

THE PROPOSAL ECONOMY
NEOLIBERAL CITIZENSHIP
IN "ONTARIO'S
MOST HISTORIC TOWN"

Pamela Stern
and
Peter V. Hall



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Introduction

This book is about citizenship and the ways in which the understanding of “good citizenship” has changed in many Western democratic nations during the last several decades of economic globalization. More specifically, it examines how people in the northeastern Ontario town of Cobalt enact their citizenship. We focus on one set of activities – development proposal writing – that has become extremely important in the daily lives of many Cobalters. It is our contention that the proposal economy we document here is integral to contemporary neoliberalism. Indeed, Cobalters are not alone in having become enmeshed in writing proposals. It seems that everywhere we turn these days, we see invitations, or rather exhortations, to ordinary citizens to apply for grant money to improve their communities. Advertisements on bus shelters in Surrey, British Columbia, invite applications for community beautification grants. In Vancouver, citizens may apply for neighbourhood grants from the Greenest City Fund, and Berkeley, California, has a Civic Arts Grant Program. In the United Kingdom, Manchester City Council offers cash grants to community groups to “take on the projects that can make a real difference to their lives and neighbourhoods” (Manchester City Council 2013).

As academics, we have long experience competing for research grants, but we are not certain when grant-based competitions became naturalized as part of civic engagement and good citizenship. However, while we were

doing research on economic development practices in Cobalt, we recognized that grant proposal writing and talk about grant funding were important to the ways in which many Cobalters understood and experienced their citizenship. Development grants are also important to maintaining Cobalt's quality of life in the current neoliberal era. Thus, we explore the complex ways in which proposal writing by municipalities and ordinary citizens in search of funding for economic development is implicated in the lives of Cobalters, Canadians, and citizens of other post-industrial democracies.

We identify a relatively new cultural formation – the “proposal economy” – which encompasses the diverse activities and dispositions that are associated with proposal writing and winning (or not winning) a development grant. Although such grants are grounded in financial realities, we chose “proposal economy,” which echoes historian E.P. Thompson's “moral economy,” to identify the social obligations and expectations embedded in taken-for-granted economic relationships. We wish to signal that proposal making hinges “on the simultaneous action of ‘economic’ (material interest, rational allocation of resources) and ‘noneconomic’ (moral, emotional, ‘social’) forces” (Narotzky 2007, 406). The mundane details of defining, specifying, and proposing a development project are just one small aspect of a proposal economy that includes both small grants to individuals and neighbourhoods and large grants to municipalities and non-profit organizations. This book tells the story of how proposal making also makes citizens in the current era.

Proposal making has been an overlooked facet of neoliberalism, though we suspect that it will remain after neoliberalism's demise. Beginning in the 1980s, the Keynesian economic theories that informed the governing policies of the West following the Great Depression, and especially since the Second World War, gradually gave way to a different set of economic theories and style of government known as neoliberalism. There is no single or monolithic neoliberalism (Ong 2006; Kingfisher and Maskovsky 2008; Peck 2010). Commonly associated with Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, neoliberal forms of governance came to Canada slightly after they appeared in the United States and Britain (as did Keynesianism), and were adapted and shaped by national and provincial particularities. Keynesianism and neoliberalism differ sharply in their effects on the ways that individuals experience their rights and obligations as citizens and on the ways that individuals and communities engage with the state. This book critiques neoliberalism, which is not the same as criticizing it. In other words, we seek to

explore some of the ways in which neoliberalism works as a form of governance, uncovering its taken-for-granted aspects that empower citizens to act and feel in particular ways. Nonetheless, as citizens, we find much that is objectionable about neoliberal forms of governance. Keynesianism, however, was also a flawed system, which did not serve all people and places equally well.

Under Keynesianism in Canada, cities and towns were merely the deliverers of services, and material supports were provided to all as rights of a citizenship that was vested in the nation. Neoliberalism has displaced neither the nation-state nor national citizenship, but due to its influence, many municipalities have taken on new functions, sometimes reluctantly, but often willingly. One result is that, for many people, local citizenship has emerged as a new site of attachment and obligation.

Under neoliberalism, many public services that were previously provided by the state are now handled by non-governmental agencies and the private sector. This change in the allocation and provision of services is often characterized as a shift from government to governance. In this context, “government” indicates that the state plays a leading role in distributing resources and directly regulating the behaviour of citizens and others to ensure the provision of services. In contrast, “governance” implies that the state is now one of several actors, working indirectly to influence and coordinate the actions of others who are expected to take responsibility for the allocation decisions that determine the delivery of services (see Jessop 1998; Stoker 1998). In Canada, the role of municipal government in the transition from government to governance shifted from one of relative passivity (following the directions of higher levels of government) to one that is relatively active, involving greater opportunities to shape outcomes but also taking on greater risk.

Many public resources are now allocated on the basis of grant competitions that work as a technology of governance; individual communities have been made responsible for producing the conditions necessary for their own economic growth, and individuals have been made responsible for developing the competencies that are seen as key to their economic security. The concept of a technology of governance derives from ideas proposed by French social theorist Michel Foucault. In a number of books and essays, Foucault (1978, 1991) showed how individuals in modern societies are disciplined to enact behaviours that serve unrecognized interests. These self-governing individuals generally regard themselves as agents

who freely choose the best practices, rather than as ideological prisoners who are constrained by social conventions and structures to act in particular ways.

In Canada today, as in other modern democratic societies, development grant proposals are a primary way that municipalities, school boards, and non-profit organizations demonstrate their capacity to be self-governing. Although only some proposals win funding, nearly all organizations and agencies that provide public services must undertake proposal writing to finance their projects and programs. Proposal making is not without consequences. To write a proposal is to imagine the future, but not just any future. It must be more compelling than the futures envisioned in the proposals of competing agencies, arts organizations, municipalities, or school districts. This book traces how the change in the mode of governing has reshaped the ways that one group of ordinary Canadians (Mackey 1999; Brodie 2002a) understands and enacts its citizenship.

The book is also an ethnography of a small town in Canada – Cobalt, a former silver-mining site located a six-hour drive north of Toronto. By “ethnography,” we mean that we have attempted to uncover and describe the everyday practices that scaffold and express shared structures of feeling, cognition, moral responsibility, and action among Cobalters. Because our interest is in citizen engagement, we have paid special attention to Cobalters’ activities and attitudes related to governance, economic development, and proposal making. The residents of Cobalt, who currently number about eleven hundred, have never been a homogeneous lot. They hold diverse opinions and they vigorously debate issues. Nonetheless, by virtue of their daily interactions and many common experiences, they have developed a number of shared understandings, feelings, and ways of acting. This book reports some of the everyday practices and taken-for-granted understandings (as well as the points of difference) that we uncovered during repeated extended fieldwork visits between 2005 and 2008.

Why Cobalt?

We first met Cobalters and began to learn about their town during the spring of 2004. We had recently joined the faculty at the University of Waterloo; Pamela Stern taught in the Department of Anthropology, and Peter Hall taught geography and directed the university’s local economic development master’s degree program. One day, Hall received a phone call from Ambrose Raftis, a member of the Canadian Community Economic Development Network (CCEDNet), who lived near Cobalt. Raftis led an

organization, the Deepwater Regional Development Corporation, which hoped to get a grant to build an arts and innovation centre in Cobalt and was looking for the kinds of support, advice, and training opportunities that social scientists often provide. Deepwater's project piqued our curiosity, so we attended its annual general meeting during the Easter weekend and met its members. Afterward, we decided to prepare a research proposal for the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada to study how non-governmental development agencies recruit citizens to pursue their goals. We planned to focus on the Temiskaming region of northeastern Ontario, which included the town of Cobalt; Deepwater's plan for an arts and innovation centre would be a key aspect of our research.

Our academic study was funded and we initiated research in the spring of 2005. Deepwater also received a grant – to conduct a feasibility study for its proposed development project – but for a variety of reasons, it had difficulty maintaining its focus and eventually abandoned the project. We collected information about development agencies and projects throughout the Temiskaming region. Many of the projects, however, were connected to people and/or organizations that were based in Cobalt, and as it turned out, most of them were somehow linked to the municipal government for reasons that we describe in this book. As we gathered data about locally focused and region-wide development projects and schemes, we began to learn a great deal about Cobalters and the ways in which they understood and engaged in multiple development activities. The more we learned about current and past economic development activities in Cobalt, the more they seemed to form a set of coherent practices that could best be understood through the lens of citizenship.

Cobalt is a particular place with a particular history, but it is not exceptional or cut off from the ideas, policies, and practices that inform and structure life of small towns in northern Ontario, Canada, and North America. Cobalters are enmeshed in multiple regional, national, and global networks. Since the 1970s, most Western countries have participated in the broad economic, social, and political changes that are associated with globalization. Over the last several years, our visits to other towns and cities have revealed that they share many of the situations, attitudes, and practices of Cobalt. We could have chosen to study another place, though we would probably have reached similar conclusions. It is our contention that the analysis of Cobalters' experiences and enactments of citizenship can also be extended to understand how citizenship is being configured and reconfigured in many places.

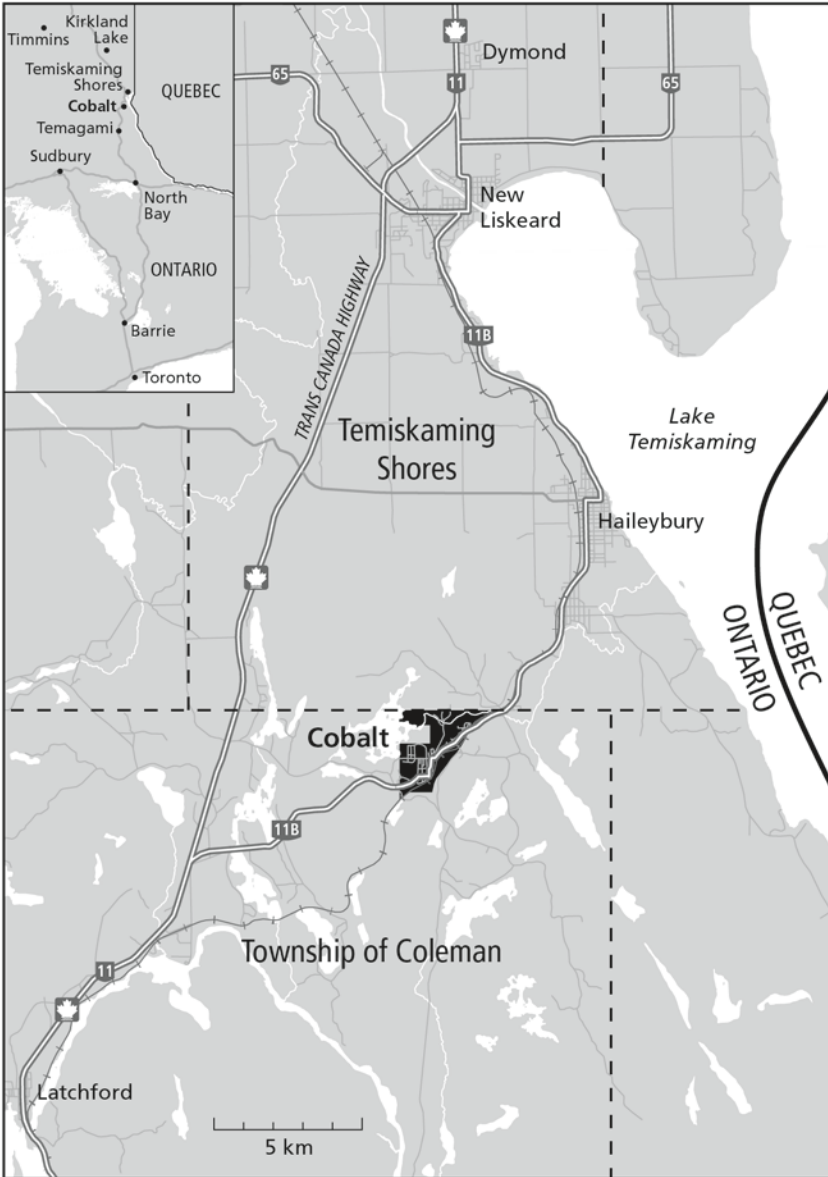


FIGURE 1 Cobalt and the Temiskaming Region

Research Methodology

This book is an ethnography. That is, we have sought to interpret a bit of the world through a close examination of the everyday and ordinary experiences, practices, and discourses of a group of people. Between 2005 and 2008, we conducted field research in Cobalt as a series of long (up to three months) and short (four to five days) visits, with the bulk of data collection occurring during 2005 and 2006. Data came from formal interviews but also from innumerable informal conversations with Cobalters and others in shops, restaurants, and taverns, on street corners and in private homes. We also watched parades and fireworks, and we attended festivals, sittings of Cobalt Town Council and other public meetings, concerts, and performances with Cobalters. We paid numerous visits to Cobalt's historical museums and mining heritage sites. Often we were able to follow up formally on things we learned in informal ways, and vice versa. Although our project was ethnographic, our research methodology is properly categorized as mixed because in addition to the qualitative methods of interviewing and participant observation, we also employed quantitative and archival data-gathering methods (Gaber and Gaber 1997). Thus, we were able to supplement and enrich the ethnographic data with original and secondary quantitative data, with policy documents, newspaper stories, town council minutes, and archival material.

We conducted formal in-depth open-ended interviews with forty-eight individuals. These included Cobalters, residents of nearby communities, and a few senior provincial bureaucrats. We tried to ensure that our respondents represented a diversity of experiences and opinions by recruiting men and women, adults of all ages, lifelong Cobalters, recent arrivals, and people who had returned after years of living elsewhere. The interviews with Cobalters and residents of nearby towns were a particularly good source of information about local values and attitudes as well as about individuals' experiences with government agencies and the relationships between Cobalt and other municipalities in the region. We interviewed both public officials and ordinary citizens, but because we were investigating economic development proposals and projects, we conducted many more interviews with current and former town officials than with individuals who had never held public office. This was a bias in favour of people who were civically active, rather than a bias in favour of public officials. We were more likely to be told about individuals who were civically engaged than of those who were not. As well, people who were less civically active tended to

assume that they had little to add to our inquiries. But as we discuss in Chapter 3, the culture of Cobalt encourages civic engagement by residents. Cobalters speak up at public meetings, they serve on municipal committees, and substantial numbers of them run for seats on town council. Many hold strong opinions about any number of local issues, which they sometimes air publicly. Partly for this reason, residents of nearby towns tend to see Cobalt as a fractious place.

Our formal interviews, which were audio-recorded and transcribed, lasted from forty-five minutes to two and a half hours. Following the research protocol approved by the Offices of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo and Simon Fraser University, we obtained signed consent from each participant to record his or her interview. The individuals who are named and quoted in this book also gave explicit written permission to be identified in publications resulting from our research. Identifying respondents is not common in ethnographies. We suggest, however, that automatically refusing to allow people to stand by their words is both patronizing and ethically problematic. It has the effect of erasing or homogenizing individual voices (Mike Evans 2004; Lisa Mitchell 2006) while at the same time inviting speculation about respondents' identities. And as May (2010) notes, revealing who did and said what enables others to challenge (or confirm) our facts and interpretations. Every interviewee was given the option to "go on the record" or "remain anonymous." Nearly everyone chose to be on the record, many asserting, "I don't have any secrets." Once interviews were under way, however, many respondents decided that some of their stories should not be on the record. In such cases, we respected their wishes and deleted personal identifiers. We did the same in a few other instances, where we felt that naming individuals would be hurtful or would cause unnecessary embarrassment. As well, when a person was mentioned during an interview with someone else, we omitted his or her name. As added assurance that we had faithfully represented our respondents, everyone who was quoted, by name or anonymously, received a copy of the manuscript pages in which his or her words appeared. In addition, we invited participants to comment on the entire draft manuscript, which we left in the town office and public library. No one requested that his or her name be removed, and one interviewee asked us to add it (which we did).

With the help of five graduate and undergraduate students, we conducted a door-to-door questionnaire survey of Cobalters during the summer of

2006 to collect basic demographic data and information about their civic engagement and social interactions. Nearly half (407) of Cobalt's adult residents responded. Their age-sex profile closely matched Cobalt's age-sex profile in the 2006 Canadian Census, giving us confidence that our sample accurately represented its adult population. (See Appendix A for the questionnaire and for detailed information about our methodology.)

The questionnaire consisted of twenty-nine questions, several of which contained multiple elements. It solicited demographic information and asked about organizational and civic involvement, location of activities and consumption, transportation and Internet access, employment (current or most recent), creative activities, use of local amenities, and migration history and intentions.¹ Results from the survey appear throughout the book and comprise a substantial part of the analysis in Chapter 2. Its final two questions gave respondents an opportunity to talk about their hopes and visions for development in Cobalt:

- What are your hopes for the future of Cobalt?
- What is the most important thing you feel Cobalt should attempt to change over the next few years?

There were no prompts for these open-ended questions; nor did the student enumerators suggest a list of answers. Hence, we have interpreted the responses as indicating the most salient or pressing hopes and desired changes of Cobalt residents at that time.

To our great fortune, we discovered that the Cobalt Public Library possessed original data sheets for a 1972 survey conducted in Cobalt and neighbouring towns. Several of its questions were similar to ours, providing us an unanticipated opportunity to make the temporal comparisons that appear in the next chapter (see Table 3). Details of the 1972 survey and how we handled it are also included in Appendix A.

Culture is dynamic; it is rooted in history even as it adapts to new circumstances. The experiences, discourses, and practices of citizenship and economic development that we observed in Cobalt reflected past practices and events as well as new opportunities and expectations. To understand the historical context, we collected and reviewed numerous development plans and proposals, correspondence about development activities, and other historical documents. This book is not a history of Cobalt, of silver mining in Ontario, or of industrial restructuring. We leave those subjects

to others. We nonetheless learned a great deal about them from the work of professional historians (Baldwin, Baxter, and Dunn 1975; Summerby-Murray 2002, 2007; Baldwin 2005; Baldwin and Duke 2005; Abel 2006) and amateur historians (Brown 1963; Barnes 1993; Angus and Griffin 1996). Understanding the historical context is essential to good ethnography (Mackey 1999; Lutz 2001), and information we collected from archival documents broadened our interpretations and suggested new avenues of inquiry.

Important data about specific events and processes came from town records and from historical documents held in the Archives of Ontario, Library and Archives Canada, the Northern Ontario Mining Museum, the Toronto Public Library, the Cobalt town office, and the Cobalt Public Library. Two types of historical documents were especially important to our research. First, we collected and reviewed the official minutes of town council and subcommittee meetings from January 1998 to February 2006. The minutes taught us about items of substance, and we also used them to measure civic engagement as indicated by committee and council attendance and participation. These data are discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

Even more valuable than council and subcommittee minutes were actual proposals for development projects in Cobalt. Although we cannot be certain that we obtained every proposal, the ones we collected comprise an archive of the kinds of economic futures that Cobalters attempted to create. Not every project was funded, and many that were did not bring about the jobs, tourists, commercial activities, or economic security that the applications had anticipated. Still, the proposals document the ways that Cobalters, as citizens of Canada and Ontario, asserted citizenship claims for state resources. Their participation in proposal writing underpins the analysis in Chapters 2 and 5.

It is important to recognize that whereas the town and its residents make development proposals, provincial, federal, and quasi-governmental agencies design and develop grant programs, with their specific aims and criteria. We were unable to observe the policy discussions of these agencies and were not privy to the meetings in which competing proposals were adjudicated. In the name of privacy, Canadian agencies do not release information about unsuccessful proposals. We attempted to make up for these shortcomings in data collection by interviewing people who worked for these agencies, and by scrutinizing policy documents related to grant programs, and reviewing the proposals themselves.

Finally, we read the local newspaper, the *Temiskaming Speaker*, throughout the research period. This weekly paper apprised us of events in Cobalt and nearby towns, informing us of many issues that concerned residents of the Temiskaming region, even when we were not actually in the field.

Some Key Terms

To tell the story of Cobalt and the ways in which its residents embrace proposal writing, we employ several terms used by anthropologists and geographers. Widely employed in contemporary social sciences, they also have everyday meanings, and writers are not always clear when they use them. Thus, before moving to the ethnography of Cobalt, we explain our understanding and use of “citizenship,” “Keynesianism,” “neoliberalism,” “economic development,” “civic engagement,” and “social capital.” Other terms are discussed in the chapters in which they feature.

Citizenship, Keynesianism, and Neoliberalism

In an analysis that has become classic, British sociologist Thomas H. Marshall (1965) divided citizenship into three types: political, civil, and social. Political citizenship includes the right to vote and to participate in decision making within the polity. It is a formal membership status that is restricted by birthright or naturalization and thus is a way of allocating resources. Civil citizenship includes access to courts, freedom of movement, and state protection from abuses. Social citizenship generally refers to economic security, including access to education, employment, and healthcare. To these three, we might add cultural citizenship, or the security of belonging (Kymlicka 1995). Cultural, civil, and social forms of citizenship entail substantive rather than formal rights and responsibilities and that are often accorded to residents of a nation-state who may not officially be citizens.

Our notion of citizenship in democratic nations is largely compatible with that of Marshall; citizenship is an assemblage of practices and feelings that binds people together through a set of equal rights and equal obligations to each other through the state. Marshall was concerned with equality of status (in terms of a shared recognition as citizens and common ability to participate in society) rather than equality of income. According to him, the massive expansion of social spending in Western democracies, especially during the middle decades of the twentieth century (usually glossed as Keynesianism, after British economist John Maynard Keynes),

extended the substantive aspects of citizenship to people whose democratic participation and civil rights (in other words, their abilities to enact their citizenship) had been limited by their daily struggles for survival. Since the 1980s, Keynesian policies and related understandings of citizenship have been replaced in Canada and other Western democracies by neoliberal understandings, which emphasize the individual over the collective. In neoliberalism, the political and civil aspects of citizenship remain primary but are often seen as threatened by social rights in the form of entitlements to education, healthcare, and old age pensions (Brodie 1996; Banting 1999). There has also been an elevation of individual cultural rights, in the guise of multiculturalism, over social rights (Kymlicka 1995, 2007).

The Keynesian-inspired expansion of social spending in Canada and other Western democracies in response to the Great Depression, and especially following the Second World War, has been referred to as “the welfare and trade union bargain” (Loney 1977, 448). A key lesson of the Depression for Keynesians, firmly dismissed by neoliberals, was that a nation’s economic welfare could not be left to the uncertainties of the market and that only governments had the capacity and mandate to secure the well-being of the economy and the citizenry. In the ideal, national governments managed monetary and fiscal policy to stabilize the environment for business. In return, businesses paid workers a sufficient wage to support their families, contributed to other benefits such as pensions and unemployment and health insurance, and submitted to controls such as workplace safety monitoring, all of which enhanced the physical and economic security of workers and their families. Government provided other social benefits such as public education, public health programs, old age pensions, and welfare. Many of these benefits were universally available as entitlements of citizenship, “premised on the assumption that citizens faced a common set of social needs, and [thus] a common set of programs could respond equitably to the population as a whole” (Banting 1999, 109).

State provision of universal benefits helped to build a sense of solidarity and common identity among citizens who might otherwise be embedded in regional parochialism and/or ethnic nationalism. According to Canadian political scientist Janine Brodie (2002a, 380), “universal social programs provided a foundation for citizen identity and solidarity that, by definition, avoided the exclusionary and potentially antagonistic underside of appeals to nation.” Throughout the West, Keynesian programs and policies were associated with broad economic expansion and with increased standards of living, which people often linked to their identities as citizens.

However, Keynesianism was not without flaws. For one, it relied on a model that regarded men as the breadwinners and the heterosexual, male-headed nuclear family as the standard, privileged in law and in custom. Women, relegated to the domestic sphere, were responsible for the emotion-work (Luxton 1981; Arlie Hochschild 1989) and for enforcing the sexual and other norms that underpinned the nuclear family. Public spending acted as a technology of governance that constrained and controlled individual citizens, even as it advanced their economic security (Rose 1999).

Our concern is not about the expansion of citizenship rights and obligations to groups that were previously excluded (see Holston 2008; Isin and Nielsen 2008), but rather with the ways that various forms of citizenship are regarded as ordinary. All modern nation-states are multicultural, yet the national projects and programs that arose with Keynesian economic policies were meant to knit diverse cultural groups together. They reinforced a shared sense of identity and common purpose among citizens, all of whom bore the same obligations to the nation-state (Banting 1999). In many cases, they achieved this goal. Still, the establishment of universal programs in Canada and elsewhere disregarded, and sometimes violently suppressed, ethnic, linguistic, sexual, or religious differences. Although some difference in private behaviour was deemed acceptable, and even celebrated as evidence of an open-minded nation-state, there was little tolerance for or even recognition that public programs should accommodate distinct values or social formations (Young 1989, 255). In the Canadian form of Keynesianism, multiculturalism operated “as a fundamental institutional and conceptual tool giving the state an enhanced ability to *control* difference” (Katharyne Mitchell 2003, 391, emphasis in original; also Asad 1990).

In Canada, federalism and the government policy of multiculturalism combined to produce a kind of institutional recognition of pluralism, which was somewhat hollow. It celebrated diversity through non-threatening mechanisms in which almost everyone could participate, such as food, festivals, and folk dance, but that required no substantial accommodation to actual differences. Brodie (2002b, 168) dubs this the “myth of caring, progressive, and tolerant pan-Canadian.” Early on, however, Canadian governments acknowledged that regional, ethnic, gendered, and other differences prevented citizens from benefitting equally from the universal social programs. The concerns and culturally informed perspectives of individuals who suffer institutionalized discrimination because of real or perceived differences diverge from those of people who experience little or no cultural dissonance in their encounters with the state (Kleinman and

Fitz-Henry 2007, 54). During the 1960s and 1970s, Ottawa took the possibly unusual step of providing funding for women's, Aboriginal, disability rights, and other minority advocates to organize and to lobby for institutional and legal changes. Financial support was provided for organizations that pursued the citizenship rights claims of youth, women, Aboriginals, and the poor. Monies were also made available to subsidize newspapers and broadcast media, and cultural centres for linguistic minorities.

Ironically, the efforts to "develop positive initiatives to strengthen the integrative mechanisms in Canadian society" (Loney 1977, 451) also worked to reinforce distinctions and laid the ground for some of the social differentiation that has since emerged (but see Banting and Kymlicka 2004). The primary purpose of these supports was the peaceful acculturation of women and linguistic and cultural minorities to dominant norms of behaviour and thinking. After previous practices of forced assimilation, religious suppression, and economic discrimination, this was a progressive step, but with the possible exception of short-lived gender equity policies (see Brodie 2007), there was no intent to substantially alter social programs and policies to accommodate the values and worldviews of minorities or other disenfranchised citizens. Iris Marion Young (1990, 115), for example, argues that in multicultural societies, "strict adherence to a principle of equal treatment tends to perpetuate oppression or disadvantage." Thus, she claims that true equality sometimes requires differential rights. In practice, advancing multiculturalism while maintaining universal social programs often engendered resistance. In Canada and elsewhere, some members of privileged groups chafed under what they perceived as the bureaucratic indifference of centralized universal social programs while at the same time believing that minorities were receiving special benefits (Mackey 1999).

By the end of the 1970s, cracks had emerged in Keynesianism as the dominant economic and governmental paradigm throughout the West (though triggered by different events and timing in different countries). Eventually, Keynesianism gave way to the new paradigm of more contingent, unstable, and indirect forms of state social regulation and support known as neoliberalism. Various scholars have emphasized the economic, social, and political outcomes of the transition. Geographer David Harvey (2005) regards neoliberalism primarily as a resource grab by capitalist elites, who have become the greatest beneficiaries of the lower tax rates and the transfer of public assets to private corporations. Indeed, the implementation of neoliberal economic policies has coincided with and contributed to substantially greater economic disparity in many of the world's

richest countries, including Canada (OECD 2008; Yalnizyan 2010). In Canada, privatized assets have included former Crown corporations such as Petro-Canada and Air Canada. In Ontario, many governmental functions, such as drivers' licensing and water and sewage treatment, are now controlled by private for-profit corporations. Well-known examples in the United States include many charter schools, privately operated prisons, and welfare-to-work agencies as well as contracting with private corporations such as Halliburton to do military work that was previously handled by troops.

Economic globalization provides a politically powerful rationale for the neoliberal efforts to lower taxes, reduce regulation, and otherwise dismantle many social entitlements. Because corporations can freely relocate, many people are convinced that places must remake themselves as welcoming to global capital. Although the state could achieve this by shouldering more of the organizational and financial burden for creating an educated workforce or providing more public healthcare, it has more commonly been done by reducing individual and corporate taxes and removing regulations. Lower taxes and diminished regulation have meant that government is less directly involved in the provision of social citizenship benefits, in many cases eliminating or rolling back social programs and frequently adopting some form of means testing for programs that were previously universal. In most cases, rollback has placed significant new burdens on individual citizens and their families, who must spend more to purchase services, such as childcare or safe drinking water, from private vendors or pay increased (and sometimes new) user fees to enjoy public amenities such as parks, community centres, and public transit. In purely financial terms, nearly all Canadians continue to derive more in public services than they pay directly in taxes (Mackenzie and Shillington 2009). Importantly, however, service reductions can drive middle-income and wealthy citizens to opt out of publicly provided schools, healthcare, recreation, and sometimes even policing and fire protection, leading to further disinvestment in the public sphere.

Neoliberalism, however, is more than the rollback of taxes and public services; it also involves a rollout, or restructuring, of the relationship between citizens and the state (Peck and Tickell 2002; also Gledhill 2005, 2008; Kingfisher and Maskovsky 2008). Neoliberal governments appear to retreat from the day-to-day business of governing citizen behaviour, but in fact they do no such thing. Rather than becoming less intrusive in the lives of citizens, neoliberal governance is more diffuse in its effect on

behaviour and expectations. Hyatt (2011, 107) regards rollout as part of a post-neoliberal security or “law-and-order state,” whose ideal citizens both police and agree to be policed. Failures in the law-and-order state are attributed to the moral shortcomings of individuals rather than to structural inequalities.

One of the changes to occur with neoliberal (or post-neoliberal, following Hyatt 2011) governance is that many remaining public services are delivered by local governments or by non-governmental organizations under contract to the (federal or provincial) state. When these bodies are made responsible for delivering social services, they replace the central government as enforcers of eligibility rules. Often, they compete with each other to provide services and for discrete amounts of funding to support *projects* rather than *programs*. To acquire funding, local governments, community organizations, and non-profit agencies write proposals. These are adjudicated in a supposedly neutral and merit-based manner, but obscured are the political decisions that produced the terms of funding in the first place. Only some locales and projects are funded, encouraging citizens to see themselves as members of distinct and competing ethnic, racial, and geographic communities rather than as part of a shared society (Maskovsky 2006; Tyler 2007).

Rollout and rollback neoliberal policies are accompanied by new ways of talking about citizenship and about the relationship between government and citizens. Over time, this new language, along with changes in the ways that government funds and delivers social programs, alters citizens’ subjectivities, or the ways that people understand and act upon their rights and responsibilities as citizens. For example, neoliberalism emphasizes civil over social rights of citizens (Lazar 2004). Proponents of rollback neoliberalism often employ the rhetoric of “freedom” and “choice,” arguing that individual citizens, families, and communities are better suited than government to make many spending decisions. They also assert that efficiency and innovation are enhanced by relying more on the market and less on big government. Rollout neoliberalism leans on terms such as “accountability,” “entrepreneurship,” “flexibility,” and “partnership,” which obscure the role of the state. Both rollout and rollback aspects of neoliberalism build on the already powerful idea of empowerment to encourage and coerce new ways of thinking and enacting the responsibilities and entitlements of citizens. Empowerment “is a strategy for constituting and regulating the political subjectivities of the ‘empowered.’ Whether inspired by the market or by the promise of self-government and autonomy, the

object of empowerment is to act upon another's interests and desires in order to conduct their actions towards an appropriate end" (Cruikshank 1999, 69). Aihwa Ong (1996, 739) recognizes this as the disciplining of individuals to want to enact the "normative standards of good citizenship" by becoming entrepreneurial and self-managing. Examples of such disciplining processes are varied, and they permeate all areas of social life. They work on the subjectivities of citizens at all income levels. Under neoliberal forms of governance, they include pressures on welfare recipients to participate in job training and/or parenting classes, on university students to compete for positions as unpaid interns, on men who batter women to enrol in anger management classes and learn "new forms of masculinity" (Merry 2001, 16), on high school students to "volunteer" in the community, on consumers to save the planet by choosing green-branded products, and on workers to voluntarily fund and manage personal retirement plans. Although many individuals may see these strategies as the best way of attaining security in our contemporary communities, we can imagine other (collective) configurations that might produce greater societal and individual security.

The Canadian version of Keynesianism accommodated itself to a system in which most powers and responsibilities were (and still are) held by the provincial governments, and in which municipalities and other local governments have no independent status. At the same time, Ottawa retains the power of the purse; the collection of most government revenue was and remains centralized in Canada, and the reallocation of revenue via social programs requires consensus between the federal government and the provinces. Hence, much of the important social spending reaches citizens through agreements negotiated between provincial and federal governments. Municipalities were responsible for service delivery, but they lacked the potential for independent action or decision making. This changed with neoliberalism and entailed a redefinition of the relationship between individual citizens and all levels of government, as well as between municipal governments and the Canadian national state.

According to Brodie (2002b, 171), "decentralization in the late 1990s [in Canada] has little to do with either democratization or community-building. The federal government, for example, recovered its fiscal bottom line largely by off-loading the costs of social programs on the provinces which in turn, cut-back and off-loaded on to municipalities and they to the voluntary sector, the family, and the individual." As responsibility for citizen well-being has been shifted from society at large to communities and

individuals, community organizations, municipalities, and households have often assumed disproportionate and unpredictable risks (Oliver-Smith 1996, 304; Rose 1999; Ilcan 2009; Silbey 2009).

It is important to stress that there was no clean break between the Keynesian policies of the past and their neoliberal counterparts of the present. Some Keynesian programs and policies persist, and Keynesianism, like neoliberalism, was never totalizing. For example, immigrants, single mothers, and ethnic and racial minorities often worked in informal sectors of the economy that were not subject to the protections promised by the state-capital-labour compromise at the heart of Keynesianism. Nonetheless, since the 1980s, there have been real alterations in the style and substance of governance and parallel changes in people's understanding and experience of their rights and responsibilities as citizens; neoliberalism is the new normal (Keil 2009), with both positive and negative consequences for individuals and local governments. Appendix B delineates some laws, social forms, and ideas associated with Keynesianism and neoliberalism, globally and with particular reference to Canada. Since the colonial era, Canadian nationalist policies and practices have been simultaneously centripetal and centrifugal, homogenizing and differentiating. In the modern era, the practices of neoliberalism and Keynesianism have both effects.

Modern nation-states are produced through technologies and practices that cause a population to recognize a common history and identity (Anderson 1991; James Scott 1998). These include schooling, census taking, tax collecting, and broadcasting as well as "nostalgic festivals, public ceremonies of national struggle and effervescent collective experience" (Turner 2000, 135). A number of scholars and public commentators have argued that Canadian identity is tied not to a founding narrative based in revolution or common language, religion, or ethnicity, but rather that it rests in the social programs that were established between the Second World War and the 1970s. This over-simplification ignores the very conscious creation of a Canadian national identity (predating Confederation) as tolerant, peaceful, and law abiding, especially in contrast to the image many Canadians have of the United States (Mackey 1999). Still, the erosion of universal social supports has led many to regard the move toward neoliberalism as a threat to the nation-state, something that will splinter Canada into separate regional, ethnic, and linguistic communities. Even Canadian legal philosopher Charles Taylor (1999, 265), a strong proponent of multiculturalism and cultural rights, insists that "democratic states need something like a common identity." Some commentators have gone so far

as to suggest that the attrition of social entitlements will end with the disappearance of national citizenship as a political identity (Turner 2000, 139).

Consequently, some in Canada see nothing short of societal disintegration and personal anomie in the neoliberal erosion of social citizenship. John Ralston Saul (1997, 227), for example, fears that “the citizenry seem to be withdrawing into a state of sullen non-cooperation ... because they are repeatedly told mythologies, and indeed the realities [of balanced egalitarianism], by which they built the country can no longer function.” Brodie (2002b) treats as Pollyannaish Saul’s assertion that a caring society lies at the heart of the founding of Canada, but she, too, foresees social and cultural decay as an unintended consequence of the progressive loss of shared national symbols and universal social supports since the late 1970s. Referring to Speeches from the Throne, in which the governing party lays out its legislative program at the beginning of each parliamentary session, Brodie (2002a, 386) shows that during the 1960s and 1970s successive federal governments sought to quell all challenges to national unity “through the fulfillment of the promise of social citizenship.” And indeed, the 1980 Quebec referendum on secession is widely believed to have failed because Québécois were reluctant to give up the social programs that were a benefit of their Canadian citizenship. Successive Speeches from the Throne told Canadians that they possessed a common purpose and common interests that were best served through universal access to social supports. However, through the 1980s and 1990s, social programs were redefined, not as universal entitlements that advanced societal well-being, but as drains on personal and national wealth that threatened the welfare of the nation. During this period, Canadians were informed that public funds were to be reserved only for the neediest and the most deserving. Eligibility for almost all forms of social support is now determined by means testing of the needy and by proposal making for everyone else.

What replaces social citizenship as a defining characteristic of Canadianness? Some suggest that the new funding for heritage projects is intended to create social cohesion (Karim 1997). This seems ironic, given that social programs have loomed so large in the configuration of Canadian citizenship precisely because Canada is thought to lack other unifying historical symbols. The word “citizen,” of course, is related to “city,” and citizenship once referred to an individual’s rights and responsibilities vis-à-vis the locality. The rise of the modern nation-state during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries eroded local citizenships, replacing them with citizenship linked to the nation-state. Canadian scholars have tended to

assume that the emotionally laden aspects of being Canadian citizens derive in large part from social benefits such as universal healthcare. Some have suggested that the adoption of neoliberal governance practices encourages the attrition of national citizenship and a return to locally constituted forms of belonging. Progressives see this fragmentation of society as undesirable because it diminishes the possibility that social problems will be recognized as having broad structural causes and solutions. As the story of Cobalt indicates, proposal making has become a technology of neoliberal citizenship, one that defines and reinforces differences while reinscribing in individuals a new sense of both local and national belonging.

Economic Development

Contemporary notions of development arose during the period following the Second World War to distinguish the supposedly advanced economies of what we now call the global North from the less advanced “developing” or even “under-developed” economies of the global South. The term “economic development” also signifies the activities of individual nations and multilateral organizations such as the World Bank and United Nations agencies to bring about socio-economic changes in those less developed nations. Inherent in the idea of economic development is the assumption of improvement in the material conditions of life. These improvements are induced by specific projects and general programs to transform health-care, life expectancy, education, food production, housing, employment practices, consumption patterns, gender roles and relationships, and more. Economic development programs often fall short of their goals, and some unintentionally harm the targets of their interventions. Critiques of specific practices of the development industry are too numerous to delineate and are outside the scope of this work, but interested readers can find an excellent overview of the issues in Sachs’s *Development Dictionary* (2010) and in a collection titled *The Anthropology of Development and Globalization* (Edelman and Haugerud 2005).

No longer exclusively understood as something for poor nations, economic development now includes governmental and non-governmental interventions meant to transform (and improve) socially and economically distressed neighbourhoods, municipalities, or regions in wealthy countries. The practices of the international development industry have a number of structural similarities to development practices in Canada, but there are also important differences (Stern and Hall 2010). Most significantly, development monies in Canada are from domestic, primarily governmental,

sources rather than from foreign governments and international agencies, and government is the direct provider of basic services such as education and public health. Furthermore, Canada is a wealthy country, and except for a few cases, often in First Nations communities, nearly all Canadians (even poor ones) are able to access basic necessities such as healthcare, clean water, and adequate shelter.

Despite our concern with development proposals, this book is not a study of economic development outcomes or of any specific economic development project or program. Rather, we employ the term “economic development” as Cobalters do, to refer to government investments in infrastructure and to their desired results. The stated goal of most of these significant public investments is to establish Cobalt as a destination for mining heritage tourism or at least to create the conditions that will make tourism possible. Domestic economic development programs in Canada, like international aid to post-war Europe or contemporary sub-Saharan Africa, encompass the belief that public infrastructure investments are necessary to make a locale safe and attractive to private capital. Also reproducing the narratives about international development, many Cobalters (and government officials) anticipate that economic development will bring physical and social improvements. Specifically, they hope to create a diversified local economy that, if not as vibrant as it once was, can provide jobs and services to sustain and grow the population. As we show in later chapters, Cobalters have absorbed a generalized understanding that the state must aid them in this effort. Their pursuit of state assistance as a right and a responsibility of citizenship is the subject of this book.

Civic Engagement and Social Capital

“Civic engagement” refers to the practices “by which individuals enter into and act within civic spaces to address issues of public concern” (Brettell and Reed-Danahay 2012, 2). These include both formal (such as voting or serving on a municipal committee) and informal forms of engagement (such as speaking in a public forum or participating in a voluntary organization). Although some scholars might equate civic engagement with social capital, we do not. Furthermore, we do not use “social capital” to describe the community development activities or practices of civic engagement in Cobalt. To start with, as many critics have observed, most definitions of social capital are too squishy, even in individual papers and reports, where social capital is often posited as both cause and consequence of certain desirable social practices and attitudes (Harriss and de Renzio 1997; Mayer

2003). The concept of social capital as a set of enduring relationships that individuals can call upon to enhance their situation comes from Pierre Bourdieu (1990), and many anthropologists use the term in this way. Bourdieu deployed the concept of social capital (and symbolic capital) as a critique of capitalism. The more widespread, even hegemonic (Narotzky 2007, 409), understanding of the concept as something that can advance capitalist development derives from Robert Putnam (1993, 2000). As Putnam (1993, 167) explains, social capital “refers to features of social organization, such as trust, norms, and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating coordinated actions.”

In *Making Democracy Work*, Putnam (ibid.) compared the political structures and economic strength of Italian regions, and concluded that the greater economic strength of northern regions was largely attributable to higher levels of citizen participation in civic life; it was able to hold government accountable, thus advancing the collective good. A number of scholars have challenged Putnam’s interpretations (Tarrow 1996; Newton 1997; Putzel 1997). Nonetheless, economic development practitioners at the World Bank and elsewhere have treated his characterization of social capital as networks, trust, and shared norms and values as a force that has the power to make things happen (Fine 1999). When this version of social capital is applied, one of two things tends to result. In the first, the goals of development interventions are redefined, moving away from improving the material conditions of life to enhancing the social capital of a region or a community. In the second, social capital, or rather a shortage of it, is invoked to account for development failures. The failures are not recognized as structural in the sense that some groups are systematically disadvantaged socially and economically, but rather the fault is seen as existing in the inadequate norms, values, and levels of trust in the target community.

Susan Brin Hyatt (2001, 209) presents an excellent example to illustrate how voluntary work by poor black women living in social housing in several US cities was made necessary by “the complete absence of public-sector resources in their communities.” These civically engaged women built social welfare networks of support, developed recreational programs for children, organized tenants’ rights groups, and worked to improve the safety and security of their neighbourhoods. During the 1990s, the federal government transferred the day-to-day management of social housing complexes to tenant management boards as a way to foster citizenship responsibility, which it saw as lacking among social housing tenants. Hyatt (ibid., 216) notes that the activist women took leadership roles on the local boards

“precisely because they were already deeply embedded in local networks of exchange.” But the boards were set up to fail; the government did not increase administrative funding levels or improve access to social services for residents. Yet, when the members of the newly created tenant management boards continued to work through their existing networks, they were accused of nepotism and fiscal impropriety:

The tenant management boards were also accused of cultivating “special relationships” with governmental agencies in an effort to avoid enforcing rules and regulations. While the ability to forge personal relationships with large organizations is often considered intrinsic to operation of an efficient and humanistic bureaucracy (and is one of the resources that defines the very essence of *social capital*), and while norms of authority are regularly contravened in middle-class settings, in poor communities these same acts were regarded as tantamount to criminality. (Hyatt 2001, 217-18, emphasis in original)

The idea that social capital is a good in and of itself is compatible with the transfer of responsibility from the state to the citizen and the local community under rollout neoliberalism. It also insulates the state from being recognized as the site of important decisions. And for some people, like the ones discussed by Hyatt, civic engagement practices can net them the label of “bad citizens.”

Organization of the Book

There is no “typical” Cobalter and no single way that Cobalters understand and enact their citizenship. Individuals interpret the world through their personal experiences and through a lens of shared, culturally produced representations and collective processes (Kleinman and Fitz-Henry 2007). Thus, Cobalters do not see their interests in uniform ways; individual social, political, and economic differences exist among them. Yet, they also share experiences, understandings, dispositions, and knowledge as a result of their identification with their town, as residents of northern Ontario, and as Canadians. They develop understandings of their experiences during everyday interactions, by hearing the ideas and interpretations of others and by trying out their interpretations and ideas on others. It is through the interpretation of experiences that individuals develop as citizens.

Chapter 1 offers a brief history of Cobalt. We also describe Cobalt’s forty-year project of using its mining history to attract tourism. Neoliberal

changes in the way that Ontario municipalities are funded have opened up new opportunities for Cobalters to pursue this economic development vision for the town. Their ability to articulate and unite around a clear narrative of Cobalt as a heritage site is integral to its success in competitions for development grants. It is also integral to the way that many Cobalters experience their identities as citizens. Becoming involved in heritage projects enables residents to interpellate, or learn to recognize themselves, in the story of the historic mining camp, and through that they may be incorporated into the story of the Canadian nation. Although Cobalt has won several grants to develop mining heritage tourism venues, tourism has not brought about the social and economic growth that many supporters anticipated. Importantly, the success in obtaining heritage development grants seems to have worked to circumscribe ideas about economic development and the future of the town.

Chapter 2 presents Cobalt as it is today and shows how its physical form and social institutions are, in part, tied to the various funding mechanisms that are available to towns and cities in Ontario. In the United States, many cities have adopted pro-corporate real estate development policies as a way to keep investors happy and their municipal bond ratings high (Hackworth 2007). Ontario municipalities may also issue bonds as a way to raise revenue for capital investments, but their borrowing is overseen and limited by the Ontario Municipal Board. Still, Canadian municipalities do worry about maintaining favourable credit ratings, though borrowing is not really an option for Cobalt at present. Rather, the town competes with other Ontario municipalities for development grants from federal, provincial, and private agencies as the way to finance its infrastructure.

Proponents of neoliberalism have often sought to justify the dismantling of centralized entitlement programs and per capita funding formulas by arguing that local communities, rather than the government bureaucracy, are the appropriate (most democratic) site for the political decisions that are required to allocate resources. In Chapter 2, we explain how the politics of apportioning municipal funding is hidden through the rhetoric of “rewarding only the best” or deflected downward onto municipal governments that do not set the terms of allocation. Chapter 3 takes the matter a step farther and explores how the politics of allocation actually plays out in Cobalt. In particular, we observe how a culture of openness and long-standing practices of involving citizens in the decision making of municipal government encourage civic engagement as well as a preference for public services. This constitutes a form of local citizenship.

Municipal amalgamations and the reorganization of public funding are part of the context described in this book. One outcome of the widespread adoption of neoliberal governance is an increased emphasis on the region rather than the municipality, the province, or the nation-state as the site of service delivery. We do not regard this as necessarily detrimental in that it takes advantage of economies of scale while potentially also allowing policies and programs to be tailored to local needs and desires. It also, in theory, avoids unnecessary duplication by recognizing that housing, labour, and other markets extend beyond municipal boundaries. Even so, regionalization would appear to contradict the elevation of community under neoliberalism. However, we take up a somewhat different question about municipal finance: How have the changes in municipal funding worked to alter the relationships between citizens, municipalities, and the national state?

From the mid-1990s to the early 2000s, Ontario municipalities were under significant pressure from the province to amalgamate. Although amalgamation is no longer a provincial priority, regional restructuring has continued through consolidation of school and health districts. Cobalters have tended to regard regionalization as a loss and as a threat to their survival as a distinct community. In Chapter 4, we address this issue to examine their experiences with and responses to regionalization. We consider what these tell us about how citizenship is produced and enacted locally as well as nationally.

Proposal writing may be one of the most unrecognized and underappreciated technologies of neoliberal governance, with far-reaching effects on individuals' understandings of what it means to be a citizen. Instead of funding all municipalities, all school districts, and all health districts equally *and* adequately, governments fund them at basic levels and then require them to compete for additional short-term project monies. Under neoliberal Ontario governments, proposal making is part of a regime of practice in which local actors assume an identity as entrepreneurs and shoulder responsibility for the success or failure of their enterprises. Chapter 5 considers the citizenship consequences of Cobalters' shift from making citizen petitions for services to making economic development proposals. Whereas the former were only occasionally successful, Cobalters are arguably winners in the supposedly neutral, meritocratic arena of development proposal making. We ask why their applications for development grants succeeded, whereas those of other towns failed. How do Cobalters understand their success? It is noteworthy that though

they were able to shift from petitioning for program funds to proposing development projects, they have not abandoned the universal public services that neoliberal states no longer support. In fact, many of Cobalt's development grants directly and indirectly support local public services. It might be tempting to view this as resistance to the neoliberal rollback of social supports, but it seems unlikely that the town would continue to win development grants if its position was primarily about resistance. Rather, it is more fruitful to think of Cobalters' embrace of the proposal economy as a site in which they "use dominant techniques of rule to assist in developing their own freedoms" (Howard 2007, 17). We wrap up the chapter with a discussion of citizenship in the current era of neoliberalism. A brief Postscript describes the town and the status of its economic development activities during our short August 2011 visit to deliver a draft of this book.

When they explain why Cobalt is worthy of special recognition, Cobalters and others tend to point to well-known individuals and specific events connected to silver mining. But all places have something unique in their histories, whether as the birthplaces of famous people or as the sites where famous companies or institutions were founded. The dance halls, opera houses, shops, and most of the other businesses that characterized Cobalt in previous years are gone, but after a long period of neglect, the town now has substantial well-maintained public infrastructure. It also provides a higher level of public municipal services than at any time during its history. In an era when many governments are retreating from the provision of public services, and citizens object to paying taxes to support services, Cobalters, through their town council, have repeatedly committed to universal public services. This may be rare. Over the last several decades, as neoliberalism has become increasingly normalized, social life and politics have been consumed by an "ethic of intense possessive individualism, and its cognate of political withdrawal from collective forms of action" (Harvey 2008, 32). Cobalters are interesting because their embrace of neoliberal tools such as development proposal making has allowed them to continue to pursue collective responses to their problems. These responses are limited and limiting, and have subtly changed the way in which many Cobalters experience and enact both their local citizenship and their Canadian citizenship. To date, the neoliberal embrace has been mostly comfortable for them, but there will surely come a time when it feels constricting. This embrace, for good and for bad, is integral to the story we tell in this book.