition registering opposition to the prison plan (WA 1998b: 5618 (Clive Brown)). Despite the protests and dissent from its own Western Australian Planning Commission (1999), the government pressed on with its

plans arguing that it was intolerable that prerelease “minimum-security offenders still have to share accommodation with maximum-security prisoners” (Foss 2000).

The most performative aspect of this campaign occurred when protesters, dressed as convicts carrying balls and chains, took to the wealthier and relatively safe conservative inner-city electorate of Mount Lawley (Callaghan 2000: 4; Dohotaru 2013). It was an eye-catching protest that drew on the convict history of the original Swan River Colony and invoked the class system of the original British colonizers. This strategy was aimed at demonstrating conservative WA government disdain for the working-class West Guildford residents by drawing attention to a relatively safe conservative electorate where affluence could buy social distance (Amit 2012: 42) and protesters believed a prison would never be built.

Despite the protests, the prison plan was defeated only when a local member of state parliament delivered a health and safety coup de grâce by revealing the site was contaminated with asbestos (WA 2000: 6481–6482 (Clive Brown)). Meanwhile, it was revealed in Federal Parliament that an application had been lodged for protection of the site under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984 (CoA 2000).⁴ Despite the seemingly “progressive” motivation of the “conservative” government, the prison plan was finally withdrawn when the supposedly “progressive” WA Labor government was elected in May 2000. The last tenant—notably a group who began as volunteers providing technological assistance to people with a disability—vacated the buildings in 2008, after which the site was cleared (TADWA 2020), thus ending the fight to keep the prerelease women’s prison out of the neighborhood.⁵

The campaign against the prison plan was likely the result of a combination of factors, including neighborhood opinion that they were accommodating enough of the “criminal” element with a high-security women’s prison and a youth detention center already situated in adjacent neighborhoods.⁶ Politics also had a role, as the working-class neighborhood challenged the conservative Liberal government for the space that both might claim as their own, either through the proximity of residents or government ownership of the land. It could be said that in uniting to campaign against the prison facility the community won this neighborhood conflict, and we might expect the government to learn a lesson about imposing land uses on neighborhood space without community consultation. Several years later, however, a new conservative government announced its intention to build two DJCs in the neighborhood. Several neighborhood action groups that had formed to protest the prison plan were still active and members continued to meet socially, so the skills and networks developed in the first campaign were poised for a new conflict, and enhanced by the advent of online news and social media platforms that facilitate comments and ease of information sharing.

Disability Justice Center

Many of the potential occupants of the DJC were first detained in the youth justice system, and without improved efforts to diagnose these conditions and provide the appropriate support, they seem destined to be transferred to adult prisons. When the competence of the accused to stand trial is in question, psychiatrists are called on to determine whether the person is unable to plead due to intellectual disability. This can, however, be overruled by legal professionals on the basis that the accused is dangerous and a threat to the community. Such an approach ignores the assumption of innocence until proven guilty that is the basis of the legal system. One consequence of this is that people are often imprisoned without trial for longer periods of time than if they had pleaded guilty and been sentenced accordingly (Gooding and O’Mahony 2016; see also Dhanda 2000). Moreover, this contravenes the United Nation’s Convention on the Rights

of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) that states people with disability must be treated equally before the law, and not discriminated based on disability. People with disability should have the same access to justice as others in the community, and at all stages of the judicial process. They cannot be “deprived of their liberty unlawfully or arbitrarily, and that any deprivation of liberty is in conformity with the law, and that the existence of a disability shall in no case justify a deprivation of liberty” (UN DESA 2006).

In partial acknowledgment of the injustice of imprisoning people without trial for an indefinite amount of time, the conservative WA government’s seemingly progressive response was to transfer MIA people to two DJCs—institutions where the individual is “not exactly ill and who is not strictly speaking criminal,” but where they will be subject to remediation to cure or reform them—to make them somewhat more “docile” (Foucault 1999: 34). The government’s initial plan was to build a DJC in each of two semirural outer Perth suburbs. Both these suburbs were in electorates held by incumbents with very small majorities, and for this reason the government was accused of altering its plans as soon as these communities began to protest (Morton 2012; Perth Now 2012). Shortly afterward, the minister responsible announced new plans to build the two DJCs in the neighborhood of West Guildford (Morton 2013)—a distinctly safe working-class electorate—where it might be said the government had nothing to lose politically (ABC News 2013a; Banks and Trigger 2013; Murray 2013). Thus began a new campaign against the government to prevent them from building two DJCs in West Guildford.

In the campaign against the prerelease women’s prison, the government argued that minimum security prisoners should not be confined with maximum-security offenders. Parallels of this argument could be detected when the minister responsible for the DJCs asserted that MIA people “need to be community-based and not based in a prison site” (Price 2013), but community members insisted the DJCs would be better situated near a prison. In the women’s prison campaign, the protesters had argued against the government’s plan because there were already two prisons in relatively close proximity to their neighborhood, but, somewhat paradoxically, they now argued that the DJCs should be placed next to existing prisons. Throughout the DJC campaign, the community and its political allies were careful to point out that they were protesting not the disability aspect but the danger to themselves and their children that might be posed by the DJC occupants if they were not properly contained (ESR 2013b; WA 2014).⁷ This argument is supported by the neighborhood’s history of accommodating people with disability, including a training hostel built in the 1960s to assist with the transition from institutionalization and a group home complex that was later demolished to make way for the DJC. There are discrete supported accommodation houses within the neighborhood, and people with disability who live independently in their own homes.

Media reports of disability advocates calling for the community to have compassion for the MIA and understanding for their situation were largely ignored (Martin 2013; UCASWA 2013). On a Facebook page calling to “Stop the Placing of Disability Justice Centre’s [*sic*] Near Homes and Schools,” the few comments from people who defended the need for the DJCs were rebutted by others who were quick to point out that those in favor did not live in immediate proximity to the proposed sites. In an online response to a media article about the campaign, one resident tried to impose some balance by suggesting “as a community that had several weapons and drug raids by police in a single week, I would think there are bigger threats to our children than 10 disabled people under the supervision of carers being housed in a secure complex” (Court cited in MKR 2013).

Defenders of the DJCs cited the case of a young man with an intellectual disability who was charged with sex offences but declared unfit to face the charges in court. He spent 10 years in prison, even after his supposed victims had declared that no offence had ever occurred (see

AHRC 2013; McGlade 2020). The campaigners countered this by citing the case of another man diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome who is serving a life sentence after pleading guilty to the murder of a girl in a shopping mall (Emerson 2013; Kappelle and Hayward 2007). These cases and the media reporting of them aroused more fear in the community and the campaign discourse of the government and the protesters began to reflect that fear (see Low 2003). The government proposed a litany of security measures to contain and surveil the occupants of the DJCs. The earlier emphasis on the benefits of community inclusion and access for the occupants of the DJCs gave way to communicating the small number of occupants expected to be housed there and the strict security measures that would be used to contain them (DSC 2014a). These included CCTV, motion sensors, and professional staff to remediate the occupants. This was meant to reassure the protesters, but it reinforced their perception that MIA people posed a threat to the community. The government's change in emphasis appeared to be politically expedient in the face of local hostility to the DJCs and the publicity generated by the campaign, but rather than alleviate the neighborhood's safety concerns, they were reinforced.

In trying to improve the situation of a marginalized group, the government was effectively supporting the community's perception of MIA people as dangerous others. The campaigners drew on these concerns and emphasized the proximity of the proposed DJCs to neighborhood schools by using children in the campaign and holding protests at schools (ABC News 2013b). A large and vocal protest at the local high school received wide media coverage, with children holding signs such as "KIDS BEFORE CRIMS." A reader of one local newspaper commented online: "What a shameful Government to put criminals before children and education" (ESR 2013a). Schools became almost sacralized places within the neighborhood to be protected from the DJC—both as places that should not be destroyed to make way for the DJC buildings, and as children's places that needed to be protected from potential DJC occupants. Theoretically, the government and the neighborhood were in conflict with each other, but what is particularly important here is that the government had effectively reinforced the community's perception of the MIA as dangerous "others." The protesters then used this to their advantage by emphasizing that local children would be particularly vulnerable to this risk. In practice, the two sides of the campaign were facilitating the further marginalization of MIA people.

The protesters were unified and highly organized in arranging radio, television, and newspaper coverage, particularly in local community newspapers that also have an online presence allowing residents to post comments. There were regular community meetings, rallies, mailbox drops, a four-thousand-signature petition to parliament (ABC News 2013b), and Facebook groups. A variety of banners were used to visually convey messages throughout the campaign. One in particular, "LOCKRIDGE IS NOT A DUMPING GROUND BARNETT," refers to one of the suburbs in the neighborhood and then WA Premier Colin Barnett. This banner was used repeatedly throughout the campaign to deliver a political message, and the "dumping" metaphor was repeated in all mediums throughout the campaign. This discourse positions the potential DJC occupants as "trash" or "garbage" who "pollute" and "contaminate" the neighborhood. After long delays, the government finally announced a new plan to build just one DJC suitable for 10 occupants on a site where hostel-type accommodation for people with a disability had once stood, and adjacent to where they had proposed to build the women's prison facility over a decade earlier. They also convened meetings of a local Community Liaison Group to belatedly address criticism about the lack of community consultation. This gave the community some relief, but the campaign continued against the remaining center until it finally opened in July 2015.

Seemingly resolved, the conflict settled down until 2 January 2016, when it was reported that two of the three occupants of the DJC had escaped with the intention of spending New

Year's Eve with their families (Hampton and Wynne 2016). Both occupants were returned to the DJC the following day, but it reignited the protests. Notably, the renewed campaign did not center on neighborhood safety and security as might be expected after a "breakout," but focused instead on the economic cost of the DJC once it was revealed there were only three occupants (Wearne 2016). Several reviews of the DJC were commissioned by successive governments and security measures further increased but the DJC is now a discrete place in the neighborhood, as described in the opening paragraph. There is even a new residential subdivision development several hundred meters farther down the road from the DJC. Despite the determination of the protesters, and the strength of their campaign, there are clearly people who do not mind sharing the neighborhood space with a DJC, but this may also be an economic compromise. It has become increasingly difficult for people to fulfill the "great Australian dream" of owning their own home, and this neighborhood is relatively affordable, so it is possible that new residents have overlooked the DJC in order to enter the housing market. It is also difficult to sustain the neighborhood outrage over time given the emotive and embodied nature of the campaign and now that the DJC is a *fait accompli* (Juris 2012: 267–270).

Disjuncture

The initial aim of the WA government, to facilitate remediation of MIA people—to support them to return to their communities—was abandoned early in the campaign against the DJCs. The occupants effectively exchanged one prison for another and, although they may be safer in the DJC from the predations of more able prisoners in the adult justice system, there seems to be little prospect of rehabilitation and reintegration back into their communities. Without the reintegration support promised in the original DJC plan, the occupants will continue to be denied justice and locked away as if they are a contaminant. They will be confined behind multiple barriers, subject to motion sensors and CCTV surveillance by staff who are focused more on security than supporting the MIA. This will likely have negative consequences for their physical and mental health. The behavioral issues associated with ill health can then be used to justify their ongoing containment and surveillance in the justice system (Avery 2020). The idea of the DJC occupants as contagion or pollutants—people who are effectively "matter out of place" (Douglas [1966] 2002: 44)—who do not belong and are not wanted in the neighborhood space was reinforced by the polluting discourse of the campaign. This may be in part because people who break the law, and people with intellectual disability, represent anomalous contradictions to our classifications of what it means to be rational humans. This goes some way to explaining why the government redefined potential occupants of the DJC from accused criminals to MIA. The protesters also did this by consistently redefining MIA people as dangerous criminals who need to be controlled in order to maintain order, in Douglas's ([1966] 2002) sense. The assumed innocent were redefined as guilty, community access was redefined as a security risk, and the DJCs were redefined as prisons. On the other hand, disregarding assumptions of innocence and redefining accused people with a cognitive impairment as criminals seems to support their separation from the community. This creates a disjuncture between the community and the MIA—positioning the latter as dangerous and in need of containment, control, and remediation in a place that is avoidable and not part of the neighborhood.

Amit (2012) identified deflection as a method of modifying social relationships and maintaining or achieving disjuncture, which is in opposition to community, and it was evident in these campaigns. In the campaign against the prison plan, the residents proposed numerous alternative uses for the site, including as an eco-center, a cultural center, or an Aboriginal heri-

tage reconciliation center—none of which has eventuated. This in itself is a sort of deflection and redefinition of potential land use—a spatial tactic aimed at creating the illusion of other progressive ideological goals (Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003b: 34). During the second campaign, the residents used deflection as a means of shifting the focus to other aspects of the campaign; the needs of the MIA were deflected toward the potential danger they posed to the community. Intellectual disability was deflected toward criminality, presumed innocence toward assumed guilt, and security measures were deflected by news of escapes from the DJC and other detention centers. Finally, when the argument against the DJC seemed lost, and construction had begun, the need for the DJC was deflected toward the economic cost of building and operating it. Amit's (2012) framework for "disjunction," reveals how West Guildford's suburban dissent was harnessed by the community in a campaign to instrumentally exclude a group of people.

Social Inequity

If we conceptualize a gated community as being a safe place within a perceived frightening outer space, then the inverse can be applied to West Guildford, whereby the residents wanted to keep their neighborhood space relatively safe by excluding the seemingly fearful DJC place and the MIA occupants and, when this failed, by keeping the MIA behind guarded walls and gates—contrary to the original goal of community reintegration. Following Low's (2016) argument that social relations, political economy, and cultural history contribute to the social production of space in gated communities, this discussion now focuses on how these aspects were evident in the West Guildford campaigns.

The neighborhood space is produced in the social relations found in such formal and informal groups as school parents' and citizens' associations and the parking lot discussions of parents, and at least four campaign action groups. All these groups and the residents who support or resist them contribute to the production of West Guildford neighborhood space. It is a geographic location, but it is also an imagined community (Anderson 1991) constructed from their memories, the language they use to talk about it—including the ubiquitous dumping metaphor—and their campaign behavior and social interactions. When they talk about not wanting a DJC "dumped" in their neighborhood, they are constructing a particularly "sanitary" version of their spatial and social relations.

Class is also embedded in the production of the neighborhood space that the campaigns highlighted. A key argument in both campaigns was that a prison or detention center would not be built in a more affluent neighborhood. Indeed, the fiscal argument about land values and getting value for taxpayers' money is the likely reason for such governmental decisions. This contributes to the economic construction of space in which certain people's space is more or less valuable than others," but affluence is relative. The political economy argument applies equally to the protesters who might have been motivated as much by maintaining the value of their property as by fear of the DJC occupants, who were undoubtedly less affluent. The protesters contributed to a disjuncture between themselves, the government, and the DJC and its potential occupants, but it could equally be argued that West Guildford residents were trying to limit a disjuncture produced by economic and class divisions between their neighborhood and others in the city.

A recurring thread throughout this analysis has been indigeneity. Aboriginal people were not directly targeted in the campaigns, but it was inferred in cases cited in the media and pictures that were shared on social media. Aboriginal people have been marginalized in WA since the first European settlement was established in 1826.⁸ This continues through the dispossession of

their land and the ongoing political, economic, and social dislocation, and social and institutional racism that, for many Aboriginal people, manifests in their overrepresentation in the justice system and as potential occupants of the DJC. Aboriginal people make up only 3.1 percent of the population (ABS 2019a) but a staggering 39 percent of the adult prison population in WA (ABS 2020b; see also McGlade 2020). As reflected by Carol Bower and colleagues, (2018), they are also almost twice as likely to have a disability, including severe and profound disabilities, than non-Aboriginal Australians (ABS 2020; see also AIH 2020). Although unspoken, race was undeniably an important aspect of the DJC campaign.

Given the embodied nature of disability and the related issues of accessible and inclusive space, a spatial approach seems particularly apt for uncovering the limits of that space and how these limits are reproduced. The campaign against the DJC is the stuff of memories now, recalled periodically with assistance from the media (see, e.g., Butterly 2018; Genovese 2019). The MIA are a politically and socially produced category of people designated for containment under strict security in what amounts to a gated compound or micro-institution. Perhaps the biggest difference between the occupants of the DJC and the residents of the gated communities described by Low is choice and agency. The residents of Low's communities chose to live in gated compounds where they feel relatively safe, despite the porous boundaries (2008: 401), and they are free to move elsewhere, to a different space, if their outlook and circumstances change. The current occupants of the DJC are not receiving the benefits of community inclusion that might see them reintegrated back into society. Their agency is curtailed by disability: their opportunity to receive the support for their disability—seemingly lacking, and perhaps leading to criminal activity. Their agency was further hindered by the campaign against the DJC: by the community who protested for their right to choose who belongs in their neighborhood, and the government who sought to change the circumstances of the containment of MIA people without due consideration for their human rights. Their agency is further diminished because they are unable to use that most basic of democratic rights—a vote—because they cannot understand this right, they have not been supported to enroll to vote, or they have been imprisoned for more than one year.⁹ Their only tactics of spatial dissent are to exhibit “challenging behavior,” or to escape, which ultimately serves the purposes of the campaign against the DJC by reinforcing the perceived threat the MIA pose to the neighborhood. It is possible that their goals are not mutually exclusive if a future government review shows the center has failed and it is closed, although it is notable that the scope of neither of the existing reviews included human rights violations of the MIA. This analysis shows that a spatial approach is relevant for disability—given the difficulties experienced by people with disability in accessing public and private space, and their limited agency in campaigning for their human rights in ableist societies.

In the Margins

Conflicts over space have the capacity to unite communities in joint action, as they did in West Guildford, but there is inevitably someone, some group, something that is excluded in the process, intentionally or otherwise. I opened this article with the idyllic evocation of the neighborhood as published in a pamphlet issued jointly by the local mayor and member of parliament to promote a protest against the prerelease women's prison facility. Their proposal to replace the plan for a prison facility with an Aboriginal and European heritage center (and the various other apparently more socially acceptable centers proposed) was supported by protesters, but it has been marginalized—an idyll that may come to fruition one day, but in the meantime it is used as a spatial tactic called upon to keep unwanted groups out of the space, and then returned to

the [212] margins of residential life until it needs to be retrieved for another conflict. Marginalization has emerged as a theme throughout this discussion.

One of the most compelling issues in the DJC campaign is that neither the government nor the neighborhood protesters questioned the assumption that “anomalous” MIA people need to be contained, controlled, and avoided (Avery 2020; Douglas [1966] 2002). The concept of the DJC contravenes the UN’s CRPD to which Australia is a signatory. Human rights would have provided excellent grounds to object to the DJC in any guise or neighborhood. The absence of this argument from the campaign suggests that the government and the protesters both agreed on the necessity of containing the MIA and reflects assumptions and practices evident in the broader Australian context, and indeed, potentially universally.

It seems there was more at stake in the campaign than just avoiding the construction of a DJC, namely, defining and limiting the perceived social contaminants who have access to neighborhood space. The tactics used in these campaigns were successful in the case of the prison proposal and partially successful in relation to the DJC plan, but they came at the cost of marginalizing other societal groups—which was a consequence of the campaign, and in fact, the state’s tactics of going along with presenting the MIA as dangerous unintentionally aligned with this logic. It is undoubtedly a complex matter, but early diagnosis, intervention, treatment, and support would help to prevent this number increasing. Work is also being done to develop a model of support for accused people with cognitive impairment to face trial (see, e.g., Andrews et al. 2016; Gooding et al. 2017), and there are calls for this support to be more culturally appropriate for Aboriginal people (see, e.g., McGlade 2020). Under the original government plan for two DJCs, up to half of these 40 people would now be based in a DJC and perhaps receiving the support they need to be reintegrated back into their communities—an improvement of sorts, but still in contravention of their human rights.

In addition to the prerelease women prisoners and the MIA, the government’s political reform agenda to address the matter of people being held in custody without trial was marginalized. The residents of the neighborhood evidently felt politically marginalized, but the real marginalization continued to take place in the wake of the campaigns. The overwhelmingly disproportionate representation of Aboriginal people in the WA justice system’s general prison population, and as potential DJC occupants, indicates that the MIA are marginalized on the basis of race and disability. The campaigners against the DJC denied that they were concerned about people with a disability and stressed that their conflict was with the government who planned to build a facility in the neighborhood to contain potentially dangerous people. This might have been the intention, but the fact that they were campaigning against a *disability* justice center, the repeated use of the dumping metaphor for signage, at rallies and in the media, and the discourse of fear that pervaded the whole campaign meant that all people with disability were potentially enmeshed as fearsome “trash.” The right to protest should be considered in relation to the rights of all people implicated in the conflict but especially those who have limited opportunity for their own protests.

Low (2016) advocates for a spatialized approach to understanding culture for locating social inequity, justice, and human rights. In this article, it has been helpful to understand how the strata of political systems can simultaneously seem to want to protect the rights of some groups but do so in such a calamitous way that those rights are further compromised. By conceptualizing the neighborhood as a suburban space and the DJC as an unwanted place within it, we see how physical segregation is achieved and maintained through a conflict that contributed to the production and construction of both. This was achieved by drawing on history and heritage, the emotion of fear, and the discourse that shaped it all.

Conclusion

I have presented a discussion about the suburban dissent that unified the neighborhood of West Guildford in response to the state government's decision to build two DJCs in the area. It was apparent that the residents' objections were based less on the built structures and more on the anomalous potential MIA occupants of the DJCs and the perceived danger they posed to the residents and their children. The protesters' campaign against the DJCs drew on themes of identification and redefinition, and spatial and temporal control to create a disjuncture between the government, the community, and the MIA. The DJCs were, in effect, socially produced by the social relations and political economy of the campaign long before they were a built reality. The DJC that was finally built represents something of a compromise between the community and the government—the disjuncture perhaps now better understood as a *détente*. The neighborhood space now contains a DJC place that is a product of the cultural histories, political economics, and social relations of the residents. This spatial approach to the protests situates them in their own unique local context but also helps us see more broadly that places exist in minds as much as on maps, that people do not have to be present in a space to be marginalized by conflict, and that being present in a space does not necessarily confer belonging.

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NOTES

1. The latest available census data indicates that, as of 2016, about 80 percent of residents who travel to work regularly use a motor vehicle (ABS 2018).
2. See also the work of Aboriginal elder Len Collard (2007) and early ethnographer Daisy Bates (1859–1951) Papers, Rare Books & Special Collections, University of Adelaide, <https://www.adelaide.edu.au/library/special/mss/bates>.
3. Nyungar is also spelled Nyoongar. I have used Collard's (2007) spelling here.
4. Under the Australian Constitution, the states that make up the federation are each responsible for establishing and maintaining law and order in their jurisdiction, but the federal government may become involved in matters that overlap with their national responsibilities for matters such as immigration and heritage, for example.
5. A second women's prison—the Melaleuca Remand and Reintegration Facility—was finally built and opened in 2016 (CS 2019).
6. The WA government closed the youth detention center in 2013 due to budgetary considerations.
7. This issue continues to fester in the community (see Genovese 2019).
8. The town of Albany was the first European settlement established in 1826, followed by the Swan River Colony in 1829.
9. Prisoners may vote in Australian federal elections if they are serving a term of less than three years, but in WA state elections, they may vote if serving a sentence of less than one year. There are provisions for people with physical disability to vote but not people with intellectual disability (see WAEC 2020).

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