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Abstract:

Brunswick is an inner-northern suburb of Melbourne, long a centre of leftist politics that is colloquially known by insiders as the 'People's Republic of Brunswick'. There is currently a high level of contestation over the approval of new multi-unit housing development. Based on interviews with residents who have been involved in resistance to such development, this paper explores the ways Brunswick is experienced and the characteristics of developments that are opposed. The defence of Brunswick is not primarily a NIMBY syndrome; residents are generally defending a broad sense of place and community rather than the amenity of their private property or immediate neighbourhood. This place has few boundaries or centres and is interpreted as a series of overlapping 'fields care'. Large-scale development is seen to threaten the sense of community as sustained by certain building types and public/private interfaces. The urban character of Brunswick is widely described as a mix of different people (ages and ethnicities) linked to a mix of building types (houses, factories, flats) and functions (industry, commerce, retail, residential). While the planning scheme requires that neighbourhood character be protected, the somewhat inconsistent and chaotic mix that residents are trying to defend is paradoxically seen from the outside as a lack of urban character. Thus the mixed character that is so valued within Brunswick becomes an excuse for the Planning Tribunal to approve its transformation.

Introduction

Over the last two decades, protection of local or neighbourhood character, along with heritage and residential amenity have become fundamentals of planning schemes in most established urban areas in Australia. This focus on character has created a conundrum for more recent policies of intensification: on the one hand, the system is bound to protect existing place-identity and enhance it. On the other, the imperative is to dramatically change it – the character of the compact city is usually imagined to be significantly different from its host. This situation is further complicated in Melbourne by a place-centred, performance-based planning code (ResCode) focused on neighbourhood character as the primary criterion to be assessed in residential development applications in established urban areas.ⁱ Issues of place-identity come to the fore on a site-by-site basis as every proposal must be assessed as to the merits of its effect on local senses of place. The tension between imperatives to intensify on the one hand and to protect neighbourhood character on the other is exacerbated by policy definitions of character that focus on built form elements and eschews any reference to social factors, or a consideration of place as an assemblage. Furthermore, how the character of an area arises from such assemblages of built form has highly-charged affective dimensions in terms of how residents experience the place-identity of their neighbourhoods that further compounds the planning process. When residents seek to protect the character of their neighbourhoods, what is it that they are seeking to protect?

This paper will focus on the inner-northern suburb of Brunswick, a designated Major Activity Centre under the metropolitan strategy Melbourne 2030 (DSE 2002).ⁱⁱ

Brunswick is undergoing major changes from a former mixed-use industrial, commercial and residential area with significant potential for sustainable intensification due to high levels of public transport accessibility. Brunswick has a colourful history as a place of left-wing politics and community activism, giving rise to its nickname 'The People's Republic'. Proposals for intensification are frequently met with trenchant resident opposition to change. Interviews with those involved in this opposition reveal a range of dimensions to the meaning of Brunswick's character and the ways in which it is seen as threatened by development. The place-identity of Brunswick is seen through a series of themes such as *chaos*, *mix*, and *community* that are firmly grounded in, as well as transcend, the politics and the soil of the suburb, and moreover, provide critical nuance to overworked and superficial uses of terms like *place*, *home* and *community*. Brunswick's history as a place of progressive left-wing politics and multiculturalism provides fertile ground for understanding some of the paradoxes of place-identity.

This case is part of a larger study linking questions of character to urban intensification. The key research question here lies in how the character of Brunswick is understood by residents and how it plays out in planning debates. Our theoretical framework lies in the conception of place as an 'assemblage' (Deleuze & Guattari 1987; Delanda 2006; Dovey 2009). From such a view cities are constantly formed out of the recombination of social or physical parts, a "'holding together' of heterogenous elements", forming more or less strongly defined sets that might later attain "consistency" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 323). None are predetermined, but emerge through their inherent possibilities for interaction. These sets and the process of their formation are called assemblages. Urban character, place-identity and sense of place may also be understood as assemblages for the ways in

which material and immaterial domains are inextricably related in experience and through practice. The example of Brunswick also raises broader theoretical questions about relationships between a place of progressive politics and a progressive sense of place (Massey 1994), with her call for places to be seen as intersections between multiple relations beyond themselves rather than internally coherent histories

In what follows we sketch the urban context before discussing how this appears to resident interviewees. We then consider how various proposals for intensification in Brunswick have stimulated concerns about the area's changing character, concluding with a discussion of the ways the various dimensions of Brunswick's character work as urban assemblages that could provide ways of thinking creatively about how insider understandings of local character might inform intensification strategies more broadly. Primary methods used for the study involve layered morphological mapping and semi-structured interviews.ⁱⁱⁱ It should be noted that interviewees were primarily residents who had been actively engaged in development debates as objectors or on community panels. This is not a random sample of residents but an account of those views and discourses that are used to celebrate and defend Brunswick against certain kinds of change. Unless otherwise indicated, the quotes used here are representative of the generally held views of interviewees. While many residents support intensification, our concern is to explore the deeper meanings of character for those who resist such change.

CONTEXT

European settlement of Brunswick first began in the 1830s as a series of agricultural allotments running east-west between two creeks, serviced by a narrow roadway that was to become Sydney Road, the main arterial out of Melbourne to Sydney and Victoria's Goldfields. During the Goldrush era Sydney Road urbanized quickly, capitalizing on the flows of miners; with its southern boundary only 4 kilometres from central Melbourne, Brunswick became a highly productive part of the growing city with a major brickworks, bluestone quarries and a swathe of other manufacturing industries. A strong working class political culture developed that was reinforced by the various waves of southern European and middle-eastern migrants who settled there in the post-war period.

[Insert here: FIGURE 1: Location Map]

Brunswick has been linked to the central city by rail since 1884 and three tram routes along the main north-south strips of Sydney Road (1887), Lygon St (1889) and Nicholson Street (1956). Buses run east-west at roughly 500-metre intervals. Historically, the primary commercial strip has been Sydney Road, with Lygon Street now undergoing rapid change from a series of local shopping areas interspersed with light industry to an eclectic mix of cafes, boutiques and residential infill. Nicholson Street comprises some large-grain industrial properties, interwar residential on large blocks and a smattering of commercial buildings with little development activity. Most of Sydney Road is covered by heritage controls and there has only been very minor redevelopment of its industrial hinterland with residential and mixed-use infill. The three activity spines are predominantly single or double storey and a small number of

major projects have recently (and highly contentiously) been approved that will dramatically change some parts of these streetscapes.

[Insert here: FIGURE 2: Brunswick Land Use]

Brunswick's topography is flat. It is bounded on the east by the Merri Creek, and to the south by a linear park along a former rail alignment. To the north and west it is adjoined by continuous suburban development. The street pattern is a distorted grid due to a history of ad-hoc development with many narrow streets. Much of the suburb's housing dates from the pre-war period, with narrow-frontage single-storey terraces and small free-standing worker cottages predominating. Many streets are a mixture of residential and industrial buildings as a legacy of development that preceded the formal introduction of land-use zoning. Brunswick displays a limited range of the traits associated with some types of intensification found elsewhere in Melbourne over the last generation – low-rise units on sub-divided houseblocks; 'six packs' (of up to three storeys) from the 1970s and '80s, and more recently townhouses and warehouse conversions. In the last decade a limited number of apartment developments of four to five storeys have replaced larger-grain industrial buildings and appeared as infill on or close to major streets. Brunswick's manufacturing base has been in decline since the 1980s leaving many vacant and underutilized sites in close proximity to good public transport, commercial precincts and social infrastructure. In the last decade, some of these sites have had proposals for significantly larger and denser development, with heights of between 7 and 16 storeys. Such proposals have been met with fierce opposition, and many of those approved remain undeveloped. In 2007, the local government authority, Moreland City Council commenced a structure

plan for the Brunswick Major Activity Centre, designating the three tram routes and the Upfield rail corridor as the major foci for urban intensification. Height limits in these corridors were proposed to be between 4 and 7 storeys (after a setback), with selected 'landmark' sites of up to 15 storeys.

[Insert Here: FIGURE 3: Typical Brunswick Streetscapes]

In demographic terms Brunswick has become the rapidly gentrifying southern end of a rather disadvantaged municipality.^{iv} While Brunswick still retains some of its ethnic diversity, this is declining due to an influx of young professionals, couples without children, group households, and people living alone. At the same time, there has been a shift in dwelling types with a significant increase in medium and high-density housing.^v

BRUNSWICK CHARACTER

Many of our interviewees, having been through the process of framing planning objections and making presentations at VCAT, were well-versed in standard definitions of neighbourhood character as an assemblage of built form elements. This version of character is generally found to be a source of frustration and communication difficulties when residents attempt to argue their case for what matters to them about Brunswick's character:

the community was just more about neighbourhood character and they were on their own... The developers and their lawyers and all their expert witnesses were not on the same level (B15)

On one hand, there was cynicism about the intentions of developers who “haven't got that same feel, they're just thinking of making some quick money” (B15) while on the other, there was a sense of discursive exclusion from the experts, since “most of the time, they won't even talk to us, they'd rather speak their own jargon to each other” (B15) with a sense that a strict technical focus tended to confuse rather than clarify the communication.

*You had to argue for the neighbourhood character [in terms of] ...
had it been properly planned, was it environmentally sound ...
those were the grounds, you had to be absolutely, strictly practical
(B16)*

Conversely, the neighbourhood character that residents typically identify is a complex assemblage that makes associations between physical and social domains through the sense of a *feel* or an *atmosphere*:

*it's still got a nice feel to it, quite a friendly atmosphere around
here of people know each other and talk to each other ... a mixed-
use sort of area, I actually like the idea of little factories in [the
street] (B15)*

As is evident in this quote, residents' characterizations emphatically contain social and affective dimensions that connect material components of character to immaterial components such as social identities, relationships and actions:

*it's not everyone who's academic, not everyone has jobs on
computers and things, and it's nice to have a mix (B15)*

The celebration of mixed use is connected to the mix of people and a more general mix of sounds and smells:

Brunswick is chaotic and it's crazy and it's noisy and it's smelly and it's all that stuff, sometimes that stuff really gets to me, but... if we got rid of all the trams and the traffic and the light industry it wouldn't be Brunswick... And the people are crazy and chaotic and all over the place (B2)

These connections between *forms* and *feels*, things and people, achieve the consistency of a kind of chaos that is repeated in different ways in residents' experiences of place, with a reflexive awareness of the complexities of living in a mixed use area:

I'm not worried about anything around here ... it's a nice secure sort of feeling ... it's just this feeling of you can rely on the neighbourhood, and you just sort of keep an eye out ... watch each other's place, see if something strange is going on (B15)

We see here the paradox of both embracing the different and 'strange' as quite compatible with security:

I'm sure a lot of people think that it's scary because it's noisy and crazy and chaotic and it's inner city, that classic stereotype, crime - and I think that is partly true. But when you live here long enough it just becomes part of how you operate here (B2)

The use of the term 'stereotype' here is revealing because such characterizations of the place slip between local and global perspectives that go beyond simple prejudice and parochial attachments. Each of the above quotes in their own ways illustrates a sense

of place with multiple subjectivities and inter-subjectivities that emphasise the importance of the social dimensions of the chaotic mix. There is also an element of paradox because the ‘stereotypical’ inner city of alienation, strangers and anonymous criminality is mentioned alongside high levels of social connectedness (social capital) that comes from “know[ing] all the permanent residents on my street” (B2) and from watching “each other’s place”. Some interviewees describe Brunswick as having “a bit of a country feel” (B15) or “it’s more like a little country town. It was. It is. It still is” (B16).

An important source of the experiences of Brunswick’s character is derived from the walkability of public space:

we walk a lot, to the shops, to school, to kinder, we walk to the parks... seeing familiar faces, on nodding recognition, you feel like you’re part of it, when you’re on the street... you’re really part of Brunswick (B15)

This reference to a ‘nodding recognition’ shows that the social capital of Brunswick is not the closed community of the village but the urban community of weak ties. Many interviewees walk a lot and their activity spaces cover quite a large field of urban space encompassing neighbouring suburbs. For many, Brunswick is not focused on a single activity centre but multiple and mobile fields of concern: “(it) changes depending on what we’re doing. Whatever the activity is for the day. There’s no centre” (B2). When pressed, a few interviewees identified the Brunswick Town Hall as a symbolic centre, but its local democratic functions moved to the neighbouring suburb of Coburg over a decade ago.

This sense of Brunswick as an open field, or for some, a series of linear corridors rather than a centre is reflected in our analysis of data on the locations of objectors to major developments. Many objectors live quite a distance from the developments they objected to and there is a sense of custodianship of a broader territory that they walk through and experience from their front yard and beyond, in local streets: “I live in the area, I walk around the area, I don't just go straight to my home” (B16). One interviewee describes these territories as a series of localised ‘jurisdictions’: “Well, that's where we live. That's our homeland. That's our home soil, right? ... probably our jurisdiction” (B14). For this interviewee the territory is akin to a field of care and concern but the term jurisdiction implies an informal right to object, outside of which a contentious development is someone else's problem – “no-one's fought that one, that's out of our jurisdiction, that's over the other side” (B14).^{vi}

The sense of Brunswick's place-identity being strongly territorialized – literally grounded in connections to the soil of place – rather than something to be contemplated or consumed, is at times quite central to the conceptions of interviewees:

I don't 'go to places', I am Brunswick, I am Brunswick. Can you get that? My veggie garden, my digging in my veggie garden, is being in Brunswick. (B3)

You feel like you have a right to call yourself Brunswick. And it's because you're familiar with the environment and you have a connection with it and you understand it. (B2)

A recurring theme in the interviews is *community*, not a unified or enclosed body of similar people with shared values and interests rooted but rather a “lot of people from

different backgrounds, that's one of the things that Brunswick holds, that long-term multicultural feeling" (B2:3). Community is articulated through weak ties rather than strong ones:

You don't necessarily go out with these people ... you can call upon them if you need some help ... they're not friends (B2)

they're around, they're there, they're not on your doorstep, annoying you every five minutes and you're not doing that to them (B15)

The link between weak ties and jurisdictions is borne out through mapping the spatial relationships between objectors and development sites. In Figure 3 each 'spider' represents a contested development proposal with 'legs' to the addresses of each of the objectors. While there are spatial overlaps, there are very few social overlaps - people who object to more than one development. The process of objecting can reveal the looseness of community ties; a local resident with political aspirations who was involved in one objection process said:

of the 30 odd people who came together, I'd stood for [election] and nobody knew who I was, people didn't know who their local councillor was, it was very humbling for all concerned. People didn't know who these people were (B13)

While Brunswick has many and diverse community groups, it has no formal residents' association. The group *Brunswick Residents Against Inappropriate Development* was affiliated with *Save Our Suburbs*, but was never incorporated and apart from a couple of notable campaigns, has never been accepted as the primary organ of resistance

activity.^{vii} Here the social diversity precludes and simple grouping: “the idea of being part of an organised group puts people off.” (B2). The character of the resistance is an aspect of the character of the place.

[Inset here: FIGURE 4 Spider Map]

The community element of character in Brunswick arises iteratively through casual interactions in public spaces, across fences and in shops. While it is a *sense* rather than a *thing*, it is anchored in the affordances created by the spatial morphology of small houses with short setbacks that generate encounters between different people. One resident describes the way young students move to Brunswick and soon become incorporated into the networks:

They can't help it when they've got some nice old person living next door and they're struggling with their bin, they end up helping and they become part of the community. (B15)

These weak ties are often established across social class, ethnic and age boundaries; and the mixed uses enable connections between insiders and outsiders in the street:

My kids talk to the people from the box factory having their ciggie break out the front. We talk to a lot of people who work in the electronics place ... Those workers are part of my family's life. (B11)

An important dimension for some interviewees is the political component of Brunswick's place-identity. While many places have specific associations – for example, the schools that successfully fought closure by a conservative government – one interviewee says that Brunswick's political identity “is more in the culture than in the geography” (B8). At the same time, the physical environment is used to display political views that are anything but conventional in Australia:

Houses in Brunswick have ‘Refugees welcome here’ and it’s quite common in windows in Brunswick, that’s not seen as an extremist view, that’s a mainstream view in Brunswick. It’s not a Left view (B3)

While the local council has historically been dominated by the Australian Labor Party, a Green councillor was elected in 2002 and Green support is rapidly increasing. Local elections are contested by a wide variety of leftwing parties with intense tribal rivalries. Recent proposals to extend clearways in main roads along Brunswick's three activity strips, however brought these groups together in defence of character:

It was about let’s save the character of this place, so in a sense it’s got such a good local character that the local character actually trumps the tribes, the local politics and the tribal identities (B8)

An important aspect of all interviewees' characterizations of Brunswick is that the place has changed and is changing. Unlike some well-known resistant suburbs in Melbourne, there are few idealizations of its identity that seek to fix it according to some kind of nostalgic image.^{viii} Despite the language of *homeland* and *soil* Brunswick is not identified with an essentialised internal history; there is no desire to protect either an idealized present or past. With such an apparently open or progressive

sense of place then, what is the perceived threat to Brunswick's character from urban intensification; what is it that residents believe is being damaged?

THREATS TO CHARACTER

Urban intensification is seen by residents as a threat to the urban character of Brunswick in a number of ways. Some objectors are motivated by a set of political beliefs about the capitalist system and what certain forms of development represent, while others are concerned about a perceived collapse of planning and heritage controls. Many objectors focus on damage to the sense of community, while others are concerned about the visual impact of taller buildings. These are all issues that somehow threaten the forms of public space or democratic practices within the public sphere. The resistance in Brunswick is not primarily about loss of amenity to immediately adjacent private property.

The two really big buildings ... they actually [wouldn't] affect my little northern backyard... I'm pretty safe where I am in this context, but I didn't like what it was doing to the neighbourhood
(B11)

A primary threat interviewees perceive from intensification is to the sense of community and the social mix of Brunswick. Despite a dramatic recent increase in numbers of apartments, most of the interviewees don't know anyone who lives in an apartment: "You knew of the person who lived next to you, but you didn't know them ... it's totally different to the way ... people operate around here" (B1). The apartment

building type was often seen as not encouraging interaction, either internally or with the community.

For some interviewees, these new buildings also attract the wrong kind of people to Brunswick, people dubbed by many as ‘New Brunswick’ who come with ‘a sense of entitlement and not quite an instinctual desire for community’ (B8). Recent arrivals are often regarded as transients with financial motivations:

They live in Brunswick, but they live in a new Brunswick [and] they're going to move out ... as soon as they think they'll get a better house price, they'll move somewhere nice. (B3)

The newcomers are also seen as less likely to engage with the community, regarded as “different kind of people ... a bit more private ... keep to themselves ... more eastern suburban” (B1); the place becomes “more monocultural ... more Anglo-Australian” (B16). The gentrifiers further dilute local potentials for social capital because their activity space is elsewhere:

they don't necessarily get their hair done around here or use the shops ... they'll go out after work and it'll be somewhere in the city or somewhere around where they work rather than come here. (B15)

The transience and apartment dwelling is associated by some with crime and drug-use:

I've seen busts ... because of the flats near me, I saw some people have a hit and then they drove off and nearly smashed into the house opposite me. (B16)

While the New Brunswick gentrifiers are the other against which many interviewees define their own social identity, there is at times a reflexive admission that “the New Brunswick is people like us, is also people like us” (B2).

These threats to the social mix can also be linked to the building types that result from the re-use or replacement of industrial buildings and the forms of public/private interface that result:

...people going up in lifts and driving into carparks, they're not connecting with the neighbourhood in the same way... that scares me... areas where no-one talks to each other... into your own thing and not taking any notice of what goes on around you (B15)

The lack of an active street interface, with casual encounters on the porch or while taking out the garbage, means that potentials to foster weak ties are greatly diminished - newcomers don't become part of the mix.

The threats to Brunswick's character also concern its urban image. Many interviewees commented on the poor design quality of new apartment developments; a common refrain is that buildings that are too high, bulky and poorly constructed will produce 'slums of the future': “there are some of the ugliest, cheapest housing development imaginable going up here” (B12:3). The sense of shoddiness is often linked to feelings of being dominated by overbearing buildings. There is a sense that without upper-storey setbacks the streetscape becomes too enclosed even in 5-storey development: “grey and formidable, [it] makes the street look crowded, shadows the street, like

walking down a tunnel if they had it on both sides” (B16:7). Many residents would prefer development at lower densities and of better quality than developers’ landmark projects that are seen by residents as symbols of rampant capitalism out of kilter with the People’s Republic: “15 storeys ... why do we need a landmark for Brunswick? ... The hotel on the corner could be a landmark, it’s been there for years” (B15).

Another significant component of the resistance to intensification is the threat to the perceived heritage and authenticity of the place assemblage. Many want to see parts of old buildings retained where viable rather than razed, allowing for the mix of old and new Brunswick to be expressed as locally distinctive built form.

If old buildings are viable ... I would like to see them incorporated into new projects. Even if they add 2-3 storeys on top, even if not sympathetic... Whereas knocking something down, plonking something... that could be anywhere (B2)

Many interviewees expressed distaste for images of ostentation and conspicuous consumption - fashionable up-market suburbs were often raised as the other against which Brunswick was defined. For several interviewees, it is the multiculturalism of Brunswick, the social processes of negotiations of difference in shared space that has given it an authenticity that is now under threat from middle-class outsiders.

A final perceived threat is the paradoxical way that Brunswick’s mixed character is portrayed in VCAT as a weakness:

It felt like [VCAT was] going “Brunswick is not special, Brunswick is open slather, such a mess of industrial and other things”... a green light to developers to do whatever they

*want... because it's not a consistently special place where
everyone's got heritage colours (B11)*

The threat here is from developers and Tribunal members who do not see the underlying order and seek to go beyond what residents suggest is an emergent main street typology of modest height. Many residents, even some of the most trenchant opponents of intensification suggest that 5-6 storeys on main streets would have been acceptable in the face of proposals of between 8 and 16 storeys.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

We will conclude by situating this case within a broader literature and debate about gentrification, character and place. At one level this story can be seen as a typical example of gentrification – an economic process displacing lower income residents whether driven by lifestyle demand (Ley 1994), the rent-gap (Smith 1996) or both. However, the ways in which the politics of urban change plays out in public discourse centres on conceptions of place identity and neighbourhood character. There is a substantial literature on conceptions of ‘place’ (to which we shall return) yet specific research on neighbourhood ‘character’ is thin. Our work has explored this field in relation to both the creation and protection of character in Melbourne and suggests that this is a highly problematic term to introduce into legislation (Dovey et al, 2009a). Almost everyone thinks they know what character means and it means many different things. Understandings of character are clearly both experienced in everyday life and discursively constructed in public debate, yet cannot be fully understood through either phenomenological or discursive analysis. There is a very common slippage between social and physical aspects of character and attempts to prohibit the wrong kind of

building can be a cover for keeping out the wrong kind of person (Dovey et al, 2009b). When the idea of either protecting or creating ‘character’ is applied in urban design, it often becomes reduced to a set of formal characteristics or elements. One key contrast is between essentialized or purified conceptions of character that tend to exclude differences and those (such as Brunswick) where a rich mix of social and formal differences is the character (Dovey et al, 2009c). In all cases neighbourhood character is profoundly social – it is fundamentally about the way that built form mediates relations between neighbours and the ways such forms and practices give rise to a ‘sense of place’.

The sense of character forever slipping between the social and physical (or formal) dimensions of the city does not imply that these are subsets of neighbourhood character. Our work suggests that attempts to reduce character to physical characteristics carries the danger of producing caricature and of killing authentic character. We suggest that the same may well be true of social characteristics. Character is not a transcendent ideal but an immanent property of an urban assemblage (Deleuze & Guattari 1987; Delanda 2006; Dovey 2009). It cannot be reduced to constituent elements because character inheres in the relations between them. The best prospect for an effective urban planning framework lies in a critique of the urban assemblage within which different forms of character emerge. This entails an understanding of the paradox that rules can both enforce uniformity and enable diversity. In this regard we suggest that one example of the kind of regulation that may protect such mixed character is limiting off-street parking. This is likely to reduce the prevalence of the drive-in drive-out population (the New Brunswick who don’t mix) and also produce more affordable housing (protecting the mix). It will also reduce traffic impacts and prevent black holes in streetwalls while stimulating public transport

and streetlife vitality. The kinds of regulation that might be effective are well removed from any form of either social or formal engineering.

This case raises questions about the relationship between a place of progressive politics and a progressive sense of place. How it is that a place that is conscious of its own history as a place of change wrought by global flows of people and products can become so resistant to what might appear to be merely more of the same. Massey (1994) conceptualises such an 'open' or 'extraverted' sense of place as process, produced through connections to an outside, with multiple identities and histories that result in local distinctiveness. The senses of place articulated by our interviewees in relation to the key themes of chaos, mix and community bring the material and the social, formal and affective dimensions of Brunswick's character together in a series of inter-acting assemblages that largely correspond with this way of thinking about place as heterogeneous, hybrid and in a process of becoming. Counterposed against this characterization are the threats posed by certain forms of intensification. The resistance is not opposition to change per se, but to very specific kinds of development – poorly designed apartment buildings of significantly greater height than locally emergent streetscapes. Such buildings are seen to close-down the potentials for an urban sociality of weak ties between a diversity of insiders and outsiders co-present in Brunswick. The social mix is seen to be diluted by the homogeneity of New Brunswick. The incremental social closure is associated with physical enclosure of public space as main streets potentially become lined with much taller buildings that close off the sky. Furthermore, the very openness and heterogeneous mix of Brunswick's physical character becomes legitimation for its transformation at the planning tribunal. Neighbourhood character, as defined within the planning legislation connotes ideals of consistency and uniformity of built form; yet it is to some degree an empty signifier

that can be made to mean what different interests choose. It is an extremely flexible planning instrument that can become a cover for place destruction. Brunswick has a progressive sense of place that leaves it intrinsically open to social and physical change. The threat to such an open sense of place is, ultimately, a closed sense of place.

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ENDNOTES

ⁱ ResCode is distributed across a series of clauses within the Victorian Planning Provisions and is not citable as a stand-alone publication.

ⁱⁱ This is part of a larger research project exploring everyday experiences and discursive constructions of urban place-identity in activity centres. For the purposes of this study, Brunswick incorporates the suburbs of 'Brunswick' and 'Brunswick East', which are very similar in terms of history, morphology and demography, the boundary between them being Lygon St. There are only very minor demographic and morphological differences between them. Socially and historically they are one suburb.

ⁱⁱⁱ The morphological mapping documented building height, grain size, urban spatial structure, streetlife, land use, graffiti, residential densities and public interfaces. A total of 20 people were interviewed. Participants were sourced from publicly accessible records of VCAT participants and through local community networks. Ages ranged from early thirties to mid-seventies, with a balance of genders. Interviews lasted an average of an hour, and typically began with questions about what attracted them to Brunswick, how they used the area, how would they characterize the area, how had the area changed, before moving onto discussions of their feelings about recent developments in Brunswick and their experiences of being an objector and, where relevant, attending the planning tribunal VCAT.

^{iv} The City of Moreland ranks 7th most disadvantaged out of 31 Melbourne LGAs according to the SEIFA index. All figures quoted are from the 2006 Census and information derived from it in City of Moreland Suburb Profiles for Brunswick and East Brunswick. See: Moreland City Council (2008).

^v Ethnic diversity (33% overseas born; 28.9% Melbourne Statistical Division (MSD)) is declining due to an influx of young professionals (37% (MSD 22.6%)), couples without children (45% - an increase of 14.8% (MSD 34.1%)) group households (13.9% - an increase of 16% (MSD 4.2%)) and people living alone (28.3% (MSD 22.6%)). At the same time, there has been a shift in dwelling types with a 17% increase in medium density (41.9% (MSD 11.4%)) and the introduction of high density housing (7% MSD 16.1%).

^{vi} The phrase ‘field of care’ has been borrowed from Tuan’s early phenomenological geography where it described the sense of place that emerges from everyday practice as distinct from symbolic discourses (Tuan 1974).

^{vii} Save Our Suburbs is the major metropolitan residents’ action group:

<www.saveoursuburbs.org.au>

^{viii} See for instance: Dovey et al 2009b.

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FIGURE 1: Location Map

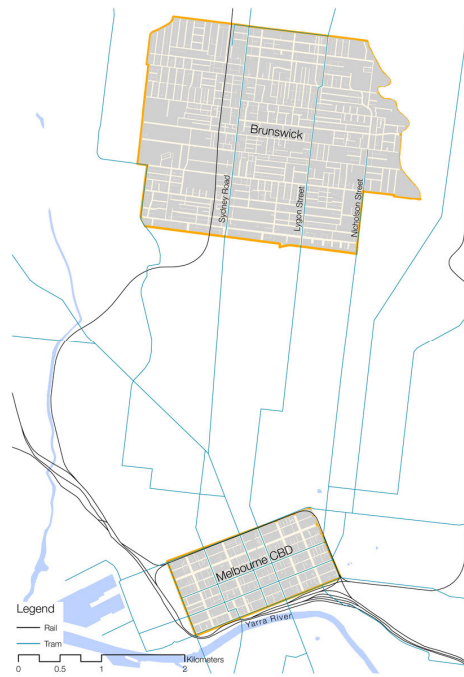


FIGURE 2: Brunswick Land Use

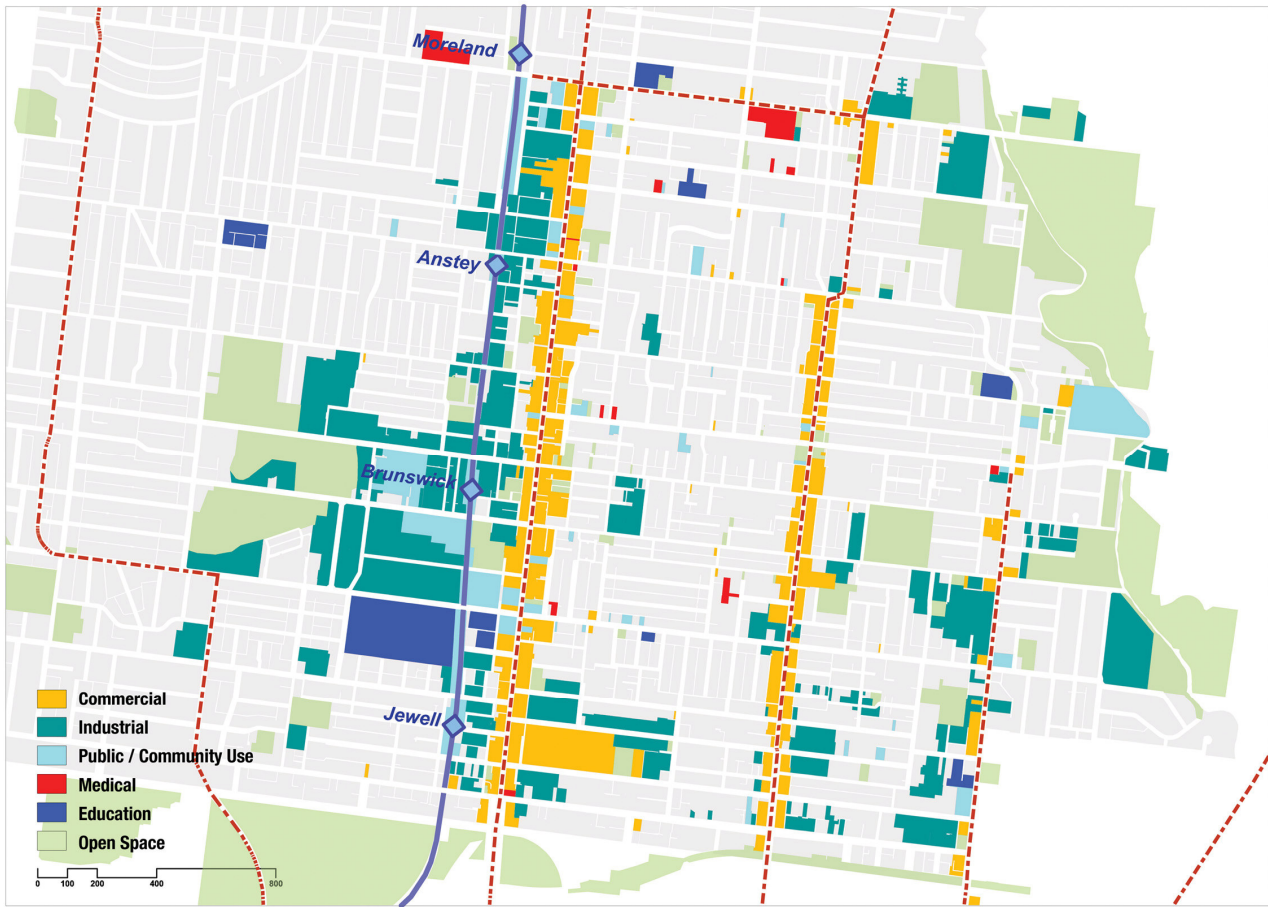


FIGURE 3: Typical Brunswick Streetscapes



FIGURE 4 Spider Map

