Designing "Community": The significance of place and urban design in public housing renewal

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STATEMENT OF AUTHENTICATION

The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge, original except as acknowledged in the text. I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material, either in full or in part, for a degree at this or any other institution.

Gordon Bijen

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<tr>
<td>Australian Bureau of Statistics</td>
<td>ABS</td>
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<td>Bonnyrigg Living Communities Project</td>
<td>BLCP</td>
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<td>Built environment professional</td>
<td>BEP</td>
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<td>Closed-circuit television</td>
<td>CCTV</td>
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<td>Community Housing Centre</td>
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<td>English as a second language</td>
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<td>Neighbourhood Improvement Program</td>
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<td>New South Wales</td>
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<td>Pacific Link Housing</td>
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<td>Private-public partnership</td>
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<td>RCC</td>
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<td>Sydney Regional Outline Plan</td>
<td>SROP</td>
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<td>Tenant Management Group</td>
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ABSTRACT

In the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia, public and social housing providers are embarking on large-scale estate renewal projects (ERPs). These projects are often presented as an urban panacea - intended to solve an urban ‘wicked problem’ - namely the tenant and asset management challenges that have left many estates as ‘homes of last resort’ in recent decades. In Australia, these renewal projects are realised by deploying mechanisms within the planning system to increase dwelling density on-site, changing the tenure profiles to increase the ‘social mix’, and the introduction of private market housing into formerly public housing estates. The built form of these estates undergoes massive change, with new construction replacing existing dwellings. After renewal, the estate is barely recognisable as the same neighbourhood.

This study uncovers the significance of ‘place’ and ‘urban design’ for residents and built environment professionals in estate redevelopments by approaching these concepts from three directions: experience, discourse and spatial form. This approach (after Lefebvre, 1991) is recruited to induce the multiplicities of place and present the lived experience of residents during the process of public housing renewal.

The research questions are initially addressed through an introduction to the context of public housing renewal. This is followed by a review of sociological literature on the multiple concepts of place; particularly the ways that place is constructed by various actors. The study is further informed by a literature review that traces community out of sociology and into urban planning. The contributions of early
planners, the disparate design schools of Radburn and New Urbanism (both of which are intended to foster community in public housing neighbourhoods) and the social goals of ERPs are discussed.

Guided by the literature, the research questions are addressed from the findings of the empirical component of the study; comprising interviews, photographic surveys and discourse analysis in three New South Wales case studies. A central finding is that while place and community are contested concepts between various actors, urban design often is an outcome of influence, rather than an influence of outcome.

At the confluence of these issues lies the question of how ERPs can be undertaken in a manner that enhances, rather than undermine, the conception of place for communities. Such an outcome can be demonstrated as having significant benefits for policy makers, built environment professionals and community members alike. The conclusion chapter of the thesis makes a series of recommendations for responding to the finding that protecting a community’s ‘lived space’ is central to ensure and ERPs success, addressing the deficit in built environment professional’s knowledge and skills relevant to the undertaking of a just ERP.
Urban renewal has become a central policy platform for planning agencies across the western world. As cities mature and become increasingly unable to support the demands of populations, the renewal of strategic locations is becoming increasingly prevalent. Public housing neighbourhoods are among the most targeted for renewal, with chronic maintenance and social issues leaving them as 'soft targets' within the global city. For communities targeted by these projects there is little understanding of the lived experience of change. Part I of this thesis details the research objectives, provides the context for the study and reviews relevant literature.
“Designing Community”: the significance of place and urban design in public housing renewal

Context: public housing renewal in the global city

The contemporary city is characterised by a patchwork of neighbourhoods, quarters and communities; each established, maintained, dismantled, or negotiated through the various contradictory actors, agendas and practices that occupy the physical and ideological urban space. Following Sennett’s assertion that “there are probably as many different ways of conceiving what a city is as there are cities” (1974:39); a housing policymaker, public housing resident, urban planner, or property developer could be expected to provide divergent accounts of the demolition and renewal of public housing neighbourhoods. How then does one analyse public housing redevelopment projects, present the different perspectives, and acknowledge and reflect on all the subjective points of view? Understanding actor’s different frames of reference becomes important.

Consider the following fictive scenario. A housing policymaker, an urban designer, and a public housing resident meet to discuss what kind of place a public housing estate might be, what the community requires, their aspirations for the future of the estate, and the appropriate mechanisms to achieve these aspirations (Harvey, 1996). The policymaker might assert that according to collected socioeconomic statistics,
broader social discourse, and government policy that estates are places with
significant social problems, high crime, and unemployment. They might suggest that
the community requires ‘regeneration’ through a variety of social interventions, best
undertaken via partnership with community organisations. Their aspiration for the
estate may involve the demolition of the estate and the construction of a
neighbourhood that they assert addresses the perceived problems through
increased social mix.

The urban planner, operating under a different conception of relating to the urban
space, might propose that these economic and social factors could be addressed by
increasing amenity, and mediating social outcomes through improved urban design
and place making solutions. For the planner, the renewal of the built form would
create new spatial discourses and minimise social exclusion through the features of
the built environment.

Finally, the public housing resident might outline a different conception of the
estate; as one of subjective experience, relating to the urban space and built form.
This narrative might relate notions of home, community, and place attachment. The
resident may ground their conception of the estate within the frame of long-term
residence and, or, aspirations for the estates future in terms of community or
homemaking. This resident might propose that the decisions that are taken about
his or her home and suburb should reflect the lived experience of estate residents.

As Harvey argues, reconciling these perspectives poses a significant challenge as
“internal spatio-temporal organisation of the household, of workplaces, of cities, is
the outcome of struggles to stabilise or disrupt social meanings by opposing social

In this study, the central research task is to enrich and broaden the way built environment professionals (BEPs) think about the linked concepts that support the spatiality of urban existence. These concepts can be given as, but are not limited to: place, space, home, neighbourhood, city, landscape and community.

The motivations of this work are grounded in the belief that current urban planning paradigms have forgotten communities, whose collective experience of the urban environment may be divergent from planner’s expectations of encounter and use. As urban planning lies languishing in heavily idealist practices, urban planning has become a platform upon which political battles are fought and won, often with the promise of legislative reform. The more planning policy is the subject of reform, the more urgent it becomes to recast urban planning beyond its current limitations and consider the impact that planning policy has upon the lived experience of urban environments.

A key nexus for the conflict between contemporary planning policy and communities lies in the proliferation of urban renewal. As cities continue to mature and develop, great strain is placed upon them to accommodate the demands of growing populations. For planning agencies across the western world, urban renewal has become a core policy. Although urban renewal can be undertaken in any area with suitable attributes, in many cities public housing neighbourhoods are among the most targeted. Chronic lack of maintenance, poor levels of amenity, uniformity of tenure, and often highly desirable locations leave these neighbourhoods as ‘soft targets’ in the global city.
Estate Renewal Projects (ERPs), the practical interest of this study, are the brand of urban renewal undertaken in public housing neighbourhoods. While achieving the consolidation and densification of strategically located neighbourhoods, these urban renewal projects have the fundamental goal of addressing the social and physical conditions in certain public housing estates, eliminating the tenant and asset management challenges that have left many estates as ‘homes of last resort’ in recent decades.

With ERPs in New South Wales (NSW), Housing NSW (HNSW) have closely followed the approaches of the HOPE VI program in the United States (USA) and the United Kingdom’s (UK’s) New Deal for Communities to reduce the concentrations on public housing households, construct new mixed income housing and encourage the growth of the social housing sector. New Urbanist design principles boost the density of housing on site (providing ample access for private market households) and encourage ‘income-blind’ design principles. By realigning the architecture of public housing with the surrounding built form, policy makers aim to remove the stigma associated with the aesthetics of public housing estates (Vale, 2002). Overall these projects amount to a social, architectural and administrative recasting of public housing.

ERPs have their ideological and discursive roots in the influential work of William Julius Wilson, who argued that the ‘culture of poverty’ that afflicted the urban poor could be attributed to ‘joblessness reinforced by an increasing social isolation in an impoverished neighbourhood” (1993:20). The urban poor were labelled ‘the truly disadvantaged as they not only suffered low socioeconomic status, but were further
disadvantaged by a lack of economic opportunities, community resources, or functional local institutions. Wilson asserted that building community ties and providing appropriate resources in neighbourhoods could address the resulting social isolationism. Widely viewed among policymakers and a tool of to eliminate place-based disadvantage, the mixed income model present in ERPs was inspired by the promise of neighbourhoods outlined in Wilson’s work.

Despite the enormous change that ERPs bring to the public housing neighbourhoods they are undertaken in, there has been little evaluation of how these changes impact the resident community beyond simple measures of satisfaction. Rather, current research is squarely focussed upon the veracity of the mixed income approach to public housing renewal. While this debate challenges the assumptions founding ERPs, the meanings of urban design in the context of public housing renewal and the potential for these meanings to positively shape the experience of urban change are sorely under researched.

**Research objective and questions**

In undertaking this project, it is my objective is to propose a more nuanced way of understanding the spatial processes that underpin urban change, specifically in the case of public housing renewal, where the debate addresses notions of ‘community’, but relevant criticism is seldom directed toward ‘place’ or ‘urban design’. While the theories of planning have advanced, the central conceptualisations of ‘place’ and ‘community’ remain far from clear, often hampering the evolution of planning praxis.
Again, points of reference are important. To encourage the reconceptualisation of ‘place’ from the current materialist episteme and develop a theory reflecting the transdiscursive knowledge of lived experience; a suite of research questions were designed to interrogate and reveal the conditions within the case studies. The research questions were designed to unpack the relationships between the directly lived and represented, the spoken and the silences, and the events that weave together the experience of urban change.

**Research Questions**

1. Do ERPs deliver positive social outcomes through place based design improvements and social mixing strategies? How is urban design perceived as an agent of change? How might external factors impact the outcomes of an ERP?

2. How are concepts of place, urban design and community used by stakeholders to construct ‘lived space’? How do these conceptions interact? How is the lived space of the public housing estate perceived after alteration?

3. Does the relationship between residents and built environment professionals impact the outcomes of the ERP? How does communication between stakeholders impact the perceived disruptions to ‘lived space’?

These questions aim to elucidate relationships and processes in order to apprehend the slippery elements that weave together the experience of public housing renewal. The way that the questions interact, each building upon and reliant on the other, reflects the dialectic approach to space forwarded by Henri Lefebvre in *The social production of space* (1991). This way of thinking subverts the dominance of ‘hard’ planning and champions the unique phenomena that generate intimate experiential
knowledge of places. A central task of this thesis is to propose links between these two episteme in order to deliver better, more equitable outcomes within ERPs.

**Thesis structure**

To present this account of urban change in three public housing neighbourhoods, the thesis is structured in three parts. Part I includes Chapters 1-4, defining the central research task, reviewing the literature relevant to the study and setting out the methodological framework. In Chapter 2 place is theorised as experience, discourse and form. This discussion is developed from the ‘spatial triad’ advanced by Lefebvre; developing the literatures of phenomenology, social theory and spatial analysis into a totalising framework of theory, positioning the urban as spanning the experiential, the social and the material while valorising none.

Chapter 3 outlines the development of ‘community’ as a key concept of urban planning. Community is theorised across multiple conceptions of community from Tonnies, through to how modern iterations of community often overlap with the social and physical fabric of life. The discussion then turns to the work of the early planners and analyses the conceptions of community they deployed. In the third section of the chapter, the two major urban design schools that have impacted the design of public housing neighbourhoods and the core social policy goals of ERPs are presented.

Chapter 4 reflects on the two literature review chapters and the central research task. Investigating the ways BEPs, residents, and other actors negotiate the disruptions and conflicts within the lived space of the estate during the ERP process, and
constructing a framework of methodological tools to investigate the lived experience of public housing residents in estates undergoing redevelopment. The chapter sets out a methodology that valorises the perspective of research participants, (Lefebvre, 1991; Jacobs 1961). It also seeks to support the diverse voices of BEPs, private sector, and the public tenant.

Part II includes Chapters 5-7 and comprises of three case study chapters. These chapters present the observations from the fieldwork activities and relate the ERP processes undertaken at each site. Each case study chapter uncovers the relationships between people and place; making explicit the ways change processes were conceived, perceived and/or experienced by the resident community and BEPs.

The case of Riverwood is presented in Chapter 5. Riverwood represents a third iteration of the ERP process, being developer-led with considerable, intensive community engagement a major feature of the project. Resident generated data is analysed and presented as a reflective narrative. Chapter 6 presents the ERP undertaken at Dunbar Way, North Gosford. This site represents the current paradigm in ERPs, small-scale redevelopments led by Community Housing Providers (CHPs). The peculiarities of undertaking such ERPs are related through analysis of resident-led empirical processes and interview data. Chapter 7 covers the case of Bonnyrigg, the largest of the three case study sites in both capital investment and scale of renewal. The HNSW ‘Living Communities’ model of ERP is analysed through a range of secondary sources and the experience of BEP led and mediated change is presented.
Part III serves to conclude the thesis. Chapters 7 and 8 provide a discussion that links the central research task outlined in Part I to the findings of the study outlined in Part II. Chapter 7 draws together the research observations and researcher reflections of public housing redevelopment. Chapter 8 identifies the opportunities presented by the findings and proposes a number of actions that can be taken to ensure future urban renewal reflects the aspirations for all involved.
CHAPTER 2

Place three ways: Exploring the spatial turn

Introduction to chapter

The main purpose of this and the following literature review chapter is to appraise the existing research that is relevant to the study and set the trajectory from research questions, through to research methods and data analysis. These two chapters are intended to provide the foundation that supports the study's aims and intentions.

This chapter sets out to review the concept of place through the lens of a range of social theorists and philosophers. Further it establishes these concepts as objects for empirical study. The ubiquity of these concepts has resulted in an enormous and diverse literature. For the purposes of this study, the work of Henri Lefebvre will be utilised as a foundation. The chapter will then conclude by linking the social theory literature with the planning literature of Chapter 2.

‘Place’ is a term which, due to its ubiquitous nature, works against a single coherent concept. For example ‘place’ can be used to identify physical locations such as homes, neighbourhoods or even nations, or it can be used to define social relations. People ‘know their place’ in social structures, and can be ‘put in their place’ if a person disrupts the hierarchy.
In recent decades, there has been a so called ‘spatial turn’ within a number of disciplines, leading to an immense, and at times, ponderous literature, progressing various theoretical projects on the nature of place. This review is exploratory in nature and does not seek to construct a singular definition, or privilege any particular theoretical perspective. The objective of this review is to establish the usefulness of literature for the study’s empirical project. Following the objective of analysing place as a ‘trialectic’ (Lefebvre, 1991; Soja, 1996), the existing literature of place is examined through the lenses of “Place as Experience”, “Place as Discourse” and “Place as Urban Form”. By reframing place in this way the triadic exploration of place fit the broader objectives of the study and offer new ways of interrogating the socio-spatial conditions present in urban renewal.

**Placing the study: Lefebvre’s urban critique**

Henri Lefebvre’s (1901-1991) oeuvre includes over 60 books, and numerous other publications, on subjects as varied as meta philosophy, political theory, sociology, literature, music, linguistics and urban studies. This broad range of research interests, reflect a similarly diverse array of influences and engagements, from French phenomenology, existentialism, and Marxism, through to the socio-aesthetic avant-gardes of Dada, Surrealism and Situationism (Kipfer et.al. 2008). While these interests and influences are seemingly tenuously related, Lefebvre’s work can be seen to be founded on three major concepts; Space, Difference and Everyday Life. Arguably, his most significant contributions were in the exploration and critique of the urban, the role of the State and spatial practice. Lefebvre’s contribution to ‘the urban’ has led to
a growing secondary literature in fields ranging from architecture, urban studies to radical geography.

For Merrifield, Lefebvre sought to understand the urban through a “maverick, non-dogmatic spatialised reading of Marx’s materialist dialectic” (1993:517 emphasis in original). These aspirations were intended to revalorise the subjective ontological nature of place itself and remove the ‘philosophical straitjacket’ of Cartesian objectivity. Lefebvre argues that current conceptions of space and time are founded upon the work of Rene Descartes, which asserts an atomised and essentially mathematical representation of reality. Descartes postulated that there existed a set of metaphysical laws that could be used to establish a universal objective explanation. To achieve this, Cartesian logic investigation involves the ‘breaking up of thoughts and problems into pieces and arranging these into their logical order” (Capra, 1982:44). In doing so, scholars attempt to establish themselves as impartial and rational observers, separating themselves from “preoccupations with our own limited experience and mentality” (Spinoza cited in Wilson,1996). When applied to geography, which has been profoundly impacted by Cartesian-inspired philosophy, space itself becomes “absolute, a passive empty container independent of physical phenomena” (Merrifield. 1993:518).

For Lefebvre, the perpetuation of Cartesian inspired fragmentation of the urban was a “theoretical fallacy with practical ramifications and a symptom of the economic, social, political, technological, and cultural reality of twentieth century capitalism” (Stanek, 2008:63). To recast this, Lefebvre theorised that it was not possible to understand the different ‘fragments’ of the urban without first understanding how
the ‘fragments’ relate to each other in within the totality of the urban (Merrifield, 1993). By applying the relational ontology of dialectics, Lefebvre reveals the underlying processes that take form within space. Significantly, the characteristics of Lefebvre’s ideas allow a fuller reflection upon place:

   The urban is, therefore, pure form; a place of encounter, assembly, simultaneity. This form has no specific content, but is a centre of attraction and life. It is an abstraction, but unlike a metaphysical entity, the urban is a concrete abstraction, associated with practice… What does the city create? Nothing. It centralises creation. And yet it creates everything. Nothing exists without exchange, without union, without proximity, that is, without relationships. The city creates a situation, where different things occur after one another and do not exist separately but according to their differences. The urban, which is indifferent to each difference it contains, itself unites them. In this sense, the city constructs, identifies, and sets free the essence of social relationships. (Lefebvre, 2003:118-119)

Following from Lefebvre, Lehtovuori (2010) argues, applying a dialectic ontology to urban space allows us to see that:

1) space always appears dynamic and processual; 2) space cannot be conceived of generally, but the conceptualisation is always specific, in a society, site, and moment in time; 3) the conceptualisation is able to deal with the radical qualitative difference between the various ‘elements’ or ‘moments’ of social space without conflating them to a single plane of representation; and 4) providing the opportunity to think the not-yet-existing, the Becoming is as important as describing the existing things.

This group of concepts provides a powerful tool to explore ‘place’ without the limitation of the heavily Cartesian foundations of geography, planning and
architecture which Lefebvre saw as serving distinctively ideological purposes (Merryfield, 1993). “Western philosophy has betrayed the body; it has actively participated in the great process of metaphorisation that has abandoned the body; and it has denied the body. The living body, being at once ‘subject’ and ‘object’, cannot tolerate such conceptual division” (Lefebvre, 1991:407). Seeking to “detonate this state of affairs” (1991:24) Lefebvre proposed a unitary theory of space, reconciling the different ‘fields’ of space that had previously been fragmentised by the Cartesian intellectual practice. Reintegrating perception, imagination and symbolism with physical and social space, Lefebvre proposed the theory of ‘the production of space’ to expose, decode and read the underlying processes of space itself, rather than apprehending ‘things’ in space. Thus the process of producing space and the produced space are not two separate concepts, but are in fact two inseparable aspects. To assist the interpretation of this theory, Lefebvre provides the ‘conceptual triad’ found below:

1. Spatial practice: the spatial practice of a society secretes that society’s space; it propounds and presupposes it, in a dialectical interaction; it produces it slowly and surely as it masters and appropriates it. From the analytic standpoint, the spatial practice of a society is revealed through the deciphering of its space. What is spatial practice under neo-capitalism? It embodies a close association within perceived space between daily reality (daily routine) and urban reality (the routes and networks which link up the places set aside for work, “private” life, and leisure). This association is a paradoxical one, because it includes the most extreme separation between the places it links together. The specific spatial competence and performance of every member of society can only be evaluated empirically. “Modern” spatial practice might thus be defined—to take an extreme but significant case—by the daily life of a
tenant in a government-subsidised high-rise housing project. Which should not be taken to mean that motorways or the politics of air transport can be left out of the picture. A spatial practice must have a certain cohesiveness, but this does not imply that it is coherent (in the sense of intellectually worked out or logically conceived).

2. Representations of space: conceptualised space, the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers, as of a certain type of artist with a scientific bent—all of whom identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived (Arcane speculation about Numbers, with its talk of the golden number, moduli, and “canons,” tends to perpetuate this view of matters). This is the dominant space in any society (or mode of production). Conceptions of space tend, with certain exceptions to which I shall return, towards a system of verbal (and therefore intellectually worked out) signs.

3. Representational spaces: space as directly lived through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of the “inhabitants,” and “users,” but also of some artists and perhaps of those, such as a few writers and philosophers, who describe and aspire to do no more than describe. This is the dominated—and hence passively experienced—space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate. It overlays physical space, making symbolic use of its objects. Thus representational spaces may be said, though again with certain exceptions, to tend towards more or less coherent systems of non-verbal symbols and signs:

The (relative) autonomy achieved by space qua “reality” during a long process which has occurred especially under capitalism or neo-capitalism has brought new contradictions into play. The contradictions within space itself will be explored later. For the moment, I merely wish to point out the dialectical relationship which exists
within the triad of the perceived, the conceived, and the lived. A triad, that is, three elements, and not two." (Lefebvre, 1991:38-39)

There remains a vagueness within this spatial triad of how each of the elements are to interact with one another (see Figure 1), however Lefebvre gives centrality to the body in the understanding of the relationship between the different concepts (Merryfield, 1993). This vagueness, Lefebvre’s sustained engagement with cities and the epochal shift from the temporal to the spatial, has led to a variety of readings of his work.

Figure 1: Lefebvre’s spatial triad

![Lefebvre's spatial triad](source: Lehtovuori, 2010)

Within geography, two major readings have emerged; those of David Harvey and Edward Soja. For Harvey, Lefebvre’s work was centred on the role of urbanisation in the accumulation and reproduction of capital, particularly within real estate investment. Like Lefebvre, Harvey does not treat the urban as an entity in its own right ‘but as a strategic entry point to understand and revolutionise the capitalist
mode of production itself’ (Goonewardena et al., 2008:7). Harvey has made a sustained attempt to appropriate Lefebvre as a political economist, postulating that cities in the age of advanced capitalism produced distinct patterns of development. Cycles of spatial homogenisation or differentiation in urban areas synchronised with periods of boom and bust (Harvey, 1973).

This application of Lefebvre's theory of the production of space as a theory of political economy can be suggested to be at odds with the original spirit of the theory. Schmid (2005) suggests that Harvey's focussed project to establish a ‘political economy of space’ disregards the dialectical nature of Lefebvre's “three dimensional notion of the production of space" that valorises the "lived experiences of people in history" (Castree, 1995). For Harvey, the everyday life is a repository of larger processes rather that a dialectic totality, asserting “to argue that the relations between the experienced, the perceived and the imagined are dialectically rather than causally determined leaves things much too vague”(1989:219). However it is precisely this vagueness that provides the launch pad for Lefebvre to transcend Cartesian objectivism.

The other reading of Lefebvre that has gained significant traction within the Anglophone academy is that of Ed Soja. For Soja each of the three dimensions of Lefebvre's theory can be constructed into a triad of spaces. These spaces can be given as (1) physical space, (2) mental space and a (3) social space. This social space or “thirdspace” (Soja, 1996) is a “comprehensive space, a lived space of representation... a place from where all spaces can be grasped, understood and transformed at one and the same time” (Schmid, 2005). Importantly for this study,
Soja postulates that each of the spaces can be aligned with specific ‘epistemologies’, in turn categorising different research methodologies appropriate to investigate each ‘space’.

**Figure 2: Soja’s thirddspace model**

![Soja's thirddspace model](image)

Source: Soja, 1993.

Although providing a sustained engagement with the theories of Lefebvre (and providing the entry point for many into Lefebvre’s oeuvre), there is dissent (Schmid, 2008; Goonewardena et.al., 2008) suggesting that the Harvey/Soja readings serve to corral Lefebvre firmly into geography, despite his project of theorising “everydayness”. This debate, while important, is beyond the research interests of the current study. The Harvey/Soja readings of Lefebvre provide a theoretical entry point and suggest ways in which the vagueness or apparent conflict between specific ideas can be recruited for empirical investigation.
For the purposes of this study, Soja’s reading of Lefebvre provides the most parallels. Whereas Harvey focusses upon the political economy of Lefebvre’s oeuvre, Soja harnesses the potential of the triad to re-establish and explore a totalised understanding of the urban. The remainder of the chapter develops Soja’s ‘thirdspace’ reading by exploring the concept of place from three perspectives - experience, discourse and form.

**Place as experience**

Thinking about place as experience seems intuitive. Casey (1997) has identified that place first emerges within Aristotle’s philosophy as ‘topos’; the notion of place as existence. Dovey describes this as an ontological paradigm, that “to exist is to exist in a place” (2010:4). Theories of place have emerged within many disciplines including psychology, sociology and human geography. Within this large and multidisciplinary literature, experiential perceptions of place are significant drivers forming conceptions of community and home.

While not a new idea in itself, Shields (1991:14) notes that there has been an emergent willingness to embrace more subjective or idealist understandings of the way space is constituted. Importantly Shields identifies that “there is a tremendous complicity between the body and the environment and the two interpenetrate each other” (1991:14).

Shield’s thesis closely reflects the philosophical traditions of phenomenology, which are a major contributor to discussions of place as experience. Phenomenologists hold that there can be no ontology of objective observation, as all knowledge
emerges from the actions and experiences of subjects. Hillier highlights the shortcomings of the object/subject dichotomy. “‘Society’, the object of social theory, seems to be a highly abstracted concept, and can nowhere be pointed to in the real world, all our experience of society, and so our knowledge of it, comes in the highly materialised form of the social life of encounter and place” (2008:223). While there are a number of schools under the umbrella of phenomenology, the existentialist phenomenology of Heidegger has the most utility for discussions of place experience.

Heidegger’s key contributions to the interrogation of place lie in the assertion that there is no existence separate from the practices of dwelling and the spatiality of dwelling (Dovey, 2008). Within the work of Heidegger, these assertions are conceptualised as ‘being’ and ‘dwelling’. Through the body, places are apprehended by the mind and progressive layers of value and meaning are added over time. Casey notes, “the vehicle for being in place is the body” and “it bears the traces of the places it has known” (2001:13). For Heidegger this individual experience of ‘being in the world’ is important to an authentic existence. Deep and unchanging connection to place has the capacity to build an unselfconscious ontological bond between humans and things (Harvey, 1996). The work of Heidegger has had a significant impact upon the course of theories of place, providing a point of reference for the work of subsequent theorists further developing or opposing Heidegger (see Buttimer, 1980; Norberg-Schulz, 1980; Porteous 1976; Malpas 2012; Trigg 2012; Harvey, 1996; Massey, 1993).
During the 1970s, human geographers set upon a concerted effort to shift the discipline from an ideographic pursuit to a quantifiable science (Cresswell, 2004; Hillier, 2008). This paradigmatic shift saw the multiplicitous concept of ‘place’ relegated and ‘space’ emerging to complement the disembodied void of spatial science. For humanistic geographers, the concept of place was as theoretically robust as the hard logic of the quantitative revolution (Hillier, 2008) and became a central aspect of their project. Recruiting the existential phenomenology of Heidegger, Relph (1976) asserts that place is not a coordinate within an abstraction of space, but is a fundamental phenomenon of the human experience, foci of meanings, experience and belonging:

The basic meaning of place, its essence, does not therefore come from locations, nor from the trivial functions that places serve, nor from the superficial or mundane experiences... The essence of place lies in the largely unselfconscious intentionality that defines places as profound centres of human existence. (Relph, 1976:43)

Location, then, is not a requisite feature of a place. Rather, the dialectical links between a places “visuality (places have landscapes – we can see them), the sense of community that place supposedly engenders, the sense of time... and the value of ‘rootedness’ gives a place its distinction” (Cresswell, 2004:22). Relph (1976), returning to the phenomenology of Heidegger, asserts that ontological priority must be given to the human’s immersion in place rather than the abstractions of Cartesian coordinates of space. For Relph what gave places their value was ‘insideness’:

The essence of place lies not in these (geographies, landscapes, cities, homes) as in the experience of an ‘inside’ that is distinct from an ‘outside’; more than anything else this is what sets places apart in space and defines a particular system of physical
features, activities and meanings. To be inside a place is to belong to it and identify with it, and the more profoundly inside you are the stronger is this identity with place. (Relph, 1976:49).

Relph identifies various levels of ‘insideness’ that can be experienced. The deepest level is given as ‘existential insideness’; a complete and unselfconscious attachment to a place central to existence; for many this is the home, a “major fixed reference point for the structuring of reality” (Porteous, 1976:386) or a neighbourhood. The next level of insideness is an unselfconscious experience of a place, experiencing and knowing the cultural and communal processes of a place, these places are often sacred sites. At the shallowest level of insideness there is a self-conscious, deliberate attempt to fully appreciate the significance of places with an open mind, rather than adopting a ‘narrow intellectual or social conventions’ (Relph,1976:142).

Consider the ‘existential insideness’ of author Will Self, expressed in his story Big Dome (1999):

but now the city is filled with narratives, which have been extruded like psychic mastic into its fissures. There is no road I haven’t fought on, no cul-de-sac I haven’t ended it all, no alley I haven’t done it down. To traverse central London today, even in a car, even on autopilot, is still to run over a hundred memories.

For Self, London exists not just as a physical location, but also an experiential entity that enables him to capture aspects of his past life. Donald furthers the assertion of Self, stating that “haunted places are the only ones people can live in” (1999:17).

Tuan’s project, which has had a major influence on studies of space and place, asserts that places are centres of meaning that emerge from the abstraction of
space. For Tuan space is fluid, offering opportunity and movement, while places are appropriated from space, are static and involved. Following Heidegger as a contemporary of Relph, Tuan positions the home as a primary centre of meaning; “a symbol of continuity and order, rootedness, self-identity, attachment, privacy, comfort, security and refuge” (Lewicka, 2011: 211). From the home people structure their view of the world, constructing a spatial memory by radiating out from the home, outwards toward the neighbourhood, city and state (Tuan 1974; 1975). This affective bond between people and place Tuan termed ‘topophilia’, which like Relph’s insider/outsider model, could be used to describe the various forms and intensities of place attachment.

Seamon, another phenomenologist geographer, departs from Tuan and Relph’s focus upon rootedness or the insider/outsider dichotomy, instead placing greater emphasis on the bodily experience. This experience of the actor is constituted of preconscious routines which construct a ‘lifeworld’, a pattern of “day to day existence without having to make it constantly an object of conscious attention” (1980:2). By invoking the metaphor of dance, Seamon introduces the concept of ‘place-ballet’ to describe theoverlaying of multiple routines. Through the ongoing activity of the place-ballet, a strong sense of place emerges. The intensity of the sense of place experienced is therefore contingent upon the spatio-temporal contact of people sharing in its space (Seamon, 1980).
Langer, in her account of the idea of place as architecture argues that places are culturally defined and that location in the strict cartographic sense in merely an incidental quality of place:

A ship constantly changing its location is nonetheless a self-contained place, and so is a gypsy camp, an Indian camp or a circus camp, however often it shifts its geodetic bearings. Literally we say a camp is in a place, but culturally it is a place. A gypsy camp is a different place from an Indian camp though it may be geographically where the Indian camp used to be. (1953:95)

These are, of course, somewhat exceptional examples - most places are indeed spatially located- but they do indicate that location or position is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition of place, even if it is a very common condition. This is of significant importance as it demonstrates that mobility does not preclude attachment to place (see Massey, 1991).

Certainly appearance, whether of buildings or natural forms, is one of the most obvious attributes of place. It is substantial, capable of description. As a visual landscape place has its clearest articulation in distinct centres or prominent features. Place experience is a concept that has been extensively explored by environmental psychologists. Of particular importance is the notion of place attachment, a cognitive bond between person and place (Kamalipour et al., 2012; Altman and Low, 1992). For urban policy, the dual concepts of social and physical predictors of place allow an attempt to measure the impact of urban renewal projects. Social predictors of place can be given as the community ties and networks that present the opportunity for people to engage with. Physical predictors include features on the
built or natural environment that provide distinction from other places. Lewicka (2011:215) notes that it is possible the environmental or physical connections to place might develop quicker than social or emotional connections to place, and these determinants are related to the various socio-cultural and socio-economic relationships people have to place and these change – or are changed through urban policy – over time. Scannell and Gifford (2010) conclude that in terms of temporal determinants of place attachment, civic (social) determinants correlate more frequently with length of residence than do natural (environmental) determinants, for “it takes longer to create a network of stable social relationships than to develop affective bonds with beautiful nature” (Lewicka, 2011:215).

The experience of place has been traced through continental philosophy, the traditions of humanist geography and the emergence of place attachment. In doing this it is evidenced that place is subjective and that the body and its environment are deeply connected in a pre-scientific complicity. This complicity is at odds with the dominant discourses within urban planning which champion the subject/object dichotomy of Cartesianism. Soja (2010) contests that this ontological context within urban planning has led to a scenario in which the production of ‘valid’ knowledge has been seized upon by stakeholders that can create and use the increasingly specialised planning discourses and tools that influence what is possible to know about the urban (Malpas, 2011; Rogers, 2013). While notions of attachment to place are regularly recruited within urban policy texts – in attempts to better understand and represent the various psychological responses people express about their home, suburb, neighbourhood or city – these representations of peoples’ place
attachments and experiences are often hard to capture (Lewicka, 2011; Scannell and Gifford, 2010).

Before continuing to the next section of this chapter, ‘place as discourse’, I return to Soja. He perceives that the ontological primacy of Cartesianism has led to a scenario where it has become increasingly difficult to apprehend concepts such as ‘place’ through ‘conventional’ methods:

I give so much attention to this highly abstract world of ontology because I think it is the source of ... a fundamental bias in knowledge formation, distorting to some degree our epistemologies, theories, empirical analyses, and social practices. Identifying this ontological distortion and presenting a better alternative are essential to the task of developing a useful critical theory of spatial justice. (Soja, 2010:69-70)

The next section of this chapter will examine the ways that community stakeholders construct and articulate discourse about place.

**Place as discourse**

Urban design has long been used to create and augment “place”. Villages deploy the town square as their primary architectural feature, creating a space to socialise, conduct business and maintain order. Likewise, civic buildings such as courthouses, legitimate authority by their appearance and position within the city (Dovey, 2010). Urban design is central to the processes of creating and proliferating cultural meaning and modes of perception that help form collective (and individual) place discourses. Additionally, urban design is responsible for the suppression and marginalisation of alternative place discourses that are divergent from the dominant
discourse (Hague, 2005). When applied to ERPs, urban design and planning represents a process of developing a discourse, and often writing a narrative (master planning). Hague identifies that planning, but especially ERPs, are “a set of interlinked discourses of words and graphics, procedures, decision structures, legal requirements and limits... within which narratives about places can be written” (2005:10).

However, as Duncan and Barnes argue, setting the direction of urban change is not solely the realm of built environment professionals, “places are intertextual sites because various texts and discursive practices based on previous texts are deeply inscribed in their landscapes and institutions (1992:7). The discourses that are built around place cannot be erased as easily as the built form and replaced with new ones, even if those in power wish it to be the case, especially when these places are the sites of such powerful and divergent socio-spatial characteristics as public housing estates (Vale, 2002).

Approaching place as discourse is a challenging pursuit as Eco outlines “apparently most architectural objects do not communicate (and are not designed to communicate), but function” (1986:57). However, places and built form, notes Eco, have primary practical functions and also a secondary connotative, symbolic function, such as the Gothic cathedral, which is designed primarily as a meeting place, but also signifies the transcendence of the spiritual. These secondary associations are part of a particular discourse and are not exclusive to the cathedral.

The Shinto shrine or Buddhist temple is visibly quite distinct from the cathedral, being built within a different discourse; however they communicate similar religious
meanings. For Eco, places and buildings are not a fully autonomous communication system. Places may be apprehended directly, but conveying the significance of places requires the assistance of language; “while the elements (of places) constitute themselves as a system, they become a code only when coupled with systems that lie outside” (1986:79). Markus and Cameron (2002) further Eco’s argument to state that the built environment is so heavily dependent on language that to treat the built environment as language would be to obscure the role of actual language, speech and writing in shaping our understanding of the built environment.

For Dickson and Durrheim (2004) the concepts of place cannot be satisfactorily apprehended through a phenomenological analysis, suggesting that the linguistic accounts of social life are ‘reality-constructing’ and are not simple ‘internal’ reactions to environmental stimuli. Rather, they contend that these accounts, such as those given during interviews are ‘exemplars of discursive practice’. Following this argument, discourse can convey meanings of place, however it does not convey how these meanings are produced via practice (Blokland, 2008).

For Giddens, human action and experience cannot be understood outside pre-existing societal structures that shape social practices and that human experience and social structure re/produce one another. His Structuration theory develops a framework that sets out social (discursive) practice in terms of ‘rules’ and ‘resources’ (1984). Rules constitute the methodological processes of interaction, and the actor’s resources are the influence or means that enable participation. Giddens contends that all social practice is conducted within the context of a priori structures that are
simultaneously determinate and mutually recursive. Human action, then, is the spatialised reflection of the interaction of structure and agency:

to suppose that space has its own intrinsic nature... is logically questionable and empirically unfruitful. Space is not an empty dimension along which social groupings become structured, but has to be considered in terms of its involvement in the constitution of systems of interaction... in human geography spatial are always social forms. (Giddens, 1984:368)

These spatial routines present themselves as the fundamental human requirement for ontological security, “the confidence that most human beings have in the continuity of their self-identity and the constancy of the surrounding social and material environments of action” (Giddens, 1990:92). Like Aristotle, Giddens suggests that the components of ontological security; the notions of trust, familiarity, community, and tradition are all anchored in place. However, Giddens discards the rootedness of Aristotle, contending that for a place to be a meaningful site, it must not be territorially delimited but build meaning from linkages that spread across time and space “which make a place a more dynamic web than a specific site or location” (Oakes, 1997:509).

Giddens asserts that in the age of globalisation the concept of place has evolved, with local/global tensions changing the way places are experienced and consumed. Rather than the global overpowering the local, the local has 'opened' to the global with the romantic village a nostalgic response to maintain ontological security. Local place relations serve as “a defensive carapace or protective cocoon which all normal
individuals carry around with them as the means whereby they are able to get on with the affairs of day to day life" (1991:40).

Bourdieu’s contribution in the paired concepts of habitus and field develop the relationships between actors, agency and the spatial. By adapting the term ‘habitus’ (1977), Bourdieu outlines a way of knowing the world, a set of divisions of space and time, of people and things which structure social practice. The habitus manifests itself within the actor from childhood and is shaped by influences such as social class, family and education. Dovey (2010) likens the habitus to a ‘feel for the game’ of social dispositions that operate unselfconsciously and develop over time:

the habitus produces practice and representations which are available for classification... thus the habitus implies a ‘sense of one's place’ but also a ‘sense of the other’s place’. For example, we say of an item of clothing, a piece of furniture or an book: ‘that’s petty bourgeois’ or ‘that’s intellectual’. (Bourdieu, 1990:113)

Habitus, while not a synonym for ‘habitat’ is, according to Bourdieu, strongly linked to the dialectical manner in which discourse and the built form frame one another, “social space tends to be translated, with more or less distortion, into physical space” (Bourdieu, 2000:134). This is evidenced in the way that space is divided along the lines of the habitus (gender, class, ethnicity etc.) into suburbs, institutions, domestic spaces of kitchens or bathrooms or land use zoning. This dialectical relationship parallels the unreflexive structures knowledge and ontological security of Giddens, with actors apprehending their surrounds in a largely unselfconscious manner (Giddens, 1990; Dovey, 2010):
The agent engaged in practice knows the world... without objectifying distance, takes it for granted, precisely because he is caught up in it, bound up in it; he inhabits it like a garment (un habit) or a familiar habitat. He feels at home in the world because the world is also in him, in the form of habitus. (Bourdieu 2000:142-143)

Habitus is primarily a discourse of place as a rigid and limiting structure, showing the mechanisms of the stabilisation of place identities and how hierarchies of spatial discourses are evident in the built environment. Bourdieu (2012) asserts that habitus is similar to the concept of character, despite the habitus being acquired, from shared social conditions and therefore developed over time rather than being inborn. This shared habitus is durable, and in many ways self-perpetuates leading to the development of ‘good’ or ‘bad’ places. Public housing communities experience a particularly durable habitus, which both structures their experience of the estate and their response to dominant discourses surrounding public housing.

While habitus is a spatial concept of social discourse, a ‘feel for the game’ (Dovey, 2008), Bourdieu’s twinned concept of the ‘field’ is given as the space where human agency is exercised, with the impact of an actor’s agency proportional to their access to capital. Capital, argues Bourdieu, takes various manifestations, which he gives as economic, cultural and social, each of which are ultimately based on the economic, but are not simply reducible to it (Bourdieu, 1993; Dovey, 2008). Economic capital, is the most familiar, being any resource that can be easily converted to cash; housing, land, stocks etc. Cultural capital is the value attached to a person’s education, credentials, manners or knowledge. This form of capital is acquired through education and/or upbringing. Cultural capital may also be objectified by the art,
food, or social institutions a person chooses to consume, creating social distinction.

For example, an education at a top university serves as a mechanism for economic
capital to be transformed into socially valued cultural capital. Social capital differs
from the other two in that it relies on the collective networks of family, friends,
communities, and social clubs. Trust, community, solidarity and resilience are
hallmarks of social capital, while fear, alienation, and community dysfunction reveal
its absence (Putnam 1995). Dovey (2008), suggests that social capital is rooted in
place, serving as a spatial sorting mechanism of the other forms.

In the context of this study’s interests, Bourdieu contends that the field of cultural
production are used to sustain the legitimacy of the values and authority of the
dominant classes. By harnessing the symbolic power of their cultural, social and
economic resources, the dominant classes frame the field in such a manner that their
dominance becomes the valued scenario. The continued dominance of one class
over another is then sustained by ‘coercing the other into a field and habitus in
which they cannot win’ (Dovey, 2008). Within ERPs this coercion is evident in the
relationships between the resident community and those undertaking the project
(Evans and Reid 2013). This coercion and any resistance to the processes are laid
into the habitus of the estate, often resulting in a community developing a distrust
of planners and planning processes. Tighe and Opelt (2014) refer to this as
“collective memory”:

Collective memories of these experiences can temper a community’s willingness to
engage in meaningful and intimate dialogue. Communities that have experienced
mistreatment, exclusion, or discrimination at the hands of planners in the past will
likely continue to be suspicious of planning in the future. This is true even if the
collective narrative does not perfectly reflect events as they occurred because, ‘the imagination, rather than instrumental-rational thought, played an important and necessary role in how residents sought to make sense of the past, the present, and especially the future of their community.’

For Tilly, place is a socio-spatial construct negotiated between actors. Within a given space actors draw on previous interchanges with similar actors, operate within shared expectations of social norms, convey the character of their relationship through communication, yet evolve the relationship through:

- interacting repeatedly with others, renegotiating who they are, adjusting the boundaries they occupy, modifying their actions in rapid response to other people’s reactions, selecting among and altering available scripts, improvising new forms of joint action, speaking sentences no one has ever uttered before, yet responding predictably to their locations within webs of social relations they themselves cannot map in detail. They tell stories about themselves and others that facilitate their social interaction rather than laying out verifiable facts about individual lives. They actually live in deeply relational worlds. If social construction occurs, it happens socially, not in isolated recesses of individual minds. (Tilly 1998b:497–498)

Tilly’s model addresses the reductionist nature of phenomenology and allows the exploration of mental geographies as fluid processes rather than fixed entities (Blokland, 2008). Place identities emerge from interactions and shared understandings that intertwine closely with social relations with locations “serving as their tools and constraints instead of constituting an autonomous sphere” (Tilly 1998a:18). This separation of the social and space are for Tilly the mode by which different spatial locations can have similar place identities and/or social conditions.
through “the copying of established organisational models and/or the transplanting of existing social relations from one setting to the other” (Tilly 1998a:10).

Developing Lefebvre, Harvey argues that places are social constructs dialectically formed within the context of everyday life. Harvey argues that places cannot be understood outside the totality of processes or ‘moments’ of social life; discourse/language, beliefs/values/desires, institutions, material practice, social relations and power (1996:78). In the face of global capitalism, Harvey contends that rather than diminishing, the significance of place has become increasingly valuable. The threat of global homogenisation forces a re-evaluation and promotion of local differences to attract investment. Consumption spectacles and the hypermobility of capital led to the marketing of vernacular traditions and place identities, developing new place discourses based in choice and prestige (1996:297).

**Place as form**

The final manifestation of place that will be interrogated by this research is that of spatial form, the bricks and mortar that make up the built environment. Lefebvre (1991) notes that discussion of space is futile unless we also identify what inhabits that space. Applied to urban planning, we identify that spaces are filled with housing, places of employment, shops, parks etc. These spaces are connected by paths, be they roads, walking tracks or bike paths. The combination these routes and destinations compel us to experience and create discourse about place (Lefebvre, 1991; Lynch, 1960). Thus spatial practice, or perceived space is a material spatiality that can be subjected to empirically measurable arrangements across space. These arrangements are concrete phenomena within the lifeworld from the houses, streets
and neighbourhoods, through to the materialised constructs of the urban, nations, and global politics (Soja, 1993). Merrifield suggests that by ‘deciphering’ the space of a society, their spatial practices are perceived. Spatial practices “structure daily life and a broader urban reality” (1993:524). Returning briefly to Giddens (1984), immaterial spatial practices appear in the built environment as concrete ‘traces’ of social lives.

For Merrifield, place must be the starting point for any theoretical or political analysis as what is conceived of in thought and discourse is only actualised in places. He maintains that life is place dependent, a “practical and sensual activity acted out in place” characterised by “the moment of struggle between conceiving space through representation and living place through actual sensual experience and representational meaning” (1993:525).

Place is the result of grounding and harnessing the flows of circulating capital, money, commodities and information, with the resulting urban form representing a specific moment in the space dynamics under capitalism. In this way, spatial practices are dialectically implicated in both conceived space and lived place; “images symbols and perceptions of local people, subcultures and gangs..all embrace different spatial practices... centred around symbolic representations of the landscape (monuments, landmarks) which while, put in place through dominant spatial practices, become imbued with meaning in daily life” (1993:525). Thus, for Merrifield, the urban form is filled with sites where the symbolic meaning and imagery have an insidious and explicit impact on the spatial practices of everyday life and the urban remains a formidable means of appropriating space.
Milgrom (2008), reviewing the work of architect Lucien Kroll, identifies that while built environment professionals primarily operate generating discourse about place, their designs are eventually built. These designs at once make prescriptions about the configuration of the urban form but they also make assumptions about the spatial practices of users, their understandings of space and the symbolism of the designer’s intentions. Millgrom asserts that participatory design processes themselves are spatial practices, which attempt to address the lived experience of end users. If properly implemented participatory design will allow the complex, diverse spatial practices of communities. Rather than conceiving new places in isolation, Millgrom contends that any ‘successful’ design needs to be rooted within the social processes that are involved in realising the plan.

Successful urban design has been the subject of many manifestoes, which Lynch argues are overly prescriptive or reflect the subjective preferences of individual authors or specific contexts (1981). Further, the spatial discourses within urban policy can be categorised in a bipolar manner as either strong (oppressive), or wistful, prosaic, hidden or neglected. To combat this, Lynch’s project seeks to understand the ways humans apprehend and re/produce spatial practices. Seizing upon the quantifiable materiality of urban form, he argues that the legibility of places is fundamental to engendering ontological security and ownership. This legibility is termed by Lynch as “imageability”:

That quality in a physical object which gives it a high probability of evoking a strong image in any given observer. It is that shape, colour, or arrangement which facilitates the making of vividly identified, powerfully structured, highly useful mental images of the environment. (1960:9)
For Lynch, the imageability of the urban form is dependent on five elements: paths, edges, districts, nodes and landmarks. Each of these elements in turn impact the ability of a person to process, store and create meaning, orienting them within the urban environment. In later work, Lynch develops his theory for assessing the ‘performance’ of a place’s form. He asserts that his normative theory, links human values with city form directly and avoids the limitations of previous theories, which he argues are problematic or difficult to apply out of specific context (1981). This new model of assessing the ‘good city’ falls along the empirical criteria of vitality, sense, fit, access and control. The merit of these dimensions is suggested to lie in their universal capacity to evaluate existing places and assess the ‘quality’ of urban spaces.

Responding to similar urban conditions to Lynch, Alexander argues that late twentieth century urban development is without concern for character, aesthetics or utility for communities. For Alexander, the places are not an object unto themselves, but concrete representation of a pattern of social forces. These ‘patterns’ are at once “a set of social, spatial aesthetic and material vectors or forces in a given place” (Dovey, 2010:28) and the concrete representation, be it a building, neighbourhood or infrastructure. Alexander (1964) contends that modern development has led to placeless monocultures within cities and that there must be a renewed focus upon the place-based integration of pre-modern urbanism. Urbanism, and the built form, argues Alexander, are ideally organic designs by the communities that occupied those places, responding to the intuitive needs and desires of everyday life. These sentiments are echoed by Langer:
a 'place' articulated by the imprint of human life must seem organic, like a living form.

The place which a house occupies on the face of the earth, that is to say, its location in actual space, remains the same place if the house burns up or is wrecked and removed. But the place created by the architect is illusion, begotten by the visible expression of feeling, sometimes called an atmosphere. This kind of place disappears if the house is destroyed. (1953:99)

Hillier identifies that ‘real space’ is sorely lacking at the heart of the dominant social theory, and questions the apparent unwillingness to theorise the “principle manifestation (of space) in our everyday lives”. He perceives that within much of social theory "space acquires significance by being seen in terms of some other agency or process which gives it its shape and meaning" (2008:223). Hillier terms this apparent exclusion of place from theory as the ‘spatiality paradigm’.

As a solution to the apparent stalemate between social theorists and built environment professionals, he offers the space syntax theoretical model. The space syntax model is particularly well developed for describing place phenomena on public housing estates as these were the urban environments that were used for the construction of the theory, the decline of estates “presented a challenge (to existing) socio-spatial thought”(2008:224). By putting place as the prime consideration, Hillier claims that social and economic processes can be shown to be reflections of spatial patterns and relationships. This space-first focus has not been without criticism, with many environmental designers and academics dismissing the space syntax model as environmental determinism (Seamon, 1994); however the model provides a powerful conceptual toolkit, one which allows practitioners to understand what influence place has upon the community but also how place is experienced, and re/produced.
Chapter summary

This first literature review analysed a range of theory that can be aligned with the three components of Lefebvre’s spatial trialectic, highlighting the complex interactions between the experiential, discursive, and physical elements of place.

‘Place as experience’, unpacked the contribution of phenomenological traditions and highlighted that lived experience is the fundamental departure point from which conceptions of place are synthesised. The significance of these existential connections to place is made clear by Relph, Tuan and Heidegger.

‘Place as Discourse’ counters the reductionist nature of phenomenology and highlights the way place identity can be constructed from shared understandings and societal interactions between actors. The work of Giddens and Bourdieu illustrate that the construction of places are an effort to protect actor’s ontological security. These spatial discourses impact how we use and experience places, however, discourses need not be specifically linked to features in the physical environment.

Finally, when casting ‘Place as Form’ the totalising nature of the Lefebvre’s spatial trialectic is revealed. The urban form is both re/producer of experience and discourse, spanning the experiential, the social and the material while valorising none. This chapter has identified that in order to adequately respond to the research questions, the empirical component of the study must combine methods that apprehend the experience, discourse and material consequences of an ERP.

Following this chapter, a second literature review examines the ways that planners conceive and deploy the concept of community. The discussion then turns to the evolution of public housing design and the major influences of Radburn and New Urbanism. Finally the case for public housing renewal and renewal processes are analysed.
CHAPTER 3

Designing Community

“Designing” community

While social theory has been shown in the previous chapter to have undertaken a significant spatial turn recently, urban planning, has similarly resolved to evolve from a rational, scientific extension of architecture to a more sophisticated framework incorporating social theory, geography and economics. Phenomenological exploration of the urban lifeworld can be seen in Death and Life (Jacobs, 1961). Jacobs argues that the street layout (pathways), built form and diversity of land uses are the key to vital urban environments and communities are present in the urban design goals of new urbanism. Similarly, Foucauldian notions of observation and constructed power relationships underlie the increasingly popular design toolkit of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (Parnaby, 2007). Each ‘design solution’ seeks to address the various ‘shortfalls’ of modern urban life, be they car dependence, high rates of crime, or sustainability issues.

Like the previous chapter’s focus upon the role of ‘place’ in social theory, this chapter will explore the ways in which ‘community’ has been used by built environment professionals, from the roots of urban planning, through to the contemporary master planned development. To open, I will discuss the multiple conceptions of community from Tonnies, to how modern iterations of community
often overlap with the social and physical fabric of life. I will then outline the work of
the early planners and analyse the conceptions of community they deployed in their
plans. In the third section of the chapter I will investigate the two major urban
design schools that have impacted the design of public housing neighbourhoods
and drive the contemporary place based approach to ERPs. Finally I briefly analyse
the social goals of ERPs and the core policy concepts of neighbourhood effects and
social mix.

Community

‘Community’ is at once a common-sense and elusive concept. At its most basic,
‘community’ is a particular, discreet association that makes distinctions between
actors at some level. Tonnies (1957) developed the dual concepts of Gemeinschaft
(community) and Gesellschaft (society) to describe the different relationships people
have in everyday life. Gemeinschaft was for Tonnies, the relationships based on
mutual aid and trust. Often these relationships occur between families and
neighbours at a small scale. Gesellschaft makes up the more loosely connected social
relationships in which actors are largely anonymous and autonomous, these
relationships are often civic relationships of a corporation, city or nation. These
concepts can be observed within current definitions of community, which have
undergone significant proliferation since Tonnies’ pioneering work.

Bell and Newby comment that this proliferation of definitions and resultant
ambiguity is not unusual with “sociologists frequently launched into defining
community with a will bordering on gay abandon. Indeed the analysis of the various
definitions was at one time quite a thriving sociological industry” (1971:27). Of the
94 studies of community explored by Hillery (1955), all but three suggest that community means people in interaction. Further, Hillery finds that 55 studies argue that there is a geographical element to community, and that 24 assert that common ends, norms and values are an element of community (Brower, 2011). From Hillery’s paper, it can be argued that most definitions of community include conceptions of social cohesiveness, shared values and norms and geographical propinquity.

For Willmot (1989) ‘community’ can be classified along three distinct, yet complementary strands: Community of Territory, Community of Interest and Community of Attachment.

**Communities of Territory** are those that have a geographical basis. However the territory of the community “can vary widely in scale, it can be as small as a few streets, or as large as a nation, or even a group of them, as in the European Community”.

**Communities of Interest** group together people of similar religion, occupation, race or political preference. These communities can transcend the bounds of geography, such as the Anglican Church or the Chinese-Australian community.

**Communities of Attachment** are based on commonly held desires or sentiments that lead to a feeling of shared identity or membership. Members need not have personal interaction with other members to build a sense of attachment to the community. Communities of attachment often form around places such as neighbourhoods or suburbs, but are prevalent in political activism, such as anti-war protests.
These categories are useful for a number of reasons. Firstly, they allow classification of different communities without inadvertently applying any moral imperative, or emotional connotations to the method or purpose of a community’s formation. Second, they de-politicise the concept of community by focussing on mutual interest with others rather than association or consensus between members. Thirdly, they allow the possibility that a person has the opportunity and capacity to belong to multiple communities which may be of different types or geographically diverse in its characteristics. Importantly, Willmott concedes that while community can be separated out into territory, interest and attachment, there can be significant overlap between and within the typologies. Interest communities have territorial boundaries, just as territorial communities are often contain interest and attachment communities (see Table 1).

Attachment communities however, can only share boundaries with communities of territory in cases such as place attachment or a suburb progress society. As attachment communities are based in relationship, solidarity or belonging, attachment communities encompass diverse connections, such as family, professional associations or social groups.

Table 1: Describing communities by type and features

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE OF COMMUNITY</th>
<th>COMMUNITY OF TERRITORY</th>
<th>COMMUNITY OF INTEREST</th>
<th>COMMUNITY OF ATTACHMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PLACE</td>
<td>The community of Riverwood estate</td>
<td>Riverwood Community Garden Association</td>
<td>The Florida Crescent neighbourhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEOPLE / MEMBERSHIP</td>
<td>The residents of Riverwood estate</td>
<td>Members of Riverwood Community Garden</td>
<td>Local Arabic families</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For Suttles (1972), community is a phenomenon that is a deliberate social construction. Community is at once a repository of geographic and social information that informs the action of members. The community is firmly bound up in spatial experience given as the ‘neighbourhood’. Social, economic and physical characteristics are in themselves, subordinate to the creative social construction and representation of these characteristics in the community. For Suttles, communities are constructed around four major spatial criteria:

The Face-block: an area where people know one another mainly because they happen to live close by or use the same facilities.

The Defended Neighbourhood: the smallest area that has a corporate identity, a name that is recognised by members and outsiders, and facilities that residents use and share in the course of their daily lives.

The Community of Limited Liability: an officially recognised area with a name and official boundaries; it may contain several overlapping communities, some broad in scope and other focussing on a single issue, and people may choose to belong to one or more of them.

The Expanded Community of Limited Liability: a large area of the city within which community groups get together in order to marshal large constituencies and gain political clout (Milgram, 1972:494).

The consequence of this classification is that communities cannot be considered a society in microcosm. Suttles asserts “total societies are not made up from a series of communities, but communities are areas which come into being through their recognition by the wider society” (Milgram, 1972:495). There is therefore no requisite
discontinuity to the way actors experience neighbourhoods, communities, cities and regions or the concepts recruited to describe them. Suttles demonstrates this with the mapping methods of Lynch, valorising environmental cognition and territoriality that is found in neighbourhoods.

Conceptions of community have been built and modified as researchers have sought to understand the multidimensional components of community and neighbourhood. McMillan and Chavis (1986) synthesised the work of several social researchers to develop a classification and theory of a ‘sense’ of community. In the review of the existing literature, McMillan and Chavis found that a within a community there is “recurring emphasis on neighbouring, length of residency, home ownership” (1986:8). They go on to theorise that a sense of community is developed along the four elements of:

  Membership: a sense of belonging and identity, a symbolic right to exclude non-members. This may be as simple as owning a house in a particular street or may involve years of acquiring the norms and values of a community.

  Influence: the perception that an actor holds currency in generating the discourse of the community and in turn allows themselves to be influenced by the values and norms of the community.

  Integration and fulfilment of needs: presented as a primary function of a strong community, this is given as the ability and/or capacity for meet the social needs of their own and each other. This binds the community together.

  Shared emotional connection: the bonds of a community are significantly strengthened by a shared history. This history need not be personally experienced
(allowing newcomers) but each member must identify with it. Community events and the facilitation of investment in the community also serve to develop the emotional connection. Of the four elements, this is “the definitive element for true community. (1986:14)

Notwithstanding a bias toward the spatial, Macmillan and Chavis, stipulate that these elements can be equally applied to territorial community or to those “not bounded by location”. Synthesising the interactions between contributing elements to a ‘sense of community' into a cogent definition is “difficult to describe...in the abstract.” To illustrate their hypothesis, examples of how the elements are observed within communities are provided.

This discussion of community has revealed the multiple conceptions and definitions that are deployed within urban scholarship. While there are some significant differences between these conceptions, there are a number of notable parallels. Of the described definitions of community, each identifies multiple ‘types' of community an actor belongs to, and the social ties, means and intentions of each type. For this research, the model proposed by Willmott has the most applicability to the research. In the next section, the way BEPs deploy specific conceptions of community are examined.

**Commodifying community: Planner’s pursuit of urban utopia**

Creating a ‘sense of community’ has in long been a central objective of planners and other built environment professionals. While the multiplicities of the concept continue to cause difficulty for social researchers, BEPs have largely adopted the model influenced by community psychology. Planners strive to “create better, more
liveable and healthy communities that people enjoy to live in” (Elton, Blakely and Rossiter, 2009:1) whether in the explicit terms of policy documents, or reflected in planning praxis.

For Talen the “source of planning interest in community no doubt linked to a more popularised literature that mourns the loss of communal and public life” (2000:1). Citing Sennett (1978) and Putnam (2000) she argues there has been a strong response from planners to “re-establish civility and public life... using the tools of the planning trade” which are strongly related to the physical environment. This contemporary ‘call to arms’ is however the most recent of many in the history of planning praxis. The development of the present discourse of ‘community’ in planning can be traced back to the genesis of the modern era of planning.

Planning (as a modern profession) developed largely as a reform movement in the late nineteenth century, as a response to the social consequences of the industrial revolution (Hall, 2014). Poor health, hygiene and ‘slums’ of tenement housing had developed following the mass migration of populations toward cities away from rural areas. Planners set out to create wholesome communities via place-based, built form interventions (Ziller, 2004; Arthurson, 2012). Ziller maintains that planners have set out to create social connections within an area through urban design and infrastructure connections. This, she contests, hamstrings urban planning by pursuing ‘empirically inaccurate and aspirationally unrealistic’ relationships within places rather than examining and mediating relationships between places (Ziller 2004:467).
Gans, extends a largely consistent argument, asserting that the first generation of ‘reformist’ planners had by the 1920s coalesced with business and political leaders who “were interested in creating an attractive downtown retail area that would bring in shoppers and office workers... they were particularly interested in making sure the slums, usually located right next to the Central Business District (CBD), did not ‘infect’ this district” (1968:35). To achieve this, Gans asserts that the planners tools of zoning and master plans were used to segregate land uses along class lines. By separating housing types, retail and manufacturing, entertainment and outdoor spaces; early planners shaped an urban environment that focussed upon the ideals of the emerging middle classes. These plans often excluded affordable housing or support services for the poor. Gans claims that governments enforced a moral mandate by “clearing slums and replacing them with new housing, enabling the poor to live in good buildings and thus stop behaving like poor people” (1968:35).

For Gans, the way that planners conceive community in terms of the physical environment does not align with the social and political environments that shape people’s lives. “For the planner, people are little more than artefacts. They are expected to function within the land uses and other community arrangements that he provides....and to share the planner’s goals of order, efficiency and beauty for their community” (1968:33).

The tenets of New Urbanism place significant emphasis upon the creation of community and neighbourliness as a product of the masterplans, disregarding broader social issues of spatial inequality or environmental sustainability (Talen, 2000). Harvey suggests that the overwhelmingly positive appraisal of ‘community’ is part of a broader narrative of coercion:
the ‘spirit of community’ has been held as an antidote to any threat of social disorder, class war, and revolutionary violence. ‘Community’ has ever been one of the key sites of social control and surveillance bordering on social repression. (1997:69)

What then, led to the tendency for BEPs to believe that a successful design would lead to community? Meacham (1999) suggests that, buoyed by the early sociological treatises of Tonnies and Durkheim, reformers such as George Cadbury and Octavia Hill strove to introduce the virtues of the rural village into urban areas. Glass suggests that the strong design bias prevalent in planning can be attributed to these ‘utopian’ social reformers; “the love of formula making is due to them, as is the strong anti-sociological tendencies particularly observable in such ideas as the neighbourhood unit and the garden city, which are imbued with nostalgic notions about the virtues of small scale, ‘balanced’ and self-contained community. The Utopian version of ‘sociology’, mechanistic and romantic and so happily definite in its conclusions, is of course one which appeals especially to the disciplines represented in the planning profession” (1959:401). As Taylor affirms:

the idea of the village, as a physical place and a social community, has exercised something of a hypnotic attraction for town planning theorists since the industrial revolution. Against this background, contemporary proposals for planning eco-villages (or neighbourhoods) can be interpreted as a perpetuation of this old idea of seeking to create small, village like, relatively self-contained communities. (2000:23)

This idealisation of the village has endured the evolution of urban planning as a key element of planning instruments and the conceptual discourse at all levels of the profession. From the NSW Department of Planning identification of ‘villages’ within the Metropolitan Strategy, through to the City of Sydney’s demarcation of ten
villages within its jurisdiction (NSW Department of Planning, 2013). The village is the fundamental spatial component of urban development around which community is expected to flourish. Gleeson asserts “just as Sea Monkeys could be willed into life by adding water to a strange powdery substance in a mail order packet, now community is willed into life by pouring money, lots of it, into nostalgic combinations of bricks and mortar” (2003:57).

Following this criticism of ‘village utopianism’ within modern planning, it can be evidenced that there is significant confusion about what elements of ‘community’ can be engendered by design and what is organic. While it is warranted for BEPs to design urban spaces with end users in mind, by situating the creation of a ‘sense of community’ as a specific objective, BEPs undervalue the concept of community.

There is however a growing ‘reform’ amongst BEPs to realign practice with a developing theoretical perspective that allows multiplicity of conceptions of community and socio-spatial context (Talen, 2000).

Hill and Salter promote a positive response to critiques of planning. By analysing the concept of inclusion, they seek to recast planning from an “arbiter of rights in law to one in which it administers and responds to a collective management process of multiple interests and views” (2004:1).

For Hill and Salter, the field of planning is attempting to adapt. The precepts of planning as an objective, institutional practice are struggling to properly engage with the dynamic, changing and increasingly unpredictable social and economic structures. They perceive that there is a growing trend to attempt to develop ‘participative’ or ‘communicative’ planning methodologies that can successfully
apprehend the individual’s subjective experience. They highlight that this trend has influenced the highest levels of governance with the following excerpt from a document published by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (UK):

Public engagement should be at the heart of our development plans... we want to empower local people to feel that they can participate in the system that is really interested in their views. (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2001:n.p.)

This trend toward public participation has been a significant feature of each ERP that has taken place in NSW and will be discussed in a later chapter.

Planners, whose tools shape the built environment, can make significant impacts upon the quality of life and amenity experienced in the urban environment. Planning and urban designers can impact “social and political forms of organisation through the spatial arrangement of public facilities, and social encounters through the design of sidewalks” (Talen, 2002:165). Gehl (1987) found that attractive public spaces were more likely to be utilised and held as significant by communities. Coleman (1985) argues that the design of Modernist public housing design had significant negative impacts upon the communities living there. Quality urban design is a focus of many ERPs, it deflects the criticism of the opposition to social housing development, serves to reduce stigma and provides high levels of amenity for all tenure groups (Evans and Beck, 2004).

Following is an analysis of the contributions of major planning theorists and in particular the evolution of urban design in public housing. Emphasis will be placed upon the two design schools that have the greatest impact upon public housing, those of Radburn and Traditional Neighbourhood Design.
The origins of planning: Social reform, industrial cities, and urban ‘villages’

When discussing the history of urban planning, there is some difficulty in determining an appropriate genesis. The twentieth century epoch of urban planning can be represented as a response to the nineteenth century city, however the ideas that influenced the early planners can be traced back to events and ideologies from as early as the 1500s (Hall, 2014). For the purposes of this study, the modern era of twentieth century urban planning provides a suitable starting point.

While a number of social reformers and benevolent industrialists had begun to develop better quality housing for their employees, such as George Cadbury’s Bournville Village (1893), these developments were for the use of a company’s employees. The broader planning practice evolved from the anarchist movements that flourished in the late nineteenth century (Hall, 2014). At the heart of the evolution and development of the UK/USA planning pantheon (of Ebenezer Howard, Patrick Geddes, Lewis Mumford, Clarence Perry, Clarence Stein and Henry Wright) was not only a desire to provide new iteration of the built form, but a vision for an alternative society based on voluntary cooperation among neighbours, working and living in small self-governing commonwealths.

The first and most significant response to the Victorian city was the garden-city of Ebenezer Howard, who without any professional planning training (as there was none available) conceived as an antidote to the ills of the city. For Howard, the overcrowding experienced in cities was the primary driver of the various social and
environmental issues that faced the population (see Figure 3). While the city provided opportunities for higher wages and greater opportunities for leisure, Howard counters that people faced longer working hours in dangerous factories, high rents for squalid tenements, ‘the anonymity of the crowd’ and the health impacts of the highly polluting industry. Conversely, the countryside offered healthy environments, strong social ties and better quality housing while suffering low wages (or unemployment), poorer leisure activities and dangers of agricultural failure. Howard contests, inspired by a theological fervor, that neither the town nor country alone “represents the true plan and purpose for nature. Human society and the beauty of nature are meant to be enjoyed together...Town and country must be married, and out of this joyous union a new hope, a new life, a new civilisation” (Howard, 1902:10).

Figure 3: Howard’s three magnets

Source: Howard, 1902.
Howard envisioned the Garden City to be a new paradigm in urban development. It was to be a vehicle for social reform. Hall (2014) describes Howard’s project as a radical, progressive recasting of capitalist society into cooperative communities within highly connected, high amenity ‘urban’ areas. The Garden City consisted of a 2500-hectare parcel of land with six radial avenues spanning from a central park. Ring roads formed a web between the radial avenues, providing spaces for residential, commercial and civic land uses. Surrounding the core of the settlement, light industry provided local employment opportunities. Beyond this, agricultural land serves as a productive, green buffer from the ‘Central City’ where industry and governance were the major land uses. Road and rail linked each satellite Garden City to one another and the Central City (see Figure 4).

Each Garden City was envisioned to have a population of 32000, with the Central City with a population of 58000. The scale of Howard’s plan was immense, and suggests that fundamentally the Garden City was a sociopolitical one (Mumford, 1946:37). The proposed financial structures that were to fund the establishment of the Garden City was to be recouped by rental incomes, with any surplus to be reinvested into community and welfare programs. Howard’s plan could then be presented as a model of a third socio-economic system, blending Victorian capitalism and bureaucratic centralised socialism. With localised governance and management, services could be properly targeted with greater efficiency. Howard also intended that residents would construct their own homes, stimulating the economy through construction, arriving at a scenario where a society could invest its economy out of recession 40 years before Keynes (Hall, 2014).
In 1902, Garden City Pioneer Company was formed to investigate and plan the construction of the first iteration of the Garden City, Letchworth, approximately 60 kilometers from London was chosen. After negotiations with local landowners, a 1540 hectare site was purchased and in 1904 Raymond Unwin and Barry Parker were appointed as architect/planner and project managers (Miller, 1992). The plan included “a central square, surrounded by civic and religious buildings, connected with a wide processional way to the railroad station and adjoining industrial areas. Axial streets... extended from the central square to outlying hamlets, each with a sub-centre surrounded by housing” (Brower, 2011:62). Despite initial enthusiasm, Howard and the Garden City Pioneer Company struggled to attract major investment for the concept. The Company modified Howard’s original plans of
resident land ownership, establishing a company title, which was thought to be a more attractive investment for industrialists. In 1905, an engineering firm and a book bindery moved to Letchworth, commencing the economic growth of the city. For the main Letchworth attracted “people with independent minds who were looking for something new and hoped to invent new approaches to religion, art, education and even agriculture” (Brower, 2011:63). Early models of co-housing were established, and residents enjoyed “the prevalence of a true spirit of citizenship and social intercourse rarely seen” (Westall, 1909:n.p.). Letchworth has grown to a small city of approximately 34000 in 2010 and reflects the broad community intentions of Howard.

Developing Howard’s central themes of mitigating overcrowding and pursuing self-governance of cities, Patrick Geddes, argues that the solution lies at broader geographical bounds. For Geddes, the solution to the Victorian city is his vision of a regional plan, with sub-regional cities, subordinate to the region, developed sympathetically with the natural resources available. In Geddes plan, cities and towns would grow and decline as necessary within the regional scheme.

For Geddes, planning must commence with a comprehensive survey of the natural resources of a region, the human responses to them (land uses) and the resulting cultural landscape. It is only with this information that a planner would be adequately familiarised with the processes of human civilisation. Geddes contends:

Such a survey of a series of our own river basins ... will be found the soundest of introductions to the study of cities ... it is useful for the student constantly to recover the elemental and naturalist-like point of view even in the greatest cities. (1905:107)
To undertake the survey, Geddes asserts that there must be a paradigmatic shift in the planner’s ‘tool box’. Moving away from conventional maps and representations of reality, the Valley Section provided Geddes a way to express his vision. The “Valley Section, as we commonly call it, makes vivid to us the range of climate, with its corresponding vegetation and animal life ... the essential sectional outline of a geographer’s ‘region,’ ready to be studied”; examined closely, it “finds place for all the nature-occupations”:

Hunter and shepherd, poor peasant and rich: these are our most familiar occupational types, and manifestly successive as we descend in altitude, and also come down the course of social history. (Geddes, 1915:333)

The Valley Section (see Figure 5) was a radical departure from previous methodology, driven by Geddes aspiration to understand the “active, experienced environment” which “was the motor force of human development; the almost sensual reciprocity between men and women and their surroundings was the seat of comprehensible liberty and the mainspring of cultural evolution” (Hall, 2014:140).

Geddes argued that regional study, through its archaic quality and emphasis upon tradition and history was to provide the basis for the total reconstruction of social and political life.
While Howard and Geddes made significant contributions to the field of Planning, Clarence Perry’s conception of the Neighbourhood Unit (see Figure 6) has had the most enduring influence upon the built environment. For Perry, the neighbourhood was the key building block of the city, racially and socially homogenous small-scale communities of up to 6000 people (Brower, 2011). Perry conceived the neighbourhood community as united by propinquity rather than the political frameworks that were the hallmarks of the larger scales of city, state and nation (Perry, 1929). The fundamental principle of Perry’s concept, was that the “neighbourhood should be considered both as a unit of a larger whole and as a distinct entity in itself” (1929:34). These neighbourhoods were to be largely self-contained, with many civic services (schools, community organisations, shops and parks) provided at by the local jurisdiction. For government, emergency services and other services, the neighbourhood would rely upon the city. For Perry, the neighbourhood unit was a primarily ‘peculiar and well-arranged residential community’ with the majority of residents leaving the neighbourhood daily for employment or access to services.
Given the social homogeneity of the community, Perry suggested that the design of each neighbourhood would be a reflection of the social values of the residents. The “character of the district in which a person lives tells a story about him. Since he chose it, ordinarily it is an extension of his personality. One individual can do but little to create it. It is strictly a community product” (1929:34). Perry does not make clear what he expects to the causal elements of this connection, however he places significant emphasis upon the quality of the urban design and the layout of each neighbourhood.

Figure 6: Perry’s neighbourhood unit

Source: Brower, 2011.

Perry’s Neighbourhood Unit has left an enduring legacy upon the housing and development industry across the Western world. The Neighbourhood Unit has, in the last 25 years been brought back into the spotlight as the basis of the New
Urbanism movement, where access to mixed housing types, commercial uses and local transport options within walking distance have been identified as the major determinants of sustainability and amenity. New Urbanism will be discussed later in this chapter.

**Homes for the people: Public housing design in postwar NSW**

This section explores and identifies the major epochs of public housing design in NSW. Over time, the mission and role fulfilled by the various incarnations of the State Housing Authority has developed, responding to society’s needs. Since the inception of the Housing Commission in 1942, successive governments have endeavoured to “improve society” (NSW DoH, 2002:9) and address the various challenges of public tenure. Numerous housing styles have evolved; from ‘fibro’ cottages on a large suburban block, through Modernist ‘Towers in the Park’ and Radburn style developments to the various specialised housing types offered to social housing residents today. This evolution can be attributed to the increasingly complex needs of society and the physical response deemed appropriate by planners and architects. If it is true that architecture reflects philosophy, ideas and government policy as asserted by De Botton (2006), then it is appropriate to say that various housing styles are physical expressions of the ever changing political policies, cultural philosophies, demographics and housing needs of post war NSW.
Radburn: Suburban paradise (lost)

While there has been numerous approaches to planning public housing estates, the design principles of ‘Radburn’, first adopted in 1963, have had the most impact upon public housing neighbourhoods in NSW (NSW Department of Housing, 1996).

Radical in its attempt to separate vehicular and pedestrian traffic, Radburn has been described as “a benchmark community design” and the “prototypical American suburban expression of Ebenezer Howard’s “Garden City”” (Martin, 2001). The urban design at Radburn, New Jersey represents a calculated assault upon conventional streetscapes with the promise of a more socially connected population.

Stein’s masterplan was a utopian vision, which infatuated Housing Commission planners between 1972 and 1989, and represented the majority of estate development in Campbelltown and Mount Druitt of approximately 15000 dwellings (Woodward, 1997; NSW Department of Housing, 2002).

Much like Howard’s Garden City, Stein and Wright’s Radburn scheme of 1928 was a radical departure from the contemporary conceptions of the urban environment. Responding to the perceived danger of pedestrian/vehicle interaction, Stein and Wright envisaged an urban settlement that effectively eliminated the danger through largely separating the two. Stein and wright, conceived a plan in which growing ownership of motor cars could be accommodated, while allowing residents to walk, or cycle in the expansive common parks that linked the neighbourhood.

In its original iteration at Fair Lawn, New Jersey, Radburn was intended to be a town of approximately 30000 people. Land was divided into ‘superblocks’ of 16 hectares
surrounded by arterial roads. Two adjacent superblocks would share a primary school, high school, community centre and community shops. Within each superblock a minimal street layout of culs-de-sac provided vehicular access to the rear of clusters of 20 housing units (see Figure 7). Vehicular access was to the ‘rear’ of the house, with the houses oriented toward the pedestrian pathways of the common park. The pedestrian pathways linked neighbourhoods to one another and crossed over/under roads. Common property (paths, road, parklands and community facilities) was held in trust by a corporation supported by annual rates paid by residents (Brower, 2011; Martin, 2001). This town scale development was never fully realised due to the Great Depression, with only two superblocks fully developed however its radical conceptions of urban life have been adopted, appropriated and evolved in a number of neighbourhoods across the Anglophone world.

During the early 1960s, Housing Commission planners were faced with profound social change. An exponential growth of young children in public housing and the increasing prevalence of motor vehicle ownership needed to be accommodated by planners. For the new generation of post war planners, the Radburn concept represented “the best features of city and rural life combined to form a suburban utopia” (Woodward, 1997:25).
Cartwright, the final precinct of the Green Valley estate is credited with being the first Radburn designed community in Australia setting the “benchmark for estate planning for the next two decades” (NSW Department of Housing, 2002:19). The Mount Druitt estates constructed during the 1960s consisting of 8000 dwellings together represent the largest housing estate constructed. A shift to townhouse development from cottages increased the density of the built form. This change in the delivered built form was a response to the emergence of smaller families, after the post war population boom (Pettigrew, 2005). Further demographic change and the growing scarcity of residential land during the 1970s saw the ‘corridor estates’ of Macquarie Fields, Airds, Bradbury and Minto constructed. These smaller estates were built along the Liverpool-Campbelltown transport corridor, providing access beyond the estate. Built form was of medium density, often townhouses or walk-up flats.
within a Radburn layout. In all 17 Radburn inspired estates were constructed across NSW. At the time “the adoption of Radburn type planning was received most enthusiastically by the public generally, and in particular, was favourably commented upon by many planning authorities” (Housing Commission of NSW, 1964:16).

Figure 8: Map of Cartwright (Green Valley) estate

![Map of Cartwright (Green Valley) estate](image)

Source: SIX Maps, NSW Land and Property Information.

Woodward, in his review of the NSW application of Radburn, links the design back to the theorisation of Lefebvre, arguing that “Radburn was to be a leisure city, in any city, the centre is generally regarded as the symbol of community values... in Radburn it is open space.... *Radburn was designed to reverse the historic value of a communities centre*” (1997:26, emphasis added). The anti-urbanist design of Radburn reversed the conventional ‘lived space’ of suburban Australia, where the home is more than a unit of domestic architecture; it is a site of ontological security, which governs associated social conventions (Rapoport, 1969). By reversing the orientation of the home, the planner makes a dramatic assumption about neighbouring and community ties. Woodward (1997) notes that the success of Radburn in New Jersey comes down to resident agency, and the choice to live there,
unlike public housing tenants, who are increasingly disempowered and have little choice of their dwelling place.

The application of Radburn to NSW public housing has been regarded to be an overreach of modernist planning into the suburban environment. Significant investments have been made to ‘de-Radburnise’ the estates through initiatives such as the Neighbourhood Improvement Program (NIP) and Building Stronger Communities (BSC). These works involve “closing walkways, enclosing open space into back yards, fencing, carports, landscaping refocussing the houses back onto the street and the subdivision of the super lots facilitating partial sale” (Woodward, 1997; see Figure 9).

While radical and utopian in the late 1920s, Stein and Wright’s Radburn failed to deliver on its promises in 1970s Sydney, with its distinctive layout and severe architecture. It is no coincidence that the majority of ERP projects take place on former Radburn estates, the vast parklands providing opportunity to recast the urban design discourse. The strong presence of the private residential market has led to masterplanned communities that reflect the tenets of Traditional Neighbourhood Design.
Figure 9: Processes of de-Radburnisation

Traditional Neighbourhood Design: Returning to the ‘new’ urbanism

Within public housing estate renewal and urban renewal in general, the focus upon physical change is championed to create the new place. By erasing the existing built form, urban designers are free to construct “masterplanned” estates. Vale (2002) states that this departure from the interior design of public dwellings and estates is useful in the development of public housing communities. This is due to the distinctiveness of public dwellings within neighbourhoods that make an easy target for much of the stigma that weighs upon tenant communities.

A number of writers have espoused the benefits of the territorial definition, the appropriate design of housing and public spaces/thoroughfares (Jacobs, 1961; Newman, 1972; Coleman, 1985; Gehl, 1987). In each of their works, particular attention is paid to the ways that the built environment can be observed to encourage acquaintanceship, passive surveillance and good neighbourliness. These writers (among others) have been co-opted by the recently (post World War II) established design school of Traditional Neighbourhood Design (TND). TND, particularly in its ‘New Urbanism’ iteration has been described as the “most important phenomenon to emerge in American architecture in the post-Cold War era” (Muschamp, 1996). The principles of TND champion a pedestrian focussed, mixed-use and well-defined neighbourhood in reaction to the modernist planning of Radburn and Le Corbusier. The New Urbanists claim that the reform driven modernists and their anti-urban utopianism had gone too far resulting in suburban sprawl and car dependence. New Urbanists contend that that the traditional American town design holds many benefits such as community development,
environmental sustainability and boosting the cost effectiveness of infrastructure (Kunstler, 1993).

The core objective of the New Urbanists is the creation of a ‘sense of community’ that like Howard, Perry, Stein and Wright before is to be realised through a radical departure from the current norms of urban planning. For the New Urbanists, while the principles of previous community design concepts have been revived, it is the pre-modern urban form that forms the core of their design manifesto (Krier, 1984; Calthorpe, 1993). While previous sections of this chapter have outlined that many components of ‘sense of community’ are quite separate from physical space, to bridge this apparent gap, the TND relies upon the model outlined by Fleming et al. (1989). Fleming et al. assert that environment variables have a concrete impact upon group formation and bonding through frequent social contact (Talen, 1999).

New Urbanism has its origins in the Ahwahnee Community Principles, a document prepared by Calthorpe et al. (1991) for the Local Government Commission. The Principles set out the fundamental design avenues that TND uses to create a sense of community. Following this exercise, the authors went on to establish the Congress of the New Urbanism (CNU), evolving and formalising the design language and social doctrine developed at Ahwahnee. In 1999 the Charter of the CNU was released, which codified the new urban solution along the following themes:

*Architecture and site design.* Social interaction is promoted by specifying small setbacks and large, useful porches to project human presence into the street. (Duany and Plater-Zyberk, 1992)
Density and scale. Urban development is structured according to the ‘natural logic’ of neighbourhood scale. Sense of community and neighbourliness are engendered through well-defined neighbourhoods with clear boundaries and an identified focus. (Duany and Plater-Zyberk, 1994)

Streets. Within the New Urbanist concept, streets are considered to be public space. By designing streets to encourage pedestrian activity it is thought that community bonds will be strengthened through chance encounters. (Calthorpe, 1993)

Public Space. Like streets, public space is designed to increase the likelihood of chance encounters. Public spaces often serve as symbols of civic pride and give ‘heart’ to the neighbourhood. For New Urbanists sense of place is achieved through careful design and placement of parks, squares and playgrounds. (Langdon, 1994)

Mixed uses. The benefits of mixed uses have been known since observed by Jane Jacobs. The places of work, residence and recreation are close by, pedestrian activity is encouraged communities become more integrated which fosters the sense of community. (Jacobs, 1961; Audriac and Shermyen, 1994)

(Adapted from Talen, 1999)

The design principles of New Urbanism have been widely applied to brownfield redevelopment, new estates on the urban fringe and public housing renewal. The possibility of generating a ‘sense of place’ through design is attractive to housing providers, planners and architects. New Urbanist master-plans boast levels of amenity and convenience that align with both market desires and government policy. Despite the commercial success of New Urbanism, there is concern regarding the theoretical rigour of its claims.
The strongest criticism of New Urbanism is that the claims it makes are based on a set of a priori assumptions. The ability of urban design to improve social interaction and therefore create a sense of community is presented as intuitively obvious and beyond reproach. The theoretical doctrine of New Urbanism has been cherry-picked from the work of Jacobs, Coleman, Newman and a series of anecdotal processes documenting the perceived correlation of design and interaction of neighbours (Talen, 1999; Langdon, 1988; Yancey, 1971). This process has led to a scenario where the principles underlying New Urbanism are based upon the assumption of “intertwining of personal and place identity” (Forrest and Kearns, 2001). The belief that urban design holds a power over resident interaction and the community has strong echoes of the ‘Chicago School’ (Plas and Lewis, 1996; Talen, 1999). The main concern with this alignment is that the Chicago School has been discredited within the social science academy, making reconciliation difficult without recasting the social doctrine of New Urbanism (Harvey, 1997).

For Ziller, the New Urbanism design doctrine signposts a return to the Gemeinschaft concept of Tonnies. She asserts that the contemporary planner is preoccupied with “unrealistic and mechanistic” approaches to social outcomes (2004:471). By focussing upon the built form, and the relationships expected within them, place-based developments, argues Ziller, are essentially inward focussed. This can be particularly problematic for ERPs as this inward focus decouples places from one another while the causes and distribution of relative disadvantage operate at broader scales. Parkinson concludes “trying to solve the problems of social exclusion by working within particular areas of cities is bound to fail, since the causes of the problems and the potential solutions for them - whether they are economic and
social changes or institutional resources and programmes – lie outside the excluded areas” (1998:2). For Harvey, the role of the neighbourhood in New Urbanism is overstated; that “neighbourhoods are in some sense intrinsic, that the proper form of cities is some ‘structure of neighbourhoods’ that ‘neighbourhood’ is equivalent to ‘community’ and that ‘community’ is what most Americans want and need- whether they know it or not” (1997:2).

Jacobs, whose work is co-opted extensively by the New Urbanism, expressed reservations about the ways her insights had been incorporated. While many of Jacob’s concepts frame the basic design parameters of New Urbanism (Kunstler, 1993), its doctrine, design codes and covenants suppress her “vision of the city as an adaptive space... gets lost in the picture perfect images of New Urbanism” (Grant, 2011:101). Jacobs identified that the New Urbanists had successfully usurped modernist planning in the mainstream, however it’s centralising power leaves little room for individual voices and the democratic organisation of urban space. In her interactions with the New Urbanism and its proponents, Jacobs remained sceptical of its prescriptive design objectives suggesting that while meaningful social units occur at a street level, the liveliness that planners pursue in neighbourhoods can only occur at city scale, where their size gives diversity and vitality (Kunstler, 1993; Stiegerwald, 2001). Jacobs warns that to try and instil growth at neighbourhood level by rebuilding to New Urbanist concepts (but not considering alternative spatial discourses) we fall into the deception of ‘salvation by bricks’ under which public housing has suffered much already.
The magic bullet: How New Urbanism is deployed in public housing renewal

As the site of Modernist planning schemes such as Radburn, public housing estate renewal programs are often masterplanned around New Urbanism principles. For SHAs, New Urbanism provides an opportunity for multiple policy objectives to be achieved.

Bothwell, Gindroz and Lang (1998) describe how the United States HOPE VI program has used New Urbanist design concepts. Using the USA example of Diggs Town, Bothwell et al. demonstrate how New Urbanism has been used to construct opportunities for outdoor socialising as well as setting up defensible space. Bothwell et al. assert "Physical design constitutes an independent variable that influences social structure" (1998:111). For BEPs, the “architecture of engagement” (1998:111) New Urbanism promotes has been adopted as to enhance the social mixing objectives of ERPs. Moreover, Ellis argues “the New Urbanism has always advocated infill development, mixing people of different incomes within the same communities, and providing dignified affordable housing that looks like normal housing” (2010:299). Homogenous design language has been advocated as a key to successful public housing redevelopment ensuring a equitable outcome for stakeholders (Marcus and Sarkissian, 1986; Vale, 2002; Arthurson, 2012; Brower, 2011; Goetz, 2010b).

One significant argument against the deployment of New Urbanist principles in ERPs is that in the case of HOPE IV, there is a significant reduction of public housing units
on site as a result of the lower density of the infill development (Marcuse, 2000). However this is not necessarily an indictment against New Urbanism, but a poor application of its principles. Counter to the USA experience, in the Australian context the impact on the built form is one of significant densification. Typically there is at least double the number of dwellings on site (Housing NSW, 2010) and significant intensification of paths and links within the neighbourhood (Rogers, 2012b).

While contemporary ERPs have recruited a complete redesign of target estates, there has been a steady evolution from the late 1980s to address the perceived social exclusion of public housing and improve the quality of life for residents. The next section will discuss this development.

**Public housing renewal as a social intervention**

Since the 1980s, there has been a progressive residulisation of the tenant base in public housing. This has been driven from three major directions: decreasing housing affordability, changes to social policy more broadly and a net reduction in public housing stock. The result is that public housing neighbourhoods have become characterised by intergenerational welfare dependence, poverty, crime and antisocial behaviour (Arthurson, 2012). Physical decay, or poor urban design is given as a major contributor to these issues. This is the ‘problem’ that ERPs are envisaged to ‘solve’. The ERP model has in NSW undergone a series of evolutions, each iteration increasing the scale of both the physical redevelopment undertaken and social welfare policies deployed. This section will briefly trace the evolution of ERPs in NSW.
The Neighbourhood Improvement Program (NIP), initiated in 1995 was undertaken in a number of estates (including Riverwood and Bonnyrigg) with the chief objective to “remove the stigma associated with public housing estates and to ensure that they look and operate in a way comparable with other residential areas” (Ruming, 2006:28). The targeted estates were identified as having high levels of dysfunction, social exclusion and high management costs.

Primarily the NIP was an asset based program. HNSW planners proposed that the design of the built environment had a causal relationship with the social dysfunction experienced by residents. By undertaking a built form intervention, essentially ‘de-Radburnising’ estates, it was expected that the socio-economic issues would be addressed. Some token level of community consultation was also performed to gauge resident’s desires for their neighbourhoods (Stubbs and Hardy, 2000). Hassell (1997) outlines the NIP’s objectives as:

- improve physical amenity,
- improve estate services,
- improve estate appearances,
- greater security, safety and privacy,
- improve tenant control over private areas,
- better living spaces,
- better use of open space, and
- community ownership over the process and outcomes.

Unlike contemporary ERPs undertaken in other states, the execution of the NIP did not require the relocation of residents throughout the project, and did not lead to a
reduction of public housing on site. By undertaking the subdivision of Radburn superlots, constructing new fencing, public domain enhancements, new street layouts and carports, Housing NSW deemed that the issues that serve to highlight the disadvantage upon estates had been addressed (see Table 2).

Bijen and Piracha (2012) found that in the case of the Riverwood NIP project, the focus on remedial urban design was a key to its success. By defining public and private spaces, improving site legibility and making modifications to housing that allowed passive surveillance; residents and community stakeholders enjoyed many improvements. Residents reported feeling safer and more active in the neighbourhood. Housing NSW noted that the community stabilised, with significantly reduced administration and maintenance costs. Moreover, the local community centre found that the estate became significantly more involved with community activities.

Table 2: Neighbourhood Improvement Program – problem / solution table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problems of NIP estates</th>
<th>NIP solutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The proliferation of ‘Radburn’ influenced cul-de-sacs and walkway, which influence levels of ownership, identity and security.</td>
<td>Street frontage for all dwellings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private space open to parks leading to potential intrusion</td>
<td>Re-defining private open space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existing walkway network as site of fear and crime</td>
<td>Streets should replace walkways as the principle pedestrian network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parks in public housing estates do not have public or road frontages</td>
<td>Street frontage parks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominance of cul-de-sacs</td>
<td>A connected street network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor roads are too wide, encouraging high speeds</td>
<td>Road design for safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public housing neighbourhoods physically contained with clear boundaries</td>
<td>Physical integration with surrounding neighbourhood. Visual integration is also important.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor quality of existing fields and reserves</td>
<td>The equitable provision of safe, usable open space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High levels of unused open spaces</td>
<td>Rationalised unused open space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominance of townhouses</td>
<td>Partial or complete redevelopment of town house precincts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Randolph and Judd (2000) in their evaluation of the NIP suggest that while the NIP was generally successful, the methodology established by HNSW was difficult to apply rigorously. The autonomous nature of individual NIP projects made cross comparison difficult and impossible to accurately determine the efficacy of specific renewal expenditures. Randolph and Judd suggest that any future ERP should include standardised cost-benefit audits and a rigorous baseline study to assess social impact. Despite these difficulties, the NIP is has been widely regarded as successful from the perspective of residents (Stubbs and Hardy, 2000).

The NIP was unique in its approach to estate renewal as the project was undertaken by HNSW, and funding streams were from within the government. Subsequent ERPs have been undertaken in a more constrained financial environment, with the public housing sector facing ongoing concerns of financial viability. In order to achieve the core objectives of providing housing and addressing disadvantage (Lilley, 2011), housing providers are entering into public-private partnerships (PPPs) to fund ERPs. Typically these PPPs represent a far-reaching intervention into the physical and social fabric of the estate. The PPP realises a socially mixed outcome through the staged redevelopment of the estate incorporating both public and private housing, new public domain, open space and community facilities. The redeveloped estate enjoys a high standard of amenity and often becomes affordable, aspirational housing within the local market (City Futures Research Centre, 2013). To attract private investment, estates are redeveloped at much higher density. For example, the ERP at Riverwood involved the demolition of 150 dwellings and the construction of 600.
By undertaking PPPs, housing providers attempt to achieve multiple goals simultaneously. Randolph and Wood (2004) identify three broad groups of benefits that are the desired outcomes of PPP ERPs:

1) Asset management outcomes
   - Creating the conditions within estates where property values rise leading to improved stock valuations for the remaining public housing and overall asset enhancement (stock revaluation).
   - Portfolio reconfiguration, especially in terms of disinvest stock that is perceived to be obsolete or with high maintenance costs and restructuring the stock mix and location to match emerging patterns of demand (stock realignment).

2) Housing management outcomes
   - Reduced concentrations of public housing towards much lower ‘average’ levels across targeted suburbs (dispersing disadvantage).
   - Improved housing management outcomes from a reduction of tenant based problems associated with larger concentrations of public housing (managing residualisation).

3) Social welfare outcomes
   - Reductions in wider social expenditures on welfare support in the renewal areas (generating service efficiencies).
   - Anticipated positive social outcomes for remaining tenants in communities with a more ‘normal’ social profile: reduced stigma, stronger social networks, improved access to services and employment (tackling social exclusion). (2004:5-6)

As Randolph and Wood (2004) identify, there is an emphasis upon the social objectives of ERPs. These objectives focus upon balancing the tenure profile of
estates to introduce a socially mixed community. Following is a brief discussion of
the twinned concepts of neighbourhood effects and social mix which are used as
major policy justifications for undertaking PPP ERPs (Holmes, 2006).

The neighbourhood effects hypothesis essentially states that living in a
disadvantaged neighbourhood leads to, or compounds disadvantage at an
individual level (Atkinson, 2008). There is a growing literature that seeks to establish
the existence and/or efficacy of these effects (Lupton, 2003; Galster, 2010). The
common assertions of the neighbourhood effects hypothesis can be summarised as:

- Conditions in housing markets tend to concentrate cheap housing away from
  employment opportunities or public facilities however the poorest people are likely
to live in these locations. This has flow on effects for high unemployment, low
  educational attainment, and poor health outcomes as these households become
  concentrated.

- The disadvantage of an area can lead to it becoming stigmatised and suffering
  further from ‘postcode discrimination’ encouraging further revisualisation of the
  population as those with the financial capacity to, leave the neighbourhood

- Continued residualisation of the population can result in the truncation of a person’s
  social networks and the establishment of a ‘culture of poverty’. Dysfunctional
  behaviour becomes normalised and reproduced.

- Poor quality housing and public domain serves to stigmatise the neighbourhood and
  can have significant impact upon the community’s health, undermines morale and
  aids the committing of crime.

(Adapted from Sampson 2012)
These assertions can seem intuitive, with Cheshire (2007) likening them to an article of faith. However, they remain highly contested with major lines of criticism focussing on the almost exclusive use of quantitative and positivist research methodologies (Darcy, 2007; Arthurson, 2012). Atkinson (2008), suggests that neighbourhood effects are difficult to attribute to a particular tenure or to the neighbourhood itself, this suggests that the processes of neighbourhood effects occur beyond the scale of the neighbourhood.

At the core of the neighbourhood effects thesis is the concept of social mix. The homogeneity of public housing estates is advanced as the causation for the social dysfunction found in these neighbourhoods (Cole and Goodchild, 2001). For Arthurson, social mix has been developed in policy discourse to describe what constitutes a community, specifically one that is heterogeneous in a range of aspects, including 'housing tenure, ethnicity and socio-economic characteristics of residents' (2008:209). The benefits of socially mixed communities are given by its proponents as:

- Improved access to social networks, which link residents to other opportunities such as employment;
- Positive role models to assist in integrating residents into the ‘appropriate' behaviours of wider society. This factor is linked to ameliorating problems of crime, low education retention rates, poor health and high unemployment;
- Decreased postcode prejudice and lowering of the stigma associated with residing in neighbourhoods that are perceived as negative or undesirable; and
Increased access to a range of health, education and community services that is difficult in areas of concentrated socioeconomic disadvantage due to service ‘overload’ within these particular neighbourhoods. (Arthurson, 2008:6; see also Figure 10)

For Darcy (2007), there have been two distinct responses to neighbourhood effects. The first (and less influential) focuses upon the compounding of disadvantage of communities through the failure of government service and infrastructure provision. The second has co-opted the concept of a ‘moral underclass’ resulting from the impact of place-based stigma, and a culture of welfare dependence upon the neighbourhood. This deployment of the neighbourhood effect thesis can be observed in other Anglophone countries. Goetz reflects that in the USA “the focus has shifted away from the causes of concentrated poverty toward the behaviour of the poor in response to concentrated poverty” (2000:160). Further, treatment of public housing as a form of welfare has formed a barrier against social inclusion for residents (Atkinson and Jacobs, 2008).
Figure 10: The HOPE VI logic model

Tanya Plibersek, former Commonwealth Housing Minister relays the ‘moral imperative’ of social mix policy:

We need to create more mixed communities – where public housing dwellings are part - but not a feature - of the neighbourhood. Mixed communities are more likely to build social capital – the goodwill, shared values, networks, trust and reciprocity that exists in neighbourhoods... people who are well-connected ‘are more likely to be housed, healthy, hired and happy’. In the long run I want to see state and territory governments redevelop the remaining broad acre public housing estates. They should be renewed to create mixed communities. This is the way of the future. (2009:7-8)

The concept of ‘community’ is deployed here as a political device. While drawing upon the gemeinschaft ideals of mutual support, Everingham (2001) asserts that ERPs use ‘community’ to promote social order instead of social justice. Community
has now been co-opted from being an object of social policy, to a policy lever (Darcy, 1999). Policy documents describe mixed communities as ‘thriving’, ‘balanced’, ‘vibrant’, and ‘inclusive’ (Jupp, 1999). These adjectives are used to set “clear ideas and expectations about what features should be exhibited by a ‘community’” (Allen, 2000:455). Any deviation from these objectives is deemed deficient.

While the neighbourhood effects/social mix thesis has been incorporated into housing policy, there is little consensus within the academic community as to whether these goals are achieved (see: Arthurson, 2002; Briggs, 2008; Cheshire, 2007; Darcy, 2010; Goering and Feins, 2008; Goetz, 2010a; Imbroscio, 2008; Popkin, 2010).

Further, some hold the argument that social mixing strategies may represent government enforced gentrification. Lees argues:

Social mix policies also destroy, in my mind, their moral authority because they (policies) socially construct the middle class or middle-income groups as a natural category in contrast to a demonised working class or low income groups... They push the idea that we all should somehow be/become middle class and that we all want to be middle class. They are about social engineering ... They forge a relationship between property and propriety, owner-occupiers are well behaved and “normal”, whilst social housing tenants are problematic and abnormal. (2008:2463-4)

The neighbourhood effects/social mix theorisation of addressing disadvantage remains contested, with a growing literature suggesting that the purported benefits of tenure mixed neighbourhoods are lacking. Despite this, governments continue pursue the policy, citing the combined social and economic efficiencies gained by undertaking PPP estate renewal. For the purpose of this study, the neighbourhood
The effects/social mix hypothesis exists as a significant factor in the resident experience of ERPs and will be analysed from this empirical perspective.

The economics of public housing renewal

Theories of urban economics provide a further, though for the purposes of this study, oblique explanation of the recent proliferation of ERPs. For Fainstein and Fainstein (1982), the “urban form of cities reflects the mode of production and the mode by which the economic surplus is circulated”. The accumulation of capital results in the spatial domination of the city by the wealthy. Ultimately the processes of capitalism results in uneven patterns of development, reinforcing the exchange value of amenity and defending areas of greater privilege within the city. In the case of ERPs, one of the major drivers is to capture the value present in the land (Goetz, 2010b). Within the global city, public housing estates represent an unexploited resource, often well positioned with considerable amenity (for example the harbour side estate of Miller’s Point). This considerable uplift potential, combined with the aforementioned social objectives of contemporary housing providers make undertaking ERPs an attractive proposition (Darcy and Rogers, 2015). While an important analytical framework, the preference of economic principles for valorising of capital flows and market forces are at odds with this study’s interest in the subjective experience of stakeholders during the undertaking of ERPs.

Chapter summary

This chapter has examined the concept of community and traced how these concepts have been deployed. From the genesis of modern planning, through the
contributions of early planners and finally to the execution of ERPs, various interpretations of community have emerged and have had impacts upon how people experience urban life. Through the chapter, community has been demonstrated to be a slippery, intuitive concept, lending itself to being co-opted and deployed in a number of distinct ways. Whether community is the group of residents that live in an inner city high rise, or a political organisation with thousands of members, in each of the conceptions, definitions and discourses, community is given as a basic component of human existence.

The next chapter sets out the methodological framework for the empirical component of the project. As outlined in the introduction, this study aims to investigate the experience of Estate Renewal Projects and how this can be best reconciled with a desire to rationalise the social housing sector. The next chapter follows on from the introduction and literature review by describing how the study’s approach to empirical investigation executed its aims, and to the complexity of places, projects and people as objects of study.
CHAPTER 4
Research Methodology

Introduction to chapter

Pursuing the claims made in the introduction and literature review chapters, this study seeks to uncover the conceptual significance of place, urban design and community for residents and BEPs in ERPs. This chapter will describe the research design and processes that were undertaken and how these reflected the studies objectives, the complexities of the conceptual/theoretical framework underlying the project, and the complexities of the change processes occurring within the case study sites. Following this introduction, the chapter will follow the themes of research objectives and approach, research design and ethical considerations.

Research objectives and approach

The methodology to be deployed for this study reflects the research questions and the objective of interrogating how stakeholders use concepts of place, community and urban design to construct lived space or perceived as an agent of change. The empirical component of the study serves to combine a theoretical interest in the pursuit of place and community and the potential application of the findings to the future undertaking of ERPs and their processes.
The approaches outlined have been determined as a response to the literature, forming a hierarchy of empirical methods from a range of research traditions.

Urry (1995:1) observes “the understanding of place is a complex theoretical and empirical task requiring a range of novel techniques and methods of investigation”. Further, Dovey suggests that ‘such approaches are fundamentally interdisciplinary and cut across the territories of geography, planning, urban design, cultural studies and area studies” (2010:1). Following this insight a methodological framework has been developed that combines quantitative and qualitative methods in a novel manner, and while experimental, is well grounded in contemporary housing research (Darcy 2007, Arthurson 2005, Nutley, 2003).

The research questions outlined in Chapter 1 are inherently exploratory and as such are more likely to generate new theory than test existing theories. To support this, the empirical method is designed to be predominately inductive and is designed to generate a rich dataset from which to draw new conclusions about the socio-spatial conditions in ERPs.

To create an environment where the methods could generate the required data, the case study approach was deployed. The use of case studies is supported by Zeisel (2006) who asserts that the case study is best applied to research projects that require a detailed engagement with complex elements, influences, multiple components or phenomena. Moreover, Yin (1994) almost unconsciously describes contemporary urban geographic research, claiming that case studies are most useful when interrogating phenomena that are difficult to differentiate from their context or sites where multiple sources of evidence are present.
With the study’s aim, the site specific nature of planning and geographic research, multiple sources of data and complex phenomena being studied, the case study represents the best vehicle for combining the various components of the methodology and exploring the relationships between stakeholder perceptions of place and the community within ERPs. The potential of multiple case studies also adds both strength and redundancy to the findings of the research.

Given the study’s interests and the nature of ERP processes and structure, the case study was identified as the most appropriate vehicle for empirical inquiry. Following the work of Flyvberg (2004), it was decided that the case studies should be ‘extreme’ cases. These sites were places where the experience of urban change had been significantly mediated through concepts of place and community and urban design. Extreme cases were thought likely to produce the richest data, maximising the potential for rigorous exploration of the key concepts and their relationship to resident’s experience of a changing urban environment. Case studies were chosen that best matched the desire to generate rich data and the time and resource constraints of the study. The time constraints limit the scope for longitudinal analysis of the ERPs which lead to careful consideration of potential case studies, to ascertain which sites would generate rich data for analysis.

Considering these constraints, it was determined that the most appropriate case studies would be ERPs that were either recently completed or significantly commenced within existing neighbourhoods of urban centres. This was, in part,
to increase the potential impact and application of the study's results. As ERPs currently form major components of social housing policy globally, despite considerable contestation of the theoretical underpinnings and an evolving public discourse around these policies (Eastgate, 2014), there is opportunity to disseminate to an audience outside of the academy. The other consideration was that the more recent ERPs would allow easier access to stakeholders and more reliable perceptions and experience of urban change.

With ERPs varying in physical structure, capital investment, policy environments and management processes it was critical to not only select ‘extreme’ sites, but also sites that shared fundamental similarities in regard to policy, planning and execution. A comprehensive desktop analysis was undertaken to eliminate unsuitable sites from the study. Following the review, three case studies were selected for empirical investigation. Three case studies were deemed to offer an adequate sample. It allowed for common themes to be to be triangulated and offered a level of redundancy. Due to the intensive research methodology and the time and resource constraints, three sites were considered to be the feasible maximum. To aid the fieldwork process it was decided to restrict the empirical investigation to cases studies within New South Wales. This was to take advantage of the consistent political environment and motivation for the ERPs commencement. The geographic distribution of sites was as broad as possible to gain exposure to different micro-cultures and localised phenomena, ensuring the study provided robust empirical responses to the research questions and maintained relevance.
Each of the case study sites selected were ERPs that were significantly commenced (given the 5-15 year timeline of most ERPs) at the time of the selection process. All were located in existing residential areas, located near a commercial or transport node and were in locations that were not only supported by social housing policy, but were a good fit for the broader urban intensification policy agenda of the Sydney Metropolitan Strategy and other various strategic planning documents. Each of the cases had long and storied histories which were strongly grounded in ‘place’ and ‘community’ which had impacted upon the planning, execution and success of the project. Two of the cases were high profile and all were awarded for their approach to ERP. All sites were different scales and were at different points of the renewal process. This was seen as an opportunity to increase the scope for empirical analysis. Interrogation of more established ERPs allows evaluation of progress to date while newer projects allow analysis of project evolution and the firsthand exploration of how urban design and the design process can respond to the concepts of ‘community’ and ‘place’. The following section provides a brief introduction to each case study and a justification for their inclusion to the study.

“Washington Park”, Riverwood (Inner South-Western Sydney)

‘Washington Park’ involves the redevelopment of a 3.7 hectare portion of the Riverwood public housing estate. The site represented both the most dilapidated housing stock on the estate and the most commercially viable site within the low density and culturally diverse neighbourhood. The ERP represented a form of
Public Private Partnership where the developer took on the community engagement and undertook to pursue collaboration with residents in surrounding neighbourhoods. Approximately 150 public housing dwellings were demolished to allow the construction on 600 high density apartments, of which 150 were transferred to a CHP for management. Alongside the five residential apartment buildings, significant works were undertaken in the public domain; including a number of commercial premises, several community facilities, and landscaping. Riverwood is a case where the developer’s desired vision and conception of place had a deliberate role in the shaping of the nature of the ERP. Commenced in 2009, the project is currently 6 years into a 10 year project timeline.

“Dunbar Way”, North Gosford (NSW Central Coast)

The Dunbar Way Estate Regeneration Program is a small scale, CHP led renewal of the Dunbar Way estate in North Gosford. This three hectare site suffered from a chronic lack of maintenance and stigma from the local community. Pacific Link (the CHP) committed to refurbish the existing housing and undertake significant public domain and community safety improvements including landscaping (providing better legibility), two new parks, and closed-circuit television (CCTV). The Dunbar Way ERP represents the new generation of ERPs which are undertaken wholly by CHPs. The site was chosen as the project attempted to stabilise a community with many negative conceptions of place.
“Newleaf”, Bonnyrigg (Central Western Sydney)

Newleaf at Bonnyrigg involved the redevelopment of the 95 hectare Bonnyrigg public housing estate. The estate was identified by Housing NSW as an appropriate site for an ERP due to the forecast uplift and proximity to major centres within Sydney’s west via road and rapid bus transit. The project involves the staged demolition of the existing Radburn inspired estate and the construction of a New Urbanist mixed income development. The project commenced in 2004 and by the estimated completion in 2017 approximately 1000 public housing dwellings will be replaced by 2400 new dwellings of which approximately 700 will be transferred to a CHP for management. Bonnyrigg is a case where the staged nature of the project has had significant impact upon the community’s conceptions of place/lessness.

In each of the case studies the design objective and schemes had been in some way impacted by conceptions of place and community, directly addressing the intent of the research questions. In Bonnyrigg, there was a total departure from the existing urban form, resulting from the demolition of all housing on the estate. In Gosford, there was strong community support for the proposed changes, but divergent perspectives of its success. In Riverwood significant community action and an active community centre had mediated the design of the ERP.

The significantly smaller size of the ERP in Gosford was offset by the congruent scale of change undertaken. The smaller size also allowed the study to inquire if
conceptions of place and community are comparable across geographic scales, further broadening the application of the study’s findings.

**Research design**

As revealed by the literature review, definitions of place and community are complex and often divergent. To account for this, a rigorous yet multifaceted methodological framework was required. The methods employed needed to reflect the multiple, imagined, remembered and experienced places of human experience, the calculated, scientific and political space of BEPs and respond to the divergent morphology of the case study sites. The first literature review divided theory into three interrelated approaches of place analysis; place as experience, discourse and form. Reflecting this, the study’s research design incorporated empirical methods from each of these theoretical traditions. The framework represented a hierarchy of interviews, participant led photographic surveys, critical discourse analysis, and behavioural observation. These methods were recruited to highlight the experience of the participant, establishing the participant as the ‘expert’ within the project (Lefebvre, 1991; Jacobs 1961). It also seeks to support the diverse voices of BEPs, private residents and the commonly marginalised opinions of the public tenant. The various components of the methodological framework will now be introduced, with their links to the research questions and theoretical framework explored.
Interviews

Focussed semi-structured interviews formed the backbone of the project’s empirical investigation. Interviews were undertaken with all stakeholder groups: residents, community leaders, BEPs and other informed observers. Resident interviewees were recruited via a targeted letter delivered to all dwellings within the case study site. Residents then self-recruited by contacting the researcher and organising an interview. BEP interviewees included local government planners, community workers, architects, developers and representatives from social housing providers. These participants were approached directly and in many cases were already known to the researcher.

All interviews were semi-structured, with common themes aimed at eliciting in-depth, considered responses. For each interview an ‘interview roadmap’ was prepared which reflected the research questions and ensured consistent coverage of themes and signposted key concepts to explore with participants. Participants were also asked a series of ‘ice breaker’ questions at the beginning of the interview. These were intended to set the direction of the interview and to introduce the participant to the research interest. There were some specific variations targeted at particular participants depending on their position or role within the ERP. This allowed the researcher to compare perspectives across the sample, while allowing individuals to create narrative in response to themes that particularly spoke to their experience or perspectives. Resident interviews included questions about their experiences of life within the neighbourhood and the activities they participated in, how they move through the neighbourhood
and their destinations beyond, how decisions about the ERP were made and who participated in these decisions. BEP interviews had an extra focus on the broader policy goals and implications of ERPs.

As previously stated, the interviews were to provide the core dataset for the research, serving to give the researcher an in-depth, ‘existential insider’ (Relph, 1976) understanding of the phenomenology of urban change in ERPs. The qualitative data collected through the interviews was the primary data source relating to the theories of place as an experiential construction and as lived space. Interviews were also important in building understanding of the memories, imaginations, and cognitive images of place.

Interviews were conducted sporadically over a six month period at a rate of usually three per day. Interviews would generally occur in the home of a participant, if a resident, or in the office of a BEP. By suggesting to participants the home or office as a meeting place, it was hypothesised that participants would be surrounded by a repository of memories (Rogers, 2013; Jacobs, 2010; Trigg, 2012) that could be called upon to provide a highly vivid account of the experience of urban change. The choice of the meeting place was left open to the participant as a measure to put them at ease and increase the likelihood of the interview going ahead.

**Critical discourse analysis**

The ways that concepts, places and people are represented through discourse was a key concern to the project, providing both the context of and insight into
the multiple elements that shape and structure the various experiences of place and community. In particular, recruiting the work of Fairclough and Hastings was used to uncover how discourse had informed the narrative of the ERP. Discourse analysis provided key findings in response to Questions Two and Three by discovering if (or how) participants’ understandings of place and community had been altered due to the ERP.

The use of critical discourse analysis is a key method for this project. As has been revealed in the brief case study introductions, and will be explored further in later chapters, discursive instruments such as place names, marketing slogans and physical features can be deployed in an attempt to valorise specific values or perceptions of community. It is the extent of these phenomena and the values driving various narratives that are interrogated by the research questions.

Short of pursuing a Foucauldian ‘genealogy’ of each of the case studies, a number of datasets (e.g. interview transcripts, planning documents and marketing materials) were identified and subjected to critical discourse analysis. These datasets were drawn from three distinct periods of the case studies history: before the ERP, during the ERP and the present (time of fieldwork). The data was analysed to discover discursive representations of the case studies that were then compared to both the data generated by the interview and photographic survey participants. Discourse provided to the researcher by way of interview, photo survey or other means was never challenged, except when clarification was required. When seeking to identify and establish the discourses and discursive instruments recruited by participants, typical lines of enquiry were:
• How were the meanings of place and community constructed through various discourses?
• What were the various discourses intended to show about the place or community?
• How were particular words or images given specific meanings?
• What were the signs, what do they signify in themselves and in relation to other images?
• Were there meaningful clusters of words or images?
• How was the effect of truth produced?
• Which groups populated the images and what were they doing?
• What were the silences in the discourse? What was prominent?
• Who are the intended audiences?
• How did representations vary between different discourses?

Broadly, critical discourse analysis was recruited by the researcher to understand the impact of various overlapping discourses on the phenomenological lifeworlds of the case study sites, allowing the researcher to deduce any change during the ERP process. Importantly, critical discourse analysis served as a ‘Rosetta Stone’ allowing comparison of the otherwise divergent datasets, methodology, and theoretical framework.

**Time/space biographies**

The time/space biography is a tool designed to examine the people-place relationship that exists in neighbourhoods undergoing renewal. The tool is a multi-modal instrument which combines a number of related methods. The
methods recruited include photographic survey, field observations and mapping. This was augmented with a short interview of participants to collect information into a coherent and analytically useful tool. The time/space biography was developed to attempt to unpack the perceptions and experiences of residents and community stakeholders in ways that might not be revealed by more traditional quantitative investigation. The time/space biography had inputs into all research questions, building a dataset that reflected resident and BEP conceptions of place and urban design. A detailed explanation of the component methods follows.

Photographic survey

An extensive photographic survey of case study sites was undertaken by both the researcher and participants. Visual methods have much to offer this project. Images can at once convey meaning, emotion and discourse. Visual communication in place research can offer an avenue to bridge the gap between the ‘words and numbers’ of existing research and the ‘experience’ that this project is attempting to document.

Visual methods are not a new research tool for social scientists (Chenoweth, 1984) however, given the richness of the data that can be produced easily, there is significant untapped potential for place researchers. Van Auken, Frisvolland and Stewart assert that participant led photographic surveys have “three primary advantages:”
1) photos can provide tangible stimuli for more effectively tapping into informants’ tacit, and often unconscious consumption of representations, images, and metaphors,

2) produces different and richer information than other techniques and

3) may also help to reduce differences in power, class, and knowledge between researcher and researched” (2010:373).

Stedman et al. (2013) note that participant-led photographic surveys are particularly effective in generating collaborative knowledge across culture, age, discourse, and language. Another significant benefit is that by absenting the researcher from the fieldwork activity, the participant is reinforced as the expert of their locality, following Lefebvre’s charge to do so (1991).

When undertaking the photographic survey, participants were provided a disposable camera and instructed to take photographs of the features that are, or were, meaningful to them. A notebook was provided for participants to annotate photographs for the debrief with the researcher.

To supplement the participants’ photographic survey, the researcher undertook a targeted photo-survey to form a ‘base line’, allowing data from interviews and critical discourse analysis to be examined against the reality of the built form of the neighbourhood. The collected photos and debrief formed a primary data source for the theories of place relating to environmental cognition and image.
Field observations

Considerable time was spent making observations in the three case study sites over the fieldwork period (October 2013 - March 2014). The purpose of this was to perceive the ways in which the resident population utilised the neighbourhood’s form and facilities. Information was gathered on the types of people using each place, the number of users (single/pair/group), the activities undertaken by users, any patterns of use and whether there was any opportunities or constraints that the built environment contributed to the activities undertaken. Particular interest was given to “appropriations of space” (Lefebvre, 1991) and/or any unexpected use of space.

This observational part of the research was largely undertaken to verify the data provided by the interviews ad photographic surveys. It also provided opportunity to see how places were used while the researcher was absent (Zeisel, 2006), examples of their use included informal gardens or other modification to dwellings, paths worn through grassed areas, items that seemed ‘out of place’, such as empty beer bottles in a children’s playground or graffiti, and informal communication. Key questions for this section of the research include:

- How pliable was the built environment to appropriation by users?
- How did users appropriate the built environment to suit their needs and desires?
- What activities were undertaken in the researcher’s absence?
• How did users appropriations of space reflect a sense of self or place identity?

• Are certain activities prohibited? Are these prohibitions observed?

When undertaking this component of the research, the researcher gathered observations by all available means without prior judgement of its empirical value to the project. Typically this lack of discrimination meant that the collection techniques and the types of data collected varied according to the specific site or phenomena. Typically the methods employed included photography, annotation of maps, making sketches of features in the neighbourhood and the keeping of a notebook. While taking these observations, the researcher endeavoured to appear as an unimportant participant to the people using each place. It was clear that he was not a resident of the case study sites taking photographs of features of the environment, or delivering recruitment letters. It was important that residents did not feel threatened or alter their behaviour because of the researcher’s presence. In an attempt to achieve this, the researcher was always dressed casually and always appeared as a pedestrian. Quite often he was able to conduct the observational sections of the work unnoticed; however, in the North Gosford site residents challenged the researcher’s activity frequently.

The theoretical motivation for this element of the time/space biography is that it establishes a significant link between theories of place as experience and the structure to the spatial practices shaping that experience lent by the built environment.
Mapping

Mapping was recruited as both a method of data collection and dissemination for this project. As was discussed in the literature review, maps are powerful political tools, serving to present ‘objective’ spatial information. However, Rogers (2013) contends that maps are unreliable tools outside the episteme of architecture and planning. Therefore, maps are used sparingly in the study to illustrate the geographic features of study sites.

Summary of research design

The combination of the various elements of the methodological framework provided a suite of data gathering techniques that matched the objectives set out by the research questions and the various theoretical traditions discussed in the literature review. The diverse collection of research methods also allowed flexibility and redundancy to the project. This ensured that the methods could be adapted if necessary in the field, responding to the conditions found on site and maximising the potential for data collection.

Both quantitative and qualitative methods were recruited and integrated into the framework. Each method was given equal weighting within the framework, and was designed in such a way that each component was mutually supportive of the others and therefore equally significant in the pursuit of the projects objectives. As has been previously stated, given the subject of the research, qualitative methods represent the majority of methods. However, the suitability and application of each particular method varied between the case study sites.
The research method was designed to both evoke and respond to the fullest possible range of conceptions and perceptions of place, community and urban design.

**Research process**

The process of undertaking the empirical investigation in each case study place began with context analysis of each place and project, as well as the ERP project delivery frameworks. Contextual information was usually obtained from websites and libraries, although some was collected through freedom of information requests. The websites were typically those of planning authorities, developers and architects who had been involved with the project, community websites, and newsletters.

Interviews, photography and behavioural observation were undertaken in all three case study places. The researcher was based in the Riverwood and North Gosford case study sites for three weeks. Operating the project in each case study place for this length of time provided some sense of the place, its culture and its people – an ‘ethnographic’ understanding of everyday life on-site. Although this understanding was inevitably limited due to the short periods of time involved, it did assist with understanding the interview and photographic elements gathered, as well as enriching the observational components of the data.

On-site data collection was undertaken between October and December 2013 (North Gosford) and February and April 2014 (Riverwood). Data collection was
attempted at Bonnyrigg during May 2014, however fatigue from previous research led to the abandonment the empirical activities on site.

**Interpretive analysis and reflective narrative**

Following each period of fieldwork, the data collected was aligned with an account of the ERP process as an interpretive narrative of change. This served to convert the datasets from the multiple methods to a single, cogent account for each site.

To aid in comparison and ability to discern common themes each of these accounts were written into a structure that had clear signposts and style. This structure was not intended to be prescriptive, with the emphasis on specific themes and details varying between sites. The structure is designed around the Lefebvrean triad, presenting the perceived, discursive and experiential phenomena present in each case. Each narrative begins with the context of the site and tracks the development, changing design, urban form and community relationships from the inception of the ERP, through to the present. Finally the findings from each of the accounts are aligned to the research questions outlined in Chapter 1.

These accounts are supported with photographic, graphic and diagrammatic data sourced from the photographic surveys and mapping components, where they emphasise the narrative or are required to illustrate the arguments deployed.
Ethical considerations

Considering the nature of undertaking social research amongst disadvantaged communities, it is important that the research respects the individuals and groups that are encountered. The research intends to study relationships between individuals of various socio-economic backgrounds and it is critical that the study does not cause antagonism between these individuals. The baseline for the ethical consideration for this study is whether the research participants would consider partnering with the researcher for future studies.

The basis of the ethical considerations is the principles of informed consent and confidentiality:

- *Informed consent*: participant will be issued with a ‘plain language statement’ to explain the aims, objectives and deliverable of the study, following the discussion of any questions and noting intention to participate, participants will be issued and asked to sign a ‘participant consent form’ in duplicate, one for the researcher and one for their own purposes.

- *Confidentiality*: Participants identity will be protected via a coded identification number. All data generated will be protected via a password protected file on a password protected hard drive. To further protect confidentiality, participants will be given the opportunity to review interview transcripts. Photographs collected will make every attempt to avoid the direct capture of individuals. However, it is expected that this will not be always possible.
Preconceptions and bias

The researcher’s educational and professional background means that it is impossible to approach the empirical components of the research without preconceptions about the research outcomes and the concepts explored by the project. Training and practice in urban planning and renewal, housing policy making and community consultation with public housing communities give the researcher an idea that urban change is predominantly insensitive to community perspectives. Keeping an open mind to research participants differing perspectives is critical to the study.

It is also realised that the proposed methods have the potential to introduce a bias to the data. This is due to the expectation that those willing to participate will be more active in their community and have stronger views about the research objectives. To combat this potential, initial interviewees will be carefully recruited from the full range of stakeholders. This will be particularly important as it is expected that in the case studies chosen there will be significant divergence in stakeholder opinions. In all of the case studies an attempt will be made to recruit a variety of residents, developers, planners, and impartial observers. It is at this point that the value of the discourse analysis aspect of the methodology will become important to establish the narrative around place and community.

Due to the design of the research questions as context specific and exploratory, and because many participants are unfamiliar to the researcher, the potential effects of any preconceptions are not seen as a threat to the methodological framework.
Chapter summary

This chapter has set out and justified the study's approach to empirical investigation. It explained how the methodological approach was reflective both of the research questions outlined in the introduction, and of the complex nature of places and ERPs as objects of study. In the next three chapters, the findings of the empirical research are reported in the form of three separate interpretive accounts. Each of these accounts is based on the integrated findings from a single case study – each then tells the story of a single changing place.
Following the literature review and methodology chapters are the three case study chapters. These chapters present the observations from the fieldwork activities and relate the ERP processes undertaken at each site. Each case study chapter uncovers the relationships between people and place; elucidating the ways change processes were conceived, perceived and/or experienced by the resident community and BEPs.

Returning briefly to the research methods, it is pertinent to anchor the case study as an appropriate vehicle to capture and relate observations of spatial and sociological data. Given the study’s aim of exploring the relationships between stakeholder perceptions of place and the community within ERPs, the site specific nature of geographic research, and multiple (and often conflicting) sources of data, the case study represents the best vehicle for combining the theoretical and methodological frameworks. The recruitment of the case study responds to Urry’s claim that “understanding place is a complex theoretical and empirical task” (1995:1) and is well supported by contemporary urban studies literature.
To add strength to the findings, multiple case study sites were sought to enable the comparison of the manifestations of place phenomena at each site. To ensure that quality data was readily available, the selected case study sites were places where the experience of urban change had been significantly mediated through concepts of place and community, and urban design.

Following the work of Flyvberg (2004), it was decided that the case studies should be chosen for their capacity to support the rigorous exploration of the key concepts and produce rich data. The sites chosen were to be in Sydney’s Greater Metropolitan Area to allow the multiple site visits to undertake fieldwork. The ERPs were also either recently completed or significantly commenced within existing neighbourhoods of urban centres.

A desktop analysis was undertaken to eliminate unsuitable sites from the study. Following the review, three case studies were selected for empirical investigation; Bonnyrigg (Newleaf), Riverwood (Washington Park) and North Gosford (Dunbar Way). These sites were chosen as they matched the specified criteria, and each represented an identifiable iteration of undertaking ‘best practice’ ERPs.

Notwithstanding a successful participant recruitment process in the Riverwood and Dunbar Way sites, successive previous research projects have left the Bonnyrigg community research fatigued. After a failed initial recruitment, it was decided that further pressure on the community to take part in the study would be unethical. Despite this lack of primary data, previous research, and ERP reporting structures have amassed a body of data that could be subjected to the same analysis as the empirical data from the other case study sites.
The Lefebvrian triad of lived, conceived and perceived space informs the structure of the case study chapters. Each chapter commences with a presentation of the ‘perceived space’ of the social and urban form, and a thematic analysis of the ‘conceived space’ of discourse and the ‘lived space’ of inhabitance and community. This format is intended to ease comparison and highlight the similarities and contrasts in the phenomena present at each site. With each study site representing a different iteration of ERP process and the dissimilar spatial scale of the sites having a consistent approach to the data maintains the effectiveness and rigour of the study.
CHAPTER 5
Riverwood

Introduction to chapter

This chapter presents an investigation of the ERP visited upon the community in and around the public housing estate at the Sydney suburb of Riverwood. The announcement of the ERP in September 2010 was met with mixed sentiments, ranging from fierce resistance, through to eager anticipation. The site chosen for the ERP comprised the northern precincts of the Riverwood public housing estate. The housing in this area had become dilapidated from a chronic lack of maintenance and there was little objection to the renewal in principle. Despite the promise of new housing and community facilities, there was a strong sense of uncertainty in the early stages of the project, with community members unsure of the social impacts of the new construction or the new residents coming into the community.

The following account explores the experiences of change to the neighbourhood from the perspective of residents, planners and community organisations. The opening sections of the chapter outline the context for the redevelopment and the extent of the case study area in which empirical data collection was undertaken. The following sections uncover how change was perceived among stakeholders and how external conceptions of urban design and estate renewal have impacted notions of
community and place. The chapter concludes with a theoretical analysis of the key themes.

**Riverwood: Perceived**

Riverwood, originally known as Herne Bay, is an established residential suburb with its commercial centre focused around the intersection of Belmore Road and the East Hills railway line (see Figure 11). The suburb is located approximately 18 kilometres (km) south west of the Sydney CBD and is situated within the municipalities of Canterbury and Hurstville.

**Figure 11: Map of the suburb of Riverwood. Study area marked**

![Map of Riverwood](image)


The settlement of Riverwood can be traced back to 1810 when the government began to make a number of land grants of 12 to 30 hectares in the area of Herne Bay. Land use in the area was predominantly agricultural, with market gardening and
timber-harvesting the major economic activities (Canterbury City Council, 2014). Agriculture continued to be the major land use until 1919, when the Herne Bay Estate was subdivided, allowing for residential development to take place (Pollon, 1988). Despite the availability of land, local residential development was sluggish until 1931 when the East Hills railway line was extended, offering greater access to the CBD and other destinations within the city. The new railway link led to rapid development of the suburb, with a commercial centre and market developing around the railway station.

During the Second World War, Riverwood saw development of a massive scale. After exploring multiple options, the US Army built a 4250-bed hospital on the land of the Levingstone family, a “236 acre site bounded by Canterbury Road, Belmore Road, the East Hills line and Salt Pan Creek” (City of Canterbury Council, 2008). After the site was no longer required for the hospital, ownership reverted to the NSW Government. Faced with a mounting housing crisis, the ex-hospital site was redeployed as the “Herne Bay Community Housing Centre” by the newly formed Housing Commission (Madden, 2001).
Riverwood has had a long association with public housing, beginning with the establishment of the Herne Bay Community Housing Centre (CHC) on 27 March, 1946 (Madden, 2001). In addition to the converting existing buildings to housing units, the Housing Commission remodelled a number of buildings into various shops, factories, schools and community services (police and post offices) in an effort to establish a self-sufficient community (Madden, 2001). Over time it became evident that, despite efforts, it was hard to create a community as the converted wartime buildings were not suitable for long term occupation. By the late 1950s the deterioration of the buildings led to the progressive demolition of the “horror huts” (Madden, 2001:191). Along with this redevelopment, Herne Bay was also renamed Riverwood in 1958 after resident action to deflect the perceived stigma and negative image of the suburb due to the presence of the CHC.

In 1964, the current (pre-ERP) subdivision of Riverwood housing estate was completed, including much of the current built form. The new design included a
large proportion of two and three storey flats, as well as some cottages. A primary school, a cluster of shops and large areas of parkland formed part of the estate (Madden 2001:191).

Figure 13: The redevelopment of the Riverwood in 1964

![Horrors Become Homes](image)


Figure 14: New dwellings completed in Riverwood (11 November 1964)

![New dwellings](image)


This plan anticipated a population of 3700. The development of the site was completed in 1976, with the opening of the twin eight storey apartment towers, built
to accommodate the growing demand for smaller dwellings. The total number of dwellings on site at this time was 1300.

By the mid-1990s much of the housing stock in the Riverwood estate was in poor condition, presenting considerable management and maintenance costs for government. This asset concern, combined with a profound change in tenant characteristics, saw the Riverwood Estate increasingly marginalised and “in danger of becoming a welfare ghetto” (NSW Department of Housing, 1996:3). Demographic characteristics of the estate hinted at a disjointed and non-cohesive community. While these issues highlight social concerns and reflect public housing eligibility criteria, it was interpreted that a physical response could be made to address the challenges facing the community. Through consultation, it was elucidated that there were significant concerns within the community regarding security and safety on the estate. Many residents felt that the lack of dwelling privacy, fencing and landscaping was intimidating and that they felt unsafe in and around their own homes (Conybeare Morrison and Partners, 1996). Proposed remedies included measures at household, building and estate scales, including better lighting and housing, increased pedestrian amenity and private gardens (NSW Department of Housing, 1996).

This redevelopment of Riverwood, as part of the broader Neighbourhood Improvement Program (NIP) was seen to be generally successful, meeting expectations for reduced maintenance liability and tenant management (Bijen and Piracha, 2012). Subsequently, the Riverwood estate has been considered by Housing
NSW as a low priority estate, requiring less than average management and maintenance resources (Participant 2013RP4).

In 2008, citing that the housing stock available in the estate no longer matched the requirements of its tenants, Housing NSW invited expressions of interest for the renewal of the northern precinct of the estate. This precinct was chosen as it was developed at low density, under occupied, and the buildings had reached the end of their service life without major renovation. The precinct, identified as Riverwood North, contained 150 dwellings within two and three storey walk up style apartment blocks and is close to the scenic Salt Pan Creek Reserve. The site also lies adjacent to the major entry point to the estate, Washington Avenue. This position within the estate serves to hasten entry and exit from the suburb and gives easy pedestrian access to recreational facilities, the railway station and commercial centre of Riverwood.

The proposed redevelopment of the Riverwood North precinct involves the demolition of approximately 150 apartments and the construction of 650 apartments, of which 150 will be retained for social housing and 500 units to be built and sold over a nine-year timeframe. The ERP project is divided into two stages. Stage One consists of the demolition, site preparation and construction of the new social housing buildings. Stage Two involves the construction of the apartment buildings for the private market and community facilities. The redevelopment also includes redevelopment of community facilities including a new library and senior citizens centre. These community facilities were negotiated as in-kind payments for land acquired from Canterbury Council. Housing NSW mandated that the ERP be
designed in accordance with the Housing NSW Design Requirements, which in addition to setting out various environmental and maintenance objectives, expressly asserts that the ERP must “create a liveable integrated residential community, which does not discriminate between the appearance of social and private housing.” (2011:3).

By December 2008, three of nine interested parties were shortlisted and invited to submit project proposals. The received proposals were then weighted against a proposal prepared internally to ensure value for money and alignment with Housing NSW policy and objectives. Once these proposals were evaluated, the tender to undertake the ERP was awarded to Payce Consolidated.

After being awarded to tender, Payce undertook a master planning and public consultation process, however there is little evidence of community engagement with the planning processes. Payce held a formal community information event at the Riverwood Community Centre where residents were able to voice their concerns. The ERP application was deemed State Significant by the Department of Planning and was evaluated under the now defunct Part 3A of the Environment Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (NSW). Despite agitation by the Riverwood Community Centre to assist anybody wishing to make a submission, no formal correspondence was received from residents by the Department of Planning. Multiple research participants hold reservations about the effectiveness of the consultation considering the scale of the proposal.

Presently, Stage One has been completed and occupied. At the time of the study, works are underway for the progressive construction of Stage Two.
Study area

The study area used for the empirical activities for this case study comprises approximately 80 hectares surrounding the ERP site. The area is bounded by the M5 Motorway to the north, Keats Avenue to the east, to the south and the Salt Pan Creek Reserve to the west. Commercial and pedestrian activity is concentrated along Belmore Road, the major thoroughfare north to south.

The built form of the suburb displays significant diversity in appearance and building type. The commercial centre of Riverwood is clustered around the railway station, with traditional row shops making up the majority of the precinct. The row stores largely house independent businesses with the upper storeys serving as the dwelling of the proprietor. There is also a large shopping centre, Riverwood Plaza, which houses two supermarkets and other specialty stores. The precinct offers various professional, financial and legal services as well as a number of cafés, restaurants and social clubs. Many of these buildings are in a partially dilapidated state, however new businesses are being attracted to the area and undertaking renovations.

Surrounding the commercial centre are residential neighbourhoods. The dominant dwelling type is three bedroom detached houses, with increasing dwelling density adjacent to the commercial centre with apartment buildings. A total of 47.9% of dwellings within the suburb are detached while another 51.4% are either flats, apartments or townhouses (ABS, 2011a). This illustrates a fairly high density of development.
Riverwood is well connected in terms of regional transportation. Trains and buses connect Riverwood with surrounding suburbs, regional centres and the city. Major roads are also easily accessible. The M5 motorway runs along the northern boundary.
of Riverwood, providing a key link to the south and west of Sydney. Riverwood is also well positioned within the Metroad system, allowing relatively rapid access to many parts of the city. Sub-arterial roads that serve Riverwood include Canterbury and Belmore Roads. Riverwood features a number of educational facilities, including four primary schools, a high school and one faith based primary school. Major features of Riverwood include the Salt Pan Creek recreation area, the Riverwood Community Centre, Riverwood Town Centre and various small parks and open spaces.

The Riverwood public housing estate lies on the northern extremities of the study area and occupies approximately 35 hectares. The estate comprises a large percentage of the suburb of Riverwood and has a number of distinct neighbourhoods. The neighbourhoods are readily identifiable by variations in built form and street layout. On the southern fringes of the estate, one or two storey townhouses are the dominant feature of the built form; these dwellings also have private gardens and a carport attached. Further north, two storey apartment buildings constitute the built form. These apartments feature a diverse range of architectural influences. Subsequently, these buildings did not receive remedial NIP works and are now in a dilapidated state. Twin eight storey towers dominate the central precinct of the estate. Built at the height of Modernism’s influence on public housing design, the towers are situated in expansive parklands, which have become an informal meeting place for the community. The final neighbourhood not subject to the ERP lies on the western fringe of the estate. This neighbourhood consists largely of detached three bedroom houses that have been progressively sold into the private market, creating an enclave within the estate. Given the introverted
nature of the estate, pedestrian permeability is low and largely limited to the major
thoroughfares of Roosevelt and Truman Avenues.

Directly to the east of the estate are community facilities. These consist of the
Riverwood Senior Citizens, Riverwood Library and the Riverwood Community Centre
(RCC). Of these, the RCC is the most utilised by the community. The RCC has many
programs that provide services such as childcare, youth and multicultural/ESL
services. Historically, the RCC has been the community's hub and advocate assisting
residents with housing and other community concerns. The RCC also provides
training courses and opportunities to volunteer in various capacities.

Figure 16: Map of Riverwood public housing estate, showing Washington Park
development


According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), the population of Riverwood
in 2011 was 10225, an increase of 4% from 9837 in 2006 (ABS, 20011a). Since the
mid-1950s, Riverwood has been an area of lower cost housing in Sydney, and has
been an attractive destination for overseas immigrants. The largest flows were from the Middle East in the 1970s and 1980s, and China in the early twenty first century. This is reflected in 2011 census data, which reports that Riverwood has a culturally diverse population with 21.3% of the population claiming Chinese ancestry, along with 12% Lebanese and 3.4% Greek. Further evidence of Riverwood’s popularity with new immigrants can be seen with 69.7% of residents stating ‘both parent born overseas’ in the 2011 census. The median age of the population in Riverwood (40 years old) is older than both NSW (38 years old) and national (37 years old) averages and a combined 86.6% of the population is either employed full-time (60.1%) or part-time (26.5%). Occupations within Riverwood are diverse with lower than average engagement with ‘professional’ sectors (18.7%) and higher than average engagement with ‘trades workers’ (14.4%), ‘labourers’ (11%) and ‘community and personal services’ (10%) (ABS, 2011a).

Summary of empirical activity undertaken

The Riverwood case study site presented the greatest opportunity for the undertaking of the study’s empirical activity. The scale of the ERP, large scale community consultation, and history of community engagement contributed to a scenario where residents were comfortable undertaking interviews and participating in research activities. From the initial letter sent to residents, the first cohort of eight participants was registered. This was successfully snowballed twice to total 23 participants. Of the total cohort 13 participants were females and 10 were male, ranging in age from 45-60 for females and 30-65 for males. Interviews of approximately 1 hour were undertaken with all participants to gain insight into the
subjective experience of living through an ERP. Each interview was open ended and took the form of a guided discussion, encouraging residents to reflect critically upon their experience (see Appendix 1).

After undertaking this first interview, participants were provided an opportunity to conduct a photographic survey (and debrief) with the directive to photograph places and objects in the neighbourhood that provoked an emotional response. 16 participants undertook this component of the study (10 women and 6 men). The photographs contributed by residents represented an unobtrusive and unselfconscious reflection upon the Riverwood case study site. The redevelopment site was included in all surveys, while photographs of the existing estate were exclusive to the particular dwellings (or gardens) of participants. Sentiments of pride in these elements of the built form were noted against these photos. This pride was expressed as attachment to their homes and the notion that Riverwood was becoming a community of choice. Community infrastructure, such as the Community Centre, local shops, the community garden, and the HNSW office were also featured in the surveys emphasising resident’s activity within the suburb of Riverwood (see Figure 17). Participants in the Riverwood case study were also much more likely to include photographs of their friends or themselves than in the North Gosford case study sites (see Figure xxx). This suggests that for residents at Riverwood, social networks contributed to a robust lived space and were a major influence in the development of place attachment.
As noted in Chapter 4, the empirical activity in Riverwood was undertaken without any challenge to the researcher’s presence within the case study site. There could be numerous possible explanations for this; however the two that have most credence will be discussed briefly. First and likely most probable is that the estate is well linked to the surrounding suburb, with popular community infrastructure adjacent to or within the estate. Many non-residents traverse the estate to access these facilities. The massive influx of non-resident pedestrians and cars due to the ERP works also contributes to this. Second is related to the built form. The previous NIP works had created definite and generous defensible space around dwellings through fencing and landscaping. As the researcher only entered these spaces when invited by participants, the researcher posed no apparent threat to the property or quiet enjoyment of residents. Both of these explanations suggest that the lived space
constructed by residents was durable and not threatened by the presence of unknown persons.

**Reconceiving Riverwood: The discursive re/construction of a neighbourhood**

As previously noted, at the time of the fieldwork investigation the Riverwood ERP was significantly underway. The site had been cleared of the three storey walk-ups at the outset, rather than a progressive demolition as the ERP advanced. Some respondents perceived this as a symbolic clearing of the community, making way for the newcomers and setting the stage for change in their neighbourhood. In some senses these respondents were proven correct. This section will explore how the BEPs and the developer discursively constructed the ERP at Riverwood.

The policy framework that underpins the Riverwood North Urban Renewal is complex and temporally fixed to the period of the Global Financial Crisis of 2008, National public housing policy from the Federal Government, various State Government policies, and the Local Governments own strategic and statutory planning instruments. The local planning instruments and policy council are required to conform to state and federal policies. Generally, in the case of public housing renewal, the scale of the development excludes the local statutes altogether, having been deemed state significant. In the case of the Riverwood North Urban Renewal, the Consent Authority was the NSW Department of Planning and Infrastructure.

Canterbury Council had no objections to the redevelopment of Riverwood North to be undertaken in principle. In the submission on the project made to the
Department of Planning and Infrastructure, Council made a number of recommendations and comments, which were intended to ensure that the project was both sensitive to, and supportive of the current community and further community development. Of these the most significant were the support of the diversification of tenure and a greater supply of affordable housing within the LGA, and further consolidation and improvement of the existing community facilities in the neighbourhood. These comments are reflected in the headline federal and state policies relating to the project, including the NSW State Plan. Major policy alignments can be found in the imperative to provide affordable housing in supporting communities, a strong social housing sector, and the economic growth of Sydney to enhance its standing as a Global City. The Sydney Metropolitan Strategy 2036 classifies Riverwood as a ‘small village’, where retail services and strong public transport links make it a suitable site for Canterbury LGA to meet some of the 7100 “new dwelling target” outlined in the South Subregion – Draft Subregional Strategy (NSW Department of Planning, 2009). The redevelopment was also supported by Federal policy in the National Affordable Housing Agreement (NAHA), seeking to deconcentrate areas of perceived disadvantage. Within the tender documents prepared by Housing NSW, the site is described as:

an ideal location to create a progressive market-driven project to address untapped local demand for good quality apartments. The project aims to optimise the use of under-utilised land assets and be a primary driver in the rejuvenation of the surrounding Riverwood area. (TendersOnline, 2008)

Any redevelopment on site would therefore be subject to these overarching policy frameworks, providing social and affordable housing, economic growth through
construction and the progression of Riverwood and Canterbury as a part of ‘Global Sydney’. The proposed ERP was offered to Payce Consolidated in January 2010, with initial development applications made to the Department of Planning in September 2010. This proposal was rejected after consultation with relevant stakeholders, with a number of concerns to be addressed such as building setbacks, landscaping, car parking and community facilities. These issues were amended (or negotiated with stakeholders), however it was impossible to satisfy the competing desires of all stakeholders, given the physical, social and financial constraints of the project. A second concept plan was lodged in November 2010. After public consultation, the ERP was approved on 15 July 2011 (NSW Department of Finance and Services, 2011).

The final concept plan accommodated 63,500 m$^2$ of Gross Floor Area including dwellings (150 social housing and 500 privately owned), retail space, community facilities, landscaping and public domain improvements, car parking and infrastructure upgrades.

Although beyond the scope of the current study, it should be noted that the Riverwood ERP might owe some of its commercial success to broader macroeconomic processes that impacted the social housing sector. In 2009, the then Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd announced the Nation Building Economic Stimulus Plan (NBESP) in response to the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) that emerged in 2008. The NBESP, a Keynesian investment program, injected an unprecedented $2 billion into the NSW social housing sector, with HNSW tasked with building 6000 social housing dwellings by June 2012. The tenants displaced by the Riverwood ERP, could be transferred into these new dwellings, some of which were constructed just beyond
the confines of the study area, reducing the social impact that is sometimes caused by ERPs.

Combined with the comparatively smooth relocation of tenants, Sydney’s residential property market has experienced steady growth post GFC with demand for new dwellings. This demand eliminated a lot of the financial risk undertaken by the developer, allowing works to be undertaken very rapidly after approval. Stage One (Social Housing) was completed six months ahead of schedule so the developer could market Stage Two as set out in the contract between HNSW and Payce (Participant 2013RP4).

**We are Washington Park**

Examining the data collected during the fieldwork, it is readily apparent the developer has invested significant effort into taking charge of the narrative of the ERP process. This was observed as a multi-faceted approach deploying a number of methods with the narrative explicit in its desire to drive the ERP in a manner that consolidated the concept of an urban village. The opening paragraph of the developments website states:

> Washington Park is the culmination of all of Payce’s experience, passion and tireless work in building cohesive communities where people feel at home, enriched and welcome. Not simply a new development but an entirely new suburb, this is the opportunity for you to be a part of something great from the outset – something dynamic which will grow and get better with age. Washington Park’s beautiful parkside location, wealth of open space and vibrant garden retail plaza combine to
create an environment designed to promote healthy, happy living and social interaction. (Payce Communities, 2011:n.p.)

Washington Park, the chosen name for the ERP and the adjacent open space, sets the direction for the narrative, with the marketing documents being driven by the excitement of a *new suburb* being constructed. The suggestion that Washington Park is a separate place to Riverwood and any negative connotations is a strong theme in both the online and printed marketing. Descriptions of the ERP are future focussed, claiming, "Washington Park is Sydney’s next property hotspot" and “Washington Park is definitely something special for the area” (Payce Communities, 2013:1).

Figure 18: Washington Park≠Riverwood

Source: Research participant, 2014.

There in a consistent theme that Washington Park is the catalyst for the continued regeneration for Riverwood, “creating a blueprint for future living” (Payce Communities, 2013:1). Discussing the urban design concept employed by the developer, one Payce employee describes the adherence to the village ideal:
Having worked with Payce before, they’re very big on the village – the community aspect. It’s not just about they want to be a developer of a physical place. They want to be a developer of community. (Participant 2013 RP1)

The location of the site is promoted heavily, its proximity to the CBD and many services are highlighted; “Washington Park is 25 minutes from anywhere” (Payce Communities, 2013:1), referencing the sites proximity to the Sydney Airport. In the marketing material, both print and online, there are no pictures or references to the public housing estate or the urban environment of Riverwood. In their place, there are photographs and images of international inspiration, parks and architect impressions of the development, including the building, and ‘streetscapes’ of the proposed piazza with cafes, retail space and outdoor markets. These outdoor spaces are filled with images of active white young adults and children. There are also artist impressions of the interiors. The print version of the marketing includes a number of images of the Riverwood town centre, train station and the surrounding parkland. These images again feature young, fit white adults mainly undertaking recreational activities. In effect, suggesting that Washington Park represents a total lifestyle destination.

Further to the pictorial discourse, the Washington Park Magazine (see Appendix 6) is focussed on building the Washington Park brand, with the slogan “we are Washington Park” or simply “we are” often repeated. This serves to assist building emotional connections to the development and the narratives of the village, community, and connectedness. Overall, the discourse surrounding Washington Park
presents a community that is young, white and active, with a large disposable income.

To compliment the Washington Park narrative, Payce set on a course of ‘community-oriented development’ to attempt to transition the existing community of the estate smoothly to the presence and processes of the redevelopment. To achieve this, Payce deployed a long term and resource intensive strategy. There were two major strands to the strategy, the distribution of a newsletter titled *Riverwood Village Talk* (see Appendix 5) and the provision of a Community Liaison Officer on site. The newsletter, delivered quarterly is intended to inform residents of the status of the ERP, the facilities and benefits that will be available to residents once complete and the various community events that Payce funds in the estate. Issue 1, distributed in May 2011, provides useful insight to the attempt to erase the existing narratives in the estate. The headline article for the issue proclaims “Get set for an exciting urban renewal” (Payce Communities, 2011). The following article describes the ERP, the relationships ‘established’ between Payce and the existing community stakeholders. The article includes an image of the proposed development with the caption “a vibrant master plan will invigorate Riverwood North with a new approach to residential development”, suggesting that the former neighbourhood was somehow deficient (Payce Communities, 2011). While the marketing material for investor consumption focuses on Washington Park in isolation, *Riverwood Village Talk* is designed to integrate the development and the developer into the community. This has also served to exclude the existing Riverwood Community Centre from dialogue, who perceive the ERP as damaging to the community in the long term.
The second component of the Payce strategy is the Community Liaison Officer. This role is well resourced financially and is fulfilled by a third party consultant. The consultant has been successful in introducing a number of community events, funding educational programs at the local primary school and holding a weekly barbeque for residents.

It is evident from the interview data that a key to the success of the Riverwood ERP is the significant financial and in-kind contributions being made to the community by Payce. In essence ‘building a new suburb and buying a community to go with it’ as one resident asserts. This adds more complexity to the political space of the ERP, and the presence of such abundant capital investment may indeed serve to muddy the discourse regarding the success of the ERP. For the purpose of this project, Payce can be seen as a divisive agent within the community, seeking to control the political space of the redevelopment.

Figure 19: Payce funded community garden at Riverwood Primary School

Source: Research participant, 2014.
Designing community

Emerging from the data was a strong trend for concepts of community and place to be aligned with the architectural and landscaping appearance of the existing estate and of the newly constructed buildings. This linking of concepts was found to be across the range of stakeholders. In a majority of resident and local participants, there were strong arguments based off the effectiveness of the NIP and the perceived improvement in the neighbourhood since that initiative.

The developer, in both interview and the literature generated supporting the development and sale of the ERP, are adherent to the village ideal. Designing public permeable public spaces and demarcating private space around each building:

So what the whole idea of this is it’s all open. So, these are these three sort of separated buildings and you’ve got social housing and private housing all worked in together here but the whole thing is centrally around this garden plaza and people being able to walk straight through the site. This is a really – this access here, both these ways here, it’s a parkland right through and there’s 50 odd of those benches. Have you seen the nice chairs?

The plaza, the piazza was what they built first. They built that before they built a house because they wanted that to be the central part of the community, the piazza. The general manager at that time was a guy called Basil and he had lived and worked in projects in Spain actually. So that’s sort of where he wanted to get that feel for. So they were very big on the actual place and the environment. (Participant 2013RP1)
Figure 20: The Piazza is the focus of Washington Park

Source: Research participant, 2014.

There were voices of dissent however, with other practitioner stakeholders proposing the masterplan and the location of the redevelopment on the estate could result in a schism within the neighbourhood:

I think if you were the designer, you would probably be really proud of having these things here so you can have your own little community. However I guess because you’re jumping on the back of an existing community - worst case scenario is that that becomes a little bit of a completely separate entity where the wealthy do their thing and can afford all this stuff and now the locals don’t feel they can even use the library for instance. Worst case scenario is that people then feel dispossessed in their own place. (Participant 2013RP3)
These sentiments were shared by some residents

Yeah. It’s interesting because this side of Riverwood, it’s basically defined by the estate and so, it’s quite a strong contrast going from public housing to a mix. I think it will be good for the community but I’m not sure whether it actually reflects that aspect or that part of what the community might need or want for the public housing area. (Participant 2013RR10)

**Growing pains: The resident’s experience of a changing Riverwood**

Upon completion of the empirical data collection the interview transcripts and photographic surveys were subjected to thematic analysis aligned with the study’s research questions. This thematic analysis was intended to extract the conceptions of neighbourhood held by residents. These conceptions were revealed to fit along the broad themes of place attachment, “community” and built form.

**Place Attachment**

Within the Riverwood case study site, the phenomenon of place attachment was readily observable. Eighteen of the 23 participants in Riverwood expressed positive experiences of place. These experiences ranged from the social networks enjoyed by residents, the amenity of the built environment and landscaping, or a sense of positive anticipation of the redevelopment.
Participants conceived Riverwood as a progressive neighbourhood with a lot to offer. Making this point, one resident described the redevelopment as a sign that Riverwood was now a neighbourhood of choice:

Well, I know from my point of view access to other parts of Sydney. So transport. Proximity to a lot of different areas, airport, CBD, beaches, southern areas. Yeah, and probably accessibility and I guess the practical aspects of life.

So, you know, it's extremely practical having the plethora of shops up the street you can walk to and yeah, it's quite an attractive suburb visually as far as the green environment goes which is something I really like. Yeah, and it's not overly noisy. You don't get a huge amount of train noise. Don't get a huge amount of plane noise. It's not in the bowl of Western Sydney which is the pollution hollow, like Fairfield and Campbelltown. I feel somewhat fortunate that it's not in there.

(Participant 2013RR10)
For this resident, the location of and the amenity provided by the neighbourhood and its appearance is key to their attachment to Riverwood. The variety of shops and services available in close proximity negates the use of a car and allowed engagement with the neighbourhood by walking.

Figure 22: Riverwood shops near estate

Source: Research participant, 2014.

This pedestrian engagement with the neighbourhood was an important factor for a number of respondents, providing informal social interaction, opportunities for recreation and, in one case, a resident driven recycling scheme:

I walk a lot; like when I go around looking for my - I call it ‘D's Off the Street Boutique'; I've always liked picking up the stuff off the side of the road. I pick out the good stuff, clean it up and take it to Vinnie’s. Then I started seeing the same people and I'd say “Hi how are you, nice day” or whatever and then gradually talk a bit more. (Participant 2013RR3)
Other respondents conceived their place experience as a supportive network of community ties. For some, this was the presence of others from the same cultural background, while others were involved with the various community groups such as the Riverwood Community Centre (RCC) or Riverwood Parents and Citizens Association. Notions of rootedness for some were linked to participation in the programs run by the community groups, or groups of neighbours within specific streets or buildings:

I go away and when I’m coming back I go “Thank God I’m back”. You feel free, you feel like... All right, as I said to you, every place has pluses and minuses. It depends on the people; it depends who you hang around. Personally, I haven’t found anything that I could say “Wow, I wish I could get out of here” or “I can’t stand it”. I have six kids and, touch wood, I haven’t had any problems with them, good neighbours, good friends, I would recommend anyone to come if it was up to me. Yeah, there is room for improvement but compared to some places – and I’ve seen other (public) housing places where really.... Riverwood was never like that.

( Participant 2013RR13)

Also of significance were the conceptions that the broader community saw Riverwood as a place with significant negative socioeconomic problems. Community members acknowledged that there were problems with petty crime, vandalism and unemployment. However, many community members felt that much of the derision faced by Riverwood was misplaced, pointing out an improving crime rate and that local authorities and Housing NSW typically failed to acknowledge, or appreciate the positive aspects of Riverwood. Several participants, for instance, used examples of other public housing estates to make their point. For community members,
Riverwood did not have the dire social conditions of Claymore (an estate in southwest Sydney) or the physical homogeneity of Mount Druitt:

I know a lot of people that I’ve encountered living in Riverwood may not have the best impression about the place but if you dig, you scratch the surface and you say well, how many times have you been in there and walked around and how many times have you met people who lived there, quite often the answer is zero and zero.

So their opinion is coming from a very low base of backup information. So it’s basically a hearsay opinion. Basically what they’re saying is that I’ve heard that there’s a lot of this going on in there and I’ve heard that there’s that going on in there.

I’ve heard stories of things going on but it’s not like Claymore, it’s easy to focus on the one person that broke into your car and smashed your window rather than the four thousand people who live there that would never consider even doing anything like that. (Participant 2013RR10)

This notion of defending place was found to be expressed more readily by longer-term residents, supporting Lewicka (2011:215) who notes that social and emotional connections to place often take significantly longer than environmental or physical connections. Further, Relph (1976:50) argues that “existential insideness, or complete and unselfconscious commitment to a place”, the highest level of place attachment is reserved for those who have lived in a place for a long time.

**Community**

Interviewees, ranging from long-term residents of Riverwood (both in private and public tenure), through to Community Development Workers and Property
Developers presented variations on the definition of community and their appraisal of the community in Riverwood. Interview data revealed important points within the theme of ‘community’ such as cultural background, tenure mix and social capital. Discussions about conceptions of community were framed within the respondents’ role within the Riverwood community.

Significantly, long term residents were of the view that the community in Riverwood had been steadily improving since the Neighbourhood Improvement Program was implemented in the mid-1990s:

I like all the fences around because it stops people walking around where they shouldn’t be walking. I’m an older lady by myself so I know if someone’s walking around the back here, hardly anyone does, so I have a look and see who it is so it’s more safe with the fences around. (Participant 2013RR3)

Safety was an important theme emerging from the interview data, with all respondents stating they felt that Riverwood was ‘at least as safe as any other part of Sydney’:

Everyone here says that they feel really safe. Some will have a bit of a feeling of apprehensive at first. They’re not sure what to expect. Perhaps they’ve heard other rumours or other media, whatever things people have said about people in housing estates. Mostly by the end I’ve had really positive comments with people saying they actually love the kind of – what’s that word? Not just communal feel, like a – not neighbourhood – a village atmosphere. (Participant 2013R9)
Neighbourhood change: New neighbours, new opportunities

Neighbourhood change, and the experience of change was expressed along a number of themes. For some residents, neighbourhood change was readily identified as a social phenomenon constructed through concepts such as social mix, or a tension in the political space of the estate between stakeholders. For others, the redevelopment works represented not only physical change, but held strong emotional nuances:

People were certainly fearful, particularly the people that were going to be moved. There was a lot of anxiety. There’s one lady, who comes to the barbecue. She used to sit across the road at one stage when they were pulling down the stuff, she was sitting on a chair and she was there for about a week, just sitting in the chair and I went over one day, and the woman comes across a bit abrupt and she said, “I was evicted” and I said “Not evicted, you were moved” or something like that. She always corrected you, she said, “Evicted, evicted” and I assumed she was really angry about that. One day I went over and sat with her and I said, “What are you doing”. She said, “I’m waiting for the last brick taken down because I’ve got a lot of memories in there”. (Participant 2013RP1)

The concept of social mix was presented within the interview data in multiple ways. Interviewee’s first response generally spoke to the significantly multicultural population and the dis/benefits that brought the community. When questioned about tenure mix, resident interviewees had less developed conclusions. The majority of resident interviewees accepted tenure mix and did not feel it would have an impact on their lives. Increased traffic flow was the most common resident concern:
I mean is it’s going to put the Riverwood suburb up the ladder a little bit. A lot of people scoff at (public) housing, they think all feral people live in it… So I think it would be good in that way and also it’s a very good place for them to build, like I said it’s close to everything, got the M5 there and everything. The only negative thing I’d say would be it would be bringing more cars into the area. This area's pretty quiet with the traffic. (Participant 2013RR2)

Private tenure residents had developed more critical responses to the concept of tenure mix. Rather unexpectedly, these residents saw the proposed social mix as an opportunity for both tenure types to benefit from one another:

Well, I would like to think that it would allow both sides of that mix, not that it’s meant to be indicating a conflict, to have more ability and opportunity to interact with each other and lessen that very us and them kind of mentality that a lot of people have and a lot of people view the place as, because I've heard it, I've heard it from people in Riverwood and not in Riverwood. It’s like, do you want to live there with housing people, and yeah, hopefully it can go some way to taking that away because – yeah, in a lot of cases it’s a fallacy. (Participant 2013RR10)

There was considerable consternation surrounding the way Payce had deployed its social mix, with suggestion that it would be a cause for future discord in the community:

I can see if the research is showing that the social mix is really important. Having said that, I guess I find quite a few frustrations with it. I think if you’re actually doing an authentic social mix, do an authentic social mix. There's been a bit of discussion with the tenants and they've have people coming from Bonnyrigg, you know the redevelopment there, to talk. But of course once I questioned our worker a bit more
about it, it seems that Bonnyrigg was much more houses and – How did they call it? Salt and pepper.... Yes. So I’m assuming that means private and public were in fact interspersed. Now as I was saying to them here in Riverwood, that’s very different to the social mix issue here. I mean yet again, we have two blocks which are completely social housing. Then there’s going to be huge numbers of private dwellings and to me that’s not exactly a social mix because that’s right on the edge of the estate. To me it could easily just become its own little enclave. (Participant 2013RP2)

For those working within Riverwood, the community was conceived as generally receptive to redevelopment, and that the people felt that it was a ‘step forward’ for the neighbourhood. As previously outlined, both the established Riverwood Community Centre and Payce are significantly embedded within the community and run multiple programs to engage residents with interest groups, opportunities to volunteer or disseminate information within the neighbourhood.

Figure 23: Community Barbeques are a key to the Payce Strategy

Source: Research participant, 2014.
Central to the Payce strategy is the weekly free barbeque that draws nearly 150 people on a Friday afternoon. The developer uses this forum to update attendees about the progress of the ERP, take on any concerns that might be held by residents and provide an opportunity for residents to volunteer in Payce branded community initiatives (which are often in direct competition to some programs run by RCC). This has led to embitterment between these organisations:

I think it would be fair to say that the Community Centre has probably experienced a sense of loss recently with the redevelopment because “It’s kind of our turf” like it’s always been – You know, we’ve been the primary people to relate to the community and suddenly to have a developer involved who wants to buy off the community engagement and stuff. There’s competition now, an unfair competition because they’ve got money that they can throw around and they’re not bound by funding.

(Participant 2013RP3)

This ‘competition’ between the RCC and Payce, is constructed differently by the various stakeholders in the community. Payce downplays the rivalry, stating that their ‘grassroots type thing’ is largely intended to avoid the ‘tick-box public meeting’ and build trust with the community. Despite this, both the community and the community centre perceive a conflict is present. This conflict is constructed differently by residents and the RCC. Residents conceive the conflict to be a case of ‘sour grapes’:

That’s what I meant when I alluded to one group that is not happy because they’re not in control, that was Riverwood Community Centre. Theoretically, I love the organisation, I used to be on their board but, I don’t think it’s the caring organisation that it used to be. I think they want to control Riverwood and they can’t. I think
they’re very possessive of Riverwood. I think it’s coming back to bite them. I really think that people in this community are not silly and I think they realise the good things Payce have done. (Participant 2013RR9)

The RCC, however construct this conflict as significantly damaging to the community after the completion of the ERP as the Centre does not have the resources to continue the programs that Payce have set up, leading to a negative impression being left behind:

There is a whole range of tenants of course in housing and there’s a rich diversity and there’s some really great people doing great things. I think though, you know, as soon as Payce leaves, all of that falls apart. So in terms of wanting to somehow build community – I think again we have different understandings of it and different models.... I have heard via the grapevine that people have said “We’re happy for Payce to be here for as long as possible because they keep throwing money at us.

( Participant 2013RP2)

For many residents, the ERP offered many hope that with the establishment of the retail and community spaces that many new opportunities for the community would be made available in close proximity to them. For some residents, this community space was critical for living in what they perceived to be small dwellings:

I think giving the people who live in the area more facilities that they can use and enjoy if they choose to rather than having to travel even a relatively small distance to be able to do that sort of thing. So open space and garden areas and parklands and walking trails and things like that which may not mean much to a lot of people but living in a confined space in a very dense environment, it’s important, from my own point of view, I was imagining if I was living back there, it’d be important to be able
to just get the hell out and go somewhere just because you don’t want to be inside.

(Participant 2013RR8)

Chapter summary

At the time of writing, the ERP at Riverwood was substantially underway, with Stage One complete and Stage Two under construction. The current masterplan and built form of Washington Park are closely aligned with the policy objectives of the NSW Government to promote higher density of development around public transport, provide a range of affordable housing products and deconcentrate public housing estates. Riverwood, and the broader Canterbury LGA have been identified as “valuable resources of affordable housing close to the CBD” (Participant 2013RP1) and ERPs and urban renewal offer considerable improvements to the housing and public facilities of the region. The construction of new dwellings in the Canterbury region will continue to put downward pressure on the housing affordability issues facing the Sydney housing market.

The case of the Washington Park ERP provides an opportunity to observe the phenomena present within a small scale PPP with significant and ongoing community engagement. The community’s previous experience with renewal and strong social infrastructure were particularly important features of resident’s experience of the Washington Park ERP. The following paragraphs respond to the propositions outlined by the study’s research questions.
Findings addressing Research Question 1

One of the dominant theoretical discourses that support ERPs in NSW is the ‘fear’ that exists in private communities of the presence of public housing in neighbourhoods. The basis of this fear can be usually given as safety for person and property, or the depression of property values in the neighbourhoods surrounding the estate. In the case of Riverwood, housing prices cannot be considered to be depressed by the estate, with above average performance compared to the broader Canterbury LGA. Residents report that the estate fits the social and physical context of the surrounding suburb and area. Fear for safety of person and property is also absent with many private residents involved with activities in and around the estate. This brings into question the implicit assertion that Riverwood was a site of dysfunctional social outcomes requiring an ERP intervention.

Riverwood, and particularly the estate was valued among public housing residents as a point of social difference to other public housing residents from other areas. To these residents, Riverwood had evolved into a place they were proud to call their home that did not fit the stereotype of a public housing estate in appearance or experience. Residents expressed a strong sense of aspiration, regarding the redevelopment as something that serves to validate the community. Resident participants expressed an explicit discourse of place attachment, placing value upon various features of the built and social environment in ways that non-residents and BEPs could not. Relph (1976) discusses this phenomenon as ‘existential insideness’.
Findings addressing Research Question 2

The housing authority and developer failed to recognise the sense of aspiration outlined above, speaking of the community in terms of the accepted discourse, highlighting the negative elements of the community and presenting the Riverwood estate within policy frameworks as a ‘wicked problem’. Ironically, the Riverwood estate already possesses a number of the characteristics that the ERP hopes to ‘establish’. The outdoor open spaces, community services and socially mixed community are present within the estate. However the interview data and policy context reveal that this organic mixed community is not valued or understood.

According to many interviewees there is a sense that the ERP would be damaging to the existing social networks, community cohesion and engagement within the community, and that tenure mix would bring with it a broader schism between ‘publics’ and ‘privates’. In some ways this constructed conflict is similar to the findings of Graves (2008) in the HOPE IV redevelopment of Maverick Landing, where each social group suspected the other for the friction within the neighbourhood. Residents at Riverwood felt that the influx of private residents would undermine the existing conceptions of community and place attachment. This threat to community life was thought to be driven by the ‘consumer’ nature of the newcomers, that they would contribute little to the community and would be unlikely to associate with their neighbours, simply coming and going as their occupation or social life demanded. Fundamentally it was a fear of change and the threat of being unable to contribute to the community that was being expressed.
Lefebvre’s concept of *lived space* (1991) provides a useful pathway to consider this sentiment. The existing community were concerned that their lived space— one that promoted relationships with neighbours and community members, contributing to the community through volunteer or paid roles and valuing local community systems was not shared by newcomers. Residents perceived that the newcomers would bring with them different norms and values, dispossessing the existing community as a result.

**Findings addressing Research Question 3**

The Riverwood case study serves to highlight the complexity of estate renewal and the importance of open communication between stakeholders. While all of the actors within the Riverwood case study championed the concept of community as the basis for their desire for the future of the estate, their ability to implement these strategies was often hampered by the actions of other stakeholders and competing discourses.

An example of this is illustrated by how resident’s aspirations for the post ERP estate would signify significant symbolic benefit (as a neighbourhood of choice) and utility (provided through new facilities) was tempered by reservations about how newcomers to the community would impact their conceptions of Riverwood. For BEPs and policymakers, it was this exactly this disruption that was desired, by allowing market forces and policy to shape the urban and political space of the estate, Washington Park was intended to effectively replace Riverwood.
Despite the efforts of BEPs to disrupt the lived space of the estate, previous experience of renewal and strong ties between residents, resident’s groups, and the RCC; equipped residents to negotiate and resist these efforts; preserving desirable aspects their lived space. There are some questions about the role the Payce funded Community Liaison Officer acting in a community development capacity and the motivations that might underlie this role; however, residents took advantage of this to demand open and timely communication between BEPs and themselves. Through this channel, residents were able to better communicate their desires and access resources to maximise the benefits of the ERP for residents and improve the quality of their lived space. This muted conflict characterises the Riverwood ERP.
CHAPTER 6
North Gosford

Introduction to chapter

This chapter identifies and explores the ERP works that were undertaken in the Dunbar Way Estate in North Gosford, New South Wales. The project was undertaken by a CHP as part an agreement to attain the management rights of the estate from Housing New South Wales. The project is representative of a growing number of similar ERPs in Australia being undertaken by CHPs as the public housing system continues to be dismantled by neoliberal governments. The housing in the Dunbar Way estate had been allowed to fall into disrepair and there was little protest to the objectives of the project. However, there were concerns amongst the community about the motivations for the project and elements of the open space plans. Unlike the other ERPs analysed, the community was to remain in-situ for the duration of the works, and no tenure diversification occurred.

The following account explores the experiences of change to the neighbourhood from the perspective of residents, planners and community organisations. The opening sections of the chapter outline the context for the redevelopment and the extent of the case study area in which empirical data collection was undertaken. The following sections uncover how change was perceived among stakeholders and how external conceptions of urban design and estate renewal have impacted notions of community and place. The chapter concludes with a theoretical analysis of the key themes.
**North Gosford: Perceived**

Gosford is a small regional city in the Greater Metropolitan Region of Sydney. It is located approximately 75 kilometres north of the Sydney CBD (see Figure 23). Gosford serves as a centre for services for the lower Central Coast of NSW, with its CBD centred on the Gosford railway station and Mann Street. Gosford is presently the major centre between Sydney and Newcastle, providing a hub for transport and services to the Central Coast area. In this capacity, Gosford has been designated a Regional City in the Department of Planning’s Central Coast Regional Strategy.

The settlement of Gosford commenced in 1823 when a number of pastoral leases were granted in the area. The settlement was also a base for road gangs constructing the Great North Road, between Sydney and Newcastle. The settlement was named Gosford in 1839 and was incorporated as a town in 1885. Major land use in Gosford continued to be predominantly agricultural, with associated services clustered in the site of the current CBD. Taking advantage of the timber cleared for agriculture, shipbuilding was a major industry until 1887, when the development the railway between Sydney and Newcastle was completed. The completion of the railway led to ‘an era of prosperity’ for Gosford, with the population experiencing steady growth as access to Sydney improved the local economy (Gosford City Council, 2001).
After the World War Two, Gosford’s significance as a regional city was growing, as identified by the Sydney Region Outline Plan (SROP) of 1968. Within the SROP, Gosford and the lower Central Coast were classified as a growth centre for a potential population of 500000 people. By accommodating this expansion, the links between Sydney, Newcastle and the North Coast of NSW would be strengthened (Abercrombie, 2008).

New growth centres such as Gosford, were to be developed with an individual identity and cater for a broad range of employment and social opportunities. These new urban areas were to be increasingly self-contained to minimise the journey to work and instill a sense of identity within the community (State Planning Authority...
1968). These principles were mirrored in other regions, such as Campbelltown in southwest Sydney. To cater for the planned industrial and manufacturing land uses envisaged for the region, public housing was constructed to house working families. Much of this housing was constructed in the townhouse style that was prevalent in the early 1970s on the northern fringes of Gosford and surrounding suburbs of Narara and Wyoming. The case study estate of Dunbar Way was constructed during this time.

By the mid-2000s, the public housing in Dunbar Way had reached the end of its service life without major renovation, being in poor condition, presenting a significant management and maintenance liability. Combined with a residulisation of tenant characteristics, the neighbourhood became increasingly marginalised and the focus of local derision. This poor reputation of the neighbourhood had a significant impact on the community, with a high resident turnover and significant disjointedness within the estate. Residents expressed concerns regarding safety and security on and around the estate. To address these concerns, Housing NSW (in pursuit of post public-private partnership (PPP) ERPs such as those at Riverwood and Bonnyrigg) entered into negotiations with Pacific Link Housing (PLH) to transfer the management of the estate and undertake renewal works. While past ERPs have involved several hundred properties and has involved significant demolition and rebuild works, the Pacific Link ERP represents a pioneering example of community housing led renewal, fitting into broader Housing NSW policy.

The interventions undertaken in the Dunbar Way ERP were largely consistent with the NIP (discussed in Chapter3). Primarily, the ERP was focussed upon improving the
physical fabric of the estate. Specific measures included improved safety through lighting, landscaping and CCTV. Estate amenity was also improved through the repair and painting of townhouse façades, the construction of a pocket park with community barbeque and children’s playground, and the establishment of a community garden was proposed. Social interventions included the reestablishment of the community centre within the estate to be used as a site office for PLH staff and base for other community service providers.

**Study area**

The study area used for the data gathering activities for this case study comprises approximately eight hectares surrounding the estate. The area is bounded by Glennie Street to the north, Henry Parry Drive to the east, Dwyer Street to the south and Gertrude Street to the west. The estate lies within a residential area of the suburb of North Gosford, with a corner shop on the northeast extremity of the study area.

The built form of the suburb is diverse in appearance and building type. The commercial precinct of Gosford is clustered around the railway station, and follows the Pacific Highway to the north. Around the railway station, row shops form the majority of the precinct. These row shops largely house independent businesses with professional services generally occupying the upper storeys. There is also a large shopping centre, the Imperial Shopping Centre which houses two supermarkets and other specialty stores. The precinct also offers a number of government, social welfare, medical and professional services alongside a number of cafés, restaurants, and social clubs. Much of the precinct is undergoing refurbishment. The commercial
precinct extends to the north, following the Pacific Highway, with large format stores and car yards being the primary businesses. Surrounding the commercial centre are residential neighbourhoods. The dominant dwelling type is three bedroom, detached houses, with increasing dwelling density adjacent to the commercial centre with apartment buildings.

Figure 25: Map of North Gosford. Study area marked


Gosford is well connected in terms of regional transportation, with trains and buses providing access to destinations within the Central Coast region and beyond. Major roads are also easily accessible with the M1 motorway and Pacific Highway providing rapid access to Sydney, Newcastle and the Hunter Valley. Sub-arterial
roads include the Central Coast Highway, Empire Bay Drive and The Entrance Road. Gosford has a number of educational facilities, including four primary schools, two high schools three faith based schools, a TAFE and a Campus of the University of Newcastle. Major features of Gosford include two hospitals, the Central Coast Stadium the Gosford Racecourse and various parks and open spaces.

The Dunbar Way social housing estate lies approximately one kilometre to the north of the Gosford CBD and represents a distinct neighbourhood in North Gosford. The estate has two distinct components, readily distinguishable by variations in built form. For the majority of the estate, two storey townhouses are the dominant feature of the built form, which, dependent on their siting on allotments, have private front or backyards. Some townhouses also have carports, however previous tenants have generally constructed these. To the east of the estate, single storey townhouses constitute the housing. These dwellings feature private backyards and lock up garages. Kendall Village, a complex of one-bedroom apartments, are the focus of the central precinct of the estate. Newly constructed two-storey apartment buildings are positioned at the northern entrance to the estate, however these buildings are not subject the ERP. There are also two parks within the estate, which are vacant and have minimal landscaping. There are a number of pathways that link the otherwise insular estate to the surrounding streets. Surrounding the estate, the built form is dominated by single storey weatherboard cottages on large allotments. A total of 60.7% of dwellings within the suburb are detached, while another 38.6% are either flats, apartments or townhouses (ABS, 2011b). This illustrates a fairly low density of development.
According to the ABS, the population of North Gosford in 2011 was 3500, an increase of 2% from 3438 in 2006 (ABS, 2011b). Historically, the Central Coast has been a source of lower cost housing in the Greater Metropolitan Region of Sydney.
and has been attractive to retirees and young families that are beginning their housing careers. This is reflected in the 2011 census data, which reveals that 40.7% of the population was less than 30 years of age and 12.1% were over 65 years. The median age of North Gosford is 37 years old, which is consistent with both the NSW (38 years old) and national (37 years old) averages and a combined 85.8% of the population is either employed full-time (60.2%) or part-time (28%). Occupations within North Gosford are diverse with lower than average engagement with ‘professional’ sectors (21.7%) and higher than average engagement with ‘trades workers’ (14.6%), ‘labourers’ (10.7%) and ‘community and personal services’ (11.8%). Household income is lower than average with 30.2% of households earning less than $500 per week. The population is predominantly Anglo-Australian with only 2.2% of the population reporting, “born overseas/ancestry” apart from Australia, the UK or New Zealand. A total of 2.2% of the population is of Indigenous ancestry (ABS, 2011b).

**Summary of Empirical Activity Undertaken**

The empirical activity at the North Gosford case study proved to engage a greater proportion of the population than that of Riverwood. From a total population of 100 dwellings, 10 residents responded to the recruitment letter. The cohort was comprised 5 females and 5 males ranging in age from 28-45 for females and 50-75 for males. Participants were well distributed across the case study site however there was a minor concentration present in the Kendal Village section, perhaps revealing that the older members of the community were more likely to engage with outsiders. Each of the 10 participants undertook an interview with the researcher for
approximately 70 minutes (see Appendix 1). The same interview roadmap was used as at Riverwood however compared to Riverwood, the participants at North Gosford were not familiar with research processes and required the researcher to explain some of concepts and processes of interest to the study. Despite this, residents were still able to reflect upon their experience of the planned ERP and the community engagement processes.

As in Riverwood, participants were requested to undertake a photographic survey of places and features within the urban environment that invoked an emotional response. Eight of ten agreed to undertake this survey and 7 completed it within the required time period. The photographs submitted to the researcher were of a different tone and depicted divergent spatial narratives. The fractious nature of the lived space was evident from both the photographs, and debriefings. Photos of participant’s homes usually featured within the photo surveys which were accompanied with sentiments of pride or gratitude. Photos of the estate’s public areas were limited in number and were often derided by residents as being ‘gross’ or ‘depressing’. The vast majority of photos submitted to the researcher were from outside the case study area, often at the local shops, social clubs or by the water in Gosford. This reflected the comments made by many residents that they spent as little time at home as they could. This was in stark contrast to the Riverwood participants who undertook many activities within the case study site and had strong social connections with neighbours. Many photos submitted to the researcher were unusable in the research as they were taken from within a car and reflections had obscured to subject of the photograph, this is interesting in itself as when questioned about it, residents reported feeling uncomfortable taking photos within
the estate for fear of retribution or being blamed for anything ‘going wrong’. This reinforces the sentiments of residents regarding the fractious lived space and mutual mistrust of others in the community (see Figure 27).

Figure 27: Sample of Photographic Surveys in North Gosford

![Sample of Photographic Surveys in North Gosford](source: Research Participants, 2013)

In Chapter 4 it was reported that the researcher’s activity within the North Gosford case study site was frequently challenged. These challenges were always verbal, and were never malicious or made the researcher uncomfortable; however, there are some underlying phenomena that may have led to this markedly different experience. As in Riverwood there are a number of possible explanations for this; the two that are aligned with the research interests will be discussed. The first is related to the built form of the estate. The estate is very insular; essentially a long cul-de-sac and houses have no delineated defensible space on the frontage. This results in residents claiming territory from the public domain. The insular nature of the built form also discourages casual pedestrian activity, leading to a scenario where only
residents use the road on a regular basis as pedestrians. The lack of other pedestrian activity made the researcher particularly conspicuous, especially when taking photographs. The second relates to the fractious lived space. The mutual distrust between different areas of the estate and bad reputation of the estate leads to residents becoming more militant toward the unknown pedestrian. The high rate of resident churn compounds these issues, suggesting that the community never develops the depth of trust or constructs as robust a lived space as at Riverwood.

**Building our business: Reconceiving a ‘problem estate’**

As has been noted, at the time of the empirical investigation the ERP at Dunbar Way had been announced and final preparations were being made. The housing and public domain remained in a dilapidated state. There was a sense of guarded anticipation within the community, unsure of the ‘newcomer’ Pacific Link Housing. This section will analyse the ways in which the staff of Pacific Link Housing and other BEPs discursively constructed the ERP at Dunbar Way.

The policy framework that supported the Dunbar Way Estate Regeneration Program is representative of “best practice, place based regeneration” (Pacific Link Housing, 2014:1), focused on transferring the management of social housing to local community housing providers for regeneration. The Dunbar Way ERP is one of the first CHP-led regenerations undertaken in NSW. This policy framework places a strong emphasis on developing a social inclusion agenda through collaboration with the non-government sector to build the capacity and resilience of communities (NSW Government, 2010:44). Operationalising these guiding principles of the NSW State Plan, Housing NSW’s corporate plan sets specific goals for the “integration of
social housing in communities, breaking the cycle of disadvantage for tenants in social housing, and provide more chances to participate in decision making” (Housing NSW, 2008). Major policy alignments can be found in the imperative to provide affordable housing in supporting communities, supporting a strong social housing sector, supporting the economic growth in the region. The redevelopment was also supported by Federal policy in the NAHA, seeking to deconcentrate areas of perceived disadvantage.

This model of increased role and autonomy of CHPs has been adopted from similar policies in the UK where CHPs establish targeted approaches to neighbourhoods, delivering a range of services, including the management, construction and delivery of place based housing products (National Housing Federation, 2008).

Gosford City Council welcomed the planned regeneration of the estate, stating that the ERP was consistent with the objectives of the Gosford Community Strategic Plan to ensure that appropriate, affordable housing be available in the community and address the shortage of affordable housing on the Central Coast. Council also anticipated that the intended works would ensure that the project was both sensitive to and supportive of the current community and further community development (Gosford City Council, 2013).

Any redevelopment on site would therefore be subject to these overarching policy frameworks, providing social and affordable housing, improving tenant engagement and social outcomes for the community. To achieve this staff of PLH, in consultation with planning firms formulated a master plan detailing the opportunities and the proposed improvements. Major objectives included:
• to improve the standard of living of current and future tenants
• to entice families to live on the estate with an outdoor area and activities for children
• to improve social cohesion on the estate, provide better opportunities for tenants and nearby residents, and reduce social and economic disadvantage
• to protect our investment in the neighbourhood, reduce turnover, increase rent payments and minimise maintenance expenditure
• to continue the process of re-imaging Pacific Link as a leading Community Housing Provider.
• to provide tenants with a mechanism for participating in the regeneration. (Pacific Link Housing 2011:4)

**Linking home and community**

While preparing to undertake the ERP, Pacific Link designed a comprehensive ‘communications and PR’ strategy to frame the redevelopment of the estate within the desired narrative. This strategy, outlined in the planning documents, followed the wider discourses of estate regeneration. Fieldwork revealed a multi-faceted approach to drive the dual narratives of neighbourhood/community development and establishing Pacific Link as the premier CHP with operations on the Central Coast:

“This is a first and critical initiative for the Central Coast. Instead of allowing the estate the slowly fall apart, Pacific Link has moved to take control and spend its own accumulated earnings to bring the estate up to date and make it useful for the next 30 years. It means that people in need can now be accommodated in the knowledge they have a mutual obligation to respect the improved amenities and opportunities that the program brings.” (Pacific Link, 2014)
The discursive imperative of this project is the restoration of the estate into a safe, secure neighbourhood, providing a high quality of life for the community. Media releases, made periodically within local media and industry updates are designed to build a sense of anticipation for the renewed estate which is “essential to protect the value and extend the use of existing community and social housing assets” (Pacific Link Housing, 2014). These documents are future focused and position the Dunbar Way ERP as a new paradigm, suggesting it “may become an early model for regeneration models of this type throughout the sector” (Pacific Link Housing, 2014).

Internal documents also reveal a focus on the anticipated future of Dunbar Way, with emphasis on improving the reputation of the estate into a desirable neighbourhood through community stabilisation, reduced maintenance and increased market rent values. These objectives are couched in the creation of a safe and ‘enticing’ neighbourhood through improved urban design in interviews with PLH staff:

I think they (the tenants) are looking forward to it, because I think in a way I think they’re sick and tired of seeing that drab look. To spruce it up, to make it more vibrant, bring it in to the 21st Century, make it a bit more modern, you know it’s caught in the ’70s, we need to bring it into the 21st Century. (Participant 2013GP2)

The social value of the estate as a resource of affordable housing is promoted heavily in PLH communications, with a focus on the capacity and enthusiasm to regenerate the estate made as a point of prestige against the implied unwillingness of Housing NSW to maintain the estate.
I think historically it’s got a bad name, so when we do try and allocate people; they’re like “I'll live anywhere except Dunbar Way,” but since they are beginning to know about the changes that are going on a lot of people have been coming to us going “we’ve heard that it’s changed a bit, we wouldn’t mind living there now.” I think painting it up and making it look bright and clean and neat again will definitely aid that and make it a place people want to live. Especially because down the bottom of the street we’ve got two new complexes that we manage as well. (Participant 2013GP3)

Within the project proposal and communications with current tenants, ‘before/after’ photographs are provided building the narrative that PLH is the catalyst for change in the neighbourhood and creating positive response to PLH via the regenerated estate.

Interviews with PLH staff revealed that the Dunbar Way ERP is designed to combat the stigma that has built toward the estate in recent years with a proposed change of the street’s name (Dunbar Way) a key strategy to regenerating the community:

I’ve always said it needs its name changed, because most people that talk about it have never been in there. I know some of my clients have a lot of trouble with putting jobs in and putting their address on their resumes. I’ve actually advised some of them to use a post office box or use our address if they need to because automatically they (potential employers) look at it and put it straight down. I know a taxi driver here in Gosford refused a young girl who was pushing a pram with two babies in it, she said the address she wanted to go to and he said ‘No I don’t go in there. (Participant 2013GP1)
This new street name (to be chosen by residents) is intended to be the climax of the change narrative set in place by Pacific Link, severing connections to the ‘old’ Dunbar Way and fostering notions of connectedness, community and civic pride,
cementing the future of the estate as a desirable location to live for the targeted demographic of young families and retirees.

The second component of the Pacific Link strategy is the establishment of a Tenants Management Group (TMG). This TMG is considered a project specific extension of PLH’s existing tenant participation strategy. The TMG is intended to “facilitate grass roots participation to engage the commitment of tenants and neighbouring residents for successful and sustainable outcomes” (Pacific Link 2011:18). The function of the TMG is the discussion of matters that affect the cohesion of the estate and coordinating Pacific Link’s agenda of implementing strategies to “address barriers to workforce participation” and mutual responsibility in the post ERP neighbourhood. To date the TMG has coordinated events to promote better interaction between tenants such as morning teas and barbeques. The group also identifies specific assistance to PLH associated with submissions to Council and disseminating information in the community regarding Pacific Link activity and any outcomes. There has been mixed success for the TMG during its tenure, as expressed by PLH staff:

    We've engaged them in everything. Like now I've just completed the playground proposal, so that's going to the board for approval. We've engaged them from the beginning. So whilst I've gone ahead and done all the nitty-gritty, you know arranging all the quotes. I've got them involved by helping. You know, what kind of equipment would they like to see, to the point where I've actually asked them to vote on which preferred playground they'd like to see. So I've gotten them involved. I must admit, it's very sad in a sense, where I've actually invited them to come along
to make a vote, yet very little have showed any interest, which is very sad.

(Participant 2013GP2)

Similar frustrations with the TMG have been expressed among residents:

We've been trying to, that’s the idea of establishing a committee. Now unfortunately the committee is in limbo, but that was essentially brought on by failure to act on complaints before. All Pacific Link and Housing (NSW) will do is point the finger at each other, but that doesn’t solve the problem. We wanted to find out who Pacific Link’s tenants are, who Housing (NSW) tenants are to start building the Residents Committee, but we were brushed off. That’s the big question at the moment. Who’s responsible for what? That’s what’s not known. (2013GR2)

A secondary function of the tenant participation program is to build cohesion between different areas of the estate. PLH staff expressed concern for the way the built form and street layout had led to the evolution of ‘ghettos’ and ‘an us vs. them attitude’. This was particularly apparent between Kendall Village (Figure 29) and the surrounding townhouses. Resident interviews related the tensions that existed between different areas of the estate, with each ‘micro-community’ blaming the others for the social difficulties and bad reputation of the estate.

The third aspect of PLH’s discursive strategy was the commissioning of an evaluation of the ERP works. This evaluation is anticipated by PLH to validate the undertaking of the project and provide a ‘good news’ story which the CHP can then leverage within the media and social housing sector to build their reputation. PLH have stated that the evaluation will guide future ERP works to be undertaken and will also improve the services available to their clients.
Designing community

The collected data demonstrated that for stakeholders of the Dunbar Way ERP, concepts of community and place were aligned with the features and appearance of the existing neighbourhood and the planned ERP. For a majority of stakeholders, the potential for the ERP to make significant improvement to the neighbourhood was apparent in interviews:

I was involved in the initial concept of the project, which was based on I guess due to the extreme anti-social behaviour and the unsavoury elements that we had out there when I first started the Pacific Link. Just a way that we could create a safer environment for everyone living there. I think giving people more of a sense of place, something to feel proud of where they live, instead of being embarrassed about living in Dunbar way. I think changing the name of the estate will be beneficial as
well and it’s just going to create an area where people outside of the area are going
to want to go as well, whereas at the moment it’s avoided. (Participant 2013GP3)

Pacific Link, in both interview and the literature generated supporting the
development of the ERP are adherent to the village ideal. There was some dissent
however, with other stakeholders proposing the redevelopment on the estate could
fail to achieve its objectives:

I would love to see if changing the appearance of it will change the respect that
people have for it. I’d love to say yes it will, but I don’t think it will, that’s my concern.
The culture in there and the way they see themselves, I think it’s just putting a pretty
bow around it really. (Participant 2013GP2)

**Shrugging off the past: Resident experience of neighbourhood change**

Upon completion of the empirical activity, the data collected (the interview
transcripts and photographic surveys) were subjected to thematic analysis. These
themes reflected the theoretical interests of the project (place attachment,
community and built form) and were aligned with the research questions. This
thematic analysis was intended to extract the conceptions of neighbourhood held by
residents.

**Place attachment and community**

Within the Dunbar Way participant cohort, the positive anticipation for change was
readily observable. Eight of the ten participants expressed a strong connection to
place, ranging from positive to resigned. These experiences related to the supportive
social networks between neighbours, the security of social housing tenure or, conversely, the stigma that living in social housing brought. Participants conceived Dunbar Way as a place with more than its fair share of problems but one that was on an upward trajectory:

Yeah, I don’t know because – well, if you follow the pattern over the years Dunbar’s had a really bad name and that kind of hasn’t been dropped. Because 15 or 20 years ago no one could walk through here, they’d get stabbed or robbed because there was a lot of criminal activity and drug activity, and that went on for years and years and years. And then when I moved here, there was a couple of them kind of still living here but they’ve been moved out. But I suppose for character – it’s hard to describe really – I really haven’t got a word for it. It’s pleasant, like it’s a pleasant area, because I can sit out on my porch and have a coffee and I’ve got really good views over there. Yeah, it’s just pleasant – it’s just a pleasant place to live.

(Participant 2013GR3)

For this resident, the amenity of the neighbourhood had been significantly improved by having problem tenants moved on, leading to a decrease in illegal activity. The ability to safely appreciate the natural amenity of the estate was a key to their connection to place. The tenancy management policies were major contributors to the security and cohesion of the estate. This cohesion was highly valued by many tenants:

For me and my family the best thing is it’s a home, it's somewhere that I'm comfortable with. The neighbourhood is great, it can be challenging at times but we all get on because we are all in the same boat, more or less. Single parents, young
people raising children. We’ve all got the same issues going on, same situation in the neighbourhood. (Participant 2013GR10)

The cohesion was however, largely experienced by tenants on a sub-neighbourhood level with derision or mistrust directed to other parts of the estate. In the case of Dunbar Way the average tenure was four years. Social and emotional connections to place were still developing for residents, existing narratives from the estate’s past influenced how the community considered each other:

I find Dunbar Way has had a stigma and always will have a stigma because up the top end there used to be quite serious drug dealers, and they were big time, they weren’t little. They covered Newcastle, way down the coast, Sydney, so they weren’t little fish. But, eventually, yes, time came and they got moved on. So that’s the type of thing they’ve got to look at. Some of the other people have been quite good. The only other things they’ve got to have a look at now is various things like dumping of rubbish up the top, nobody’s done a thing about it to see if the council will come and pick it up. (Participant 2013GR2)
Significantly, the conceptions of Dunbar Way as a stigmatised neighbourhood were present in all interviews. Residents acknowledged the significant issues that affected the community, such as significant unemployment, welfare dependence and petty crime, and expressed the emotional toll this took on their lives:

Well to be honest, this place is fucking depressing. I’ve never been in a housing community before so I didn’t know. But after living here, like I said, I keep to myself because if you go out there you hear all the stories and you hear everyone’s lives and everything and it can get depressing. So that’s why you keep to yourself.

(Participant 2013GR10)

Despite this, residents anticipated that the ERP would make significant inroads to improving the perceptions of the estate for both their neighbours and the broader community. Particularly, the restoration of the façades, and the construction of the playground were seen as the measures that would have the most impact. While other measures such as the CCTV were dismissed as ‘Candid Camera’, with one
resident claiming that the cameras were there to provide security to the built form, rather than the community.

Figure 31: “To be honest this place is depressing”

Place attachment for most was strongly linked to their security of tenure, with many respondents formerly homeless or suffering severe hardship in the private rental market. For these residents, Dunbar Way represented an ontological security that had previously eluded them:

If we didn’t get this house we’d still be living in a hotel and it would have been very, very negative. You can’t do things in a hotel room. ... If we didn’t get this house, it would be the hotel life and I would have started looking for housing. But when you go looking for rentals they don’t accept you that well as a single mum. (Participant 2013GR10)
The resident experience of the Dunbar Way ERP was expressed along a two broad themes. Many participants noted that while they did not understand the intricate processes and timeline of the renewal project, longer term residents expressed feelings of disappointment of having made decisions to transfer tenancy arrangements or other sacrifices which they perceive leave them in tenuous positions:

I think it would be, but let’s face it, if they are going to do it, schedule and plan the blasted thing. It’s like any construction or redevelopment project, if we know what the thing is then we can look at it and say okay this is where it's going. There will always be odd bits and pieces I’m quite willing to accept, I think everyone’s quite willing to accept, but as long as we know where we're going. (Participant 2013GR9)

These concerns were thought by residents to be compounded by a perceived lack of communication about the renewal. When the researcher discussed the long
timelines of other Estate Renewal Projects in Sydney, residents were somewhat appreciative of the challenges faced by PLH. Residents proposed that a newsletter or other line of communication for project updates would have reduced the community’s anxiety.

**Chapter summary**

The planned works of the Dunbar Way ERP are an exemplar of contemporary estate management policies of the NSW Government to transfer public housing assets into the community housing sector for renewal and management. These projects are the favoured path for Housing NSW as the CHP meets the maintenance backlog, improves tenant engagement and is able to leverage the assets to increase the supply of social housing available. This is particularly important in Gosford, as the Central Coast of NSW has up to 30% less social housing than the State average (Pacific Link Housing, 2014).

The Dunbar Way ERP therefore provides an opportunity to examine the processes that need to be undertaken by CHP’s for small scale redevelopment without private market investment or social mixing. For the resident community, the ERP provided the potential to make significant positive change to the neighbourhood. This opportunity was tempered by the unknown of being under the management of Pacific Link, and the security of residence. The following paragraphs will align the findings from Dunbar Way with the study’s research questions.
Findings addressing Research Question 1

The Dunbar Way estate was valued by the residents for the stabilising effect that housing provides. However, the estate was a place that also caused hardship in their lives in the form of stigma and the experience of severe social problems. Residents expressed a desire for the redevelopment to provide a ‘fresh start’ for the community and allow the estate to shed some of the narratives of dysfunction and crime that had characterised it in the broader community. Residents expressed a narrative of developing place attachment, placing value upon their homes and social connections with their immediate neighbours; however the relatively short tenure of participants prevented unselfconscious connections of ‘rooted’ place attachment. This lack of place attachment allowed residents to perceive the external impacts of the ERP quite readily; noting that the place based measures would ‘bring the neighbourhood to standard’.

Findings addressing Research Question 2

For both residents and other stakeholders, there was a sense that the ERP would positively disrupt the place narratives that exist in the neighbourhood. Residents identified the results of the ERP as; a more cohesive community, less stigma and more engagement with the housing provider. However there was some reservation among the residents of Kendall Village that their near monopoly on the influence in the neighbourhood would be undermined with the expansion of the existing Tenant’s Committee to the broader estate. For others there was fear of the less secure tenure of community housing and the cultural changes that Pacific Link represented. Lefebvre’s concept of lived space is a useful way to analyse these
concerns. Essentially, this fear is a response to the discourses promoted by Pacific Link. Interview data revealed that for the majority of residents in Dunbar Way, there is a disconnection between the aspirations of the community and Pacific Link’s attempts to recast the estate’s spatial narratives with the BEP promoted discourses of community development, workforce participation and encouraging the transition of tenants into the private market. For residents, this signalled the establishment of a new *lived space* with different rules and norms, which would negatively impact their existing roles within the community.

**Findings addressing Research Question 3**

The Dunbar Way case study allows a concurrent examination of a pioneering ERP. Key questions raised are about the effectiveness of the planning and execution of the project, and if the objectives are sustainably achieved. There are further questions regarding the role of a CHP undertaking renewal works for promotion and growth of its business.

There is little doubt that the redevelopment of the estate will have a lasting effect upon the culture and *lived space* but it remains to be observed if these effects will be positive. While welcoming the renewal and the updated built form, significant frustration between residents and BEPs was apparent with regard to the communication and stakeholder engagement. Residents remained reserved regarding the impacts Pacific Link would have on the political space of the estate and the conceptions they held of Dunbar Way. Both residents and BEPs championed the restorative potential of the ERP; however conflicting desires for the future of the
estate and representational discourses frustrated the efforts to engage in a meaningful way.
CHAPTER 7
Bonnyrigg

Introduction to chapter

This chapter presents an analysis of the ERP that was undertaken in the Sydney suburb of Bonnyrigg. The project was the first ERP to follow the ‘Living Communities’ model developed in response to lessons learnt from the Minto ERP. The Housing Minister of NSW announced the project in December 2004 as the first PPP redevelopment of public housing in NSW, involving a 30-year contract between the NSW government and a private sector ‘consortium’ (NSW Department of Housing, 2004a). Over the term of the contract, the entire estate is to be redeveloped, having fallen into material disrepair and social dysfunction. Following the difficulty Housing NSW faced during the Minto ERP, sentiments toward the proposal were varied. There was concern that the negative experience of Minto would be replicated in Bonnyrigg. To counter this, significant resources were allocated to tenant participation and community consultation.

The following account presents the empirical work undertaken and an analysis of secondary sources, to disclose the experience of neighbourhood change. The opening sections of the chapter outline the context for redevelopment, and the datasets utilised. The following sections describe the PPP process and the ways that stakeholders deployed conceptions of urban design, place and community. The chapter concludes with a theoretical analysis of the key themes.
Bonnyrigg: Perceived

Bonnyrigg is a residential suburb in the south west of Sydney. It is located approximately 35 kilometres from the Sydney CBD and entirely within the Fairfield local government area (see Figure 31). While being primarily a residential suburb, Bonnyrigg has a small commercial area to the west of the suburb, which is aligned with the rapid bus transit network, granting easy access to the major centres of Liverpool and Parramatta. Within the context of the Sydney Metropolitan Strategy, the estate is located within one of the key growth areas of Sydney, often defined as the geographical space within the motorway orbital (the M2, M7 and M5 motorways). The estate is well connected to two of the five key growth cities (no more than 20 km to each city) and the two proposed major centres (no more than 10 km to each major centre). Locally, the estate is surrounded by the residential suburbs of St Johns Park (north-east of the estate), Mount Pritchard (south of the Estate) and Bonnyrigg Heights (south-west of the estate), all of which have experienced significant median house price increases (Rogers, 2012a).

The post-European settlement of Bonnyrigg commenced in 1791 when the first land grants were issued in the Bonnyrigg area (Fairfield City Council, 2008:11). The first major development was the construction of an Orphan School in 1803 that “played a vital role in the development of child welfare in the colony” (Starr and Wheeler, 2005:5).
During this time agriculture was a major land use. The network of creeks and fertile soil around Bonnyrigg was well suited to a range of activities, with large scale pastoral properties, vineyards and orchards prospering in the region for 80 years.

Subsequent subdivision of the original grants during the 1870s opened Bonnyrigg to smaller family operated farms. By the early 1900s, Bonnyrigg and the surrounding area was host to many poultry, dairy, and fruit and vegetable farms (Fairfield City Council, 2008:11).

Urbanisation of the Bonnyrigg area slowly commenced post-WW2 with the further subdivision of agricultural land. The development of the suburb was accelerated when, in 1980, the Housing Commission of New South Wales, acquired 119 hectares at the current site of the Bonnyrigg public housing estate (Fairfield City Council,
From 1981 to 1986, Housing NSW built 828 dwellings, a mixture of cottages and townhouses, laid out according to the Radburn design principles outlined in Chapter 3 (Housing NSW, 2008a). Since construction, 99 dwellings (primarily cottages) have been sold to tenants or on the private market. Other areas of the estate have undergone the NIP renewal to de-Radburnise the neighbourhood; however the majority of the estate was not subject to the NIP (Rogers, 2012a).

In the mid 2000s Housing NSW saw the estate as socially “problematic, and the properties were considered to be reaching the end of their intended lives” (Pinnegar, 2013:2). The estate had previously undergone a series of interventions that had been deemed unsuccessful. Bonnyrigg had become increasingly stigmatised, suffered high levels of crime and the Radburn layout of the estate had been discursively constructed as compounding the “multiple layers of social disadvantage shaping the lives of Bonnyrigg’s residents” (Pinnegar, 2013:2).

Like other public housing estates with Radburn layout, the community reported concerns for personal safety and the security of their possessions, noting that the culs-de-sac, poor lighting and laneway access presented opportunity for muggings and break and entry to occur. Laneways were identified as a particular concern, allowing covert access and escape for burglars and routes for drug dealers. For the Bonnyrigg community this permeability of the built form, combined with a lack of appropriate fencing or landscaping, left residents feeling unsafe in and around their homes, often taking extreme measures (such as carrying a baseball bat) for even mundane household activities such as disposing of rubbish (City Futures, 2013).
In 2004, the then Minister for Housing, Carl Scully MP announced the intention of the Housing NSW to undertake a redevelopment of the Bonnyrigg estate via a PPP arrangement. The imperative to renew the Bonnyrigg estate via a PPP was driven by a number of imperatives. Housing NSW saw an opportunity to deploy social policies, such as introducing tenure diversification and a new vehicle for estate redevelopment and community renewal. Combined with the speculated financial viability of the project, supported by the buoyancy of the ‘entry level/aspirational’ housing market within Sydney’s west, Rogers (2012a) contends that there was a secondary political commitment to the PPP model as the NSW State Government had delivered other major infrastructure projects in this way. By utilising the PPP, HNSW was also signalling that the ‘heavy lifting’ of deconcentrating disadvantage was now beyond the capacity of the government alone and was to become to be a ‘whole-of-community’ task (Rogers, 2012a). Housing NSW released a call for expressions of interest in January 2005, outlining the scope of the project and the specific requirements of the ERP.

Despite the complexity of the project, interest from the private sector was strong with three consortia being shortlisted to provide a ‘Detailed Proposal’ for the ERP. at this point, one consortium withdrew from the procurement process. Further negotiation followed the submission of the Detailed Proposal. On 18 October 2006, the Premier of NSW announced that Bonnyrigg Partnerships had been chosen as the preferred proponent and would be entering final negotiations with the Land and Housing Corporation (Housing NSW’s asset branch), with the Bonnyrigg Living Communities Project (BLCP) Deeds executed on 20 April 2007 (Rogers, 2012a).
Between the announcement of the ERP and the execution of the Deeds, Housing NSW and Fairfield City Council undertook significant community consultation events. These ranged from ‘capacity building’ exercises, aimed at giving participants the requisite skills to participate in master-planning forums, through to tours of other ERP sites to give stakeholders and residents conceptual context for the BLCP (Stubbs, Randolph and Judd, 2005; Rogers, 2012a). Learning from the negative experience of the Minto ERP, Housing NSW designed the Living Communities Program to “span social, economic and physical elements in an integrated approach... projects need to involve multiple partnerships and a strong emphasis on the engagement of the affected community”. And “as an approach to estate renewal, which ensures comprehensive and integrated change across three interlinked goals: provision of better services and creating new opportunities; the building of a stronger community, and the renewal of houses and public areas” (Coates and Shepard, 2005). Significant emphasis was placed upon the integration of the social and physical aspects of the renewal which was positively received by residents (City Futures, 2013).

At the time of first approval (2004), the masterplan for the redevelopment involved the staged demolition and reconstruction of the entire estate. There is a departure from the Radburn layout of the estate, replacing culs-de-sac and undefined corridors of open space with grid-like street layout and demarcated parks and reserves. Housing type is ‘normalised’ with a mix of detached, terraced and higher density housing proposed. The net housing stock will be increased from approximately 925 to 2300 dwellings. Once completed, approximately 30% of dwellings will be made available for social housing, with the remainder being sold on
the private market. The planned increases in housing density serves to both deploy a
tenure mix policy across the estate and part-finance the ERP through the sale of
private dwellings.

Study area

The study area used for the data gathering activities for the Bonnyrigg case study
comprises approximately 95 hectares and the entirety of the estate. The study areas
boundaries can be given as: Bonnyrigg Avenue to the west, Elizabeth Drive and
Cabramatta road to the south, Humphries Road to the east and Edensor Road to the
north. The estate lies within the residential suburb of Bonnyrigg and comprises
approximately 60% of the total area of the suburb. The built form of the estate can
be demarcated into identifiable neighbourhoods. The eastern and southern
comprises Radburn style townhouses, while the central and western areas of the
estate have undergone renewal, featuring a combination of terraced style and multi-
unit housing. The new entry point for the estate, Newleaf Avenue, is a grand
boulevard with adjacent to landscaped parkland. At the time of the empirical works,
the estate is effectively divided into two ‘halves’, with both the original Radburn
design and the renewal works causing severe disruption to both pedestrian and
vehicular traffic (Stubbs, Randolph and Judd, 2005; see Figure 32). A large
commercial area lies on the western boundary of the study site. Services available
include a large hardware store and Bonnyrigg Plaza, which houses two major
supermarkets, a range of specialty stores and a Housing NSW client service centre.
In response to the ERP, Bonnyrigg Plaza is undertaking significant renovations.
Surrounding the estate, the built form is predominantly residential, consisting largely
of brick veneer single storey housing. A total of 88% of dwellings within the suburb are detached, while another 9.1% are either flats, apartments or townhouses. This demonstrates the increase in density when compared to 80% detached and 17.8% townhouses of the 2006 census period (ABS, 2011c).

Figure 34: Map of the suburb of Bonnyrigg (study site)


Places of worship are another significant feature of the built environment in Bonnyrigg, reflecting the multicultural makeup of the resident population. Fifteen places of worship are within 500 metres of the study site, including Buddhist temples, a mosque, and various denominations of Christian church (Stubbs, Randolph and Judd, 2005).

Bonnyrigg is well connected in terms of regional transportation. While not having a train station within the suburb, multiple bus routes run through, or around, the
estate including a rapid bus service (T-Way) to Liverpool and Parramatta and direct routes to the subregional centres of Fairfield and Cabramatta. Major roads are also readily accessible. The M7 motorway runs near to the site, providing a key link to the Metroad system. Sub-arterial roads that serve Bonnyrigg include Elizabeth Drive and Cabramatta Road (City Futures, 2013).

Bonnyrigg is served by a number of educational facilities, including three primary schools and two high schools. Major features of Bonnyrigg include significant open spaces (due in part to the Radburn design), major sporting and social clubs and ‘Cabrogal Cottage’, a multipurpose centre that serves as a community hub where many events are held. Training opportunities are also available to tenants with a focus on computer literacy and English as a Second Language (ESL) services.
At the 2011 census, the population of Bonnyrigg was 7978, a decrease of 4% from 8303 in 2006; reflecting the significant displacement of households from the estate. The south west of Sydney has historically been an area of lower cost housing within
Sydney and has been attractive to lower income households and has also been an important entry point for new migrants and refugees. Between 1981 and 2001, the estate in particular served this role, by the mid-1990s it had a significant proportion of tenants from non-English-speaking backgrounds (Rogers, 2012a). In 2001, the estate population was approximately 3100, of which over 60% were born overseas (Rogers, 2005). Therefore, cultural and linguistic diversity was a defining feature of the estate until ERP announcement in late 2004. The most common languages spoken in 2004 by public housing tenants included “English (30.3%), Vietnamese (26.4%), Khmer (7.0%), Arabic (6.4%), Chinese (5.6%), and Spanish (4%)” (Stubbs, Randolph and Judd, 2005). This is reflected in the 2011 census data. The population remains diverse, with Vietnamese (22.6%), Chinese (11.8%) and Khmer (5%) being the highest ancestry responses. Further, the 58% of the population were born overseas and 84% of the population report that both parents were born overseas (ABS, 2011c).

The median age of Bonnyrigg is 34 years old, which is younger than both the NSW (38 years old) and national (37 years old) averages and a combined 81.7% of the population is either employed full-time (57.3%) or part-time (24.3%). The unemployment rate for the suburb is 11.1%, however the unemployment rate within the study area is 24.1% (ABS, 2011c). Occupations within Bonnyrigg are generally low skilled, with lower than average engagement with ‘professional’ sectors (12.2%) and higher than average engagement with ‘trades workers’ (15.9%), ‘labourers’ (15.9%) and ‘machinery operators and drivers’ (13.8%).
A brave new world: Recasting public housing renewal

As previously noted, at the time of the empirical investigation the ERP was significantly underway. Stages One to Three were complete with demolition works for Stage Four nearing completion. This staged redevelopment has had multiple benefits and disbenefits for stakeholders and community members. For stakeholders, it allowed the financial risk to be compartmentalised, however did not provide long term certainty of project viability. For residents, the staging allowed them to remain on site as part of the community, however left them in a state ‘limbo’ (Lui, 2013). This section will explore the discursive tools that the developer and BEPs used to construct the narrative of ‘Newleaf at Bonnyrigg’.

The policy framework that supports the BLCP is complex and borne out of a response to the lessons of the Minto ERP, the social and asset management policies of HNSW set out in response to the NAHA and the NSW Treasury’s commitment to pursuing PPPs (City Futures, 2013, Rogers 2012a). Further, the ERP was framed in the long-standing Department of Planning policy of urban consolidation. The planning controls of Fairfield City Council also apply to the site. In the case of ERP projects, the scale of redevelopment and capital investment often require assessment by the Department of Planning, having been deemed state significant development. In the case of the BLCP, the Consent Authority was the Minister for Planning (Urbis, 2008b).
Fairfield City Council had no objections to the ERP in principle, amending relevant Environmental Planning Instruments in order to accommodate changes to the town centre and dwelling density. Council did make a number of recommendations to the proponent, Bonnyrigg Partnerships. These recommendations were made to ensure that the project was supportive of the existing community and that the new development was in character with the surrounding suburbs, while remaining consistent with the outlined social and economic goals of the redevelopment (Urbis, 2008b). These comments are reflected in the headline federal and state policies relating to the project, including the NSW State Plan.

The Sydney Metropolitan Strategy 2036 classifies Bonnyrigg as a ‘small village’, where retail services and public transport links make it a suitable site for Fairfield City Council to meet some of the 95500 “new dwelling target” outlined in the West
Central Subregional Strategy (Urbis, 2008). The redevelopment was also supported by Federal policy in the NAHA, seeking to deconcentrate areas of perceived disadvantage.

The EOI document describes the BLCP as an opportunity to work with government to create a ‘sustainable’ renewal of the estate, with the ERP described as:

The Living Communities Program aims to make Public Housing estates safer and more attractive places to live... For this Project, a Private Partner will be chosen to plan improvements to houses, roads, parks and community facilities and to undertake physical renewal works... The Department recognises that sustainable renewal of Public Housing estates cannot be achieved by government or individual agencies acting alone. It can only happen through partnership, with tenants and other residents, the private and community sectors, local councils and government departments all working together. (NSW Department of Housing, 2004a:9)

The Living Communities model was a reflection of broader Government policy directives. These policy platforms focussed upon the realignment and renewal of public housing assets, the pursuit of building dwelling density within Sydney’s existing footprint and the retreat of State Government from leading major infrastructure projects (Rogers, 2012a). With this comprehensive list of objectives, the project encouraged the formation of consortia, each component entity present to specialise in one area of the ERP. Bonnyrigg Partnerships, the successful consortium, comprised of a developer (Becton), a maintenance and waste management firm (Spotless), a Community Housing Provider (St George Community Housing) and a financier (Westpac Bank). After being awarded the tender in October 2006, Bonnyrigg Partnerships undertook master-planning and the submission of a
development application to the Department of Planning in November 2007. This masterplan was guided by the community consultation (80 meetings) undertaken between the award of the tender and the submission of the application. Despite (or because of) the significant consultation, a number of issues with the urban design, stormwater and drainage, and street layout were identified in the concept plan (Rogers, 2012a). These issues were resolved to “deliver an appropriate and consistent outcome for the site, taking into account a wide range of criteria, including the site context, amenity considerations, safety and security, social needs and impacts, environmental criteria and the like” (Urbis, 2005b). Approval for the concept plan was granted by the Minister for Planning on 12 January 2009. Since this approval, there has been some slippage from the original plan. Due to the ongoing impacts of the Global Financial Crisis the project’s timeframe has blown out from 13 years to 17 years. Significantly, the number of dwellings available to social housing has reduced to 700 while the total number of dwellings has increased to 2500 (Pinnegar, 2013).

**Turning over a New Leaf**

As the Bonnyrigg ERP represented a wholesale demolition and reconstruction of a residential suburb, Bonnyrigg Partnerships has undertaken a concerted effort to present the renewal as an opportunity to participate in a novel model of urban living. This was the underlying narrative presented both the existing tenant community and the marketing of the newly constructed neighbourhood to the private market.
Newleaf, was the lynchpin of the ERP narrative of Bonnyrigg. Like Washington Park in Riverwood, “Newleaf” seeks to distance the masterplanned neighbourhood from any negative connotations of public housing. The Newleaf brand was future focussed, and was widely reported in mainstream media channels. Articles with headlines such as “Troubled housing estate turns over radical Newleaf” tout that the ERP is “the future of community housing” and that “it (Bonnyrigg) cannot be any worse than it is; it (Newleaf) has to be better, doesn’t it?” (Tovey, 2009). Newleaf at Bonnyrigg is described as a highly desirable neighbourhood, close to services and recreation. Marketing materials (see Figure 35) build the desirability, drawing attention to the sales success of earlier stages:

Newleaf Bonnyrigg is fast becoming the community of choice for people looking to move into a new, vibrant, safe and friendly neighbourhood in South Western Sydney.

There are new parks, barbecue facilities and open spaces to enjoy with family and friends. So whether it’s an outdoor lunch you have in mind or a sports game with your children, Newleaf Bonnyrigg is for you. Other public amenities are also close by, with Bonnyrigg Plaza Shopping Centre, the T-way bus service and local primary and secondary schools all within walking distance. (Newleaf Communities, n.d.)
Discussions with Housing NSW staff that assisted the development of the masterplan, revealed that a primary motivation of the Living Communities urban design scheme was to de-Radburnise the estate. This was determined to be a major contributor to the negative perception of the estate. Laneways and culs-de-sac were to be replaced with a more legible system of paths through the neighbourhood and the built form was:

..reconfigured so as to encourage a community where people walk, cycle, and interact informally in the spaces in front of their properties, as well as in local streets, parks, and centres. This is intended to create a safer environment by increasing the level of activity, and improving passive surveillance from houses. It is also intended to increase opportunities for the kinds of social engagement between neighbours that results from more people walking and cycling. (Premier’s Council for Active Living, n.d.)
Newleaf is presented as the beginning of an ongoing change to the surrounding area, with the neighbourhood providing a ‘lifestyle destination’ in addition to a typical residential neighbourhood. Whilst not explicit, the masterplan betrays an adherence to the ideal of the village, describing the features of the ERP as a:

“high quality residential area characterised by a suburban leafy amenity, with well-maintained public and private realms that reflect community pride...The renewal of Bonnyrigg will build upon the current positive attributes of the Bonnyrigg area to form an inclusive identity... Bonnyrigg will become the first place of choice to acquire an affordable home in south west Sydney” (Urbis, 2008:55).

The masterplan describes the new urban design solution as central to the character of the new Bonnyrigg. Street and paths are designed to ‘look, feel and operate as neighbourhood spaces’ to ‘encourage active use and informal meetings of neighbours’, Character Precincts will feature ‘consistencies in dwelling architecture and street armature’ which ‘design relationships of movement between park areas
and building uses and forms’ that ‘have passive surveillance from a number of sources’ (Urbis, 2008:70). The planning documents present Newleaf as an idyllic urban environment, contrasted with the ‘current situation’, a description that unfavourably focuses upon the shortcomings of the current housing estate. Further, the documents contrast poor quality photographs of the estate to architect’s concept drawings, adding a pictorial representation to the discourse, building emotional response to the ERP and highlighting the adherence of the Newleaf planners to the concepts of community as a place and village utopianism.

To complement the Newleaf narrative, the Living Communities model included community engagement activities. Given the long project timeline and its positioning as a “pathfinder project”, the Bonnyrigg ERP deployed a number of engagement activities that were previously untested. This approach was intended to be both planned and opportunistic, with opportunity for reflexivity to respond to outcomes or feedback from previous activity (Coates et al., 2008). Learning from the negative experiences of Minto, the “Department of Housing recognised that the consultation process needed to be crafted such that the community had language to express themselves accurately and understand the issues put before them” (Coates et al., 2008:41). The community engagement included a hierarchy of activities that were aligned with specific project milestones. This hierarchy can be drawn along the trajectory of “Information-Consultation-Participation- Capacity Building” (Cultural Perspectives, 2007). At each stage, activities were designed to build upon the knowledge and skills developed in earlier phases.
The ‘information’ phase, initiated immediately prior to the project announcement remains ongoing through a regular newsletter to residents. Core to the engagement strategy is the free flow of information among the community. This serves two major purposes. Firstly, it establishes and manages the desired narrative for the ERP, minimising the development of misinformation (Coates et al., 2008). Second, the saturation of the neighbourhood with the ERP narrative serves to set the direction for further consultation activities. The first letter to residents, distributed in December 2004, reveals the HNSW attempt to undermine the existing spatial and social narratives present in the estate. The opening paragraph designates Bonnyrigg as a ‘high need’ estate in need of ‘community renewal’ (Rogers, 2012a). Following is a description of the ERP, containing many phrases that devalue the pre-ERP estate, contrasting them with ‘solution’ narratives:

Bonnyrigg is a ‘Radburn’ estate ... some old and worn out houses will go ... we need to replace and upgrade poor quality public housing ... we will find ways to upgrade public safety ... create opportunities for local people to improve education and skills and find jobs ... like many public housing estates, it is a community with strengths but also some social problems ... the first thing we will do is consult with local residents. (NSW Department of Housing, 2004a)

These statements served to deem both the physical and social components of the estate as ‘obsolete’. This appraisal, and the stigmatising narrative deployed by the mass media at the time of project announcement significantly weakened the position of residents. Residents were now in a position such that they could not voice their dissatisfaction regarding property maintenance or crime prevention without justifying the case for the ERP (Weber, 2002). Moreover, resident’s attempts
to raise concerns were now effectively corralled by the BLCP community engagement activities.

During the EOI stage of the ERP, the community engagement process transitioned to a ‘consultation’ stage, which for the first six months was outsourced to a dedicated community engagement consultancy (Sarkissian and Cook, 2000). A variety of activities were undertaken during this stage, including field visits to previously redeveloped estates, community barbeques, information stalls and small workshops with targeted resident groups (Coates et al., 2008).

Under the direction of Housing NSW, Sarkissian Associates Planners undertook two major public ‘community consultation’ events, SpeakOut and Our Bonnyrigg Dream: Telling the Planners What Really Matters. The events were designed specifically for the BLCP context recruiting a number of ‘best practice’ consultation techniques (Rogers, 2012a).

SpeakOut was a two-way mediated event held on the Bonnyrigg estate in April 2005, immediately after the close of the EOI period. The one-day event was designed to be an informal forum that allowed public housing residents, private residents and other stakeholders to ‘drop in’ and ‘speak out’:

The SpeakOut is a lively, innovative, colourful and interactive staffed exhibition — a hybrid event combining some of the characteristics of a meeting and some of an exhibition or ‘open house’. The purpose is to provide an informal and interactive ‘public meeting’ environment where a wide range of people have a chance to participate. It is designed to facilitate structured ‘drop-in’ participation about planning and design
issues. Participants come to the venue, find the issues on which they wish to ‘speak out’ and have their say. (Sarkissian and Cook, 2005:2)

As the name SpeakOut suggests, the event provides and avenue for residents to come to raise concerns for the future of the estate and the proposed ERP. The forum was intended to cross the divide between BEPs and the resident community through a range of activities and provide “ordinary people opportunities to contribute to decisions that can make a difference” (Sarkissian et al., 2009:7). Sarkissian Associates Planners explains:

Unlike a typical 'open house', a SpeakOut is a carefully facilitated event. A trained Listener pays close attention to what people are saying and asks pertinent questions, while all their comments are clearly recorded ... A range of interpretive material is used to encourage people to comment on issues of local concern. This is really a ‘listening session’ focusing on the community's views. As the SpeakOut progresses, the walls of the venue become covered with community views. (Sarkissian and Cook, 2005:7)

Despite the promise of democratic place-making processes, the SpeakOut event was limited in potential, with Housing NSW setting the issues that were open for comment by public housing residents. While public housing residents were able to ‘speak out’ about any issue, the event was structured around nine ‘Issues Stalls’ which “participants were able to visit... and make comments specifically about those issues” (Sarkissian Associates Planners, 2005). In addition to managing the type of information collected, Housing NSW influenced the reported outcome by specifying the data analysis method and reporting categories within the SpeakOut Consultation Report (Rogers, 2012a).
Designing community

The second consultation event was held in May 2005. *Our Bonnyrigg Dream: Telling the Planners what Really Matters* followed a similar two-way mediated format to the earlier SpeakOut event. Rather than a generalised forum, this event asked residents to comment on specific aspects of the masterplan for Newleaf. This event was also marked the transition into the ‘capacity building’ phase of the engagement (Coates et al., 2008). The *Our Bonnyrigg Dream* event provided public housing residents and other residents with input into the master-planning processes. Specifically:

The workshop program was designed to gather specific information for the future Bonnyrigg master plan. In particular, the workshops aimed to:

1. Create guiding principles that reflected the community’s aspirations for the Master plan and can be incorporated into the Request for Detailed Proposals; and

2. Develop guiding principles that can also serve as criteria and could be used to inform later assessment of draft masterplans by the community and others.

(Sarkissian Associates Planners, 2005b:9)

Like the previous SpeakOut, in reality the resident input was aligned with predetermined aspects of the BLCP. These included informing public housing residents and others about the BLCP, conducting ‘visioning’ exercises to encourage public housing residents and others to imagine a new Bonnyrigg, and ‘mapping’ exercises to record ‘social networks’ and community service needs to facilitate community building.

The final large-scale consultation event took the form of community ‘feedback’ in August 2005. Named ‘What you have told us so far’, this event was integral to the
devaluing of pre-ERP discourses of Bonnyrigg. At this event, Housing NSW presented the filtered ‘community consultation’ information to residents. Housing NSW had carefully regulated information, issues and resident concerns in the various collection and reporting methods deployed, selecting and privileging some discourses while excluding those that weakened the BLCP (Fairclough, 2003). In this case, resident input had gone through several stages of fragmentation, reconfiguration, and alignment with the objectives of the BLCP (Rogers, 2012a). In doing so, Housing NSW was able to argue that a ‘consensus’ had been reached regarding the next stages of the ERP.

After the ‘What you have told us so far’ consultation and information session, the community engagement moved into the final and current stage of ‘capacity building’:

The consultation program now moves into a new phase through to the end of 2005, with fewer of the large-scale events and more emphasis on capacity building with residents who are already engaged. (NSW Department of Housing, 2005:2)

The final phase of the capacity building scheme was the ‘Building the Dream’ workshop series. This activity departed from the conventional urban planning model of ‘community consultation’ implemented earlier by Sarkissian Associates Planners. By contrast, Housing NSW employed an adult educator to develop “the workshop curriculum with inputs from experts in each topic area” (Coates et al., 2008:13). The workshop curriculum followed the master-planning process for the BLCP and was structured around the following master-planning principles: basic design and planning concepts; master-planning principles; open space, streetscape and built-
form configurations; crime prevention design; and house design (Rogers and Darcy, 2014).

Emerging from this exploration of the community engagement process, it is evident that BEPs consider concepts of community and place linked to the processes of urban planning and design. This was apparent through the discursive ‘problem-solution’ presentation of the BLCP to residents and the broader community (Rogers 2012a). This conceptual alignment was also witnessed in the controlled filtering processes undertaken by Housing NSW during consultation events and the presentation of community concerns and issues arising as spatially sited within Bonnyrigg.

A member of the HNSW Community Renewal team relays the BEPs adherence to the primacy of physical intervention as a solution to community “issues”. In the case of Bonnyrigg, the NIP had not resulted in the positive outcomes that were apparent at Riverwood, requiring further intervention:

All the cul-de-sacs making a lot of rabbit warrens and the really unpleasant combined with the inappropriate, unhelpful retro fitting of the Radburn formation trying to make that into a more conventional formation, meant that you had a lot of residual back alley laneways, just pedestrian lanes that are narrow with very high fences, if you were looking for a hidey hole to do the wrong thing, to do crime or make mischief you could find heaps of them. And getting rid of those would be a very important thing in terms of changing the physical layout of the space. (Participant 2013BP1)
The notion of erasure of community in ERPs was considered to be ‘overblown’ with little appreciation granted to the social networks that existed in the pre ERP Bonnyrigg:

I think public housing neighbourhoods and community is different to non-public housing areas absolutely, but I still think there can be an over exaggeration of the amount of mutuality and support that happens widespread. More people would have those supports in that place, but in the same way that I don’t know everyone who works in this building I know enough people here that if I needed something I could find some help. And I think that’s the same often in a public housing neighbourhood. And so with all of that said I think it can easily be overblown, we still end up regularly with stories of an older person passing away in their home and being there behind a locked door, dead for weeks before anyone notices. So I think you probably do get a little more interaction (in public housing neighbourhoods) and the advocates who oppose social and physical renewal of estates say these people will be much more isolated in these neighbourhoods where not everybody is home all the time. I think then you just need to compensate for that and create other ways for people to get together. So have the master plans address that and considered those issues, I think very much so, and that’s because for both of those we had very strong connections across the social and physical together. (Participant 2013BP1)

This ‘social problem- physical solution’ model is evident in the community engagement and project planning documents. Engagement activities were designed to build enthusiasm for the development develop the discourse of ‘community renewal’ objectives; Providing better services and creating more opportunities; Building a stronger community; and Renewal of houses and public areas (NSW Department of Housing 2004a). Importantly, these objectives developed into ‘key
messages’ that began to shape the narrative of the BLCP as they were reproduced in various planning documents, consultants reports, housing conferences and in mass media. In short, it was thought that by the provision of information and capacity building activities, residents would gain “the skills and confidence... to make a meaningful contribution” (Coates et al., 2008:3) to both the BLCP and building the ‘community’ imagined by BEPs.

Figure 39: ‘Social problem- Physical Solution’


Placing placelessness: Resident’s experience of renewal

As previously noted, the undertaking of further empirical data collection on this extensively researched community was deemed to be unethical. The Bonnyrigg community has become research fatigued (Lui, 2013). Despite no data specifically collected for this project, existing research has built a secondary literature that can be analysed to elucidate resident conceptions of Bonnyrigg, the ERP and place.

A key component of the reporting and evaluation processes of the BLCP, the Bonnyrigg Living Communities Baseline Survey, represented an independent analysis
of the resident community and the community. Defined as one of the monitoring and compliance mechanisms within the BLCP Deeds, the Baseline Study set out to record the experiences of residents and “establish baseline data on social cohesion in the community” (Stubbs, Randolph and Judd, 2005). Despite the difficulties of defining ‘social cohesion’, some theoretical attention was given to the problem in the study:

In terms of temporal comparisons, the survey provides an opportunity to undertake a longitudinal study of the effects of estate renewal on Bonnyrigg; for example, on any changes in the perceptions and life experiences of residents as their community changes, or they are relocated to other areas (changes in what may be termed ‘social cohesion’). (Stubbs, Randolph and Judd, 2005:20)

The Baseline Study framed the subsequent Bonnyrigg Longitudinal Panel Study undertaken in 2012 by City Futures Research Centre (University of New South Wales). Based upon similar Longitudinal Studies undertaken regarding the US HOPE IV program, the study reflects the growing recognition of the impacts that ERPs have upon resident households. Of particular interest to this study, was the documenting of impacts upon households that remained on-site throughout the BLCP. The Baseline Study, conducted in 2004-5 recruited 200 households; however this had declined to 97 by the ‘First Wave’ study of 2011-12. The data presented in these reports, along with other secondary sources have been subjected to thematic analysis aligned with the interests of this study.

Prior to the commencement of the BLCP, attachment to place was evident. This was expressed through a sense of belonging, the enjoyment of the built environment or
a discourse of place defence among participants. Residents noted that Bonnyrigg has developed into a well-connected neighbourhood, commenting on the proximity of services and facilities useful for their day-to-day lives. This contributes to a positive context for redevelopment that is not present in other broad acre public housing estates in western Sydney:

Residents are generally very positive about life in Bonnyrigg, have a strong attachment to their community, and intend to remain long term residents of their area. More than three-quarters of respondents felt ‘positive’ or ‘very positive’ about life in Bonnyrigg, whilst certain groups are even more positive. (Stubbs, Randolph & Judd, 2005:11)

The announcement of the ERP in 2004 was met with general support from the community, with the early stages of Housing NSW engagement processes giving residents an understanding of the possible renewal activities. This also meant that although enjoying community support, this support was heavily qualified by resident expectations of positive post-development outcomes for residents and the community. Further, Stubbs, Randolph and Judd (2005) report a strong desire to participate in the master-planning processes, indicating that residents are enthusiastic to maintain the aspects of Bonnyrigg that are deemed significant.

Place attachment was observed to be more developed amongst long term residents and those from non-English speaking backgrounds. For these residents (predominantly Lao and Cambodian), neighbours from the same cultural background contributed greatly to reducing isolation and provided positive experiences of place (Stubbs, Randolph and Judd, 2005). Bonnyrigg’s location to other clusters of migrant groups in the Fairfield LGA, allowed residents to remain close to family and friends. This cultural diversity was well recognised by BEPs:
I think my experience of Sydney and Australia overall is that there is a very strong suburb identity connection that people have, this is quite different for me from other places that I have lived. Bonnyrigg has a very distinct image of themselves, and there is quite a distinct image of the surrounding areas. As a place it's, it's hugely diverse. So that was a very significant characteristic and the fact that quite a lot of land had been allocated by the State to new arrival groups in the 70s and 80s for temples and areas of places of worship and community gathering, it has...it's been a focal point. So if you talk to anyone who's Lao or Cambodian anywhere in Australia Bonnyrigg is an important place to them, because they're the main temples for both of those communities

Longer-term residents from all backgrounds were found to have strong ties to their neighbourhood; this is especially apparent when residents had made improvements (at their cost) to their homes or gardens. Residents had expected that Bonnyrigg was their permanent home and had invested time and financial resources into improvements (Stubbs, Randolph and Judd, 2005).

As the BLCP progressed and renewal works (demolition, civil works, construction) commenced, residents place experience became characterised by notions of disruption and loss. Darcy and Rogers report that some of this sense of loss can be attributed to the community engagement processes. The design of the engagement processes resulted in the “removal of inhabitance based rights” (2014:251) and led to a ‘flexible citizenship’, whereby residents no longer hold rights as legitimate place makers, but must conform to the state sanctioned conceptions of ‘community’ or ‘place’ in order to participate in the ‘community’ (Lepofsky and Fraser, 2003:134).
To some residents, the staged renewal of the estate is a source of disruption. While in the case of Bonnyrigg, the geographic displacement that often occurs during ERPs did not occur; the staged renewal and multiple relocations that households undertook were stressful (Coates et al., 2008). While sound in theory and allowing residents to remain in Bonnyrigg, in practice, the plan effectively divides the suburb into 18 spatially contiguous, yet temporally fragmented stages. The long project timeline means that while, at the time of this study, residents from the early stages have already moved through temporary relocation and are in their new homes, households in later stages are yet to experience the first relocation. This movement and the visual impact of the works have eroded the sense of place and community experienced by residents. Importantly, the experience of Bonnyrigg residents suggests that while the intention of a staged redevelopment is to preserve place attachment, or at least minimise disruption to social networks (Goetz, 2010b) it does not deliver the intended outcome every time. This is especially true if project timelines are as long as the case at Newleaf. Some residents question the capacity for ‘Newleaf’ to restore the perceived disruption to the socio-spatial landscape (Lui, 2013).
The relocation experiences of residents have contributed to a sense that the community, like the suburb itself, is divided and fractured, with households becoming more concerned about the impacts they personally face rather than working with the rest of the community to maintain a sense of place (Lui, 2013). For many, these impacts are experienced less spatially but ideologically, the involuntary nature of their relocation highlighting their disempowered position within the social housing system. For residents in the first stages of the redevelopment, dislocation from place was particularly arduous as daily errands and social engagement bring them past the location of their previous homes, which often remain standing for many months before demolition.
Along with the demolition and renewal of housing stock and public domain, Newleaf features a radical departure from the Radburn street layout. Many new streets have been created or have resulted from opening up culs-de-sac (Urbis, 2008). This further disconnects pre-renewal Bonnyrigg from Newleaf. The street naming convention reflects the overarching ‘Newleaf’, with a botanical theme. This renaming of streets is a deliberate measure, designed to assists with the marketing of new homes, and avoids the association of new homes with the poor reputation of streets known for violence or drug crime (Stubbs, Randolph and Judd, 2005). In some ways this is a positive disruption to place, effectively giving the neighbourhood a metaphorical ‘new start’; however, it also represents an ideological disconnect between Bonnyrigg and Newleaf, resulting in a disruption to place for residents (Lui, 2013).
While the renaming of the street network has disrupted the spatial discourses of Bonnyrigg’s paths and public domain, the design concept of ‘tenure blindness’ has consummated the onset of sentiments of placelessness. In the case of Bonnyrigg, the medium density attached dwellings are constructed using the same architecture, materials and finishes, rendering private and social housing dwellings indistinguishable from one another. While this serves to deflect the stigma usually attributed to the distinctive architecture to social housing dwellings, “the casual eradication of distinctive places and the making of standardised landscapes” (Relph, 1976: ii) results in residents contrasting the physical and social aspects of sections of Bonnyrigg yet to be renewed and Newleaf. Many residents living in renewed stages have discursively distanced their new (Newleaf) homes from the stigma of Bonnyrigg, while others are derisive of what they see as an aesthetic ‘Band-Aid’ solution to the underlying social problems.

For the original private owners of Bonnyrigg, the ERP brought somewhat different experiences and disruptions to place. Where the experience of place disruption for social housing residents was characterised by involuntary mobility, experiences for the private households have been characterised by a sense of entrapment (City Futures, 2013). No arrangements were made to acquire these privately held houses by the consortium; meaning households would need to leave of their own volition. Lui (2013) reports that some households, while attempting to sell, have discovered a lack of appetite for run down housing, effectively surrounded by a building site in the housing market. This ensnares private households within the renewal for the duration of the ERP, causing significant embitterment and disengagement from place, as previous commitment to the neighbourhood (through the purchase of
housing) remains unrecognised. Residents report a fear of exclusion, as their homes are not afforded the same renewal as the rest of the estate.

This exclusion is not limited to the physical appearance of dwellings. Residents report that being ‘locked out’ of the initial and ongoing community engagement and a lack of clarity about the ERP exacerbates the sense of placelessness. Although the number of private households is small, this group is living through change like their social housing neighbours. In regard to communication:

A number of issues emerged. In part, these related to concerns that they were not being kept as well-informed, or had the opportunity for as much input, as other residents on the estate. It also reflected concerns that renewal activity was something that ‘happened around’ them. Furthermore, because private owners were not to go through the process of relocation and rehousing, there was relatively little consideration given within the renewal framework to the change taking place ‘around’ those residents, and how they might be affected. (Pinnegar, 2013:7)

A third aspect of the ERP that impacts private residents sense of place is that once their stage has been completed, while not spatially moving, they have changed address due to the changes in the street layout and naming convention. This too has ideological impacts upon residents, as their inhabitance-based rights and connection to place is eroded by an involuntary change of address. There is also a significant investment of time and resources to legally change deeds and contracts associated with the change of address borne by theses private residents (City Futures, 2013).
Among all residents, the conception of ‘getting on’ while the ERP moved through stages of development was apparent. Notions of rootedness are apparent with many residents holding the realities of urban renewal in abstract terms and regarding the ERP as ‘somewhere else’ until immediately impacted by the realities of relocation, change and disruption (City Futures, 2013). For these residents, while the ERP pervaded the spatial narrative of Bonnyrigg, it was filtered through the lens of the ‘day-to-day’. Pinnegar explains:

For example, an interviewee living in one of the later redevelopment stages had never ventured across to the Newleaf development in the five years since construction commenced, despite the new streets and homes making up Stages 1 to 3 being no more than 250 metres from his existing home. But with his own relocation many years away, his life largely homebound and defined by continual support for his elderly mum and, when he did leave the house, trips to the Plaza reached through the streets of ‘old Bonnyrigg’. (2013:7)

Chapter summary

The current masterplan and completed stages of the BLCP can be evidenced to be closely aligned with the scope of contemporary policy objectives of the NSW Government to promote development within Sydney’s existing urban footprint, to align higher density development within public transport corridors and to address locational disadvantage through deconcentration of public housing estates. The geographic location and housing market conditions in Bonnyrigg and surrounding suburbs have been identified favourable to achieve these policy aspirations.
The BLCP/Bonnyrigg presents a unique opportunity to examine the interaction of broader neoliberal urban policy and the local conceptions of place. What contributes to this uniqueness is that the structure of the BLCP allows residents to stay ‘in place’ throughout the redevelopment almost pitting the “individualisation and responsibilisation of tenant’s experiences that is implicit in neoliberal community building” (Darcy and Rogers, 2014:253) against the collectively imagined, constructed, and lived experiences of place that inhabitation affords individuals. The following discussion will align the findings with the study’s research questions.

Findings addressing Research Question 1

While the announcement of the ERP in 2004 was met with general support from the community, this support was heavily qualified by resident expectations of positive post development outcomes for residents and the community. As the BLCP progressed and renewal works commenced, residents place experience became characterised by notions of disruption and loss. For these residents, the staged; the staged renewal and multiple relocations that households undertook were stressful and damaging to social networks that were enjoyed and relied upon by residents. Combined with the visual impact of the ERP, many residents had reported that their sense of place and community were eroded, negatively impacting their opinion of the ERP process (Lui, 2013).

Additionally, the impact of the BLCP tenure mix strategy is not well discussed by the sources deployed for this study. Despite this, the references made to it reveal there was some discussion of the concept and its outcomes during the community consultation process. Pinnegar (2013) suggests that the concepts are well
understood and are regarded by tenants to be another difficulty to be endured along with the more substantive disruptions brought on by the ERP.

**Findings addressing Research Question 2**

Public housing residents valued Bonnyrigg as a neighbourhood that offered many advantages and opportunities. These residents valued the multicultural community, the access to cultural resources on and adjacent to the estate and the ease of travel to major centres such as Liverpool or Parramatta. Residents felt strongly attached to Bonnyrigg, with notions of place attachment expressed through the valuing of features of the built and social environment, beyond the cognition of BEPs (Tuan, 1977, Relph 1975). The housing authority, and the Newleaf partnership failed to recognise the value of resident’s aspirations for their community, highlighting the accepted discourses of social malaise and sentiments of the estate presenting a ‘wicked problem’ to social support services. In doing so BEPs were discredited the place experience of the community and commenced the spatial and ideological transition toward the placelessness of ERPs.

Further these discourses led to a reconceptualisation of place making, locating BEP conceptions of commodified, flexible citizenship within a socio-political space that effectively delegitimised resident’s experiential conceptions of place. By co-opting resident’s rights to participate in place making, BEPs effectively mitigate the opportunities for residents to resist or mount challenges to the ERP (Harvey, 2008; Sassen, 2006; Fischer, 2000). Measured against the spatial trialectic (Lefebvre, 1991; Soja, 1996), it can be readily apprehended that the collective lived space of residents is hindered and/or appropriated by the conceptions of community building and
inclusion proffered by State Housing Authorities in the socio-political space that surrounds ERPs

**Findings addressing Research Question 3**

The BLCP’s community engagement, incremental renewal and temporary relocation structures were central to the resident experience of the ERP. Though intended to circumvent the negative social impacts of displacement from renewal sites these structures coalesced to form a coercive agreement between residents and the state. By taking advantage of resident’s commitment to place, BEPs enjoyed ‘buy-in’ and tacit approval of the renewal (and the attendant discursive spaces created). By committing to the community consultation processes and living through the renewal, residents effectively waived their claims to place. The neoliberal discursive forces set in place within the BLCP processes undermined the rights of residents to make knowledge claims about place or participate in ways other than those sanctioned by the state.

The Bonnyrigg case study serve to illustrate the discursive manoeuvring that accompanies the wholesale demolition and reconstruction of a public housing estate. Key questions raised address the effectiveness of the ERP and the coercive nature of the projects communication structures. Questions about how the ERP will impact the resident conceptions of place and community in the mid to long-term have revealed that the disruption is far reaching and has little benefit to the community. Residents welcomed the material improvement to the neighbourhood through built environment interventions however the multiple relocations and years of ‘limbo’ cast doubt over Housing NSW’s intentions. By implicating residents in the
BLCP’s structures, they were unable to resist the changes being made to the urban and political space of the estate. The very structure of the BLCP, with its 18 stages is also called into question with the Consortium facing difficulty in delivering the redevelopment, requiring Government intervention. The Bonnyrigg ERP is largely characterised by the complexity of the public-private partnership and the community’s resigned acceptance of dislocation.
PART III

Part III serves to conclude the thesis. Following is a discussion that links the central research task and literature outlined in Part I to the research observations and researcher reflections related in Part II. The thesis concludes by identifying opportunities presented by the findings and proposes a suite of actions that can be taken to ensure future urban renewal reflects the aspirations for all involved.
CHAPTER 8
Revisiting the Propositions

Introduction to chapter

The case study chapters have outlined the interactions of competing spatial agendas that arise when undertaking ERPs and the managing of these conflicts. This discussion chapter appraises what has been learned through the case studies and evaluates the contested claims that ERPs might deliver improved social outcomes through the redevelopment of public housing estates and mixed tenure policies. This objective was pursued by responding to a series of research questions, focussed upon illuminating the interactions between empirical data and the theoretical framework. As Jacobs notes, a richer and more insightful way to address urban renewal and social housing development would “embrace renewal and development not just as physical processes but also consider how these processes are understood or consumed” (2010:103). Shaped by Lefebvre's spatial trialectic (1991) and recruiting the concepts of place, inhabittance and urban design the theoretical framework allows a novel presentation of the findings and allow a fuller representation of the subjective experiences of ERPs.

A central observation from the study is that, while BEPs recruit a number of theoretical propositions to support the deployment of ERPs to confront spatial disadvantage, the success of ERPs may be subject to certain temporal and spatial
influences. These influences include the policy environment, project design, financial arrangements and external factors such as the economic climate or housing market.

The findings of the study are presented under four headings: Mixed Outcome Housing\(^1\); Designing Community; Finding Common Ground; and A Place Called Home. These headings correlate with the themes of the research questions to highlight the key findings from the synthesised data in the previous chapters.

The *Mixed Outcome Housing* section addresses Research Question 1. That is, whether the positive social outcomes claimed by the proponents of ERPs can be linked to the theoretical frameworks used to support them, or if notions of success are better linked to external forces and community resilience. Second, *Designing Community* turns to address the second proposition of Research Question 1. That is, the role of urban design or physical renewal as an agent of change within ERPs. The differing experiences of physical renewal in each case study are discussed. Following this, the *A Place Called Home* (Research Question 2) and *Finding Common Ground* (Research Question 3) sections turn to discuss the ways that the conceptions of lived space within the case study sites are constructed, defined and interact with alternative spatial narratives. The role of residents’ participation and communication is discussed as a key variable to the perceived nature of disruptions to the spatial discourses.

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\(^1\)The phrase ‘Mixed Outcome Housing’ was first used by Graves, 2011
Mixed outcome housing

This section addresses the first part of the first Research Question: do ERPs deliver improved social outcomes through design improvements and social mixing policies? Or are there other influences that need to be identified? As discussed in the second literature review chapter, ERPs recruit a number of theoretical propositions to position estate renewal as an effective strategy to combat urban poverty. These propositions centre on the presence of higher income private residents providing increased levels of social capital, improved informal social control, greater participation in the workforce and greater engagement with political and market forces via positive role modelling (Arthurson et al., 2013). Joseph et al. (2007) assert that of these goals, the propositions for improved social control and access to higher quality services are most compelling, however evidence to support other elements is lacking. This section will consider the complexity of ERPs, charting the elements that can influence how public housing communities perceive the project and the overall success of the ERP.

Success in delivering improved social outcomes within the ERPs examined by this study varied significantly from site to site. In many ways, this success was aligned with the level of trust between community members and BEPs. Where trust and transparency was fostered, stakeholders were more open to the ERP process and were more positive about the proposed built and social consequences. For community stakeholders, transparency around how external forces impacted the day-to-day was most appreciated. Chief of these external forces were the buoyancy
of the housing market, the interaction of Housing NSW policy with the private sector and the timing and management of the ERP.

The fundamental mechanism of most ERPs is the introduction of private households into public housing estates. In respect to the financial mechanisms of ERPs, it is this investment that enables developers to raise capital to undertake the renewal works. Thus, the strength of the housing market is a significant external influence with its impact readily observable in two of the case studies. In Bonnyrigg, the commencement of the Newleaf ERP aligned with the 2007 Global Financial Crisis and a marked softening in market appetite for new housing and experimental housing types. The impact of the GFC was far reaching and left the consortium in a weakened position. The developer, Becton was made vulnerable from poor market performance of other projects and found it difficult to recapitalise and raise funds to ensure timely completion of the remaining stages of the Newleaf ERP. Subsequently in 2013, Becton was placed into receivership, halting renewal works on site and casting residents into a placeless ‘limbo’ with the old neighbourhood demolished but an without a replacement. Community stakeholders anticipated that the failure of the Consortium, and the significant wind-down of community consultation activity was symptomatic of the ERP failing.

By 2012, the Washington Park ERP was being undertaken in the Riverwood estate, coinciding with unprecedented investor activity in the Sydney housing market. The first three stages of private housing were fully subscribed off the plan within weeks of release, owing to the high level of demand for apartments in the region. A fourth stage is expected to be subscribed in a similar timeframe. This commercial success
led to the social housing stage being completed six months ahead of time in order to commence on private dwellings. BEPs were quick to leverage the commercial success with the community, reinforcing resident’s aspiration for the change introduced by the ERP. This ‘good news’ was perceived as Riverwood’s ascendance as a neighbourhood of choice in the inner southwest region of Sydney. A second impact of the commercial success, was that the project was able to proceed at a faster than anticipated pace, lessening the period of disruption experienced by residents. The commercial success and adept management of the Washington Park ERP was a key contributor to the high levels of trust between stakeholders.

Key findings from the example of Washington Park that help explain its success compared to Bonnyrigg are; first, to ensure that the uplift potential will allow for the intensive community engagement needed to maintain good will between stakeholders. Second, the layout of the estate and the siting of the ERP were important to residents. Washington Park enjoyed high regard from residents in part due to the minimal disturbance construction had upon the community. For the residents of Riverwood, the ERP represented significant benefit, with little burden.

While not involving the private market, the planning of the Dunbar Way had secondary indicators for commercial success. Within the project proposal document, the financial investment for undertaking the ERP is amortised rapidly by higher assessed market rental rates, lower forecast vacancy rates and reduced maintenance liability. The estate is envisioned by PLH to generate significant operating surpluses within 10 years (Pacific Link Housing, 2011).
Besides commercial success, which is largely influenced by the state of the housing market, key criteria for success include the social outcomes and the efficacy of social mixing policies. A key finding was that greater positive social impact was observed when community members were able to successfully integrate the ERP into their conceptions of place experience.

At North Gosford, the social impacts were to come via the improvement of the built environment only. While the project had no social mixing policy, Pacific Link expected that the redevelopment would realise a similar range of social outcomes to the other case studies. Residents were positive toward the renewal works, and perceived that their experience of living in Dunbar Way would be positively augmented. This was largely attributed to a modification of the neighbourhood effects concept, where the renewed estate would reduce the stigma that they faced in day-to-day life. Without the demolitions, relocation and tenure mix of the other two sites, it was observed that the built form intervention was regarded by residents as an improvement to place experience and building community ties, rather than a substantive impact upon levels of disadvantage.

The purported social impacts of the Washington Park ERP were somewhat harder to quantify. In many ways the community were observed to have a strong attachment to their neighbourhood and were highly engaged with the broader community. Where residents of Bonnyrigg and North Gosford were sceptical of why ERPs were being undertaken in their communities, Riverwood residents apprehended the Washington Park ERP as a new opportunity to access services and facilities close to their homes, representing a tacit endorsement from the community. The siting and
size of the Washington Park development enabled residents to discursively construct the built form as an addition to, rather than a disruption of, the lived space of the Riverwood estate. Despite this positivity toward the built form intervention, a key fear among community members was that the influx of private households would render them socially out of place. It was feared that the new neighbours could fragment the lived space through rapid demographic change. Further, some community members felt that the built form of the ERP was designed to benefit private households only; once Washington Park was complete they would be excluded from contributing to the on-going development of Riverwood’s lived space.

The community experience of estate renewal in Bonnyrigg was more advanced than either Riverwood or North Gosford at the time of the fieldwork. With the first two stages of the ERP complete and a large number of private households moved into the neighbourhood, the best opportunity to observe the impact of social mixing policies was present. Reported within the Bonnyrigg Community Resident Survey administered annually by the managing CHP (St. George Community Housing), the social housing community is largely supporting of the proposition of a mixed community (City Futures, 2013:64). For these residents, the social mixing was tied to their broader aspirations of side-stepping the stigma endured previous to the ERP. However, BEP aspirations of mixing among tenures were not supported. Social housing residents report that their relationships with neighbours are tenure-segregated beyond occasional pleasantries. This was claimed to be a result of private residents leaving the neighbourhood early in the morning for work and returning in the evening. Additionally, private resident’s social networks largely
existed outside the neighbourhood, reducing opportunities for spontaneous interaction. Further, in the richly multicultural Bonnyrigg, language barriers further confound social mix policies.

For the residents of Bonnyrigg, like the other case study sites, the built form represented a new place, and an appreciable disconnect from the ‘old’ neighbourhood. Unlike the case of Riverwood, community members were less optimistic for their ability to express their place attachment and construct lived space. The sense of ‘placelessness’ that evolved as the ERP advanced rose out of ideological disempowerment and geographic displacement, denied residents a ‘foothold’ from which to preserve existing or build new attachment to place. Contrasted to Riverwood and North Gosford, the protracted project timelines, difficulties in the consortium, and mismanagement of the relationship between stakeholders that characterise the Bonnyrigg ERP model deliver unsatisfactory outcomes for residents.

**Designing community**

Contemporary urban design is a fundamental feature of the physical interventions made by ERPs. Much of the community building discourse surrounding ERPs rest on the ability of shaping the neighbourhood to provide the foundation for long term, normative community function. The physical design is intended to fulfil three aspects of supporting a developing community.

The most obvious is the notion of ‘design blindness’ that endeavours to reduce the visual distinction between tenures. Major building elements, finishes and hard
landscaping are designed to be outwardly indistinguishable by tenure type to the passer-by; this was apparent in the Bonnyrigg and Riverwood ERPs. While no private market development was present in North Gosford, the ERP was designed to blend the estate into the surrounding neighbourhood. The second is concerned with the physical distribution of social housing units within the renewed neighbourhood, which is intended to maximise interaction between tenures and reduce the opportunity for clusters of antisocial neighbours (Chaskin and Joseph, 2009). This component of the masterplan is executed differently in each of the case studies.

In Bonnyrigg, the scale of the ERP meant that social housing dwellings were widely dispersed amongst private market dwellings, whereas in Riverwood, the staging of the project and difficulties with strata titling law meant that all social housing dwellings were within two buildings. The third mode of intervention is the design of the public domain of the neighbourhood. Hard landscaping, parks and other amenities are common additions to the physical fabric. In Bonnyrigg, this was the case, with a large scale reconfiguring of the estate, including road closures/construction, new parks and facilities. The Washington Park ERP masterplan included community facilities such as a new library, senior citizens centre and a piazza with cafés and other shops. These community spaces are important amenities for the community to negotiate a shared lived space in the post ERP neighbourhood, and as such are often sites of tension, with differential use patterns from different community groups (Chaskin and Joseph, 2009).

For Lefebvre, the reconstitution of the neighbourhood built form can be used to exclude different social classes. The visions of place forwarded by BEPs and
legitimised by market conditions include urban design features and layouts that
attract the middle classes to purchase housing in the new development. These
spatial practices may be forced upon the resident community or negotiated through
community consultation. This imperative for transparent consultation has been
discussed highlighting that meaningful participation in the making of new places is
key to the achieving the inclusion that is a headline objective of ERPs. This section
discusses second proposition on Research Question 1. That is, the role of urban
design in the ERP process and; the impact that the design of the post renewal
neighbourhood has upon the success of the ERP.

At the Dunbar Way ERP, the success of the project hinged upon the physical
intervention alone. Apart from the possibility of internal tenant transfers off the
estate, there was not the social mix driven threat of relocation and the ERP was
undertaken with residents in situ. Consequently, the built form intervention was
limited in scope to cosmetic changes to housing and the public domain of the
estate. While these changes made a significant difference to the appearance and
maintenance liability of the neighbourhood, visually it was still easily identifiable as
public housing. This contributed to mixed attitudes toward the capacity for design as
an agent of change by stakeholders. Some regarded the intervention’s success with
significant cynicism:

I would love to see if changing the appearance of it will change the respect that
people have for it. I’d love to say yes it will, but I don’t think it will, that’s my concern.
The culture in there and the way they see themselves, I think it’s just putting a pretty
bow around it really. The issues are still there and there are still problems in there that
need to be dealt with. (Participant 2013GP1)
Others were optimistic for the change that the new defined public spaces and refreshed housing would bring to the neighbourhood:

It’s old, it’s dated, it needs to be brought up into the times, it’s been neglected, and it’s quite evident on the outside that it’s been neglected. It certainly - there is that decay, and I think it’s probably led to why certain people will probably reside there. We’re trying to change that culture; certainly it’s all about culture.... Yeah, urban design is really trying to bring it; you know bring some life back into it. (Participant 2013GP3)

Noteworthy is the fact that both cynics and optimists expressed their expectations of the physical intervention in terms of ‘culture’. For both, the culture of the estate existed as a negative influence that needed to (and could) be corrected. For Pacific Link, each element of the physical intervention was associated with specific expected social outcomes.

Residents anticipated that the ERP would make significant improvement to the perception of the estate. Particularly, the restoration of the façades, and the construction of the playground were seen as the measures that would have the most impact. Residents were more cynical of the installation of CCTV, dismissing it as a punitive ‘Candid Camera’ securing the assets rather than the community. For some, the installation of the CCTV represented a concrete reinforcement of the stigma facing the community. Residents understood the capacity for urban design to influence the lived space of the estate, with many hopeful for the expected opportunities that the renewed estate would offer them.

In Riverwood, there were fewer differences in the way that the various stakeholders regarded the estate. The long average tenure contributed to a durable place
attachment among residents and positive collective memory of previous renewal works undertaken on the estate. The NIP and its associated urban design works featured as an epoch for the continued improvement in place attachment and lived experience of residents. Thus, the community was receptive toward the Washington ERP and were enthusiastic for the potential to positively augment their place experience. While residents had little prior knowledge or part in shaping the built form of the neighbourhood, stakeholders considered the urban design as a positive agent for change. In the other case studies, there was not the equivalent understanding of the change process, or the aspiration for the new housing and social infrastructure that was incorporated into the ERP:

I’m hoping it will be – well it is a positive change to Riverwood because a lot of the drabness of the buildings is going to be gone ...Physically it’s much larger than the old one and more imposing but that imposition is lessened by the fact that it just looks like a block of units. It doesn’t look like houso’s live there, for want of a better term, and in that position, having such a lot of traffic go by, I think that makes a big impression on people. (Participant 2013RR10)

The masterplan for the Washington Park ERP was also different to that of Newleaf both in terms of scale and built form. Where Newleaf progressively redevelops the whole Bonnyrigg estate, the Washington Park project is largely situated on what was vacant land, with a comparatively small number of households required to relocate. The lived experience of renewal was therefore significantly less disruptive to the place experience of Riverwood residents. Rather than the sterilisation of spatial discourses that occurred at Bonnyrigg, Riverwood residents were better positioned to appropriate and positively integrate the new built form and infrastructure into the
existing lived space of the estate. It is this ‘critical distance’ allowed between the community and the masterplan that manifested the sense that the urban design was a significant contributor to the success of the ERP.

The NIP figures heavily in stakeholder’s conceptions of urban renewal and the impacts of urban design. The specific interventions undertaken had made significant improvements to the aesthetics and amenity of the estate. The major success of these changes was that it allowed the easy adaptation and appropriation of spaces around dwellings and public spaces. The Washington Park ERP was anticipated to provide further opportunities for the community to benefit from improved housing and community facilities. In the other case studies this capacity for appropriation was not evident as residents were in-situ and preoccupied by negotiating daily life in the midst of a construction site.

At Bonnyrigg, the masterplan for the Newleaf ERP involved the staged demolition and rebuilding of the entire estate, effectively erasing the spatial practices and discourses that had developed up to the announcement of the ERP. The redevelopment process is underway with significant progress having been made. The completed stages of the ERP are almost unrecognisable, with many new streets, parks and semi-detached houses replacing the Radburn style layout of cottages, culs-de-sac and vast, yet undefined open spaces. With this stark transformation of the built environment, that urban design is an agent of symbolic change in the neighbourhood is without question. However, how stakeholders perceive the success of the change is more contested. Resident’s perspectives of the redevelopment are largely nuanced and reveal multiple perceptions of the new built
environment upon their place experience. These perceptions can be aligned with the themes of the new layout, the increased density and the new housing.

The new public domain was well received by residents. The closure of laneways and opening of culs-de-sac into thoroughfares were identified as significant improvements to the urban fabric. Residents reported that these actions served to normalise the estate and engendered perceptions of greater safety and security. New streets and the renaming of ‘notorious’ streets, made onsite access easier and eliminated the stigma that had been part of the spatial discourse that characterised the estate. Residents with children noted that the new parks had provided safe areas for children to play and provided new places for recreation. These broad aspects of the masterplan had made positive impacts to residents place experience.

Other areas of the masterplan such as the densification and the housing were more problematic for residents. The new built form raised various threats to the lived space and spatial practice that had developed at Bonnyrigg. A number of concerns were raised in regard to the densification of the suburb, with residents noting that the high density of the ERP was out of character with surrounding suburbs. This was perceived to maintain the tension within the built form that existed before the ERP. The size and amenity of the new housing was also a source of major concern. Issues such as noise intrusion from neighbours, a lack of garden space for vegetable production and the lack of room for furniture or other possessions, were frequently raised. These concerns highlight the primacy of the everyday experience within the context of changing neighbourhoods and the disempowerment of residents within the ERP process.
Further to these issues, many residents saw the masterplan as a divisive and cynical co-opting of the estates lived space. These residents conceived that the government had ‘sold them out’ and that the PPP was primarily a profiteering venture at the Bonnyrigg community’s expense. These concerns were exacerbated by the shift in community consultation and changes to the masterplan (to cover financial shortfalls) without what was considered adequate consultation. This dissent was founded in the belief that Newleaf would not benefit existing residents in the long term and that the ERP was designed to only benefit the new, private market residents.

**A place called home?**

Chapters 2 and 3 focussed upon the literature on place, urban design and community. It was discussed that through everyday experiences with places, such as a neighbourhood, individuals developed affective bonds with their surrounds. These bonds, while experienced at an individual level, can congeal as collective and community sentiment toward place (Tuan, 1974; Altman and Low, 1992). These relationships are congruent with Lefebvre’s concept of ‘spaces of representation’ or lived space, where physical and imagined spaces combine and are filled with political agendas, possibilities and struggles (Soja, 1996).

The construction of lived space, a central interest for this study, was evident in all of the case study sites. Residents and other stakeholders made substantive claims over the physical environment. Layers of meaning and significance were evident on site through stakeholder’s participation with, and appropriation of, spatial discourses and elements of the built environment. By undertaking these activities, actors make claim to particular places and spaces and the right to act in certain ways within them. For
social housing residents, these practices authenticate their democratic agency through the experience of inhabitance within their neighbourhood. Throughout the fieldwork phase of the study, these activities were observed in a range of forms, from creating ‘guerrilla’ gardens, through to recycling schemes, and tenant led environmental groups. Darcy and Rogers (2014) note that these investments into dwellings and local community life represent resident’s commitment to place making, despite the absence of any substantive property rights.

In this section, the findings of Research Question 2 are appraised. The lived space in each of the case studies is presented and the impacts to the lived space as a result of the ERP are examined. The ways in which the concepts of place, urban design, and community informed the construction of lived space within the case study sites are identified, compared and contrasted.

When investigating the motivations for undertaking the Washington Park ERP at Riverwood, familiar BEP conceptions of mitigating disadvantage through built form intervention and social mix were present. The project was envisaged to create an “integrated residential community, which delivers quality residential apartments, revitalised public open spaces and improved access to community facilities, creating a strong sense of place and belonging in a new, clean, safe and welcoming environment” (Payce Communities, 2010:1). While the focus of the ERP may have been the creation of a strong sense of place, evidence from data collected demonstrates that residents had constructed a strong, inclusive sense of place over the course of many years. Many residents interviewed had lived in the neighbourhood for over 20 years and were able to identify the elements that
contributed to the lived space of the estate. This ‘existential insideness’ experienced by many residents was a major influence in the perceived impacts of the ERP upon the community.

Of the three case study sites investigated, the interaction between resident and BEP conceptions of lived space was most complimentary. Residents welcomed the ERP as a sign that Riverwood was now a neighbourhood of choice and expressed a strong sense of aspiration toward the renewal. For them, the Riverwood estate's reputation had been on a steady upward trajectory since the earlier NIP redevelopment. The estate’s lived space had developed into a place that residents were proud of, placing value upon features of the built and social environments that they felt distinguished their community from other public housing estates. The ERP was anticipated to affirm and evolve this lived space through the construction of new services, community facilities and housing. This positivity toward the ERP was tempered by a fear of the unknown impacts of the ERP upon existing social networks, community cohesion or engagement. Some residents at Riverwood felt that the influx of private residents had the potential to undermine the existing conceptions of community and place attachment rather than the positive impact expected by BEPs. This threat to community life was conceived by residents to bring develop a deeper schism between ‘publics’ and ‘privates’. Other residents dismissed these fears noting that “they’ll go about their lives and we’ll get on with ours”, asserting that the positioning of the ERP on the estate meant that ‘the heart of Riverwood remains’.

The role of the Riverwood Community Centre as an anchor for the community was very significant in the discourses of place attachment. The RCC was very active in the
community, holding many events catering to a wide range of interests. This resulted in residents visiting multiple times per week to meet, play sports or discuss the ERP. While the role of the RCC as ‘community developer’ was undermined by Payce (the developer), it remained a valued site of community organisation, providing an alternative narrative to the events surrounding the ERP. Some residents perceived this alternative narrative as ‘sour grapes’ others appreciated having a balanced perspective and felt empowered by the RCC to critically engage with BEPs regarding the Washington Park project. This was possible as the estate was well integrated into the broader suburb of Riverwood. Residents from surrounding neighbourhoods, often visited the estate for community events or to visit friends and family. The community centre on the northern boundary of the site and the commercial/transport centre immediately south were focal points of community action and were fundamental anchors to the lived space that residents had constructed.

The frequently recruited discourse of ‘fear’ of either crime or depressed housing markets was absent in Riverwood. Residents report that the estate fits the social and physical context of the surrounding suburb and area. The ‘soft’ boundaries of the estate resulted in Riverwood resident’s lived space to be the most diverse and cohesive of the case studies examined.

The development of Washington Park as a spatial narrative illuminated a key insight to the interaction between stakeholder’s conceptions of lived space. Similar to the other case study sites, BEPs at Riverwood recruited the narrative of addressing locational disadvantage through social mix and built environment intervention. Part
of this narrative was an attempt to disrupt the lived space of the estate by introducing Washington Park as the discursive site of the intervention, discrediting the lived space constructed by residents. This is intended to then compel residents to participate in the BEPs habitus, or be excluded from the community going forward.

The Community Liaison Officer employed by Payce, noted that the community engagement undertaken had been smooth, with constructive dialogue undertaken with the community. This apparent ease during the engagement may be attributable to the previous experience Riverwood residents have had with ERPs or the discursive construction of ‘Washington Park’. Due to the siting of the ERP on the northern extremity of the estate, residents apprehended Washington Park as not only a different discursive site, but also as a separate physical place to the estate proper. Residents regarded the site identified for the redevelopment, as the site of the remaining social problems in the post NIP estate. The development of Washington Park and its promotion as a new suburb excised the negative elements of the estate, but only had minor impacts upon ‘Riverwood’. This resulted in a scenario where public housing residents were able to negotiate their daily lives with minimal interference.

Unlike the Newleaf and Washington Park projects, the ERP undertaken at Dunbar Way in North Gosford was unique in this study, as the redevelopment did not include demolition, relocations or the sale of dwellings to private households. This ERP was representative of the ‘new generation’ of smaller scale, community housing sector led renewal works. These redevelopments reflect the current policy
environment for the continued retreat from public housing toward ‘social’ housing and the lack of appetite for PPP style ERPs. As Housing NSW had little to do with the renewal at Dunbar Way, the more nuanced approach delivered by PLH can be examined. For PLH, the Dunbar Way renewal represented a number of opportunities to make substantive improvements to their business through minimising maintenance liability and improving their reputation and relationships within the community housing sector. The Dunbar Way ERP was explicit in its goals to improve social cohesion within the estate, and to reduce the impact of socioeconomic disadvantage through the provision of better opportunities. Like the other ERPs examined for this study, these goals stem from the political uptake of notions of social capital and community building (DeFilippis, 2001).

In North Gosford, the estate was a site of multiple overlaid notions of lived space. The physical layout of the estate had induced the formation of micro-communities that had formed particular conceptions of the estate and their neighbours. The clearest example of this can be observed with the residents of Kendall Village. For these residents, the clear demarcation of ‘their turf’ (by fencing) was appreciated and vocally defended. The social problems of the estate existed ‘beyond the gate’ and inside Kendall Village was a ‘friendly mob just getting on with life’. These residents also were the most engaged with Pacific Link and formed most of the Tenant’s Committee (the major line of communication between PL and residents). Other micro-communities formed around the cul-de-sac at the northern extremity of the estate and similarly around the cluster of townhouses at the southern end of Dunbar Way. Cohesion amongst the micro-communities at each end of the estate was strong and like residents of Kendall Village, harboured significant mutual distrust.
and derision for ‘the other end of the street’. These conceptions of a fractious lived space can in part, be attributed to the persistent negative discourse arising from the history of the estate. While the average tenure of residents on the estate was four years, they knew the negative reputation of the estate before coming to live in Dunbar Way. This knowledge was subsequently recruited to construct their conceptions of Dunbar Way, building bonds with immediate neighbours but avoiding other areas of the estate or interacting with the broader community. The built form enhances these negative spatial discourses with poor quality urban space.

Pacific Link sought to augment the cohesion of the community and positively disrupt the lived space by as a result of the ERP. The approach taken was similar to the NIP works undertaken at Riverwood in the mid-1990s, through built environment interventions and a positive change narrative. The narrative that was set acknowledged the negative perceptions of the estate and the poor condition of the neighbourhood however was future focussed, highlighting the positive impact small scale ERPs have had internationally, particularly in the UK. The Pacific Link strategy set a course of action to positively augment the place experience for residents and valorise the role and place of social housing within the local area. This was achieved by maintaining a comprehensive and transparent communication stream with all stakeholders. This included engagement with Dunbar Way residents, on a community and individual level, and the release of media statements in the local press. These releases were leveraged to improve relationships across the estate and with other entities such as Gosford Council and Police.
While Pacific Link controlled the rights to place making, unlike the ERP at Newleaf there was not the conflict or disillusion that characterised the lived space at that location. This could be attributed to the relatively fractious lived space, hampering tenant resistance, or a lack of ‘rootedness’ as a result of the relatively short tenure term (compared to Bonnyrigg or Riverwood) (Relph, 1972). The lack of conflict could also be aligned with the desire voiced by residents to avoid the stigma and derision that burdened their neighbourhood. The planned disruption to the lived space of the estate represented an opportunity for residents to enjoy an improved built environment and construct a new, positive lived space.

Newleaf at Bonnyrigg, like the other ERPs, was explicit with the intent to ‘deconcentrate’ public housing dwellings, claiming to improve tenant’s lives through social inclusion and positive role modelling (NSW Department of Housing 2004a; NSW Land and Housing Corporation, 2007). By recasting estates as sites “with more than their fair share of problems, made worse by a high concentration of public housing” (NSW Department of Housing, 2004a:8; NSW Department of Housing, 2004b), Housing NSW constructed the resident ‘community’ as a both a social pathology, and the site through which the solution would be implemented. This was apparent in the framework of community building that was pursued in the early stages of the ERP. Residents were encouraged to participate in a number of engagement processes that focussed on building capacity in the community. Workshops built, skills such as reading and commenting upon masterplans and equipped the community with a good understanding of the aims and principles of the renewal. Housing NSW deployed this framework to support the discourse of ‘building new stronger and more sustainable communities’ (NSW Department of
Housing, 2004a). This strategy allowed Housing NSW to lay claim to the exclusive right to create knowledge about public housing estates; delegitimising the lived space that residents had constructed on the estate.

Prior to the ERP, residents had engaged in a lived space that was based on conceptions of inhabitance and engagement with the estate over many years. This account captures the experience of loss reported by a number of residents as their lived space was irreversibly disrupted:

I have lived in Bonnyrigg for just over 20 years.... If we were to have been asked four years ago if we thought our life was lacking or needed improving then I feel the answer would have been no. On 20th December 2004 life as we knew it changed with the announcement of the Bonnyrigg redevelopment. Our lives have been like a roller coaster since then,... with no clear vision of a better ride to come. The vision we had was of loss - loss of our homes, our community and our security.... when people moved here we were told to treat our home like we owned it, so we put down roots and made improvements with our hard earned money. When the announcement was made our sense of power was taken with it. (Arnfield, 2008:1)

The different personal circumstances of residents impacted the ways that the ERP contributed to a sense of placelessness. For some it was the built form of the renewed estate, which signified an erasure of the cultural history and identity as ‘Bonnyriggers’. For others, their ‘mental map’ of the estate was disrupted, causing distress when walking through their demolished neighbourhood. Others still felt the renaming of streets contributed to the sense of placelessness; however, this was widely regarded as a positive disruption, revealing the ‘shadow side’ of place attachment (Manzo, 2014).
Conflict between resident and BEP conceptions of lived space can be demonstrated by the difficulties that faced the Newleaf consortium in the wake of the GFC. Due to the commercial failure of ‘quadplex’ (four apartments in two storeys) style housing, the masterplan was amended to include conventional apartment buildings to meet the density requirements. Reflecting BEPs conceptions of Bonnyrigg as a commercial enterprise rather than home, this iteration was expedited through the approval process with minimal opportunity for community input. This posed a significant disillusionment for a number of residents, as the masterplan that they had ‘approved’ had been superseded. This resulted in a substantive setback for Newleaf, as much of the good will and community support built in early stages of the engagement processes was now jeopardised by this conflict between stakeholders (City Futures, 2013).

**Finding common ground**

Ongoing communication between stakeholders is vital in any project of this scale. The quality and transparency of the communication channels are of equal importance. Community engagement is widely acknowledged to be critical to the success of projects where substantive change is enacted by governments. In the case of Estate Renewal Projects, clear and even-handed engagement is especially important as the issues at stake are existentially linked to resident’s homes and neighbourhoods. It is at within the setting of community engagement that an individual’s place attachment congeals to reflect the complex interrelationships between personal identity as members of a community, and the spatial features of the neighbourhood where they live, work and socialise. While place attachment can
form the basis for cooperation and community action, more often it can lead to conflict. Competing claims over the rights for spatial expression can cause tension among community groups. Davidoff argues that “determinations of what serves the public interest in a society containing many diverse interest groups are almost always of a highly contentious nature” (1965:332). Lefebvre advances this sentiment asserting, “every social space is the outcome of a process with many aspects and many contributing currents” (1991:110).

In the case of ERPs, this tension can be cast as counterproductive, where community engagement undertaken before ERPs has merged with notions of community development. Fraser and Lepofsky forward the argument that this engagement operates within a logical contradiction; “‘local’ knowledge of residents is privileged as the most insightful because it is generates from experience, however the very basis of this knowledge, that these people are living in poverty, precludes them from enacting that knowledge into political action” (2004:6). Therefore, BEPs appoint community building ‘experts’ to filter resident’s knowledge through the lens of ‘consensus building’ to minimise the risk to BEPs and selectively legitimise resident activities.

The following section returns to Research Question 3 and discusses the ways that communication between stakeholders impacted success through the management of the ERP and communication between stakeholders. As with the previous chapters, data collected by empirical processes and secondary sources will be drawn upon.

The case of the Dunbar Way ERP, representing the contemporary, small-scale CHP led projects had a different communications strategy to the other ERPs investigated.
Having no appreciable budget for the large scale community engagement undertaken at Riverwood or Bonnyrigg, PLH designed a comprehensive ‘communications and Public Relations’ scheme which included a multi-faceted approach to drive the dual narratives of community development and establishing PLH as the leading CHP operating on the Central Coast of NSW. Of the three case studies, the community engagement at Dunbar Way had the most direct communication between BEPs and residents, with early consultation for the ERP often taking place during routine property inspections. This early consultation was intended to familiarise residents with the broad intentions of the ERP in an informal setting, before moving to larger scale, dedicated consultation channels.

The most significant consultation undertaken was the co-opting of the Tenant’s Committee and rebranding it as the Tenant Management Group (TMG). The TMG is intended to “facilitate grass roots participation to engage the commitment of tenants and neighbouring residents for successful and sustainable outcomes” (Pacific Link 2011:18). Specific activities undertaken in cooperation with the TMG include morning teas and barbeques where the issues facing the community are discussed. These meetings were resident led with PLH representatives in attendance, giving residents a sense of volition in the future of the neighbourhood. Members of the TMG were empowered to make submissions to council, demand action from PHL regarding maintenance to their homes or report vandalism or other illegal activity. PLH also used the meetings to disseminate information regarding the ERP and to introduce the contemporary narratives of neighbourhood effects, social cohesion and performative citizenship.
Interviews with PLH staff revealed that the communication process was not as effective as desired. Staff reflected that many attempts to engage with residents in the project planning stages were unsuccessful:

> We've engaged them in everything. Like now I've just completed the playground proposal, so that's going to the board for approval. We've engaged them from the beginning. So whilst I've gone ahead and done all the nitty-gritty, you know arranging all the quotes. I've got them involved by helping. You know, what kind of equipment would they like to see, to the point where I've actually asked them to vote on which preferred playground they'd like to see..., yet very little have showed any interest, which is very sad. (Participant 2013GP3)

Resident interviews reveal that, while Pacific Link was providing an opportunity to participate, it was on their terms. Many residents felt that these engagement activities were too much effort, or didn’t reflect their interests. Others reflected that they felt like they could not participate in the discussion as they didn’t feel equipped to contribute.

As the Dunbar Way ERP did not involve the private market, or the influx of private market residents, Pacific Link developed a spatial narrative that valorised the role of social housing and the ERP within the Central Coast community. Pacific Link communications deploy the renewal to advance their reputation as a CHP, contrasting the implied unwillingness of Housing NSW to maintain the estate with the conception that PLH is the catalyst for positive change in the social housing sector, seeing the social value of affordable housing and maximising it through regeneration:
This is a first and critical initiative for the Central Coast. Instead of allowing the estate to slowly fall apart, Pacific Link has moved to take control and spend its own accumulated earnings to bring the estate up to date and make it useful for the next 30 years. It means that people in need can now be accommodated in the knowledge they have a mutual obligation to respect the improved amenities and opportunities that the program brings... may become an early model for regeneration models of this type throughout the sector. (Pacific Link, 2014)

Though this communication was aimed at the broader community, residents apprehended the media releases and other information as setting the narrative for the ERP. The discourse of mutual responsibility and the reconceptualisation of their right to produce knowledge about their neighbourhood were clearly understood. Residents accepted this narrative reluctantly; “doing it their way” was a trade-off for the anticipated restoration of the estate into a safe and secure neighbourhood. Residents conceived the negative reputation of the estate as a significant burden to be cast off at almost any price. Additionally, as the ERP was concerned with the public domain and façade of the built form, residents conceived that their home’s interiors and backyards were still subject to their individual expressions of place making.

The communication between residents and BEPs at Dunbar Way illuminated the relationship between stakeholders had significant power imbalances. These imbalances enabled Pacific Link to reconceptualise the nature of the neighbourhood’s lived space, introducing notions of community building that clearly define how community and place making are to be undertaken. Though direct communication between residents and BEPs existed, the residents did not take the
opportunity to negotiate Pacific Link’s plans. This can be attributed to residents feeling disempowered and unfamiliar with community engagement processes. Resident interviews suggest other contributing factors. Many felt that the fractious lived space hindered the undertaking of meaningful collective resistance. Others still felt no need to participate, as they were happy with the proposal. Despite the direct link existing between stakeholders, a lack of structured, explicit consultation lead to lost opportunities for residents to participate in the place making of Dunbar Way.

The Riverwood case study was characterised by the communication between stakeholders. Due to the structure of the community consultation and the recent history of the estate, stakeholders engaged in active negotiation of rights to constructing live space and the day-to-day experience of the ERP. The dense network of links between stakeholders was readily apparent. At Riverwood, these stakeholders included the developer (Payce), the Riverwood Community Centre and residents. All stakeholders championed the concept of community as the basis for their desire for the future of the estate; however, their ability to participate in the change process was often hampered by the actions of other stakeholders and competing discourses. This muted conflict characterises the Riverwood ERP.

Unlike the large scale ‘capacity building’ engagement at Bonnyrigg or the direct relationship of North Gosford, the community engagement was undertaken by a third party community engagement professional employed by the developer. Following the announcement of the ERP, the Community Liaison Officer undertook to embed himself in the social landscape to understand the community and craft
channels into which resident action may be directed and dissent may be negotiated into the machinations of the ERP.

I start to develop a strategic plan for an organisation to engage with the community because you can't do all this stuff unless you do – so the first part of it was actually going out and listening to everybody. So pretty much what I've done at the start was just going and introducing myself to everybody and I've tried to keep those conversations going the whole time and – so therefore Payce have a face in the community and somebody that they can readily access....So understanding here, the first part of the deal was anxiety of change or fear and so it was about trying to communicate with people, to let them know look, this is what's planned. (Participant 2013RP1)

From the interview data, it is readily apparent that residents were receptive to the ERP and the community engagement activities. In Riverwood, residents had been engaged over a many years by the RCC to give them the knowledge and skills to enter dialogue with external stakeholders, such as Housing NSW. Residents 'knew the ropes' when it came to engaging with the other stakeholders and how to extract maximum benefit for any perceived trade-off that the ERP would force them to make. This was apparent with some residents successful in securing funding (from Payce) for community programs such as a second community garden and a resident-led recycling scheme.

Previous positive experiences with neighbourhood renewal such as the NIP shaped their understanding of the Washington Park ERP. In the other two case studies, there was not an equivalent understanding or appreciation for the ability for residents to negotiate the disruption occurring to their lived space. Previous experiences of
renewal allowed residents to communicate their priorities for change and incorporate their concerns and aspirations into the change process. A major contributing factor in this sense of volition was the sustained and genuine community engagement that fostered high levels of trust between residents and BEPs.

The commercial viability of the Washington Park project, while not directly applicable to the exploration of how communication impacted success, had a tangible impact upon the engagement processes undertaken by Payce. The alignment of product (apartments), and market conditions meant that ample funding was available to extend the Community Liaison Officer position and continue the amicable relationship with the community.

In the case of Newleaf at Bonnyrigg, it is somewhat of a paradox that despite the large scale of the initial engagement and community enthusiasm, in subsequent years there has been growing disillusion and contempt for the project among residents. As the Newleaf ERP progressed from the planning to delivery stages, a simultaneous shift in the focus of engagement also occurred. Programs transitioned away from the large forums through to smaller group meetings and a regular newsletter. This transition reflects BEPs understanding of requisite communication between Newleaf and residents and the discursive shift from establishment to the maintenance of a new lived space. There is evidence to assert that there is a disjuncture between ‘best practice’ and community expectations of engagement. Community members, particularly those in later stages, felt that the new phase of engagement represented BEPs retreat from the ‘partnership’ and the revision of their
stage of the masterplan without adequate consultation was a undoing of the original aims and plans for renewal that they had ‘agreed’ to and taken some level of ownership of. These residents sensed that rather than active engagement with the processes of the ERP, community consultation now reflected niche interests and that their opportunity to participate had been lost.

While residents received regular newsletters from the consortium, these often did not satisfy the needs and expectations for the engagement processes across the community (City Futures, 2013). Resident’s understanding of the redevelopment and their opportunities for place making are shaped by everyday considerations. Concerns about their ability to keep pets or utilise existing furniture in the new housing, were weighted more heavily than community barbeques or theoretical debates regarding social mix (Pinnegar, 2013). This highlights the need for BEPs to remain responsive to the changing expectations of communication.

A second example of the conflict present stakeholder communications is the manner that self-organised resident groups were co-opted into the broader engagement framework of the ERP. By design, residents were bound up in a notion of ‘partnership’ with Housing NSW, the consortium and other stakeholders. This at once bound their participation to the agenda set by the community engagement providers and concealed the significant power imbalance between parties (Darcy and Rogers, 2014). This reconceptualisation of residents as partners co-opts their experiential knowledge of their neighbourhoods and repositions them as consumers within the community building discourses of village utopianism. Further this serves to obviate resident’s claims to participate in constructing lived space through
collective place making. In summation, the significant imbalance in power and resources between ‘partners’ led to the systematic disruption of resident’s place attachment through erasure of the spatial discourses of the estate and the erosion of residents claim to collective placemaking.

**Chapter summary**

This chapter has uncovered that ERPs are complex undertakings with multiple contextual factors that have geographic/temporal impacts upon perceived social outcomes. Examples include the commercial success due to market dynamics, the ‘buy-in’ from stakeholders resulting from the management of relationships and the structure of contractual agreements or partnerships. Further, the scale of ERP and timelines of their completion have a significant impact upon how community stakeholders perceive the success of ERPs. While BEPs recruit a raft of theory to support the claim for ERPs as a social housing panacea, the application of theory to the built environment often relativises the social, cultural and economic factors that contribute to the true causes of the disadvantage. In responding to the research propositions, it has been revealed that the interplay of the various external factors render the undertaking of ERPs more complex than is currently apprehended by either BEPs or existing research. Of the three case studies, the Washington Park ERP at Riverwood was perceived by all stakeholders to be successful, delivering positive outcomes for the community, developer and housing provider through the careful, transparent negotiation over the course of the project.
CHAPTER 9

Conclusion to thesis

Introduction to chapter

This final chapter will serve three functions. Firstly, the findings of each chapter will be detailed. While the motivations for BEPs to undertake estate renewal are well documented, the interactions of these motivations and residents conceptions of place and community may be less obvious. The perceived success of an ERP can be variably impacted by the alignment of stakeholders conceptions, willingness to negotiate the impacts of the ERP and trust built on the transparency of communication. Secondly, the significance of this study’s contributions will be discussed. As has been described, there were variable outcomes across the three case study sites, with lessons that can be reflected upon during the planning of future estate renewal. The implications of these findings for estate renewal and their applicability will be explored. Finally the concluding remarks will meditate upon the pursuit of a just ERP. As neoliberal states pursue the systematic dismantlement of the public housing system through ERPs, measures must be taken to advocate for the achievement of a ‘just estate renewal’.
Review of findings

This thesis began with a two-part literature review. The first literature review analysed a range of theory that can be aligned with the three aspects of the production of space, given in Lefebvre (1991) as lived space, representational spaces and spaces of representation. The chapter presented place as *experience*, *discourse* and *urban form*. ‘Place as experience’, unpacked the contribution of phenomenological traditions for which the lived experience of places is the fundamental point from which all conceptions of place are synthesised. The discussion of ‘place as discourse’ highlighted the potential within phenomenology to neglect the role that social discourses have in shaping the way people experience place. Finally, when casting ‘place as urban form’ the totalising nature of the trialectic is revealed, the urban form is both re/producer of experience and discourse, spanning the experiential, the social and the material while valorising none.

The second literature review chapter examined the concept of ‘community’ and traced how these concepts have been deployed from the genesis of modern planning, through the early planners, and finally the history of public housing design through to the execution of ERPs. Various interpretations of community have emerged and have had impacts upon how people experience urban life. Throughout the chapter, community was demonstrated to be a slippery, intuitive concept, lending itself to being co-opted and deployed in a number of distinct ways. Whether community is the group of residents that live in an inner city high rise or a political
organisation with thousands of members; each of the conceptions, definitions and discourses, community was given as a basic component of human existence.

The fourth chapter set out the methodological framework describing how the study's approach to empirical investigation executed its aims, and to the complexity of places, projects and people as objects of study. This chapter outlined the research design and processes that were undertaken, aligning methods with the study's research questions and objective of investigating the experience of Estate Renewal Projects and how this can be best reconciled with the desire held by SHAs to rationalise the sector.

In the next three chapters, each of the case study sites was introduced. The context, history and proposed works/works undertaken were described to provide a foundation for the thematic analysis. The relationship between stakeholders and the interplay of competing claims over the physical and discursive space of the estate was then discussed. Each of the sites was shown to have diverse outcomes and differing degrees of success. This was due mainly to the quality of stakeholder relationships, and in part to the influence of various external factors. The ERP at Bonnyrigg, Newleaf, was found to be a site characterised by a sense entrenched placelessness and perceived mistrust between stakeholders. While the project was sound from the perspective of BEPs, resident's inputs were co-opted into predetermined channels of communication that did not meet the expectations or needs for transparency or reciprocity. This was best illustrated by the major disillusionment among residents in response to the major wind-down of community consultation and subsequent revision of the masterplan in 2012. These events, as
described in Chapter 7, were apprehended by community stakeholders to be a cynical reneging on the ERP that they had ‘signed up’ to. One of the key findings of the Bonnyrigg case study was that award winning community consultation programs are not always successful in the long term as community expectations of consultation change and develop over the life of the project.

The ERP at North Gosford was in some ways the least impressive of the case study sites, smaller scale in areal extent and capital investment. However, the site was particularly important, as it was representative of the future undertaking of ERPs. Policy frameworks have changed significantly in the wake of the failure of the Living Communities model that was undertaken at Newleaf to favor this new Community Housing sector led model of estate renewal. The Dunbar Way site provided a unique opportunity to test the applicability of the study’s theoretical and methodological hypothesis on a small-scale ERP. The empirical work revealed that despite the disparity between the case study sites; that the expectations of community stakeholders remained largely the same. The smaller scale gave added weight to each individual voice, with the various discourses addressing the spatial and social landscapes appearing amplified. Somewhat surprisingly, the lived space at North Gosford was characterised by its fractious nature, with micro-communities of two to five households forwarding distinct discourses and contributions to the lived space. Again, communication between stakeholders was a key factor in the success of the project, with a lack of a specific consultation program resulting in mixed messages and expectations of what Pacific Link was attempting to achieve.
In many ways the ERP at Riverwood stands out as the most successful of the case study sites. The residents of the public housing estate had previous positive experience of ERP works and were a highly engaged community. Community members were experienced negotiators and were able to successfully integrate the ERP site into their existing lived space. Of the three case study sites, BEPs and other stakeholders at Riverwood held the most congruent aspirations for the neighbourhood, with residents seeing the Washington Park ERP as the logical extension of the Neighbourhood Improvement Program. At the foundation of this positive relationship was transparent communication between stakeholders; rather than a traditional consultation period, a specialist consultation professional served as a Community Liaison Officer providing timely responses to resident concerns and undertaking significant community development activities. Some dissent toward this approach was noted, with questions leveled at the commitment of the developer to continue community development after completion of the project. Despite this, community members remained positive toward the ERP.

In the penultimate chapter, the findings from the empirical activity were synthesised and aligned with the study’s research questions, underscoring the primacy of the lived space and its maintenance to as the foundation of equitable outcomes for stakeholders within ERPs. The key observations made were that ERPs considered more commercially successful, were also more equitable. This came through the interplay of various factors, such as policy settings, external market conditions and, communication models that allowed community members to smoothly integrate the change process into a positive augmentation of their place experience. These conditions enriched opportunities for the construction of lived space in the
neighbourhood. Urban design was often seen as the agent of change; however, interview participants relativised the material interventions proposed into socio-experiential measures. Places were unselfconsciously conceived as the relationship between the physical form and community members—the physical features of the neighbourhood were often described in accounts of place experience, but were not necessarily components of their place attachment. An example given was a resident led recycling scheme, where particular parts of the neighbourhood were considered more fruitful for collections; however, it was the friendships between members that were the driver of the place experience.

The notion of relationships was pursued further when examining the interplay between divergent conceptions of place and community. The participation of community members in the change process and the transparency of communication between stakeholders were established as a key variable in the perceived nature of the ERP and the disruption of pre-existing spatial discourses. Opportunities to participate were provided differently in the three case study sites, ranging from informal, direct communication with individual residents; to large scale whole of community forums. The findings of the empirical work identified strong parallels between resident’s satisfaction with participation and the success of the ERP.

The final proposition explored the assertion forwarded by BEPs that the social outcomes that result from ERPs are attributable to the theoretical frameworks supporting social mixing; or if notions of success are better linked to external forces and community resilience. The fieldwork supported the latter, finding that much of the apparent success of ERPs is tied to commercial success, which in turn, is
dependent upon the buoyancy of the housing market. The capacity of the community to valorise their conceptions of community at the time of project announcement was also a significant factor in the equity of the ERP outcomes.

**Significance of the study**

The findings of this study are significant in many ways. Firstly they begin to unravel the meanings and significance of place and community in the context of change that occurs during Estate Renewal Programs. The neighbourhoods that are visited upon by ERPs become sites of ideological conflict, as competing conceptions seek to set the discursive direction of the lived space. For resident communities in public housing estates, ‘place’ was apprehended through the socio-experiential lens of inhabittance. Material features of the neighbourhood allowed specific description of places; however, they were often used figuratively to describe the relationships within place. For example, the community garden, while a physical feature of the estate, was perceived as a social, *lived* space that unselfconsciously shaped the place attachment of many participants.

For BEPs, these intangible conceptions of place were hard to quantify, and for the planners that designed the masterplans, ‘place’ was the specific combination of physical features discursively linked to expected social responses. Carefully laid out streetscapes, design-blind housing, and carefully curated open space were conceived to provide an appropriate environment for mixed communities to perform ‘place’. In contrast, the Radburn layout or distinctive architecture of public housing was dismissed as the evidence of what BEPs perceived as ‘communities in crisis’.
This contrast in conceptions is a significant finding that must be reflected upon by BEPs when in the preliminary planning of estate renewal. Planners need to be aware of the diverse conceptions of place that might exist within the neighbourhood that potentially cannot be distilled to quantifiable design features without obviating their significance.

In the effort to forward the primacy of the lived space of estates, resident participants made claim to the universalism of their perspectives. While all participants reported numerous examples of the social interactions, neighbourliness or place attachment, these claims can be somewhat difficult to authenticate. For this study, these claims were tested via links to other variables such as demographic composition, levels of community engagement or other elements of empirical research; for example, ensuring that interviewees represented a true cross section of the stakeholders. Other measures such as land use, social make up and community engagement were readily verified by empirical inquiry. It follows that these components of a target community should be interrogated by BEPs wishing to gain an understanding of the existing lived space, not only datasets that focus on a community’s shortcomings.

The three case studies explored the experience for community members and other stakeholders during the process of estate renewal. At each site, different concerns shaped the experience that change brought. For residents at Bonnyrigg, large-scale redevelopment of the estate and the loss of the ‘old Bonnyrigg’ were met with grief. Experiential knowledge developed over years of dwelling in the estate was eroded, or lost, as the neighbourhood underwent renewal. Though described in terms of
physical redevelopment of the estate, residents were lamenting the disruption to the lived space and their previous contributions toward placemaking.

In Riverwood, residents did not experience loss like those in Bonnyrigg. The Washington Park ERP was welcomed and residents were able to negotiate the impacts of change to better suit them. While the ERP promised access to new opportunities and services, many residents were also fearful of the unknown experience of living with private market newcomers to the neighbourhood. Though residents were highly engaged with the surrounding suburb of Riverwood, the new discursive site of Washington Park posed the threat that residents’ lived space would now clash with the norms of their private neighbours, rendering them socially out of place within the neighbourhood.

In North Gosford, residents of Dunbar Way experienced the least invasive ERP. Limited to the renovation of façades, installation of CCTV and some works in the public spaces, community members did not endure the disruption that characterised the change experience of the other case study sites. While not of the same scale or structure as Newleaf or Washington Park, residents of Dunbar Way were hopeful for the positive disruption to the negative community perceptions of their neighbourhood. However, these aspirations were tempered by the fear of the impact that Pacific Link’s establishment of new spatial discourses would have upon community members. Residents were fearful of the spatial narratives forwarded by Pacific Link and the potential to be dispossessed of their lived space. For the residents of Kendall Village, this was especially true as their virtual monopoly of
influence on the estate was eroded by the co-opted evolution of the Tenant’s Committee into a broad based Tenant Management Group.

For BEPs, these experiential factors that shape the day-to-day of resident communities must then be apprehended during the preliminary stages of the ERP. The findings reported from Riverwood indicate that the extensive and targeted community consultation undertaken encouraged interaction between stakeholders and allowed community members to both negotiate better outcomes and assuage their fears to some extent.

A key research priority for the study was investigating how urban design is used within ERPs to shape and give direction to the change process. Within the three case study sites, design was deployed to alter the spatial discourse within the site. BEPs made material claim to the site’s place identity and rights to place-making through the construction of ‘vibrant residential communities’. While urban design was undeniably an agent of change in the each of the sites, the outcomes intended by BEPs did not always transpire. The findings of this study challenge some assumptions held fast by planners and architects; that ‘good’ urban design produces inherently inclusive places. The case of Bonnyrigg has shown that despite winning numerous industry awards for its designers, not all stakeholders viewed the masterplan positively; their conceptions of place were excluded from the new development.

Finally, the findings from the case studies show while following a similar project structure and founded on the same theoretical framework, each ERP had a different outcome. This was particularly evident when comparing Bonnyrigg and Riverwood,
where similar renewals either improved or eroded resident’s place experience.

Returning to the work of Lefebvre, the experience of estate renewal is inextricably bound up in the interplay of the perceived, conceived and lived. While BEPs may apprehend of place as a static construct, in reality place is a slippery concept, made up of elements, moments, and opportunities in a perpetual state of becoming.

**Toward a just estate renewal project**

In this concluding discussion, I briefly return to the literature before meditating upon the pursuit of a just ERP. To this point, the focus has been upon the shortcomings of BEPs and their plans. The findings have led to the assertion that the representations of space that guide the change process such as maps and architectural drawings require the simplification, distortion and corruption of the lived space. Planning and place-making as currently practiced in ERPs consumes possibilities rather than creating them. Lefebvre asserts that modern urban planning has been reduced to a “ideology, a functionalism which reduces urban society to the achievement of the few predictable and prescribed functions on the ground...he (the planner) believes in and wants to create human relationships by defining them, by creating their environment and décor” (1996:98). BEPs fragment cities, demarcating space where certain activities may or may not take place and opening cities up to consumption spectacles by drawing socioeconomic lines into the urban fabric. Equitable cities, argues Lefebvre must be *oeuvre*, sites of praxis and opportunity, unmaking and remaking itself as people produce lived space (1991). How then can planning turn away from practices of fragmentation? What possibility exists for BEPs to generate opportunity? How to best maintain the fluid and volatile conditions of lived space?
An experiential approach

The literature explored in the second chapter highlighted the primacy of experiential measures that actors recruit to negotiate their environment. Features of the physical environment become interwoven with social interactions and appropriated to create the lived space. Variously this lived space has been identified as social space, the life-world or place. These places can transcend geographic and temporal boundaries, yet exist within them (Langer, 1953). Places are spatial narratives; they have rules, resources and are crucial for ontological security (Giddens, 1984). Places are hard to create and easy to erode (Relph, 1976), particularly when these places are the sites of such powerful and divergent socio-spatial characteristics as public housing estates (Vale, 2002). In these places, there is a high risk that BEPs underestimate the value of subtle phenomena and small details of the existing neighbourhood. Guerrilla gardens or other appropriations of space are not supported in the carefully curated landscaping of post ERP estates.

How might an experiential approach to undertaking ERPs look? What must BEPs undertake to ensure a just ERP? Fainstein notes “city building for the benefit of non-elite groups requires empowering those who are excluded not just from discussions but from structural positions that allow them genuine influence” (2000:461)
Here I will make a number of propositions that I will then synthesise into practical possibilities:

- Planning must reduce its dependence upon Cartesian representations of space. BEPs need to reacquaint themselves with the lived and experienced city; this may be possible through a return to the Valley Section of Geddes.
- Images and maps used must reflect the experiential; however, images must not exclusively represent places.
- BEPs must appreciate that social relations shape material conditions.
- BEPs must develop community participation to interpret possibilities, understand symbolism, and find diverse actors and give them a voice.
  Participation must move beyond commenting upon preferred options to an integral part of the change process.
- Plans should be reflexive, iterative or prototypical. Planning should be open, allow for organic change and avoid imposing a final result. BEPs should be pluralistic, valorising diversity rather than neat solutions.
- Further, plans must maintain space for appropriation, allowing the maximum opportunity for people to inscribe their experience upon the lived space through place-making processes.

These propositions represent a radical change for planning, and an almost unthinkable shift for the policy framework that surrounds the modern ERP; however, to argue it is impossible in the context of neoliberal political economy only serves to reinforce the existing conditions. Aligned with the totalising and open-ended
theorisation of the spatial trialectic I will briefly discuss possible changes that would forward a more equitable approach.

*Reducing BEP’s reliance upon visual representations of space* (which entrench exclusive technocratic spatial discourses) through introducing novel methods of abstracting socio-spatial data. By democratising the process of representing space through a method such as space syntax, or mind-mapping, BEPs can apprehend the spatial knowledge of community members without resorting to ‘capacity building’.

*Valorising the lived experience.* This study has presented the value of seeking to know the lived space of neighbourhoods undergoing renewal. Seeking to understand the lived experience supports individual perceptions, appropriation of space and champions the creative capacity for individuals to shape and contribute to the social space.

*Investigating new methods of plan making.* BEPs must acknowledge that each ERP is unique and that a universal formula for undertaking them will not be discovered. To ensure equitable outcomes, community members must be integrated into the planning process in a genuine, empowered way. Cultural planning, an action research based approach to planning, integrates a community’s cultural resources including marginalised community members, local heritage, and the physical features of neighbourhoods that have experiential significance. These processes can democratise the planning process and protect community member’s rights to place-making.
I am not insisting that these propositions will work, only that they might open the way for more equitable outcomes. In doing so, I am not only calling for further study, but further exploration of the opportunities provided by a new, more nuanced understanding. The findings of this study suggest that addressing the tension between an imperative for the transition of public housing estates into mixed communities, and community members place experience will remain a significant challenge going forward. However, the case of Riverwood is encouraging, showing that an ERP does not have to mean the destruction of communities. A key contribution of this study is to show that there is significant potential for communities undergoing urban renewal to reinforce their lived space and strengthen their attachment to place. The key variable is the how willing BEPs are to negotiate change with resident communities.
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APPENDICIES
Appendix 1: Interview Roadmap

Background

- What was/is your involvement with the project?
- What is your understanding of the broad intentions of the urban design of the project?
- What were/are your aspirations for the redevelopment?

Before Redevelopment

Place/Identity

- How would you have described the place/identity of the place before redevelopment?
- What gave these Characteristics?
- Positive/Negative aspects of place - what needed changing/protecting etc?
  - Preserve existing place character/create new place character...
  - Why did you feel this way places/objects etc.?
- How was the place character/identity defined by others? Based on?

Experiences of Place

- What is your understanding of how the place was experienced by users before the redevelopment?
- What is this based on?
- How was this important to how you feel/felt about the place?
- Describe a day in the life of the place (kids to school, shops, social events etc.)

Design Objectives

- What is your understanding of the specific design objectives for the project with respect to the identity of the place?
- How/Is your understanding of “Community” reflected in the masterplans/what you understand about the masterplans.
- How have the changes affected your experience of place?
During Redevelopment

- How much public participation was there during the design process?
- With whom? Nature of participation
- How do you define locals? Were all groups involved?
- How was the urban design of project influenced by existing place character/identity of the estate and the experiences of residents?
- Were changes made in response to this?

After Redevelopment (if applicable)

How would you describe the changes to the place character/identity due to the redevelopment?

- Positive/Negative?
- Intentional/Unintentional?
- How has this change/ lack of change been influenced by the project’s urban design?

Experiences of Place

What is your understanding of how the place was/is experienced by residents after the redevelopment?

- How has this change/ lack of change been influenced by the project’s urban design?
- How did the existing place character/identity of the project facilitate the process of urban design and development?
- What do you consider to be the successes and failures of the project?
- Were you surprised by the quality of the completed scheme?
- In your opinion, how could the urban design of the project have been improved? To what end would this be?

Key Findings

- How have the place character/identity of the Estate and the experiences of residents changed as a result of the redevelopment? Why?
- How was the urban design of project influenced by existing place character/identity of the estate and the experiences of residents?
Appendix 2: Recruitment Letter

Dear Resident,

RE: Invitation to participate in Designing "Community": The Significance of Place and Urban Design in Public Housing Renewal

You are invited to take part in the research project "Designing "Community"", which is being conducted by Mr. Gordon Bijen of the Urban Research Centre at the University of Western Sydney. This project will form part of Mr. Bijen's Doctoral thesis and has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of Western Sydney.

The project will study how public housing renewal projects change the way residents feel about their neighbourhoods by:

1) Exploring the lived experience of public housing renewal
2) Looking at ways urban design can change a person’s feelings about public housing renewal.

You are requested to take part because of your involvement or knowledge of a public housing area in which renewal has recently taken place or is planned. Should you agree to participate, you would be asked to attend an informal interview of approximately one hour with Mr. Bijen. With your permission, the interview would be recorded to ensure an accurate record of the discussion. The audio tape of the interview will be transcribed. You will then be provided with a written copy of your interview responses for your confirmation. You will also be able to ask for corrections and/or deletions. The total time commitment required from you for this activity will be less than two hours.

A second activity you may agree to take part in is a Photo Journal. The Photo Journal would require you to use a supplied camera to photograph places in the neighbourhood that are important to you and write a short explanation in the provided journal. At the end of this activity (approximately one week) Mr. Bijen will meet you to discuss the results. The total time commitment required for this activity from you will be less than two hours over the activity period.

You may choose to participate in one or both of the activities. As a gesture of appreciation, participants will receive a supermarket voucher valued at $50.

Your privacy and the confidentiality of your participation will be protected. Your name and contact details will be kept separate from any information you supply. Your details will only be able to be linked to your responses by the researcher. In the final report, any references
to personal information that could be used to individually identify you will be removed. However, you should note that it may still be possible that someone identifies you due to the small size of the project.

Once the final report has been written, a summary of the findings will be provided to you. It is possible that the results will be presented at academic conferences. The data collected during the research project will be kept securely in the Urban Research Centre of the University of Western Sydney for five years from the date of publication. The data will then be destroyed.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. Should you wish to withdraw at any stage, or withdraw any unprocessed data that you have supplied, you are free to do so.

If you would like to participate, or you require any further information, please contact either the researcher; Mr Bijen (4736 0325) email (15989303@student.uws.edu.au) or his Supervisors; Dr. Awaś Piracha (4736 0049) email (a.piracha@uws.edu.au) or Associate Professor Michael Darcy (9772 6797) email (m.darcy@uws.edu.au). Mr Bijen will then organise a time to meet you. Should you choose to participate you will be asked to sign the participant consent form.

If you have any complaints or concerns about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Office of Research Services on Telephone (4736 0220) Fax (4736 0211) or email humanethics@uws.edu.au. Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

Best regards,

Gordon Bijen
PhD Candidate
University of Western Sydney
Appendix 3: Participant information sheet (general)

Participant Information Sheet (General)

Project Title: Designing "Community": The Significance of Place and Urban Design in Public Housing Renewal.

Who is carrying out the study?
Gordon Bijen, A PhD Student, Dr. Awaik Piracha and Associate Professor Michael Darcy

The research will form the basis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Western Sydney under the supervision of Dr Awaik Piracha and A/Professor Michael Darcy

What is the study about?
Broadly, this project seeks to uncover and present the lived experience of 'place based' urban renewal and how urban policy and resident conceptions of place influence these projects.

Specifically, the project seeks to explore the nature and impact of public housing renewal, to determine if the physical design of the new development has an influence upon the success of the renewal projects.

What does the study involve?
Participation in this study involves a semi-formal interview, keeping a photo-journal and a focus group. From this, the researcher hopes to gain an understanding of the lived experience of urban change from residents, practitioners and community groups.

How much time will the study take?
Total time commitment would be approximately one hour for the interview, two hours over one week for the Photo Journal and one hour for the Focus Group. As a gesture of appreciation participants will receive a supermarket voucher valued at $50.

Will the study benefit me?
The study will not provide immediate benefits to you. The project is focussed upon producing new knowledge.

Will the study involve any discomfort for me?
Participating in the study will not cause you discomfort.
How is this study being paid for?
The study is being sponsored by the Australian Government as part of the Research Training Scheme.

Will anyone else know the results? How will the results be disseminated?
All aspects of the study, including results, will be confidential and only the researchers will have access to information on participants. The data collected will be used as the basis for the writing of a PhD thesis, but individual participants will not be identifiable in the thesis.

Can I withdraw from the study?
Participation is entirely voluntary: you are not obliged to be involved and - if you do participate - you can withdraw at any time without giving any reason and without any consequences.

Can I tell other people about the study?
Yes, you can tell other people about the study by providing them with the chief investigator’s contact details. They can contact the chief investigator to discuss their participation in the research project and obtain an information sheet.

What if I require further information?
When you have read this information, Gordon Bijen will discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage, please feel free to contact Dr. Awais Piracha, Senior Lecturer (02) 4735 0049.

What if I have a complaint?
The study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee. The Approval number is [enter approval number]

If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Office of Research Services on Tel +61 2 4736 0225 Fax +61 2 4736 0013 or email humanethics@uws.edu.au.

Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

If you agree to participate in this study, you may be asked to sign the Participant Consent Form.
Appendix 4: Participant consent form

Participant Consent Form

Project Title: Designing "Community": The Significance of Place and Urban Design in Public Housing Renewal

I, __________________________, consent to participate in the research project titled Designing "Community": The Significance of Place and Urban Design in Public Housing Renewal.

I acknowledge that:

I have read the participant information sheet [or have had read to me] and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my involvement in the project with the researcher.

The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me, and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.

I consent to the interview, photo-journal. I acknowledge the interview and focus group will be electronically recorded.

I understand that my involvement is confidential and that the information gained during the study may be published but no information about me will be used in any way that reveals my identity.

I understand that I will receive a Supermarket Voucher valued at $50 as a token of appreciation for participating.

I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time, without affecting my relationship with the researchers now or in the future.

Signed: __________________________

Name: __________________________

Date: __________________________

Return Address: Gordon Elton, University of Western Sydney, Locked Bag 1797 Penrith NSW 2751

This study has been approved by the University of Western Sydney Human Research Ethics Committee.

The Approval number is: [enter approval number]
If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Ethics Committee through the Office of Research Services on Tel +61 2 4736 0220 Fax +61 2 4736 0013 or email humanethics@uow.edu.au. Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.
Appendix 5: Riverwood Village Talk - Issue 1

The Riverwood North Renewal Project is now underway. You may have noticed the site officers in Washington Park, set up for the coming residential project. From these temporary premises, Payce Communities will oversee the construction operations. The renewal area is bounded by Washington Avenue to the south and Salt Pan Creek Reserve and Balmoral Road to the north and east.

The architect-designed apartments by leading architectural firm Turner + Associates will be part of a master planned community that increases public open space and outdoor amenities. A new park and several smaller green spaces will encourage outdoor social activity and recreation.

Payce Communities, in partnership with HousingNSW, will work to create a vibrant and safe residential community. The new Metroline will be named after the community, and a new Metroline Park will be named after the adjoining park.

The local residents are Payce Communities’ most important partners in this project. Loece Banks, the Community Development and Leasing Manager has been busy promoting the Riverwood North project to the community, meeting everyone and discussing future developments.

As the project continues, more information will be made available to the public. We encourage you to stay tuned for more updates.

Source: Payce Communities, 2011.
Appendix 6: Washington Park magazine cover

Source: Payce Communities, 2013.
Appendix 7: Resident Photo Collage

Riverwood

Source: Research participants, 2014.
North Gosford (Dunbar Way)

Source: Research participants, 2013.
Bonnyrigg
