

## MAPPING NEIGHBOURHOOD FIELDS OF CARE

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### INTRODUCTION

It is almost a truism that place-identity embodies different meanings for different people, highlighted during conflicts over shared space by different groups. But to what extent do the terms of such place-identity relate to the requirements of a development approvals system premised on place-sensitive planning? And to what degree, and in what ways are such meanings shared or differentiated within a group of residents who are united in its defence? These questions are explored through a case study of the inner-city Melbourne suburb of Brunswick. The paper utilizes interview data to construct and map 'fields of care': the spatial field of concern for each interviewee. Using this technique, it was found that interviewees experience the place as a product of how they move around it, particularly via walking, cycling and public transport. There are significant variations in perceived place boundaries, centres of meaning and 'hot spots' with intense intersections of different meanings in the same places. The 'field of care' maps illustrate the ways people talk about place and provide a method for urban research that is sensitive not only to place-identity, but highlights what is often occluded in qualitative research on place: the differences in place-identity that exist within groups otherwise regarded as having a similar relationship with a place. These maps are then contrasted with others that effectively represent the field of care of the planning system – maps of development projects, the areas notified by planning officials and the source of objections. The nexus between these two kinds of map is the requirement placed on objectors to state how a proposed development will affect them. We suggest that these differences are illustrative of the problem presented to planning policy by the issue of place-identity, enshrined in legislation as 'neighbourhood character'.

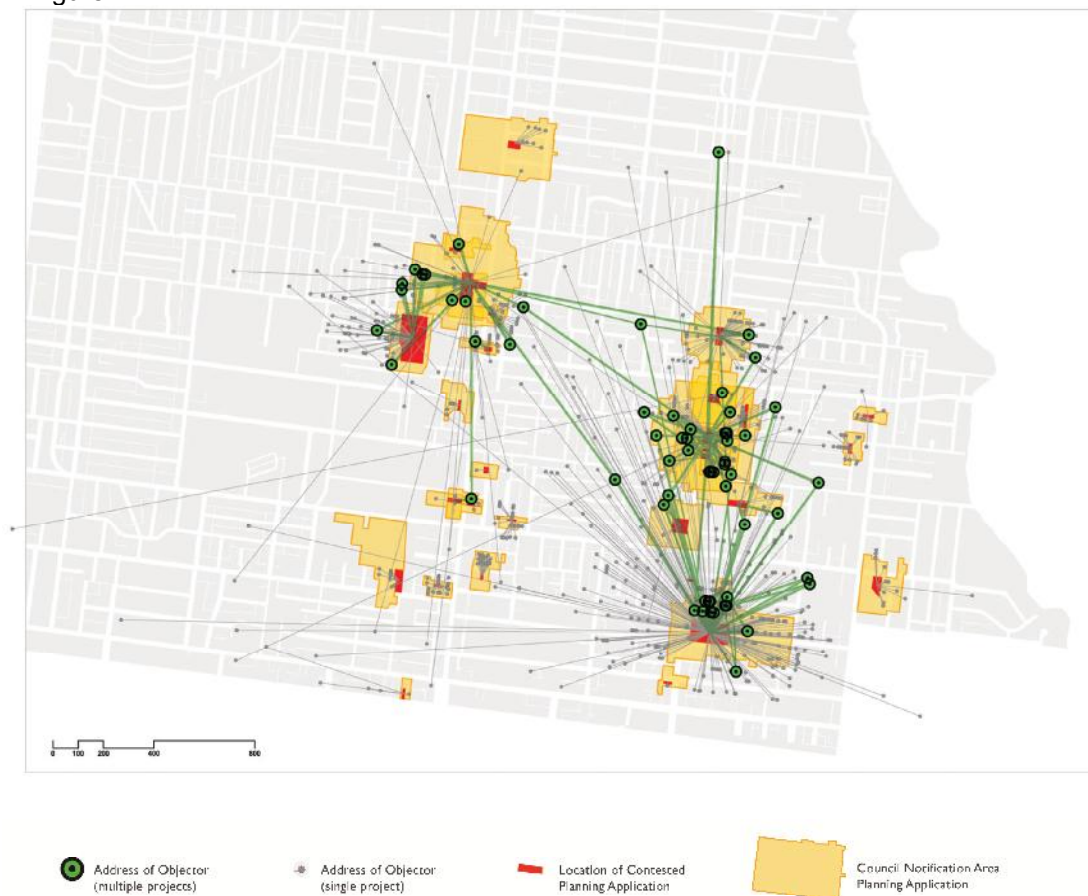
### Fields of Care

The phrase 'field of care' is primarily associated with the humanistic geographer Yi-Fu Tuan to refer to what he calls the 'affective bond between people and place or setting' (Tuan 1974:4). Tuan argued that through place experience, that is, the daily activity of living in and moving through specific environments, we come to form attachments to places. In distinction to the more public symbolisation of places connected with national history or state power, fields of care may not be so easily apprehended by visitors, being the places where people create interpersonal ties and develop social capital, both of which require extended time as well as material settings (Tuan 1999). Key for Tuan was the distinction such experience makes between place and space – the former rooted and particular, the latter mobile, open and generic. This duality has a long and contested history within theoretical discussion on place, where progressive ideas of openness and mobility have been seen to threaten such a sense of place or to be required to replace it (Massey 1994). Many have been concerned to eschew the concept of place altogether because of its imputed regressiveness – closed, static and nostalgic. Similar charges are frequently and stereotypically made of people who object to intensification projects in Australian cities, the so-called NIMBY or 'not-in-my-backyard' conservative with a nostalgic and reactionary sense of place-identity. And yet, the planning schemes that govern the approval of urban intensification are fundamentally driven by ideas about place, identity and community – that new development should respect and enhance neighbourhood character – these are seen as goods that new development should aspire to achieve. Performance-based planning within the Victorian planning system demands that development proposals be assessed against such criteria rather than be contained by quantifiable prescriptions for height, density or built form. The planning and development assessment process includes requirements to consult communities, to create neighbourhood character policy, to undertake site analyses and character statements and to notify affected property owners and occupants. It contains several iterations of processes

designed to establish fields of care among residents, planners, developers and designers, albeit to differing degrees of depth and rigour. Thus, when making structure plans and neighbourhood character policy, planners will consult with communities about the aspects of the suburbs they live in that they care about and seek guidance on a qualitative vision of the future. With the over-arching view that planning authorities necessarily have, this process assumes that individual fields of care can be aggregated and combined into a coherent vision, or at least that some compromise can be achieved about differing versions of such senses of place (Wood et al 2006). While such juggling and calibration is at the heart of planning, our interest here is to shed some light on the spatiality of this qualitative domain in terms of residents' experience of place and how it plays out within the development assessment process.

### Interviews, archives and maps

Brunswick in Melbourne's inner northwestern suburbs has a long-standing history of resident activism and has been euphemistically known as the 'people's republic of Brunswick' (Woodcock et al 2009). Local resident groups have connections to the metropolitan-wide association known as Save Our Suburbs (SOS) and activism has included resistance to intensification and high-rise development. As planning policy and development assessment procedures are predominantly focused on responding to objections (rather than polling representative samples of residents) our focus was on local residents who have taken a keen interest in planning and development in Brunswick. A combination of fieldwork and the local government (City of Moreland) database was used to analyse all development applications between the years 2002-2007 and their passage through the approvals system (Woodcock et al 2011). From this archive, potential interviewees were identified from the register of cases that were heard at the state planning tribunal, VCAT. Fourteen interviewees were selected this way and a further three self-presented through their work on planning committees who had been notified about the project. Alongside this selection process, the location of these contentious development projects, the area notified in each case and the sources of objections were mapped. A composite 'spider' map of these projects and objectors is shown in Figure 1.



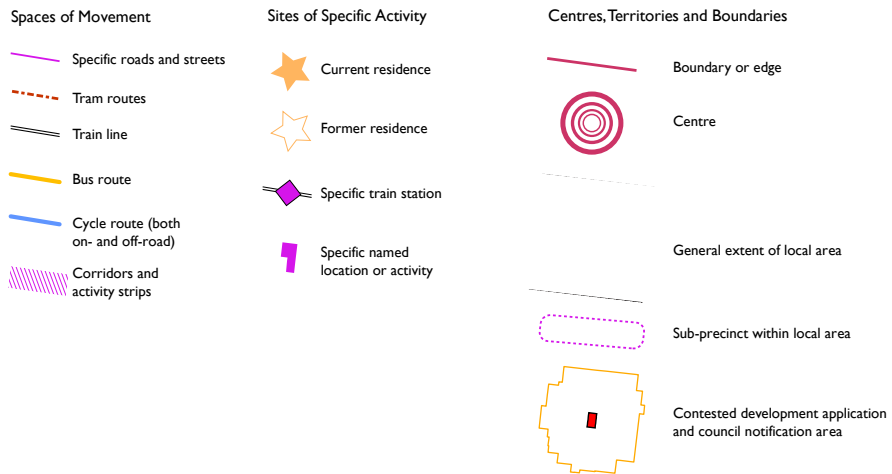
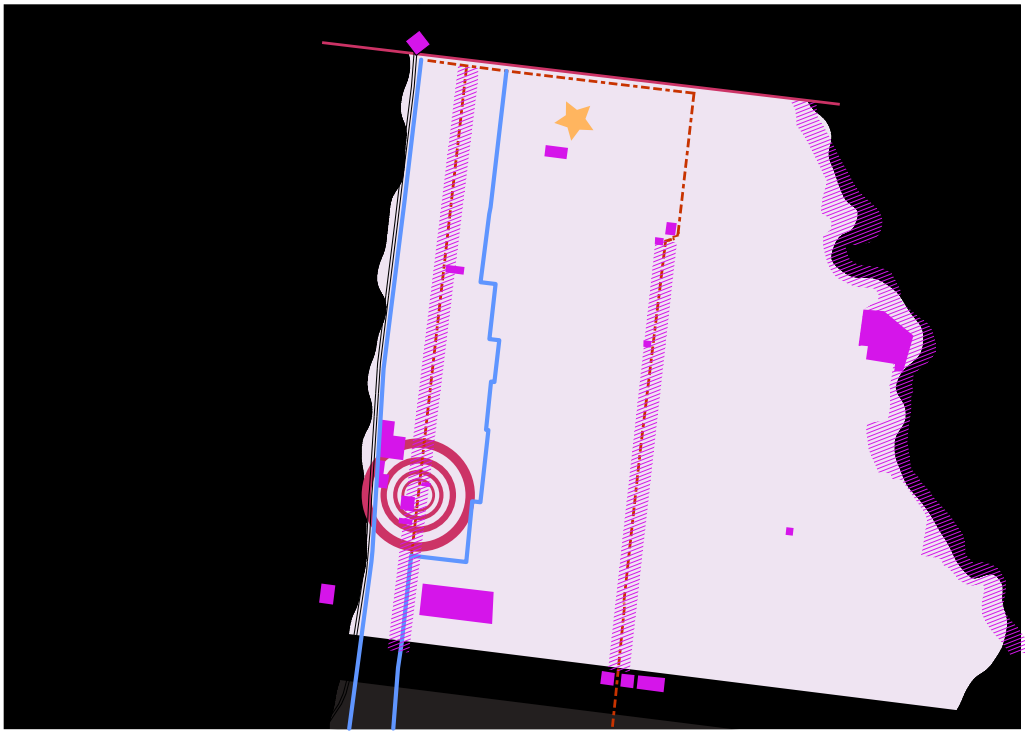
**Figure 1. 'Spider map' of development application sites (red), notification areas**

**(orange) and sources of objections (black/green dots) in Brunswick, for the period 2002-7**

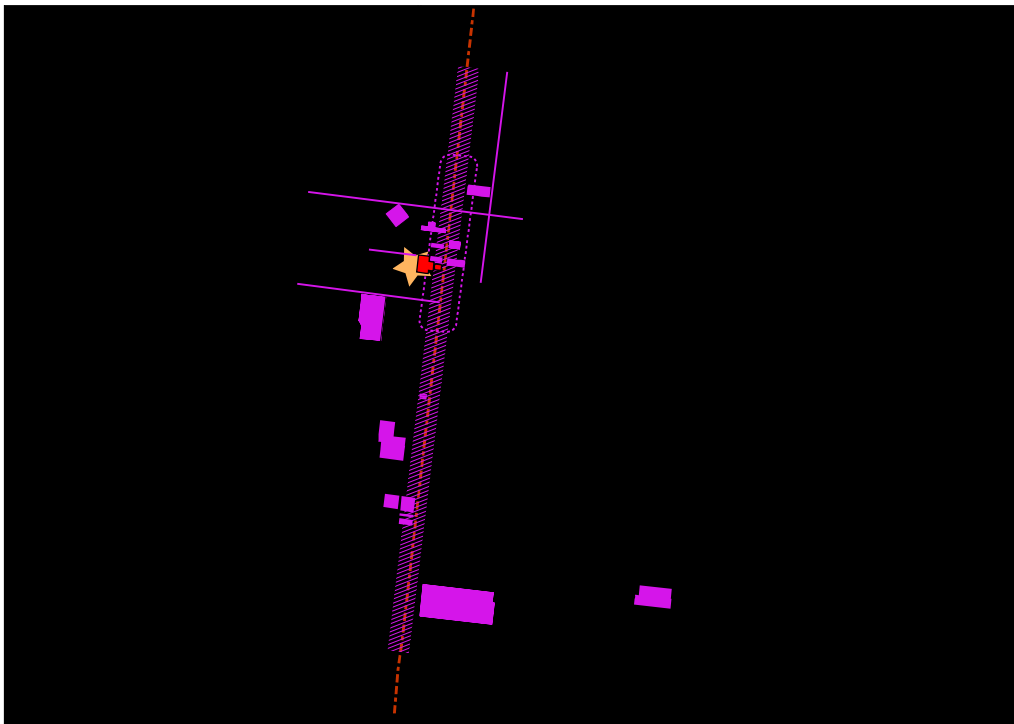
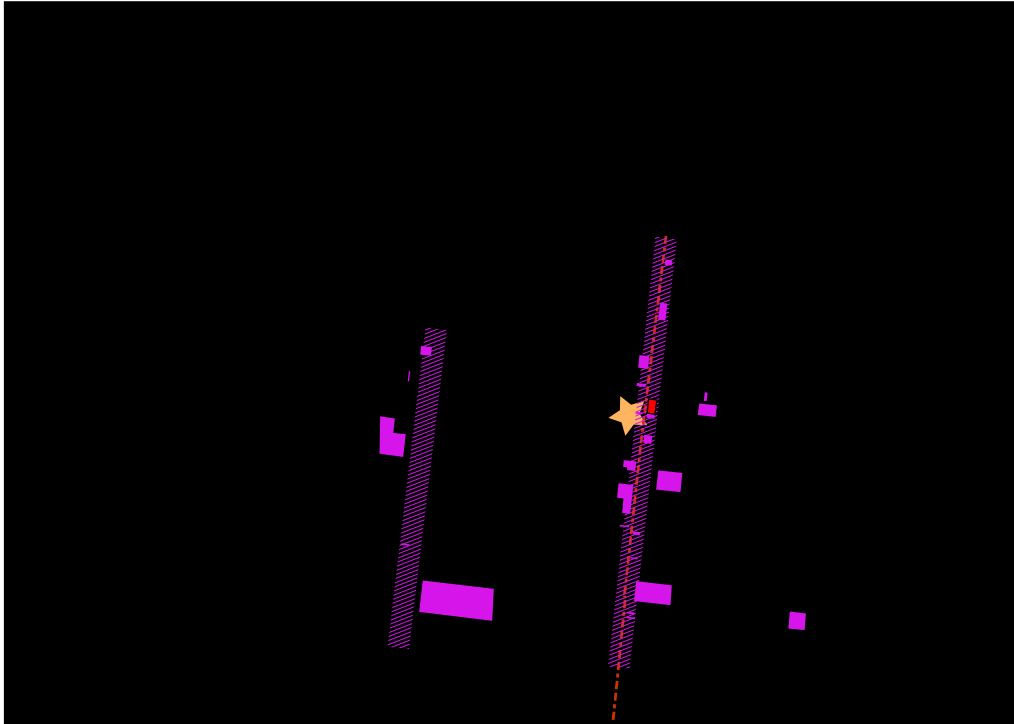
Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with the 17 participants, taking an average of 90 minutes each. Interviewees were roughly equal in terms of gender, aged between late 20s and late 70s and varied in their socio-economic background and ethnicity. The format of the interviews followed a set of three major themes. Firstly, to elicit an understanding of how each interviewee carried out their daily life, how they used places in Brunswick and how they moved around. Secondly, we asked questions about their sense of Brunswick as a place: where did it begin and end, were any parts more distinctive than others, where was the centre, and why. And thirdly, we were interested in their experiences as an objector and the reasons they became involved in a residents' campaign. A primary interest here was how Brunswick, designated a Major Activity Centre under state planning policy, actually functioned for residents and what it meant as such. All interviews were transcribed in full. After a series of experiments with representational techniques and symbology, each interview transcript was interpreted as a map (Figure 2) based on the content of the first and second parts of the interview. While initially we were interested in a number of different ways of mapping this content, for example, places with positive and negative associations/values attached to them, or actual and virtual places (currently existing versus potential proposals) we decided against this kind of differentiation for a number of reasons. Many statements made by interviewees were ambiguous. Some places raised in conversation would have a host of associations and uses attached to them, and it was unclear whether they had a neutral, negative or positive value – sometimes they might have all three, sometimes it was very hard to say. While such slippery meanings are of interest, for our present purposes we are not concerned with making maps of relative value as such.

Furthermore, the attributes of a site as it exists or as it could be, while interesting in other contexts, are of a different order than the fact that the interviewee mentioned the site. Thus, what the maps of the interviews illustrate is the range of places of any kind or value mentioned by the interviewee. As such, this allows a comparison between the interview maps and the 'spider' map of projects and objectors. While the reasons residents may give for objecting to development proposals vary, we have not differentiated between them on this basis, we have located them on the map to illustrate spatial relationships. It is this emphasis on spatiality over meaning that allows us to compare maps produced by very different means, and to draw out issues in relation to the concept of fields of care.





**Figure 2. Examples of ‘field of care’ maps constructed from transcripts of interviews with residents (B-01 and B-03, planning committee members).**



**Figure 3. Examples of ‘field of care’ maps constructed from transcripts of interviews with residents (B-02 and B-07, objectors living at a distance from development projects). See figure 1 for legend.**

At this point a question could be asked why we chose this rather laborious method of making such maps, when a well-known qualitative research technique is to get participants to sketch their own ‘mental maps’, of which all authors have experience in both research and design contexts. One response to this is that few people draw very well, and many find such a task intimidating – becoming too focused on the drawing problem rather than responding to questions that are much easier to answer verbally. Furthermore, drawing skills vary to such

an extent that comparisons between the maps would be likely to have more to do with personal representational styles than the spatial content – requiring the researcher to re-draw the maps to achieve consistency. Another approach could have been to provide participants with a base map and ask them to annotate it. The drawback with this is that apart from differences in abilities to read maps, the graphic language of the base map could draw the attention of the participant to places they wouldn't have otherwise considered relevant to the interview. Lastly, however, one of the matters of interest in this process is the larger issue of the potential for mapping interviews and other word-based texts to spatialise their content and make visible aspects that would otherwise remain invisible.

## **FINDINGS**

Broadly speaking, our interviewees fell into three categories: three were members of a planning committee looking at the development of Brunswick as a whole; 14 were objectors, of whom most (12) lived sufficiently far from the development site to not be directly affected in terms of overshadowing or overlooking; and two lived immediately adjacent to the developments they objected to. The relevance of these categories will be returned to later in the discussion. We will now describe the content of the maps, firstly with a quantitative analysis of the entities they represent, and secondly with an interpretation of the visual impact of the maps. An important aspect of mapping is that spatial relationships are foregrounded and revealed in contrast to the semantic content normally extracted from interview texts. As such, images can 'say' things that are otherwise very difficult, if not impossible to articulate verbally because the former are spatial, multidimensional and immediate (like much embodied experience) whereas the latter is linear and semantically associative rather than spatial.

A simple content analysis of all 17 maps identifies a total of 61 separate entities, as summarised in Table 1. The difference between a simple count of the times these entities appear in the interview transcripts and on the maps derived from them is that the spatial aspect of the entities becomes clear when they are represented as a map. These entities cover major commercial strips, the local shopping centre, landscape elements such as the Merri Creek, various parks of great difference in size, minor streets, development sites, public transport routes/modes, and a range of other individual sites, large and small, public and private. The maps vary a great deal in the spatial extent and composition of entities within of each individual field of care. The range of entities present in any one map is between 8 and 25 (or between 13% and 41%), with only 10 (16%) entities appearing on more than half of the maps. In addition to this diversity of entities within interviewees' fields of care, it is notable that a large proportion of these are spaces of movement. Of the 10 most commonly present entities, six concern Brunswick's main north-south spine (the Sydney Rd-Upfield Railway Corridor), three concern Lygon St, Brunswick's secondary spine and the last of these entities is the category of 'walking in east-west streets', generally between these two strips. Of these most common entities, seven are very ordinary places of movement: streets, transport lines and bike paths (See Table). Another way of seeing this is that over a quarter of the entities within these fields of care are referred to by their individual names and either concern movement in one way or another, or, in the case of Sydney Rd. and Lygon St., are also everyday places of exchange.

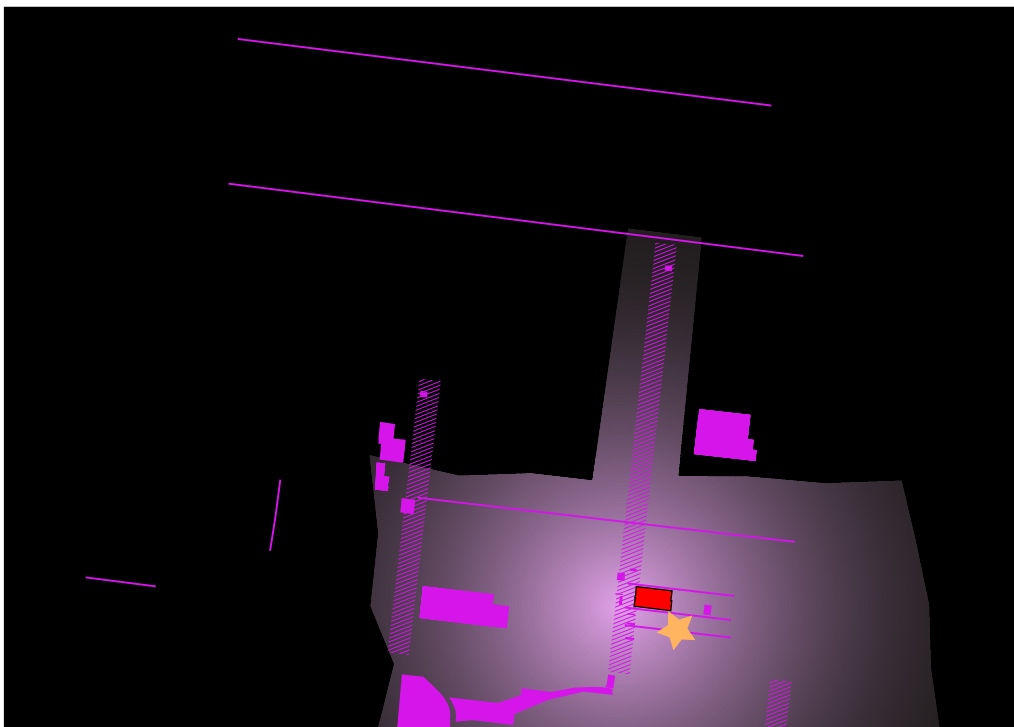
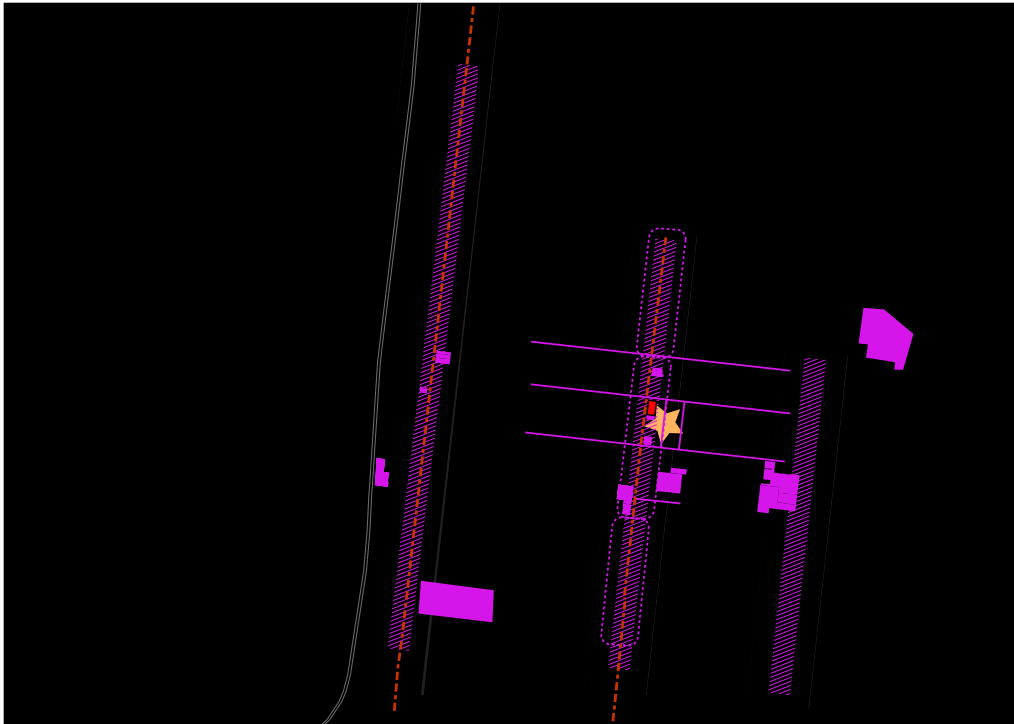
Mapping Neighbourhood Fields of Care

MAP >>>> PLACE	TOTAL	TH, SL, ML					TH, C, BS, SL, BS										TH		
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15		16	17
		BMAC 17 28%	TA 12 20%	BMAC 21 34%	TA+L 20 33%	380L 9 15%	TA 20 33%	W 11 18%	BMAC 19 31%	GM 13 21%	TA 14 23%	TA 20 33%	20FA 8 13%	TA 25 41%	GM 15 25%	TT 14 23%		WTTGM 19 31%	W 20 33%
SYDNEY RD	94%	16	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
PUBLIC TRANSPORT	88%	15	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
LYGON ST	82%	14	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
PLACES SYDNEY RD	82%	14	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
PLACES LYGON	82%	14	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
BARKLY SQ SC	76%	13	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
WALK E-W STREETS	76%	13	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
TRAM LYGON	65%	11	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
RAIL UPFIELD	59%	10	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
TRAM SYDNEY RD	53%	9	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
BDY NORTH (BR-CO)	47%	8	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
CERES	41%	7	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
PLACES NICHOLSON	41%	7	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
DEVT SITE TA	41%	7	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
DEVT SITE GATEWAYS LYG	35%	6	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
MERRI CK	35%	6	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
BIKE UPFIELD	29%	5	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
BDY MORELAND RD	29%	5	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
BDY UPFIELD	29%	5	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
NICHOLSON ST	29%	5	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
PARK FLEMING	24%	4	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
TOWN HALL	24%	4	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
BDY MERRI CK	24%	4	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
LYGON ST SOUTH	24%	4	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
DEVT SITE TT	24%	4	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
PARK METHVEN	18%	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
CENTRE TOWN HALL	18%	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
BUS BLYTH/VICTORIA	18%	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
BIKE MERRI CK	18%	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
BDY SOUTH	18%	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
LYGON ST NORTH	18%	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
DEVT SITE CHEF	18%	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
DEVT SITE WHELANS	18%	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
DEVT SITE 408-432L	18%	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
PUBLIC HSG	18%	3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
PARKS WEST	12%	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
PARK PRINCES	12%	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
CENTRE STH LYGON	12%	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
TRAM MELVILLE	12%	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
TRAM NICHOLSON	12%	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
SYDNEY RD SOUTH	12%	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
SYDNEY RD NORTH	12%	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
LYGON ST MID	12%	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
PLACES MELV/GRAN	12%	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
WALK N-S STREETS	12%	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
BRICKWORKS	6%	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
PARK ALLARD	6%	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
CENTRE BARKLY SQ	6%	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
CENTRE MID LYGON	6%	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
CENTRE CERES	6%	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
CENTRE BSC	6%	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
BUS HOPE	6%	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
BIKE PARK ST E-W	6%	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
BIKE BACKSTREETS	6%	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
SYDNEY RD MID	6%	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
MELVILLE RD/GRANTHAM	6%	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
GRANTHAM UNION SQ	6%	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
STATION JEWELL	6%	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
STATION BRUNSWICK	6%	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
DEVT SITE MAN L	6%	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
DEVT SITE 380L	6%	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
RMIT	6%	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	

**Table 1. Summary of occurrence of entities within field of care maps from resident interviews**

Other entities we are particularly interested in are centres, territory/boundaries. For most interviewees, Brunswick does not have a centre. For the five interviewees who do identify centres, two cite the former Town Hall as the sole centre (for its earlier role in Brunswick politics rather than any current centrality) and a third cites it as a centre along with the CERES community environment park and the Brunswick Secondary College campus because of the narratives of community resistance and activism associated with them. While CERES, for others, is ostensibly within their field of care, its value is not entirely positive, because of its perceived appropriation by ‘hippies from Hawthorn who come to bang their drums’. In Tuan’s terms it passed from field of care to public symbol. The remaining two interviewees both cite the southern end of Lygon St as a centre (for its emergent café culture), with one also citing the middle-section of Lygon St. (as an up-coming strip of café culture) and the other citing the Barkly Square shopping mall. Notably, Barkly Square, along with ‘places on Sydney Rd’ and ‘places on Lygon St’ are the only non-movement related entities that occur in more than 50% of the fields of care. While Brunswick is an activity centre in planning terms, it is clearly experienced as a series of strips of activity and places of

movement, which as one interviewee explains means that 'there is no centre, it changes with what we're doing'.



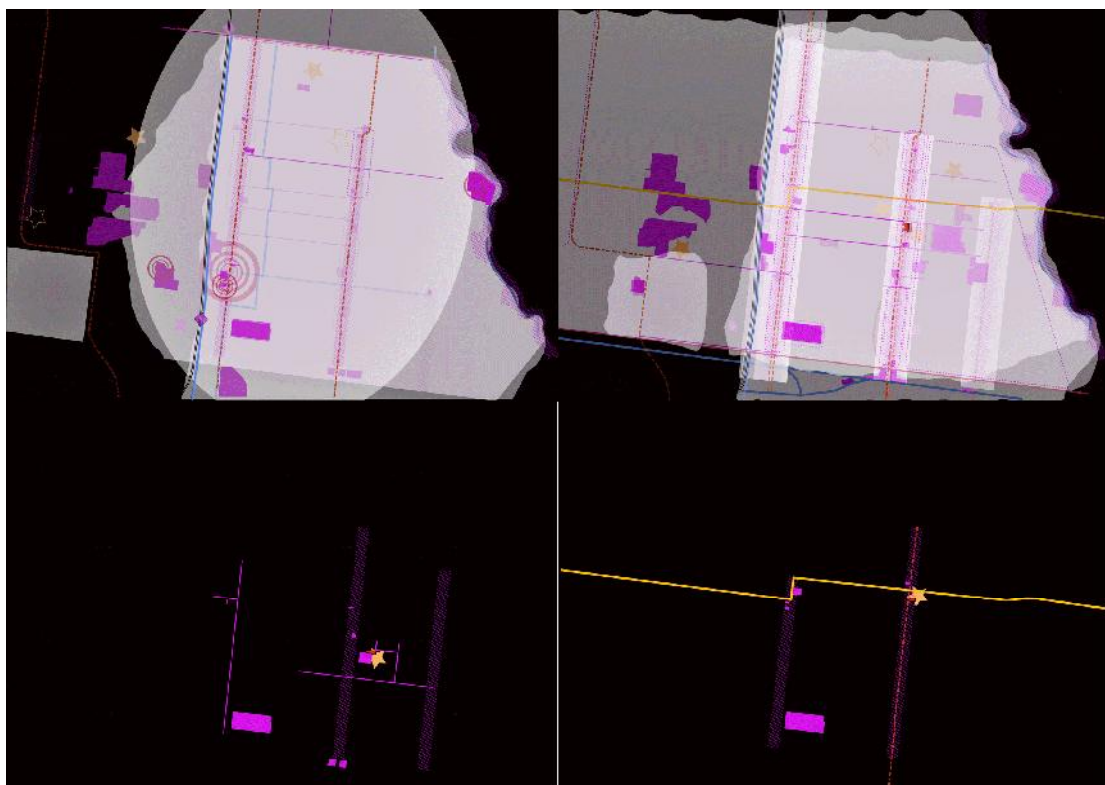
**Figure 4. Examples of 'field of care' maps constructed from transcripts of interviews with residents (B11 and B15, residents living at some distance from development sites) see figure 1 for legend.**

In terms of territory, in 15 (88%) of the maps, the field of care contains some sort of boundary or sense of territory, but in most cases these differ greatly between interviewees and there is



an ambivalence or vagueness about where Brunswick begins and ends. For example, the most frequently cited boundary / territorial distinction is that between Brunswick and Coburg (8 maps, 47%), followed by citing Moreland Road (5 maps, 29%), which is the place name and postcode boundary. In urban morphology terms, the built form changes quite gradually throughout the area as one moves north, but a number of interviewees associated this boundary with claimed social differences between the two suburbs. Some said that they never went north into Coburg so it was largely unknown territory. It is interesting that the social boundary of Moreland Road was cited as frequently as the north-south Upfield railway line, which is a physical impediment to east-west pedestrian movement with significant differences in land use either side, while the even more substantive boundary formed by the Merri Creek was only cited in 4 interviews as a boundary. The least cited boundary was to the south, only being present on 3 (18%) maps, and yet there is a swathe of linear park along almost the entire southern edge of Brunswick where it borders the inner-city suburbs of Fitzroy North, Carlton North and Parkville. Many interviewees would move across this southern boundary on foot, bicycle, tram or train when travelling to and from the city – the other major domain of the broader activity spaces of most interviewees.

The differences and similarities between these fields of care are of course best studied by looking at the maps themselves. The above themes are only a few of the many ways that the maps could be compared with each other. When looking at the maps as images, what is striking is how different they are in terms of the immediate impression they convey about what is within each interviewee's field of care. While some maps share a similar basic structure (two or three vertical corridors would be the minimum recognisable), there are some whose constellation of entities, rather than appearing as unfinished or less definite versions of more 'complete' maps, makes them appear to be almost completely different places. This contrast is illustrated in Figure 5, a composite organised around the three categories of interviewee – planning committee members, objectors living some distance from development sites, and objectors living directly adjacent to a development site. The fields of care of the committee members are among the most 'comprehensive' (citing 17 to 21 or 28-24% of the entities); the fields of care of the objectors living some distance from development sites are also frequently similarly comprehensive (the range being 11 to 25 or 18-41% of the entities), while the fields of care of the those objecting to developments immediately adjacent is the smallest and least recognisable (8 and 9 or 13-15% of the entities only).



**Figure 5. Composite of residents' 'fields of care' maps (clockwise from top left): Planning Committee members; Objectors living some distance from development sites; objectors immediately adjacent to development sites (2 separate maps). See figure 1 for legend.**

## Discussion

One of the telling aspects of these maps is the ways in which interviewees' experience of place as fields of care can be represented. Clearly, the maps are as individual as people are and reflect the differences in the way people move around and live in a place. But what about the comparison with the field of care, such as it is, produced by the planning system when assessing development applications? The minimum legal requirement (where one exists at all) is that planning authorities notify adjacent owners of properties of development applications. The official objection *proforma* asks objectors to answer the simple question 'explain how the proposal would affect you'. There is an implicit logic here about a field of care that the planning system can assess – the notion that there is only a material impact on people close enough to be directly affected that needs to be assessed as grounds for objection. Planning officers have the discretion to extend this field of care beyond the adjacent properties however far they believe that residents might reasonably be affected by a proposal. Our 'spider maps' illustrate the degree to which such discretion was exercised in Brunswick and the extent to which planning officers' perceptions of each development proposal's potential field of care varied. They also show that in most cases, each resident's field of care regarding these sites was different – almost always objections came from a much larger area than the one set out for notifications, and often distributed in irregular ways rather than, say, a linear progression related to distance from a site. This is significant because it means that the residents' field of care is effectively spatially inverse to the principles driving the planning assessment process. Although our sample size is small, if there is anything that can be said about the maps in relation to the planning issues, it is that the closer to the development site the objections come, the less concerns there are likely to be in terms of broader planning issues (neighbourhood character, how the wider suburb works as a place) and the more focussed on immediate impacts that may have little to do with the intent of good place-based planning.

In short, the planning policy of notifying only a very limited number of spatially proximate residents may actually exacerbate the tendency of objectors to react as stereotypical NIMBYs and obscure the nuances contained in the fields of care of residents who care, but who live outside the area deemed worthy of notification by planning policy. To speculate further, what we see by comparing residents' fields of care maps with the 'spider maps' of projects, notifications and objections is the potential for conflicts over whose field of care will prevail in planning decisions. The semantic content of the interviews shows that what is contained in these maps on another plane is residents' sense of how the suburb works as a place and the complex assemblage of the material and the social from which their experience of its place-identity, or character, emerges (Woodcock et al 2009). These maps illustrate that residents experience could be drawn upon much better by the planning system to frame policy as well as assess development applications than is currently the case.

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