Flat-Packing the Suburbs, IKEA, Tempe, and a Sense of Place

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Flat-Packing the Suburbs, IKEA, Tempe, and a Sense of Place

Abstract
This thesis explores the influence of recently-arrived big-box retail stores on the senses of place of residential populations. It aims to further the understanding of challenges posed by big-box retailers to surrounding communities – beyond the narrow economic focus previously dominating the literature. A range of human geographical theories are used to investigate senses of place of Tempe residents, and whether the 2011 opening of IKEA Tempe has influenced these senses. A mixed-methodology comprising interviews – both sedentary and mobile – and mental mapping was used to capture responses from residents. This method collected spatial and biographical data. Results offer new insights into the influence of big-box industry on senses of place. First, senses of place were found to be informed by resident’s shared experiences of three phenomena: gentrification-related community transition, post-industrial economic shifts, and place attachment. Despite such shared phenomena, senses of place were complex, plural, and often conflicting at the individual level. Second, IKEA’s influence on senses of place was overall subtle, though not without complexity. On the one hand, IKEA did not upset local residents or dramatically unsettle their senses of place. In some cases, IKEA was viewed through a middle-class lens as putting Tempe “on the map” and redressing the suburb’s stigmas as a downtrodden, dirty place. On the other hand, material attachments to the place – and in particular to homes – were influenced very little at all. Some tensions were created because of resulting traffic management and streetscape changes, and these challenged conceptions of a strong “community spirit”. Nevertheless, residents accommodated IKEA’s entry into the suburb and the retailer made only minor changes to most people’s everyday practices, rhythms, and movements. I argue that, as additions to suburb assemblages, incoming big-box retailers influence not only economic conditions but social and cultural landscapes. I call for deeper research into this phenomenon by exploring other locations where gentrification and big-box retail coincide through globalisation. Much scope exists to expand this research and to better inform those responsible for urban planning of the proclivities of local communities.

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Flat-Packing the Suburbs

IKEA, Tempe, and a Sense of Place

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of

International Bachelor of Science

from

The University of Wollongong

by

Beth Laurenson: 3657991

October 2012
The information in this thesis is entirely the result of investigations conducted by the author, unless otherwise acknowledged, and has not been submitted in part, or otherwise, for any other degree or qualification.

Signed:  

Date:  10.10.2012
Abstract

This thesis explores the influence of recently-arrived big-box retail stores on the senses of place of residential populations. It aims to further the understanding of challenges posed by big-box retailers to surrounding communities – beyond the narrow economic focus previously dominating the literature. A range of human geographical theories are used to investigate senses of place of Tempe residents, and whether the 2011 opening of IKEA Tempe has influenced these senses. A mixed-methodology comprising interviews – both sedentary and mobile – and mental mapping was used to capture responses from residents. This method collected spatial and biographical data. Results offer new insights into the influence of big-box industry on senses of place. First, senses of place were found to be informed by resident’s shared experiences of three phenomena: gentrification-related community transition, post-industrial economic shifts, and place attachment. Despite such shared phenomena, senses of place were complex, plural, and often conflicting at the individual level. Second, IKEA’s influence on senses of place was overall subtle, though not without complexity. On the one hand, IKEA did not upset local residents or dramatically unsettle their senses of place. In some cases, IKEA was viewed through a middle-class lens as putting Tempe “on the map” and redressing the suburb’s stigmas as a downtrodden, dirty place. On the other hand, material attachments to the place – and in particular to homes – were influenced very little at all. Some tensions were created because of resulting traffic management and streetscape changes, and these challenged conceptions of a strong “community spirit”. Nevertheless, residents accommodated IKEA’s entry into the suburb and the retailer made only minor changes to most people’s everyday practices, rhythms, and movements. I argue that, as additions to suburb assemblages, incoming big-box retailers influence not only economic conditions but social and cultural landscapes. I call for deeper research into this phenomenon by exploring other locations where gentrification and big-box retail coincide through globalisation. Much scope exists to expand this research and to better inform those responsible for urban planning of the proclivities of local communities.
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1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

On May 10, 2009, IKEA, the world’s largest furniture retailer, was approved by the New South Wales (NSW) Planning Assessment Commission (PAC) for development in Tempe, Sydney. Ten hectares was purchased by IKEA at 634 Princes Highway, Tempe, for an estimated $35 million (Cummins 2011). IKEA invested an additional $100 million to transform the former Tempe Tip into the largest IKEA store in the southern hemisphere: with space for 1680 cars, 760 diners, the full 9000-item product range and the IKEA Australia headquarters (Cummins 2011). It constituted one of the largest single site redevelopments in Sydney in recent decades.

Much media attention was generated in the period between initial development application and opening for trading, on November 3, 2011. Media articles focused on the construction process, projections for local economies, and expansion plans of IKEA in Australia (Campion 2011; Cummins 2011; Speedy 2011). But what of the residents of Tempe? Every neighbourhood is a unique, complex assemblage of material structures and sociological elements. When such a large new retailer is introduced, changes throughout the assemblage are likely (Billig 2005). This thesis asks: what happens when an enormous big-box retailer like IKEA moves into a small, predominantly residential suburb like Tempe?

As Chapter 2 discusses, the literature on big-box retail and its impacts on surrounding communities has focused especially on its economic dimensions: for instance the ‘Wal-Mart effect’ on local main street small businesses. Much less attention has been given to the influence of big-box retail on the cultural dimensions of local community life – the potential impacts on the senses of place of local residents. This thesis seeks to redress this situation by focusing on senses of place in Tempe, and whether IKEA’s recent arrival has catalysed change.
1.2 Aims

The broad objective of this thesis is to explore what happens when a big-box retailer moves into a small, predominantly residential suburb. Although economic impacts are well-covered in existing literature, cultural and symbolic challenges faced by residents and communities in similar situations are yet to be significantly explored. Consequently, the specific aims of this thesis are:

1. To understand holistically the challenges that incoming big-box retailers present to surrounding communities – beyond narrow economic impacts

2. To explore whether the senses of place of Tempe residents have been influenced by the development and opening of IKEA Tempe. Three sub-questions of this are:
   
i. What senses of place are evident in the Tempe residential community?
   
ii. Does IKEA play a role in the quickening gentrification of Tempe?
   
iii. Has IKEA influenced Tempe’s senses of place?

1.3 Thesis Outline

This introductory chapter outlines the aims of this thesis and its structure. It then provides a background description of Tempe as the research context in question. A comparatively lengthy historical discussion is provided to assist understanding the depth of feeling of responses collected during fieldwork (the results of which make up Chapters 4 and 5 of this thesis). Here, background on IKEA as a multinational big-box corporation, and its arrival in Tempe is also provided.

To address the aims as outlined, this thesis then proceeds in five further chapters.

Chapter 2 outlines current literature pertaining to big-box retail. Despite the extensive nature of this literature across multiple disciplines, justification is provided for this thesis by identifying an absence of cultural research on big-box retail. The chapter then details the conceptual framework required to address this gap, mobilising especially the work of Doreen Massey on global sense of place, and of Mark Davidson and Loretta Lees in expanding the definitional boundaries of gentrification.
Chapter 3 outlines the methodology used. The ethical requirements of the research, along with the importance of rigour and critical reflexivity in qualitative research, are discussed. The selection of static and mobile interviewing schedules is explained, along with the participant recruitment process and approach to data analysis.

Chapters 4 and 5 discuss the results of the research in response to the second aim. Chapter 4 outlines the place identities that inform the senses of place present in the Tempe residential population. These are largely constructed by Tempe residents within a traditional gentrification ‘script’, providing a means to understand the demographic changes and community relations that contribute to senses of place. Chapter 5 draws on this discussion to ascertain whether the senses of place of participants have altered on account of the ‘moving in’ of IKEA.

Chapter 6 returns to the research aims for a final overview of the research. The case-specific lessons learnt in the previous chapters are outlined and applied to a wider context, addressing the first aim and overall objective of this thesis. Finally, avenues for future research are discussed.

Prior to considering relevant literature and the results of fieldwork for this thesis, and given the depth of historical feeling about the case study location, it is necessary to sketch the research context: Tempe, the place, and IKEA, the company.

1.4 Research Context

Marrickville Local Government Area (LGA) is a collection of inner-city suburbs covering 16 square kilometres to the south-west of Sydney central business district (CBD) (Marrickville Council 2007: 8). Marrickville is divided, socially and symbolically, into two regions: the northern ridges, including Dulwich Hill, Lewisham, Petersham, Stanmore, Enmore, Newtown and Camperdown; and the southern lowlands and former wetlands of Marrickville, St Peters, Sydenham, and Tempe (Marrickville Council 2012; Cashman & Meader 1990:32). A number of landmarks bound the LGA, including Kingsford-Smith Airport to the east, Parramatta Road to the north, Old and New Canterbury Roads to the west and the Cooks River to the south. Tempe is located on this southern boundary (Figure 1.1) (Marrickville Council 2007: 8). Tempe’s development history is crucial to this thesis, as is knowledge of IKEA as a big-
box corporation. Both strongly underpin the place narratives of Tempe residents that are presented in later results chapters.

1.4.1 Early History: European settlement and the ‘laying out’ of Tempe

The Marrickville area was colonised by Europeans in 1789. The area was heavily forested for the remainder of the 18th century, until land grants were assigned to British farmers. Modern-day Tempe (as well as southern parts of St Peters) was covered by the farm of Provost Marshal Thomas Smyth (Cashman & Meader 1990: 19, 36-39). This ‘first wave’ of migration followed Indigenous occupation by the Cadigal and Kameygal bands dating back to at least 5000BC (Cashman & Meader 1990: 18, 59).

By 1830, original land grants had been consolidated into 5 large estates, echoing those of the landed gentry in the contemporary English countryside (Cashman & Meader 1990: 19). Tempe had become a “rural retreat” for wealthy Sydney residents, its location on the Cooks River ideal for recreation. A number of grand houses were built here at this time, including
Lymerston and Milford Haven, as well as a number of public buildings (Cashman & Meader 1990: 20, 35, 111).

Until this time, Marrickville had remained largely rural in its economic activities. Population growth and demand for smaller land parcels resulted in the subdivision of the estates and the expansion of industries in the 1840s and 1850s (Cashman & Meader 1990: 19-20). The alluvial and clay wetland soils, local water sources, and fuel from local forest cover made brickworks and pottery a natural choice for the first raw materials industry in Marrickville, particularly in the south. The 1839 construction of the Cooks River Dam at Tempe provided both a water source and a road link across the river to southern settlements, and made brickworks the primary industry in Tempe (Figure 1.2) (Cashman & Meader 1990:143-147; Meader et al. 1994: 34, 53).

It was around this time that the village of Tempe was officially laid out by Scottish merchant A.B. Spark. The village was named after Spark’s house on the southern bank of the river (pictured in the background of Figure 1.2) and was one of the first “planned” settlements in NSW (Cashman & Meader 1990: 16, 57, 100, 108; Whitaker 2006: 62). Tempe village was established over the next three decades by the opening of churches (St Peters Anglican Church in 1838 and Sts Peter and Paul’s Catholic Church in 1858), inns (Pulteney Inn and the Cottage of Content) and schools (Rugby Anglican School in 1856, Sts Peter and Paul’s Catholic School in 1864 and Tempe Public School in 1874) (Cashman & Meader 1990: 20-21, 57; Meader et al. 1994: 85, 127, 115, 155, 158).

Figure 1.2: Painting of Cooks River Dam by Samuel Elyard in 1836 (Source: Cashman & Meader 1990:109)
Local government and public resource provision was initially assigned to Road Trusts – collectives of wealthy residents of each village. Tempe was governed by the Cooks River Road Trust in 1843, established to administer the present-day Princes Highway Bridge connecting Arncliffe and southern Tempe. Trusts were abolished in the 1860s-1870s with the advent of local government municipalities (Cashman & Meader 1990: 21; Meader et al. 1994: 61). This new form of government was designed to increase the sense of community felt by residents. However the physical separation of Tempe and St Peters from the remainder of the Marrickville Municipality by Gumbramorra Swamp gave rise to a counter-petition in 1861 for a separate municipality (Cashman & Meader 1990: 182, 187-188). This counter-petition was initially ignored, but was enacted a decade later to create the St Peters-Tempe Municipality.

1.4.2 Boom Period for Tempe: 1880-1950

Notwithstanding the emergence of a raw materials industry, Tempe remained a retreat for wealthy British migrants from Anglican and Conservative traditions until the turn of the century (Cashman & Meader 1990: 24). The advent of trams in the 1880s in the Marrickville Municipalities created other bonds with the CBD, providing an inexpensive commuting option. Five-fold growth of the Marrickville population followed. The subsequent need for residences and infrastructure bolstered existing brick-making and quarrying industries, along with water provisions from the 1888 Nepean Water Scheme and the introduction of electricity in 1900 (Figure 1.3). This period saw the transition of Marrickville from a collection of separate settlements to adjoining suburbs (Cashman & Meader 1990: 21-24). For Cashman & Meader (1990: 64) this was the second wave of migration to area, predominantly composed of the contemporary working class: Irish Catholic migrants.

The opening of Tempe Train Station in 1884 initially provided Sydney residents with access to the recreation facilities at Cooks River but increasingly became an important selling point for housing developers targeting Sydney commuters (Figure 1.4) (Cashman & Meader 1990: 44-46, 57; Meader et al. 1994: 36, 39). The 1897 draining of Sheas Creek Swamp – the current Alexandra Canal to the east of Tempe – created suitable space on the eastern side of the Princes Highway for industrial development to replace the flagging rural trades (Cashman & Meader 1990: 22, 24, 164, 166; Meader et al. 1994: 64). This began a development trend across the south-eastern Marrickville suburbs, one that is still evident in Tempe today: residences located primarily to the west of the Princes Highway, and industry to the east.
Figure 1.3: Speare’s Brickworks, Tempe (Source: Cashman & Meader 1990: 149)

Figure 1.4: Advertisement for auctions of Tempe residential properties
(Source: Cashman & Meader 1990: 44)
Tempe’s demographic changes reflected the Marrickville Municipality’s movement from the English “landed gentry” to an Irish-Catholic working class with strong Labor Party leanings. This trend intensified with the opening of Tempe Tram Depot (which would later become Tempe Bus Depot) in 1900, a popular means of transport among the working classes (Cashman & Meader 1990: 24, 166; Meader et al. 1994: 31, 39, 44). The area was described in the Daily Telegraph as ‘the Sheffield or Birmingham of the southern hemisphere’ (Cashman & Meader 1990: 167), a reflection of the transition of Tempe to an industrial economy. Further public amenities were financed during this boom period, including the current Sts Peter and Paul’s Church (1915), Riverside Park (1918), Riverview Hotel (1922) and Tempe High School (1923) (Meader et al. 1994: 85, 124, 127, 158, 167).

This strong industrial base largely saved Tempe from the turbulence of the Great Depression in the 1930s. What Cashman & Meader (1990: 66) call the third wave of migration began post-1945, when Tempe became a hub for Eastern European and Asian migrants of account of the industrial employment available alongside affordable housing and public transport. No single cultural group ever became dominant in Tempe; however the suburb was particularly popular with Greek, Macedonian, Pacific Islander and Vietnamese migrants. Some evidence of this remains demographically – although migrant presences are more felt through local small business ownership, churches and through vernacular associations between culture and place. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (2011) reported only 2.7 percent of Tempe residents are of Macedonian heritage, with 3.2 percent and 2.1 percent of Greek and Vietnamese ethnicities respectively. Nevertheless these groups remain highly visible participants in local culture and economy. People of all backgrounds that have remained in Tempe from this period of post-war industrial migration are, adopting the language used by interview participants, referred to as “long-term” residents or “Old Tempe” throughout this thesis.

Important in this period was the amalgamation of suburbs to form the present day Marrickville Municipality/LGA. The municipalities of Marrickville, Petersham and St Peters (including Tempe) joined in 1949, dissolving the former St Peters-Tempe Council. The municipality was extended in 1968 to include Newtown, Camperdown and Enmore (Cashman & Meader 1990: 17, 29, 188). Some remnants of the pre-amalgamation era survive in the urban landscape today – for example the St. Peters-Tempe Town Hall on Unwins Bridge Road. Meanwhile, for some long-term residents, the pre-amalgamation era lingers in a mild form of resentment for having been absorbed into a larger LGA, ceding autonomy to a
larger council. For some, Marrickville is still viewed to have centralised resources to the detriment of Tempe and St Peters residents, marginalised instead on the edge of the present day LGA (see Chapter 4).

1.4.3. ‘Tempe Tip’: a flipside to the Tempe boom

The mid-twentieth century ‘boom’ period created two issues that have lingered into the 21st century. First was the development of Kingsford-Smith Airport in 1920 (and its subsequent post-war expansion), the sole hub for domestic and international air traffic in the Sydney Metropolitan area. The opening of this airport on the eastern boundary of Tempe and St Peters had, and continues to have, profound noise pollution implications for the residents, as well as concerns for physical safety and property values (Meader et al. 1994: 31, 42-43).

This problem was compounded from the 1950s by a second issue: the rise of private cars and increases in industrial road traffic. Tempe quickly became “a place of through-traffic” (Meader et al. 1994: 31), its gentile past as a riverside retreat for the elite long gone. The sheer number of vehicles, along with noise and air pollution on narrow streets designed for horse-and-carts, has remained a source of irritation for Tempe residents. Traffic pollution, combined with heavy industrial pollution, the location of a landfill site at the former Speare’s Brickworks, and general concerns for urban health created the public identification of the suburb as ‘Tempe Tip’ (Cashman & Meader 1990: 166, 179). By the end of the twentieth century Tempe was seen as a grubby, largely anonymous suburb on the highway. ‘Tempe Tip’ was its only extra-local moniker.

1.4.4. ‘Rediscovery’ of the Inner City

Things turned for Sydney’s inner-west in the 1970s. That decade saw, among other things, the green bans movement surrounding destruction of old houses in Sydney (Burgmann and Burgmann 1998); the OPEC oil crisis; and development of politically-active inner-city subcultures and ‘alternative’ cultural scenes (Shaw 2006). Increasing interest in Australia’s heritage – particularly architectural – and rising petrol prices in a suburbanised Sydney renewed interest in living in inner-city LGAs like Marrickville. This interest seeded gentrification, with the middle and professional classes repopulating inner-city suburbs and
increasing property values (Gibson and Homan 2004). The exit of heavy industries such as brickworks and quarries on account of the competitive international market and the prospect of cheaper land on the new outskirts of Sydney supported this process. In Tempe, the delay between the exit of heavy industries and the rediscovery of the area by the middle classes was more pronounced than for most of the surrounding suburbs. ‘Rediscovery’ really began in the 1990s, as Sydney’s property prices escalated and Tempe became a comparatively affordable inner-city area, with suitably ‘heritage’ homes, only six kilometres from the city centre. Manufacturing has nevertheless remained present in Tempe, in smaller and lighter forms (Cashman & Meader 1990: 30, 180). Incoming residents of this period to the present day are, using the language of informants, referred to throughout this thesis as “New Tempe”.

1.4.5. Political Tensions: an underside of urban ‘rediscovery’

Following ‘rediscovery’ was a distinct drop in population in the Marrickville Municipality, which Cashman & Meader (1990: 30, 78) attribute to the decrease in industrial jobs and economic stagnation caused by a lack of new developments. This was partially caused by gentrification, but also by decreasing average household sizes – with one- and two-person gentrifying households increasingly replacing larger family units. Political struggles formed between the Labor politics of the existing working classes and the Green politics of the newly re-established middle and professional classes. Tensions extended to a range of issues, most notably in the bid to balance development and heritage concerns (Cashman & Meader 1990: 30). The St Peters/Sydenham/Tempe Neighbourhood Centre opened in 1985 to promote community development and community organizations during this period (Meader et al. 1994: 110).

Central to political tensions was the extension of Kingsford-Smith Airport. Renovations at Tempe Public School had been completed in the late 1970s to minimize noise pollution of over 100 decibels and Tempe residents were active in lobbying against government proposals for increased air traffic (see Figure 1.5) (Meader et al. 1994: 43, 115). Community interests seemed to have won the battle when in 1986 a second Sydney airport was proposed. Yet three years later, the development had not gone ahead and the question of Kingsford-Smith expansion was revisited. Despite protest activity between 1989-1994, airlines and developer interests prevailed, and an extra runway was opened in 1994 (Fitzgerald 1998). The
development involved the buy-back of some houses on the eastern side of the Princes Highway, including many of the properties on Bellevue Street.

Another local flashpoint related to the changing local political mix was, and still is, the state of the Cooks River. While the river crosses five LGAs, significant damage was done by the Cooks River Dam at Tempe. The 1839 damming prevented tidal flushing of sewage pollutants and later industrial runoff (Cashman & Meader 1990: 35, 109). Despite the removal of remnant dam materials in 1963 and multiple initiatives to improve the river at Tempe – including the Cooks River Improvement League of 1925, the Cooks River Improvement Act of 1946 and the Cooks River Festival held annually since 1976 – the health of the river continues to be a source of political tension (Cashman & Meader 1990:35, Meader et al. 1994: 53).

Figure 1.5: Aircraft coming in to land at Kingsford-Smith Airport over Tempe residences (Source: Beth Laurenson 2012)
1.4.6. Tempe Today

Tempe has retained many of its industrial era characteristics, and bears the demographic and cultural imprint of its post-1990s ‘rediscovery’. According to the 2011 Census, Tempe’s 3,299 residents have an average age of 38, the majority of whom are categorised as “professionals”, followed by those in service industries and trades. The majority of households are “family” dwellings, with incomes slightly less than the Sydney average (Urbis 2007: 2). Ongoing interest in regeneration continues, reflected in rising property prices. The former industrial strip to the east of the Princes Highway has been replaced by active light industry, although there are a number of unoccupied terraced retail premises (Figures 1.6 and 1.7) (Marrickville Council 2010: 12; Urbis 2008: 8).

Tempe has also maintained a diverse linguistic population with 45 percent of residents born overseas. The migratory history of Tempe remains evident, with Macedonia, Greece, Vietnam and Pacific Islands common birthplaces for residents (Urbis 2008: 7). The everyday multiculturalism of Tempe have earned the suburb a reputation as a place of “ethnic peace”,

Figure 1.6: Vacant retail premises on Princes Highway, Tempe (Source: Beth Laurenson 2012)  
Figure 1.7: Light industrial/commercial premises on Princes Highway, Tempe (Source: Beth Laurenson 2012)
with Tempe High School featured in the 1994 SBS TV documentary ‘School of Babel’ (Meader et al. 1994: 123-124). The apparent racial harmony in Tempe was noted by Cashman & Meader (1990: 74-75), as was the absence of discourses of racially-related “ghettos” or unrest (cf. Wise & Velayutham 2009).

The early history of Tempe is echoed in surviving street names. Lymerston and Way Streets, Samuel and Terry Streets, Bellevue and Talbot Streets, Gannon Street along with Unwins Bridge Road take their names from prominent households and land-owners in the 18th and 19th centuries (Cashman & Meader 1990: 111-112, 123, 131-132; Meader et al. 1994: 68). A number of late 1930s Californian bungalow houses and early sandstone homes remain as heritage-listed items on Stanley and Collins Streets, as well as the Tempe Tram/Bus Depot on the Princes Highway. A Moreton Bay Fig tree, planted in 1843 on the current IKEA site, is a valued heritage item – one of the oldest surviving local trees (Cashman & Meader 1990: 36, 138-139; Meader et al. 1994: 41, 85). Meanwhile, evidence of gentrification has emerged across Tempe’s urban landscape: renovated Federation-era, Edwardian and inter-war homes; and from 2005-2009 the opening of a wine cellars, a Brazilian boutique, antique home-wares shops and Rosa’s Kitchen (an inner-city style cafe) on Unwins Bridge Road. Both the Riverview Hotel and Stella Inn have been refurbished along the Princes Highway (the former into a live music venue; the latter into a ‘family pub’ with bistro and outdoor beer garden). This palimpsest of historical eras makes up the prosaic context into which the IKEA superstore was, in 2011, inserted.

1.4.7. Introducing IKEA: the ‘big-box’

IKEA is a Swedish furniture company. Famous for its “flat-packed” products, IKEA combines reference catalogues with large showrooms, including warehouse space in which products are collected to be assembled off-site by the purchaser (Kling & Goteman 2003: 32). Based on a vision to “offer a wide range of well-designed functional home-furnishing products at prices so low that as many people as possible will be able to afford them” (Edvardsson & Enquist 2009: 8), IKEA aims to create products with a “democratic design” through form, functionality and low prices, targeted at young people and young families (Edvardsson et al. 2006: 235).
Established in 1943 as a mail-order company by Småland teenager Ingvar Kamprad, IKEA functioned domestically for 20 years. During this time, the distinctive flat-pack concept was developed to maximise store capacity (Figure 1.8). The first international venture for IKEA was to Norway, expanding to North America in the 1980s and to Eastern Europe in the 1990s (Kling & Goteman 2003). IKEA is currently the world’s largest furniture retailer with over 150 stores across 20 countries and a network of over 1,300 suppliers and 7,000 employees (Kling & Goteman 2003; Baraldi 2008: 99).

Figure 1.8: Flat packs at IKEA Tempe (Source: Elyse Stanes 2011)

The IKEA brand publicises corporate social responsibility and corporate ‘values’. IKEA aims to provide a range of furniture products at as low a price as possible, making shopping in this retail category more economically “democratic” (Edvardsson et al. 2006: 235). Strategies include:

- customer self-service (using flat-packed products);
- “outlooking”: deciding how much a product should cost and designing to match;
- purchasing agreements with companies globally to minimize production costs and the impact of economic fluctuations; and
- buying stores rather than renting properties to gain income from property value (Edvardsson et al. 2006: 235; Edvardsson & Enquist 2009; Kling & Goteman 2003).

Locating stores on the outskirts of cities as opposed to city centres allows IKEA to purchase large lots at a lower cost. Focus on low-price goods was cited by Anders Dahlvig, former IKEA CEO, as a product of the foundation of IKEA in Småland, Sweden, a low socio-economic farming region (Kling & Goteman 2003).

IKEA values purportedly extend to social and environmental ventures. IKEA has formed well-publicised partnerships with organizations including UNICEF and WWF to address challenging local working conditions in their supply-chain. IKEA reports the formation of relationships with overseas industries using child labour and unsustainable forestry to help address such issues, rather than ignoring or exploiting the situations for corporate gains (Strand 2009: 180; Edvardsson et al. 2006: 238). This complements IKEA’s “IWAY”, a code of conduct for producers released in 2000 that states the social and environmental standards that IKEA suppliers are required to meet (Andersen & Skjoett-Larsen 2009: 77-78). Such ventures, particularly environmental ventures, also operate at the individual store level through the use of ‘green’ company cars, sale of energy-efficient lighting products, in-store marketing (Figure 1.9) and a long-term goal for all IKEA stores to be run entirely on renewable energy (IKEA Australia 2012; Hakansson & Waluszewski 2002).

This notion of corporate social responsibility has been critiqued by academics as “inadequate” in addressing the complexity of situations like child labour and unsustainable forestry (Pater & Van Lierop 2006: 343). Corporate social responsibility in many cases remains vaguely defined and poorly enacted as a relatively recent, immature concept to enter corporate management. The strategic use of power by corporations like IKEA in the aforementioned partnerships to retain low production costs for high product output is also problematic. Such practices are argued by Hamann & Acutt (2003) to in fact perpetuate the same unsustainable and abusive production methods they claim to address.
Notwithstanding its public relations image as a socially and environmentally conscious company, IKEA is nevertheless an example of what is known as a big-box retailer (Columbia University 2012; Jones & Doucet 2000; Hernandez 2010; McConnell 2004; Sampson 2008). According to Columbia University (2012), big-box retail is characterized by the physical size of the store in comparison to other stores in the same retail category. Big-box stores can occupy over 50,000 square feet, the exact size dependent on the size of a ‘traditional’ outlet. Buildings are large and rectangular, with standardized facades and sizable car-parks. Store height is important, allowing for vertical product stacking (See Figure 1.10) (Columbia University 2012; Munroe 2001: 357-358; Hahn 2000: 224; Jones & Doucet 2000: 234). Big-box stores are often grouped together in “power centres”, resembling large industrial estates (Hahn 2000: 224-225; Jones & Doucet 2000: 233). While IKEA Tempe stands alone, other new IKEA stores including Southampton and London in the UK, and Springvale in Melbourne, are grouped with other big-box retailers (Lowe 2007).

The operation of IKEA stores is classically ‘big-box’. Columbia University (20102) describe big-box retailers as developing profit-margins based on high sales volumes rather than high product prices. As “category killers”, big-box retailers sell large volumes of a range of

Figure 1.9: “Green Home” display at IKEA Tempe (Source: Elyse Stanes 2011)
specialty products at low prices, effectively killing off competition: in the case of IKEA, smaller independent (and chain) furniture retailers (Columbia University 2012; Hahn 2000: 224; Jones & Doucet 2000: 233). Low prices are achieved by purchasing stock directly from manufacturers, limiting “middle-man” costs that are passed on to the customer in traditional retail formats (Hahn 2000: 224). While IKEA is considered a “category killer”, it does not so much resemble other big-box stores that take the form of a “discounter” or “warehouse club”, offering a variety of products available elsewhere at dramatically reduced prices (Hahn 2000: 224). Instead, IKEA draws on the reputation of Scandinavian design more generally (especially a minimalistic and modernist aesthetic) to sell its own exclusive range of named products.

Figure 1.10: Physical size and standardised appearance of IKEA (Source: Elyse Stanes 2011)

1.4.8. IKEA and Tempe: a relationship long in the making

IKEA Tempe was a long time coming. The store was first proposed for the Tempe Tip site by IKEA Australia in 2005 but withdrawn by the corporation prior to a final planning decision being made. A second Development Application was lodged with and approved by the NSW Department of Planning and Infrastructure in 2008 (Marrickville Council 2012). The site required the amalgamation of smaller blocks, including the heritage-listed ATECO building (Figure 1.11), which was to be retained and refurbished for use as the IKEA Australia headquarters. Approval also involved multiple social and environmental impact assessments (NSW Department of Planning and Infrastructure 2006).
The Tempe site fits IKEA’s criteria for preferred location – a large space on city centre outskirts with close proximity to major transport routes. Although IKEA did not overtly state it when questioned for this research, the location was also proximate to a rapidly expanding middle-class/urban market in Sydney’s inner-west and south. Despite being 10 years in the planning, the development was not without problems. The location of the site under the western flight-path of Kingsford-Smith Airport created difficulties, with construction work often scheduled to match late-night aircraft curfews. Specialized building ventilation was also required to avoid concentration of aircraft fumes (NSW Department of Planning and Infrastructure 2006). Building materials were required to meet Australian standards for aircraft noise intrusion, including an ‘acoustic blanket’ against the “shake, rattle and roll” of low-flying aircraft (Campion 2011).

Previous uses of the site as a brickworks and waste disposal were additional hurdles in the development approval process. Aircraft-related height restrictions required excavation into landfill material as compensation. Building construction on former landfill sites was cited in the Development Application as “rare” due to soil settlement, and potential gas and leachate hazards. IKEA were required to replace the concrete cap constructed over landfill, removing sections of waste material in the process, and designing a car-park filtering mechanism for the ongoing release of methane and other gases (NSW Department of Planning and Infrastructure 2006).
Infrastructure 2006; Campion 2011). Ongoing monitoring and maintenance was also required to ensure the safety of those on-site.

Another development issue for IKEA Tempe was proximity to residential streets. Noise and traffic congestion generated by the development were key concerns of residents in studies conducted during the approval process. Noise impact assessments conducted in 2005 by Renzo Tonin and Associates (on behalf of IKEA) found that residences along the Princes Highway and Bellevue Road would be most affected by noise from machinery, loading-dock vehicles, and increased traffic (NSW Department of Planning and Infrastructure 2006). Traffic monitoring by Transport and Traffic Planning Associates in 2006 estimated a “limited” impact from IKEA Tempe, with small increases to the weekday morning peak period and weekend peak periods, and significant increases to the Thursday afternoon peak period due to late-night shopping (NSW Department of Planning and Infrastructure 2006). Ongoing public concern resulted in the St Peters-Tempe Local Area Traffic Management Study, published by GTA Consultants in 2011, and alterations in a number of residential streets directly opposite the site (Figures 1.12-1.14)

Figure 1.12: Closure of Terry Street to traffic from the Princes Highway, Tempe (Source: Beth Laurenson 2012)
Figure 1.13: Addition of angle parking and speed bumps in Samuel Street, Tempe (Source: Beth Laurenson 2012)

Figure 1.14: Addition of pedestrian islands in Samuel Street, Tempe (Source: Beth Laurenson 2012)
In accordance with IKEA corporate policy, such concerns were also dealt with through a community engagement strategy (Baker 2012). A bi-monthly flyer was used to update the residential population on construction works, key milestones and corporate-supported community projects. For instance, the July/August 2011 edition provided updates on the health of the Moreton Bay/Port Jackson fig tree, transplanted to make way for developments, installation of solar hot water panels, traffic updates and a promotion of a fence-art competition to cover the temporary hoardings on the Princes Highway (IKEA Store Project: Local Tempe Community Update 2011). Love Where You Live, a community photography competition run by community forum Tempe2020 and sponsored in part by IKEA, encouraged positive, place-based interaction between residents and IKEA (Figures 1.15 and 1.16) (Tempe2020 2011).

IKEA Tempe opened for business on the 3rd of November 2011 after a two-year construction period, with shoppers arriving from 4am to be the first inside (Figure 1.17 and 1.18). UOW researchers, including myself, UOW’s Human Geography Technical Officer and my supervisor, were present at the opening: taking photos and talking to shoppers informally about their experience. An estimated 2.2 million people will subsequently visit IKEA Tempe in 2012, including 20,000 shoppers each Saturday (Cummins 2011; Campion 2011). The development of IKEA Tempe was reported to have created 550 construction jobs, and 600 ongoing jobs, including 350 local staff roles (Sydney Morning Herald 4 September 2008; Cummins 2011). IKEA Tempe is considered a milestone for IKEA Australia, in line with managing director David Hood’s expansion plan of a total of nine stores nationwide (Speedy 2011). What this thesis seeks to explore, meanwhile, is exactly how the opening of such an immense big-box retailer impacts on surrounding residential communities – and in particular, how it might alter influence dynamic senses of place. Exactly how this particular angle relates to existing academic literatures is the subject of the following chapter.
Tempe 2020 Presents

LOVE WHERE YOU LIVE

a community photography competition created to celebrate the vibrancy and diversity of Tempe in Sydney’s inner-west.

To enter, simply take a photograph of a person, a place or a landscape in Tempe. You needn’t be a professional and you needn’t live in the area, but your photo must be taken in Tempe. Photos will be exhibited at The Tempe Hotel on Saturday, 12 November, with select winning entries later displayed at IKEA Tempe. Entries will be judged in the following categories:

- Primary school age (up to 12)
- High-school age (13 – 18)
- General (18+)

Prizes will be awarded to the winners in each category.

Entries must be delivered to FrameUp, 723 Princes Highway, Tempe, by Saturday, 5 November. Maximum of 5 entries per person.

To get a complete information package on how to enter email Pat at tempe2020@ozemail.com.au or visit Tempe2020 on Facebook or at www.tempe2020.com

Figure 1.15 and 1.16: Love Where You Live promotional postcard, front (top) and back (below) (Source: tempe2020.com)
Figure 1.17: Queues for the opening of IKEA Tempe (Source: Elyse Stanes 2011)

Figure 1.18: Banner at the official opening of IKEA Tempe (Source: Elyse Stanes 2011)
2. Research Context

2.1 Introduction

This chapter situates the research at the intersection of relevant bodies of literature. It is organised into five sections. The first three sections outline the current scope of literature on big-box retail globally. While extensive, this scholarship is contextually focused on small-town America, with offshoots to the United Kingdom and Western Europe. Scholarship is currently dominated by authors from economics, marketing, and management fields, with a distinct absence of geographers in the debate. Section 2.5 highlights the narrow scope of existing literature and identifies the gap addressed by this thesis – a cultural geographical emphasis on senses of place. The role of this research in re-directing the focus of retail geography from the needs of retailers towards those of local communities is also discussed. Section 2.6 then outlines the conceptual framework used for this thesis, drawing on cultural geographical theories of senses of place as well as definitional debates surrounding gentrification.

2.2 Big-Box Retail History and Expansion

A significant amount of the current academic literature on big-box retail was specific to companies and case studies: covering the history of individual retailers and their expansion activities. An overwhelming majority of authors (for example Vance & Scott 1994; Tilly 2007; Ortega 1998; Arnold & Fernie 2000) focused on American big-box retailer, Wal-Mart, and its founder, Sam Walton. This writing was principally by marketing and management scholars and covers the conception of Wal-Mart in Arkansas, 1962, and its subsequent corporate expansion across America and into the international market.

The histories of other retailers – for instance IKEA, CarreFour, Target, Kmart – were also discussed, albeit to a lesser extent than Wal-Mart. Authors have focused on the growth of retailers from domestic to international markets and on corporate mergers (Jonsson 2007; Jonsson & Kalling 2007; Warnaby 1999). Treated primarily as individual corporations, Jonsson & Kalling (2007) also discussed knowledge-sharing between firms for mutual gain.
Kling & Goteman (2003) provided one of the only comprehensive discussions of IKEA’s history and expansion, via an interview with Anders Dahlvig, former IKEA CEO.

2.3 Corporate Strategy

Much of the writing on big-box history and expansion overlapped with that exploring big-box corporate strategising. Pursued by a mixture of business, retail and management scholars, this literature analysed strategies used to outstrip competitors. Strategies commonly included store location selection (Lowe 2007; Graff 1998; Graff & Ashton 1994), targeted marketing (Baraldi 2008; Arnold et al. 1998), promotion of corporate values (Edvardsson & Enquist 2009; Edvardsson & Enquist 2006; Edvardsson & Enquist 2002; Bartlett & Nanda 1990), corporate structuring (Konzelmann et al. 2008; Lichtenstein 2005; Colla & Dupuis 2002) and technological innovation (Hakansson & Waluszewski 2002; Baraldi & Waluszewski 2005). Often authors compared the strategies of two or more companies, creating in effect “do and don’t” lists for big-box retailers (Edvardsson & Enquist 2009; Colla & Dupuis 2002; Graff 1998; Lichtenstein 2005; Konzelmann et al. 2008).

Specific studies of IKEA have identified the importance of management and service strategising to their success as a big-box (Edvardsson & Enquist 2009; Edvardsson & Enquist 2006; Edvardsson & Enquist 2002; Hakansson & Waluszewski 2002; Baraldi 2008; Baraldi & Waluszewski 2005; Bartlett & Nanda 1990; Konzelmann et al. 2008). Edvardsson & Enquist (2009; 2006; 2002) outlined IKEA’s strategic environmental and social values-based approach to customer service and branding, and discussed their long-term economic value to the corporation. This work was an IKEA-specific base that others have built on to include values-based marketing and purchasing strategies (Baraldi 2008), values-based technological development (Hanjansson & Waluszewski 2002), and expansion strategies (Konzelmann et al. 2008). Such studies had little, or anything, to say about the impacts of big-box retail on surrounding neighbourhoods, focusing instead on purely business strategy and structure.

2.4 Economic Relationships between big-box retailers and small town settings

Where research had sought to more extensively analyse the local impacts of big-box retail, it tended to focus on local economic effects. Such scholarship, pursued by economists, and
business and retail scholars, identified common patterns in local economic impacts (Arnold & Luthra 2000; Beaver 2005; Brennan & Lundsten 2000; Fishman 2006; Hicks 2007; Stone 1997; Stone et al. 2002). These included employment change (Basker 2005; Hicks & Wilburn 2005; Neumark et al. 2008); closure of small businesses and competitors (Franklin 2001; Jia 2008; Peterson & McGee 2000; Sobel & Dean 2008; Volpe & Lavoie 2008; Black 2010) and inflammation of poverty rates (Goetz & Swaminathan 2006). Wal-Mart was again the quintessential case study. Many authors examined whether the benefits of Wal-Mart as big-box retailer – convenience, in-store variety, local employment opportunities – outweigh aforementioned consequences. The economic benefits of big-box retail were heavily contested, particularly in regards to employment patterns and local business sustainability.

Business scholars also touched on a phenomenon dubbed the “IKEA Effect”. Norton et al. (2011) identified the phenomenon in which the labour of the owner increases the intangible value of the product because of their personal involvement in the construction process. The famous “flat-packed” furniture products of IKEA drove this association, products that require the buyer to assemble the product themselves after purchase. Elliot et al. (1996) also explored how the association of IKEA products with particular demographics generates meaning for individuals. This work explores the specific branding and design of IKEA products and is thus tangential to this thesis topic.

2.5 Cultural impacts of big-box retail: a justification for this research

Despite notable research on business strategy and local economic impacts, the current state of research on big-box retail is limited. Research on the historical expansion and development strategies of big-box retail remain relevant, especially as big-box retail turns global. Likewise, the local economic challenges presented are significant: especially the prospect of detrimental effects to local independent businesses. Nevertheless, they are by no means the only influences. Scholars have arguably neglected the people most immediately impacted upon by big-box retail, people outside the roles of local small business owners or big-box retail staff: local residents within immediate proximity. How the introduction of a big-box retailer into a small town or city suburb may alter geography for the people that live and interact there remains largely untouched. This oversight is in turn arguably due to the limited involvement of geographers and planners in the field of big box retail research.
It is important that this gap be filled by geographers, so as to develop more inclusive analyses and to identify the full reach of these retailers into local areas. The concern of geographers is crucial – particularly those of cultural persuasion, who seek to document lived experience and the functioning of communities within wider processes. IKEA Tempe provides a particularly relevant case study, involving the insertion of a well-branded multinational retailer into an established residential suburb with strong industrial ties. Furthermore, Tempe has a history of urban development and planning tensions (as outlined in Chapter 1), with which the IKEA development inevitably interplays, the most recent of which is the gentrification process.

This thesis accordingly pursues analysis of the cultural impacts of IKEA Tempe: specifically on that suburb’s changing senses of place. Such analysis has potential to inform future planning decisions about big-box retail, and to widen the understanding of urban planners and developers. It fits within a broader remit to return the focus of urban planning processes – which are arguably too preoccupied with economics and technical aspects of land-use – to the needs of people as people (Young 2008). It also may provide a means to re-stimulate the arguably stagnating sub-field of retail geography (Pritchard 2000; Walmsley 2006). The thesis contributes to a new, critical cultural geography of retail, shifting the focus from the spatial needs of retailers – the analysis of store location, distribution and the retail patterns of consumers (Dawson 1980; Wrigley & Lowe 1996; Berry 1967; Rowley 1984) – towards a more critical study of the interests and experiences of local residents surrounding retail outlets.

### 2.6 Conceptual Framework

Responding to the lack of cultural geographical research on big-box retail, this section assembles a conceptual framework to specifically analyse the interactions between big-box retailers and residential populations. Capture and analysis of relevant interactions was difficult due to their complexity and multiplicity. It was essential to draw on the combined works of scholars who appreciated the fluid nature of human relationships over time and space. Geographers provide one such critical lens through which to inspect and appreciate such interactions.
2.6.1 Sense(s) of Place

The conceptual framework adopted in this thesis is two-pronged, beginning with sense of place. Most simply, sense of place is the attitudes and emotional connections that people have to place (Johnston et al. 2000: 731-734). Connections result from combined social, environmental and psychoanalytical processes developed through the lived experience and imaginations of individuals (Buell 2006; Corcoran 2002). Place exists across spatial scales but most often encompasses areas of everyday living: the house and the residential suburb (Dowling & Mee 2007; Gorman-Murray 2007; Graham et al. 2009).

Though sense of place is identified as unique individual connections, Corcoran (2002: 204-205), Gieryn (2000: 464-465) and Cosgrove (2000) all agree on three vital elements: the built environment, social networks, and the “symbolic locale” – memories, imaginings, and meanings invested by individuals. Johnstone (2004: 68) argued that the human constituent in these elements was what makes “a space become a place” and makes studies of emotional geography important to sense-of-place inquiries (see also Lou 2010; Davidson et al. 2007). One antecedent for this work was 1970s humanist geography, most notably the works of Yi-Fu Tuan. Tuan (1974, 1977) argued that places assume emotional significance through everyday experiences and, along with space, constitute the basic components of the lived world. Place is, according to Rogan et al. (2005), “more than mere backdrop to experience”.

Billig (2005) noted that when something new arrives in a place, or something is changed, sense of place will accordingly be altered. Such understandings are not new, although they do speak to successive currents in human geographical thought. This includes assemblage theory, in which places are viewed as collections of human and non-human components, decision-making processes, institutions, infrastructures, technologies, and cultures of daily living (Anderson & McFarlane 2011: 124; Bennett 2010: 6: Gibbs in press). Bennett (2010: 5) argued that material objects are “not restricted to a passive ‘intractability’ but have the agency to make things happen, to produce effects”. Places are flexible in the hands of different people, and can change or be disrupted over time by the affective properties of nonhuman things (Gieryn 2000: 465). With assemblage theory in mind, this thesis considers senses of place in Tempe as products of the particular assemblage of material objects, people, wider politics and processes that constitute the suburb. It seeks to explore how the addition of IKEA as a material presence to the assemblage of Tempe has influenced the senses of place it informs.
The conceptual complexity of place is captured by Hayden (1995), who described it as “one of the trickiest words in the English language: a suitcase so overfilled one can never shut the lid” (see also Buell 2006: 17). Hayden referred to both the complexity of contributory elements to place and to the multiple applications of the term. This thesis acknowledges the former and narrows the latter to its application in Doreen Massey’s progressive/global sense of place. In her seminal 1994 work ‘A Global Sense of Place’, Massey identified the elements useful for considering the concept in a suburb like Tempe, which at this time exists in a post-industrial global city: Sydney. First, sense of place must be conceptualised as a process instead of a stable entity. That places themselves are complex products of social interactions – which themselves are not “motionless things, frozen in time” – lends to the conclusion that sense of place is malleable over time. As Massey (1994: 232-233) argued,

Can’t we rethink our sense of place? Is it not possible for a sense of place to be progressive; not self-closing and defensive, but outward-looking?

The understanding that sense of place is continually unfolding, shifting and changing with social relations speaks to the negotiation of sense of place in a suburb like Tempe experiencing active change.

Second, Massey suggested that sense of place must be conceptualised plurally: as senses of place. Study of her own residential suburb, Kilburn, and its main street, led Massey to recognise that despite the existence of a perceived public character, it was “absolutely not a seamless, coherent identity, a single sense of place that everyone shares” (Massey 1994: 238). Places have multiple identities just as people have multiple identities. Massey (1994: 238) argued that singular place identities are largely a product of historical interchange between “place” and “community”:

On one hand communities can exist without being in the same place – from networks of friends with like interests, to major religious, ethnic or political communities. On the other hand, the instances of places housing single ‘communities’ in the sense of coherent social groups are probably – and, I would argue, have for long been – quite rare. Moreover, even where they do exist this in no way implies a single sense of place. For people occupy different positions within any community.
Massey argued that place identities can be ascribed through the discursive and everyday practices of individuals or groups, both internal and external to the place, official and non-official. Place identities can be so strong as to influence residents’ self-identity or be shaped to reflect desired identities. They may also exist in a state of concord or conflict, often a mixture of the two. Such understandings assist in later chapters of this thesis, negotiating the rich texture of identities ascribed to Tempe, internally by residents, as well as externally, by non-residents.

Third, Massey contended that local senses of place are heavily influenced by global relationships. Places are “absolutely not introverted”, the product of not only relations between locals – residents, shop-keepers, etc – but of social, economic, and political relations extending to the global stage (Massey 1994: 238). The globalisation of social relations is visualised in the following way:

Economic, political and cultural social relations, each full of power and with internal structures of domination and subordination, stretched out over the planet at every different level, from the household to the local area to the international. (Massey 1994: 238-239)

Understanding Tempe contextually as a suburb of Sydney and of Sydney as part of an international, post-industrial, capitalist system is crucial to understanding the long-term changes in the suburb, particularly in the local economy and government policies. The palimpsest histories of Tempe (as outlined in Chapter 1) encompass successive intersections of the local with global processes and relations, from colonialism and post-war industrial investment, to present day gentrification (as well as the arrival of IKEA, itself a global relation of sorts). Without acknowledgement of such big-picture relations and their intersections in Tempe, the full range of senses of place cannot be grasped.

Finally, it is understood that these trends do not make place uniform. Massey (1994: 240) argued that:

None of this denies place nor the importance of the uniqueness of place. The specificity of place is continually reproduced, but it is not a specificity which results from some long, internalised history.

Sources of particularity identified include physical geography and accumulated history, as well as the “particular constellation” of social relations that intersect in places and interact
with their geographies and histories (Massey 1994: 239). Her understanding that attachment to, affection for, and identification of place can exist without the need to ascribe stability or coherency is particularly important to understanding the senses of place evident in Tempe.

In this thesis, attachment to place, and particularly to ideas of ‘community’, is considered a key element of senses of place. Place attachment is understood as a dynamic, affective bond between people and a specific place – here, Tempe – which fosters a desire to remain close to the place in question (Hidalgo & Hernandez 2001: 274; Williams & Vaske 2003; Brown et al. 2003). Smith (2009) listed length of residency, community participation, social contact, access to services, and choice of residency among the elements that contribute to place attachment. Like sense of place, place attachment can be felt in many complex and conflicting ways. Attachment is most often to the social makeup of place – but can also include material elements – and informs both individual and community identities as well as the negotiation of pride (Hidalgo & Hernandez 2001; Brown et al. 2003). Consequently, social and physical-material change in a place can challenge or disrupt attachment (Manzo & Perkins 2006). This understanding of place attachment will enable the discussion of how IKEA has interacted with the attachments of participants to Tempe.

Community is understood in this thesis using Benedict Anderson’s (1983) conception of “imagined” communities. Anderson defines imagined communities as internalised images of a group of individuals as interconnected across time and/or space. These images may exist in situations where community members do not, nor ever will, have any form of social contact (Anderson 1983:15-16). Imagined communities and the attachment people feel for them also hold the power to exclude individuals who are not perceived to fit the shared identity of the community: with newcomers viewed as outsiders and potential threats to the community (Anderson 1983: 14-16; Chavez 1994). In this thesis, the phrase ‘residential community’ is used to refer to those people who reside in Tempe. It also is used to discuss the application of the term ‘community’ by participants, which often implies social coherence and singularity despite evidence of heterogeneity across participant’s narratives.

2.6.2 Gentrification

The second prong that makes up the conceptual framework for this thesis is gentrification. Gentrification is the movement of the middle class into established working-class
neighbourhoods, injecting social and economic capital and displacing original occupants (Glass 1964). There has been significant academic debate over gentrification: what it includes, what it looks like, and where it takes place. Discussion has centred on the purity of the term, and whether a wider-than-traditional definition should be adopted to include related processes. Human geographers Mark Davison and Loretta Lees (2005; 2010) have convincingly argued for conceptualisation of gentrification as a model undergoing continual “maturation and mutation”. They contended that the term “gentrification” captures the class politics present in urban change, unlike suggested alternatives, including “reurbanisation” and “renewal” (Davidson & Lees 2005: 1165; Davidson & Lees 2010: 396). Such considerations underpin discussion of gentrification in this thesis.

Davison and Lees (2005: 1170) identified four elements of suburb gentrification: reinvestment of capital; landscape change; social upgrading by higher-income groups; and direct or indirect displacement of lower-income groups. This broad definition mirrors Massey’s progressive sense of place, by acknowledging that contemporary gentrification is plural: occurring at a variety of sites, in a number of forms, and through a range of actors. By attributing gentrification to a single landscape and context, the term risks losing meaning (Davidson & Lees 2005: 1167). Contemporary gentrification may still take the “traditional” form of individual actors renovating disinvested inner-city homes. It may also be driven by government bodies (state-led gentrification), corporate developers, or a combination (Davidson 2007). However, it may also include other occupancy types, including industrial and commercial sites as well as new-build developments. These sites may not directly displace residents but do so indirectly by lessening the sense of place of low-income residents. In particular, the scope of “typical” gentrification locations has been widened from the inner-city to include city suburbs and even rural populations (Davidson & Lees 2005: 1167-1169). These elements of gentrification will be applied to Tempe to critically examine the nature of its gentrification experience.

Even the definition of the “middle class” has diversified from the traditional Anglo-Saxon nuclear family on a middle-range income to include other ethnicities, sexualities, family structures, incomes, and professions (Davidson & Lees 2005: 1169). Ideas of class in gentrification are of utmost importance this thesis, not so much as a socio-economic demographic but as the cultures associated with class identities. The habitus of the “new middle class” – their dispositions, practices, and beliefs – in gentrifying inner-city areas have powerful transformative qualities. It was argued by Dowling (2009: 836-838) that gentrifying
places “bind” class groups together. This is achieved through the collective production and reproduction of classed processes, experiences, and emotions that match middle-class understandings of respectability. Similar processes were discussed previously by Skeggs (1997:75) in relation to working-class women and their attempts to escape their class identity through discourses of “improvement”. These “improvement” discourses can be identified in the middle classes who are gentrifying working-class inner-city suburbs. Bridge & Dowling (2001: 93) and Zukin et al. (2009: 47) argued that “improvements” were not just about renovating residential properties, but included the wider aesthetics and “lifestyles” associated with the suburb. The nature of local retail spaces were identified as particularly important to the incoming middle-classes in creating a sense of place, with restaurants, cafes, and boutiques being among the most commonly desired elements. This understanding of classed identities and their importance to both gentrification and sense-of-place analysis will assist in interpreting the place narratives of Tempe residents during a period of accelerating gentrification.

Another way in which senses of place and gentrification intersect is through nostalgia. The sense of place of long-term residents in places undergoing gentrification is often informed by nostalgia. Nostalgia has the reputation of being a melancholic, defeatist, and sentimental reaction to progress and change; however, a post-structuralist reading does not accept this singular reading. British sociologists Michael Pickering and Emily Keightley (2006: 921) identified nostalgia as a composite and complex combination of “loss, lack, and longing”. They acknowledge that while the emotion most often arises in times of divergence (such as gentrification within a suburb), the relationship between past and present is reflexive and active: not a one-way memory. This is how nostalgia is understood in this thesis. Pickering and Keightley’s (2006) appreciation of how changing times and uncertainly may alter views of the past and their relative importance will be particularly applicable in comprehending the senses of place and attachment of long-term Tempe residents – those for whom belonging is developed through lived experience. This is in contrast to those residents of the gentrifying class, whose place connections are better understood through “elective belonging”: people that elect to belong (or not belong) to certain communities based on the perceived alignment of a place with their sense of self and certain ways of living (Savage et al. 2005; Davidson et al. 2012).

Such a conceptual framework is vital to address the case of IKEA in Tempe as an example of how big-box retail may challenge senses of place in local residential communities. A
geographical understanding of sense of place which is open to complexity and contestation is necessary to critically handle the individual place narratives which deliver insight into how residents construct senses of place. A sense of place that accepts the fluid nature of place relations is particularly crucial when the place in question is experiencing gentrification. An equally open understanding of what gentrification entails is thus required. If a more traditionally stringent definition was applied, important relations between the actions of corporations, governments, and residents that concern sense of place would be ultimately overlooked and the importance of class may be downplayed.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter identified the scope of existing scholarship pertaining to big-box retail. Dominated by business-related perspectives, three bodies of work were shown to contribute to the growing understanding of this industry model: development history, corporate strategising, and local economic challenges. What remains lacking is analysis of the cultural imprint of big-box retail on surrounding residential neighbourhoods. This gap provided the impetus for this thesis, and for a perspective that seeks to broaden understanding beyond business and economics, towards more inclusive community planning processes. The ‘progressive’ works of Massey (1994) and Davidson and Lees (2005; 2010), on sense of place and gentrification respectively, are drawn upon to provide an alternative conceptual framework for analysis. Their ideas of multiplicity, inclusion, and conflict provide means to understand resident narratives in light of the overall research aims.
3. Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the research methods used in this thesis. Section 3.2 outlines ethical considerations made prior to, during, and following data collection. Section 3.3 discusses critical reflexivity in this process. Section 3.4 comprises three sub-sections exploring qualitative methods of recruitment, semi-structured mobile interviewing, and mental mapping. Section 3.5 describes the data analysis techniques used in this thesis. The place of rigour in each method is specifically outlined in Appendix A.

3.2 Ethics

O’Connell-Davidson & Layder (1994:55) described research ethics as a concern with:

The conduct of researchers and their responsibilities and obligations to those involved in the research, including sponsors, the general public and most importantly, the subjects of the research.

Because qualitative research commonly involves human subjects, the professional relationship between researcher and the researched is important, as are potential implications of the research on the people, places and environments involved (Dowling 2010: 28). Ethics were considered both formally and informally to fit the variable and unpredictable nature of qualitative research (Hay 1998: 65). A formal ethics review was conducted by the University of Wollongong Human Research Ethics Committee, who considered the aims of the research, suitability of methods, and the balance of risk and reward for researcher and participants (Appendix B). Ethics were also negotiated informally during data collection via a flexible ‘ethics-on-the-move’ approach.
3.2.1 Informed Consent and Confidentiality

Explicit consent of participants was vital in the collection of primary data. It was the researcher’s responsibility to ensure adequate information was available to the participant to allow informed decisions to be made (Dowling 2010: 29). Furthermore, the privacy of participant identity, stories, and opinions, along with the privileged nature of this information, were primary considerations during the research (Dowling 2010: 28).

A number of steps were taken to ensure that consent was given by participants in an informed manner. A Participant Information Sheet (Appendix C) outlining the research aims, data collection process and sample questions was provided to all participants. Recording methods and data storage procedures were also explicitly outlined here along with the rights of the participant. Such rights cover identity protection via pseudonym and withdrawal of involvement. Names and contact details were recorded during the recruitment process, but destroyed at the request of individual participants.

A Consent Form (Appendix D) was also presented to each participant. Participants were able to consent to individual data collection processes separately. This ensured understanding of the interview structure and the final destination of their stories: an Honours thesis. The Consent Form also allowed participants to select their desired level of anonymity: their real name or a pseudonym. Written consent was supplemented by verbal consent during a discussion of the research prior to each interview – an opportunity for the participant to question the researcher. The only occasion on which this process was deviated from was while interviewing a Macedonian couple. The multi-part nature of the English-language consent form was perceived as potentially confusing and off-putting. In that case, consent was gained verbally via a Macedonian interpreter before the interview.

3.2.2 Ethics in the Field: potential for harm to both researcher and participant

This research did not seek strong personal views or intimate details. Discussions were more concerned with place and the participants’ experiences of place rather than the participant as a person. However, the potential for upsetting emotional responses to arise that may constitute “psycho-social” harm could not be completely eradicated (Dowling 2010: 29). It was necessary to adopt an ‘ethics-on-the-move’ mindset, prepared to be flexible with discussion topics and to redirect conversation if necessary. In retrospect, no interviews
elicited responses that could be considered to induce Dowling’s’ definition of harm. The strongest concerns were from some older participants and concerned confidentiality. On these occasions, the right to a pseudonym was exercised.

The safety of the researcher was also a potential source of harm. The grounding of this research in concepts of place required the researcher to venture into an unfamiliar suburb and into participant’s residences. A research team format was floated as a safer method of data collection, yet it was resolved that a single researcher would be a more effective initiator of open conversation for the subject. In this situation, a team of researchers visiting a person’s home could be construed as intimidating. Stringent reporting methods were put in place to ensure the safety of the researcher during interviewing, involving SMS ‘check-ins’ and ‘check-outs’ to the supervisor before and after each session.

3.3 Critical Reflexivity

Reflexivity is considered to be a “constant, self-conscious scrutiny”, pertaining to both the research design and the researcher (England 1993: 31). Recognised as essential to ethical research, it holds an especially important place in qualitative research due to the emphasis on subjective knowledge (Dowling 2010). Qualitative data is often derived from human interactions and dialogues interpreted by an equally human researcher. In the case of research involving individual lived experiences – like senses of place – gaining personal understandings and interpretations of the subject is the prime objective (Alvesson & Sköldberg 2009: 31). Consequently, the placement of individual experiences within wider contexts must be carefully considered to ensure meaningful responses.

Researcher-participant interactions involve power relations that must be negotiated. The relationship is often asymmetrical due to the researcher’s capacity to shape the research design and data interpretation: and by extension, the academic or policy issues the research may inform (McDowell 1992; Dowling 2010). Establishing rapport with participants as a means to try to equalise power relations required the negotiation of “speaking positions”. Here, participants are recognised as purveyors of knowledge to which the researcher was otherwise not privy (Dowling 2010: 33). The researcher had to be aware of power and make it a point of constant reflection to ensure participant narratives were reported as faithfully as possible.
Issues of researcher positionality can never be fully eradicated: however, they were mitigated in this research through reflexive activity. In this thesis, reflexivity was approached in both fixed and ongoing ways. The formal ethics consideration process highlighted the nature of the researcher-participant interactions, prompting consideration of researcher power and methods of negotiation to attain the most accurate results. Issues of gender, socio-economic status, age, and outsideness were also raised. Such considerations were consolidated and articulated in a positionality statement prior to data collection (Appendix E).

Positionality issues were continually reassessed during and after data collection. As suggested by Dowling (2010), a research diary was kept by the researcher over the duration of the research, in order to develop ideas and to reflect on any interactions that took place. Specific entries were made following each interview. These were made based on the recommendations of Latham (2003) to ‘debrief’ on not only the data collected but on the changing positionality of the researcher with each new interaction. Positionality was considered at the conclusion of the research as a reflective activity that highlighted the power of qualitative research in its ability to alter or reconfirm long-standing assumptions (Appendix F).

3.4 Approach

This research lent itself to a mixed-methods approach. Tashakkori & Teddlie (2003:2) argued that mixed-methods can incorporate qualitative and quantitative research traditions in unique ways, with results amounting to “more than the sum of its components”. The final combination of data collection methods was a semi-structured interview and a mental mapping exercise. Participants were given the option to take part in a sedentary discussion or a combined sedentary-mobile discussion according to their time and ability to participate. A participant survey was also considered for use but was dismissed on account of the limited time and scope for research. Both IKEA Tempe management and Marrickville Council were also contacted by email to extend an invitation for their involvement in the research. The following sections outline recruitment methods and a discussion of aforementioned data collection methods.
3.4.1 Recruitment

Participants were required to meet two selection criteria: a resident of Tempe over the age of 18. The recruitment process was designed for maximum variation sampling, referred to by Patton (2002) as sampling as wide a range of residents as possible. Ranges included age, gender, socio-economic background and ethnicity (see also Bradshaw & Stratford 2005). Recruitment methods included a letter-box drop of an A4 pamphlet (See Appendix G) to each Tempe household, and social networking via the community Facebook page, Tempe2020 (Figure 3.1). Email contact with the Tempe2020 page administrator resulted in a number of promotional posts on the page. Snowballing was another important recruitment method. It quickly became apparent that the use of established social networks was of utmost importance considering the limited timeframe, with neighbourhood conversations often resulting in new participants (Bradshaw & Stratford 2005). Researcher-directed snowballing was also employed, via social media and visits to meetings of a local seniors group.

Despite best intentions, the nature of the research resulted in partiality in the recruitment process. Much of the initial interest in participation came from a specific demographic: technology-savvy young couples, young professionals and young families who regularly engaged with social media. Only a small number of older residents were engaged via the letter box drop. The original sample size of 20 – designed to enable meaningful analysis in a limited timeframe (as outlined by Bradshaw & Stratford 2005) – expanded over time to 26 participants to allow for a more balanced demographic mixture of participants. Older residents specifically later targeted through the local seniors group. While attendance at the
group meeting made recruitment easier, it was within a limited social circle – albeit one up until that point underrepresented in the sample.

Tempe has a well-established post-war migrant population, largely of Greek and Macedonian decent (as outlined in Chapter 1), and it was important to attempt to include these residents in the research. Contact with this demographic nevertheless proved difficult due to their insular community structure and a significant language barrier. This was overcome through persistent snowballing efforts from participants with Macedonian neighbours as well as through the employment of a University of Wollongong student of Macedonian heritage to interpret interviews. While a small number with Macedonian residents were subsequently included, they remained significantly underrepresented in the sample. Other missing voices included residents from Indigenous backgrounds and from other smaller migrant groups, including Vietnamese and Pacific Islanders.

The final participant list is outlined below in Table 3.1.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Length of Residency</th>
<th>Tempe as Birthplace</th>
<th>Interview Type</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allison Taylor</td>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>30-50</td>
<td>12 years</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>S, W, M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patrick McInerney</td>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>30-50</td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>S, M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laurel Horton</td>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>60+</td>
<td>30+ years</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>S, M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert (Bob) Horton</td>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>60+</td>
<td>30+ years</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>S, M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lorne Hyde</td>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>40-60</td>
<td>~ 15 years</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>S, W, M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashleigh</td>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>20-40</td>
<td>~ 6 years</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>S, W, M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ellen (Ellie) McNamara</td>
<td></td>
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<td>20-40</td>
<td>~ 8 years</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>S, M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lara Coleman</td>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>20-40</td>
<td>~ 4 years</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>S, M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul</td>
<td></td>
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<td>20-40</td>
<td>&gt; 1 year</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>S, W, M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sean Tooker</td>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>30-50</td>
<td>~ 15 years</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>S, W, M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jenny</td>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>20-40</td>
<td>12 years</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>S, W, M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vicki Devane</td>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>30-50</td>
<td>19 years</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>S, M</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peter Gamble</td>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>40-60</td>
<td>5-10 years</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Raymond Smith</td>
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<td>60+</td>
<td>30+</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>S, W</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lorraine Worland</td>
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<td>60+</td>
<td>30+ years</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<tr>
<td>James (Jim) Smith</td>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>60+</td>
<td>30+</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>S, M</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meredith-Ann Williams</td>
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<td>15 years</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>S, M</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bridgette</td>
<td></td>
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<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Elizabeth Ahlston</td>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>60+</td>
<td>&gt; 10 years</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>S, M</td>
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<tr>
<td>Robert York</td>
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<td>Male</td>
<td>60+</td>
<td>9 years</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>S, M</td>
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<td>Maureen Hilder</td>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>60+</td>
<td>30+</td>
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<td>Female</td>
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<td>18 years</td>
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<td>S, M</td>
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<tr>
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<td>~ 3 years</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>S, M</td>
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<td>Emily</td>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>60+</td>
<td>30+</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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<td>Gail</td>
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<td>30+</td>
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<td>S</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phillip</td>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>60+</td>
<td>30+</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>S</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interview Types: S= sedentary  W= walking  M=mental mapping  P=phone
3.4.2 Semi-Structured Mobile Interviewing

Semi-structured interviewing induced conversation between researcher and participant, shaped by loosely predetermined topics. This allowed the researcher to collect relevant information whilst allowing participants a degree of flexibility in how the topics were addressed (Dunn 2010). The benefits of face-to-face contact in qualitative research were clear: without face-to-face contact, important non-verbal information within ‘social cues’ remains invisible to the researcher, compromising the overall quality of the data (cf. Opdenakker 2006). Semi-structured interviewing provided detailed understandings of how meanings, experiences and opinions differed between residents. They were ideal, therefore, for research on senses of place, gentrification and the impacts of incoming big-box retail.

Previous studies show that when research is concerned with place, mobile interviewing may provide more meaningful data than traditional sedentary methods (Evan & Jones 2011; Jones et al. 2008; Carpiano 2009). Mobile interviewing, walking interviews, or “conversations in place” allow participants to interact with the place in question, based on the premise that surroundings act as triggers for stories and interpretation (Evans & Jones 2011). This methodology is based on Casey’s (2000, 2001) “constitutive co-ingredience” of place and human identity, in which the inseparable bond between these factors is acknowledged (see also Anderson 2004: 254). Combining the works of humanist academics, including Merleau-Ponty (1962), Tuan (1974) and Relph (1976), Casey argued that the human experience is spatial and can be harnessed to access concealed otherwise knowledge about self and place (see also Anderson 2004).

Comparison of data collected in mobile and sedentary interviews in other studies supported Casey’s (2000, 2001) argument. Evans & Jones (2011) and Jones et al. (2008) discovered that mobile techniques produced a higher “place-to-story ratio” with fewer tendencies to follow tangents. Participants were also found to talk more naturally about their relationship to place due to visual prompting. Stories were less biographical than in sedentary interviews, focussed more on specific places and buildings (Evans & Jones 2011). However, Mobile methods were sometimes limited by dependency on fine weather and the time and physical ability of participants to take part (Carpiano 2009; Evans & Jones 2011).
Various mobile methodologies have been designed, ranging from casual conversation while walking through a landscape to carefully designed tours of predetermined locations. Which is selected depends on the research. Pre-determined researcher-selected routes allow cross-sectioning of responses and focus on only relevant places (Jones et al. 2008; Evans & Jones 2011). However, subject-led methods encourage equal researcher-subject power relations and provide locations and stories important to the specific subject. Figure 3.2 lists popular walking methods and academics who have pioneered their use.

For this thesis, multiple interviewing methods were combined. Participants were invited to take part in an hour-long interview. During the interview, eight primary topics were raised for discussion from a pre-prepared interview guide (Appendix H). Questions included keywords designed to act as triggers for place-specific responses. As defined by Dunn (2010: 106), most questions were descriptive or storytelling questions, followed by opinion and structural styles to encourage detailed responses. Each primary topic was designated up to 12 secondary questions – prompts to expand discussions where necessary (Dunn 2010: 105-108).

Adapting the strategies of Evans & Jones (2011) and Dunn (2010: 108), interviews were structured in pyramid format, allowing easy-to-answer questions about the participants’ biography to assist in establishing rapport. Accordingly, interviews began with two ‘biography’ topics, discussed while seated at a Tempe location of the participant’s choosing.
Participants were then asked to take the researcher on a walk around the suburb of Tempe, reminiscent of the participatory walks of Clark & Emmel (2008). While walking, six ‘place’ topics were discussed, addressing the opening of IKEA, interactions with the retailer, community reactions, and the significance of IKEA for future development (See Appendix H). Walking routes were recorded using pocket GPS technology to create ‘spatialised transcripts’. Jones et al. (2008) and Evans & Jones (2011) argued that GPS enables the matching of participant quotes to particular locations, and a comparison of tracks in a GIS. This capacity was made possible here through use of QStarz GPS trackers (although resulting GPS tracks were not utilised heavily in further analysis in this thesis).

The ability of mobile interviews to produce higher place-story ratios was corroborated in this research (cf. Evans & Jones 2011). Mobile interviews were often longer, with more place-specific insights gained into senses of place in Tempe compared with sedentary or phone interviews. Memories and stories that may not have been otherwise shared were triggered by buildings, green spaces and other landmarks and tied back to topical discussion. This is not to say that sedentary interviews did not elicit spatially-oriented discussion: there were simply a smaller number of less spatially-specific stories offered.

Limitations raised by Carpiano (2009) and Evans & Jones (2011) were confirmed in this research. Mobile interviews were conducted during ten of twenty-four sessions. Mobility was limited by the physical mobility of elderly and/or injured subjects, wet weather, and the presence of babies and/or small children that were asleep at the time of interview or which prevented ease of mobility for participants. Daylight also limited mobility; the sole participant interviewed at night expressing discomfort at the idea of being outside in darkness (cf. Gallan and Gibson 2011). In the 14 sedentary interviews, spatially-specific responses were encouraged using an A3 map of Tempe provided as part of the mental mapping exercise (see Figure 3.3). Many participants referred to the map during discussions, often to indicate spatial relationships within the community or locations of specific objects/events. Spatially-oriented responses had to be verbally prompted in the single phone interview conducted for the research.
Mental mapping (or cognitive mapping as it is sometimes known) was included in the research design as a complementary strategy to spatially-oriented responses. Kitchin (1994) described cognitive mapping as the “mental representation of spatial knowledge” – it attempts to capture spatial understanding of place in graphical form. The mental mapping exercise employed in this research was based on previous advances made by Brennan-Horley (2010) and Gibson et al. (2012) in their cultural mapping research in Darwin, Sydney, and Wollongong. Here, mental maps were provided at the beginning of each interview, at which time participants were asked to draw where they ‘felt’ the extent of the Tempe community to be, disregarding any knowledge of official suburb boundaries. This exercise not only encouraged subjects think spatially about their responses from the outset, but also formed an ice-breaker and reference mechanism throughout the interviews. As previously mentioned, the map became an especially important reference point in sedentary interviews.

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3.4.3 Mental Mapping

Mental mapping (or cognitive mapping as it is sometimes known) was included in the research design as a complementary strategy to spatially-oriented responses. Kitchin (1994) described cognitive mapping as the “mental representation of spatial knowledge” – it attempts to capture spatial understanding of place in graphical form. The mental mapping exercise employed in this research was based on previous advances made by Brennan-Horley (2010) and Gibson et al. (2012) in their cultural mapping research in Darwin, Sydney, and Wollongong. Here, mental maps were provided at the beginning of each interview, at which time participants were asked to draw where they ‘felt’ the extent of the Tempe community to be, disregarding any knowledge of official suburb boundaries. This exercise not only encouraged subjects think spatially about their responses from the outset, but also formed an ice-breaker and reference mechanism throughout the interviews. As previously mentioned, the map became an especially important reference point in sedentary interviews.
The argument made by Brennan-Horley (2010) as to the selection of topographic-style base maps over free-hand sketch mapping was employed here. While sketch-maps can provide insight into the importance of specific areas relative to each other, base maps are easily digitised and georeferenced for use in a GIS to compare results among participants (Brennan-Horley 2010; Matei et al. 2001; Vajjhala 2005). In this project, GIS capability enabled the identification and presentation of spatial patterns of sense of place, an additional layer of insight for the research.

3.5 Analysis
Narrative analysis was employed to examine the qualitative data collected. According to Wiles et al. (2005: 90), narrative analysis attempts to interpret and understand the layers of meaning presented in interview dialogue and the connections between them. This covers processes developed from conversational analysis and ethnography harnessed by geographers interested in the “dynamics of everyday life” (Wiles et al. 2005: 90). Narrative analysis was an appropriate choice due to the interest of this thesis in the senses of place experienced by

Figure 3.4: Example of a completed mental map

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Tempe residents in their residential suburb and how IKEA’s entry may have influenced these senses.

This method was also well-suited because the data gained through interviews predominantly constituted participant’s personal experiences and stories. Whether a list of facts, a description, or evaluation of an event, they were stories told from within specific socio-spatial contexts and thus required deeper analysis (Wiles et. al. 2005: 89-90). Moss (2005: 44) suggested that the location of the body in place and its interaction with that place would influence responses. For participants of this thesis, responses were influenced by length of residency in Tempe, personal history, age, and the history of Tempe as understood by each participant. These were considered contributory layers of participant’s narratives. The context in which interviewing took place was also considered as influential (Moss 2005: 44). According to Wiles et al. (2005: 92), such inspection can reveal patterns and inconsistencies within narratives that may not be fully recognised by the participant themselves. By deconstructing the data in this manner, knowledge could be extended from what was said to the ways in which it was said and contextual elements that informed the stories were made apparent.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has sought an inclusive description of methodology in this thesis. Recruitment was designed to establish positive rapport with potential participants in a limited timeframe. Face-to-face researcher-participant interaction, often in the private space of the participant’s residence, required careful consideration of ethics, both formal and ongoing. Flexibility in the semi-structured interview process was crucial to the collection of meaningful results from each participant, no matter their availability. Flexibility also allowed for positive rapport and the collection of candid qualitative data through topics tailored *ad hoc* to suit individual response style. Spatial elements of mobile interviewing and mental mapping enabled the focus on place to remain central, with personal lived experiences articulated spatially.
4. Before the Big-Box: senses of place in Tempe

4.1 Introduction

This chapter is the first substantive results chapter of this thesis. It outlines senses of place in the Tempe residential population. The combined works of Massey (1994), and Davidson & Lees (2005; 2010) offer a framework to critically examine people-place relationships as processes characterised by plurality, interaction and potential conflict. This chapter identifies three overarching Tempe place identities, exploring points of convergence and divergence in how these identities inform senses of place. The importance of gentrification in these senses of place is also underscored. The chapter is organised into three corresponding sections – a community in transition; a downtrodden place; and a place of attachment.

4.2 A Community in Transition

Senses of place among participants were undoubtedly varied, as sense of place is essentially an individual experience. Nevertheless, identification of Tempe as a changing place was consistent across participant’s narratives. Participants were asked to list words to describe Tempe, with common responses including “changing”, “growing”, “up-and-coming”, “a good investment”, and “inspiring”. These descriptors invoked discussions of gentrification from those participants born-and-bred in Tempe, right through to those that arrived as late as January 2011. These gentrification narratives followed what is understood academically as a traditional (or “classical”) script: middle class people moving into a working-class area and renovating old homes. Ellie, a resident who has lived in Tempe intermittently over the past decade, discussed her experience of this process in Tempe:

We had a very different experience the first time we were in Tempe. The biggest difference I noticed related to the population, certainly at this end of Tempe down near the station. There’s a lot more young families now, whereas back then it was mostly older European post-war immigrants. There wasn’t a lot of renovating going on. Whereas now you drive down the street and every second house is
getting renovated to billyo. The affluence of the suburb has changed since we were last here.

Here Ellie described the traditional gentrification script – residential restoration in working-class neighbourhoods by those financially able. The characteristics of people reportedly moving in reinforced this traditional script, as articulated by Peter:

There’s been a lot of younger people moving in. There’s gay and there’s straight, some with kids, some without kids. There’s different nationalities as well. It’s quite cosmopolitan.

Such typologies appeared to be informed middle-class ideas (cf. Dowling 2009). When connecting material and social changes in Tempe, Lorne identified apparent house-pride and disposable income as key attributes of newcomers:

Those people often have lots of disposable income. You’ll see them doing up their houses and raising the standard of the property. I certainly notice the change in types. Those are the sorts of people who take a lot of pride in their homes.

The inference was, arguably, that the populations living in Tempe previously – industrial working-class families, migrant families – did not take pride in their homes, or could not express it because of limited means.

Despite increasing affluence, Ashleigh claimed that: “Many of us are not posh people in the first place. People that move here tend not to be super-conventional”. Through the phrase “not super-conventional”, Ashleigh also referred to Tempe’s designation within the Sydney’s inner-west as a growing hub of ‘alternative’ politics and identities: artists, diverse sexualities, Green politics, and non-conformists (cf. Gibson and Homan 2004; Gorman-Murray 2006; Gorman-Murray and Waitt 2009).

Sean, a resident since the 1990s, dates gentrification in Tempe from the 2000s, later than for neighbouring Marrickville suburbs (See Chapter 1):

Within about five or six years, maybe the early naughties, houses were being gentrified. There was a new demographic moving in. I said earlier there were break-ins and lots of problem kids from families that were a bit dysfunctional: they dropped off. The crime rate has dropped with that in-surge; urban
professionals that have moved in. There’s more civic-minded people, there’s more house-proud folk fixing up their houses.

In this equation, traditional gentrification – middle-class young urban professionals renovating homes – is equated with civic-mindedness. This was in contrast to original residents, implied to belong to a criminal (under)class (cf. Davidson 2010). Allison noted the increasing pace of gentrification activity: “It’s been a gradual process, but particularly so in the last four or five years”. Allison’s husband, Steven, spoke of his recognition of change through growing instances of owner-occupier homes:

Tempe had the highest percentage of rental properties. Lots of them were used as investment properties ‘cause this was 30 percent cheaper than a kilometre away. In the last three to four years, everyone is selling up. That’s probably the biggest change, people coming in who have ownership of the house and not paying cheap rent.

Traditional gentrification scripts were also reinforced by the reasons gentrifiers chose Tempe. Many participants cited low property prices as the key – and sometimes only – ‘pull’ factors drawing urban professionals and families to Tempe. Bridgette illustrated such arguments in her personal biography:

We moved here nine years ago from Rose Bay. The reason we bought in Tempe was because we couldn’t afford the eastern suburbs. We started looking in the inner-west and Newtown. It was quite competitive, the housing market. Then we thought, what’s Tempe like? We didn’t know anything about it. We did a few properties and thought, they’re bigger than Newtown, and it wasn’t that far away. It was affordability really in the end, and it wasn’t far from the city. But there wasn’t anything else that was appealing that drew us to it; it was what we could afford.

Bridgette’s comments about the importance of proximity to Sydney’s CBD and to more desirable suburbs reflected the extent to which senses of place were bound up in broader processes that have accelerated housing prices across Sydney – especially in the eastern suburbs, and nearby Newtown, which have more fully undergone gentrification. Such thoughts were reinforced by Lara’s experience of buying in Tempe:
We realised there are a whole lot of other people our age doing exactly the same thing. Its seven minutes away from Newtown but the houses, well four years ago, were about 400-grand cheaper.

Elizabeth and Jenny’s narratives further confirmed the ‘pull’ of price and location, as Tempe in-migrants with specific renovation plans. Elizabeth relocated to Tempe after renovating in Rozelle, Sydney:

I was not prepared to go out to Terry Hills or out into what I considered to be the ‘woop woop’. I thought that this was a fantastic bargain, because the man had to sell and it had not been renovated.

In Jenny’s case, the intention to renovate was more a by-product of the house she purchased rather than specific renovation interest:

I bought a unit in Marrickville 17 years ago and really liked the area. Then left a job and got a nice long-service-leave payout and was able to buy a house. At that point I couldn’t afford Marrickville for a house. I moved across to Tempe ‘cause it was the next best thing. I bought the house in April 2000. It was a renovator’s delight.

The narratives of Bridgette, Lara, Elizabeth, and Jenny succinctly explained why the middle classes were moving to working-class Tempe. Tempe was increasingly influenced by city-wide changes associated with Sydney’s global city status and economic reorientation. Growth in service and creative industries concentrated economic activity in Sydney’s CBD, related structurally to escalation in house prices of inner-city suburbs (Gibson 2006). The busy (and dirty) Princes Highway and severe aircraft noise delayed Tempe, Sydenham and St. Peters from being caught up in these macro-scale transformations – a delay in the onset of gentrification that would eventually relent. Tempe relented, according to participants, in the mid-2000s. Tempe’s proximity to the CBD, combined with substantially lower housing prices than in surrounding suburbs, was the primary reason gentrification ‘took off’ in Tempe.

4.2.1 “Old Tempe, New Tempe”

How did overarching identification of Tempe as a gentrifying place manifest in senses of place? Participants commonly imagined that gentrification divided residents into two
generational groups with separate senses of place. Reflecting Davidson’s (2010) previous findings, fantasies of post-gentrified suburban social mixing were not uniformly substantiated in evidence of actual interactions between old-time residents and newcomers. The division was labelled by Patrick as “Old Tempe, New Tempe”:

Old Tempe, they’re much older. It’s very working-class: they come from the bus-and-tram era of Tempe. The other half of Old Tempe is the Macedonians. They’re grandparents who originally bought here, still struggle with English and they’re very insular. It’s very hard to break into that community. A number of us have tried but they don’t step out of their group because they still struggle with English. The other group is people like myself who have come in, in their late 30s, early 40s, with kids. Predominantly middle-class, university-educated.

Perceptions of such division were consistent across the board. Age, life-stage, and the length of residence in Tempe appeared to form fluid social boundaries within which generalisations could be made. Maureen, a born-and-bred Tempe resident in her 70s, discussed generational differences and feelings of detachment from “New Tempe”:

I knew them to say hello to, but not that well. The neighbours around me, we look after each other. But that’s as far as it goes. They’re too different to me. They’re a lot younger and they’ve got different ideas.

Likewise, Jim spoke of a changing social mixture and feelings of separation in that mix:

The social mix is different. Once I knew everyone in the street. Now I know the people either side of me and that’s about it. They don’t want to know you, the new ones, the young ones. They walk past you in the street when they’re walking their bloody dogs. You’re not in that mix.

Such perceptions appear to have escalated with the introduction of community social media: especially the Tempe2020 Facebook group. Patrick, the creator and administrator of the group, spoke of the group as a source of contention between “old” and “new”, with exclusion felt by older residents lacking internet access:

Patrick: “Old Tempe” and “New Tempe” talk. Occasionally there’s tiffs.

Interviewer: What over?
Patrick: Believe it or not, the webpage.

Interviewer: Really?

Patrick: They see it as exclusive, because not everyone has access to the internet: particularly older people. They see it as an exclusive culture. It was never the intention; it’s just the way people communicate.

It is important to recognise such divisions as particular, and as perceived. Participants often appeared to simplify complex residential relations via the old-new discourse. For example, the location of the ‘dividing line’ was ambiguous. The “new ones” for Jim included participants living in Tempe for anywhere between 19 years to less than 12 months. In contrast, participants recognised as gentrifiers covered a range of ages: from late 20s to retirees. Perceptions of the origins of Tempe’s gentrification also conflicted. Annie, a resident of three years, reported feeling like “part of the vanguard, some of the first ones who’d moved in”, while self-identified gentrifying participants like Sean and Vicki had moved in over 10 years prior. Such characteristics suggest complex transitional changes rather than an easily generalised divide.

Perceptions of “Old Tempe” were also simplified. This group was typically acknowledged as older residents that remain in Tempe from childhood, ‘born and bred’ during the mid-twentieth century. Many of these participants have in fact spent time elsewhere – Lorraine in southern Sydney for the early years of her marriage, and Bob migrating from England in 1984. Post-war migrant residents were also included here by younger participants, despite recognition of their European birthplaces. It became increasingly evident that the ‘divide’ was relatively ambiguous and difficult to define.

Perceptions of generational division were also, somewhat contradictorily, contested by other experience of the very same participants touting the existence of division. Patrick, who introduced me to the old-new concept, mentioned local history tours run by older residents as having instigated intergenerational mixing:

She’s (Laurel) the most amazing wealth of information. She’s the ‘Old Tempe’. She was born and bred in Tempe: I think she was born in the house she lives in now. She runs historical walks. The knowledge that she has! Everyone who did this walk, who were predominately ‘New Tempe’, had the best time. They know
about a number of historical buildings, not listed buildings, but just the history of the buildings in the area, particularly the shops up in the street. Just great stories.

Such knowledge-sharing in Tempe revealed the complexity of the influence of gentrification on senses of place. Notions of generational division and generalised differences were inconsistent with stories of willing intergenerational connections. Peter spoke of his disbelief in any form of division, citing strong friendships and street-based social interaction that were not limited by divisions of any kind:

I’ve noticed a lot of friendships. There’s street parties that we have on a regular basis. Ford over the road will have three or four parties every year, it’s an open door. I host a breakfast here every Easter Sunday. Somebody else has a post-Christmas, pre-new-year leftovers get-together. Two doors up, they hold the New Years Eve party. The couple that have just recent bought next door, they’re going to start a monthly barbeque. That sort of thing is constantly going on. You’ll say g’day, you’ll have a chat over the fence, you know damn well that you can knock on the door and talk to anyone if you’re in strife. If you need help, there’s no problem whatsoever.

Similarly, Bob and Laurel recalled the make-up of their annual street Christmas parties as bringing together a range of residents. This narrative was complex: it challenged perceptions of generational and cultural division; however the notion of ‘new people’ and apparent difference persisted:

Bob: It’s just a curious, strange mix...

Interviewer: Is there any common themes between the people that do come and the people that don’t?

Laurel: No.

Interviewer: It’s random?

Laurel: It’s random. We have a couple up the road, they’re a young couple

Bob: It’s driven by Todd...

Laurel: Who moved in a few years ago and started it. They’ve got three young kids, so they come. He’s a stockbroker. Then the Macedonians who have lived
here for about 30, 40 years, they come, the Vietnamese will come, Sean and his wife over the road, they turn up. It’s a strange group of people who actually come out. The other people seem to sit behind their things, especially the new people moving into the street. It’s hard to really make contact with them.

Such complexity and variation in how ‘community’ was perceived by participants was also evident spatially, in the mental maps. As illustrated in Figure 4.1, many maps included all Tempe residential zones, using the physical boundaries of the Cooks River, Alexandra Canal/Sydney Airport, and the western rail line as a guide. However, a number of maps discounted the eastern residences from the ‘community’, with participants citing the Princes Highway as divisive for social interaction (Figure 4.2). Some interpretations included areas of neighbouring suburbs, most commonly Sydenham to the north (Figure 4.3). Such extension were justified by social interactions of participants with residents here, mainly through seniors group meetings held at St Peter’s Town Hall on Unwins Bridge Road, Sydenham.

From this discussion it was evident that the identification of Tempe by participants as a place of gentrification-related transitions coloured participant’s senses of place in complex and often conflicting ways: both between and within individuals. Ambiguity and conflicting evidence surrounded the widespread generalisations of generational division following gentrification. Despite such complexity, identification of Tempe as a residential population in transition was crucial to the senses of place of participants collectively.
Figure 4.1: Example of a mental map where the participant has used the physical boundaries of Tempe as a guide

Figure 4.2: Example of a mental map where the participant has excluded residences in eastern Tempe
4.3 A Downtrodden Place

4.3.1 Middle-Class perceptions of economic stagnation

A second primary identity informing senses of place was Tempe as a downtrodden place. It fell into two intertwining discourses of stagnation and neglect. A strikingly uniform refrain – especially considering Massey’s (1994) argument for multiplicity and complexity – was participant’s perceptions of Tempe as economically stagnant. The decline of heavy industry along the Princes Highway in Tempe since Sydney’s transition to a service-based economy featured similarly in each narrative. Older residents, including Robert, recalled the Princes Highway as an active industrial district that has gradually receded: “There were about three woollen mills in the area that employed a lot of people. There were other warehouses and industrial sites which gradually closed down”.

Maureen and Ray, both older residents, recalled Tempe as once a “fantastic shopping centre” and that “Marrickville was second rate compared to Tempe”. Maureen spoke of the vibrant

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Figure 4.3: Example of a mental map where the participant has included areas of Sydenham in their interpretation
retail and service outlets formerly operating along the Princes Highway and on Unwins Bridge Road in Sydenham:

We had three butchers, two barbers, three hairdressers, a boot-maker, a hardware shop, a grocers shop, a milk bar, a place that did motor repairs, a baker, a bank, a post office and a police station. It was wonderful.

The wane of heavy and retail industries from the 1970s onwards created a landscape perceived by participants extensively as “stagnant”, “ugly”, and “decaying”. Peter described Tempe as “a downtrodden little suburb, not somewhere you would go voluntarily.” Such associations commonly focused on retail decline specifically, which appeared to be a result of changes and additions to the assemblage of Tempe over time. The advent of cars – allowing bulk purchasing and transportation of goods from retailers outside the local area – and smaller household sizes typical of gentrifying areas, were two such changes to affect Tempe retail. Others were referenced by participants. For instance, retail decline was associated by some participants with the advent of shopping centres, namely, the 1987 opening of Marrickville Metro. Laurel blamed what she perceived as the embattled local economy on the opening of the Marrickville complex and the closure of particular industries – here, the Tempe Bus Depot. She also mentions the increased storage capacity of refrigeration technology as contributing to retail decline (cf. Gibson et al. 2013):

Butchers shops, you had them ‘cause in those days you used to go and buy your meat every day. Then people got refrigerators. Then you get bigger supermarket chains and they’re cheaper. People go there and shops gradually close down. Once the bank moved out, you had to go to Sydenham. Now they’ve closed the bank at Sydenham so you have to go to Marrickville. Then of course the depot closed. The sandwich shops used to supply lunches for the guys that worked at the depot: when the bus depot closed, that was less customers. A general decline all round.

Participants intuitively understood the premise of Tempe as an assembled place: its gradual decline an amalgam of different pathways of causation between macroscale processes (globalisation, decline of heavy industry), local changes in retail (shopping centres) and the advent of twentieth century domestic technologies (cars, fridges). Other enduring perceptions of stagnation were amplified by proposed retail development at neighbouring Wolli Creek, as articulated by Lorraine:
They’ve got Metro open and now, on the other side of Cooks River, they’re opening a Woolworths. These little shops are never going to be there again, I don’t think. The little shops are going.

Heavy traffic on the Princes Highway necessitated lengthy clearways in both direction and was considered by some participants to have made parking to shop problematic. Nevertheless it is interesting to note that similar retail effects have not been experienced along the Princes Highway in Newtown, only two kilometres north and closer to the CBD. Elizabeth, like many others, spoke of parking issues as crucial to the perceived decline of Tempe retail:

While we have that expressway going through, I don’t think it’s going to make much difference. I can’t see anyone making that [the Princes Highway] a viable shopping centre because there’s nowhere to stop. Everything these days seems to depend on whether you can get parking. You go somewhere like Broadway [shopping centre] which is kind of like a Mecca for me ‘cause there’s always parking. Having this clearway though Tempe, unless you know the area very well and know you can park in one of the back streets there and they get very congested too.

The overarching perception among participants of Tempe was of the suburb as economically stagnant. Arguably, however, this contrasted with observable light-industrial activity, illustrating instead the suburb’s growing middle-classness. The number of empty shops in Tempe and Sydenham is suggestive of decline in local retail (See Figure 1.6) – although this is offset by the prosperity of retail in places where Tempe residents do shop – in nearby undercover shopping centres such as Marrickville Metro and Broadway. More accurately, the shifting local geography of retail spending has left local independent shops unviable (rather than as an outcome of economic stagnation, per se). Meanwhile, the local economy is definitely active. Instead of heavy industry leaving “desolate industrial sites” as Robert suggested, the far majority of industrial lots on the Princes Highway were, at the time of field work, found to be active, containing assorted light-industrial businesses (Figure 1.7). They might be ugly forms of light industry, but that is not the same thing as actual economic stagnation. How such businesses were considered by participants was well-summarised by Sean whilst walking along the Princes Highway:
The ugliness that’s around Tempe and everybody associates it with is right here: the crappy wrecking yards full of old cars. The façades are messy. You’ve got this hodge-podge arrangement, junk, neglected-looking and bomb-y cars.

Such perceptions of Tempe’s current mix of light industry reflected gentrifiers’ middle-class values of neatness, tidiness and cleanliness, rather than an accurate assessment of economic decay. Arguably too they de-valued industrial sites as symbols of Tempe’s working-class history. Such businesses departed from a middle-class gentrifier’s interpretation of ‘nice’ or ‘attractive’. Likewise, Paul’s comparison of Tempe to his former suburb of Dulwich Hill – a suburb at the western extremity of the Marrickville LGA that has undergone significant retail gentrification – suggested a middle-class reading of Tempe’s economic landscape:

When you live here, when you come from somewhere like Dulwich Hill that’s got a really good shopping area – a lot of cafes, a lot of things like that – here it’s a lot more restricted. It seems like there’s nothing there: a few car wreckers and a couple of pubs maybe. There’s nothing.

This revealed the particularity of classed senses of (a gentrifying) place. The “nothing” is not really nothing: all along the Princes Highway and in Tempe’s subsidiary main streets (Railway Road, Unwins Bridge Road) there remain many viable businesses in operation: smash repairers, wood suppliers, toolbox makers, sign-writers – even a specialist slot car racing toy shop, in the case of Railway Road. What there was “nothing” of were businesses serving local people only (the above examples more likely to attract customers from across Sydney), or that conformed to middle-class aspirations of main-street lifestyles associated with gentrification: an absence of cafes, eateries or bookstores to service Tempe’s growing middle-class.

4.3.2 Extra-local discourses of Tempe Tip

Identification of Tempe as stagnant was not solely informed by participant’s own perceptions of the economic landscape. Extra-local discourses of Tempe as a former waste disposal site – Tempe Tip – reinforced this place identity for some participants. Sean recalled reactions of colleagues to his move to Tempe as largely informed by ‘Tempe Tip’ discourses:
When we first bought here, everybody who I worked with, they said, “You bought a house? Up in Tempe, old Tempe Tip!” That was it, Tempe Tip and that’s the image that I think people had. The older generation will always say “Oh, I remember Tempe Tip”. I think they even made a movie called Tempe Tip.

The association of Tempe with Tempe Tip was also reported by Lara. She recalled interactions with elderly residents of Sydney’s north shore as evidence of discursive endurance through time and space:

Tempe Tip, that’s what people always associate it with. Where we go swimming at the local pool, there’s a couple of old nuns that swim there. We’re having this talk about Tempe and these nuns used to work at a very fancy North Shore school. They used to get sent down here and she says, “we hated it”. She says “We had a song we used to sing, “it’s a long way to Tip ‘a’ Tempe”’. So across Sydney – I grew up south, these ladies were north – and we’re going back 50 years. It’s always had that reputation.

The apparent strength of such discourses prior to IKEA’s arrival perpetuated this place identity – such that Tempe was widely perceived as undesirable, socially detached and unsafe. This was raised in Diane’s narrative of retiring to Tempe from the eastern suburbs: “My family wasn’t happy about it. They thought I’d moved into the back blocks”. Lorraine recalled similar reactions: “It was “Urgh, Tempe, yuck!””. That was Tempe. If you say Tempe, they automatically think of Tempe Tip, my generation, my age”.

Although widespread, Lorraine alluded to the generational specificity of such discourses. ‘Tempe Tip’ appeared to be perpetuated by Sydney residents who experienced the site as a functioning waste disposal facility. Peter also mentioned endurance when recalling non-residents’ identification of Tempe: “Tempe was always known as “where the tip is”. The tip hasn’t been here for years and years and years!”.

4.3.3 A Neglected Place?

Economic stagnation was also associated with feelings of neglect. Being forgotten by the government and wider public was perceived by Sean to result from Tempe being considered a “thoroughfare” between economically “active” and culturally “superior” suburbs. Other
participants showed similar understandings, with terms including “drive-through suburb” and “a dead suburb” applied by Annie and Lorne respectively.

Here ended any uniformity of participant’s ‘downtrodden’ narratives. Rationales that explained perceptions of neglect were messy and multiple. For some older residents, perceived governmental neglect began when the former St Peters Council merged with Marrickville (as outlined in Chapter 1). Laurel spoke of feeling overlooked for community resources when compared to her memories of St Peters Council:

We were used to having our own council, having everyone do something for us. It was a rich council because they had Tempe Tip, they had plenty of money for repairs and that. When it was merged with Marrickville, we were forgotten. When they were putting swimming pools in years ago, there was talk of putting one in Tempe. Everyone thought ‘wow!’ But no, they put one at Marrickville, one at Petersham, one at Enmore. We didn’t get a pool. Things like that. Everyone’s got a chip on their shoulder: we don’t get any benefits from Marrickville Council.

This interpretation was shared by Diane, who, when comparing Tempe to surrounding suburbs, revealed perceptions of being ignored for government funding: “It always looked unloved you know. Other areas have money spent on them but Tempe was just ignored. ‘You can wait’, you know, ‘you’re not worth it’”.

Different again were perceptions that neglect was a product of Tempe’s location on the eastern LGA border. Patrick’s justified his perception of Tempe as an “under-looked part of the Marrickville LGA” through the distance of Tempe from the functional centre: “I think the Marrickville LGA forget about us, we're quite far out from their epicentre.”. Ellie suggested that large developments – namely Sydney Airport – may have resulted in the residential population being overlooked:

There’s always some government trying to do something to Tempe, ignoring the fact that it is a very vibrant residential population. Because of our proximity to the airport and the existence of some commercial zone we tend to get things that we wouldn’t like proposed.

The enduring sense of neglect described above was not shared by all. Others felt increasingly noticed or that Tempe was definitively “in Marrickville Council’s sights”. Such conflicting opinions contributed additional texture to the collected senses of place. For instance, Lorne’s
perception of local government contested those of Laurel, Diane and others who spoke of enduring neglect. His experience of petitioning created understanding of Marrickville Council as active in Tempe when prompted by residents:

There were issues with council that would come up so I would often take petitions around. For example, Council’s going to put in new trees. They were going to put in huge bloody trees that have shallow roots and in twenty years will fall down on your house: things that were impractical to have next to a residential house. When they started planting those I called council. They weren’t going to remove them so I took up a petition and they changed their minds.

Similarly, Vicki’s perception of local government attention as needing to be prompted by residents was partially shaped by her experiences of letter-writing regarding street trees:

I wrote quite a lengthy letter saying that, rather than worry about changing the direction of the street, couldn’t we please spend the money on the inappropriately chosen trees that are uprooting the footpaths and are likely to cause a major accident. I swear within three days of me having sent that, they were out there with their tar buckets.

Feelings of embattlement against perceived levels of government attention appeared to have fostered protest culture in Tempe. Such activity suggested strong emotional geographies within the senses of place of participants involved. Protests over past decades have been diverse: the airport, movement of the local war memorial statue, prospects of local coal seam gas extraction, and proposed extensions of the M5 motorway. The latter featured heavily in participant’s narratives. Patrick, who was instrumental to the M5 protests via Tempe2020, spoke of the plans as making the residential population feel invisible to the government: “Speaking to them, they didn’t realise that there were people living down here in East Tempe”. Likewise, Allison’s suggested that government relations in Tempe were perceived as largely one-way: “We want to know more and decide what happens in our community, not have someone impose it on us”.

Notable in light of previous discussions about “Old” and “New” Tempe, it was suggested that protests bridged the perceived generational divide. Laurel spoke of the M5 protest as “pulling together” residents:
That was one big protest. Everyone in Tempe, Sydenham, St Peters was there, everyone pulled together for that. We went over there ‘cause we felt you should support them. It’s our suburb.

Such involvement of residents in the politics of Tempe was one explanation for the tendency of some participants to surrogate official suburb boundaries for ‘community extent’ displayed in the mental maps (Figure 4.4). The presence of well-defined physical boundaries and perceived need for community action to achieve recognition seem to have produced a residential population bolstered by its official boundaries and by its imagined status as ‘distinct’ from the rest of the LGA.

![Figure 4.4: Layered mental maps of participants who used the official suburb boundaries as a surrogate for ‘community extent’](image)

Different again were Lara and Bridgette’s perceptions of neglect. As mothers of young children, the regular presence the Magic Yellow Bus – Marrickville Council’s mobile playgroup – in Tempe’s Tillman Park was an important factor in their understanding of Tempe as recognised and well-serviced by local government. Lara saw Marrickville Council as overwhelmingly active in Tempe:
My attitude about the place has even changed in the year off on maternity leave I’ve had with the little one, because I’ve used parks and playgroups and libraries. I think Marrickville Council is just wonderful now because of all the free stuff I’ve been able to access as a new mum. It’s been sensational.

Likewise, both Allison and Ashleigh spoke of Tempe’s visibility to local government, using the example of parkland restorations. Ashleigh, who lives in the eastern residential zone, spoke of the rehabilitation of the wetlands bordering Alexandra Canal and its influence on her sense of place:

Marrickville Council has been a big part of Tempe moving up in the world. I think they’re really good. We didn’t need to lobby to get all this done, it was just done.

The same thing happened along the bike paths. Marrickville Council has improved all the parks and every year it gets nicer to be in this area.

In contrast to the experiences of Lorne and Vicki, Ashleigh, Allison, Lara, and Bridgette all felt that Marrickville Council did not require prompting for attention. Overall, it was evident that shared place identity of Tempe as downtrodden – a place of stagnation and neglect – were products of wider social relations within the Marrickville LGA, government bodies, and public discourses. So too were the influences on sense of place of global economic and political trends, namely the movement of Sydney to a service economy. Despite the apparent uniformity of how ideas of local economic stagnation appeared in participant’s narratives, how stagnation and neglect informed sense of place was undeniably complex, multiple and contested.

4.4 A Place of Attachment

The third and final place identity contributing to participant senses of place was as a source of attachment. Upholding Massey’s (1994) view of plural and composite senses of place were participants’ strong emotional associations expressed towards Tempe. Three attachments continually recurred in participant narratives: nostalgic attachment, attachment to ‘community’ and attachments to the material landscape of residential homes. Some participants expressed dominant attachment to one type, while others combined multiple types. Nostalgic attachment and ‘community’ attachment often directly contested each other, reinforced by perceived generational division.
4.4.1 Nostalgic Attachment

A nostalgic sense of attachment was common among older participants, with nostalgic emotions largely centred on childhood memories (cf. Phillipson 2007). This was confirmed by Maureen, Jim, and Laurel, who displayed dissatisfaction with perceptions of current community spirit and socialisation compared to memories. Such narratives were not necessarily backward-looking or suggestive of a desire to turn back time: they were reflexive. Participants identified absent elements of imagined pasts and desired their return to the current social makeup.

Maureen spoke of a robust community spirit and society in the 1950s that informed her childhood attachment to Tempe: “It was a wonderful life. Everybody knew everybody. It was a real community; a real community spirit”. She expressed her belief that these elements had changed with the entry of gentrifiers:

People aren’t near as friendly as they used to be. It’s a different atmosphere entirely. When people moved out of the area, or they died, and new people came in, it didn’t seem to be the same.

Such conceptions revealed an imagined community that excluded newcomers associated with gentrification. Jim compared childhood memories with his current perceptions of a “different” and more “selfish” social mix:

It was good. Half the kids went to the public school and myself and others went around to the Catholic school. We had Boy Scouts and that’s where you got to know the kids from the public school better. Not much sport in those days: kids kicked footballs, you went to the park to amuse yourself. It was a good way to grow up.

Laurel, who personally identified as “born and bred in Tempe”, drew particular connection to Tempe as the former tram hub. For her, nostalgic attachment was informed by the closure of the Depot rather than by gentrification-related changes. Interestingly, a ‘rekindling’ of community feeling was not raised by any participants since the depot reopened in 2009:

The tram depot and later, the bus depot. That was the centre of the community when I was growing up. Lots of the tram drivers and conductors lived in the area because of its proximity to the depot. They used to have family picnics, they had
races, lots of activities involving families. That was really a big community, family-oriented thing. Then it went to a bus depot. That was alright but when they closed the bus depot, well, that community centre kind of disappeared. You didn’t have that community spirit of everyone working and knowing each other.

For these participants, place attachment is the reflexive product of childhood nostalgia and familial ties. Section 4.4.3 reveals how in many cases, these attachments include a material element in the form of ancestral homes.

4.4.2 Attachment to Community

Nostalgic attachments for a former, imagined Tempe appeared in direct contrast to those that valued perceptions of strong community bonds. Lorraine, a long-term resident, spoke of being “isolated in your own house” in a place with “no community feeling”. Other participants – commonly gentrifiers – described an increasingly community-minded, connected neighbourhood. Ellie spoke of a growing community spirit fostered by gentrification as contributing to her sense of place, directly contesting the ‘community in decline’ narratives of Maureen and Jim:

There seems to be a lot more pride in Tempe. There are lots of young families and they’re pretty determined that our suburb is going to be nice for our kids. In terms of the community now compared to previously, it’s a lot more friendly. It’s a lot more connected and it’s a lot more involved. I’m a part of a Tempe Book Club and a Tempe Mamma-Bake community and my husband is part of the Tempe Brew Club.

Such narratives rested on assumptions that the suburb lacked connectivity or community before gentrification – an inversion of the testimonies of long-term residents. Likewise, Lara spoke of perceived community as growing her sense of place. This was largely informed by her discovery of community facilities as a new parent:

I was so against living in Tempe. Now we're here, I'm really happy here. Particularly now I’m a stay-at-home mum with her [infant daughter], I’ve discovered all sorts of community stuff that I didn’t know was around and it’s really good.
Imagined community cohesion was heightened for some in contrast to their previous suburbs. Peter described his community feeling as unlike other suburbs in Sydney. His narrative depicted personal emotional connectivity to Tempe and noted perceptions of similar emotions in other residents:

There’s friendships with other families and friends in the community. I’ve noticed from living 20 years out in the hills district [of Sydney], there wasn’t that sense of community. There was the occasional friend over the road but people were very insular. Here they’re more open; they tend to chat over the fence a lot more. You couldn’t do that in the hills [district]. And people, once they come here, they tend to want to stay in the area.

For some, ‘community’ was fostered by the Tempe2020 Facebook group. Allison reported that, in her experience, Tempe2020 enhanced neighbourly interactions:

It really has come out of Tempe2020. It’s that you get to know people. I think people like and are embracing that idea of community and feel quite strongly about that. I’m not saying it wasn’t there before, it was just different. Before, it was just ‘hello’. [Now] you can actually talk to people because you’ve got an idea of who they are because of their comments and who they are because of their picture. You can put names with faces.

The community groups cited by Ellie – Tempe Brew Club, Tempe Mamma-Bake, Tempe Book Club – were also identified as products of Tempe2020:

All those groups I mentioned have been spurned through Tempe2020. Someone would just put up “who wants to join a book group?” and people put their hands up. That’s certainly something that I couldn’t imagine having been involved in when we first lived in Tempe.

In contrast, others felt that while Tempe2020 boosted community engagement, community spirit is independent to social media. Peter expressed emotional connection long before the group and that its strength was autonomous of Tempe2020:

Interviewer: I’ve heard a lot about Facebook. Do you think that has something to do with community?
Peter: No. That sense of community and trust and all of that was there well before the Tempe2020 site. It’s enhanced it a little, put people in touch with other people in the community. The community is still a community without the Facebook site.

Consequently, place attachment for some appeared to be informed by their own gentrification acts. Emotional connections to an imagined active community resulted from participants electing to socialise with other gentrifying residents. Such attachments departed from those of some older residents who often perceived community fragmentation following gentrification. This was not to say that active emotional geographies of older residents did not endure, even for those like Maureen, Jim, Laurel, and Lorraine. Laurel spoke of the Tempe Seniors Group as creating regular social interactions that compared to those fostered by Tempe2020. Maureen also mentioned the regular bus trips organised by the seniors group as facilitating social interaction between older local residents. Yet again, this demonstrates the complexity and conflicts involved in constructing senses of place.

4.4.3 Material Attachment

Many participants who displayed nostalgic attachment to Tempe also displayed emotional attachment to material elements – especially their houses. Laurel, Lorraine, Maureen, and Jim each resided in their childhood homes. Here, nostalgic attachment to childhood memories incorporated familial attachments. While most had spent time away from these homes – Jim at boarding school, Maureen and Lorraine in other Sydney suburbs during their married lives – they remained attached to their respective houses in Tempe. Maureen’s enduring identification with Tempe as home (despite perceived community decline) were testament to the strength of her material attachment:

Maureen: I wouldn’t live anywhere else. Its home.

Interviewer: So even despite all these changes that have happened, it’s still home?

Maureen: it’s still home, will always be home. Even my kids refer to it as home.

Such material attachments were not only tied to nostalgia. Some participants expressed attachment to their house as their sole attachment to Tempe, while others combined material attachments to perceptions of community. Annie’s house was the reason she moved to Tempe: “This was the perfect house and we fell in love with it. We didn’t investigate anything
really”. While Annie identified as “pro-Tempe”, her place attachment was independent of nostalgia and was only beginning to combine with community attachment:

I knew all the people in my [former] street. I organised Christmas parties, so I had that connection with my neighbours. There were the people at the shops, my shop keepers. I don’t have that here. It was very different here. I felt like I was living in a country town. My life had become very private instead of more public. I feel like here it’s much more a collection of private homes. I find it harder to have a sense of my suburb and my place in it now.

Different again was Meredyth-Ann’s place attachment, a combination of material attachment to her house, named Kinross, and perceived community connections. Of her house, Meredyth-Ann said: “It is my opinion that Kinross chose me, I did not choose Kinross. I came to see her once on a Sunday and I thought she was lovely”. Unlike Annie, Meredyth-Ann expressed much stronger connections to community and recognised similar sentiments in other residents:

I wouldn’t move anywhere else. I love Tempe I love the people, the people are very friendly. I’ve got great neighbours which makes me feel very comfortable living by myself. I love the area. I feel a sense of community: the fact that I’ve got really nice neighbours and I spend time with neighbours, I feel safe in the community. I have a sense of community. I think some of my friends do too. If you talk to them about Tempe, they feel very close to Tempe. I have a friend and he would like a bit more space but he doesn’t want to leave Tempe.

Ray spoke of combined attachments to his self-restored 1886 house in Tempe and to Sydney as a city of perceived opportunity for heritage restoration. Moving to Tempe in 1974, Ray said he “combined my liking for old houses with a need to move closer to where I worked”. His attachment to Sydney as an American immigrant was expressed as a product of this “liking”: “I’m originally from New York. I saw Sydney as full of wonderful old buildings that you could buy and restore. Not to become rich, but to have the opportunity to turn a sow’s ear into a silk purse”.

Emotional attachment to Tempe was widespread among participants and made important contributions to senses of place. The ways in which participants expressed place attachment
varied widely and in some cases directly contested one another. The complexity evident here amplified the complexity of senses of place in Tempe generally.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter sought to illustrate senses of place in Tempe: how they were informed, constructed, and maintained. Ray recognised that “the people in this suburb are not definable”. Neither are the senses of place displayed by participants. Results suggested that senses of place revolved around three broad place identities – community in transition, Tempe as downtrodden, and Tempe as a place of attachment – but that these identities were negotiated individually. Sometimes perspectives were uniformly shared (even if particular in their construction – such as with narratives of economic stagnation). At other times, such as with issues of neglect, perspectives were conflicting, or evoked a range of social and affective emotions for Tempe.

As such, this chapter provided a snap-shot of how senses of place were negotiated by particular individuals within the Tempe residential population. In the next chapter, the entry of IKEA into the Tempe assemblage is analysed for evidence of influence on these senses of place.
5. After the Big-Box: IKEA’s influence on senses of place in Tempe

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses IKEA’s influence on participants’ senses of place. The analysis will ultimately uncover whether the senses of place have been influenced by the entry of IKEA into the Tempe assemblage. This chapter consists of three sections – corresponding to those in Chapter 4 – that search for influence on participant senses of place.

5.2 IKEA’s influence of Tempe as a ‘community in transition’

Tempe’s identity as a residential population transitioning under gentrification undoubtedly contributed to participant’s senses of place across the board. However, participants argued that IKEA was not considered an agent of gentrification for a variety of reasons. Many of these revolved around an understanding that gentrification was conceptually related to the actions of residents, not retailers or any other body. While many participants spoke of traditional gentrification, connections were rarely made between owner-occupier gentrifiers, Marrickville Council planning, and IKEA. This was particularly interesting in light of the development plans of Marrickville Council in which IKEA is overtly cited as a source of corporate-led “revitalisation” for Tempe (See Appendix I). Separation of IKEA from traditional gentrification scripts meant that IKEA did not influence many participants’ senses of Tempe as a transitioning place.

The only obvious way in which IKEA appeared to have influenced senses of place related to Tempe as a community in transition is in a reconfirmation of the perceived generational division. Laurel felt IKEA’s target market further distanced present-day Tempe from the Tempe of her childhood memories and those of other long-term residents. She spoke about interactions within the Tempe Seniors Group, few members of which had visited IKEA because of perceptions of the store as a place for the younger generation: “They think, “not
interested, it’s not me”. They know IKEA’s there and everything, but they think it’s for younger people”. Likewise, some younger gentrifiers understood IKEA’s entry as a solidification of change in the suburb. Annie spoke of IKEA as an external extra in the general “improvements” she perceived around Tempe, as an addition that simply reconfirmed her existing opinions:

IKEA adds to that vision I had: there was something happening when we first came and we started to realise that we weren’t the only ones coming. People were saying “Oh, we’ve got friends who have moved to Tempe and they’ve got this great house, a big garden and they really love it there!”. IKEA adds to that picture that we're part of a suburb that’s making its way. But even without that, Tempe was making its way anyway.

Such perceptions were also raised by Bridgette. Unlike Annie, she spoke of the Princes Highway, suggesting IKEA may have stimulated different change to that of gentrifiers. Instead of affecting residential zones that were more readily associated with gentrification, IKEA was recognised as changing non-residential zones: “It was definitely changing anyway. But that that side of the Princes Highway was really ugly and a bit isolated [before IKEA].”

The isolation to which Bridgette referred prompted five participants to exclude the IKEA site from their spatial representation of ‘community’, further decreasing IKEA’s potential influence over senses of place. Bob, Ellie, Sean, Elizabeth, and Diane limited their drawings to purely residential zones or to the western side of the highway. Perceived spatial separation informed the likes of Ellie when it came to considering IKEA as part of gentrification-related change: “There’s no houses up there. I see Tempe as residential: it’s where we live. The fact that there’s no houses up there meant I’ve never pictured it as part of Tempe” (Figure 5.1).
IKEA was excluded by other participants from Tempe’s gentrification due to a lack of perceived influence of IKEA on the demographics of the residential population. Laurel maintained that the “people” changes she associated with gentrification were not associated with IKEA. Here, Laurel also suggested that IKEA may have seeped into the everyday movements of Tempe residents – as a place to have coffee and “wander”:

People enjoy having it there ‘cause they can go up for coffee and wander, but I don’t think it’s changed us much. I don’t think it’s changed the dynamics of the people living here.

The exclusion of IKEA from the “wider change” associated with traditional gentrification was also based on participant understandings of why IKEA chose Tempe for its new store. Meredyth-Ann doubted that IKEA’s site selection was unlikely to have been informed by gentrification-related change in Tempe:
Interviewer: Is IKEA coming in part of a wider change in Tempe? With that new demographic coming in and those new people? Is it part and parcel with that or something different?

Meredyth-Ann: I don’t think that IKEA moved here because they knew the demographic was changing.

Disassociation of gentrification and IKEA seemed to be enhanced in some cases by the brownfield nature of the development site. Brownfield sites constituted a ‘mutation’ of traditional gentrification for Davidson and Lees (2005; 2010). For participants, the absence of brownfield sites in traditional gentrification scripts served as further confirmation of IKEA as separate from gentrification in Tempe. For Jenny, the site being brownfield, not residential, encouraged her view of IKEA as a separate development. Middle-classness was apparent in her view of the light-industrial business previously on the site: “I mean it’s not like they knocked down houses to build IKEA. It was storage or something”. Such views confirmed the arguments of Bridge & Dowling (2001) and Zukin et al. (2009) as to the importance of particular main-street aesthetics to the middle classes. Likewise, development history of the site factored heavily into Patrick’s separation of IKEA from gentrification. He suggested the site’s reputation as the former Tempe Tip combined with and buy-backs of neighbouring residential properties by Sydney Airport (as outlined in Chapter 1) made the sizable development acceptable and separate from changes going on in the residential zones. Like Jenny, that IKEA did not result in residential demolitions was crucial to this separation:

Interviewer: Do you think it might have been a different story, say had that site have been a block of houses and IKEA said “Nup, we want to build here”?

Patrick: ‘Course, because you’re talking about people’s homes. But this was quite literally Tempe Tip. Plus there were homes on Bellevue Street that the airport had already bought.

Despite widespread separation of IKEA and gentrification, one participant did make the connection. Lorne was the sole participant who directly connected IKEA and gentrification to wider plans concerning business and transport. For Lorne, IKEA influenced his sense of place by reinforcing his sense of transition in Tempe. Lorne’s interpretation also revealed a distinct middle-classness. He spoke of a “metamorphosis” of Tempe into a business and transport hub, suggesting that these industries had not thrived in Tempe previously:
I think this metamorphosis that’s occurring is not just about people coming in and buying their houses and doing them up: it’s also about other parts of the community. It’s about business, transport. It’s about all sorts of stuff and we need to embrace all of these things.

From this discussion, it appeared that IKEA had very limited influence over senses of place of Tempe as a community in transition. Participants did not consciously identify state or corporate actors in gentrification, considering such developments as distinct from middle-class change. The dominant perception was that gentrification in Tempe had occurred prior to and independently of IKEA as a result of middle-class re-population. The biggest influence that IKEA had here was the reconfirmation of increasing dominance of “New Tempe” ideals over those of “Old Tempe”. While certainly complex – and in some cases internally conflicting – IKEA influenced the place identity of Tempe as a community in transition in only the most subtle of ways.

5.3 IKEA’S influence on Tempe as a ‘downtrodden’ place

5.3.1 Residents perceptions of economic stagnation following IKEA

While IKEA did not constitute gentrification for many participants, its potential for economic ‘rejuvenation’ was a topic of much discussion. A range of opinions were shared, revealing different levels of IKEA’s influence over senses of Tempe as economically stagnant. Lorne contended that IKEA would revitalise what he perceived as a “dead” economic district:

It will bring it into a living city. I always felt it was a dead suburb: you walk around and not see anybody or anything. You walk up the street and you see old derelict buildings which encouraged the concept of Tempe Tip.

Senses of place that were most dramatically influenced here by IKEA belonged to those participants who perceived IKEA as an active economic stimulant. Most focused primarily on effects on local retail, citing the appearance of a Thai restaurant and a cafe on the Princes Highway following IKEA’s development approval as evidence (Figure 5.2). Lara viewed the aforementioned developments as the beginning of long-term improvement:
It’s the beginning of it [Tempe] having some sort of centre again. Everything’s dead, the shops along the highway, Sydenham, all empty. But we've got a Thai restaurant now and little cafes have opened. It still needs a lot of work but slowly it’s coming along.

Such views reinforced the importance of retail – and particular types of retail at that – to incoming middle-class populations. IKEA appeared to encourage and in some ways provide the main-street lifestyle factors that were missing for gentrifiers. In this way, IKEA had seeped into the everyday lives of some participants. The location of IKEA at the northern extent of east Tempe prevented some participants living in the south and south-west of Tempe from regularly interacting with IKEA. However, many participants visited IKEA from all over Tempe on a regular basis. Many participants were members of the ‘IKEA Family’, which provided discounts on IKEA purchases and free coffee from the restaurant. Memberships encouraged some participants to use the restaurant as a local coffee-shop or cafe in lieu of other alternatives on the main street. While some participants preferred Rosa’s Kitchen cafe in Sydenham as a more traditional local cafe, Diane spoke of the local popularity of the restaurant for coffees and inexpensive meals out:

I often go [to IKEA] with a friend. We have a cup of coffee over there or a meal. It’s very popular. I’ve been over there a few times and I’ve seen so many people. It’s just like going to a cafe.

It seemed as though the new cafe on the Princes Highway had not been popular with residents, its location on a busy, noisy stretch of road next to a north-bound bus-stop meant that it was often perceived as providing for commuters. Vicki spoke of IKEA’s restaurant as a popular among local children for self-serve ice-cream. In this sense, IKEA had taken the place of the former corner stores as a child-friendly retailer in the local area:

I give my son a dollar every second day and when he and his friend get off at the bus-stop, they pour themselves and ice-cream. It’s also a good skate ramp. In the last school holidays, I had eight kids here one night. So I said “Ok, I’ll meet you up there [at IKEA], you guys walk”. So they all walked and we had dinner there.

Vicki also mentioned the way in which IKEA has crept into the everyday rhythms of locals as a local supplier of “bits and pieces”. As a caterer, Vicki spoke of the food store as a useful
place to “whip in to the food store”. Likewise, Meredyth-Ann and Allison recalled visiting IKEA to purchase last-minute party items like dinner-ware and bulk-buy glassware. IKEA also appeared to have become a rainy-day alternative to the children’s play equipment at the local Tillman Park. Both Lara and Laurel spoke of taking their children and grandchildren respectively to Småland, the children’s play area at IKEA. While the prospect of crowds and low-quality, unnecessary purchases kept the likes of Patrick and Paul from regularly visiting the store, there was certainly evidence to suggest that IKEA had quickly seeped into the everyday rhythms and routines of some residents as a middle-class lifestyle development.

The new cafe and Thai restaurant formed the basis of some participants’ hopes for future investment in a gentrifying middle-class style. Here, the influence of IKEA was one of hope for economic stimulation that, in a very middle-class fashion, dismissed existing economic activity. What this suggested was that Tempe may not require economic stimulation as such, but a ‘cleaning up’ of unsightly business activity to meet the standards of middle-class residents. Interestingly, the situation inverted that of Port Kembla, an industrial suburb in Wollongong. In a study conducted by Barnes et al. (2006), it was local authorities, not residents, who desired middle-class lifestyle investments on the main street. Residents were happy for simple business activity on the main street, unlike the residents of Tempe. Sean discussed hopes that IKEA would stimulate retail along the Princes Highway in the future:

> I’m thinking IKEA will spread the good will down the highway. There’s nothing they can do about the traffic. That’s something that’s never going to change, but hopefully.

Particular focus was placed by some on a vacant lot next to IKEA, advertised as being “in elite company” (Figure 5.3). Laurel considered the lot as a potential draw-card for new businesses in the area:

> Some business might come in. There’s a site next to IKEA in front of the Salvation Army which has just been sold. That’s another big highway site. They had it advertised for sale and they had “good neighbours” or something ‘cause they’re next to IKEA. They were cashing in on IKEA for the sale.
Sean’s argument for IKEA as a retail stimulant raised a key concern for those who viewed IKEA as an isolated retail event. Traffic volume, commonly blamed for Tempe’s retail decline, remained a reason some participants felt the local economy would not, and could not, be rejuvenated by IKEA. Elizabeth cited parking as an enduring issue:

Interviewer: What do you think that IKEA coming to Tempe means for the future?

Elizabeth: I have to say, while we have that expressway going through, I don’t think it’s going to make much difference. I can’t see anyone making that a viable shopping centre because there’s nowhere to stop.

Additionally, perceptions of IKEA as a ‘one-stop shop’ informed opinions that it could not stimulate local retail activity. Maureen believed IKEA’s internal restaurant, as well as a lack of well-known Tempe retailers hindered IKEA’s ability to kindle development:

IKEA said it would rejuvenate Tempe, which it hasn’t. IKEA is here, we’re over there, the shops are down here. It was supposed to bring people into the area,
which it has for IKEA, but just for IKEA. There’s nothing down there [Tempe shops] to interest people. Once you get in there [IKEA], you’re in. It takes you hours to walk around and then you go into their, their restaurant. You get in your car and go home. I don’t think it’ll make any difference.

The sheer size of IKEA and the floor-plan Maureen mentioned was problematic for others, including Ashleigh and Robert. While no more than a kilometre apart, Robert, like Maureen, perceived the distance as enough to prevent local economic flow-over from IKEA. Distance was not necessarily a perception so much as a reality of the new materiality of Tempe. There was an argument to be had that separation of existing retail outlets from IKEA in the streetscape of Tempe and the design of the IKEA site actually prevented adjacent spill-over benefits to other stores:

It hasn’t improved any of the local businesses. The shops across the road are just not serviced by IKEA. They come and go and don’t spend any additional money in Tempe itself.

Ray made an interesting comparison between IKEA and Tempe, and the 2000 Olympic Stadium in Homebush. He believed both developments presented respective residential populations with false hope for economic stimulation:

It was like the Olympics. Everybody thought the Olympics would lead to all sorts of prosperity. But it never translated. I think there’s been a lot of false hope involved in the idea that this is the springboard for development.

Just because these participants believed the economic landscape would remain unchanged by IKEA, it does not mean that their sense of place remained unchanged. While IKEA did not change their perceptions of Tempe as stagnant or add hope for stimulation, it appeared to reinforce these perceptions.

5.3.2 Beyond Tempe: Alterations to extra-local Tempe identities

Discourses of stagnation in Tempe among non-residents were raised in Chapter 4 by Sean, Lara, Diane, Lorraine, and Peter. Association of Tempe to Tempe Tip illustrated the power of extra-local discourses of Tempe as stagnant, dirty, and decaying. For many participants, IKEA had dramatically influenced the re-imagination of Tempe as downtrodden. The
multinational status and associations with IKEA’s brand provided a new image of Tempe for the middle classes as economically active.

Participants reported that the downtrodden identity had been altered by a variety of factors. One such factor was the perceived power of the IKEA brand to generate greater public pride among Tempe residents. The expression of pride by locals to non-residents was considered by participants to be limited by the negative extra-local discourses. Meredyth-Ann perceived a heightened pride in the emotional geographies of residents since IKEA:

It has made a psychological change. If you said you lived at Tempe, it was “Eww, you live in Tempe?” Now you go “Oh, I live in Tempe!” and it’s “Oh, where IKEA is! Oh god, how good is that!” We’ve been given an ‘it’s good to live at Tempe’. We’re more proud of living in Tempe.

Lara shared a similar opinion. Her association of the retailer with successful middle-class people was shown to have significantly influenced feelings of residential pride. Interestingly, Lara’s account directly contradicts Meredyth-Ann’s previous argument: that gentrification would not have been considered by IKEA when selecting a development site:

When we moved here, people would say “Where do you live?” and I’d say “Oh, just south of Newtown”. I was clearly embarrassed about it. Having IKEA here is like, it’s got something. Everyone’s got a lot of respect for IKEA, they’re incredibly business-savvy. I get the message that they’ve spotted this as an up-and-coming area of young people. It gave me more confidence, and now I happily say “Yeah I’m from Tempe, where that new IKEA is”. It’s given me more pride in it.

Sean expressed similar discourses of IKEA as the ‘cure’ to perceived decay during his walking interview, not through brand power, but through upgrades to streetscape aesthetics and main-street atmospheres. Again, the materiality of the suburb assemblage came to the fore: the “softening” of the industrial landscape (using greenery and sympathetic restoration of the on-site heritage-listed building) was important in changing the perceptions of outsiders. It had been, literally, cleaned up by IKEA. Collectively, ideas of pride and aesthetic improvement through main-street retail further reinforced the middle-classness that dominated participant’s narratives:
They’ve cleaned up the old building here, it’s got a nice look. You feel a softening on the landscape once you walk here. Nice landscaping, green grass. It’s had interesting knock-on effects. We’ve got a lot more people walking on the highway which we’ve never had before, you get the bus-stop being used by lots of people coming in by public transport, lots of people walking: see, these guys walking probably don’t live local. It gives it a bit more of a ‘lived in’ look. It almost seems to tone down the din of the area.

These views also extended to Sean’s perception of the aesthetic upgrade of other parts of the Tempe assemblage. He referred to the cafe directly opposite IKEA being covered in event posters following IKEA’s opening to exemplify the importance of aesthetics in significantly influencing a revision of Tempe’s downtrodden identities:

Bill posters never used to be up around here because people didn’t walk here. But now you’ve got a cafe there, you’re obviously getting foot-traffic so this is good advertorial space. So there you go. The IKEA opening up, another business saying ‘we’ll trade on their name’, then all of a sudden you get this coming up, creating an interesting wall with things to look at.

Likewise, landscaping of the IKEA site appeared to alter Ashleigh’s perceptions of Tempe as downtrodden. Unlike Sean, she focused on aesthetics influencing her own views rather than those of non-residents:

I look for every bit of greenery in the city, so I’m completely won over. The pavement’s been upgraded by IKEA, it’s much better to walk along. That’s a small improvement but it’s nicer. From the clock-tower onwards, it’s a million times nicer to look at than it used to be. We can thank IKEA for improving the walkability of the highway.

Noticeable improvements to the “walkability” of the Princes Highway were an important part of the IKEA development. Many participants mentioned that their everyday rhythms did not often involve walking around Tempe or along the highway prior to IKEA. This was not only because of the industrial aesthetic and lack of retail interest but due to noise and safety issues related to high –volume traffic. Ray and Diane respectively noted that IKEA had resurfaced the section of footpath and prompted the installation of traffic and pedestrian lights directly in
front of the site. While these additions were recognised as encouraging walking, the boundaries of the site marked the extent to improvements.

In contrast to extra-local identification of Tempe through Tempe Tip discourses, other participants perceived a lack of public identification with Tempe at all. It was, in Lara’s view, “a no-man’s land” between more prominent suburbs. IKEA as a popular, multinational retailer was considered by some to have dramatically overhauled such perceptions by providing a highly visible and distinct landmark for Tempe. Sean spoke of having to refer to surrounding suburbs – Newtown or Marrickville – to explain Tempe to non-residents:

Before IKEA I used to say “Marrickville” more than “Tempe” because I found people having to say “Tempe?”. Or “It’s near St Peters” or “It’s near Sydenham”. But because those names don’t ring out at people either, you’d have to say “Newtown” or “Marrickville”. When IKEA moved in we say “You know where IKEA is? That’s Tempe”.

Almost every participant referred to the impact of IKEA on Tempe’s visibility in the same way: as putting Tempe “on the map”. Laurel, like Sean, believed that IKEA’s brand had created a landmark for spatial recognition among non-residents: “It’s put us on the map; everyone knows where Tempe is now. They said ‘Oh, yes, IKEA’s there’. It’s given us an identity”.

Lack of spatial awareness of Tempe among non-residents was distinctly contrasted by the spatial awareness of participants. As previously mentioned in relation to in Figure 4.4, the mental mapping exercise revealed widespread understanding of Tempe’s official suburb boundaries. While the official suburb boundaries were not necessarily the same as the community extent for participants, many could accurately identify Tempe as a suburb in conversation as distinct from surrounding suburbs.

“On the map” was used by some participants in reference to the increased spatial identification of Tempe by non-residents, while others used the phrase to describe perceptions of community visibility following IKEA. Harking back to Ellie and Patrick’s concerns that the residential population had been forgotten by government bodies, Lorne spoke of IKEA as providing a means through which residents could identify themselves as a collective to the wider public:
It helps us identify ourselves as a community. I ran into someone the other day and [they] said “Where do you live?”. I said “Tempe”. Previously people would say “Where’s Tempe?”. Now they say “Oh, that’s where IKEA is!” It’s linked us as a community to other parts of Sydney.

To summarise the extra-local discourses, Ashleigh linked the identities of Tempe as Tempe Tip and as unidentifiable. She felt Tempe Tip was Tempe’s only public image, and that IKEA put Tempe “on the map” for something more: “It puts Tempe on the map in that people have heard about Tempe, but without ‘that’s where Tempe Tip used to be’”.

5.3.3 IKEA: the only extra-local discourse?
Perceptions of decreasing spatial anonymity and specific land-marking of Tempe by IKEA for non-residents prompted concerns for some participants. Fear existed among some gentrifiers that IKEA would be given credit for ‘improvements’ in the suburb made by residents themselves. While Ashleigh dated “Tempe moving up in the world” as a “definitely pre-IKEA” process, Annie feared credit would accrue to IKEA, and not to the renovating acts of the incoming middle-class. Such views reinforced the popular separation of IKEA from Tempe gentrification:

I don’t think it’s happened because of IKEA, and I don’t think it will happen because of IKEA. I think IKEA means more people know about. It takes away some of that attitude I had when I came: “Where? You’re joking. There’s nothing there!” We do get the big landmark, but Tempe still has to develop itself.

This revealed the extent to which senses of place were emotive, and classed by the participants concerned. Tempe was, to incoming gentrifiers, ‘their’ suburb, and its (middle-class) ‘cleansing’ was something that ought to be attributed to the people, not to an incoming corporate retailer.

Related were underlying fears of identification of Tempe as the ‘IKEA suburb’. As a new resident, Paul recalled his initial identification of Tempe with IKEA and how it had broadened over time. In contrast to Lorne and Ashleigh’s positive perceptions of community identification through IKEA, he spoke of growing concerns for IKEA overshadowing the residential population:
One of the dangers is that we become known only for IKEA. People know where IKEA is and think that’s Tempe. There’s this suburb called IKEA in Tempe and that’s it. I did, ‘cause I didn’t know about all this [residential population]. That’s the danger. It was everywhere, this “IKEAs opening and its very exciting”. People who hadn’t heard of Tempe heard about it. I imagine that people would get upset that we're known for IKEA. We’re more than IKEA, we’re a community.

It was undeniable that IKEA challenged the ‘downtrodden’ place identities of participants and that senses of place were, in some cases quite dramatically, altered as a result. In Section 5.3.1, IKEA as a prominent retailer was found to have influenced some middle-class perceptions of Tempe as economically stagnant among residents. This was a result of the opening of new local retailers and the inclusion of IKEA as a middle-class retailer in the everyday rhythms of some participants. In Section 5.3.2, a mostly consistent opinion was expressed that IKEA had overhauled extra-local associations of Tempe with dirt, decay, and spatial anonymity. Such opinions were informed by a multitude of attributes, including aesthetic appearances, the creation of a geographic landmark and/or a community identity through brand power, and the stimulation of new pride-related emotional geographies among residents. Contributing further texture here were fears expressed in Section 5.3.3 that new IKEA-related discourses will overshadow any future place identities.

5.4 IKEA’s influence on Tempe as a place of attachment

As discussed in Chapter 4, senses of place in Tempe were clearly imbibed with strong place attachments—resulting from nostalgia for past imagined states of community, to perceptions of community connections enhanced by gentrification, and to the material fabric of homes. As a recent addition to the Tempe assemblage, IKEA did not outwardly appear to have significantly enhanced or detracted from place attachments. Nevertheless IKEA interacted with place attachments in more subtle ways.

Nostalgic attachments were strongest among older participants. For many of these participants, such attachments had endured perceived economic decline, association with undesirable place identities, and middle-class gentrification. The narratives of these participants, particularly those that incorporated material attachment to familial houses, did not appear to have been overly influenced by IKEA. However, IKEA’s development process
did reinforce for some the generational-divide perceptions. While concerns for overwhelming traffic increases were not realised, Jim, Maureen, and Laurel each spoke of the IKEA traffic consultation process as reinforcing feelings of community fragmentation. Jim labelled gentrifying residents as “selfish”:

They wanted to see streets closed so their kids can play on the street. We used to go to Tempe and Sydenham Park when I grew up and play there. But they like their street closed. That’s put a tremendous imposition on people like me getting to work, even driving down to see my doctor.

Maureen’s recollections of the gentrifying class as dominant in consultations reinforced her understanding of those residents as having “different ideas” to her own: “The yuppies. They wanted it closed. They were very vocal. Had we been as vocal as they were, I’m quite sure it would never have happened”.

In this way, the increasing social disconnection felt by these participants was reinforced. Laurel mentioned traffic meetings and the Tempe Action Group, a small collective of Union Street gentrifiers, as divisive. The actions of this group not only reinforced Laurel’s perceptions of generational division, but created divisions on and among individual streets:

There were meetings at the Town Hall and around the district. Everyone was out for their own street. People said “We don’t want this, we don’t want that”. It got to the point where the next street here, Union Street, got a group together. They had, on this traffic plan, actually blocked that street [Union Street] off, so that the through traffic couldn’t go through. But it meant that it kept coming down our street! They said “We don’t care if it goes down your street”. That really divided everyone.

IKEA did not appear to significantly nostalgic attachments to Tempe. However, its presence and development process seemed to subtly enhance their views of a declining community atmosphere. The emotional connections of participants to Tempe as a place of growing community spirit were similar to the nostalgic, in that subtle interactions revealed the most about IKEA’s influence. While IKEA did not appear to challenge overall identification with growing community-mindedness, it did show signs of having temporarily impinged on such attachments. Patrick recalled the intense lobbying of some residents to have Union Street
closed to the Princes Highway at the expense of adjacent streets as temporarily dampening the “huge sense of community” valued by many gentrifiers:

That street caused the most problems with the road closures. They set up ‘TAG Tempe’, Tempe Action Group. Effectively, they wanted to block Union Street and were really quite divisive in their lobbying. Quite literally, it turned the whole suburb onto this street. They hounded everyone: at consultations they were argumentative. It was a really divisive and horrible fight but it’s all over now, everyone’s back on the [Facebook] page.

Similar experiences were discussed by Lorne, who cited traffic meetings as having created unfriendly neighbourhood relations, dividing people into rival “factions”:

I got the impression that most people didn’t mind IKEA being there. But nobody wanted traffic on their street. I went to a couple of public meetings, with people saying ”It’s alright for you, you live in Edwin Street but our street’s not very wide so you should take the traffic”. It effectively allowed people to play off neighbour against neighbour.

Patrick’s narrative implied that IKEA may have altered place attachment for those participants who valued community groups and activities. Many of the interest groups cited by participants appeared to have stemmed from the Tempe2020 Facebook group. Patrick suggested that residents had been removed from or left the group as a result of the IKEA traffic consultation, which may or may not have had flow-on effects to group interactions.

Such alterations to perceived community spirit appeared as more permanent and dramatic for some. Bridgette felt that the process provided insight into her neighbours, some proving less community-minded than she assumed:

You learn a lot about people when something like this happens. There was so much in-fighting about the traffic. There seemed to be people who had a sense of community and some who just thought about themselves. You realise there are a lot of selfish people and a lot of people that have a good sense of community, willing to think about how things might be for others instead of just their little environment. It’s been an interesting time.
Bridgette expressed that the permanence of the changes IKEA had made to her place attachment could have been furthered, given the right conditions. While problems associated with traffic increases did not eventuate, she said that IKEA-related traffic increases held the potential to permanently sever her attachment:

If the street stuff hadn’t have worked out well, if it had have been bad – like if our street had become busy – I would have been on a war-path. I would have been upset. I probably would have moved. We were thinking about moving. I said ‘if our streets going to be busy because IKEAs turned up, I couldn’t live there anymore’. It changed the way I thought about my home and my community.

While some perceptions of Tempe as a place of community spirit were strained to different levels, IKEA did not affect all participants in this way. Ashleigh conceptualised IKEA as part of her growing attachment to a community-oriented Tempe. Her understanding directly contested other perceptions of IKEA as a source of community tension:

Interviewer: Do you think IKEA’s changed the way that you feel about Tempe?

Ashleigh: IKEA’s improved my satisfaction of living in Tempe. But it’s definitely part of a general trend that also includes the number of people I know and the young families that are here and Marrickville Council’s improvements as well.

Interestingly, the same traffic consultation process that was so contentious for people like Patrick and Laurel was viewed by Peter as a community building process. A TAG member, Peter saw the IKEA consultation as a time for residents to come together to discuss collective issues:

Interviewer: Tempe Action Group, did that expand over other streets?

Peter: It went right down to the [Cooks] River, into Sydenham, across the other side of the highway, the other side of Unwins Bridge Road. It was always very positive about the community. We need to make sure that the right things are in place so the community isn’t destroyed. That’s what it was about. They [IKEA] want to be part and parcel with the community; they want to get involved. It’s good neighbourship.
Place attachment related to the material landscapes of ‘home’ appeared to have endured without any hint of an IKEA influence. Despite apparent stability in these place attachments, there were various reasons as to why IKEA could not destabilise these attachments. Annie spoke of her enduring attachment to her house in Tempe, purchased only three years prior, because of the structure itself, rather than for nostalgic memories of family or even its location in Tempe:

Interviewer: Has IKEA changed the way that you feel about Tempe being where your home is?

Annie: No actually. I could love them or lose them. I don’t care really. We were really happy and we loved our house before we even knew they [IKEA] were building. I don’t think it’s really changed that. We liked it whether other people thought it was in a skuzzy suburb or not.

Meredyth-Ann, who identified her house, Kinross, as her initial source of attachment to Tempe, also felt untouched by IKEA in this sense. Unlike Annie, Meredyth-Ann also spoke of attachment to the Tempe ‘community’ as having co-contributed to enduring place attachment:

I love it. I love being here. I’ve stayed in Sydney a lot longer than anticipated. Ten years later I’m still here. This is the only thing that’s keeping me in Sydney, Tempe. I love Tempe.

The stability of material place attachment is interesting considering that IKEA appears to have physically seeped into many of the participant’s home spaces. Despite the understanding that Meredyth-Ann’s material attachment to her house had not been affected by IKEA, she mentioned a number of IKEA items that were purchased for both practical and aesthetic purposes: “I got some little candle-y things and a set of steps. I had a party last week so I went and got some glasses. They were cheap as chips”.

Even in long-term familial homes like Laurel’s where it was “very difficult to find a space to stick and IKEA box”, IKEA managed to make its mark through “good packaging things that are inside drawers”. This was not the case for all participants however. Maureen claimed that
she had not been to IKEA or purchased any products because of the flat-pack design and her lack of need for new furnishings in her ancestral house: “I don’t need to go ‘cause I don’t need anything over there. I can’t see the sense when you’ve got to take it home and put it together anyway”.

Overall, the influence of IKEA on participants’ attachments to Tempe varied, and in some instances, conflicted. In Chapter 4, place attachment of participants was discovered to be informed by a range of different and complex elements. The range and extent of challenges posed by IKEA to these attachments were equally plural. Superficially, love of place remained steadfast in the wake of IKEA for the majority of participants, especially those pertaining to material attachment. Looking deeper, the intensity of some factors (particularly those relating to perceived strength of community spirit) were altered in both permanently and temporarily, subtly and more dramatically. It was concluded that IKEA had changed the senses of place of some participants.

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter endeavoured to determine whether IKEA had challenged the senses of place of participants. Just as senses of place were found to be plural, complex, and contested, so too were the ways in which IKEA influenced senses of place. In many instances (eg. identities relating to Tempe as a community in transition, community and nostalgic place attachments), the influence of IKEA was very subtle, reinforcing or weakening existing emotions. In the case of Tempe’s downtrodden identities, IKEA’s influence was more dramatic. In contrast, place attachments of participants to specific material objects (ie. houses) remained relatively unchanged. Evidently, IKEA’s new presence in the Tempe assemblage interacted differently with each identity. Whether participant narratives were considered collectively or individually, senses of place among participants, in one way or another, had been influenced by IKEA.

It was interesting that both positive and negative changes to senses of place could be located within a single participant. Such internal conflict revealed that sense of place can be considered a complex assemblage of multiple identities, each challenged differently by a new addition to place. Likewise, it was interesting, although not unexpected, that a single new addition to the Tempe assemblage could affect senses of place in such a wide variety of
manners. The differences between how IKEA challenged the senses of place of even the most similar participants revealed the intricacies of sense of place and of assemblage theory.
6. Conclusions

This chapter concludes the thesis in two sections. First, the aims are revisited with a summary of key findings. Second, wider implications of results are discussed and suggestions made for future research.

6.1 Revisiting the Aims

So, what happened when an enormous big-box retailer moved into a small residential population? The goal of this thesis was to answer this question, and in so doing address an important research gap: the cultural impacts of big-box retail development within cities. Using Tempe and IKEA as a case-study, this thesis identified and investigated transformations in senses of place that resulted from a recently-arrived big-box retailer. It asked if IKEA had influenced the senses of place of Tempe residents as a new element in the assemblage of the inner-city suburb.

This was explored over two chapters. Chapter 4 identified the senses of place evident among participants. Without this base knowledge, any change as a result of IKEA would be indeterminable. Using Doreen Massey’s (1991) conceptual work, multiple senses of place were identified: senses that were continually unfolding and changing and the outcome of shifting global and local relations. Senses of place were informed by three broad place identities, the first of which was Tempe as a community undergoing gentrification-related transition. Traditional gentrification scripts were upheld consistently by participants to explain changes that have occurred in Tempe – relating to economic re-orientation of Sydney as a global city. Traditional scripts informed perceptions of generation division between “Old Tempe” and “New Tempe” residents. The influence of gentrification was evaluated as more complex than such a binary division, stimulating complex and sometimes contested relationships.

The second place identity that informed senses of place revolved around ideas of stagnation and governmental neglect – ‘the downtrodden’. These ideas interplayed with gentrification narratives. Contrary to Massey’s (1994) plurality in sense of place, perceptions of Tempe as
economically stagnant were relatively uniform across participant narratives. Such perceptions suggested growing middle-classness in Tempe that desires a particular economic landscape (café culture, rather than light-industrial businesses). Discussions of neglect in Tempe were more plural, providing evidence of a complex emotional mix: from those who perceived Tempe as forgotten, right through to others that regarded Tempe as well-recognised by Marrickville Council. Participants’ explanations of the causes of perceived stagnation contributed additional complexity to senses of place.

Equally complex were the place attachments of participants – the third place identity. Identification with nostalgic attachment, attachment to imagined communities, and material attachment to homes combined differently to reveal a range of social responses and emotions for Tempe. Some attachments appeared in direct contrast to one another, particularly those informed by perceived states of community spirit and interactions. Again, gentrification scripts outlining the generational divide were important in informing participant’s perceptions of community in Tempe.

Sense of place was acknowledged here as a process of multiplicity and of continual unfolding. How these identities combined with past lived experiences and ways of thinking produced unique – and multiple – senses of place.

Chapter 5 evaluated whether participants’ senses of place (as discussed in Chapter 4) had been altered by the recent arrival of IKEA. The presence of the particular retailer, along with the nature of the development and consultation process affected senses of place in highly nuanced ways. First, identities of Tempe as a community in transition were evaluated for evidence of influence by IKEA. For the majority, IKEA had not consciously influenced this identity. The seeming lack of influence was largely the result of participants perceiving IKEA’S presence as unrelated to their own gentrification acts. Gentrification and IKEA were separated for a variety of reasons, such as the types of change attributed to each (ie. gentrification changed residences and class dynamics, IKEA changed a former-industrial brownfield site), and the perceived timeline of gentrification (starting long before the IKEA development).

Identification of Tempe as downtrodden appeared significantly altered. Brand power of the popular multinational big-box retailer prompted relatively dramatic discursive re-imaginations of Tempe’s economic state by the middle classes. Association of Tempe with images of economic stagnation appeared to have lessened following the injection of retail
activity into the light-industrial landscape. In addition, IKEA had put a spatially anonymous place – or if known, only through association with a tip – “on the map”. Spatial specificity was granted by providing a huge landmark, both in terms of its physical size and popularity with the middle classes. For some participants, such a re-imagination ran the risk of overshadowing more locally-meaningful identities. These influences appear to be strengthening over time, and are likely to continue if retail development continues to grow in Tempe.

More subtle influences were evident on place attachments. IKEA appeared to alter the intensity with which emotions were felt. These influences were not necessarily through the physical presence of the retailer, but through the development process. For instance, participants’ experiences of the traffic management process appeared to enhance nostalgic feelings of community detachment and dampened those of strong community spirit. At times, such processes divided otherwise harmonious groups. For the most part, these influences were temporary and have largely evened out at the time of this analysis, however for some individuals (for example, Bridgette), the effects were more lasting. In contrast, participants’ attachments to the material spaces of the home appeared unchanged.

The challenges posed by IKEA to senses of place differed from one participant to the next. The nature and intensity of change varied according to the individuals’ particular perception of each place identity, and the way in which these identities interacted with previous experiences, outlooks, and worldviews. Overall though, IKEA did influence broad place identities that informed participant’s senses of place. As this thesis is a snapshot taken around six months following the opening of IKEA for trading, it is entirely possible that IKEA will continue to influence the senses of place of Tempe residents in the above ways. Likewise, the influences identified in this thesis may morph and change moving into the future.

6.1.1 Implications for big-box retail geographies

How does this case provide insight into big-box retail and surrounding communities more broadly? The case and results are unique, coloured by specificity of place and the particular retailer. However, the primary elements – the spread of big-box industry, and gentrification – are not only entangling with each other, but with globalisation. Big-box retail has taken off, with Australia a prime location in expansion plans. Not only has IKEA expanded to five
company-owned stores nationally (with plans for four more), the supermarket-club giant Costco arrived in 2009, with talk of American icon Wal-Mart entering the Australian market in the near-future. As the industry expands, so too will the number of communities playing host to big-box retailers. The spread of gentrification combined with the corporate power of multinational big-boxes means that this combination will become more common globally. Although in many ways unique, the case of Tempe and IKEA is instructive rather than hypothetical: a “pilot” case of a global phenomenon (cf. Castree 2005).

The Tempe-IKEA case has provided a potential launch-pad from which to establish a new kind of retail geography (in comparison with earlier approaches – see for example Dawson 1980; Wrigley & Lowe 1996; Berry 1967; Rowley 1984) – one centred on the needs of people as opposed to those of companies. The importance of retail to middle-class gentrifying populations became increasingly apparent throughout this study. Participant’s understandings of local economic success and community vibrancy were heavily influenced by their perceptions of what has happened in retail locally. The changing interests of inner-city populations as they transition from working-class to middle-class were suggested to revolve around retail activity (cf. Bridge and Dowling 2001). It was into this context that a suburb could be seen to be “revived” by the entry of a big-box retailer. Insight into the senses of place and desires of residential populations provided by such new retail geographies will be crucial to those responsible for urban planning as the big-box-retail-globalisation relationship spreads and strengthens.

It would appear as though a gigantic retailer has appeared in Tempe and has caused surprisingly few ripples throughout other elements of the suburb assemblage. However, just because the cultural impacts of big-box retail weren’t overly dramatic here does not mean they were minimal. In this case, the influences of IKEA on the senses of place of Tempe residents were subtle and nuanced, but decidedly present and widespread. They served to reinforce feelings or emotions that were already there (eg. a lessening sense of community spirit among older residents) or in temporary rather than permanent way (ie. community tension during traffic consultation). The more dramatic influence was on how Tempe was perceived on the extra-local front – how outsiders see Tempe and the level to which residential pride is expressed when identifying the suburb to non-residents. The potential of big-box retailers to influence senses of place should not be overlooked or played down on account of the relatively subtle results of the Tempe case.
Indeed, future detailed analysis of the senses of place of residents will be essential in future cases of big box retail development. The lack of widespread dramatic influence on senses of place is a function of very specific assemblage conditions of Tempe. The IKEA site was previously a tip and was separated from most of the residential areas by a busy six-lane highway. Additionally, IKEA did not seem to have had much of an adverse impact to traffic, existing businesses, or residential properties – all a function of the specific micro-geography of the site. It cannot be assumed that conditions will be so favourable for big-box development elsewhere or that the impacts will be as subtle. Here, the specifics of the IKEA Tempe development provide a practical lesson regarding the material landscape of the suburb. Where developments do not destroy things of material value to residents (homes) or elements that contribute positively to senses of place, the development should merge more smoothly with the existing assemblage. Even if the development does not fit in with the existing streetscape, if it is considered to be a positive development for the suburb, it is more likely to be accepted.

The apparent smoothness of IKEA’s entry into Tempe may also be a product of timing. At the time of development, Tempe was transitioning from a working-class to middle-class population. The new population was unhappy with the style of the main street and with the suburb being construed as a tip: downtrodden and dirty. Emotions of disgust were common. While IKEA did not necessarily meet the visions of a middle-class main-street lifestyle, it was a popular middle-class retailer with the power to come in and ‘clean it up’ a bit – both physically and image-wise. IKEA improved the landscape and put Tempe “on the map”. It also came with positive baggage – from a middle class perspective – as a Scandinavian retailer who make and sell ‘funky’ homewares. IKEA moved into an area that desperately wanted something positive, and was being increasingly inhabited by people with certain aspirations for the suburb to be cleaned up. IKEA did just that – it meshed seamlessly within participants’ continually unfurling middle-class narratives of place improvement. Ultimately, the entry did not have dramatic sense of place influences because people were not overly offended by what IKEA ‘stood for’.

The influence of a big-box retailer could be far more dramatic and its entry much less smooth, in places where the middle-class is more firmly entrenched, in upper-class suburbs, or in more quiet suburbs without arterial roads like the Princes Highway. In these cases, their incoming presence would likely be resented much more from a sense of place perspective. For instance, if IKEA had moved into the more heavily gentrified Newtown, the effects on
senses of place would be far more dramatic. Even though Newtown is a middle-class, inner-west suburb only two kilometres up the Princes Highway from Tempe, the established lifestyle of its main street and its extra-local association with bohemian culture would be challenged by IKEA in a way that would produce more dramatic and possible disruptive sense-of-place effects for residents.

Likewise, the influence of a big-box retailer over senses of place could be more dramatic for other big-box retailers. Most people in Tempe were not offended, and in some cases quite excited about the prospect of having an IKEA in the local area. This enthusiasm can be put down to the match between the classed perspectives of residents and the classed aesthetic and appeal of the retailer. In this case, Tempe locals were part of IKEA’s target market: the burgeoning middle-classes and cosmopolitan ‘global city’ gentrifiers. If it had been a different big-box retailer moving to Tempe that did not have the same kind of appeal as IKEA, the influence to sense of place could have played out very differently: more dramatically, with more disruptions, and with the possibility of fierce opposition. This would also be the case if IKEA entered a different place that did not have a complementary class perspective.

Opposition to particular big-box retailers is not just a result of class mis-matching. There are people who oppose the whole big-box format: large monopolist corporations that appear to swallow up smaller local businesses and reduce competition and diversity in particular markets. In the case of IKEA, their promotion of high levels of consumption through low prices and their potential to destroy markets for nearby furniture or homewares businesses are sources of criticism for some. What can be taken away from this thesis here is that those who oppose big-box retailers for economic or environmental reasons should not presume that proximate local communities feel the same way. Similarly, local communities are not necessarily likely to strongly oppose the arrival of a big-box retailer because of personal objections to its retail format. While not all participants in this study loved the IKEA brand – some expressed the opposite – the perceived need for ‘clean’ retail activity in Tempe (as opposed to ‘dirty’ industry) seemed to outweigh any such objections.

The biggest lesson to be learnt from this case is that sense of place is an important addition to the literature around big-box retail. Scholarly investment is required to improve the understanding of those involved in planning for major retail developments. The IKEA Tempe case has shown that sense of place is highly complicated, detailed and important: it is unique.
to the place in question and is drawn from a variety of material and social sources. Sense of place cannot be overlooked when assessing the entry of new big-box retail into an area. The appropriateness of big-box retail for a particular site can no longer be solely gauged on its potential economic impact. The assemblage of to which the site belongs – its materiality, community, and histories – must be considered.

6.2 Future Research

The influence on sense of place posed by big-box retailers require further critical geographical exploration. By studying different combinations of places and specific big-box retailers, a greater depth of understanding will be developed as to challenges faced by those living and working around big-box retailers. The more that is known about how retailers influence the senses of place of local residents, the better prepared state and corporate actors will be to address community needs.

It is also important to expand the breadth of research into big-box influences on neighbouring populations. This thesis has contributed sense of place as a challenge pose by big-box retailers to a list historically dominated by impacts on local economics. Other potential challenges to be investigated should include effects of new big-box industry on shared local infrastructure, and the nature of relationships between corporate retailers and state actors. Both are challenges that were identified in the Tempe-IKEA case, but were not within the scope of this thesis to cover fully. The interaction of multinational retailers with local community and interest groups is another challenge identified in this research as a priority for investigation. Research could explore further the national, city-wide, or neighbourhood-wide interactions of big-box retailers, expanding the scope of what are understood as retailer-community relations. Such widening of the research scope is needed to allow more holistic understandings of the challenges that incoming big-box retailers present to surrounding populations.
References


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Fishman, C. 2006. The Wal-Mart Effect and a Decent Society: Who Knew Shopping was so Important?. *The Academy of Management Perspectives* 20, 6-25.


Marrickville Council 2012. Email. 29 August 2012. mpp@marrickville.nsw.gov.au


Marrickville Council 2010. Our Place, Our Strategy: Marrickville Community Strategic Plan, Marrickville.


NSW Department of Planning and Infrastructure 2006, *Development Application 602-614 Princes Highway Tempe (5-7 Bellevue Street)*. Development Application to the NSW Department of Planning and Infrastructure, Sydney.


Appendix A: Ethics Approval

CONDITIONAL APPROVAL
In reply please quote: HE12/183

25 May 2012

Ms Beth Laurenson
25 Toogang Close
CORDEAUX HEIGHTS NSW 2526

Dear Ms Laurenson

I am pleased to advise that the Human Research Ethics application referred to below has been approved subject to the following conditions:

1. Please include a statement on the Participant Information Sheet that should participants require more information about the research and the way it is conducted they can contact the researcher (refer to template at url http://www.uow.edu.au/research/ethics/UOW809183.html)
2. Please provide research contact and Ethics Office (rgo-ethics@uow.edu.au) details on the Consent Form.

Please forward copies of any documents requiring revision within 10 working days.

Ethics Number: HE12/183
Project Title: Flat-Packing the Suburbs: IKEA, Tempe and a Sense of Place
Researchers: Ms Beth Laurenson, Professor Chris Gibson
Reviewed Date: 28 May 2012
Approval Date: 24 May 2012
Expiry Date: 23 May 2013

The University of Wollongong/ISLHD Social Sciences HREC is constituted and functions in accordance with the NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research. The HREC has reviewed the research proposal for compliance with the National Statement and approval of this project is conditional upon your continuing compliance with this document.

Ethics Unit, Research Services Office
University of Wollongong, NSW 2522 Australia
Telephone (02) 4221 3356 Facsimile (02) 4221 4338
Email rgo-ethics@uow.edu.au Web: www.uow.edu.au
A condition of approval by the HREC is the submission of a progress report annually and a final report on completion of your project. The progress report template is available at http://www.upw.edu.au/research/iso/ethics/UOW009385.html. This report must be completed, signed by the appropriate Head of School, and returned to the Research Services Office prior to the expiry date.

As evidence of continuing compliance, the Human Research Ethics Committee also requires that researchers immediately report:

- proposed changes to the protocol including changes to investigators involved
- serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants
- unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.

Please note that approvals are granted for a twelve month period. Further extension will be considered on receipt of a progress report prior to expiry date.

If you have any queries regarding the HREC review process, please contact the Ethics Unit on phone 4221 3388 or email rese.ethics@upw.edu.au.

Yours sincerely

[Signature]

A/Professor Garry Hoban
Chair, Social Sciences
Human Research Ethics Committee

Cc: Professor Chris Gibson, School of Earth & Environmental Science
# Appendix B: Rigour Table

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<th>Credibility</th>
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<td><em>Critical Reflexivity:</em> written debriefs following interviews to reflect on positionality</td>
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Appendix C: Participant Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet for Interview Participants

Project Title: Flat-Packing the Suburbs: IKEA, Tempe and a Sense of Place.

Researcher: Beth Laurenson Contact: bl134@uowmail.edu.au

Supervisor: Chris Gibson Contact: cgibson@uow.edu.au

Institution: School of Earth and Environmental Sciences, Faculty of Science, University of Wollongong.

The aim of this research is to explore the ways that big-box retailers entering largely residential communities may challenge the sense of place experienced by residents. The entrance of IKEA into the Sydney suburb of Tempe in November 2011 provides an Australian context for this research in a field largely dominated by the United States and Western Europe.

A number of Tempe residents will be interviewed as part of this project to gather stories and experiences of living in close proximity to IKEA Tempe and the role that IKEA may play in how they experience place in Tempe. Interviews will be conducted once with each participant and will last approximately one (1) hour. The interview will be conducted in two (2) sections: the first being a seated interview at the location of the participants choosing to talk about the participant’s history in Tempe and the development of IKEA Tempe; the second being a walk around Tempe guided largely by the participant to discuss the way that the participant experiences place in Tempe and the role of IKEA Tempe in this experience. Please see the following page for a list of sample questions.

Interviews will be recorded using a hand-held voice recorder, with walking routes tracked using a pocket GPS recorder. This data will be held on the researchers personal home drive which requires a password as part of the University of Wollongong’s computer network and will only be accessible to researchers involved in this project. Any hard-copy information will be held securely within a locked filing cabinet at the researcher’s home. Data will be held securely by the University of Wollongong School of Earth and Environmental Sciences for a minimum time period of five (5) years in accordance with University of Wollongong ethics requirements. Information derived from interviews will be analysed and presented as part of the researcher’s Honours Thesis. Participant identity will be concealed with the use of pseudonyms and will not be revealed at any stage of analysis or presentation.

If you have any questions about any aspect of this research, including the interviewing procedures, please do not hesitate to ask. You are free to refuse to participate in this project and are able to withdraw your consent at any time. Withdrawing your consent will not affect any relationship that you may have to the University of Wollongong. If you require more information about the research and the way it is being conducted, please contact the researcher at bl134@uowmail.edu.au. If you have any concerns or complaints regarding the way in which this research is or has been conducted, please contact the University of Wollongong Ethics Officer on (02) 4221 4457 or rso-ethics@uow.edu.au
Sample Questions

1. How did you come to live in Tempe?
2. Has Tempe changed much in the time that you have lived here?
3. What was the reaction in Tempe when it was first announced that IKEA were interested in opening up here?
4. What do you think the opening up of IKEA means for Tempe?
Appendix D: Consent Form

Project Title: Flat-Packing the Suburbs: IKEA, Tempe and a Sense of Place.

Researcher: Beth Laurenson

Supervisor: Chris Gibson

Institution: School of Earth and Environmental Sciences, Faculty of Science, University of Wollongong

I ____________________ have read the Participant Information Sheet and have had the opportunity to ask any questions of the researcher. I consent to participate in an interview pertaining to this project and for any information I provide to be used in this project. I am aware that confidentiality will be maintained at all times.

I understand that my participation in this project is voluntary and that I am free to refuse consent and to withdraw my consent at any time. I am aware that I can contact the researcher at bl134@uowmail.edu.au or the University of Wollongong Ethics Office at rso-ethics@uow.edu.au at any time if I have any concerns or complaints regarding the way in which this research is or has been conducted.

I consent to participate in (Please tick):

☐ Sit-down interview (approximately 15 minutes in duration)
☐ Walking Tour (approximately 45 minutes in duration)

I would like my real name to be used if I am quoted from this research (Please tick):

☐ Yes, please use my real name
☐ No, please use a pseudonym (false name or number)

I would like a copy of the Honours thesis relevant to this research when it becomes available (Please tick):

☐ Yes, I would like a copy of this thesis
   Hard Copy/Digital Copy (Please circle)
   Please send to: _________________________________________________________

☐ No, I would not like a copy of this thesis

Signature:___________________________________ Date:______________________
Appendix E: Positionality Statement prior to data collection

Coming into the fieldwork stage of my project, I am curious as to the way that positionality will influence the research. As a young female student from a professional middle-class household, I feel as though I will not be a demographic outsider. Despite the multicultural mixture present in the suburb and firmly embedded in its history, I do not feel that “whiteness” will be an issue in the Tempe study in the way it may in other Sydney suburbs with similar ethnic mixtures. I feel this way as a result of the background research of the suburb that I have already carried out, in which inter-racial harmony is promoted as an important characteristic of the residential population.

Though I do not predict that I will feel outside in a demographic sense, I am definitely an outsider in regards to my not being a resident of Tempe. As the study revolves around the Tempe residential population, there is the potential that I may be viewed as an intruder, invading the places of residents and interfering with their narratives. Despite a courtesy letter sent to IKEA Tempe to explain the project, I fear I may also be viewed by IKEA management to be stirring trouble, with negative ramifications for the Tempe store.

The influence of my position as a researcher is also an element of curiosity for me. Interviews that I have conducted for previous projects have been largely with friends or acquaintances, people with who I have some common connection. As this has been the case, the lines of friendship and research have been relatively blurred, and candid responses easy to come by. Though I will present to participants of this project as a researcher and a stranger, I predict that my aforementioned demographic attributes may assist in the search for open, honest responses.
Appendix F: Positionality statement following data collection

At the tail-end of the analysis phase of my thesis development, the journey of my positionality has been as curious as I thought it would be at the outset. In regards to my previous consideration of myself as an ‘outsider’ in the Tempe community, I feel it was fairly correct. I did not feel ‘out of place’ in terms of my demography. This was particularly prevalent when interviewing parents with children who are currently in or have been though the education system, with rapport gained with many participants through discussions of my studies. I felt that my gender and age worked in my favour, with parents of young children and elderly single residents happy to host me in their private homes, often in the company of their families. My “whiteness” proved problematic when trying to engage the post-war European migrant community, many of whom are long-term residents of Tempe. A language barrier presented a huge limitation in a recruitment process that aimed to sample the widest variety of residents as possible, and could only be overcome through targeted recruitment based on the social networks of previous participants and the engagement of an interpreter. My “whiteness” was a source of mistrust in the non-English speaking Tempe community, as without interpretation and support from previous subjects within their social networks, my intentions could not be made clear to these potential participants.

My fears associated with my spatialoutsiderness were largely unfounded. Instead of being viewed as an intruder, I felt very welcome in the community. It was expressed to me by many subjects that the focus on my research on the stories of residents made them feel noticed and valued as members of the wider community and as such they were happy to contribute. At no time was I made to feel as though I was intruding, which was largely supported by my inclusion in Tempe2020 Facebook group discussions and even invitations to community events. My fears of being labelled a trouble-maker by IKEA management was also unfounded, with the General Manager responding positively to the courtesy letter I sent prior to the beginning of the data collection stage. He initiated not only a relationship between myself and IKEA, but also between myself and Marrickville Council. In the later stages of the data collection process, I developed feelings of attachment to the suburb and to its residents on account of my growing knowledge of the area and the nature of the sense of place narratives divulged. I feel like my positionality as an outsider became more fluid as the process went on, a change that was unexpected at the outset.
In regards to my position as an interviewer, I have been pleasantly surprised. While I initially felt nervous conducting interviews with strangers of whom I knew little about, small-talk and ice-breaking came surprisingly naturally. I felt that I drew on experiences in my professional life in interacting with strangers of all ages, right down to 6 months old, to find ways to quickly establish an easy rapport with each subject. By remaining open to the exchange of tangential personal stories and anecdotes throughout the interview, participants felt comfortable enough to share with me candid opinions about IKEA and about Tempe. I tried to exude an air of naivety to Tempe events and histories throughout the process, despite my initial and growing knowledge. By doing so, I felt as though I was able to even out the power balance between researcher and participant somewhat, allowing them to take on the role of valued experts, rather than the subject of an inquisition by an academic researcher that feel pressured to provide the ‘right’ response.
ATTENTION: TEMPE RESIDENTS

Do YOU love living in Tempe?
Do YOU remember when IKEA Tempe opened last November?
If YES, we’d like to talk to you!

An Honours researcher from University of Wollongong is currently interviewing Tempe residents on their experience of living in Tempe in light of the recent opening of IKEA Tempe. This is NOT an evaluation of whether IKEA is good or bad, but an exploration of the interaction of retailers like IKEA in suburbs like Tempe.

An interview for this project will take a approximately an hour of your time and can be arranged at a time and location of your choosing. You will be asked to discuss questions such as:

How did you come to live in Tempe? Has Tempe changed much in the time that you have lived here?
What was the reaction in Tempe when it was first announced that IKEA were interested in opening up here? What do you think the opening of IKEA means for Tempe?

To get involved, please contact Beth Laurenson at bl134@uowmail.edu.au or 0422 606 902
Appendix H: Interview Guide

Seated Questions

Q: Tell me about how you came to be living in Tempe

Prompts:

- When did you first move to Tempe/how long have you lived in Tempe?
- Where did you move from/did your family always live here?
- Who did you move with/grow up with?
- Are you still living with these same people now/Who currently lives here with you?
- Tell me about what it was like to move here/grow up here (first impressions)
- What drew you/your family to the Tempe area?
- What did Tempe look like when you first arrived/were growing up? (main street, residences, Princes Highway, train station/line)

Q: What is it like to live in Tempe today?

Prompts:

- What do you particularly like about living here?
- Does Tempe have a particular character to you? Word association.
- What kinds of activities are you involved in here? (work, social, family etc.)
- Do you spend most of your time in Tempe, or do you get out to other places around Sydney?
- Are there any drawbacks to living in Tempe?

Q: Do you use the Princes Highway in Tempe much?

Prompts:


Walking Questions

Q: Has Tempe changed much in the time that you’ve lived here? Has your experience of living in Tempe changed at all?

Prompts:

- What caused this/these change/s?
- What did this/these change/s look like?
- How did this/these change/s affect your life in Tempe?

Q: What do you think about IKEA Tempe? Has it changed your experience of living in Tempe?

Prompts:

- Why do you think that this is the case?
• Do you think this change is mostly positive, or negative?
• Did you think that a retailer like IKEA belongs in a place like Tempe?
• Why/why not?

Q: What do you think the entry of IKEA into Tempe signifies for Tempe?

Prompts:
• What does it mean for future Tempe? Is it a bit of a disaster or will it move Tempe forward?
• Do you think it will cause a change in the character of Tempe?
• What do you think a post-IKEA Tempe will look like/what makes you think this way?
• Do you think that Tempe has changed physically since IKEA opened here? Eg. shops opening, closing shops, house sales, heritage activity, road works, renovations to public space?
• Do you think that bringing IKEA to Tempe was the right thing to do: for the residents, the site and for the suburbs itself?
  ▪ For what reasons do you feel this way?
  ▪ What about the site itself? Former brickworks, then the tip site, then vacant land. Was developing a store like IKEA a good idea for this site?
  ▪ What about for the heritage building on the site? The ATECO building and clock-tower. (lead into heritage discussion)
• Do you think Tempe has a strong sense of heritage about it?
  ▪ Is this heritage about the buildings in Tempe, or more in the communities that make up Tempe, the stories about Tempe, the street names?
  ▪ Does this heritage contribute to the character of Tempe that we spoke about earlier?
  ▪ Does having a store like IKEA here have any impact on these heritage factors?

Q: Tell me about the reaction in Tempe when it was first announced that IKEA were interested in opening up in Tempe.

Prompts:
• How did you first find out about it?
• Did most people seem to be keen, or were people not happy about it?
• Do you know why people felt this way?
• What was your initial reaction to the announcement?
• What made you feel this way?
• What was it like to be a resident of Tempe on the opening day last November?
• Was it as busy as you thought it was going to be?

Q: To finish up, what are your thoughts on IKEA itself?

• Had you visited the IKEA at Rhodes before IKEA Tempe was built?
• What do you like/not like about the brand?
Appendix I: Corporate and State-led Gentrification in Tempe

To properly understand participant perceptions of IKEA, the retailer must be situated in the gentrification process. Davidson and Lees’ (2005; 2010) argued that gentrification is not limited to a traditional script of owner-occupier renovations: it can involve state and corporate actors. The Tempe case supported this argument but introduced previously unconsidered variations. Corporate actors in gentrification have typically been residential or mixed-use land developers, rather than retailers. In this case, when Tempe’s gentrification was viewed as a process that began on a traditional script, IKEA Tempe was considered part of a maturing gentrification involving new actors. Mike Baker, General Manager of IKEA Tempe, cited transport linkages, accessibility, and land-parcel size as key draw-factors to the Tempe site, but that development depended on government bodies for approval. Consequently, it was crucial to explore IKEA as a corporate actor in local government plans.

In the Stage 1 Development Control Plan (DCP) 2011, the Marrickville LGA was divided into forty-seven “precincts”, five covering Tempe. The DCP outlined “an existing and desired future character” to guide planning controls and objectives for each precinct. Tempe’s ‘character’ as conceptualised by Marrickville Council was not available for analysis (it was part of the Stage 2 DCP which remained unpublished at the time of this research). However, other sources suggested council plans for IKEA.

Following May 2009 approval, IKEA began to appear in planning documents. The Marrickville Community Strategic Plan, published in 2010, recognised Marrickville as an “inner-city” LGA as well as the effect of Sydney’s shift to service industries on its industrial suburbs. It acknowledged the Princes Highway in Tempe, Sydenham, and St. Peters as a former “major industrial hub” but stated that they were no longer “predominantly industrial”. Retail was listed as the focus for future development, with IKEA directly cited as a key stimulant for sector growth. This strategy, published after IKEA’s approval, suggested that objectives for Tempe precincts may revolve around transforming existing industrial sites into a commercial hub.

Such conclusions were supported by Marrickville Council in response to questions submitted for this thesis. Marrickville Council reportedly sought to long ago change industrial zoning in Tempe to “bulky goods” but was obstructed by state government policy. Council desired this change to allow for the development of an “enterprise corridor” along the Princes Highway for service industries. Dubbed “office and business premises” by Marrickville Council, new
sites would be established alongside existing light industry. Apparently, it was not until IKEA was approved under new NSW Major Projects legislation that rezoning was allowed. Marrickville Council wrote that “it is anticipated that the broadening of the permissible range of land uses will assist in the revitalisation of the precinct”. From these plans, it was concluded that a state-led form of gentrification was on the cards for Tempe.

The prominence of urban renewal and maintenance projects in Stage 1 planning objectives further endorsed this conclusion. The “desired future character” of neighbouring precinct 25 – St. Peters Triangle – was “redevelopment”. Redevelopment was proposed to create a “village centre” from former industrial sites comprising of retail, residential, and mixed-use developments. The 2009 St. Peters master-plan cited in the DCP aimed to “reinvigorate” – or gentrify – existing infrastructure into an “exemplary urban environment”. While light industry was to be retained as a nod to “existing character”, creative industries were labelled as “desirable”. Tempe was listed here as “adjoining”, sharing industrial history and many of St. Peters’ “existing” characteristics: businesses types, narrow streets, and residential-industrial mix. Gentrification through service/creative industries and mixed-use development was common to many other Stage 1 precincts, including Marrickville Town Centre, Dulwich Hill, and Enmore North/Newtown Central.

The above information suggested that Tempe is part of an LGA-wide, state-led gentrification process to which IKEA was crucial. In regards Tempe-IKEA specifically, Marrickville Council noted the importance of corporations, saying that “renewal projects will need to be driven by private landowners such as IKEA.”. IKEA’s effect was already being evaluated in mid-2012, with Marrickville Council’s General Manager, Ken Gainger, reporting significant increase in local activity as a result:

There have been some very positive impacts on local businesses in the Tempe area where trading seems to have increased markedly since the IKEA opening. IKEA seems to have become a catalyst for increasing business/development interest in the area.

By Davidson and Lees’ (2005; 2010) definition, such planning constitutes state-led gentrification. While council plans did not necessarily depend on traditional gentrification scripts, they were linked as part of an unfolding gentrification involving wider actors, developments, and changes. IKEA was therefore considered a corporate actor in a state-led
phase of Tempe’s gentrification, not necessarily though its direct entry as a corporation but as Marrickville Council’s potential retail stimulant for Tempe.