Clustering, Concourse and Collectives
Ruth And Maurie Crows’ Alternative Planning Imaginary for Melbourne

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This paper explores Ruth and Maurie Crow’s contribution to Melbourne’s strategic planning history. It focuses on the 1960s and 70s, when deliberation over future growth patterns for Melbourne dominated urban planning discussion. During this period, multiple models of urban expansion were considered by the Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works, the Town and Country Planning Board, residents’ associations and the Town and Country Planning Association. The Crows contributed to this transitional moment by proposing a future linear city based on social and ecological values outlined in their three-volume Plan for Melbourne. Rather than eulogising the suburbs, and equally not advocating higher densities as necessarily necessary humanising in themselves, the Crows were early champions of functional mix and compact urban development in Melbourne. More significantly, their work reflects a prescient awareness of the need to design urban landscapes to maximise the potential for social interaction. The MMBW rejected the Crows’ linear city on the grounds of its physical aspects, without proper acknowledgement of the radical implications that ‘clustering’, ‘concourse’ and ‘collectives’ could have on urban flourishing. Relying on both published and unpublished archival material, this paper excavates the spatial justice claims underpinning the Crows’ planning imaginary, arguing that re-visiting these past city futures can provide a counterbalance with which to question contemporary planning ambition.

**Keywords** — Ruth and Maurie Crow; planning imaginaries; spatial justice; compact city.

’.the debate around the plan for the future of a city is not essentially a debate about things...buildings, cars, trains, roads, and so on, and their placement; although it often expresses itself in these terms. It is essentially a debate about human relationships.’
(Crow R, public talk 1974)

‘we have no problems as regards how we can build shelters for humans that are both comfortable and beautiful, the problem is how to relate these homes one to the other and to relate them to work places, leisure places and commercial places, so that we can live a whole life, not partly live’
(Crow R, public talk 1973)

**INTRODUCTION**

The late 1960s and early 1970s represent a transitional moment in Melbourne’s planning history. This was a period when the future growth of both the wider metropolitan area and the central city were being publicly questioned and considered (Logan 1986). A moment when alternative growth and consolidation proposals were put forward, providing a chance to reconsider the path dependency of anfettered expansion typifying Melbourne’s morphology since the 1930s (Beed 1981). Consideration of the quieter, sidelined counter narratives lends an appreciation of the significance of this transitional moment in the emergence of the compact city ambition which has come to dominate Melbourne’s planning imaginary; the seeds of which can be found in the proposals put forward by Ruth and Maurie Crow.

By 1966, Melbourne’s first strategic plan, the 1954 Planning Scheme, was already considered outdated and requiring review. This prompted the then Minister for Local Government, Rupert Hamer, to request the Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW) and the Town and Country Planning Board (TCPB) to come up with revised growth options for the metropolitan area. In addition to this, in 1971, Hamer called on the City of Melbourne to prepare a strategy plan which would ensure a “more colourful living city functioning 24 hours a day” (cited in NMA 1980, pp.1). Both instigations led to the emergence of increased participation in strategic planning processes from actors outside the traditional realms of technocratic professionalism (Logan 1981). Equally of interest, both requests can be viewed as catalysts to the emergence of the compact city planning imaginary in Melbourne; solidifying the era’s relevance as a transitional moment in Melbourne’s planning history.

Of significance, and the focus of this paper, is the proposal for future Melbourne put forward by Ruth and Maurie Crow in their three volume Plan for Melbourne. Theirs is a largely overlooked contribution to Melbourne’s metropolitan planning history. This paper argues that their work represents an alternative planning imaginary, which when excavated reveals a prescient awareness of the social implications of urban form and function, and the need to ensure spatial justice claims steer future redevelopment. Returning to their Plan for Melbourne encourages a questioning of the dominant planning imaginary, particularly with regards to how far planning in Melbourne has drifted from the progressive justice ambition embedded in their work.

This paper will begin by outlining what is meant by planning imaginary. It will situate this discussion within the context of the emergence of the compact city ideal in Melbourne’s planning history. The paper will then provide the socio-historical background of the proposed transitional moment in Melbourne’s post-war period, and introduce the alternative planning imaginary of Ruth and Maurie Crow. Following on from this, it will draw on qualitative content analysis of published and unpublished archival material to illustrate the spatial justice principles guiding the work of the Crows. The intention of the paper is to highlight the radical roots of the compact city planning imaginary in Melbourne, and to contribute to a re-telling of Melbourne’s strategic planning history which constitutes the significant imaginary of Ruth and Maurie Crow.

**MELBOURNE’S PLANNING IMAGINARY: STRIVING FOR COMPACTION**

Melbourne’s metropolitan planning has been characterised by an alternating desire for containment and decentralisation. Multiple growth and consolidation patterns to resolve these paradoxical drives were considered in the post-war period, before the now dominant planning objective of a compact city was settled on and actively pursued. These propositions variously advocated for ‘the dispersed city’, ‘satellite cities’, ‘growth corridors’, and ‘the redirected city’ to name a few (MMBW 1967; TCPB 1967: TCPA 1967). Dominant planning ambitions, as decided upon and pursued, constitute the “consensus view” (Forster 2006, p.178) of planners. They influence the way spaces and places, and the lives within these, are to be arranged and managed. And although the consensus view of optimal urban development has varied to suit different needs and agendas, the overriding prescription determining settlement form and function at a specific time can be theorised as the dominant planning imaginary. There can be, and often are, disjunctures between the driving planning imaginary and...
actual development trajectories being implemented on the ground.

This notion of planning imaginary extends Taylor’s (2005) theorisation of social imaginary, which he defines as the common understanding of collective practices. That is, the sense we have of how things ought to go, how they usually go; “the normal expectations we have of each other” (Taylor 2005, pp.24). Social imaginaries particular to the project of spatial and social planning can be thought of as ‘planning imaginaries’. They can be understood as the socio-spatial framings of planners, planning traditions and cultures; the underlying norms and values of expected land-use configurations. Dominant incarnations imbue the mainstream planning project and in this sense, we can adopt Healey’s (2004, pp.6) definition of strategic planning as “self-conscious collective efforts to re-imagine a city, urban region or wider territory and to translate the result into priorities for area investment, conservation measures, strategic infrastructure investments and principles of land use regulation”. Moments of active re-imagining occur in the lead up to the formulation of strategic plans, which are constituted by, and in turn constitute, the planning imaginary.

It can be argued that the compact city ideal is a dominant planning imaginary guiding development of urban form and function in the contemporary city (Bunker 2014; Forster 2006; Randolph 2006; Searle & Bunker 2010). It strives for consolidated, multi-nuclear cities within a contained metropolitan area in the belief that high-density urban environments can better support increasing populations in uncertain social-ecological futures (Dempsey 2010). This internationally prevalent phenomenon (OECD 2012; UN 2016) represents the ‘optimal’ morphology in “the new metropolitan mainstream” (Schmid 2012, p.54), with compactness being a major spatial ambition and technical fix for “greening the growth machine” (While, Jonas & Gibbs 2004).

The ideal first became validated in Melbourne’s official planning imaginary in the 1981 strategic plan, Metropolitan Strategy Implementation Report (MMBW 1981). As McLaughlin (1992, p.82) has argued “the late 1970s and the early 1980s saw planners becoming increasingly concerned with containing the metropolis, holding on to a more concentrated metropolitan form, increasing the nodality of key middle-suburban activity centres and, above all, with revitalising the central city itself”. During this time, spatial consolidation became de facto policy to promote inner city population and employment growth, and greater utilisation of existing infrastructure and services (Beed 1981).

**Melbourne Post-War Planning Imaginary: Containment and Decentralisation**

The emerging intensification ambition as dominant, authorised planning imaginary reversed the preceding consensus view advocating for low-density lot subdivisions and sprawling radial growth which characterised the post-war metropolis. Initially, the striving for compaction was pursued in Melbourne for its potential to curb expenditure on dispersing development through greater utilisation of existing infrastructure, and to preserve non-urban land and resources from new waves of development on the fringe (Breheny 1996; Bramley & Power 2009). The earliest rendition for spatial consolidation dates to Melbourne’s first strategic plan, the 1954 Planning Scheme, which has been described as a cautious trend plan with neither visionary nor strategic ambition (Stretton 1970). The twin ambitions for containment and decentralisation were clearly outlined therein.

Compaction was advocated as a means of restricting the continual expansion of the urban area and making use of vacant space in the existing urban boundary. The Scheme states “our problem is not to disperse excess population, but to encourage a more compact and more economical community structure by filling up the open spaces which have been left as the city has expanded” (MMBW 1954, p. 30). Decentralisation was advocated to assist in this consolidation process, partially in response to the need to distribute industry which would provide greater accessibility to jobs and would minimise congestion, and equally for civil defence: “in wartime this decentralisation could be of immense value as a precaution against large scale destruction of industry from air attack” (MMBW 1954, p. 28). Five ‘district activity centres’ were proposed to offer relief to an already overcrowded central core. “Efficiency of the central business area” was the primary aim of this policy, however, there is a vague yet implicit referral to spatial justice which comes secondary: “through (decentralisation) the efficiency of the community can be maintained and the citizens given the convenience for fulfilling their daily needs, which is their right” (MMBW 1954, p. 31).

Following the formulation of this planning imaginary, Melbourne drifted far from its core into low-density, detached housing and garden lots in fringe development (Davison 1997). Radial growth aligned with the railway routes was modified by increasing car ownership which led to residential infill and rapid drift beyond the ends of the transport corridors particularly to the east and south (Alexander 2000). The Scheme had substantially underestimated the subsequent rates of growth, and although decentralisation was promoted, the Scheme proved ineffective in providing mechanisms for managing and directing growth into desired locations (Spencer 1985). As Buxton, Goodman and Moloney (2016, pp.19) have argued “the 1954 plan represents an opportunity wasted, by people who knew better, to redefine the type of urban development in Melbourne and avoid a range of problems that have increasingly plagued the city since”.

**Transitional Moment: Emergence of Alternative Planning Imaginaries**

The outcome of this uninspired metropolitan plan was the emergence of various alternative approaches to imagining Melbourne’s ideal future growth. In 1966 Rupert Hamer attempted to revisit the apparent shortcomings of the 1954 Scheme with his request for proposals outlining the most desirable pattern for Melbourne’s future metropolitan growth. In his letter to both the MMBW and the TCPB, he writes “the growth of the Melbourne and Metropolitan area has reached a stage when the pattern of development by the Master Plan since 1954 must be reviewed and the planning policy reshaped to meet the needs of the future” (Hamer cited in TCPA 1967, p.3). Acknowledging that the Scheme had almost outgrown its estimated population capacity of 2.5 million, and overspilt its designated boundaries for growth, he presses the urgency for a review stating “...nobody could happily contemplate a future metropolis of seemingly endless suburb spreading outwards indefinitely” (Hamer cited in TCPA 1967, p.3). In addition to the two reports requested - MMBW’s The Future Growth of Melbourne (1967) and TCPB Organisation for Strategic Planning (1967) - the citizen’s lobby group, Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA), also presented their suggestions in An Urban Planning Policy for Victoria (1967). These plans advocated for three broad patterns of future growth – “growth corridors” as proposed by the MMBW, ‘satellite cities’ by the TCPA and ‘linear growth’ by the TCPB. As McLaughlin (1992, pp. 45) points out: “Many people in government circles were convinced that there was no alternative to further suburban fringe growth and that consolidation or redevelopment was not a serious option. The question therefore was what form should most suburban growth take – corridors, satellites, conventional annular-ring extension or some combination of these?”. In a ministerial statement in February 1968, the government adopted corridors as policy, stating “growth should occur primarily along the general axes of the principal rail and road routes radiating from the centre” (cited in TCPB 1974, pp. 7). This signalled the development of a regional framework endorsing a corridor-green wedge pattern of urban growth for Melbourne, as gazetted in the 1971 Planning Policies for the Metropolitan Region (MMBW 1971).

The social context of this period is significant and contributed to this transitional mood in Melbourne’s planning history (Howe 2005). Widespread socio-cultural change in the latter half of the twentieth-century led to a critiquing of the dominant planning imaginary espoused in the 1954 Scheme, heralding the emergence of counter narratives that proposed renewed goals for urban planning. These can be called ‘alternative planning imaginaries’, and refer to spatial conceptualisations which are not regulated for, nor legislated into planning practice. These imaginaries, deriving from outside the hegemonic planning ideology, were influential in guiding the planning profession to embrace a more participatory and socially responsible approach to urban development based on greater social inclusivity and concern for justice and environmental outcomes (Freestone 2010).

Gentrification in the inner areas and protestations against slum clearance, peripheral sprawl, locational disadvantage and
freeway construction led to increased awareness of environmental, gender and justice issues in urban planning (Huxley 2000). It was during this time that an increasing number of residents and activist groups began to question the perceived outcomes of traditional planning as benefiting the more affluent, inner suburbs whilst disadvantaging the poorer, less organised and articulate minorities (Logan 1981). Such groups included the Carlton Association, the North Melbourne Association (NMA), the Fitzroy Residents Association, and the Centre for Urban Research and Action (Davison, Howe & Nichols 2013).

Heavily involved in the NMA during this time, Ruth and Maurie Crow dedicated themselves to “the urban action movement” (Crow 1998, pp.4). Their planning imaginary proposed radical alternatives to what they saw as the injustices of urbanisation and capitalism. They believed that the pursuit of corridor-green wedges development would ‘freeze’ lifestyles: “the tragedy of the decision is that it will universalise suburbia, freezing lifestyles to fit fifty foot frontages with the car as the dominant mode of transport”. Instead of this “outdated urban design served by an outmoded form of transport” (TPRG 1974, pp. 2), they insisted that

if a deliberate policy of restructuring were attempted all the modal interchanges would be planned to become prime social centres, be high density and centred in multi-use zones, and growth patterns would be linear rather than radial; both measures combined minimising the need for commuting, maximising public transport and the potential for social concourse. (Crow, M 1972, pp.1)

They wanted a city which was more rewarding socially and ecologically. Part of their mission was to help “break down the immensity of planning issues to human scale” (Crow 1998, pp. 4) by assisting community planning groups critically analyse official plans and help them formulate alternative proposals. They hoped to act as a catalyst for the formation of temporary coalitions of diverse groupings, and established the Town Planning Research Group in 1967, which acted as a precursor to their more formal work published in Plan for Melbourne.

The Crows launched themselves into debate around optimal future morphology, proposing the only substantial examination of one of the growth alternatives put forward in the MMBW 1971 Report – that of the linear city (Beed 1981). Hugh Stretton (1970, pp.157) also advocated for a linear city in his Ideas for Australian Cities (“consider the social and economic gains open to that long city”), just as the TCPB did in their 1967 Organisation for Strategic Planning report. However, as Beed (1981, pp.175) rightly points out, “in terms of Melbourne’s future development, the idea received its greater social input from the Crows who had been publicly advocating the concept since 1966”. Their Plan has been described by Sandercoc (1999, pp.9) as “the single most important planning document and vision produced in Australia this century”, and yet remains a relatively over-looked piece of Melbourne’s planning history.

**THE CROWS’ PLANNING IMAGINARY: LINEAR CITY WITH CONCOURSES FOR COLLECTIVES**

The Crows’ alternative planning imaginary is a decisively amateur contribution. It is worthwhile remembering on what grounds they were awarded the Robin Boyd Environment Award for Merit in 1972: in recognition of “consistently valuable and perceptive contributions as Laymen to the literature of planning issues in Melbourne”. Neither Ruth nor Maurie had formal training in the planning profession beyond their voluntary work with various community associations. In this sense, planning imagines also belong to those outside of the profession; to amateurs and their voluntary associations, and to all those who place a stake in socio-spatial configurations through social and political activism. To recall Stretton (1970, p.1) in the first chapter of Ideas for Australian Cities, aptly titled ‘An amateur book’, he begins “this is a citizen’s book about cities”.

Often dismissed as dabbles and hobbyists, the contribution of amateurs to knowledge production can easily be overlooked. We can understand the Crows’ work to have contributed much to contemporary planning and yet they have mostly vanished as recognised actors except for cursory references in discussion about community activism during the turbulent 1970s. The content of their planning proposals and urban design objectives were not seriously considered at the time, and curiously have remained sidelined in Melbourne’s post-war planning history literature. This is surprising recent touting of a Resilient Melbourne agenda (CoM 2016) which replicates, although in updated form, many of their suggestions around building community and social cohesion.

No doubt their affiliations with the Australian Communist Party kept their contribution marginal, or more rightly, largely unattributable. Volume one of Plan for Melbourne was commissioned by the Modern Melbourne Committee of the Communist Party of Australia. Maurie Crow, in his call out to ‘comrades’ for participation in the initial meeting of Alternative Ideas for Melbourne, made it clear that the vision was for an “ultimate-stage communist society required to set a generalised direction for policies” (Crow 1968?, pp.1). Although these directions were open for debate, he suggest they would be focused “towards eliminating alienation (and with it sexism and ageism) from workplaces, domestic/neighbour arrangements, urban centres; and towards designing all activities to meet ecological needs for stability” (Crow 1968?, pp.1). This reflects the heterodox nature of their commitment to communism vis-à-vis their steadfastness to the pursuit of ecological sustainability and spatial justice. As they saw it

*you have to project the future: a more workable, more humane, more ecological future, and then battle towards it. Maybe the goals will change as you battle towards them: but without goals there is no battle, only an unending class scrimmage within the system (Crow & Crow 1973, pp. 2).*

Their proposal in objection to the 1967 MMBW report was a linear city with concourses for collectives. Originally titled ‘the Gippsland-corridor’, the Crows’ appear to have renamed their approach ‘the Concourse Case’ to emphasise its social features. Their intention was to maximise social involvement via an emphasis on modern transport technology and changed patterns of living. Rapid transit was advanced as a replacement for automobile dependency. The motor vehicle, Maurie argued, has “unstructured former land-use relationships (and) their associated community relationships by permitting randomness of location” (Crow 1972a, np). Constant mobility has been used to “justify a lack of real planning” (Crow 1976, np). “The concourse case” puts forward the notion “that the random, scattering instant-mobility attributes of the car way of life tends to break up stable social activities which people need in order to feel like they ‘belong’ in a particular community” (TPRG 174, pp.7).

The Crow’s vision of the future city was resolutely compact. Their first volume of Plan for Melbourne includes this telling slogan: “to maximise social contact we need (i) faster mobility, (ii) higher housing density, (iii) better siting and growth patterns all of which minimise travelling time” (Crow and Crow 1969, pp. 14). Maximising social contact was the ultimate objective, with compaction and improved mobility viewed as the enablers. In Maurie’s (1978, pp. 143) later work he reiterates this point, stating “we will contend that the reorganisation of access to local places where people can fine satisfaction is just as important as more efficient mobility”. He and Ruth regarded, what they called, the “rapid post-war growth, etc sprawl” (Crow & Crow 1969, pp.8) as “a “community scattering trend” (Crow & Crow 1972, pp.107), and viewed urban consolidation as having two interlocking objectives: the first being to concentrate social activity and so minimise transport energy; and the second, to heighten participatory enjoyment (Crow & Crow 1972, pp.107).

Towns were to be arranged along a linear spine of development towards the south-east, where the landscape was perceived to be more conducive to habitation due to greater rainfall, more pleasant outlook, and arable soils. So-called ‘mini-metro hearts’ and ‘city-metro hearts’ would embed the singular corridor, and would be distinguished from existing suburbs by their multi-functional zoning and higher-densities around cores situated at nodes of the rapid transit network. Urban structure was to be based on this hierarchy of centres, determined by function, density and transport mode. The purpose of this was “to create conditions under which people would be able to easily meet other people, both because there would be a concentrated density of activity, and because, people being saved much unnecessary travelling would have more time to do this” (Crow 1972, pp. 8).

The Crows’ planning imaginary was dismissed in the Board’s 1974 Report on General Concept Objectives which was
steadfastly committed to radial development through corridors and wedges policy. It is important to acknowledge, as Beed (1981, p.175) does, that the MMBW dismissed their suggestion without taking into consideration the social dimension of their proposal. As Ruth and Maurie Crow explained “the MMBW whilst understanding the physical aspects of the Gippsland corridor, i.e. its linear shape, and rapid transit, fails to grasp the social aspects” (Crow & Crow 1974, p. 6).

**Spatial Justice: Clustering, Concourse and Collectives**

The underlying social intention driving the Crow’s optimal restructuring of Melbourne is the yearning to minimise alienation, and so support the human need for interaction. Providing for social encounter, and the potential for conviviality, is the dominant spatial justice trope in their work. Of the three reports presented in response to Hamer’s request in 1966, Maurie (1977, pp.2) notes that none of them “openly start with human needs, but appear rather to examine present trends without examining whether those trends are good ones to be consciously encouraged, or bad ones to be discouraged”. In a somewhat reductionist but revealing manner, they stipulate that “those trends in modern society which tend to disrupt and scatter community activities instead of consolidating and enriching them are bad trends” (Crow & Crow 1970, p. 26).

They take case with the MMBW’s interpretation of ‘interaction’ as defined in the 1971 Planning Policies for the Metropolitan Region:

> a concept of ‘interaction’ is produced which has nothing directly to do with intense and satisfying experience with other people around some selected activity. Instead ‘interaction’ has been devised as a concept of ease of access (mainly by private car) based on present travel trends. Hence there is no mention of a concept of deliberately clustering of people-intensive activities together in the suburbs, to maximise opportunity for activity (TPRG 1974, pp. 4).

The Crows moved beyond this notion of justice as being achieved solely via increased accessibility, and particularly more efficient mobility; a view which dominates justice thinking in contemporary planning. Rather than seeing justice as being accomplished via the provision of social infrastructure, or even by ensuring that this provision is serviced as ‘humanly’ and adequately as possible, they argued that ‘a rich life’

> is more even than making such facilities universally available, and more even than humanising them. … what we are trying to do is tackle the root cause of social problems rather than patching up the symptoms of breakdown of social relationships. We see the cause of social breakdown in the increasing alienation of people from each other (Crow 1976, np).

In this sense, the Crows pushed beyond a merely redistributive notion of justice, to try and accentuate an understanding of how urban design, micro and macro restructuring, could alleviate the conditions of urban crises. Furthermore, not only do they appear to have pre-empted the communicative turn in planning with their focus on diversity, inclusivity and matters of process, they also extended this to recent debate about the need to see beyond difference and locate commonality across diversity (Fincher & Iveson 2008). For instance, the Crow’s proposed dedicated first-level concourse in their ‘city-metro hearts’ and ‘mini-metro hearts’ to promote commerce-free encounter. Increasing densities was proposed as a method of maximising ‘concourse’; allowing this urban design feature to perform as a “therapeutic measure” (Crow & Crow 1972, p. 21) counteracting the ‘scatterisation’ of individuals. In their Plan for Melbourne they contend that the “pedestrian level of the entire high-density core area should be completely weather-proofed and vehicle-free” (Crow & Crow 1972, pp. 53) because these are the most socially precious areas.

Clustering of people-oriented activities, combined with the benefits of concourse design, would maximise the potential for social interaction. They suggest that a percentage of land be set aside in the mini-metro heart for providing space for voluntary community activities: “…the provision for ‘concourse’ should be deliberately built in to the mini-metro hearts and city-metro hearts, just as we now ‘build in’ parks and playgrounds…” (Crow & Crow 1972, p. 19). Alert to critique on the feasibility of this proposal, they clearly state “if we can regulate off-street car parking, surely we can regulate for the infinitely higher purpose of off-street people gathering” (Crow 1972, pp.8). Within this proposition they were careful not to overvalue the likelihood of “strange encounters” (Stretton 1970, p.18) by promoting diversity for diversity’s sake. They define ‘concourse’ as

> the voluntary coming together of people around some mutual interest, educational, cultural, political, ideological, recreational or otherwise (provided the purpose is not to damage or disadvantage the community or some section of it) (Crow & Crow 1972, p.18).

In Maurie’s formal objection to the MMBW plan (Crow 1972, pp.8) he argues

> We do not propose such ideas arbitrarily, but certainly not with the highest standard of amenity, but to serve an overriding purpose to provide a ready facility for people of all ages to associate in voluntary common activities.

They planned for “deliberate voluntary contact” (Crow & Crow 1972, p.18) which they defined as more than the fleeting contact of commercial transaction. Allowing for deliberate contact, they hoped, would help to form collectives via the ethical decision making of communities. This reflects the notion of ‘the commons’ that is more than just public interest but is a pledge to share together and be defined by that commitment. The Crows clarify this aim:

> By collectives we mean a team, for which, since there is a common purpose, there begins to develop a spirit of each contributing as best she or he can, some with highest skills, others with humble offerings, but all with a quickening appreciation of each other, all teaching and learning from each other, all developing a more elevated concept of their aims, and with it, incidentally, an increasingly more effective impact on the ‘tone’ or ‘ethos’ of the community generally (Crow & Crow 1972, p.18).

They acknowledged that spatial or environmental determinism cannot alone enable this ‘therapeutic’ outcome, recognising that process is important – one that “involves a change in life-style, in moral standards, and in political and social effort” (Crow & Crow 1975, pp.18). An improvement in humane urban design would reduce the consumerist desire they hoped, by encouraging more time spent in interaction and less time dedicated to claiming identity through consumption. Maurie writes in his official objection to the MMBW Plan:

> The more that social community life of one type or another can be organised, the less these practices involving needless extravagant and ecologically intolerable expenditure of energy and materials will flourish (Crow, M 1972, pp.7-8).

They point out that the kind of gathering and sharing they advocate is nothing new and has been occurring at the ‘local Sunday cricket club’ and the ‘local pub’. They do, however, point out the spoilt of these voluntary collectives as being “the car (which) has torn aside the fabric of older associations based on pedestrian distance or directionalised public transport focal points” (Crow & Crow 1975, pp.23). Deliberately clustering activities together would allow for the return of an ethic of collective, achieved in the spaces of concourse they designed into their metropolitan centres.

**Conclusion**

The Crows’ alternative planning imaginary represents a significant contribution during a transitional moment in Melbourne’s metropolitan planning history. Not only did it provide a visionary alternative to the urban growth patterns
proposed by mainstream planning interlocutors, but it also played an important role in the emergence of the compact city planning imaginary in Melbourne. Their calls for compaction were informed by spatial justice ambitions; a yearning to minimise alienation and support the need for interaction. Allowing for the potential for convivial encounter was the dominant spatial justice trope guiding their representations of an intensified city. They rallied for clustering, concourses and collectives to catalyse the propinquity of human bodies; compaction in favour of intercorporeality and human need rather than economic rationale. Advocating high-density, multi-functional cores connected via rapid transit along a linear urban morphology, their planning imaginary was disregarded largely on the basis of its seemingly unachievable and costly restructuring propositions. However, closer consideration of the embedded notions of clustering, concourse and collectives reveals the Crows’ dedication to spatial justice ideas. Revisiting their work, and reinstating it within Melbourne’s metropolitan planning history, allows for a counterbalance to re-evaluate contemporary urban transformations. The city of Melbourne is increasingly undergoing spatial intensification with urban redevelopment of the core occurring space. The justice ambitions driving this transformation, however, are questionable, and the outcomes for residents with regards to urban flourishing largely obscured. As the Crows predicted, we risked ‘looking back from the year 2000…with regret that the struggle to shape our cities for its citizens rather than vested interests did not begin too late’ (Crow and Crow 1972, p.4).

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