Understanding Port Melbourne: 
Accounting for, and interrupting, social order in an 
Australian suburb

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Doctor of Philosophy

February 2016

The School of Social and Political Sciences
The University of Melbourne

Submitted in total fulfilment of the requirements of the degree
Abstract

Understanding may be a process rather than an end point, but any account of a place or people relies on the imposition of order. In this thesis, I use methods and concepts drawn from the work of Jacques Rancière to configure an ethnographic account of Port Melbourne, a bayside inner-suburb of Melbourne, Australia. That account, presented in three parts, demonstrates how processes through which social order is experienced, imposed and interrupted in the places people live can be studied ethnographically.

In Part I, I analyse the material and social geographies described in accounts people offer of Port Melbourne, making use of the suburb’s distinctive built history to discuss what was protected in the past development and more recent planning decisions for some of Port Melbourne’s housing estates. In exploring how some people in Port Melbourne map a social geography onto the material geography, I mobilise Rancière’s conceptualisation of the imposed nature of order and argue for an understanding of this as always premised on social order.

In Part II, stories and characters that I, and others, came to learn about in Port Melbourne are analysed to reveal such order to only ever be imposed, not inherent. When new arrivals, through learning the stories of Port Melbourne, enacted membership of the community of those who ‘know’ that place, they were simultaneously demonstrating the capacity to exceed the identity they had been accorded in the prevailing order. Yet social identifications, such as that of being an ‘older person’, still matter in Port Melbourne. Rather than being grounded in set criteria against which capacity is universally evaluated, however, I found this identity being co-opted into a broader binary classification of effective subjects/objects of care that operates in Port Melbourne. Classifications of people, then, are not descriptions of difference so much as the imposition of inequality.

In Part III, I turn to issues of policy and politics. Institutions also position particular categories of people as objects of care. Through policies, such as those of the City of Port Phillip on footpath use, such processes of ordering had material consequences. In Port Melbourne, these consequences were not necessarily experienced as negative.
Instead, they often met the expectation held by people for institutions to be fair in their dealings with all. It was possible for people to redraw the order against which assessments of fairness are made, but this was dependent on interrupting the existing social order. In the example I offer from Port Melbourne, this was achieved through some residents being recognised as speaking sense as the community.

My thesis thus demonstrates that Rancière’s work offers an insightful approach to understanding the suburb of Port Melbourne. It shows, too, that a Rancièrian approach can usefully contribute to the critical tradition in anthropology of playing with strangeness and familiarity to render visible elements of human experience that are more often taken for granted. This clears the path for uncomfortable policy questions to be raised regarding who does and who should have a say in what happens in our suburbs.
Dedication

In memory of

Kay
Roy Handy
John Francis Burgess
Ryszarda Mambort
Edward Howard Gibson
Steven Walters

and dedicated to all of you for whom these names can be the indexes to much larger stories (i.e. everybody).
Declaration
The thesis comprises only my original work towards the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.
Due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used.
The thesis is fewer than the maximum word limit in length, exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies and appendices.

Tracey Michelle Pahor
2nd February 2016
Preface

Not so long ago, I went for a run and realised I could no longer see people’s faces without my glasses. With my Port Melbourne fieldwork being my introduction to gyms and group exercise in general, I was particularly fascinated by the curious phenomenon I had named ‘gym face’ — the uncanny ability people had at the gym to be eye-to-eye with another person, without a hint of acknowledgement on their face. I thought it was a learnt skill particular to that setting, and I worked hard over many months to master it myself. The moment I realised I could not see people’s faces threw into question the sense I had made as a younger fieldworker who was yet to need glasses. Now I understand how lucky I was to be able to see so much in the world in the first place.

Port Melbourne has changed since my fieldwork. Groups have grown or folded. Sites have been bulldozed and reconstructed. Land to the north of my field site has been rezoned for housing. As this land is larger than Melbourne’s central business district, there are rapid changes anticipated in the area. I am surprised when I return to Port Melbourne not so much at the change, but that enough has stayed the same for me to still find my way around and (thanks to my glasses) greet a familiar face.

There has also been much change in what has been included and excluded from this dissertation over the years. There may be some echoes of earlier blog posts (see inportmelbourne.wordpress.com) and conference papers (‘Flirting with social order: Why a rejection-adverse approach to offering a hand does not foreclose politics’ at Australian Anthropological Society Conference 2015, ‘People are not stupid even though my paper is ridiculous’ at Reason Plus Enjoyment 2 2015; “‘Vintage Port’: Making locals through the social creation of place’ at Community Identity Displacement Research Network Conference 2012; ‘Ordering dinners in Port Melbourne: What does not eating together illustrate about social mix?’ at The Australian Sociological Association Conference 2012; ‘Negotiating space and breaking the rules’ with John Francis Burgess at University of Melbourne Ethnography Forum 2012; ‘Gaining an ethnographic understanding of an urban place: The rhyme and reason of success and failure’ at RC33 Eighth International Conference on Social Science Methodology 2012; ‘Cars as a vehicle for expressing concerns about social change in...
Port Melbourne’ at Housing Theory Symposium 2012; ‘The political impotence of ‘cracking the shits’: Evaluating affect in civic spaces’ at Sociology of Emotions and Affect Symposium 2012).

Those of you who know things about and people from Port Melbourne at the time of my fieldwork might struggle to recognise this place in my work. If you so desire, I look forward to reading your account in the future.
Acknowledgements

The list of people I would like to acknowledge far exceeds the space that would be sensible to devote to such a task. Important are those who told me I was not making sense (particularly Catherine Phan and John Burgess), those who told me I could make sense (particularly Monica Minnegal), and those who did a better job than me of understanding my work (particularly Bryonny Goodwin-Hawkins, Laura McLauchlan and Mythily Meher).

I have an intellectual debt to University of Melbourne’s Ethnography Forum and the Shut up and Read writing group. Individuals involved, who also brought much merriment to this processes, include Anastasia Chung, Bryonny Goodwin-Hawkins, Claire Kennedy, Gabrielle Desilets, John Burgess, John Cox, Julia Saint-Mire, Khyrstyna Chushak, Kim Neylon, Melinda Heron, [the other] Melinda Herron, Michelle Hannah, Morgan Harrington, Mythily Meher, Nadiya Chushak, Natalie Swann, Robyn Natasha, Sandrine Lefort, Sarah Francis, and Thomas McNamara. The same is the case for my honours cohort: Jen Tan, Maddy Fox, Alex Dickson, Paulina Alexandra, Dave Williams, Joseph Ferguson, Heather Anderson, Kate England, Giri Ramasubramanian, Gemma Baker and Nur Abrotonite. Formative in my understanding of anthropology have been Peter D. Dwyer, Richard Sutcliffe, E. Douglas Lewis and Andrew Dawson.

Thank you to my supervisors who not only kindly came on board relatively late in the project, but gave me the benefit of their astounding capacity to engage intellectually with my work: Adrian Little and Monica Minnegal. Monica’s widely acknowledged personal and administrative support for students, along with her impressive capacity to comprehend ideas and express them clearly in words, made getting this close to completion possible and even pleasurable.

I want to acknowledge the insight, patience, kindness and companionship extended to me by so many people in Port Melbourne. Naming fieldwork interlocutors can be a murky question of actual and institutional ethics, but I do not think it will surprise anybody that I owe a great deal of gratitude to Janet Bolitho, Pat Grainger and Stacey Hanley.
People from across my life — clients, colleagues, high school friends, Ingress players, Kingston Public patrons and staff, neighbours, and family — have helped by both tolerating my divided attention and calling me back into the shared symbolic order. I have not forgotten the long conversations about the work of Jacques Rancière shared with Michael Sellings. I would certainly not have the insights, practical skills or confidence I do today if it was not for Jill Sealey. Lina Pahor and Walter Pahor, my parents, have been indulgently generous and relatively patient. They, along with my siblings Andrea Pahor and Simon Pahor, are always great company. Special thanks to Andrea for providing non-judgemental expert advice on questions of grammar and style, and Simon for selling me that Custard ticket he could not use.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

When Sandridge ward councillor Janet Bolitho came out of the St Kilda Town hall after one City of Port Phillip Ordinary Meeting of Council, I was still perched on a wall outside. Having both ridden our bikes, though neither of us had planned, Janet and I set off in the cold drizzle of rain from the meeting together.

In the dead of the night, our bike lights flashed out of sync as we rode along the relatively quiet streets to the foreshore bike path that would take us towards one particular suburb within the City of Port Phillip — Port Melbourne. This suburb, the site of my fieldwork, was the place Janet lived and, with the suburb being largely covered by the ward of Sandridge, represented in local government.

Port Melbourne, located four kilometres from the Central Business District of Melbourne, is considered an inner-suburb of Melbourne — Australia’s second largest city. According to the Australian Government census, 14,521 people resided there in 2011, an increase from 13,293 in 2006. This is not surprising, with the 2011 Census recording 8,083 private dwellings, compared with 7,117 in the 2006 Census. The growth in housing over the years has been facilitated by changing land use. This had been in progress since the City of Port Melbourne’s concerted campaign dating back to at least the 1970s of encouraging brown field development — the redevelopment of industrial land for residential purposes.

When we reached the beach path, Janet and I rode alongside each other for much of the short journey from St Kilda, through South Melbourne to Port Melbourne, with the sand and calm water of the bay to the left of us, and low to medium rise buildings on the other side of the road that was to our right. We passed, without comment, plaques and sculptures commemorating harsher aspects of social history of this area; it had been the site of low paid and insecure stevedoring employment, the departure point for service men and women, and the arrival point for many migrants. What we did converse about was how my research was going, the challenge Janet faced winding down after council meetings and the common assessments we heard people offer of the largest chain supermarket in the area.

Now inside the unmarked boundary of Port Melbourne, it was near the HMAS Lonsdale apartment building that we parted ways. This block of apartments was built on a former navy site. Despite the activism of Janet and many other residents at that time directed at reducing its height, at 18 storeys, it towers above its neighbours.

After we parted ways, I continued along the waterfront alone, past the new builds and older facades of expensive homes and a few long gentrified pubs or cafes. As I neared the still-in-use Station Pier, my view of the bay was obscured by the fence of a truck parking area. This services the Spirit of Tasmania ferry, which, depending on the season, crosses either once or twice a day between Station Pier in Port Melbourne and Davenport on the
northern side of Australia’s island state — Tasmania — moving mostly passengers and some produce.

My cycle then crossed where Melbourne’s first train line once ran down to the pier. The easement is now used for a light rail service that terminates a few more meters inland, and moves fewer dock workers than cruise ship passengers. The station has been given the name of Beacon Cove — the Master Planned Community development my ride next took me through. The most recent of four significant master planned developments in the suburb of Port Melbourne, the towers of this development are lined up along a boardwalk with low rise housing sitting behind.

That night, I turned off the waterfront at the end of this development, just before the sculpture of Pluto — the last planet in the scale representation of the solar system that runs along the municipality’s foreshore. As I often heard people in Port Melbourne complain about the City of Port Phillip treating the suburb as marginal, it seemed a fitting termination point. The area designated as Port Melbourne, and the land that falls under the administration of the City of Port Phillip, continues to the Sandridge Life Saving Club. (The name of Port Melbourne Life Saving Club belongs to the club at the other end of the suburb’s foreshore.)

My ride had not taken me as far as Pluto, or even to the end of the suburb’s waterfront. Perhaps emblematic of the always partial nature of any journey or description, I had traversed a path that left the rest of the streets that lay behind unobserved even though they are very much part of the story.

**Opening order**

Places and social worlds never remain still — but accounts of the world can be, and are, offered. These can never be the account: there is no temporal or social vantage point from which to offer anything other than an account. It is not just a matter of pinning things down for a moment, since for an account to say something it cannot say everything. Any account of a place or people relies on the imposition of order. Orders imposed on the world play into how the world is shaped and experienced, but they do not determine what may be attended to. This thesis offers an account of Port Melbourne and, following Rancière, it proposes that the presupposition of the equality of intelligences is a useful tool for understanding places so to be better able to attend to the consequences of policy making.

The world is not perceived as if it is pinned down anew in every moment: in a given context, it is particular accounts, and so particular orders, that are treated as sensible. The participation of people — the very beings that constitute the social world — in the social world is predicated on a universal potential capacity to understand how to be part
of that world. If any person has the capacity to understand (and I argue it is not possible to prove that anybody lacks this capacity), then they could potentially describe the world.

In as much as Rancière grapples with questions of who writes, who reads, and which stories of order are visible in contexts that are always shifting, his methods and concepts configure my approach to understanding the policies and people I encountered in Port Melbourne. In my ethnographic account of this particular place, I start with the presupposition that people are equal. Equality proves to be a useful tool for both undertaking and reflecting on the value of undertaking ethnographic research. It allows me to advance my account of this place and account for what I observed without asserting that any place, or the people, can be reduced to a static order.

Ethnography has traditionally understood social life and values through descriptions of particular places and peoples. Understanding particular places also matters because representations are drawn on when Australian suburbs, as places people live, are sites of state intervention in housing, policies promoting social inclusion and sanctioned (although devalued) democratic participation. Unfortunately, however, policy and ethnographic attention have both disproportionately fallen on ‘disadvantaged places’. My study of the relatively advantaged suburb of Port Melbourne takes a small step towards addressing this. Rather than turning ethnographic understanding towards policy recommendations, I offer an approach and develop the conceptual language that allows not only order, but also equality, to become visible.

Port Melbourne is an appropriate place for this exercise because, while it has been a site of state intervention (particularly in housing), it is not treated by the state as posing a problem: it is not ‘a disadvantaged place’. It is also a place where the demographics, built environment and social reputation has changed significantly over recent decades. The history of Port Melbourne has been documented by student researchers, academics, council consultants and local history enthusiasts.

Although some of the spaces and groups in which I undertook research have since been bulldozed and reconstructed or folded, this dissertation is no exercise in salvage ethnology. Port Melbourne is a place that, like any other, is always moving, where
people are active and exceed any single identity they may be ascribed. This is a suburb
that has had many speakers and with a legacy of resident activism. With many
organised groups and a built environment clearly shaped by changing trends in urban
planning, Port Melbourne proved a manageable site for learning who is and who is not
taken seriously. I turn my learnings to pinning down an approach to ethnography that
allows me to describe the form and processes of what I refer to as ‘social order’ without
disregarding equality, and then an approach to using equality to interrogate policy.

In this introductory chapter, I locate my project in a conceptual framework that, drawing
on the work of Jacques Rancière, starts with equality. I show briefly how my Rancièrian
approach in this ethnographic project is situated in, rather than in contrast to, the
broader ethnographic legacy of anthropology. I situate this project in a broader tradition
of studying places, before outlining the specific methods used in my own study. I
discuss my approach to naming places and people in terms of both the ethical and
conceptual significance of anonymisation and identification. I conclude this
introductory chapter by outlining the chapters that make up my Rancièrian account of
Port Melbourne.

Starting with equality
Social science has of course always concerned itself essentially with one
thing, proving the existence of inequality. And indeed in this endeavour it
has been highly successful. But the fact that the science of social criticism is
perpetually rediscovering inequality is to my mind precisely what makes it
worth taking another look at the practices which set out to do just the
opposite. (Rancière 1995a: 45)

Social science, in describing societies, makes people appear to be unequal. This thesis
follows Rancière in presupposing that, even given the appearance of unequal capacity
within society, it is always possible to verify people are, in fact, equal. Ascribed social
roles can be identified (as social life is lived in explicit and implicit institutions which
impose inequality), but no person is equivalent to the social roles they appear to be
ascribed in day-to-day life or in the accounts of the social scientist. This presupposition
is a challenge to the discipline of anthropology; anthropologists have long been
concerned with describing and explaining ordered systems of social relations, as well as
systems of beliefs and values (e.g. Beattie 1959). However, that challenge is not at odds with the ethnographic legacy of anthropology.

In this dissertation I show how people live in an ordered world by describing some of the material spaces they inhabit, the identities they are perceived as having, and how what they say and do is interpreted by others. However, I simultaneously work with the hypothesis that the order being described is imposed in a world that is irreducibly complex. The inhabitation of material space and the actions people carry out in that space are not exhaustively defined by any account of order. Human life violates the boundaries of places and identities. While this is often not visible in the contexts where such violations arise, I discuss here (and so outside of the configuration in which they occurred) many such moments and accounts of people, to explore the lived reality of equality in an ordered world.

The claim of equality, and the implications for politics that follow from this, orders this text — but equality always undermines any claim to order. It is valid to presuppose equality but, as I verify this through an account that is necessarily an ordered text, nobody is ‘made equal’ in my account (or through the accounts of orders, or through policies enacted by anybody else for that matter). As a consequence, my observations about findings, writing and fieldwork overlap and so are discussed simultaneously.

A Rancièrian project

Rancière’s work affords the concepts through which I consider and operationalise the presupposition of equality. In the next chapter I will discuss the key concepts from Rancière’s work on which I draw, and the use and interpretation of this work in English-language social research. Here I explain why it is that, rather than just using terms from Rancière, I offer a Rancièrian project in my mode of data collection, analysis and presentation.

While my training in anthropology is very different from Rancière’s background in philosophy and his early research in historical archives, the path I have constructed aligns with his method. I engaged seriously with the work of Rancière during my fieldwork. I had started my project committed to taking seriously not just what I
observed in my fieldwork but also the understandings offered by those who would be the objects of my research. Certainly their voices would never find independent expression in the papers and chapters I would write, or even in my fieldnotes, (that is, this was always to be my project) but that lack of independent expression would not indicate their lack of capacity. My humble position was particularly appropriate because, as a student researcher, I knew that I was undertaking fieldwork in order to both generate data and learn how to undertake fieldwork. While the anthropological tradition has often been criticised for being light on training its novices in ethnographic methods (Hammersley & Atkinson 2007: 20; see also Jackson 2010: s280), I did not feel this need to learn was a failing of my training or discipline. I felt that in fieldwork I was learning what it was not possible to teach.

When I came to read Rancière’s robust engagements with the worker-philosophers in Proletarian Nights (2012a), his critique of explanation as the claim that you cannot understand on your own rang true not only for my own education in ethnographic methods but also for my engagements in the field. As I stumbled through Disagreement (Rancière 1999), I began to recognise the rather Bourdieuan underpinnings of my original conceptual framework, mediated through the work of Wacquant (i.e. Wacquant 2002), needed to be revised. As my familiarity with Rancière’s (at times very sarcastic) tone grew, I started to develop the tools to understand not only what I was already doing in a methodological sense, but also my empirical findings.

What stands out to me in Rancière’s Proletarian Nights (2012a) and much of his work on politics — particularly Disagreement (1999) and On the Shores of Politics (1995a) — is a sense of movement in the discussion that is driven from at least three different directions: the equality of intelligences, empirical details concerning particular individuals or group being discussed, and existing discourses. I use the metaphor of movement to echo Rancière’s own (third person) description of his method.

[T]here is not, on the one hand, ‘theory’ which explains things and, on the other hand, practice educated by the lessons of theory. There are configurations of sense, knots tying together possible perceptions, interpretations, orientations and movements. What he [Rancière] does

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1 This is a widely accepted claim, but still sometimes ignored in qualitative research (Sandelowski 2010).
2 Then available in my university library as The Nights of Labor (Rancière 1989).
3 A familiarity developed primarily through reading On The Shores of Politics (Rancière 1995a) and The Philosopher and His Poor (Rancière 2004).
himself is to construct a moving map of a moving landscape, a map that is ceaselessly modified by the movement itself. (Rancière 2009a: 120)

This is echoed in the role he sets out for concepts.

As I conceive of them, concepts are neither Platonic ideas nor mere empirical designations. They are tools with which we can draw a new topography in order to account for what happens to us and with which we can try to weave a mode of investigation and action equally distant from the consent to things as they are and from the hyperboles of imaginary radicalism. (Rancière 2009d: 288)

Rancière’s work does not just move a certain way; the reader is also obliged to move. The equality of intelligences is a presupposition, and so perhaps a starting point, but there is nothing static about it. It presumes the universal capacity to learn — you cannot rule out the potential for any particular person to learn any particular thing.  

Rancière (2011a: 123) does not claim to be situated outside of the discourses he discusses. Instead, he describes his work as always ‘interventions on’ (Rancière 2009a: 116), and I too draw on this approach. I do not offer a total description of Port Melbourne: it is not possible to view and experience the entire place at once. However, it is possible to move through the space and pay attention to the way the place is accounted for and shaped, materially and socially. As much of my dissertation is advanced through a series of stories, my project is also decidedly Rancièrian in its presentation (see Deranty 2013). If orders are only ever imposed in contexts of contingency, this is not only relevant for what it is we claim to make findings about. Data collection, analysis and presentation requires the imposition of order. Rancière’s work shows why any one account of order is unsatisfactory. The same can be said of accounts of Port Melbourne. By including details, not just generalisations, I demonstrate how claims to order are undermined by the particularities of the places and people.

Any account is undermined by attention to the accuracy of any single part of it. However, to offer an account — an explanation — requires pinning things down, at least for a moment. Here I pin down my method long enough to offer some cardinal

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4 This presumption does not set apart the poor, the disadvantaged or the disabled but rather undermines the use of such categories.
directions to the reader. I show how equality, particularly in the form of the equal
capacity to learn, is already ‘at work’ in much ethnographic enquiry.

**The ignorant ethnographer**

Whoever teaches without emancipating stultifies. And whoever emancipates
doesn't have to worry about what the emancipated person learns. He will
learn what he wants, nothing maybe. He will know he can learn because the
same intelligence is at work in all the productions of the human mind, and a
man can always understand another man's words. (Rancière 1991: 18)

The claim I make that people are equal is an assertion that, as each person’s capacity to
learn is not dissolved by the institutions of social order, each person has the potential
capacity to be equal. Social inequality does matter, but it does not obliterate equality.
The universal capacity to learn (or at least the failure to falsify the presupposition that
learning is a universal capacity, and so anybody could learn anything even if nobody
learns everything) is what is meant by the equality of intelligences. I argue here that this
equality of intelligences underpins ethnographic methods. In the next chapter, I discuss
further Rancière’s concept of ‘equality’ and position my reading of this concept within
relevant literature, and in the first substantive section of the thesis (chapters 3 and 4) I
work closely with this concept. Here, however, I outline how my methodological
starting point of equality is congruent with the wider anthropological legacy of
ethnography.

The presupposition of the equality of intelligences is set out in Rancière’s (1991)
discussion of Joseph Jacotot, the ignorant schoolmaster. The ignorant schoolmaster is
not a deficient teacher but, rather, one who starts with the presupposition that students
are not of inferior intelligence. While a pedagogy premised on inequality presumes that
the teacher will always know more than the student, a pedagogy premised on equality
(according to Rancière) presumes that each person, at least potentially, has the capacity
to learn. Here intelligence is not equated with knowledge: there is much for the student
to learn. However, differences in knowledge or understanding can be overcome and
learning proceeds through the student enacting his or her equality, not through receiving
explanations (as to explain is to presume that students do not have the capacity to learn
on their own). The teacher is assigned the role of master of the will — the role of
linking the student to an intelligence (such as a book) and providing the context in which students can apply their will (by establishing an environment for study, asking the students questions and showing the students how they can apply what they already know to learning something new). The teacher provides the context for, and may instruct in this method of, learning but, in such a pedagogy, the student may learn what the teacher does not even know. By extension, here I offer an account of the ignorant ethnographer to set out an ethnographic project premised on the equality of intelligences. This is not a radical inversion of an anthropological approach to ethnography; it simply renders explicit (and celebrates) the equality on which I believe ethnography is already premised.

While fieldwork may appear to be premised on a fundamental inequality (the researcher and the people described by the researcher), it is only possible through the equality of speaking beings. The researcher must learn from the people they set out to study and, to do this, the researcher must learn to understand the language used by the particular group (Becker & Geer 1957: 29). This has been shown to be possible, even when the ethnographer’s language skills have been poor. There is a shared capacity for language (or at least communication) and it is verified through mutual participation in lives lived. This shared capacity for language — the shared capacity to learn rather than a claim that everybody can pass any exam — is used in Rancière’s own justification of equality (see Chapter 2). There is much for the ethnographer to learn and there will always be gaps in any person’s knowledge and understanding. Power matters, but it is never solely held by the researcher or those the study is purportedly about. Those the researcher speaks with may refuse to disclose information or exclude the researcher from interactions and spaces, and the researcher is not omnipresent, ethnography can still yield valuable understandings (Metcalf 2002).

The ignorant ethnographer is not a careless ethnographer. To describe the ethnographer as ignorant echoes many of the (albeit romanticised) representations of the ethnographer

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5 It is not that a professor cannot be useful as an intelligence. ‘There are a hundred ways to instruct, and learning also takes place at the stultifiers’ school; a professor is a thing, less easily handled than a book, undoubtedly, but he can be learned: he can be observed, imitated, dissected, put back together; his person, available for observation, can be tested. One always learns when listening to someone speaking. A professor is neither more nor less intelligent than another man and he generally presents a greater quantity of facts for the researcher’s observation. But there is only one way to emancipate. And no party or government, no army, school, or institution, will ever emancipate a single person.’ (Rancière 1991: 102)
arriving in the field ignorant, having to learn to carry out activities of daily living and perhaps even to communicate (e.g. Malinowski 1922). The ethnographer may be ignorant on arrival but (even without formal academic training) is not a blank slate; something is ‘known’ by the ethnographer and this can be employed to understand something else. An ethnographer, as a person, is already a social being. Ethnography is necessarily a comparative enterprise because, even if the project itself does not set out to make comparisons, the understandings of human diversity are only made visible in comparison with a set of understandings and expectations held by the researcher. In this way, it fits the primary method of self-education that Rancière (1991) describes: to learn something and apply everything else to it (see also Rancière 2011b: 38-40). So each person, not only the researcher, is never a blank slate. Students — anybody — can turn their understandings of the world they inhabit towards new situations (c.f. Ingold 2014). Or, as Rapport (2000: 21) expressed,

Culture is not a secret, it is something experienced — the formal medium of an experience — and its study is not an esoteric pursuit so much as an exercise in concentration and will; anthropology as a frame of mind, and as a fieldwork practice, is not so much a perversion of an everyday mindset as an exaggeration of one. People are all and always anthropologists in and of their lives, to a variable degree pondering their selves, their worlds and others. People are all and always engaged in ethnomethodology: in the creation of relatively stable socio-cultural forms and meanings out of the fragments and randomnesses of their experience.

Ethnography, as written explanation, may be used by the ethnographer to put forward an account (it is never the only account possible). Even though ethnographic research and the productions of ethnographic texts may be undertaken, produced and pursued in contexts of social and academic hierarchy (Clifford 1986a: 9), their existence verifies the capacity for learning. The circulation of ethnographic texts also verifies, as a sound presupposition, the equality of intelligences across the ethnographer and the audience. Understanding by both the researcher and the audience is a capacity that can be exercised. Peter Winch (1990: x) states,

Unless there is a form of understanding that is not the result of explanation, no such thing as explanation would be possible. An explanation is called for only where there is, or is at least thought to be, a deficiency in understanding. But there has to be some standard against which such deficiency is to be measured: and that standard can only be an understanding that we already have. Furthermore, the understanding we already have is expressed in the concepts which constitute the form of the subject matter we
are concerned with. These concepts on the other hand also express certain aspects of the life characteristic of those who apply them.

Ethnographic work, even when turned towards explanation, is premised on the potential for understanding, a potential possessed by the ethnographer and the audience.

Although not without contestation (see Forsey 2010), participant observation is widely accepted as the core method of ethnography and anthropological fieldwork (Atkinson & Hammersley 1994: 248). It has been described as undergoing education (Ingold 2014: 388). The equality of intelligences is a strong starting point for participant observation-based ethnographic research. The participant observer needs to learn without having things explained (or perhaps needs to learn despite the explanations of others) but be sensitive to ‘indigenous explanations’, whether or not they are semiotically communicated (Mitchell 1997).

Participant observation is generally grounded in a researcher engaging in continuous contact with the people they seek to study, over relatively long time frames (Bloch 1998: 16). Such research presumes that a certain way of life can be understood by living it. Gaining a wide ranging understanding of events can help the researcher access the ‘inexplicit’ aspects of everyday knowledge and how to act appropriately in a given context (Bloch 1998: viii & 16) and may provide access to the happenings of everyday life (Lichterman 2002: 121). The researcher, as an observer (and, I would add, participant), ‘is the research tool’ (DeWalt & DeWalt 2011: 111; see also Powdermaker 1966: 19). In other words, the ability to live in a particular way (within a particular culture) is not an innate property of the people who do so; it is a human capacity and people have the capacity to learn to live in different ways. However, as with the potential for a particular social order to be interrupted by a demonstration of equality (see Chapter 8), this capacity can only be enacted in social worlds.

**Studying places**

Being there has generally been central to the ethnographic methods traditionally used by anthropologists to learn to live different ways since the early 1900s. This is so much the case that ethnographers have often been associated with a group of people, with that group identified by their locale of residence (Appadurai 1988). Of course, social,
economic and cultural life are never contained by place markers, whether these are socially understood, administratively defined or materially present. A study based around a place is not the same as one centred on a set of social relationships (Amit & Rapport 2002). However, ‘the field’ itself is often, and was for me, a place— a socially and administratively identified (i.e. named) space (Low & Altman 1992).

Responding to a world where many people do not live their lives within a walkable physical location, contemporary work in anthropology does not assume an exclusively spatial understanding of location (see Lambek 2011). Finding a place to undertake ethnography in may not mean designating a single site in physical space. However, those undertaking ethnographic research still talk of their ‘fieldwork’, with its spatial connotations, even if the understandings have been stretched to accommodate critiques of cultures as totalities (Hastrup 2013). In an article dated a decade after the review of multi-sited ethnography by Marcus (1995), Hage (2005) argues that the ‘buzzword’ of multi-sited ethnography was less useful for his understanding of migrant diasporas than a concept of a geographically non-contiguous site. As Hage (2005) works with ‘a concept of the site as something one has to spend an inordinate amount of time and labour on in order to become familiar with,’ (466) it is unsurprising that the bodily and institutional constraints experienced by the fieldworker and the relationships and social position developed within particular places made moving around difficult and increasingly unfeasible (465).

Places and people have not received ethnographic attention proportional to the proportion of the world’s population they are said to cover. Broader shifts in disciplinary focus are demonstrated by types of places in which ethnographic research has been undertaken. Prior to the 1960s, the dominant image of anthropology was as a discipline dealing primarily with what it declared to be primitive and uncomplicated,

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6 When it comes to referring to place and space, I use space to refer to an area and place as a named location. Ingold (2011: 145) argues ‘against the notion of space’, complaining that, ‘[o]f all the terms we use to describe the world we inhabit, it is the most abstract, the most empty, the most detached from the realities of life and experience.’ In contrast, Massey (1994: 70) describes space as socially constructed, identifying the use of definitions of space ‘which deprive it of politics and of the possibility of politics’ as a problem to be overcome, rather than a reason to abandon the term ‘space’ (66). Therefore disagreements concerning the space/place distinction are largely a product of varying definitions. In keeping with common practice (see Gieryn 2000: 465), I treat both space and place as perceived and lived in within social orders.

7 In his review of multi-sited ethnography, Marcus (1995) describes this type of research as impelled by not just post-modern academic interests, but the very cultural logics to be comprehended in the capitalist world system in which many people live multi-sited lives.
self-contained and exotic societies (Peirano 1998). Conducted by ethnographers largely in India but also in Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Nepal (Fuller 2002: 58), village studies were treated as an intermediate step down from the demand for students of anthropology to undertake fieldwork somewhere completely foreign to the researcher (Peirano 1998: 106). Geertz (1972: 22) asserted that anthropologists do not ‘study villages… they study in villages’ and, consistent with this, village studies, rather than a direct study of the function of villages, was part of anthropology’s shift ‘toward the study of complex societies’ (Berger 2012: 327). Urban anthropology, with a significant focus on African towns in the 1960s and 1970s (Gutkind 1974; Sanjek 1990: 152), along with studies in northern America cities (Sanjek 1990: 151) and English villages (Savage 2010: 159) further broken down the distinction between places that are or are not suitable for ethnographic study. However, at a time when anthropology was still concerned with ‘the primitive’, it was the growing sociological tradition of community studies that prioritised societies seen as being (or tied to the) modern (Savage 2010: 155).

In Australia, community studies have been undertaken in rural areas (e.g. Dempsy 1990) and coal mining areas (e.g. Metcalfe 1988 & Williams 1981). While it is now less common for academic work to be presented as a community study, there continue to be studies of neighbourhoods — particularly disadvantaged neighbourhoods (Australian examples include Peel 2003; Palmer et al. 2005; Warr et al. 2009). Many studies of Australian neighbourhoods explore the relationship between indicators in these neighbourhoods (neighbourhood effects) and disfunction (see Arthurson 2012). There is also work, such as Peel's (2003) *The Lowest Rung*, which sets out the logic of life within a disadvantaged suburb. There are studies of new developments, both gated (Australian examples include Kenna 2007; Kenna & Dunn 2009) and ungated (Australian examples include Arnold, Gibbs & Wright 2003; Bryson & Winter 1999). These studies of new developments are notable as it has otherwise been rare for more ‘advantaged’ suburbs to be the object of neighbourhood studies. However, these studies have described gated communities as achieving undesirable social outcomes in society more broadly (Kenna 2007; Ruiu 2014) but also within the estate (Breetzke & Cohn 2013). Furthermore, there is a presumed pathology behind gated communities (e.g. Bauman 2001; Blakely & Snyder 1997; Breetzke & Cohn 2013; Gwyther & Woolcock 2009; Hook & Vrdoljak 2002). When Bourdieu (1999a: 3) calls for ‘a complex and multi-layered representation’ of ‘so-called “difficult” spots (“housing projects” or schools today)’, it is still the
‘difficult’ that is the object of enquiry. Regardless of the criteria used, designating a place as a problem is generally a necessary condition for it being treated as worthy of study.

When it comes to urban anthropology, Fox’s (1972; 1977) call in the 1970s for an anthropology not just in, but of, cities has not been ignored; there are now ‘many anthropologies of the city to build upon’ (Brash 2006: 342). Fox (1972: 207) sets out two different types of studies of the urban: studies of belief systems as structuring the urban and studies of the role cities play in structuring social organisation. With their focus on neoliberalism, many recent studies are somewhat consistent with the first category, although the taxonomy quickly breaks down. For example, Brash (2011), Gowan (2010) and Herzfeld (2009) all look at contested rights to inhabit the city, with development playing a key role in the tensions explored. These texts, while providing a detailed geography, remain highly ethnographic as they are about people. Brash (2011) is able to focus (and explore the focus of others) on a well-known individual — Mayor Michael Bloomberg. In Gowan (2010) and Herzfeld (2009) in particular, detailed ethnographic discussion exposes people with a lack of control over the spaces they inhabit — homeless recyclers and tenants in a gentrifying part of Rome respectively. Exclusionary policies, such as a local government banning over night car parking in areas where people regularly slept in their cars (Gowan 2010), or the Catholic Church prioritising financial gains from housing they own over respecting the rights of tenants to continue to live in their homes (Herzfeld 2009), do redistribute people and thereby alter prior patterns of social contact. In Lea (2014), the ongoing militarisation of the city of Darwin — with its distinctive social organisation — shapes what it feels like to live in the city in both an embodied and social sense.8

It has been noted that it is not always possible or useful to distinguish research about places from other social enquiry (Gieryn 2000: 468). But it matters which places are, and are not, studied. Rather than neutrally testing hypotheses, research focused on disadvantaged suburbs perpetuates the suggestion that disadvantaged places fail to live up to what a neighbourhood should provide for residents and the broader society. Wacquant’s (2002) review article ‘Scrutinising the street’ outlines deficits of the

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8 This book by anthropologist Lea (2014), is not the product of a discrete ethnographic project; Darwin is the city in which Lea grew-up in and to which she still returns.
approach taken by the work of the reviewed authors who provide a moralistic and
clichéd account of the deficiencies of those living in poor urban areas. Cheshire (2007)
draws conclusions that are critical of such assumptions regarding poor places. In being
described as ‘disadvantaged’ and ‘marginalised’, both places and people are defined as
deficient against other places or people (Amin 2005). Such descriptions are not literal
spatial descriptions, but rather allude to spatial configurations to describe particular
places as inferior. Anthropologists are not alone in place-making (Rodman 1992) and
so, although I am interested in interrogating the value judgments implied in such
descriptors, I am not arguing for their abandonment in policy or academic discourse.

The sociology I encountered being mobilised by people in their day to day life in Port
Melbourne was often predicated on spatial metaphors of absence or presence, inclusion
or exclusion, and partition or distribution. At the same time, social order played a role in
how spaces were understood and even physically configured (as I discuss further in
chapters 3 and 4). Spatial metaphors can be put to use because they impose order. My
claim is that the uses they are turned towards and/or afford, as well as their interruption,
can be made visible through my Rancièrian approach. Law and Urry (2004: 398)
comment on the pervasiveness of spatial metaphors in social method — or, rather, that
method is often predicated on such metaphors. The spatial metaphors that hold social
salience may vary between groups, but the embodied and emplaced reality of life means
that all people have an experience of the spatial (as varied as these experiences may be).

One of the spatial concepts that imposes order is ‘the local’. If taken to mean the
particular material space one is located in, it is reasonable to expect all people have a
spatial experience of ‘the local’. As a spatial designation, the local is smaller than the
region, the nation or the global. However, not only is the local seen as physically
smaller, it is often treated as inferior. When Lambek (2011: 199) suggests that ‘the
opposite of the local may be the abstract or transcendental universal’, instead of ‘the
global’, he is not suggesting that the local is less valuable. However, value judgments
often are embedded in such distinctions. For example, to be parochially minded or small
minded is an insult in everyday Australian English. There are campaigns to ‘shop local’
but simultaneously ‘think global’. In such a campaign, what is represented as the
morally sanctified basis for a person’s local consumption is in fact premised on global
— rather than locally informed — criteria.
Ingold (2011: 146) asserts that viewing places as nested in each other is inaccurate, and so a problem. However, it is common that spaces are ranked, by scale, into a hierarchical order. Australia’s system of government is an instance of this relevant to my study. Although local government areas in Australia and elsewhere may be responsible for particular policy decisions and implementation, the space of cities is impacted on by the social policy and approaches to governance of broader levels of government. As put by Kroen and Goodman (2012: 304), ‘[L]ocal government is the least powerful level of administration in Australia.’ The Kennet era amalgamations in Victoria — through which all local councils were sacked, local government boundaries redrawn and unelected commissioners installed to establish the new local government areas — demonstrate that local governments are not sovereign. In neoliberal contexts, state policies shape how people inhabit spaces, as is sensitively demonstrated in Gowan’s (2010) ethnography of homeless recyclers in San Francisco. These policies may be experienced at the level of the local, but control does not sit with this tier of government.

Concern with ‘the local’ is also devalued. People living in a particular city may become involved in shaping policies regarding the use of space, as discussed in Brash’s (2011) study of Bloomberg’s mayorship in New York City. But political activity in, or of, a particular place in its own right is described by many as inadequate for advancing broader agendas (Pithouse 2013: 104). Echoing the ‘Think global. Act local.’ campaign mentioned above, when participation in local politics is celebrated, it is often because of an ascribed potential to act as a starting point for larger and more significant political intervention (e.g. Pithouse 2013). In other words, a hierarchy is imposed in which what occurs at a local level is more significant — better — if it feeds into a broader political movement. Something larger than the local is celebrated and the local is valued as a means to achieve that. In my fieldwork, when people brought attention to a particular place the significance of their claims was often diminished on the grounds that these were ‘local issues’. A functioning hierarchy of governance in civic discourse was demonstrated on many occasions during my research. For example, during the run-up to the 2010 state elections, at a public forum for candidates standing in one seat (Albert Park), the chair requested that there be no more questions on local issues. A similar instance occurred at the annual general meeting of a neighbourhood association; the
person chairing the question and answer session with invited speakers dismissed many of the questions as not important enough to be dealt with by the guests because they were too local (e.g. in regard to a particular footpath).

Unlike the chairs of the Albert Park Candidates Forum or that neighbourhood association annual general meeting, I, in the privileged position of fieldworker, was able to follow such discussions about and actions regarding ‘the local’ without seeking to move the conversation on to something deemed more important. Yet, in studying a suburb, my considerations are not only local; this thesis has been influenced by what is taken to be important in anthropology. I have already outlined how my approach is consistent with the broader ethnographic tradition of anthropology and justified using my approach to study a place, and next I describe my data collection methods as a sensible way to study the suburb of Port Melbourne.

**Ethnographic methods**

I have already discussed my primary method for data collection, participant observation, in relation to ethnography, studying places and the devaluation of ‘the local’. However, in undertaking ethnographic research in and on Port Melbourne, I drew on a variety of methods. Here I offer a reflective discussion of my use of participant observation, interviews and a door knock survey for this Rancièrian project. In effect, I present a partial map to render explicit some of what was (and also what was not) visible or perceivable in my development of this thesis. Methodological issues are returned to later in the dissertation, at those points where they are implicated in the development of my thesis of equality.

**Participant observation**

Participant observation was well suited as a method for my project, because to both describe the orders mobilised in a place and also problematise these orders, I required detailed information. This research method draws on being present in, part of and alert to a situation. Although (or perhaps because) it lacks a more clearly defined and narrow set of practices on the part of the researcher, participant observation ‘gives us more information about the event under study than data gathered by any other sociological method’ (Becker & Geer 1957: 28). Through this method, the researcher can focus
‘both on what has happened and on what the person says about what has happened’ (Becker & Geer 1957: 32). As a result, it is useful for exploring perceptions, descriptions and actions. When undertaken over a period of months or years, participant observation also provides opportunities for observing and understanding change that are not present in interviews (Becker & Geer 1957: 32).

To undertake participant observation, I spent 18 months participating in formal and informal groups, attending council meetings and consultation events, visiting public and commercial spaces, and traversing Port Melbourne. I also set up a Facebook page and used Twitter. My observations and interpretations were recorded in my fieldnotes. In this dissertation, I include many details about the basis for my claims – my learnings – because they are part of the data and stories. I draw on, but do not cite, my fieldnotes. Overlapping multiple groups and using different methods for engaging with people and spaces within the same suburb allowed me to compare social interactions across situations. However, without the familiarity with the place, people and public issues of the suburb, I stood little chance of even following many of the meetings I attended. I did not observe everything occurring in or concerning Port Melbourne, and I did not feel like I was interacting with the suburb as an entity in its own right (c.f. Kumar 1992: 230). However, by being physically present and socially active in the suburb I gained a thicker understanding than would have been possible otherwise (Geertz 1972).

9 Scratchnotes were taken regularly during the day and then supplemented with fieldnotes. It was appropriate to make scratchnotes during some activities, particularly meetings. For seated activities, particular attention was paid to seating arrangements to assist with recall in preparing full fieldnotes. ‘Breaks’ in scheduled activities were often used to catch up on pre-reading (especially for council meetings and other information regarding local issues), take photographic records, and prepare fieldnotes. This was particularly important as evening meetings (i.e. council and one of the neighbourhood associations) could run very late. In preparing fieldnotes, a basic level of coding was included as a document was created for each activity-event (e.g. a meeting, a volunteer shift, a visit to the supermarket). A standard system of naming was used for reoccurring activity-events and this was used as the filename along with the date. Time, location, attendees and duration were recorded. Conversations and actions were described. My personal reactions or interpretations at the time were included but care was taken to indicate them as such and to provide what I thought was the basis for them. If these fieldnotes were recorded more than 24 hours after the event, or notes were to supplement the initial fieldnotes, this was also recorded.

10 The decision not to cite my footnotes was, even if each event was assigned a random code, it would reduce my ability to provide some level of anonymity (as I discuss later in this introductory chapter). It is possible to assign codes that would further disaggregate situations, however, as the notes are not a publicly accessible archive anyway, it would contribute little to the capacity for others to verify my claims.

11 ‘Meetings are notoriously hard to follow’ (Herzfeld 2012: 109).

12 Carrithers (2002: 231) quotes, but with no reference to the representation of the people she studied as ‘the city itself’, Kumar's (1992: 230) remarks on the end of her fieldwork: ‘I was interacting with only a few informants on one level but on many other levels I was interacting with other components of the city. I felt beyond the shadow of a doubt that I was interacting with the city itself.’
Even studying a single place, it was not possible to be everywhere or observe everything. In participant observation, I focused on formal and informal groups of people who gathered in person. Some groups I participated in for close to 18 months, and others only for a few months. Sometimes the shorter length of involvement was because the group only convened for a discrete period (e.g. a working group for an event), in other situations it was because it took me until later in my fieldwork to identify or secure access to the group, and there were some instances where I knew I had a finite number of hours in a week and so I made the choice to only ask to participate in the group for a shorter period (e.g. gentle exercise). I developed a regular routine, with weekly or monthly groups or meetings to attend, and more flexible activities such as visiting the gym or catching up on correspondence and fieldnotes at the local library. One-off events also took up a significant amount of time. I did not live in the suburb and there was generally at least one day a week I was not physically present in Port Melbourne (particularly early and late in my fieldwork). While my approach to fieldwork was less intensive than complete immersion and my approach is open to the criticisms often directed at non-resident participant observers (see Passaro 1997), my experience resonated with that of the people I came to know in the suburb; their lives were not confined to the suburb and many people spoke positively about Port Melbourne as a place to live because of the ease of commuting to other places, such as the Central Business District of Melbourne. My approach made it feasible to conduct a longer period of fieldwork than is usually otherwise possible in an Australian Ph.D. program. Being able to conduct participant observation for a longer period of time was useful when it came to learning the group-specific language (Becker & Geer 1957: 29) of some of Port Melbourne’s groups, as I became familiar with many of the spaces, residents, workers and events in the suburb.

The length of time I spent engaged in fieldwork and my participation in different, but at times overlapping groups, meant that the only practical approach open to me was that of being ‘genuine’. My attention and activities were shaped by my role as a researcher but I did not intentionally adopt a persona (c.f. Fassin 2013). While selective self-representation in fieldwork may be employed to increase the likelihood of accessing information (Stein 2010), productive fieldwork relationships can cut across differences of opinion: ‘people do not have to like you to give you valuable information’ (Davis, D.
Unsurprisingly, my fieldwork relationships took time to grow. However, I disagreed with opinions, introduced new information into conversations and had some days when interactions were influenced by how exhausted I appeared to my interlocutor. This never resulted in a moment as significant as the demonstration of anger discussed by Briggs (1970).

Participating provided the opportunity for visual observation and embodied experience, but also for listening (see Forsey 2010). I was able to access a great deal of information shared aurally. I would often hear the same person, park, building, event or issue being discussed by community groups, neighbourhood associations, and council staff. I found out about events in the suburb, sometimes directly through means used to promote them to residents (e.g. posters, flyers, online content, social media and print media) but also through word of mouth. Participant observation also assisted with the identification of, and access to, many other data sources useful for ethnographic enquiry. Local newspapers and relevant stories in other publications, as well as government documents, were followed, as is now accepted as part of participant observation research (Gupta & Ferguson 1997: 37). In addition to earlier research reports, I was able to access interview or life history recordings, transcripts and written stories in the Port Melbourne Historical and Preservation Society’s collection. However, consistent with the ethnographic approach promoted by Borneman (2014), it was the face-to-face fieldwork that configured my engagement with the archives.

Participating with other people offered much of the data that inform my discussion but it was also the means through which I found out what was on and how different methods reveal different parts of the story. One event I attended was a focus group session, as part of a review of council services for seniors. I had become a regular at the Linking Neighbours weekly coffee group for seniors, which is how I found out about the focus group. I observed conversations leading up to the focus group where group members worked out what they should say. They were suspicious of the motives for an evaluation, suspecting it could be used to cut funding, and they planned to go and speak positively about the program of which they were a part. The fact that people had set aside time beforehand to discuss what they would say in the focus group could be seen as an attempt to interfere with the evaluation. However, it also demonstrates that they thought the program was significant. In moments such as this I was able to access some of the ‘backstage’ preparations; while I did not have universal access to all conversations, I had a better understanding of what I may have not been present for. Furthermore, the relationships I developed contributed to gaining access to events and groups I may not have been able to access otherwise. When I appeared at another seniors’ event many months later, without a ticket, some of the people I had gotten to know at the focus group event recognised me and I was invited to sit on their table. Perhaps more significantly, negotiations to be a regular observer at many more politicised meetings seemed to be successful only because I had fostered relationships with group members who could advocate for my requests to attend to remain on their agenda.
Interviews
In addition to the day-to-day conversations I engaged in through participant observation, I carried out two types of (formal) interviews (n=20): meetings with key individuals (n=16) and semi-structured interviews with Port Melbourne residents (n=4). My use of interviews in data collection, analysis and this dissertation is closely tied to my use of participant observation. As with my fieldnotes, interview references are not cited.

Interviews are a common qualitative research method. One of the constants through the Australian community studies tradition has been the use of interviews; substantial use of participant observation has been unusual. While Peel (2003) in The Lowest Rung did not use any questionnaires or surveys for his (in practice) participant observation-based data collection (where he often undertook recorded unstructured interviews ‘on the spot’), other projects (particularly when undertaken by teams of researchers) have relied on interview schedules (e.g. Bryson & Winter 1999; Williams 1981). If participant observation is undertaken, interviews usually are as well (Franklin 1990: 93). The methods can be symbiotic. The understanding developed through participant observation may assist the researcher to access the relevant language for understanding the particular group they are concerned with, identify relevant questions for consideration, and make more informed inferences (Becker & Geer 1957). In the other direction, interviews can assist when it comes to finding out information and developing relationships that may be useful for participant observation. This last justification for the use of interviews with participant observation proved most relevant for my project.

Meetings with key individuals were, for the most part, conducted early in data collection. A flexible schedule was developed for each meeting, relevant to the interlocutor. These meetings were not audio recorded, but comprehensive notes were taken at the time and afterwards. These interviews provided an opportunity to gather data relevant to the project but also to canvas the feasibility of the project, identify priorities for participant observation and set up good working relationships to support participant observation. Individuals were identified based on their formal position in Port Melbourne (e.g. the local councillor, the local state MP, staff in community sector organisations and the local neighbourhood house) and also through suggestions from people in Port Melbourne (e.g. a real estate agent).
Semi-structured interviews were carried out using an interview schedule. These interviews were undertaken with people I had met through fieldwork and administered towards the end of my fieldwork. Scratchnotes were made at the time and supplemented by more comprehensive notes completed afterwards. Three of the semi-structured interviews were audio recorded with either a recording device (livescribe pen) or a computer program that time stamped the notes against the recording. This meant that the recordings could be revisited without the need for full transcription. At the request of the interviewee, one interview was not audio recorded. Generally interviews were held with people I had gotten to know in situations where extended conversations had not occurred. A smaller number of semi-structured interviews were required than originally planned because of the extended opportunities for data to be collected in ‘naturally occurring conversation’ and through informal interviews when the opportunity arose due to the physical co-location with respondents — ‘bumping into each other’ for example. Although triangulation is valuable, holding interviews was balanced against the demands being made on people’s time and, as mentioned above, sensitivity to not duplicating archives that already exist (such as interview and life histories archived in the Port Melbourne Historical and Preservation Society’s collection).

Door knock survey
The recruitment methods I used for participant observation and interviews meant that I engaged with people based on activities they undertook in, or concerning, Port Melbourne. To complement this, I included a door knock survey (n=71) as a way of talking with people based solely on the fact that they lived in the suburb. I developed a short survey schedule that did not duplicate the Australian Census, although it was possible for me to make some assessments regarding the representativeness of my sample. I focused on the assessments people made about their street and suburb, as well as the people they thought lived there. I also asked about the use of local commercial and community facilities. Drawing on Davies’ (2008; 2010) work on door knocking as a method, a flyer was developed and letter boxed to properties that were to be door knocked. As with the other methods I utilised for data collection, I administered all surveys myself. Both the letter boxing and administering the survey contributed to my embodied understanding of the suburb. I was also able to be attentive to and record responses I had not anticipated when I designed the schedule.
This was not a census (an Australian Census was, however, carried out during my fieldwork) and so I did not door knock all residential properties in Port Melbourne. My approach was in contrast with more intensive recruitment used by some anthropologists, such as the census of a precinct undertaken by Edwards (2000). Even though the door knock survey did have a distinctive focus, the overlap with my other methods in the people encountered and issues discussed allowed for triangulation (Hanson 2008). While in the more explicitly participant observation-based aspects of data collection I focused on groups of people who met in person, the door knock survey recruitment was largely informed by my understanding of the social geography of the residential part of Port Melbourne. I selected streets to have a representation of parts of the suburb and types of housing (discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3), but also those streets where different parts of the suburb or different types of housing met. I sought to survey one adult from each house in the selected streets and did not screen respondents for representativeness. Consistent with the warning given by Davies (2008: 2), this recruitment method relied on my capacity to ‘sell’ my research project in person and to face rejections. I revisited the same street more than three times to start with but, as returning more than twice was not greatly increasing the number of surveys completed and other participant observation activities were competing for my time, this was refined to door knocking streets or apartment buildings twice (generally one weekend afternoon and one weekday afternoon). The less intensive recruitment strategy still allowed me to use door knocking itself as an opportunity to test assumptions I had encountered through other methods of data collection. In other words, reflecting on recruitment is not only important for understanding the data I used, it was a means by which I developed and tested my understanding of Port Melbourne.

Response rates for the door knock survey, when considered alongside the responses, make visible a strong distinction between private rental and owner-occupier tenure. In some streets, the rental properties were singled out by multiple residents as houses in which they did not know the residents. ‘They are only renters’ would sometimes be offered as an explanation. Verifying the perception from the perspective of renters through the door knock survey was problematic because gaining access to residents identified as such by other respondents proved difficult. Of the small number of properties where I had not been able to find somebody at home (or — in a number of cases possibly too small to generalise from — who had declined to participate), a
disproportionate number were identified by neighbours as rental properties. The small sample size of the door knock survey (n=71) meant the correlation between response rates and tenure type (using census data) could not be accurately tested, but encountering such a perception was unsurprising in an Australian context where home ownership as a norm is fostered by governments through a range of direct and indirect policies (as I discuss in Chapter 3).

While those people who answered their door to me in person overwhelmingly agreed to complete my survey, apartment properties stood out as providing a physical challenge for access; occupants would need to come to the building entrance or I would need to enter the apartment building. Those in apartment buildings were also much less likely to be home, but also less likely to participate if they were home, generally declining through an intercom system.

People I was spending time with or during participant observation often asked me about how I was collecting data and how this was progressing. When I mentioned I was conducting the door knock survey, people in Port Melbourne often spontaneously volunteered their prediction that I would find newcomers to the suburb unfriendly and unhelpful. The difficulties I encountered with surveying private rental tenants and apartment residents was not met by any surprise amongst people I had gotten to know through participant observation. It was as if those difficulties provided evidence to support a prevailing view that renters and apartment dwellers were not active in the local community. Those views that were prevalent were not necessarily valid; I also met many apartment residents and some rental tenants in my participant observation activities such as on historical walks, visiting the library for story time, at community garden working bees, in conversations at the pub and attending neighbourhood association committee meetings.

In discussing recruitment here, I have highlighted the co-construction of findings, data and methods. One benefit of ethnographic methods, particularly when employed by a researcher rather than distributed across a team, is that what may otherwise appear as limitations in the data set can be instructive.
**Revealing identities**

Research methods will always have limitations and any data set will contain omissions. However, details are also intentionally removed in the move from data collection to the presentations of findings. While much of this is due to analysis and the abstraction involved in moving from data to findings, often some information is withheld, or even altered, in an attempt to provide anonymity for places and people.

While anonymising places and people is usually justified on the basis of ethical concerns (Hicks 1977: 215; Nespor 2000: 547; Vainio 2013), or justified as a valuable tool to allow more rigorous research (Vainio 2013), the practice has also been brought into dispute on these same grounds; some anthropologists have critiqued the anonymisation of people as primarily being a way to protect the researcher (e.g. Finnegan 2003: 22; May, S. 2010: 13; Scheper-Hughes 2001). As to use (or not use) anonymity also shapes research on a conceptual level, there have been calls for anonymity to receive more critical consideration (Nespor 2000) or to be more thoughtfully celebrated (Vainio 2013) has been a topic of disagreement. I this section, I position my Rancièrean project in these disputes.

As I discuss below, I do not anonymise the suburb I studied. I do, however, provide a level of anonymity for most of the people I came to know, through the use of pseudonyms and omitting or altering some of the most identifying information. Such an approach has been common in recent urban ethnographic research. The public figure used to open Muehlebach’s (2012) book and the one at the centre of Brash’s (2011) text are named. However, pseudonyms and altered biographical information are used to de-identify the volunteers, clients or general members of the public amongst whom Muehlebach (2012) conducted fieldwork; the homeless recyclers discussed by Gowan (2010); and the active or former addicts discussed by Zigon (2011). The cities and neighbourhoods where fieldwork was carried out are named in Brash (2011), Gowan (2010), Muehlebach (2012) and Zigon (2011). However, naming places when they are the subject of research has not been universally practiced. Anonymising the site of research through the use of a pseudonym has been a practice in community studies, with Australian examples being Bryson & Thompson’s (1972) *An Australian Newtown* and Dempsey’s (1990) *Smalltown*. One possible reason for this difference is the different attention paid to the potential for generalisation in earlier community studies compared
with more recent ethnographic projects. Anonymising places, to the extent that it suggests generalisability, suggests that particular details do not matter (see Nespor 2000: 550). The pseudonyms used for places often indicate that they are standing for a category of places (e.g. a ‘new town’ or ‘small town’) rather than a specific location. It has been argued that this is not an issue if the ‘right’ site is selected — a site that does not include unique characteristics, on the basis of which it could be identified (Kelly 2009: 443). However, to claim that a site has no unique characteristics that are significant is an evaluation not only as to what is or is not relevant but also what can be considered ‘the same’.

Stein (2010: 566) has asserted that the ethical issues arising from the potential identification of places and people in ethnographic work can be avoided in historical research. Australian historical community studies have also named the places with which they are concerned (e.g. McCalman 1984; Peel 1995). However, in so far as this is predicated on the assumption that the issues and people discussed have slipped into the past, it is a similar justification to that of generalisability — the details do not matter.

While I have used the distinction to structure my discussion of where anonymity is or is not used so far, a contrast between recent ethnographic work and earlier community studies is too simplistic. Nespor (2000: 549) offers a list of community and urban studies that do name the place; a list to which Australian examples can be added: Metcalfe (1988), Wild (1983), Williams (1981), and a more recent and urban example, although covering three different suburbs, by Peel (2003). There is, however, a tendency for anthropologists, more so than sociologists, to be associated with the sites at which they have carried out fieldwork.

I made the decision not to anonymise my fieldsite. To the best of my knowledge, that decision was never challenged within my university by my committee or my peers. Nor did anyone I spoke with during fieldwork suggest I anonymise the place. This was not

14 ‘A proper selection of research site should obviate the need to provide contextual descriptions of such detail that anonymity is jeopardised.’ (Kelly 2009: 443)
15 ‘Researchers in fields such as urban and community studies, for example, routinely identify towns and cities by name (e.g., Davis, 1990; Dorst, 1989; Foley, 1995; Portes & Stepick, 1993; Zukin, 1991; also see Szklut & Reed, 1991 for a review).’ (Nespor 2000: 549).
16 Williams (1981) positions the study as an Australian ethnography.
because they were all unaware of the practice. For example, early in my fieldwork, a Port Melbourne resident enthusiastically asked me about my project aims and methodological approaches. He went on to ask me if I had come across *An Australian Newtown* (Bryson & Thompson 1972), and if I knew which suburb it was about, before going on to name the suburb. He did not ask me if I planned to anonymise the suburb I was studying — the suburb in which he lived. My plain language statement and online presence made it clear that I was studying Port Melbourne. My decision not to anonymise that was justified on the basis of empirical rigour; if I protected the identity of the suburb I would not be able to cite relevant publications, utilise census data or make explicit reference to public debates concerning the area.

According to Kelly (2009: 433), ‘[i]f a site and its individuals have been anonymised properly, their identities cannot be uncovered, even though the findings be significant.’ Anonymity requires greater levels of de-identification than simply substituting names. While this may mean using pseudonyms for all people and places (as they may be identified through their relationships), it can also mean not only omitting but also changing some details. Decisions therefore need to be made as to what information is important because it contributes to ‘findings’, and also what can be substituted. Anonymity is a tool that — like any tool — is packed with assumptions that should be questioned as it plays a role in shaping what accounts are presented (Nespor 2000: 546). Vainio (2013), writing from within social psychology, praises anonymity because it can be employed as a tool of abstraction to convert people, groups or places discussed to examples of theory. Disclosing only the identifying details considered relevant within a particular theoretical approach, ensures that the reader will not be sidetracked by extraneous information (Vainio 2013). Anonymity is useful for making theoretical claims, but it also deprives the reader of information they could draw on to take an informed dissenting position (Nespor 2000: 552). Particular topics of research (not just approaches) may be more suited to granting anonymity (Kelly 2009: 437), and my project was not one of them. A Rancièrian project, at least the type of project I have described this one as above, demands that particularities are not airbrushed out of accounts of order.

Naming the place of my study allows me to include more particularities in the writing, but it also allowed me to engage in a more genuine manner throughout my fieldwork.
As I mentioned above, the length of time I spent engaged in fieldwork and my participation in overlapping groups contributed to my assessment that being able to be genuine was important. This meant being upfront about my project and research interests. Instead of business cards, I handed out copies of my Plain Language Statement when people I met suggested exchanging contact details, even if the reason for exchanging details was to carry out a role I had taken on as part of participant observation rather than a direct enquiry about my research project. If I had set out to anonymise my fieldsite, it would have been difficult to operate with such transparency. Transparency works both ways of course; not only did people I met through fieldwork know I was undertaking a project, those who knew me were able to find out where I was undertaking fieldwork. Overt fieldwork results in a level of visibility (Nespor 2000: 547), so 18 months of participant observation based research was likely to result in me and the place being associated with each other in the public record (van der Geest 2003). My name was mentioned in the newsletters and blog posts of groups I participated in, my presence at meetings was often minuted, I signed attendance lists at consultation events, my face (and sometimes even name-tag) was recognisable in photographs used for local council publications and I was even invited to submit a short commentary column for February 2012 edition of the local council’s magazine, *Divercity*.

I take a more sensitive approach to disclosing identifying information about individuals I encountered, spent time with and worked alongside in my fieldwork. I do not name individual people, except for some key people easily identifiable because of their public role. I use some pseudonyms, while acknowledging that only limited anonymity is provided through such a strategy. Using pseudonyms allows me to link discussions regarding a particular individual while still obscuring their ‘real’ names. Obscuring ‘real’ names is highly valuable in a world where much information is digitised, and a quick search of a text, database or the internet can easily return name-based information. Pseudonyms or unique identifiers often do not need to be used, as descriptions and pronouns can be substituted. However, these can become cumbersome and they can prevent the reader linking parts of the story to particular characters. Links play an important role in a Rancièrian ethnographic project, as any person cannot be exhaustively defined by any taxonomy of roles. As I argue that any particular person elides definition through classification in a socially recognised identity, it is important
that I am able to demonstrate the contingency of identifications and the always existing potential for classifications or divisions to be challenged.

Pseudonyms can be useful for links within a text but, as is often acknowledged (van den Hoonnaard 2003: 147 cites Murphy and Dingwall 2003: 341), including in my Plain Language Statement, pseudonyms may not prevent people identifying their own contributions or being identified by people they know. While the recognition of information someone already knew appears innocuous, and the alternative would call into question the accuracy of the information, links may also be made between information known to the audience or available on the public record and information not widely known about a person, resulting in unintentional disclosures. For example, if I was to link a quote from somebody who had also participated in the published oral history project ‘They Can Carry Me Out’ (Grainger 1991)\(^\text{17}\) to information I collected during participant observation or an interview, then anybody would be able to link the person’s name to that information. Therefore, I have undertaken thoughtful deliberation as to what is included and excluded when it comes to details and referencing.

Rancière does not anonymise the people and groups he discusses.\(^\text{18}\) While his work is largely archival and historical, and works with accounts people have already placed in circulation, by being upfront as to which writers, people and groups he is considering Rancière ensures that his audience can both understand how his work challenges alternative readings and can also go to his sources to provide an alternative account. Representations of research participants as ‘vulnerable’ and needing protection, although a motivation for anonymity,\(^\text{19}\) are rendered problematic when the people

\(^{17}\) “They Can Carry Me Out”: Memories of Port Melbourne (Grainger 1991) is a book published as part of the oral history project — ‘Vintage Port: Worth preserving’ and was popular enough to be republished in 2001 by the historical society and the City of Port Phillip. It offers a collection of quotes from people interviewed, and these appear thematically alongside photographs and contextual information. Quotes and photographs are labelled with the full names of people. In this way, individuals are written into the historical record. That the descriptions appear alongside the names of people who provided them, rather than being re-presented through the voice of a narrator reinforces that what is being offered are memories, as the subtitle claims, rather than a unified account of Port Melbourne. However, this also means that if I link such accounts with my own fieldwork, names I do not include can be found by others who access these published works.

\(^{18}\) Those with something to lose are not so much the individuals he discusses as exemplifiers (the worker-poets of Proletarian Nights [Rancière 2012a] are long since dead), but those whose interpretations he is working against. Even then, he is clear that he does not consider critical readings as an affront to their targets.

\(^{19}\) Kelly (2009: 443) claims that ‘[t]he default of anonymity exists to protect the innocent and the vulnerable against harm.’
discussed are treated as poets and philosophers rather than workers or ‘the poor’. Anonymity continues the distinction Ingold (2014) names as occurring between ethnography, which happens ‘out there’, and academic life; with van der Geest’s (2003) self-anonymisation, referenced above, a notable exception.

It may not be possible to maintain anonymity when the boundary between the objects of research and the academic community is breached. While ‘[l]ow-status groups are more likely to have their anonymity violated than high-status groups’ (van den Hoonnaard 2003: 146), it was those in the relatively higher status position (e.g. senior academics) whose professional/private boundaries were breached by my intrusion into their suburb. I recognised some academics when I encountered them in Port Melbourne, and I recognised some Port Melbourne residents when I encountered them at academic conferences. Another situation where the boundary can be breached is the introduction of informants to friends or colleagues (Hopkins 1993: 125). Port Melbourne residents I came to know well, or crossed paths with briefly, did intersect with my academic community, either through choice (such as attending my confirmation seminar) or because they were both Port Melbourne residents and part of the academic community. I balanced such concerns with my commitment to equality by simply never making the introductions in academic situations, allowing people to self-identify.

A strategy for dealing with imperfect anonymity is to allow ‘informants’ to review the resulting texts before their circulation (Hicks 1977: 215; Tilley & Woodthorpe 2011: 203). One group did request to review work that concerned them before it was published. However, this group also acknowledged my authorship, with members reminding me that I bear responsibility if I say anything untruthful. In this way, I was treated as being equally able to write about Port Melbourne (the significance of this is most clearly dealt with in Chapter 5), while my interlocutors knew (or presumed) that there were legal structures in place to protect people not from being described so much as from being described inaccurately. This example shows how my approach to anonymity was not only influenced by my academic training, but also by the understanding that I shared with people in Port Melbourne: that communication results in disclosure and that an ethic other than that of patronising protection was appropriate. It is unsurprising that anonymity has been criticised, or at least described as particularly problematic, in participatory, emancipatory and ethnographic research (Glazier 1993: 30).
the types of research where generalisations and power relationships are likely to be questioned.

Along with what I perceive is appropriate to reveal in terms of identifying people, questions of what is captured in my data collection due to the selection of methods, recruitment strategies and the access granted by the [would be] objects of research are valuable for reflecting on the scope and limits of my project, while also highlighting aspects of the physical, administrative and social configuration of the context in which I undertook fieldwork. I do not provide perfect anonymity in the text that follows, as I include details regarding many of the particularities of places and people which, I argue, have the capacity to interrupt order (see Chapter 4). Naming the tension between generalisability and particularity has structured — rather than been resolved through — my consideration of the utility of anonymity here. This same tension underpins my thesis. In describing my approach to the identification of the place and people I discuss, I have revealed more of the details and ethic of both my fieldwork engagement and what I present in this dissertation. It is to the outline of this dissertation that I now turn.

Outline of chapters

By taking equality as my starting point and distinguishing politics and social order, I offer a Rancièrian account of Port Melbourne. This opening chapter is the first of two introductory chapters that set up the approach and conceptual framework I have used to collect, analyse and discuss the empirical data. In Chapter 2, I discuss the concepts from the work of Rancière that configure my work. I do not set out to offer a definitive summary of the work of Rancière but, as there is no consensus on the use of his work, this detailed discussion is necessary to contextualise my distinctive approach. After this introductory section, my dissertation is structured in three parts, with each focusing on a key concept from Rancière’s work: the sensible, equality, and the processes of policy and politics. Each part comprises two chapters, with the first chapter undertaking the work of illustrating the concept and the second mobilising the concept to reflect on or analyse its significance.
In the two chapters of Part I (The sensible), I work with the concept from Rancière’s work of *le partage du sensible* to both give an account of and account for what is taken to be sensible. In Chapter 3, my focus is on the material geography of my field site. I introduce the chapter, and what I mean by ‘sensible’, through justifying my focus on the residential part of Port Melbourne. To position this within broader discourses, I outline how significant housing is in Australian notions of the good life. The majority of the chapter demonstrates the functioning of accepted ways of living attached to recognised social identities through the past construction of and more recent planning protection for some of Port Melbourne’s housing estates built since World War I. The descriptions in Part I are turned towards the space — a geography — of the suburb of Port Melbourne. However, this proves to be underpinned by social geography, as I demonstrate that the orders I discuss are underpinned by social order.

Picking up on the way people in Port Melbourne employed material and social geographies, Chapter 4 focuses primarily on talk about people from one of these housing estates, Beacon Cove. I describe the role of this estate in my own justifications for choosing Port Melbourne as a place to study, but the validity of these justifications are quickly shown to be contingent on a partial representation. This is also the case for commentary offered on the social geography of Port Melbourne, whether it is offered in academic texts or by those I met within the suburb. I consider what people said about Beacon Cove to offer a social geography of Port Melbourne, and also to describe the existence of a broader configuration of sense in which it is sensible to speak about ‘people from Beacon Cove’ in the first place. I mobilise three different interpretations of *le partage du sensible*: partition of the sensible, distribution of the sensible and a configuration of sense. I argue that order is only imposed, and that it cannot be read off the material properties of, or the actual people living in, Port Melbourne. Even discourse concerning ‘social inclusion’ in published commentary and a project in Port Melbourne imposes an order, to represent a place and a people, that imposes inequality.

In Part II (Equality), I empirically verify Rancière’s assertion of the equality of all people by turning to the ways that the configuration of sense outlined in the preceding chapters is interrupted. In Chapter 5, the equality I verify is an equality of any person rather than anything — for, although material objects and sensory experiences feature in the stories through which equality is enacted, it is people who advance the
interpretations and employ objects. Artefacts of the material world are used to demonstrate that things have been different and so can be different in the future, but it is people who always have the capacity to ‘speak’.

While Chapter 5 is framed around stories, in Chapter 6 I undertake analysis at the level of ‘characters’ — two people and the understandings and responses to them I observed from the empirical focus for my discussion. Contributing to the critical literature on gerontology I describe, as a parapolitics, a binary of effective subjects/objects of care at work in much policy directed at older people. These ascribed identities may be mobilised, but my detailed discussions of particular people soon reveal that these identities are never an exhaustive account of who a person is or can be. I demonstrate why institutions directed at participation are not democratic and how policies proclaimed to make people equal achieve the opposite. I use Rancière’s (1995a: 48) understanding of the enacting equality as always being an act of self-emancipation to tread the fine line between rejecting passive equality and offering yet another audit of inequality. This approach allows me to share understandings I developed, and could only have developed, through participating in groups of people who gathered in Port Melbourne.

In Part III (Policy and Politics), the ideas of order and equality come into play, but I shift my focus to processes. In Chapter 7, using the City of Port Phillip’s policy on footpath trading, I show how policy is used to try to impose order in Port Melbourne so things can be fair for all. Yet, as the analysis reveals, the imposition of order, even when underpinned by the most principled policy commitments, imposes inequality. Rancière’s concept of ‘the police’ is shown to be useful for analysing why policy that is considered fair is consistent with social order. This also opens up the analytical space to appreciate why the fear of disorder works against taking the presupposition of the equality of intelligences seriously.

In Chapter 8, I show how not all words are taken to be sensible. Drawing on the conceptual tools I set out across the chapters, I am able to demonstrate that judgements of somebody’s opinion as being ridiculous or valid are always contingent on those opinions being consistent with what is taken to be sensible. This is why taken-for-granted orders are able to shape decisions made. The interruption of the functioning of
the existing social order does not occur through orderly decision-making within community or civic spaces. Yet, for an interruption to be efficacious, social recognition is still necessary. As I demonstrate, this has sometimes (though rarely) been possible in Port Melbourne.

I do not offer a road map for better housing, stronger communities or a fair world; the examples I work through from this suburb show why there are good reasons to be suspicious of the social order that would underpin any such planning. However, and as I reflect on to conclude the dissertation, my project nonetheless presupposes understanding is possible and worthwhile. In this respect, it sits within the ethnographic tradition, even though it is distinctive for being configured by the work of Rancière.
Chapter 2: Using Rancière

Finding sense in using Rancière

[T]he main point is not understanding what I wrote. It is moving forward together in the discussion of the issues we are facing today. For those who want to thread a new way between consensual thinking and the ethical absoluticization of the wrong, there is still much room for discussion. (Rancière 2011d: 16)

The account I offer of social order in Port Melbourne, and its interruption, is configured by concepts from the work of Rancière. To orientate the reader to my use of the work of Rancière in the more empirically substantive parts of this dissertation, this chapter offers an introductory discussion of my reading of his work.

I claimed, in Chapter 1, that Rancière’s presupposition of the equality of intelligences is consistent with the ethnographic tradition in anthropology. This is not because Rancière is an anthropologist. Rancière works largely with texts of theory, history, literature and art, and his ideas largely concern politics, but situating his work in disciplines is a fraught exercise. Badiou (2005: 108) describes Rancière as taking ‘delight in occupying unrecognised spaces between history and philosophy, between philosophy and politics, and between documentary and fiction.’ His work on pedagogy is used to bring political theorising into education (e.g. Den Heyer 2009; Lambert 2012; Pelletier 2009; Pelletier 2012) and pedagogy into cultural studies analysis (e.g. Chambers 2014). Not only between disciplines, there is also an anti-disciplinary nature to Rancière’s work (e.g. Rancière 2006). Rancière has been criticised by Patton (2012) as presenting a particular political approach that cannot be considered political philosophy (though Patton [2012: 129] also acknowledges ‘Rancière denies that he is a political philosopher’). And Toscano (2011) criticises Rancière as hostile to the discipline of sociology. [This accusation is convincingly argued against by Lane (2013), who describes Rancière as rather setting a challenge to take seriously the potential for people to demonstrate intellectual capacity.] The anti-disciplinary nature of Rancière’s work is part of its appeal in some areas, with Greteman (2014) pointing out ways in which Rancière’s approach fits with the ‘queer’ approach of upending the normal.
Rancière’s work has received little attention in English-language sociology (Baiocchi & Connor 2013), and the same is true in anthropology. It is not that anthropologists do not engage with theoretical concepts offered by those outside the discipline, although there certainly is no definitive approach to engaging with theory (Das et al. 2014). As Borneman (2014) demonstrates, perhaps there is something particular about the learning that occurs through the fieldwork encounters that are often emblematic of anthropological projects, and reflecting on them afterwards with the aid of concepts. I have argued above that Rancière’s concepts are consistent with the anthropological tradition of ethnography and I indicated that they proved useful for my comprehension during and after fieldwork. However, when others in anthropology have drawn on concepts from Rancière’s work, the concepts have at times been found wanting. For concepts to be useful for ordering reflection and communication, no concept can make everything visible. It is on the grounds of what the concepts obscure — what would be missed in a discussion using only those concepts — that anthropologists Povinelli (2011) and Boswell (2015) criticise Rancière’s work as insufficient. (The concerns of Povinelli (2011) and Boswell (2015) are discussed further in this chapter and addressed in Chapter 5.) Yet (and I suggest that this is of greater relevance for introducing the use of the work of Rancière here), there are examples of anthropologists finding concepts from the work of Rancière useful. Rancière’s definition of politics is employed by both Candea (2011) and de la Cadena (2010) in considering how to take seriously in analysis, not just perform analysis on, the accounts of the world offered by their fieldwork interlocutors. They reference Rancière not only to open up a dispute within anthropology, but to argue for anthropologists to take seriously disputes in which their fieldwork interlocutors are engaged.

Robbins (2013) offers a convincing defence of the proliferation of areas there is an ‘anthropology of’ on the basis that bodies of work, in adding a guided focus for attention, contribute to the critical capacities of anthropology. As I discussed in Chapter 1, Rancière’s presupposition of the equality of intelligences is well suited to being mobilised in anthropology. The equality of intelligences and associated pedagogical implications are identified by Varenne (2009) as particularly salient for the project of the anthropology of ignorance. More generally in anthropological enquiry, with there

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20 Borneman (2014) uses a concept drawn from his reading of the work by the psychoanalyst Wilfred Bion.
being no cultural boundaries around the validity Rancière claims for the equality of intelligences, it provides a starting point for my project that leaves open the possibility for generalisations that may be useful for guarding against what Leach famously disparaged as ‘butterfly collecting’ ethnography (see Leach 1984: 19) and Stacey’s (1969) disillusionment with community studies because they cannot be synthesised into a meta-narrative.

Then again, the equality of intelligences may be of little use against accusations of ‘butterfly collecting’ that devalue ethnographic work that does is not linked to policy recommendations (e.g. Franklin 2008: 280; see Chapter 7). According to Rancière (1991), the emancipatory pedagogy built on the equality of intelligences was proven unsuited to scaling up for roll out in state institutions by Jacotot’s failure to enact the emancipatory pedagogy in the Dutch military. However, this is used by Rancière to verify that equality is ‘not an end to attain, but a point of departure’ (Rancière 1991: 138).

Rancière’s concepts are criticised as both ineffective and for the impact they do have on the world: by Dean (2011), Rancière’s work is assessed to be an inadequate basis for a leftist politics; and Sansi (2015) insinuates that the adoption of Rancière’s ideas as part of the curatorship of a gallery in Barcelona implicates him in practices of gentrification. Yet others do see it as effective and useful. Žižek, although critical at times (e.g. Žižek 2010: 199-200), is quoted on the cover of Rancière’s (2009b) _Hatred of Democracy_ as praising Rancière for offering the grounds on which ‘we can continue to resist’ (cited by Bulloch 2008: 290). Consistent with this is the observation that his work does not appear to have a clear endpoint in mind (Panagia 2009; Pelletier 2011). As I return to in Chapter 9, it is in the processes of enquiry that Rancière’s concepts have greatest use, and such enquiry does matter.

To use the work of Rancière is not to reproduce it, but there are areas in which greater empirical attention has been directed. Outside of anthropology, and convenient within the context of Deranty’s broader project on work (see Smith & Deranty 2012), Deranty (2012) claims to demonstrate the centrality of the concept of ‘work’. While Rancière does not reject ‘work’ as being important, in the same collection (Deranty & Ross eds. 2012) Rancière (2012c: 206) describes his most ‘recurrent theme’ as the ‘critique of
identity’. In describing it as not identity, but rather the critique of identity, it is the processual that is emphasised. Although the categories of structure and process are not used to do the same analytic work as they were in earlier anthropology (Swartz 1969), concepts from the work of Rancière are useful for drawing attention to not only orders, but also the processes of ordering. Although I named both Candea (2011) and de la Cadena (2010) as using Rancière’s definition of politics, the reading offered by de la Cadena (2010) is closer to the one I offer below than that of Candea (2011) because she goes further in treating politics as a process. I agree that de la Cadena (2010) taking up the challenge set out in the cosmopolitical proposal of Stengers (2005) to ‘slow down’ is consistent with the use I make of the work of Rancière. That said, I do not join her in the concern with the ontological (instead I focus on what I term ‘social order), and I join Chambers (2011a; 2013) in contrast to Deranty (2003) in not searching for the ontological in the work of Rancière (as I am instead interested in the processual).

As I stated in Chapter 1, I study a place. Yet Rancière’s concepts have been taken up most enthusiastically by geographers interested in the spatial aspects of social order within the urban places people live (e.g. Davidson 2012a; Davidson 2012b; Davidson & Iveson 2014; Davidson & Iveson 2015a; Davidson & Iveson 2015b; Dikeç 2002; Dikeç 2005; Dikeç 2007; Dikeç 2012c; Marshall 2013; Ruez 2012; Swyngedouw 2011). Although he discusses the utopian Icarian communities (see Rancière 2012a), Rancière does not engage empirically with places. Therefore, the enthusiasm comes from the concepts using the work of Rancière affords. While Swyngedouw (e.g. 2010) perhaps offered greater visibility to the conceptual contribution Rancière could make (in particular in response to representations of climate change), and Dikeç (e.g. 2002; 2012a; 2012b; 2012c) has contributed multiple papers exploring (particularly the spatial) elements of Rancière’s account of politics, there is a growing body of research drawing on the work of Rancière to look at what happens in neighbourhoods (e.g. Davidson & Wyly 2012; Panagia 2009; Ruez 2012), and Rancière’s work is a common thread across many chapters in the edited collection *Urban Politics* (Davidson & Martin eds. 2014).

The concepts with which to discuss order certainly did not enter with the circulation of Rancière’s ideas but, as with the above mentioned consideration of dissensus by Candea (2011) and de la Cadena (2010), his work is seen as particularly helpful for moving past
the notion of the ‘post-political city’ (Davidson and Iveson 2015b) and so not being stuck reaffirming that there is inequality within urban places. In tracing the similarities and differences between the work of Rancière and Marxist geographer David Harvey, McSweeney (2010) claims the project set out by Harvey of exposing the contradictions of neoliberalism is not as deep as the challenge pointed to by the work of Rancière. McSweeney points to an importance difference: ‘Rancière examines the internal logic of the socio-cultural ideas and framework, which neoliberal economics supports, while Harvey interrogates the neoliberal impact upon the context in which these ideas have been elaborated’ (McSweeney 2010: 7).

Consistent across much work drawing on Rancière’s concepts, whether the book length examination of French urban policy’s continual marginalisation of the disadvantaged into and already resident in the banlieues by Dikeç (2007) or shorter chapter on graffiti in the Australian city of Sydney where attitudes amongst and to graffiti writers are examined by Iveson (2014b), is an interest in mapping not only spatialise order but also the relationship between person-scale interactions and overarching directions set out in policy by the state. Those who take seriously the demand made by Rancière to presuppose the equality of intelligence will always be directed towards paying attention to particular people, over normative ideals, in their analysis (c.f. Harvey 1973: 96).

The concepts of Rancière challenge those who use them to take seriously processes, which extends to the process of presupposing the equality of intelligences. As I stated in Chapter 1, to say something is not to say everything and to follow a particular path is to be obliged to move a particular way. However, and as with the account of key concepts I offer below, this is my reading. I am not alone in using the work of Rancière, and my reading is not the only one. In Reading Rancière, Chambers (2013: 75) argues that May (2008; 2010) enlists for his own collectivist anarchist project, rather than faithfully presenting, the work of Rancière. Yet, this is a point of difference rather than a dismissal of the value of May’s work. In this same book, Chambers (2013: 3) explains that Reading Rancière is not a systematic construction of Rancière’s ‘overall political theory’ because such a project would not be in keeping with Rancière’s own approach and is not desirable.

21 I differ from the position taken by McSweeney (2010: 9) that the challenge is to develop a project that will always be in a state of politics (and my discussion in Chapter 2 offers an account of Rancière’s concept of politics that sets out the grounds to justify why I disagree).
Rancière’s distinctive conceptual framing of the world is evident in the very position adopted by Rancière in relation to his own ideas: Rancière (2004d: xxviii) introduces *The Philosopher and His Poor* with the assertion, ‘if we show too much respect for others’ arguments, we do them the worst injury, which is to make them insipid.’ While those who use the work of a particular thinker may attempt to shut down critiques of this thinker’s work through explanations of what this thinker was trying to say, such as the particularly fierce explanations Wacquant (2004) offers for Bourdieu’s work, there is little equivalent among those who use the work of Rancière.22 May (2010) tells his reader that Rancière has been supportive of his projects, suggesting Rancière is not only willing to challenge and offer his own interpretations of the concepts of others, but he is also open to the same being done for his work.

In this chapter, I start by positioning my choice to use the work of Rancière in the broader English language academic context. As Rancière’s work on politics is the most relevant to my dissertation, I then discuss the distinction between policy and the police. Next, I outline how the words ‘sensible’ and then ‘equality’ are mobilised as terms. Finally, the processes of subjectivization and the police are discussed.

Perhaps I contribute to wearing in a path for the presupposition of the equality of intelligences to be mobilised in future projects, whether others choose to follow this path or use the one I build as a point of comparison for something rather different. Rancière’s presupposition of intellectual equality, including his own equality with those he writes about and for, filters into my claims and writing style. This does not mean that my work presents the sort of road map to be imposed as a method on other research questions. My project does more to open questions than offer a way forward for others, particularly if their concern is to set out institutional arrangements for social life.

**Policy and politics**

Institutional arrangements are of interest to me and, even though Graeber (2012) suggests it is so seldom done in anthropology because it is boring, I do pay attention to them. However, my attempt to understand Port Melbourne is not limited to describing

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22 Rancière is frequently introduced within English language circles as a critic of the work of Bourdieu. This is on the grounds of style and also substantive findings, and I will return to some of their particular points of difference in this chapter.
them. One way in which my work is configured by that of Rancière is that I am not cataloguing social order, but rather accounting for it and its interruption. Of course, this is premised on the claim that there is order, but that it is not the only game in town. Rancière (1995b: 63) distinguishes between politics and policy. This distinction results in much English language audiences may usually consider ‘politics’ being re-defined as the mechanisms by which the potential for politics is foreclosed. In diagnosing such situations, the connotation is that these mechanisms that close-off of politics should be resisted. Bylund (2012) criticises such work, including that of Rancière, as just a fad. Perhaps it is. However, Rancière’s distinctive approach to what is and is not politics can be enlisted to criticise the social order enacted in other ways of accounting for the administration of people.

I follow Rancière in not talking about bureaucracy itself so much as policy. Policy, according to Rancière (1995b: 63), is the process of governing as ‘it entails creating community consent, which relies on the distribution of shares and the hierarchy of places and functions.’ Politics, in contrast, is a particular type of interruption of this imposition of order. Importantly, the very definitions of politics he argues for, as with that he offers for democracy, are as counter to consensus and social order. Rancière uses democracy and politics as synonyms, fusing them together with his conceptualisation of equality. In doing so, Rancière does not so much redefine democracy as he demonstrates it to be the rule of those with no qualification to rule (see in particular Rancière 2009b). Although some (most notably May 2008; 2010) seek to institutionalise democracy, this is not possible according to Rancière. For Rancière, politics is democratic: politics is not the rule by those granted a position in the hierarchy that qualifies them to act in such a capacity.

Other understandings of politics that are not underpinned by the presupposition that people have the capacity to be equal are ruled deficient by Rancière. Rancière still engages with them, not just to dismiss them but to show how they too expose the empirical truth of equality. This circular reasoning of basing his definition of politics on equality and verifying equality through examples of politics is supported by his employment of empirical material. However, as the rest of my chapters work with empirical material, I will focus here on offering an outline of how Rancière conceptually differentiates his definition of politics from that of the very theorists of the
social he uses to verify his presupposition of the equality of intelligences. It is in *Disagreement* that Rancière (1999) offers a chapter length discussion of what he terms archipolitics, parapolitics and metapolitics. Each is associated with a particular movement in political philosophy: archipolitics with Plato, parapolitics with Aristotle, and metapolitics with Marx. However, elements of each approach are still found today. Each approach is not only a political philosophy but, according to Rancière, they have also shaped the social sciences.

Archipolitics is typified by Plato’s ideal community (discussed in greater detail below in the section on equality), with the ideal community the object of Rancière’s (2004a) sarcastic attack at the start of *The Philosopher and His Poor*. Archipolitics eliminates politics as a ‘specific activity’ (Rancière 1999: 70). The task of governing is assigned to a particular philosophical elite and the people, rather than having to be ‘restrained by law’, are ‘won over by story’ (Rancière 1999: 68). Archipolitics, with its focus on defining and enacting a totalising order, is against the (illegitimate) encroachment of social sciences into philosophy but, by way of contradiction, it ‘invented’ the social sciences and archipolitics and social sciences operates with the same logic (Rancière 1999: 69-70). In particular, modern political philosophy shows itself to be engaged in a project of archipolitics by having the elites prescribe the ‘common good’ (Rancière 1999: 93). However, the capacity of the people to understand the same language and stories as the elites shows that the inequality on which archipolitics rests is just an illusion.

Parapolitics operates by institutions (Rancière 1999: 73) but these institutions do not result in equality. Parapolitics transforms ‘the actors and forms of action of the political conflict into the parts and forms of police’ (Rancière 1999: 72). Parapolitics treats both the monarch and community’s interests (and/or ends) as being able to be served through the same institutions (Rancière 1999: 76). In other words, the institutions close down the opportunity for conflict between the ruler and the ruled. The ideal of parapolitics ends up not being open political participation for anybody, or even a desirable outcome for all, but rather the absence of ‘peasants’ from politics (Rancière 1999: 74-75). Modern parapolitics converts people into individuals through the classic liberal fable of a ‘war of all against all’, but it results in experiences of inequality that give rise to arguments for class. In this way, it transforms political philosophy into social science...
(Rancière 1999: 75). However, in resting on a fable of a war of all against all and relying on the absence of those whose presence would show conflict had been foreclosed rather than resolved, it actually demonstrates a fundamental equality of all (Rancière 1999: 79).

Metapolitics, in the way that Rancière contrasts it with archipolitics and parapolitics, makes visible that the institutions of parapolitics close down political conflict and enact order; it shows that there is actually injustice or inequality in what has been presented as justice or equality (Rancière 1999: 81). Metapolitics achieves this through a ‘symptomology’ of detecting untruth, by declaring the ‘truth of politics’ is ‘located beneath or behind it, in what it conceals’ (Rancière 1999: 82). Metapolitics offers ideology — politics cancelled out (Rancière 1999: 86) — as the name for the gap, as ‘the true of the truth of the false’ (Rancière 1999: 85). While in parapolitics arguments for class can arise, it is in metapolitics that the proletarian arises as the ‘third people’ (Rancière 1999: 88). When it names ‘ideology’ and class, metapolitics enacts an order where the political disappears in the ‘critique of all appearance’: the ‘end of politics’ (Rancière 1999: 92). Metapolitics positions itself as the ‘scientific accompaniment of politics’ (Rancière 1999: 85), where social truth is posited against the untruth of politics (Rancière 1999: 83). This understanding of metapolitics does vary from the sense it is used by Badiou (2005) (see Bosteels 2011). In presenting itself as the means through which to expose what is concealed, metapolitics leads back to elites and so archipolitics. Rancière’s account of metapolitics correlates with the accusations he makes against much social science such of that by Durkheim, Tocqueville and Bourdieu23 (Rancière 2010a: 96).

With my particular project of understanding Port Melbourne, clearly it is possible to see my work in the tradition of metapolitics. However, even Rancière’s own work on the relation between politics and aesthetics has been evaluated as such by Ferris (2009: 47). Yet it appears that Rancière not only defines metapolitics to criticise work in the social sciences, such as the sociology of Bourdieu. Metapolitics can also contribute ‘to the

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23 See also: ‘In common with the Marxist critique, he [Bourdieu, the sociologist] establishes that any idea of gift and communication is a denial of the class division. And he shows this division as inscribed in the most minute details of everyday comportment and behaviour. But he also knows that any desire to overcome this division is itself condemned to denial or misunderstanding. The class struggle that he demands should never be forgotten is now an eternal truth, whose irredeemable forgetting he alone has the privilege of eternally denouncing.’ (Rancière 2012b: 166)
reframing of forms of experience’ (Rancière 2009a: 122) through, for example, literature. Rancière (2009a: 122) writes evocatively regarding the interruption of the functioning of inequality, but also the ordering, that may occur through such reframing:

On the one hand, this reframing makes new forms of political subjectivization thinkable. On the other hand, it tends... to dismiss equality in favour of the sympathy or fraternity of the subterranean drives or impersonal rhythms and intensities of collective life.

It seems that Rancière would be more supportive of a metapolitics that does not institute the new, and so is not claimed to be the correct order, but rather to let an expanded range of claims be ‘thinkable’. Or, perhaps more accurately, allow anybody to speak for collective life. While the shifting nature of Rancière’s concepts means that direct quotes of his work may be better suited to evoking ideas rather than clarifying meaning, my reading is consistent with the more general definition offered by Rancière (2009a: 122) of metapolitics as ‘politics without politics or besides politics... the attempt to perform the task of politics, the construction of forms of community, by other means.’

This, according to Rancière (2004f; 2005: 18; 2008: 11, 2009a: 122; 2011c), is what literature does. Although not every person learns to read in every language, to presuppose the equality of intelligences is to presume that anybody may have the capacity to read. Yet, as there is potentially a political capacity of literature that is other than the project of the author (Rancière 2004c: 5-6; 2004e: 13; 2004f: 21), it is impossible to limit the community of those who read a particular text and the projects they may use these words to authorise. This is particularly noticeable when it comes to the form of the novel.

By stealing away to wander aimlessly without knowing who to speak to or who not to speak to, writing destroys every legitimate foundation for the circulation of words, for the relationship between the effects of language and the positions of bodies in shared space. (Rancière 2004c: 13)

Day-to-day, written words are not read and put to work without any regard to the existing social order (see Chapter 3). In fact, the rise of the novel and the diffusion of the technologies of writing around the world is treated as complicit in doing away with an imagined pre-modern way of human life that is mourned by some. In considering stories, Stoller (2007: 188) refers to Walter Benjamin’s ‘The Storyteller’, in which Benjamin ‘sadly suggests that the productive forces of modernity triggered the decline
of storytelling’. For Benjamin, Stoller (2007: 189) says, the novel is written and read in isolation. Stoller (2007: 189), in offering a list of ‘memorable’ ethnographies and memoirs ‘consisting of ingeniously woven stories that speak to the issues that define the human condition’, is clearly not arguing against anthropologists circulating the written word. However, the freedom to access the words with little heed to social order is not celebrated. Stoller (2007: 189) suggests the value of the direct contact between the storyteller and the audience comes from ‘the experience of the storyteller’ being able to be ‘transformed into the experience of those who listen to her or his tale.’ It is worth noting that the experience is described as ‘transformed into the experience’ of others (Stoller 2007: 189). It is a creative process because it acts not only on the audience but also on the story. Yet, this transformation is managed by the storyteller. The defining, and acting in the interest of, the ‘common good’ remains with expert storytellers in a way that it is not for written literature.

The categories of archipolitics, parapolitics and metapolitics are all reminders that Rancière’s presupposition of the equality of intelligences renders all justifications for social order as only ever imposed on the world. He shows us how theorists of the social mobilise these orders, but showing equality at work is a core part of Rancière’s method. His approach can be summed up as disagreement, dissensus or aesthetics. Sharing with metapolitics the practice of positing truth against untruth, such an approach avoids the charge of being a veiled archipolitics only because it verifies equality rather than enthroning the elite (e.g. the sociologist king) as the one able to diagnose inequality. As I return to conclude this chapter by addressing further, a social science project undertaken with attention to the work of Rancière is thereby challenged to step outside the strong criticisms Rancière makes of the social sciences. Archipolitics, parapolitics and metapolitics (as the reign of experts, the institutional appearance of equality that is actually premised on inequality and the continual diagnoses of the absence of equality) all prove to elide equality.

Yet it is possible to do something other than offer a metapolitical diagnosis of these orders as unequal and unjust. Rancière demonstrates equality as an empirical fact by showing that even these orders that deny equality or eliminate equality are actually premised on equality, even if they are not emancipatory. To verify equality requires making it visible in situations that are otherwise ordered. Work that engages in this
project can say something about these situations, whether they are the policies of a
government or the actions of some people who come together for an activity.

**Sensible**

A commonsense is a topography of the common, determining what objects
are given as common objects, what spaces are visible as spaces for
discussion about common objects, what subjects are counted as able to
perceive those objects and to make statements and decisions about them.
(Rancière 2007: 561)

Concepts from the work of Rancière have been used in diagnosing how the day-to-day
administration of neighbourhoods, populations and systems of government are
conducted within *le partage du sensible*. Looking at issues of planning approvals, Ruez
(2012) claims that heated debates about the ‘Ground Zero mosque’ — which buildings
and people were welcome in that part of New York City — actually took place within
the taken for granted order of *le partage du sensible*. Tyler (2013) describes how
categories of people, such as refugees (illegal migrants), Gypsy Travellers (illegal
occupiers) and a culturalised underclass (chavs), are excluded from legitimate
citizenship. In the field of democratic theory, Little (2007: 145) suggests that the
operation of the distribution of the sensible has resulted in not only the exclusion of
people, but ‘the exclusion and marginalisation of certain ideas’ from democratic
politics.

There are different philosophical approaches to order: Foucault (1994) claims that all
people have an experience of order as something that exists, perhaps suggesting that it is
something that is already inherent in the world, while one of Bateson’s (1987: 13-18)
metalogues, ‘Why Do Things Get in a Muddle?’, illustrates how order needs to be
made. For Rancière, order is always imposed on the world. This order is what is taken
to be common sense, and he terms it *le partage du sensible*. Bringing together ideas of
division, linkage and arrangements, Rancière (2009a: 120) discusses his concept (using
the third person) in the following way:

A configuration of sense is an effective form of linkage between
perceptions, discourses and decisions. This form of linkage creates a
specific form of commonsense, defining what can be seen, said and done,
and confronting other forms of commonsense, which means other
constructions of the possible.
A configuration of sense — *le partage du sensible* — is what is evoked when ‘commonsense’ is referred to. It is also the type of order that is achieved through policy. However, the phrase of *le partage du sensible* has been translated in varying ways. With Rancière’s concepts being dynamic, I agree with Chambers (2014: np) that there is ‘no consensus, and debates have flared, over how to translate’ the term. The use of the definite article, *le*, is not as significant for the phrase’s meaning as Rancière offers us ‘the police’ to refer to a particular *partage du sensible* that presents itself as a total order.

The greatest variation has been in the translation of partage (Chambers 2014: np). *Le partage du sensible* has generally been translated as either the partition (e.g. Dikeç 2007; Ruez 2012) or the most popular, according to Chambers (2014: np), the distribution of the sensible (e.g. Highmore 2011; Panagia 2010). Chambers (2013), in his book *The Lessons of Rancière*, uses a range of translations or sometimes the French. However, as *partage* also denotes sharing (May 2007: 31), a strength of the term is that it simultaneously evokes division and sharing (Panagia 2010; Chambers 2011a: 306) through being both a break and link (Chambers 2014: np). In this way, it is a method of talking about arrangements, and so the word ‘configuration’ has also been used (e.g. Deranty 2003; Dikeç 2012a: 5; Lambert 2012; Panagia 2010; Rancière 2009a; Ruez 2012).

As ‘sensible’ can be read as the English word ‘sensible’, this sees less variation. However, whether this is the most useful translation has been the subject of deliberation. The suggestion by Oliver Davis that *le partage du sensible* is better translated as ‘the partition or distribution of the sensory, rather than the sensible.’ is described by Chambers (2013: 183n3) as based on a ‘compelling case.’ However, Chambers (2013: 183n3) goes on to suggest ‘that no singular translation will do, and surely none will be the definitively “correct” one.’

My experience in Australia has been that it is common for people to evoke the notion of commonsense. It is not feasible to offer a settled account of the content of what is commonsense. Being shared in common, it does not need to be coherent enough to need to be explained to another person. Rancière (1994: 2) writes, ‘to know something is not
to have to think about it.’ As the distinction between what is and is not sensible is not inherent in the world, the distinction between what is and is not sensible must continually be imposed on the world. Rancière’s work calls less for an exhaustive audit of common sense than an exploration of it being put to work. Or, perhaps more accurately, it is sensitive to the way that not only can anybody participate in a common sense world, but they can offer judgements as to what is or is not common sense.

Rancière’s work, in demonstrating what is taken to be common sense to be contingent but shared and understanding it as implicated in social order, is consistent with a very large body of scholarship within the social sciences. Arguably, the most influential (and relevant for my project) conception of a taken for granted order social order in recent times has been Bourdieu’s concept of the role of habitus for doxa. The habitus is an embodied set of dispositions that structure people’s ongoing engagements with the world: ‘The body is in the social world but the social world is also in the body’ (Bourdieu 1990: 190). It is ‘socially constructed’ rather than ‘as the embodied sediments of individual and collective history’ (Wacquant 2009: 142). The claim has been made that there is not enough consideration of contingency (Burawoy 2012). It is somewhat distinct from the concept of habitus discussed by Aristotle, Dewey and Mauss, and ‘the technologies of the self’ found in Foucault’s later work (Burkitt 2002), the influence of Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology means Bourdieu’s notion of habitus incorporates consideration of the embodied and spatial. Relevant to understanding a suburb, it has been taken up as useful for considering the physical and social aspects of places (Dovey, Woodcock & Wood 2009: 2611) and to discuss housing consumption (Cheshire, Walters & Rosenblatt 2010; Flint & Rowlands 2003). Wacquant (2009), a student and explicator of Bourdieu, describes his use of habitus as both the topic and the tool of his early research on urban marginality. Although carried out in a boxing gym, this was a project where he ‘wanted to reconstruct the question of the ghetto from the ground up’ (Wacquant 2009: 140). A methodological consequence of Bourdieu’s conceptualisation of habitus is that only the sociologist can learn to decode and describe the habitus. For everybody else, to participate is to be unreflective.

While Bourdieu (1999b: 625) wrote, ‘[s]ociologists cannot be unaware that the specific characteristic of their point of view is to be a point of view on a point of view.’, Rancière reminds us that to place the knowledge of the academic as higher order
knowledge is problematic. Rancière (2012b: 170) critically dubs Bourdieu the ‘sociologist king’ who offers ‘[e]ach rank in the hierarchy of knowledge … the reason that is suited to it’. For Rancière (2012c: 211), equality is not something that is parcelled out by the sociologist as ‘the scandal of intellectual emancipation was sufficient to object both to those who claimed to give equality to the children of the people through instruction and to those who intended to do it by adjusting instruction to their cultural background.’ Social science, with its metapolitics (as discussed above), has used understandings of common sense to diagnose inequality. Rancière (1995a: 45) suggests,

Social science has of course always concerned itself essentially with one thing, proving the existence of inequality. And indeed in this endeavour it has been highly successful. But the fact that the science of social criticism is perpetually rediscovering inequality is to my mind precisely what makes it worth taking another look at the practices which set out to do just the opposite.

The practices that Rancière is most interested in are those that verify the equality of anybody.

Equality

Although common sense is underpinned by social order, the inequality shepherded in through such orders does not appear so sensible when examined more closely. In Rancière’s discussion of Plato’s model community, everybody has a role but these different roles make people unequal.

In the beginning there would be four persons. Maybe five. Just about as many as the needs of the body. A farmer for food, a mason for housing, a weaver for clothing. To these let us add a shoemaker and some other worker to provide for material necessities.

That is how Plato's republic represents itself. Without a deity or founding legend. With individuals, needs, and the means to satisfy them. A masterpiece of economy: with its four or five workers Plato founds not only a city but a future science, sociology. Our nineteenth century will be grateful to him. (Rancière 2004d: 3)

Only Rancière does not really think that people should express gratitude for the justification of such an order, or social order itself. The justifications for this ordering are shown to be ridiculous and so Rancière is actually holding up Plato’s model
community as an object of ridicule. Equality results in the calling into question of ‘any system of domination’ (Chambers 2013: 29).

The potential for people to enact equality is taken by Rancière to already exist in even the most unequal situations. It does not need some ideal context to be enacted. Prescribing an ideal community is rejected by Rancière in favour of exploring a question: ‘How can those whose business is not thinking assume the authority to think and thereby constitute themselves as thinking subjects?’ (Rancière 2004a: xxvi). Gauny — the philosopher floor layer — is frequently referred to by Rancière (e.g. Rancière 1983: 6; 2004d: 28-29; 2011b: 25; 2012c: 214). His embodied skills as a floor layer did not determine the way he experienced the room. Gauny was not only able to pause work to appreciate the view from the room in which he is supposed to be working (better than any of the wealthy neighbours), he also reflects on and writes about this. Gauny’s written work is not treated by Rancière (2011b: 27) as ‘a chronicle of work, but the commentary of a genuinely philosophical experience: how to live the working-class condition philosophically.’

Individual people are identifiable in Rancière’s work (to a greater degree than the empirical work of Bourdieu). The worker poets and philosophers discussed by Rancière are rarely able to be treated as a single group, or at least the unity of the group is repeatedly undermined by reference to one person or another. We find a discussion of their learnings which allow them, as particular people, to think outside of their social roles. Following Rancière’s (1991: 2; 2011b: 40) discussion of Jacotot, it is a matter of learning something and linking everything else to what you already know. The existing acquired understandings do have some parallels with the concept of habitus discussed above. However, in Rancière's work people have the capacity to learn what is not prescribed for them in the existing social order. This is in direct contrast with the approach taken in Bourdieu's work where, according to Wacquant (2004: 7), ‘[t]he efficacy of performative discourse is directly proportional to the authority of the agent that enunciates it and to its degree of congruence with the objective partitions of society’.

Rancière uses texts written by Gauny and others to demonstrate that the capacity to learn the knowledge and skills associated with certain categories of people has been,
and so can continue to be, enacted by people from other social classes. People demonstrate they too have particular capacities, rather than rejecting particular knowledge or skills as mattering. For example, in *Proletarian Nights* (Rancière 2012a), the workers who write poetry and philosophy, such as Gauny, seek to do so by the standard of the day.

Who is considered a poet or a philosopher, instead of somebody who writes poetry or philosophy, is still a function of social recognition that occurs in social order. A demonstration that somebody has the capacity to do what their position in social order could mean the repositioning of that person. But, as the example Rancière (1995b: 66) offers the example of a French woman demonstrating belonging to the (already accepted) ‘category of Frenchmen’, it can force the redrawing of the categories used in social order. (As I return to discuss as ‘subjectivization’ in the next section.)

When it comes to research on social movements, Rancière’s concepts shift the analytical focus from looking at access to power to equality. Stoneman (2011), interpreting Rancière’s concepts through the frame of ‘appropriate indecorum’ and thereby articulating a role for the individual in social movements, uses the 1966 ‘Berkeley Speech’ by Stokely Carmichael as an example of the presupposition of equality. May (2010) uses Rancière’s concepts in arguing that a commitment to equality within anarchist social movements is essential for their success. That people in an advantaged position (such as homeowners in desirable Sydney suburbs) also benefited, it was the bringing in to being of the identification of ‘the people’ that was universal and the creation of a shared public interest comes through strongly when Iveson (2014b) employs Rancière’s conceptualisation of politics to account for the success of the Sydney green ban movement, in which unions refused to work on developments deemed to be against the public interest through damaging the city’s environmental and built heritage. However, what is more common is to use Rancière’s conceptualisation of the functioning of order to account for why particular movements are not emancipatory, such as the discussion by Ruez (2012) of the conflict over the building of a mosque in New York City, the ‘cruel optimism’ of self-management regimes discussed by Berlant (2011) and the creation of ‘revolting subjects’ traced in Britain by Tyler (2013). Whatever the findings, with Rancière taking a strong stance against identity politics (Lane 2013; May 2010; Neocosmos 2012), his work provides an analytical alternative
to analysis through the frame of identity politics, as demonstrated in many of May’s (2010) and Tyler’s (2013) case studies.

Subjectivization

A lot of things are not actually politics within Rancière’s framework, but a French woman’s declaration of being a Frenchman can be defined as such. Politics, according to Rancière, occurs through subjectivization\(^\text{24}\): a person interrupts the existing social order through staging their equality and enacts a configuration in which they are visible. This is not a struggle between formal groups or recognised camps (Rancière 2004g: 303; 2009a: 116). In the process of subjectivization, a person who had not previously been considered as a legitimate speaker enacts a group identity that they can speak from. ‘It is a call of the demos for a new institutionalization’ (Dikeç 2002: 94). In doing so, the speaker thereby redefines the world so that their words can be considered speech rather than noise. Rancière (1995b: 66) describes the example in the following way.

For instance, does a French woman belong to the category of Frenchmen? The question may sound nonsensical or scandalous. However, such nonsensical sentences may prove more productive in the processes of equality than the mere assumption that a woman is a woman, or a worker, a worker. For they allow these subjects not only to specify a logical gap, that in turn discloses a social bias, but also to articulate this gap as a relation, the nonplace as a place, the place for a polemical construction. The construction of such cases of equality is not the act of an identity, nor is it the demonstration of the values specific to a group. It is a process of subjectivization.

The claim to be a Frenchman and (bringing back in the examples of worker poets and philosophers such as Gauny) to write poetry or philosophy, are voiced using existing language. There is already an understanding in operation as to what rights it is sensible for a Frenchman to claim or what counts as poetry and philosophy. In these situations Rancière draws our attention to how a gap is articulated between who this particular woman or worker is within the existing configuration of sensible identities and a capacity they demonstrate. As for the existing identities of a Frenchman as based on being a citizen with universal human rights or a poet and philosopher to be based on the work they produce, these people who demonstrate the capacity to be prosecuted for civic action (and so a citizen) or to produce this work were already included in the existing understandings of these identities. Of course, these women or workers were not

\(^{24}\) I use this word that Rancière used in an English text (Rancière 1995b; see also Chambers 2013: 101).
really treated as such before. The identity categories needed to be redrawn if it was successfully demonstrated that it did not make sense for being a citizen to be premised on not being a woman and being a poet or philosopher was not premised on not being a worker.

What is important to my reading of Rancière is that subjectivization, as the process of politics, is enacted by people. Subjectivization is a social concept as it refers to ‘the formation of a one that is not a self but is the relation of a self to another.’ (Rancière 1995b: 66). The absence of any basis for authority to articulate such a gap is what qualifies the process of subjectivization as democratic. It has to be the self that is formed, rather than an account of others, as otherwise you are engaging in archipolitics, parapolitics or metapolitics. This self is not the agent that is ‘subjected to power’ in the sense of Foucault’s *assujettissement* (Chambers 2013: 98-99), it is a social relation. The emphasis on there being a gap between the existing identity of a person within the existing order and ‘a certain claim of subjectivity through the action of politics’ is a key point of difference from Foucault’s work (Chambers 2013: 101; see also Baiocchi & Connor 2013: 95). However, the whole process is premised on there being an order in which being called a Frenchman, a poet, or a philosopher matters in the first place.

Rancière rejects an approach to history where only people in particular roles are considered the appropriate subjects of history (see Rancière 2012a). Rancière does evoke the ‘name of anyone’ in explaining his conceptualisation of politics. For example,

> The process of emancipation is the verification of the equality of any speaking being with any other speaking being. It is always enacted in the name of a category denied either the principle or the consequences of that equality: workers, women, people of color or others. But the enactment of equality is not, for all that, the enactment of the self, of the attributes or properties of the community in question. The name of an injured community that invokes its rights is always the name of the anonym, the name of anyone. (Rancière 1995b: 65)

Names are significant for Rancière (2004d: 304),

> Political names are litigious names, names whose extension and comprehension are uncertain and which open for that reason the space of a test or verification. Political subjects build such cases of verification. They put to test the power of political names, their extension and comprehension. They not only confront the inscriptions of rights to situations of denial; they
put together the world where those rights are valid and the world where they are not.

Tyler (2013: 154) describes the concept of class she mobilises in her analysis as drawing on Rancière’s ‘formulation of class as a struggle over names.’

Nikulin (2012) has criticised Rancière for not giving enough priority to names. Nikulin (2012) poses a particular type of history, based on epic narrative, where proper names are not just granted a role in narrative but rather are what constitute history. Nikulin (2012: 85) agrees with Rancière’s analysis of the prioritising of particular roles as the only appropriate subjects of history as problematic. His suggested alternative is not to focus on the equality of intelligences of people but rather ‘the names in history can be those of any people, things and events.’ (Nikulin 2012: 85). It soon becomes clear why names are prioritised over the equality of intelligences when he suggests that the non-human and non-living should be included (Nikulin 2012: 77). The non-human and the non-living can be included as ‘names’ in a way that their equality of intelligences cannot be verified.

Criticisms of Rancière’s work as not going far enough in acknowledging a role for the non-human and non-living are likely to increase as his work is more widely read in the social sciences. There are a number of approaches in the social sciences that claim to include the non-human and even the non-living, termed ‘thingism’ by Janesen (2013). One approach to ‘thingism’ does not do away with an emphasis on the human as it simply requires describing people acting as if objects have agency or at least make demands. For example, Whatmore and Hinchliffe (2010: 451) describe people who grow potatoes ‘learning what combination of conditions a potato “likes” in order to thrive.’ The potatoes in question are being grown by gardeners for human consumption, indications of liking are measured by the human project of having more potatoes to eat. The potatoes are not demonstrating a capacity to learn things other than what a potato would be expected to do in the taken for granted orders that I am familiar with.

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25 ‘Each history that uses epic narrative is constituted by a detailed and elaborate account of names – the ‘who’ of history, as well as a relatively simple narrative account of the story – the ‘what’ of history, which can always be ‘zoomed in’ on with more details. These names are personal unique names that can be the names of people, events, things – including living things – which allow for a new ‘natural history’ of the world that is absent in most modern accounts of history, including Rancière’s.’ (Nikulin 2012: 84)

26 ‘I would think, however, that each history depends on, and is constituted by, its names, which are then its proper names. These names should have priority over the narrative, if they are to be the names in history; that is, not produced but shown and told by history.’ Nikulin 2012: 85)
Povinelli (2011), does look to material evidence of social life in her conceptualisation of the endurance of people, so there is prescience for treating existence as a demonstration of capacity. However, assessments of thriving or enduring are made against a criteria. Even Boswell (2015) describing the will to live of eels, based on their ongoing existence, still privileges humans as the ones who can learn and speak for objects or animals.

When it comes to the gardeners and their potatoes, while the account from Whatmore and Hinchliffe (2010) is useful for other projects, it is not in keeping with the suggestion from Nikulin (2012) of prioritising proper names over narrative. In the narrative offered by the researchers, no potato or potato plant appears to be “zoomed in” on (Nikulin 2012: 84). Boswell’s (2005) use of a photograph, does offer up a particular eel for consideration. However, Boswell appears as the person telling the story. As I demonstrate in Chapter 5, there is much to learnt about social order through the use people turn objects like photographs towards.

Many anthropological inquiries into ‘things’ place a greater emphasis on the relationships between things and people, than the items as an object of inquiry in their own right, such as Miller’s (2001: 16) focus on material-social relations whereby social relations are not split off ‘from the agency of the material worlds within which they occur.’ There is a growing body of work that claims to grant objects ‘greater independence’, such as Harman’s ‘object-orientated philosophy’ (e.g. Pierides & Woodman 2012). However, even in such accounts, things are considered from the perspective of human projects and so it makes little sense to say they are enacting equality.

The responses of potato plants to conditions and the presence of eels may draw out actions from people. The material properties of spaces, the potatoes or eels and people may be included as part of a Latourian actor network (Latour 2005), and such work has been done on urban places (Farias & Bender 2010). Yet, such mapping may not be the most important project for every question. Even in the case of something that clearly shapes the way people move in the world such as material markers of a border street in the city of Sarajevo, these markers have arisen after the decision made by people to make this particular street a border (Jansen 2013).
Even when confined to the human population, Nikulin suggests that Rancière’s conceptualisation of the oppressed is too narrow. Specifically this is because Rancière refers ‘to the oppressed as the “poor”’ (Nikulin 2012: 77). For Nikulin (2012: 77) this presupposes an economic basis for exclusion, which is problematic as ‘systematic exclusion from history’ is not able to ‘be thought in purely economic terms – for example, women.’ Yet Nikulin does not dismiss the economic as the frame for looking at the excluded as this forms part of his justification for extending equality to the non-human.

If the category of the ‘poor’ has any place in history, it has to be radically rethought in order to be able to include the “poor” of nature, those exploited and endangered precisely because of our transforming economic activity. (Nikulin 2012: 77)

In contrast with this critique, for Rancière (2004d: 304), ‘the poor’ are never just the poor.

But the demos—or the people—does not mean the lower classes. Nor does it mean bare life. Democracy is not the power of the poor. It is the power of those who have no qualification for exercising power.

This returns us to Rancière (2010a: 28) privileging the any-human-body: ‘Politics cannot be defined on the basis of any pre-existing subject.’ The names used may be familiar. However, when there is politics, there is an interval or gap between what the names had been taken to mean and how they are mobilised.

Political subjects exist in the interval between different names of subjects. Man and citizen are such names, names of the common, whose extension and comprehension are litigious and which, for this reason, lend themselves to political supplementation, to an exercise that verifies to which subjects these names can be applied, and what power it is that they bear. (Rancière 2009b: 59)

To work with the concept of politics drawn from the work of Rancière is to accept a gap between accepted social identities and political subjectivity (Dikeç 2005: 176). Through subjectivization, somebody moves from being defined by their identity within an existing order to being taken seriously as offering an account of the world not just because they suddenly were able to speak in such a way that their words were taken as speech rather than noise, but because they have brought into being a shared identity and a world in which this shared identity is accepted as a social position able to be spoken
from. We are still concerned with names here. The name may be a word that has been heard before, but the way the name is used is not consistent with the identity to which it previously referred. In this way, privileging the gap rather than having a criteria for the terms in which status as a subject can be asserted, responds in part to Dean’s (2011: 79) criticism that the dismissing of ‘identity politics’ by Rancière is an over-reach as existing identity categories can function politically. As mentioned above, Rancière’s work does not just sidestep, but is posited as a corrective to, identity politics (e.g. May 2010), with Rancière (2012c: 206) describing ‘critique of identity’ as ‘the most recurrent theme … of his work, as a constant polemical stake.’ Identity politics is not subjectivization, but the terms on which claims in identity politics may later be made can be enacted through subjectivization.

The radical presupposition of equality underpins Rancière’s work, providing a crucial distinction with the work of Bourdieu discussed above. This equality does not need to be premised on an ontological subject. According to Rancière (2009b: 61-62), ‘[t]his is what the democratic process implies: the action of subjects who, by working the interval between identities, reconfigure the distributions of the public and the private, the universal and the particular.’ As I suggested above, institutionalising democracy is not Rancière’s project.

**The police**

*Le partage du sensible* can be interrupted. However, social order is business as usual because of ‘the police’: ‘the established social order with a process of governing.’ (Dikeç 2002: 94). This captures much of what is often referred to as ‘politics’ in day-to-day language, and so Rancière’s work posits a distinction between politics and the police. This distinction has been criticised. Žižek (2010: 199-200) states,

> We should thus ultimately also abandon the distinction, proposed by Rancière, between politics proper (the rise to universality of the singular “part-of-no-part”) and police (the administration of social affairs), or Badiou's homologous distinction between politics as fidelity to an Event and policing as “servicing the goods” of a society: politics proper truly counts only insofar as it affects policing itself, radically transforming its mode.

However, as I discuss below, the distinction between politics and the police may not be as clear as Žižek’s position suggests. The divergent ways of interpreting Rancière’s
conceptualisation of the police may be due at least in part because, as Chambers (2011b: 19) describes,

despite its apparent centrality to his entire politico-theoretical framework, Rancière seems content to leave “the police” somewhat undertheorized. He gives us a few pages on it in Disagreement, devotes one thesis to it in “Ten Theses on Politics”, and barely two short mentions of it in Hatred of Democracy.

Significantly (re)interpretations of the police have provided the grounds for many commentators (particularly Chambers, Dikeç and May) to situate their own projects.

The police is, like le partage du sensible, ‘the order of things’ (Dikeç 2002: 93). It is not an enforcement body that steps in after the distribution of what is visible where (Chambers 2013: 71). It is problematic to ascribe ‘the police’ the status of a subject. The police is not an intentional subject, although it has been described as having a goal — the end of politics (e.g. Chambers 2013: 73; May 2008: 43). The term should even be considered non-perjorative (Ranciere 1999: 29; see also Dikeç 2002: 94; Ruez 2012: 1141).

Importantly, the police is a particular partage du sensible that presents itself as the total, and so without supplement (Chambers 2011a: 306; Chambers 2011b: 22; Rancière 2004b: 6). What is meant by ‘without supplement’ is that nothing is left unaccounted for. Importantly, the police presents itself as what is, rather than as a particular configuration. Or, in the words of Dikeç (2002: 93-94), it is the ‘symbolic whole’. If an order is perceived as the whole, it functions to rule out disagreement. However, ‘this does not, according to Rancière, make the police order totalizing in the sense of determining a repressive State order’ (Chambers 2011b: 23).

The police ‘is neither a repressive instrument nor the idea of a “control on life” theorized by Foucault’ (Rancière & Panagia 2000: 124). However, the practices described by Foucault as the police are useful for understanding Rancière’s use of the term (May 2007: 23). 27 (Chambers (2011b:22) also points to Rancière’s own

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27 ‘By naming this form of politics policing, Ranciere surely intends the resonances of coercion and repression often associated with the police. However, there is another, more historical reference to the term, one that has been analyzed by Michel Foucault. Policing refers to the set of practices, emergent particularly in the eighteenth century, that seek both to utilize and to maintain the population of a state.’ (May 2007: 23)
acknowledgement of a connection between his work and that of Foucault.) As there is
greater familiarity with Foucault’s concepts, especially so amongst the English-
language audience, it is not surprising that much work introduces Rancière’s ‘the
police’ with reference to that of Foucault. However productive these similarities are for
introducing Rancière’s concept of ‘the police’ to an English language audience and the
relevance of Foucault’s work for that of Rancière, it does not occlude the project
Chambers (2011b) names of finding the politics of the police.

Rancière does distinguish between politics and the police. However, against
representations of Rancière’s work describing the police as engaged in ‘counterpolitical
action’ (Hallward 2009: 147) or the police as the very cession of politics (Badiou 2009:
46), to represent politics and the police as opposed to each other is an over
simplification. Chambers consistently argues against understanding politics and the
police as opposites and instead suggests that politics acts on and appears in police
orders. Chambers (2013: 69) describes the police as not simply a ‘renaming’ of certain
aspects of politics and has focused in his work on the relationship between politics and
the police. The police is described by Chambers (2013: 65) as always being the context
for politics. Other approaches include describing it as a register which can be ‘worked
in’ (and broken out of by politics) (Citton 2009: 139).

Conceptualisation of the politics-police relationship matters when it comes to the
application of Rancière’s work. Part of the way that May (2010) seeks to advance his
project is to argue for an understanding of democratic politics that is not parasitic on the
police. May argues that democratic politics can be institutionalised, in direct contrast
with Dikeç’s (2002: 94) reading that ‘politics cannot be institutionalized.’ Tambakaki
(2009: 102) characterises Rancière’s understanding of postdemocracy as ‘state-led’ as
institutions close down the potential for politics. Rancière (2011d: 5) does clarify that in
his work there is no clear division between the objects of politics and state institutions;
the institutional objects of politics are not democratic. Although May (2008: 178)
recognises this (that Rancière rejects institutionalising equality) May (2008: 182) tries
‘to keep the door open to the possibility of institutionalizing democratic expression, to
show that there is nothing in a democratic politics that precludes the building of
institutions.’ This is his project and Chambers (2013: 80) is critical of aspects of May’s
reading of Rancière’s work through which he frames this project.
This relationship between the politics and the police has thereby been a point of disagreement, with the conceptualisation of politics also key. Chambers (2011a) addresses the question of the relationship between politics and the police when he argues, against Deranty (2003), that there is no ‘pure’ politics. This point of divergence has not split those working with Rancière’s concepts into self contained camps. While Dikeç (2005: 182) draws on Deranty’s interpretations and claims that politics ‘acts not in the police space, but in between spaces that are not determined by the police, that have no place in the police space’, articles such as Ruez (2012) draw directly on Deranty’s readings of Rancière while claiming to address the project Chambers sets out: to find the politics of the police.

While May seeks to present a democratic politics that is not limited to being parasitic on the police, others accept Rancière’s claim that we do not live in democracies. However, to leave democracy as politics that ‘doesn’t always happen’ (Rancière 1999: 17) is an approach that is not widely accepted. Most notably, it is named as a problem by many critics (such as those named below) of Rancière’s work when they claim he does not offer a way forward for democratic politics. Rarity cancels out meaningful politics according to Tambakaki (2009: 105). Badiou (2009) rejects that politics ceases rather than it being an always ongoing process. Furthermore, it seems that for many who have little else in common, if democratic politics is to have a future, it has to work (e.g. Dean 2009, Tambakaki 2009, Toscano 2011). Although not directly an issue of efficacy, to describe politics as happening only ever rarely (if ever) is treated as a problem. It can only be described in retrospect rather than being prescribed. These critics want democratic politics to be granted a future.

I am quick to distance myself from the project of imagining a way forward. The chapters that follow are based on social research. They are descriptive and at times interpretive. In interpreting, I am able to show what may seem new is actually consistent with a broader order (see Chapter 3), what may be praised as making people equal actually imposes inequality (see Chapter 6). So I too add my diagnoses of inequality to the catalogue. However, these orders are only ever imposed (see in particular Chapter 3, Chapter 5 and Chapter 7). Furthermore, the demonstration of equality is encountered in the world and so it too is present in the observations and analysis I offer.
What follows

The implication for research of taking equality seriously — if we treat all people as if they potentially have the capacity to enact the equality they already have — is that there is no justification for the privileged position of the researcher as the one who can explain. Research is generally premised on an understanding that there are experts who can undertake the research. Bourdieu (1990: 198) may ‘only’ assign sociologists ‘the least illegitimate of symbolic powers, that of science,’ but this position of an expert is still shown by Rancière to be stultifying. Yet the position of experts has been questioned, with one example being Radin’s choice to train research assistants from the social groups he sought to study (Couldry 2005), which contrasts with Bourdieu (1999a) in terms of the respect it offers these assistants. Responses to Rancière’s axiomatic equality are not necessarily positive. Jodi Dean (2011) is critical of Rancière’s dismissal of experts. She suggests ‘expert’ knowledge is preferable to using ‘gut instinct’. This may be a valid concern but Rancière’s work, although it explicitly argues against the specialisation promoted in Plato’s model community, does not reject the need for mastery (see Chambers 2014).

Rancière may be sceptical of claims to being a legitimate expert, but demonstrating the capacity to understand is an important factor in enacting equality. A person’s potential to demonstrate their equal capacity (to understand and to act) is presupposed as an empirical fact that can be verified (Rancière 1991: 39). One site for this verification is the observation that all people, regardless of their social position, have the potential capacity to speak so that their words are considered speech rather than noise.

This is not an explanation of how the reader is to understand Rancière’s work, but it may be of use to following the path I construct over the chapters that follow. I turn concepts drawn from Rancière’s work to discuss who is and who is not taken seriously in a place. This is a reoccurring question in my work that is most directly addressed in Part III. It is a question of who ‘is taken’ (and so is treated) seriously by others, rather than who has the potential to be. Following my reading of Rancière’s work, and as I demonstrate in Part II, it makes sense to treat anybody as having the potential to enact this, or any other, capacity. In Part I, which I move onto next, Rancière’s concepts
enable me to set out why what makes sense is only ever contingent, but still matters. Others too, including Chambers (2013), have used key terms from the work of Rancière to structure their own texts. In this I am not doing anything unique, but it is an order that makes sense.
Part I: The sensible

The following two chapters comprise the first of three Parts that make up the substantive body of this dissertation. If my Rancièrian project is just one path, clearly there are many other roads along which some understanding of Port Melbourne can be developed. It is sensible, then, for me to offer more of a roadmap to the order I use. Although Chapter 1 concluded with an overview of chapters, and each of the two chapters that follow do include an introduction, each of the three parts is prefaced with an abstract.

The first of the three substantive parts that now follow is about what is taken to be sensible. Even though, what is taken to be sensible may vary based on the frame through which the world or situation is perceived, whether in an academic text or a conversation on a footpath in Port Melbourne, a ‘sensible’ account is always going to be orderly and partial. Part I describes the orders I encountered in Port Melbourne. Here I offer a brief description of (and some metacommentary on) the ordering of the two chapters of Part I.

My discussion of ‘the sensible’ in Part 1 draws on the material and social geography I encountered in Port Melbourne. This is a suitable starting point for understanding this suburb because, as I outline in Chapter 3, Port Melbourne has a distinctive built history. In particular, it has been the site of many housing developments that were innovative for their time and Port Melbourne has been a site where the state has played a role literally in the very structures in which people live. Yet, while these developments may have appeared new and distinctive at the time of their construction, they are also consistent with a broader configuration of sense.

In Chapter 3, my focus is on the material geography of my field site. I introduce the chapter, and what I mean by ‘sensible’, through justifying my focus on the residential part of Port Melbourne. With housing playing such a significant role in the everyday culture of Australians, my discussion also contributes to understanding the Australian context more broadly. To position this within broader discourses, I outline the significance of housing in Australian notions of the good life. The majority of the chapter demonstrates the functioning of accepted ways of living attached to recognised
social identities through the past construction of and more recent planning protection for some of Port Melbourne’s housing estates built since World War I. The descriptions in Part I are turned towards the space — a geography — of the suburb of Port Melbourne. However, this proves to be underpinned by social geography, as I demonstrate that the orders I discuss are underpinned by social order.

People in Port Melbourne employed material and social geographies in their accounts of the place as it is and of how they think the place should be. Chapter 4 picks up on this as it focuses primarily on talk about people from one of these housing estates, Beacon Cove. This estate played a significant role in my own justifications for choosing Port Melbourne as a place to study, and I describe this in Chapter 4. Conceptually, Chapter 4 outlines how Rancière’s concept of le partage du sensible, already introduced in Chapter 2, can be mobilised in analysis using varying translations as the partition of the sensible, as the distribution of the sensible and as a configuration of sense. What people in Port Melbourne said about Beacon Cove enacted a social geography of Port Melbourne, and also indicated the existence of a broader configuration of sense in which it is sensible to speak about ‘people from Beacon Cove’ in the first place. I argue that such order is imposed, not inherent; it cannot be read off the material properties of, or the actual people living in, Port Melbourne. Even discourse concerning ‘social inclusion’ in published commentary and a project in Port Melbourne imposes an order — to represent a place and a people — that imposes inequality.

The next three parts do take a linear path progressing through a description of order, a verification of equality and an exploration of the processes of the police and politics. The account offered in this part is just ‘an account’. It is not arbitrary, not without justification, and yet it could be otherwise. Echoing the bike ride with which I opened the dissertation, the validity of my justifications are quickly shown to be contingent on a partial representation. This is not a limitation in my work for which I apologise. Rather, Part I demonstrates what is always the case: commentary on the material and social geography of Port Melbourne, whether offered in academic texts or by those I met within the suburb, is always partial.
Chapter 3: Planning and protecting

Introducing Port Melbourne

Beacon Cove — a housing estate in Port Melbourne — has been described as ‘perhaps the best that could be hoped for in the situation’ (Batten 1998: 22). As Batten (1998) alleges that it came out of a planning and development context where lessons from the past are ignored, this is not unqualified praise for Beacon Cove. Dovey (2005) also criticises Beacon Cove, claiming it is materially and socially segregated from Port Melbourne. The design elements he names are found broadly across Master Planned Community (MPC) developments; Beacon Cove was planned within a particular context. The same is true for the planning of other housing estates in Port Melbourne. Keeping with Horne’s (1971: 239) lambasting of Australia as ‘a lucky country’ which ‘lives on other people’s ideas’, these estates were modelled on planning ideas imported from overseas. The earliest of these estates, Garden City, even took its name from the British garden city movement. Yet the name, along with a few design elements, was imported in a way that the broader social project mobilised through particular tenure arrangements was not. Instead, consistent with the Great Australian Dream, the privileged position of owner-occupiers in Australian housing policy was further cemented through various housing developments in Port Melbourne, including the development of publicly owned housing.

In this first of three substantive parts (Part I), I am looking at what is taken to be sensible. I use the initial development and ongoing oversight of changes to some of the housing estates in Port Melbourne in Chapter 3 and a social geography in Chapter 4, not only to add to descriptive accounts of Australian attitudes to housing and social groups, but also to demonstrate how a social imaginary underpins which actions are considered sensible when it comes to the built environment or social projects. This I show to be a hierarchy of identified categories of humans — a social order — and Rancière’s concepts prove useful for discussing such orders. These arguments I make in Part I, I will draw on in Part II to demonstrate that any such material or social geography is only an imposed order, and also in Part III to look at the processes of imposing and interrupting such order. In this chapter (Chapter 3), I argue that housing estates, seen as innovations in planning at the time they were constructed, were only considered
sensible because they appeared to be consistent with the broader social order at the time. Social order has remained significant when it comes to what changes are permitted or refused on houses in these estates, even with the existence of written guidelines. How Beacon Cove, one of the estates, is distinguishable from the rest of Port Melbourne and the operation of the social category 'people from Beacon Cove’ in Port Melbourne are the focus of the next chapter, Chapter 4.

In the two introductory chapters, I have spoken about the ordering of the text of this dissertation in terms of the framing of the project and the concepts I have drawn from the work of Rancière. These concepts are now turned towards understanding Port Melbourne. My place based project draws on fieldwork in the residential part of Port Melbourne. The suburb name — Port Melbourne — is likely to communicate where I am talking about to the extent that it is a shared sign. It specifies my interest in a particular, geographically defined space. I added the qualifier of ‘residential part’ because the suburb name refers to a larger area than that with which I was concerned and in which I undertook fieldwork. What I am referring to as the residential part of this Australian bayside inner-suburb of greater Melbourne, in the state of Victoria, is within the City of Port Phillip local government area.²⁸

²⁸ My fieldwork did not exclude land with alternate zonings within what was otherwise a predominantly residential area.
Demarcating the industrial part of Port Melbourne as outside my fieldwork was never questioned, and quite often presumed, by those I conversed with in and out of the field during the course of my project. It is not just because much of the area I excluded fell in a different local government area. These industrial areas could no doubt be a useful site for exploring many questions about places, people and social life. However, and as I discuss further in Chapter 4, the places people live are drawn on when social identities are ascribed in Australia. Within this context, it is likely that it would make sense to those I met in Port Melbourne that my focus in this chapter is not so much processes of habitation as it is housing.

While much of my time was spent with formal and informal groups, housing in the area itself featured in my work. Not only was housing a taken for granted material backdrop
for these groups, it was frequently evoked in conversations and the target of campaigns. As I suggested in Chapter 1, I do not sideline ‘local issues’ (even though, or particularly since, a strategy for responding to such concerns is to dismiss people raising them as small minded). I introduce in this chapter, for those less familiar with contemporary Australian public discourses, or who may not be aware of the significance of the broader ideological legacy, the Great Australian Dream of home ownership. This is part of the broader context I encountered in Port Melbourne, when notions of what it is to live the good life came into play or evaluations of policy as fair or otherwise were offered. I discuss three housing estates in Port Melbourne that each hold a significant role in the narrative of planning in the State of Victoria: the first of the state government’s housing projects — Garden City; Victoria’s first public housing estate developments — Dustan Estate and Fishermans Bend; and the Master Planned Community (MPC) housing estate that Victoria’s Major Projects Department was first set up to oversee, a development on Victorian Government-owned land by a private development company — Beacon Cove.

Locations for the Garden City, Dustan Estate, Fishermans Bend and Beacon Cove housing estates

Annotations (housing estate precinct names) by Tracey Pahor using fieldwork experience and information from Beacon Cove guidelines, Dustan Estate guidelines, Fishermans Bend Estate guidelines, and Garden City guidelines (see List of other cited documents).

Excerpt from “The field site: Port Melbourne, Victoria, Australia” (see above) used under Open Data Commons Open Data Base License
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These estates were the first in the State of Victoria for their particular approach to provision of housing as state programs). Material designs were important for the estates (and this was certainly to a greater extent than the particular social projects the designs had been associated with elsewhere). It is the visible exterior of the buildings which is offered some protection from particular changes, but their planning was still underpinned by a social imaginary and their development enacted social order. In the last part of this chapter, I describe how their protection during my fieldwork was consistent with existing social order, as I consider the policy framework and public perceptions of the decision making of the responsible authority.

**The Great Australian Dream**

In the USA “The Great American Dream” refers to the liberation of workers from having to sell their labour to a capitalist, by setting themselves up in a small business. By contrast, the Great Australian Dream refers to the desire to escape from exploitation by the landlord by becoming a home-owner. In both countries the Dream is to beat the capitalists by joining them, albeit on a small scale. … [U]nlike in the USA the Dream is a realistic one for the majority of Australians. (Kemeny 1983: 1)

Home ownership has been described as the ‘Great Australian Dream’, and a realistic one at that (Kemeny 1983: 1). Australia’s self-satisfied and stable self-identity has been attributed to, at least in part, access to home ownership (Horne 1971: 26-27). The representation of home ownership as a realistic life goal has also been a pull factor in migration, thereby boosting and shaping Australia’s population and shaping patterns of home ownership (Bourassa, Greig & Troy 1995: 100). Being born in Australia, I was certainly not alone growing up hearing my grandparents tell their stories of migrating from Europe post-WWII to this country where, as long as you were willing to work hard and sacrifice, you would be able to be a married couple with children living in a home you owned. This representation of Australia also appeared in the fictional representations of Australia, *They’re a Weird Mob* (O’Grady 2012), which concludes with the Italian who migrates to Australia happily cobbling together his own house, even though he had moved from the more prestigious occupation of a journalist to that of a labourer.

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Although O’Grady’s (2012) fictional Italian migrant cobbling together his own house is positioned as an eccentric character, housing construction by owner-occupiers certainly occurred in Australia, even in the face of a shortage of construction materials and financing being difficult in the years after WWII (Dingle 1999; Johnson 2014: 122; Troy 2012). The emphasis on construction of housing is perhaps not in itself remarkable. Even though, with the exception of the relatively remote and small city of Darwin, Australian cities had not been bombed, there was pressure to expand housing stock (Bourassa, Greig & Troy 1995; Dingle 1999; Johnson 2014: 122). State intervention in stock expansion at this time included restrictions on the maximum size of housing and involvement in the Small Homes Service (Johnson 2014: 122; Money 2011: 22; Troy 2012). As in the case of the Garden City estate in Port Melbourne, states such as Victoria in Australia had a legacy of using their state bank to provide housing finance to people who met certain criteria (Troy 2012: 22). There have also been varying regimes of grants for housing in Victoria, particularly with bonus payments for new-build properties and new building in regional areas (AAP General News Wire 2008). In 1983, the Australian government started giving funds to Australians who had not previously owned a property (Troy 2012: 190). There was also the short-lived First Home Saver Account program between 2008 and 2011 (Pape 2011: 81). Housing policies have played a role in Australia’s rate of home ownership (Bourassa, Greig & Troy 1995). However, the state never assumed primary responsibility for housing in Australia.

The operation of social norms regarding housing in Australia are likely to have not only been reinforced by, but also contributed to the development and public acceptance of, such policies. After all, home ownership had been perceived by Australians as preferable to private rental even before the introduction of direct state support for home ownership (Hayward 1986: 215). Historically, economic and demographic factors appear to have exerted an influence on rates of home ownership, independent of direct policy intervention (Bourassa, Greig & Troy 1995). Yet these factors may not themselves give rise to a preference for home ownership so much as enable realisation of a socially recognised achievement. As expressed by Crabtree (2013: 100), ‘[m]ortgagee homeownership has long been perceived and promoted as a primary indicator of household stability and individualised social and economic success.’ Still today in Australia, aspiring to be an owner-occupier is treated as a sensible life goal.
‘To settle down’ is an expression in Australian English that refers to a norm of maturation in an individual’s life course of entering into marriage, homeownership and the parenting of children. Home ownership is treated as a desirable and responsible thing to do: it is part of being a good subject. This type of tenure is seen as more desirable because it offers greater security not only in housing, but also as a type of asset ownership (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2013b). Although actual household composition and tenure does not always fit this norm, Australian Bureau of Statistics (2013a) data on housing suggests that many people in Australia do follow the trajectory of ‘settling down’ as a mortgage-holding owner-occupier.

In contemporary Australia, declining housing affordability across Australia’s cities is named as a policy issue in the media and even in day-to-day conversations. While it is seen as at least partially a result of the preferences of Australians, and thus their own responsibility (Troy 2012: 285; media examples include Serry 2008: 8), there is a public discourse of unfairness, particularly when it comes to first-home buyers being priced out of the housing market (e.g. Black 2007: 6; Uebergang 2007: 13; Whalley 2014: 26; Williams 2013). Beyond calls for direct support for first-home buyers (Anderson 2003: 13; AAP Finance News Wire 2009a; AAP General News Wire 2010; Bolling 2007: 5), often the state is treated as complicit in shaping the housing market (e.g. McKibbin 2012: 35). Access to the right of passage of becoming a home owner is treated as part of Australia’s compact with its citizens. One justification for treating the state as responsible for declining affordability of houses is the use of zoning laws to permit only particular land to be developed for housing, which is often perceived as directly influencing the supply and price of housing (e.g. AAP Finance News Wire 2009b; Bolling 2007: 5). The expansion of the zone in which housing would be permitted in Victoria was put forward as a policy to improve housing affordability by the Liberal Party in the 2010 Victorian Election at the start of my fieldwork.

Mortgage finance for housing is not uniquely Australian, but it is closely intertwined with The Great Australian Dream. The Australian life course is described by Horne (1971) in The Lucky Country as entailing that you leave your house to be sold after your death so the equity can be used to pay some of the mortgage of your children’s houses. With mortgage finance, housing is not just something that results in people having a material investment in a place; they are also financially tied to ongoing
payments. Returning to expectations of government in Australia, a large proportion of media and public commentary that is popularly linked to housing affordability focusses on the consequences of government policy for ‘interest rates’. Particularly for first-home buyers, interest rates are perceived by the public as linked to housing affordability because of the centrality of mortgage finance as the commonly expected means for purchasing a home.

Not everybody has equal access to achieving the Great Australian Dream. Institutional frameworks surrounding home ownership both reflect and impose inequalities in Australian society. For example, mortgage finance has been a site of gender-based discrimination. Women in Australia experienced direct discrimination in obtaining home finance, not just indirect discrimination as a side consequence from their unequal earnings (Watson & Helliwell 1985). I heard stories of this in fieldwork, such as that of an older women who had divorced in the 1980s. As an agreement was reached with her ex-husband that he would move out the family home, and she would continue to pay the mortgage and live there with their children. However, when she tried to transfer the mortgage to her name, the bank refused. Her manager at work agreed to write a support letter as to the security of her employment and adequacy of her income, but she had to find a male to be named on the mortgage.

Mortgage arrangements anticipate a regular and dependable income, and state regulation of wages has meant that this has been possible for many men during Australia’s recent history. The Australian labour market may be seen as a factor in home ownership being achievable, but the ideal of home ownership also plays into how changes in Australia’s labour market are assessed. One criterion on which the casualization of work is deemed unfair is that such employment functions as a barrier to obtaining mortgage finance.

More generally, changes in Australian society are evaluated as unfair if they reduce the capacity of Australians to become and remain home owners. Beyond a concern with interest-rates that has been fostered amongst the voting public, the rising costs of housing in the major cities (which is where most Australians live) has generated a sense of injustice. People in Australia people complain of there being a generational inequality in the capacity to enter the housing market. This was not redressed by the
2008 economic events described in Australia as the ‘Global Financial Crisis’ (GFC). While the GFC reduced the value of superannuation savings and investments of many self-funded retirees, Australia’s housing market value was not wiped out. Complaints of intergenerational inequality have done little to drive contemporary policy, with any attempts to wind back exemptions for ‘the family home’ when it comes to means tested publicly paid pensions seen as highly contentious.

Remortgaging is used in Australia, and Australia’s banks are seen as quick to promote how much more you can borrow by capitalising on home equity (e.g. Padley 2014: 41), but to move from home-ownership to private rental is unlikely to be perceived by Australians as a rational choice about capital investment. Private rental has long been treated by Australians as inferior to home-ownership (Hayward 1986). Cheshire, Walters and Rosenblatt (2010) even use Bauman’s conceptualisation to describe the dominant Australian attitude to private renters as ‘flawed consumers’.29 For example, renters are perceived by other residents as transient and a threat to stability within a housing estate (Walters & Rosenblatt 2008: 409). Thus, rather than just a case of home-ownership being seen simply as an aspirational goal, private rental tenure is seen as creating an inferior quality of life for renters, their neighbourhoods and the nation.

Rental tenants are often represented as not being invested, financially and socially, in their home (Cheshire, Walters & Rosenblatt 2010). Renters are also perceived as less involved in local decision making. A study of community consultation in eight Victorian councils, including the City of Port Phillip, found that renters were ‘viewed as more difficult to consult with than homeowners’ (Brackertz & Meredyth 2009: 162). However, this is treated as a public cost, rather than just undemocratic. Data on social capital in the US and citizenship in Germany has been used to assert that homeowners invest more in social capital and are better citizens (DiPasquale & Glaser 1999). Furthermore, the negative consequences of private rental are seen not only to be experienced by the tenants themselves but rather to exert a negative impact on the neighbourhood. Research in one master-planned estate found that ‘[m]iddle-aged and older residents in particular were concerned about the potential for renters to

29 The discourse of ‘flawed consumers’ reflects that, even if the choice to purchase rather than rent is denied by their economic position, it is the renters who are described as inadequate. Cheshire, Walters and Rosenblatt (2010: 2601-2602) provide a review of this understanding of ‘flawed consumers’ and its application in studies of housing consumption. They then offer a discussion of how renters are perceived to fail to meet aesthetic, ethical and community standards.
lowering[sic] the tone, harmony, security and predictability of the environment’ (Walters & Rosenblatt 2008: 408).

Yet the representation of rental tenants in research may enact, and itself be the result of, the marginalisation of private rental tenants. Renters have often been side-stepped in research into housing. Cheshire, Walters and Rosenblatt (2010: 2600) note that most research directed at the perceptions held by renters is conducted on tenants of public or social housing, rather than among private rental tenants. That private rental results in an inferior quality of life, particularly when it comes to the experience of housing security, has generally been assumed as common sense: research on the housing security of Australia’s renters, particularly in the private market, has lagged behind research considering the housing security of owner-occupiers (Hulse & Milligan 2014). So limited is the attention that has been paid to renters in Australian research more generally that a 1998 paper is able to claim the status of ‘the first large-scale examination of long-term renters’ in Australia (Wulff & Maher 1998: 88). In that paper, Wulff and Maher (1998: 86) define long-term renters as those who had rented for more than 10 years. They chose this criteria to separate out long-term renters from the rest of the population, in part because the expected ‘typical Australian housing career’ included ‘five or six years’ before purchasing a home (Wulff & Maher 1998: 86). As suggested by the expression ‘to settle down’ discussed above, renting has widely been seen as a transitional phase.

While private rental tenants have been described as ‘problematic’, public housing tenants in Australia have been described as facing stigma (Arthurson 2004; Atkinson & Jacobs 2008; Warr 2005). This is part of the longer term legacy in Australia, where public housing has not been taken as a serious alternative to the private landlord. Australia has had more in common with the USA than Britain in that public housing has played a small role (Maclennan 1990). While there has been a commitment at times to constructing public housing with the support of funding from the Commonwealth government, there was also always a policy of privatising public housing through sales (Hayward 1996). Public housing has long been part of Port Melbourne’s housing story with Victoria’s first public housing (Dunstan Estate) located there. However, (and to use an expression that is likely to carry across cricket-playing nations beyond Australia) ‘straight off the bat’, the first State of Victoria housing project was designed to open
opportunities for less affluent families to become mortgagee owner-occupiers. It is this project, built in Port Melbourne, to which I now turn.

**Garden City**

It is likely that people living in Port Melbourne, even if they know nothing of British planning movements, would be familiar with the name ‘Garden City’. As well as the destination displayed on many of the buses that travel through Port Melbourne, this is the name most commonly given to the housing also known as the Bank House Estate. This alternate name comes from the fact that Garden City was built by the State Savings Bank of Victoria. As Garden City was the first development in Victoria with such direct involvement of the state, it was seen as a precursor to the development of public housing in the state. However, consistent with the state support of the Great Australian Dream, Garden City houses were to be sold with State Savings Bank mortgages. The estate’s purpose as a development for owner-occupiers was reinforced by prohibiting purchasers of Garden City houses from leasing them out (Harris 1988b: 16). Rather than completely unprecedented, Victoria’s use of its state-owned bank for finance for this program was consistent with earlier granting of advances for farm properties from 1896 and the housing advances provision approved in 1912 (Troy 2012: 22).

Garden City is made up of 322 semi-attached houses (Garden City guidelines), constructed with terra cotta roof tiles, cindercrete blocks and cement facing (U’Ren & Turnbull 1983: 236). The houses are considered modest in size when built but, each having a sizeable garden, many have had extensions added. The gardens are augmented by unusually large nature strips which line the narrow streets. It had a usual resident population of 844 people at the time of field work (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011).

Between 1926 and 1948, Garden City was built on a triangular area of land in what was then called Fishermans Bend. There had been support for the construction of housing at Fishermans Bend from at least as early as 1906 (Harris 1988a: 121). This support did not initially come from the Port Melbourne Council, however, as it opposed a plan in

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30 The buses terminate alongside a small shopping strip with a post office, milk bar, pharmacy and Chinese take away, near the Fishermans Bend Community Centre.
31 Details for documents cited without a year of publication can be found in the ‘List of other cited documents’.
1908 for construction of housing in the area (Harris 1988a: 122). The suitability of the land for construction of housing was a consideration, with it being quite low in comparison with the water table and it had suffered from sand mining in the area (Harris 1988a: 121). The land was also described by many parties as being ‘too valuable’ for housing as it could be used for port and industrial purposes (Harris 1988a; 1988b). Port Melbourne Council policy shifted, despite these considerations, and a few years later Council lobbied the Victorian government to release land at Fishermans Bend for housing development (Harris 1988a: 122). It took until 1926, however, for housing construction to commence in the area. The start of construction in Garden City therefore may have been felt by some to have ‘finally happened’, rather than being perceived as a radical shift in housing policy. As with many other projects, WWII slowed its completion.

Although the internal streets of Garden City are curved, there are no cul-de-sacs, perhaps reflecting the strong objections against dead-end courts in Australia when it was designed in the 1920s (Freestone & Nichols 2013: 10). At the time of construction, the ideal in Australia was for houses to be detached, perhaps epitomised by the 1926 estate of bungalow houses at Rothesay Avenue Brighton with their adoption of new planning features such as nature strips (valued for trapping the dust from the road) (McBrien 2010: 22). However, this ideal was not realised in Garden City. As the estate was intended to provide affordable housing for workers, to keep costs down it was built with double story semi-attached houses. Design compromises were an acceptable trade off for encouraging the higher order goal of owner-occupation, particularly for the less affluent.

The Garden City project was not without international precedent. After all, according to Horne (1971), Australia should be known for importing second-hand ideas. While American town planning influences were also present in Australia (Freestone & Hutchings 1993; Freestone & Nichols 2013), Garden City was primarily influenced by, and even associated by name with, the British garden city movement. The notion of garden cities was conceived by Ebenezer Howard (Garden City Estate Guidelines). Howard’s 1898 book, *To-morrow: a Peaceful Path to Real Reform*, set out garden cities as a means of social reform through housing. The 1902 revised version, titled *Garden Cities of To-morrow*, is an international town planning classic (here cited as the Howard
Writing at a time of increasing urbanisation, Howard (1965: 42) described the growth in the urban population, at the expense of the country, as a problem. According to Howard (1965: 46-47), garden cities were a way to offer residents the best of both the town and the country when it came to what today could be described as social, health and employment aspects of lifestyle. The text and diagrams of *Garden Cities of To-morrow* (Howard 1965) set out how this would be achieved through the physical configuration of garden cities. Garden City in Port Melbourne is not a true satellite city in the sense envisioned by Howard. That said, it was in close proximity to a train station and areas that would be developed for industry. Therefore, it would have been reasonable at the time of the planning of Garden City to anticipate that residents would be well connected to places of employment.

Hall and Ward (1998) claim that, at the time they were writing, many of the material design elements of Howard’s plans could still stand as examples of ‘good planning’. In particular, Hall and Ward (1998:23) describe a garden city to be ‘a walking-scale settlement, within which no one needs a car to go anywhere; the densities are high by modern standards, thus economising on land; and yet the entire settlement is suffused by open space both within and outside, thus sustaining a natural habitat.’ It is not clear, however, that Garden City in Port Melbourne is a strong candidate in all those criteria. Rather than economising on land, the density of the development is lower than other parts of Port Melbourne. This would have been celebrated at the time, as terrace rows in lower class areas were treated as unsanitary and slum housing. The shops and hall at the edge of Garden City (where the bus terminates) were not constructed at the same time as Garden City, but rather later when the nearby Fishermans Bend public housing estate was developed. The gardens and nature strips provide urban greening, but are generally not consistent with the local indigenous vegetation that predated British-colonial settlement.

The garden city movement was directed at social reform, and the majority of Howard’s (1965) text focuses on proposed and anticipated economic arrangements and outcomes. Yet the narrative of the adoption of the garden city model in Australia is, according to Freestone (1989: 4), ‘pre-eminently a history of physical planning and urban design’. In other words, the planning and design elements, rather than the ideology of social reform, were advocated for and, in part, adopted in Australia. This is the case when it
comes to the garden city model of ownership envisioned by Howard (1965) as the financial foundation of his social project. In Howard’s plans the houses were not to be sold off to individual occupiers or investors. As with Port Melbourne’s Garden City, the aim was to remove speculative and exploitative landlords. However, in contrast with State Bank mortgages and mandating owner-occupation, Howard (1965) sets out plans for a self-funding welfare society to be established. Howard (1965) did not reject land being a commodity in a growth based economic system; the amount of rent collected was still expected to increase as property values would increase over time. It was increasing rent revenue that would be used to repay the cost of building those properties and then, instead of generating wealth for landlords, be used to fund welfare within the city (Abram & Weszkalnys 2011: 5; Hall & Ward 1998: 25).

The welfare regime envisaged by Ebenezer Howard for garden cities was not adopted in Victoria. Australia is not unusual in this regard as Howard’s mini welfare state was not realised in practice anywhere else either (Freestone 1989: 4; Ward 2002: 223). Yet this cannot be credited to American influences, because individual houses within the American bungalow courts promoted in the interwar years were also not to be sold off to household owner-occupiers. Garden City does appear to be a particularly good example of the operation of the Great Australian Dream.

Garden City in Port Melbourne did not interrupt existing social order. This was not exclusively an Australian outcome as, according to Abrams and Weszkalnys (2011), the garden city developments that were constructed in the UK offered the social outcome of stability rather than bringing about economic redistribution. These developments were part of capitalist development agendas, and so were in keeping with the broader economic consensus. The written work of Howard is part of the story of residential planning in Britain and Australia, but it was always interpreted within a broader context. The resulting built environments communicate more about the context in which they were built than about Howard’s vision. As stated by van Dijk (2011: 138), when it comes to planning, ‘[i]f a design (by either content or process) does not sit comfortably alongside already present intentions, ideas and feelings, it is likely to be rejected as being unwanted, unacceptable, inappropriate or unrealistic.’
Howard himself did not offer an absolute break from the context in which he developed his work. Although Howard had put forward a radical proposal, the financial arrangements he proposed to achieve this involved working with, rather than threatening, the Victorian era bourgeoisie (Hall & Ward 1998: 15). It was with support from wealthy gentlemen that enough land would be purchased ‘to establish the system on a small scale,’ and then ‘the inherent advantages of the system … [would lead] to its gradual adoption’ (Howard 1965: 123). So, while Howard planned to bring about change, the means he proposed drew on existing social and economic structures. Even if the situation of ‘the poor’ was to be improved, maintaining the existing economic inequality of people was treated as acceptable.

In Port Melbourne, access to good quality housing was not cleaved from the existing economic order. When it came to Garden City, in practice, houses were only affordable for those ‘with at least a small amount of capital’ (U’Ren & Turnbull 1983: 236). Even with cost-cutting measures, the properties were ‘often more expensive than other available housing’ (Harris 1988b: 16).

At first the deposit was to be ten per cent of the cost, but this was reduced to a flat £50. The purchaser also had to pay architects, clerk of works, survey and legal fees and meet all municipal water rates. So, although the scheme was designed for and aimed at the working man, the houses could only be taken up by people who had raised the money for the initial outlay and were in steady employment and able to meet the monthly repayments. (U’Ren & Turnbull 1983: 236).

With the set repayments pricing Garden City properties outside the means of many working class families, economic inequalities were not abolished. The Great Australian Dream of housing ownership was not opened up to those households who were already least able to become owner occupiers.

**Dunstan Estate**

Many working class families, and certainly those without a male breadwinner in secure employment, would not have been able to afford the housing of Garden City. The State of Victoria did undertake a program of housing development to be publicly owned and leased for rental tenancies, however, and adjacent to Garden City is Victoria’s first public housing development: the Dunstan Estate. The estate comprises of 46 dwellings.
at the corner of Williamstown Road and Graham Street, near Garden City (Dunstan Estate guidelines: 5). Started 10 years after Garden City, The Dunstan Estate is set out around two streets: the L-shaped Griffin Court and the Southward Avenue cul-de-sac. Houses also front the major roads of Williamstown Road and Graham Street. These houses are mock Tudor style and contrast with the neighbouring less ornamented, grey concrete-rendered Garden City houses.

This estate was promoted as a means to provide high quality houses to those living in conditions that were described in public discourse at the time to be unacceptable. It formed part of the public face of the Victorian government’s response to the Slum Investigation, which had shown up the terrible living conditions for many in inner suburbs and the associated disproportionate child mortality rates (Troy 2012: 22; U’Ren & Turnbull 1983: 246). As the heritage guidelines specify, this development was also directed at maintaining broad public support for the then Victorian government (Dunstan Estate guidelines: 5). It is referred to as the Dunstan Estate after the then Country Party Victorian Premier, Albert Dunstan. Blainey (2013: 206) claims that Dunstan government support for this initial project of state owned housing and the subsequent establishment of the Housing Commission of Victoria, was directed towards maintaining the support of Labor Party members of parliament. Dunstan held the premiership at the time only with the support of the Labor Party, so maintaining the support of these members of parliament was important.

The Dunstan Estate was a small development, but the ‘brilliant gathering’ held in 1936 to inaugurate the scheme allegedly portrayed the sense that it was the start of something bigger possibly justified (U’Ren & Turnbull 1983: 246). In at least one respect it did signal a beginning: the Housing Commission was established by the Dunstan government in 1938, soon after the commencement of construction on this estate. The estate’s significance continues to be described in such a way. For example, the Dunstan Estate guidelines state,

The historical importance of the Estate lies in its contribution to a political progress towards the formation of a state-wide rental housing policy and its ultimate implementation by the Housing Commission of Victoria. (Dunstan Estate guidelines: 7)
So both Garden City and the Dunstan Estate are not only part of Victoria’s planning history, but also part of the administrative build up to establishing the Housing Commission. These estates appear not just as part of the story of why Port Melbourne housing looks the way it does, but also contributed to embedding institutional legacies throughout Victoria.

**Fishermans Bend**

Once established, the Housing Commission's first planning and construction project was also in Port Melbourne: 412 homes of the Fishermans Bend public housing estate (Fishermans Bend estate guidelines: 5). At one point, the Housing Commission had constructed the properties lived in by one in ten Victorians (Blainey 2013: 210). Developments by the Housing Commission were not just intended to provide new housing stock to ease congestion in the growing city. They were also needed to replace housing in areas, like parts of Fitzroy and South Melbourne, that had been declared slums and demolished. Aside from improving living standards for the poor, provision of public housing was seen as a way to prevent people in these areas from being swayed by more radical demands for change (Troy 2012: 286). Again, we see housing being used to conservative ends. It was not that the housing estate did not alter the place, but it did so in a way that was consistent with those goals that were already treated as being sensible ones. In Port Melbourne, there were no declared slums to be eradicated, but the Fishermans Bend development was the impetus for the removal of informal housing of ‘Fisher folk’ in the area (Meiers 2006). Rather than public housing challenging the centrality of owner-occupation, the Great Australian Dream evoked housing constructed with the appropriate permission on legally recognised land holdings.

While the Housing Commission mostly constructed semi-attached houses with gardens in the Fishermans Bend estate, elsewhere it also constructed walk-up (or low-rise) flats in the 1950s and high-rise flats in the 1960s (Blainey 2013: 210). In Port Melbourne, walk-up flats, but no high-rise flats, were constructed by the Housing Commission in the suburb. The nearest public housing tower is located in the neighbouring suburb of South Melbourne. During my fieldwork, the designated state primary school for

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52 This estate was given the name from the more general name for the area. There are variations in spelling — Fishermans or Fishermens — and these names are also used to refer to other precincts in and around Port Melbourne. Here I adopt the spelling accepted as historically accurate (e.g. Meiers 2006) and used by the City of Port Phillip for the 2010 Fishermans Bend Estate Guidelines.
children living in these flats was actually Port Melbourne. People I spoke with during fieldwork suggested to me that the South Melbourne primary school had intentionally introduced zoning boundaries to exclude children residing in the public housing tower in South Melbourne. Such descriptions always came across to me as a criticism of people from South Melbourne. In treatment of public housing, South Melbourne was often compared unfavourably to Port Melbourne. In my fieldwork, many long-term Port Melbourne residents spoke proudly of the community mobilisation that put a stop to plans over the years to remove some of Port Melbourne’s public housing, resulting instead in redevelopment (e.g. Raglan Estate and the public housing adjacent to Beacon Cove I discuss in Chapter 4).

Public housing has been built into the history of housing in the suburb. While most of the Dunstan Estate properties are now privately owned, public housing properties, and their tenants, are treated by many other past and current residents as belonging in Port Melbourne. While public housing never displaced the centrality of mortgagee owner-occupation to the Great Australian Dream, that public housing tenants have long term tenancies could be one factor behind treating such people as having a right to claim belonging in Port Melbourne, a right that private rental tenants are often not recognised as having.

Historical research into Port Melbourne’s past, particularly during the depression years, shows that Port Melbourne has at times been home to many transient private rental tenants. This is consistent with the common narrative of Port Melbourne as having once been a home to poor workers. Yet the broader representation of private rental tenants as problematic, which I described as operating in Australia, does still operate in Port Melbourne. As I return to discuss in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, stories about Port Melbourne and its past can be used to make visible very different accounts of, but also a normative agenda for, the place. Here I will simply point out that the attitudes to public housing I encountered during my fieldwork, and indeed the very construction of such housing, are not solely determined by the material form of what has been planned and constructed. A social imaginary is at play (see Strauss 2006): one that can be discerned in moving back and forth between broader representations and particular histories.
**Beacon Cove**

Social goals did shape what housing stock was deemed ‘appropriate’ at Port Melbourne, whether the owner-occupied properties offered with mortgages of Garden City or the design of the public housing of Dunstan Estate and Fishermans Bend as part of a response to public outcry over abject material and social conditions in Melbourne’s ‘slums’. However, the social goals were already consistent with the prevailing social order, rather than being adopted from overseas utopian planning movements. This continues to be the case, as Beacon Cove, a more recent estate development in Port Melbourne, indicates.

The 30-hectare Beacon Cove development was constructed between 1995 and 2006 (Beacon Cove guidelines: 12). With around double the number of houses of Garden City and five high rise buildings, the new residents it brought to the area had a significant impact on the population size and demographics of Port Melbourne. As with the estates discussed above, Beacon Cove involved constructing housing where there was not any formally recognised housing before. Previously state-owned industrial land and the site of rail and industrial buildings, including a petroleum tank yard, this land was marked for residential development for more than a decade before the construction of Beacon Cove. There was significant state involvement in this development. Major Projects Victoria, which also managed the Docklands development, was initially set up to oversee the project for this site. However, the project itself was a ‘joint venture’ with the private development company Mirvac.

The matter-of-fact description of the location in the Beacon Cove guidelines mentions that ‘[t]he estate is situated on a formerly contaminated industrial waterfront site’ (Beacon Cove guidelines: 10). There is no reference to the role of resident mobilisation in having the contamination recognised and the soil treated. Other events contested at the time concerning European settlement of Port Melbourne, the recognition of Port Melbourne as a suburb, the filling of the lagoon and the location of industry are simply listed as facts (Beacon Cove guidelines: 10). There are conflicting accounts as to what has been built in Beacon Cove. However, these conflicts are written out of many administrative accounts of Beacon Cove, such as the Beacon Cove: Neighbourhood Character Guidelines, developed by SJB Urban (2010) for the City of Port Phillip.
Designed with a series of courts, cul-de-sacs and pocket parks, Beacon Cove sits alongside the Garden City and Fishermans Bend estates and is sandwiched between the foreshore and Garden City Reserve. Continuing the tradition of adopting ideas originally developed elsewhere, the design drew on a ‘mix of Garden City, New Urbanist [American] and gated-community models’ (Dovey 2010: 67). Beacon Cove is an example of a Master Planned Community (MPC). This term, used to categorise the type of housing estate that Beacon Cove is, suggests its development was a social project. I will return to consider the slippage in usage between a people and a place in Chapter 4 and more about the concept of community in Chapter 5. Here I discuss the planning of Beacon Cove as a MPC primarily from the perspective of physical design. This is sensible because a deeper conceptualisation of community as social connectedness did not drive the development. Yet, as I will show, its construction was ultimately still underpinned by a social imaginary.

Recent planned housing estates in Australia and beyond are (and are described in the housing studies literature as) MPCs. MPCs are often marketed in Australia as offering ‘community’ (Gleeson 2006; Rosenblatt, Cheshire & Lawrence 2009). While primarily a material plan, the use of the word ‘community’ to describe these housing developments is an intentional reference to sociality and a sense of identification. Several studies have documented efforts to cultivate community within such developments (e.g. Arnold, Gibbs & Wright 2003; Bosman 2010). Such developer-led ‘community’ does require significant work and has been described as having benefit for both the developers and the residents (Walters & Rosenblatt 2008). However, it has been suggested that there is a gap between the claims of such developments as offering community and the very limited social interaction that actually occurs within developments (Rosenblatt, Cheshire & Lawrence 2009).

The type of community that MPC residents, or aspiring residents, are said to seek — community that is exclusionary and unequal (Hook & Vrdoljak 2002) — has not gone unchallenged. Residential exclusion by choice has been criticised by social theorists such as Bauman (2001). In such accounts, if MPCs achieve the type of community that their residents or aspiring residents seek, it is not a cause for celebration. However, even

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33 In the guidelines I discuss later, it is referred to as ‘a master planned residential community’ (Beacon Cove guidelines: 10).
if MPCs are exclusive, Kenna (2007) claims that data do not exist to verify that these sorts of developments are actually socially harmful more broadly.

Those who purchase into MPCs have limited choice in house design and the properties are often subject to restrictions on future alterations. These restrictions are seen as a way of protecting the estate from particular changes, and may even include certain standards of maintenance. These material protections do not just offer security in how the estate will look, but can provide barriers to the housing being repurposed or subdivided, which could result in changes to the socio-economic make up of the area. Therefore this may mean that residents can expect some predictability and so find a sense of social and economic security. It may come at the cost of reduced control over property (Romig 2005), but it seems to be a price many people are willing to pay.

Dovey, Woodcock and Wood (2010) describe the estate of Beacon Cove as offering residents a sense of security through protection from difference. Dovey, Woodcock and Wood (2010: 70) suggest that it was the ‘protection from new development’ and ‘rules for fitting in clearly established by law’ that offered Beacon Cove residents comfort. And yet, as I discuss further in Chapter 4, Dovey, Woodcock and Wood (2010) also found that Beacon Cove residents spoke positively about social difference in their estate. The sense of comfort and predictability in the built environment was credited with residents not requiring a sense of security ‘in ’people like us’’ (Dovey, Woodcock & Wood 2010: 70). Although, with the diversity amongst the population of Beacon Cove described by Dovey, Woodcock and Wood (2010) as benign — suggesting that the diversity is not experienced as there being significantly socio-economic or lifestyle differences — even this security in the form of social uniformity is achieved.

In Beacon Cove’s guidelines, reference to the ‘unique living environment’ brings into consideration the people who may live there, but the focus remains on the ‘living environment’ — the material space — rather than the social experience of living in that space. This is the ‘protection’ that Dovey, Woodcock and Wood (2010) describe. In the guidelines for Beacon Cove, ‘living’ in a place is not put forward as an active process resulting in change, and the implication is that the material conditions of the estate as it has been constructed should be preserved through planning controls. Justification for preservation of Beacon Cove is extended with reference to the estate being ‘recognised
for its significant mixture of architectural forms’ (Beacon Cove guidelines: 10). The prospect of a new mix emerging through later changes to the estate is not celebrated. The ‘mixture of architectural forms’ (Beacon Cove guidelines: 10) does not mean anything should be permitted. What exists is said to ‘create harmonious streetscapes’ and the ‘variation in building forms’ is still ‘compatible’ (Beacon Cove guidelines: 10). It is ‘[t]he consistency of design within the estate [which] creates a unique character which is identifiable as Beacon Cove’ (Beacon Cove guidelines: 10). So ‘mix’ and uniqueness are actually a way to achieve and a reason to preserve compatible, harmonious and consistent appearances. Ultimately, the reasoning used appears so muddled that the logic appears to be backwards engineered from the presumption that Beacon Cove’s appearance should be protected.

**Protecting the estates**

Many Garden City properties have changed hands, most of the Dunstan Estate is privately owned and, with much of the former industrial area north of my field site now rezoned as residential, soon Beacon Cove will no longer be the new development in the area. Yet these estates are still clearly discernible today. In part, this is because they have been protected from particular material changes. Property owners and occupiers in each of these estates face restrictions on what changes they can make to the outside of the buildings. I was present for, and my project was used as an invitation to initiate, almost daily conversations about the frustrations associated with which works were approved or rejected. Consistent with the planning for the estates, the ongoing administration of the estates demonstrates that what is considered sensible is consistent with an existing social order.

Certain types of work, particularly those on externally visible structures, require a planning permit from the local government. Garden City, the Dunstan Estate, Fishermans Bend and Beacon Cove are each subject to a set of guidelines that sit under the planning scheme. The estate specific, Council-approved guidelines specify what works are to be approved or not and are part of the formal process for controlling changes to the external appearance of these buildings. The guidelines make visible certain material properties of the housing developments so they can be protected over time. Documents such as the guidelines rely on making some things, but not everything,
visible. These estates are treated as units and that they were designed as such is used to justify the preservation of these particular buildings and the use of estate-level guidelines as a tool for achieving this.

I return in Part III to discuss the processual aspects of the development and operation of guidelines in the City of Port Phillip. Here I focus on the guidelines for Garden City (Garden City guidelines were adopted in 1997, with only minor updates in 2010) and Beacon Cove (developed in 2010). Like the guidelines, I do not make everything visible; to do so would be impossible. As I argued in my introduction, just as any path lets you go somewhere but not everywhere, someone having one understanding does not foreclose their potential to comprehend another. My discussion has been configured by the concepts I have discussed in Chapter 2. The resulting topography allows me to make visible particular characteristics of what I saw unfolding in Port Melbourne regarding the shaping of the material environment and social conditions.

I found in Port Melbourne that which works would be approved by council officers was predictable. However, rather than being a property of the text of the guidelines, this predictability was better explained by the hypothesis that the guidelines are interpreted within a broader configuration of sense. This is consistent with the historical narrative I have offered so far in this chapter, and also the conceptual framework I outlined in Chapter 2. Guidelines and housing estates themselves came to be, and continue to exist, in a broader context. Guidelines exist because it is acknowledged there will be change but, even if what counts as desirable or suitable change is contested, there is consensus that not everything should be permitted. As texts, guidelines are enacted by people within particular understandings of what is a sensible interpretation. As I demonstrate below, in the case of the Garden City guidelines, this understanding directly contradicted the words of the text. The authority of the guidelines and those who interpret, and so enact, them are underpinned by the acceptance of particular processes as the means by which to make such a decision.

Differences between the guidelines for Garden City and Beacon Cove reflect the contexts they were developed in, including the attitudes held towards the estates concerned, at that time. Although the Garden City and Beacon Cove guidelines are both framed as protecting character, there is a greater emphasis on the very word heritage in
the guidelines for Garden City than in those for Beacon Cove. The standard for heritage practice in Australia, as set out by the Australia International Council on Monuments and Sites in the Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter (1999), does not specify a period of time that needs to pass for places to take on significance, yet heritage value is still seen as accumulating with time.

A brief history of the estate is included in each set of guidelines. The heritage significance of Garden City (and also other Port Melbourne estates pre-dating Beacon Cove, such as the Dunstan Estate and Fishermans Bend) is described as following from the developments being innovative at the time, both in terms of the physical design but also the planning processes undertaken and the types of social projects associated with the housing. So some consideration is given to the stories of how these estates came to be rather than just how they appear today. However, it is only physical elements of the estates, not other factors of historical interest such as tenure type, that the guidelines specify can or cannot be altered.

Both sets of guidelines focus on the appearance of houses from the street, which is also the focus taken in other ‘protecting’ documents such as the Heritage Overlay. However, a difference between the two sets is that the guidelines for Garden City include floor plans while the Beacon Cove guidelines, although they are a much longer document, do not. This is even though ‘[n]o planning permit is required for internal alterations to a dwelling in Garden City’ (Garden City Guidelines 2010: 12). Such inclusion possibly reflects a greater anticipated interest in the now historic, and often altered, floor plans of the Garden City houses.\(^\text{34}\) The guidelines do not specify maintenance of these original floor plans, but their inclusion does render them visible.

It is unsurprising, since the guidelines for Beacon Cove have been developed more recently, that they also reflect a general trend in recent years from interest in ‘heritage’ to concern with ‘character’ (Dovey, Woodcock & Wood 2009: 2597; 2010: 78). Claims to ‘neighbourhood character’ play a significant role in Victorian planning approvals (Dovey, Woodcock and Wood 2009). Character is described in the Beacon Cove guidelines in such a way that to maintain neighbourhood character is to keep the

\(^\text{34}\) Perhaps also of relevance is that the practical feasibility of including floor plans is greater for Garden City as there were a smaller number of floor plans used in that development.
physical appearance of the buildings the same. This is clearly named in the guidelines: the ‘preferred character for most Precincts is typically to retain the original, established character and the elements which contribute to it’ (Beacon Cove guidelines: 23). The character is defined by physical properties, rather than the social identities of those associated with the place.

Notably, the Beacon Cove guidelines are more prescriptive than those for Garden City. Both Garden City and Beacon Cove comprise repeated, but varying, house designs. The guidelines for each estate do provide details relevant to different house designs. While for Garden City this is broken down into different house types, Beacon Cove is first broken down into precincts and then into house types. The Beacon Cove guidelines divide Beacon Cove into nine precincts (with five of these residential sub-precincts composing a bulk of the low rise housing). For each precinct, physical characteristics are described and detailed guidelines offer prescriptive instructions based on these existing characteristics. Colour swatches for external walls are provided on the last pages of the guidelines. This level of detail for Beacon Cove reflects that the houses do have varying paint colours, rather than the uniform grey render that was used across Garden City. In other words, this level of detail in the account of the estate can be justified through the material properties of the space. Yet it also demonstrates a different approach to managing change. The retention of the same colours does not need to rely on subjective description; the same brand and colour codes can be used into the future.

In breach of the guidelines, one Beacon Cove house had been repainted, without approval, in different colours. Some people referred to the house as ‘the clown house’, a practice not stopped when it was reported that the house owner had selected the colours to be Tuscan. One Beacon Cove resident did quietly explain to me that she liked the new colours, but she still publicly supported efforts to have the house returned to the colours specified in the guidelines. She thought the house looked good and interrupted the monotony of the estate, but she also agreed with the widely held view that, by buying into Beacon Cove, you bought into the restrictive conditions; if you did not like the way your house looked, you could have bought elsewhere.

‘Character’ is not always used in council-approved documents in an attempt to guard against change, as it was for Beacon Cove. One example is offered by the Draft Urban...
Design Framework (UDF) for the Port Melbourne Waterfront (Draft Port Melbourne waterfront urban design framework) – a document that was ultimately withdrawn, as I return to discuss in Chapter 8. This document outlines plans for substantial change under the claim of celebrating the Port Melbourne Waterfront’s ‘unique character’. In the UDF draft document, the beginnings of the area are described as ‘humble’. However, the document envisions a much less humble future, aiming ‘[t]o ensure an exciting future for the Port Melbourne Waterfront’. The very point of the framework was to guide change. The document is not describing the existing conditions so they can be kept the same, it is setting out something different from what already exists to be worked towards into the future.

Commentary on neighbourhood character can be used to support claims both to maintain and to change the built environment. A similar observation can be made regarding the work on ‘heritage’, particularly when it incorporates consideration of social identities. This tension between consistency and change is also reflected in the academic literature on planning practice. Social sustainability has been connected with heritage management (e.g. Cervelló-Royo, Garrido-Yserte & Rio 2012; Landorf 2011). On face value, this could be understood as a consistently conservative agenda: sustaining both heritage and social relationships. Yet social sustainability is proposed as a framework for change, or at least for evaluating what ‘is’ with the view to bringing about change if social sustainability is not already demonstrated (Landorf 2011). The framework of social sustainability, when applied to places, is less about stasis and more an attempt to configure places for achieving a particular normative agenda. The meaning of ‘social sustainability’ makes sense within a broader program for society.

If there was no expectation that things will change, then there would be little to justify the development of heritage or character guidelines. Particularly in Garden City, the expectation is that houses will be renovated. In fact, Garden City residents called for Council to better promote the guidelines less as a way to prevent any change than to assist property owners in these estates to put forward proposals for renovations that these residents thought were suitable and should be approved by council. The changes that are accepted as sensible are those that are consistent with broader understandings of what living conditions the place should offer. Residents may have bought into the estates with the expectation that they would not be confronted with the equivalent of
what was the ‘clown house’ to some Beacon Cove residents, but this was not the only expectation at work.

As discussed above in relation to ‘character’, while housing is often discussed with attention to social factors, it is really only the built form that is protected. Yet there are many aspects of ‘heritage’ that are not clearly captured by discussions of window sashes or external finishes. Heritage is formally described as contributing to the ‘feel’ of places. The Port Melbourne and Garden City sections of the Port Phillip Planning Scheme (2010), which administratively sits above the more specific guidelines, specifies a vision whereby, ‘[t]he sense of “old” Port Melbourne is maintained through the retention of key heritage buildings.’ A ‘sense’ may be evoked by built form, but it also requires this to be perceived and experienced as such by a person. Perception occurs in context, and it is what is visible (can be observed visually from the footpath) that is generally treated as significant in operation in the Port Phillip Planning Scheme (2010) and the various guideline documents.

The perception of significance can vary between parties and situations, and the guidelines, within their broader administrative context, need to be more specific than a ‘feel’ if they are to operate as policy. I return to discuss this further in Chapter 7, but relevant here is that the guidelines define what is considered visible. In the Garden City guidelines, there are different requirements imposed on those parts of a house visible from the street and those that are not. ‘External walls which are visible from the street should be kept in their original form, with the original materials and finishes’ (Garden City guidelines: 27). Air conditioners and new porches are not to be ‘visible from the street’ (Garden City guidelines: 29). The way these buildings appear on the street is protected in a way that their appearance from the homes and gardens of neighbours are not. The stereotype of ‘not in my back yard’ (NIMBY) outcry about what can be seen from, or in, one’s property is not as important as how a property appears from the street.

The appearance of houses in the estate from the street was an issue of concern to many residents. Garden City residents active in a neighbourhood association often discussed renovations and extensions. The majority opinion in their neighbourhood association committee meetings as to how extensions and other renovations in Garden City should look was broadly consistent with what they thought the guidelines specified. One reason
for regular discussion of the guidelines was that these appeared to be in stark contrast to what they observed happening. Not only did they not approve of the changes, the implementation of changes was seen as violating proper process. Frustrations expressed by these residents were often consistent with the text of the guidelines. This was not a co-incidence, as some of these people were involved in drafting the 1997 Garden City guidelines document.

The guidelines permit single and two-story extensions under a range of conditions, including that they ‘match the house’s original form, materials and character (with a cement render or similar textured finish, and a flat or pitched roof with terracotta tiles)’ (Garden City guidelines: 17). This point is further enforced in the illustrative diagrams that make up ‘Figure 4: Acceptable alterations and additions’ (Garden City guidelines: 18-19). In the two versions of the diagram of a house with a single story extension built on the side of the building, one has a hipped (partly slanted) roof of the same shape as the house, and the other does not. The text says that, ‘parapet walls at corners are not highly intrusive but are notably less sympathetic than hipped tiled roofs’ (Garden City guidelines: 19). In other words, both a hipped and a flat roof may be permitted, but the guidelines seem to suggest the hipped version, as more sympathetic, would be a better fit with the house’s original character and so preferred. However, this is not what the residents said was happening. Residents understood council planning officers as not only approving, but actively encouraging ‘glass and concrete box’ extensions – distinctive (and, according to these residents, ugly), instead of sympathetic (and, in the view of these residents, better looking), additions to the houses. This was justifiably decried by residents as in conflict with the guidelines. Yet council officers argued that their decisions were a way to protect heritage areas. Heritage practices had moved on from ‘sympathetic designs’ to distinctive additions that could be clearly distinguished from the original part of the building. As one council officer was reported as saying, the local councillor should easily be able to point to what is (or is not) ‘original’ in the estate on her historical walking tours.

Even if heritage practices had changed, how did this change take place in Port Melbourne if Garden City was supposedly protected not through general heritage practices but rather a specific set of guidelines that called for additions to be ‘sympathetic’ in design? One answer is that the guidelines presented to council in
October 2010 for some minor updates did not specify that additions were to be sympathetic. This was missing information. Some of the active neighbourhood association members had been involved in working groups for the initial drafting of the guidelines and so they remembered the guidelines as encouraging sympathetic designs. Not finding mention of this in the version presented to council in 2010, they suggested the original document had been substantially altered. When an old hardcopy of the 1997 guidelines was sourced, I volunteered to compare it with the document presented to council in October 2010 as a marked up copy of the 1997 guidelines. It was only then that we realised the version presented to, and accepted by, Council was missing page 17 — the page described above. Nobody seemed to have noticed that the document circulated for the meeting and then uploaded to the City of Port Phillip website jumped from page 16 to 18.

Although it would be easy to blame officers for making a page disappear, in all likelihood this was not an intentional omission. Minor changes to the text on page 17 were included in the table of changes prepared for council. When the error was reported to council, the version of the guidelines on their website was updated. However, even though the text seemed unambiguous to the residents who had noticed its absence, the re-inclusion of page 17 did not result in different decisions being made. In other words, the text of the guidelines did not translate directly into what was or was not approved by the council officers. This was possible because the guidelines were being interpreted in a broader framework.

The broader framework in which planning decisions were made in practice did not just require that additions were distinctive; rather, a particular appearance was clearly being favoured. One day I was talking with a Dunstan Estate owner-occupier about the frustrations being expressed by some Garden City residents at the ‘glass and concrete box’ extensions being approved by council in their area. I shared my opinion that such extensions were being approved because of the heritage industry’s requirement for later changes to be able to be distinguished from the ‘original’. The Dunstan Estate home owner explained that her extension did not look like a ‘glass and concrete box’ but was able to be distinguished from the original. The extension to her house drew on some of the design features, but altered them so they did not duplicate the original. Design mechanisms included a line of bricks set into the rendered finish that did not have the
level of ornamentation of the line of bricks used on the adjoining house and, while there was wood panelling on the added garage, it was in a different pattern to that on her house. The addition was discernible but she felt that it was in sympathy with the house. Her extension was also widely praised by Port Melbourne residents and visitors as ‘looking good’.

Many Garden City residents used the guidelines as evidence that their complaints about the extensions being approved by council were justified. This did not mean that they agreed with everything written in the guidelines, or thought that following the guidelines would result in the most attractive housing estate. For example, the guidelines encouraged window frames of the same colour and shape as the frames used when the estate was built. I heard one resident complimenting another on her window frames. Although in place for many years, the window frames were not original. That they did not comply with the guidelines was known by both the home owner and her complimentary interlocutor. The home owner even took time in the conversation to explain that if they wanted to install such window frames now it would not be permitted by the council. Even though these window frames were seen as more attractive, neither resident used this as an opportunity to criticise the guidelines. While they might have liked some of the changes on the estate, maintaining heritage was the only argument they felt they could draw on to prevent many of the changes they did not want.

Council officers approved plans for extensions in Garden City that many residents did not like, but it was not just the City of Port Phillip that had a say in what counted as adequate heritage protection for the estate. While Council is generally the designated responsible planning authority in Victoria, the State of Victoria provides for planning decisions to be contested at the Victorian Civil and Administration Tribunal (VCAT). The permit for a two story extension on a Garden City house was contested at VCAT by the two immediately adjacent residents (‘Vakrinos & Anor v Port Phillip CC & Anor [2010] VCAT 1716’ in October 2011). The size, rather than just the style, of this particular extension was objected to. The objectors reportedly argued, ‘the proposal would diminish the sense of spaciousness of the backyard realm that is a feature of the neighbourhood character’ (VCAT 1716: item 7). The Member – the person with the authority to decide the case – agreed that ‘the backyard realm is an important
component of neighbourhood character (VCAT 1716: Item 14). However, this was to play a secondary role to other considerations:

Although a sense of space is apparent from the backyards of both No.’s 50 Crichton Avenue and 19 Walter Street, this sense of space is not a consistent feature of the area’s neighbourhood character. Nor as Member Wilson observed in Zdenek Paris is it critical to the maintenance of the area’s neighbourhood character – a proposition with which I agree in the particular circumstances of this case.’ (VCAT 1716: Item 20).

The neighbours’ experience of living in the area would be impacted on as they were to lose the sense of space in their backyards, but this was not considered ‘neighbourhood character’. In fact, the size of the extension factored into the positive assessment of the proposed extension.

This proposal will provide for improved standards of internal amenity with better access to light and space with a functional open plan layout. The resultant dwelling will most likely be attractive to larger households such as the traditional family model. In so doing, the proposal will allow retention and preservation of the valued visible heritage elements of the host building as viewed from the surrounding area, particularly from the streetscape. I find these outcomes would be entirely consistent with both housing and heritage policies that I have outlined above. (VCAT 1716: Item 18)

The increase in indoor space was described as providing a higher amenity home which would provide the type of housing that may attract desirable family groups. Therefore, it appears that a social imaginary was still in operation in planning decisions regarding the housing of Garden City. It was still a nuclear family owner-occupier that was to be encouraged. However, in contrast with the compromise on space to produce homes that would be affordable when Garden City was developed, the owner-occupiers imagined by the VCAT Member who prepared the decision could afford to make changes to these houses that will provide them the space.

Achieving consistency

Beyond these limited examples of the planning of housing estates in Port Melbourne and contested decisions regarding their ongoing modification, what appears to be a matter of planning for the future is a mechanism for protecting the existing order. I have shown that what is often described as ‘new’ is actually consistent with already existing, and usually taken for granted, social order. The literal construction and ongoing
maintenance of the material form of the suburb, the estates and the houses has been underpinned by social order.

Housing provides a useful site of study in the Australian context because of its place in the national imaginary. The Great Australian Dream has been the lens through which I have demonstrated how what may be billed as ‘new’ was actually accepted as a sensible intervention by virtue of being consistent with existing social order. As the location where so many direct state interventions in housing developments were piloted, this has been a lens suited to introducing parts of Port Melbourne. Working with some of the estates, rather than the suburb as a whole, emphasises that the representations offered are always partial, as are these in the rest of this dissertation.

The plans for the Port Melbourne estates of Garden City, the Dunstan Estate, Fishermans Bend and Beacon Cove did reconfigure where people lived, but they responded to and were achieved through existing social order. My demonstration of this has been only a cursory one; a closer reading of how decisions were made regarding the floor plans, streetscape and land use in the area would further demonstrate how this occurs, but this focus on processes will be returned to in Chapter 7. Social order has shaped the homes in Port Melbourne and, as I discuss in the following chapter, the homes Port Melbourne’s residents live in are strongly tied to how they are discursively positioned in social order.

Guidelines for estates like Garden City are a mechanism for achieving very particular outcomes concerning built form, such as the use of particular window frames if the house is modified. To the extent that guidelines are followed, the need for a decision to be made is removed (a process I return to in Chapter 7). Yet reading the guidelines in isolation does not reveal what the estates in Port Melbourne actually look like today or will in the future. It is because guidelines exist within a broader context that what is taken to be a sensible application of them is not necessarily for them to be followed word-for-word. There may be different opinions as to what is a sensible application but, when it comes to planning approvals, only the opinions of some people are treated as sensible. Even though residents have been involved in the development of guidelines, such as those for Garden City, the guidelines themselves are part of a set of policies that
set out who can decide what is important and what is not. The decision is put in the hand of experts.
Chapter 4: Talking of Beacon Cove

Introducing descriptions

Even the most matter-of-fact descriptions are shot through with abstractions, usually unanalysed 'common sense' ones. This must be so, because all description must use general terms, and general terms are the names of classes, that is, of abstractions, and not the names of things. (Beattie 1959: 48)

During my fieldwork, Margaret Bride and Graham Bride were working on their book — *The Borough and Its People: Port Melbourne 1839-1939* (2013). Their book and my fieldwork were centred on the same place — Port Melbourne — and we were both focusing on the people of the place. While theirs is something of a public history project and mine is an ethnographic study turned towards obtaining a research higher degree qualification, descriptions are fundamental to both the text of their book and my dissertation. The introduction of Bride and Bride (2013) is framed with a description of Port Melbourne. The authors explain that the named used in their title — the Borough — references the municipal government classification for the area of Port Melbourne at a particular point in time (Bride & Bride 2013: vii), then sets out the spatial scope of Port Melbourne. In this way, they present an administrative genealogy and historical geography to define Port Melbourne that differs from my use of present labels at the start of Chapter 3. Bride and Bride (2013) were not alone in making visible the terms on which they were dividing or characterising the world. As Foucault (1994: xxi) asserts in his preface to *The Order of Things*, people use, experience and also reflect on order. In this dissertation, I work with an understanding of order as always imposed on a world that is irreducibly complex. While the orders usually perceived by people may be based on what they have learnt through socialisation, Rancière argues that a person’s position in the social order does not foreclose the properties they can perceive and the assessments of value or order they can comprehend (see Chapter 2).

Continuing with my focus on ‘The Sensible’ (Part I), what I am concerned with here is my observation that some processes of ordering were treated as sensible enough to be employed in everyday conversation with little comment. In Chapter 3, I made a case for there being a broader context in which decisions are made and interpretations are carried out. In this chapter, I link this idea to Rancière’s concept of *le partage du
sensible — a concept I outlined in Chapter 2 and that has underpinned my analysis in Chapter 3. To do this, I return to Beacon Cove, one of the estates discussed in Chapter 3, but shift focus to how people in Port Melbourne talked of ‘people from Beacon Cove’. Beacon Cove, as a place and an identification for those who resided there, was treated as a sensible descriptive category. In fieldwork, I encountered talk in which some people lamented the absence from Port Melbourne of people from Beacon Cove. This was the case even though geographically and administratively Beacon Cove is an estate within Port Melbourne. Comments about the absence of people from Beacon Cove was a way for the speaker to enact the inclusion of people from Beacon Cove in the speaker’s representation of the world.

Here I work with three translations/interpretations of Rancière’s concept of le partage du sensible — partition of the sensible, distribution of the sensible and configuration of sense — to present and interrogate some of the talk of Beacon Cove. While it is the notion of a configuration of sense that I draw on most heavily in later chapters, I do not intend my discussion of these three interpretations to be treated as progressive revelation. The conceptualisations are useful tools for bringing moments into awareness by finding space for them in the path of my text. As I asserted in Chapter 1, ideas offer ‘a map of the visible and orientations for moving’ (Rancière 2009a: 114). The framing devices I use to consider questions of order in this chapter (as I shift between the devices I use as ordering mechanisms across chapters) are largely conversations I have heard and some autobiographical reflections.

I make no claim to be experimenting with order in an original way, but this chapter does interrupt some common expectations for the structure of a dissertation. It is here, in this fourth chapter rather than the introduction, that some of my autobiography is included to illustrate contributing factors in my selection of Port Melbourne as the site for this project. My take on the concept of social inclusion also appears in this chapter. While less autobiographical, I still draw on my personal response to talk of ‘social inclusion’ to structure my description of the concept. These personal justifications, offered now within the context of the path I have set up so far, have not been banished to a preface (and I have chosen not to ‘tick them off’ as part of an introductory chapter) because they play an instrumental role in my discussion.
The structure and empirical content of this chapter could have been otherwise, but nor are they arbitrary. I conclude the chapter with discussion of a mapping project at a community event. Any one of various other examples could have been easily substituted for that. However, that project appears here with discussion of the contingency of the selection of my fieldsite, my awareness of discourse around social inclusion and the conversations to which I have been privy. My discussion of the mapping project, as with the rest of this chapter, keeps returning to Beacon Cove as a sensible category, and slowly it is the beacons themselves that become increasingly visible (and set the stage for my discussion of material objects in Chapter 5). Centring my discussion on the Beacon Cove estate, like all order, is both contingent — other decisions could have been made if I shaped the dissertation otherwise — and yet overdetermined — it appears for a multitude of reasons. The overdetermination of the arguments I make — they could still be advanced with attention to different ‘data’ — is the reason that I can spend more of the later chapters tracing the equality and politics that, when made visible, always interrupts order, even though I draw on different fieldwork observations.

**Mapping places and people**

Thus, in every culture, between the use of what one might call the ordering codes and reflections upon order itself, there is the pure experience of order and of its modes of being. (Foucault 1994: xxi)

I am not alone in reflecting on the administrative, material and social dimensions of Port Melbourne to describe the place and the sociality encountered there. Accounts of Port Melbourne exist not only in texts, such as Bride and Bride’s (2013) book or the planning guidelines I discussed in Chapter 3. In one of the interviews I undertook early in my fieldwork with key people in the area, I was quite literally drawn a map of Port Melbourne. The interviewee, Gavin, was a real estate agent who did not live in Port Melbourne, but had worked in the area for much of his career. His name had been mentioned when I asked other ‘key individuals’ for suggestions of people and groups to contact. At least one person, therefore, thought he was a sensible person for me to speak with. We met in Gavin’s office. Ready to hand were some of the articles about real estate in Port Melbourne that he had collected, and sometimes been quoted in, over the years. In our conversation, he described changes and continuities in the area along with their links to property value. Gavin also offered to explain to me something that he had
learnt about community — what he would undertake research into, he said, if he enrolled in a research degree.

I enthusiastically took up Gavin’s offer and, using paper from a notepad on his desk, he drew two sketch maps. The first was of the Post WWII Fishermans Bend public housing estate and the second of the 1990s Beacon Cove MPC estate (see Chapter 3). As he drew, Gavin described the features he was including. Each map featured streets of housing that curved around, and radiated out from, pocket parks. A small cluster of shops was located on an edge of each map. His maps, he said, illustrated the similarity in appearance between the two estates. Then, with no further additions to the drawn maps, Gavin’s commentary moved to focus on the differences between the estates. He told me that one of the two places, Fishermans Bend, the earlier development, had a strong sense of community. He said that this sense of community did not exist in the other place, Beacon Cove.

Community, for Gavin, was not a word used simply to indicate a place, or the people living within a particular place (c.f. the use of ‘community’ in the term MPC discussed in Chapter 3). Gavin was talking about a sense of connection with others and helping each other out. As the two places had similar-looking street configurations and access to pocket parks, the material properties of the developments could not be responsible for the perceived difference in the strength of community. But the sense of community was still found in a particular place. It was the experience of the people living in this place — specifically hardship — which Gavin described as the catalyst for a sense of community. In particular, Gavin mentioned that Fishermans Bend had poor residents who struggled through the depression. The Beacon Cove estate had not been constructed until the 1990s and residents were those who had sufficient capital to buy into the estate. Different experiences are captured in different housing estates in Port Melbourne because of the times, intentions and particular housing projects in which they were embedded.

In summary, Gavin’s description was premised on an approach whereby the configuration of streets did not determine social outcome; despite material similarities,

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35 As Fishermans Bend was largely a post WWII project and so was not occupied during the interwar depression, the history of the estate itself was misrepresented in Gavin’s account.
‘a sense of community’ is sedimented into one estate but not the other. According to Gavin, community developed through residents experiencing hardship. Gavin’s maps can also be used to illustrate a more general point: in many situations Beacon Cove (as with other parts of Port Melbourne) was used to describe a place and a group of people; it was a taken to be a sensible descriptor to use in conversations and able to be understood by interlocutors.

**My encounters with Beacon Cove**

As in Gavin’s potential research project, Beacon Cove played a significant role in my awareness of, and interest in, Port Melbourne as a site to study. I had the experience of being shuttled as a child through the area that has since become Beacon Cove. Although I was born in Melbourne, for seven years I lived interstate with my nuclear family. At that time, all my grandparents lived in Melbourne, with those on my paternal side in one of Melbourne’s south eastern suburbs and those on my maternal side in one of Melbourne’s western suburbs. When we came to Melbourne to visit, we generally traversed Port Melbourne as we travelled by car between the two ‘sides’. On these car trips, I saw the route we travelled through change: roads were closed and constructed and the Beacon Cove estate was built around our modified route. This continued to be the favoured route to visit our maternal grandparents when my nuclear family ‘moved back’ and settled in the south east of Melbourne. Even when we and they moved house to other suburbs, all parties remained living on their respective sides of Melbourne. My family never referred to this area we travelled through as Beacon Cove but, rather, as Noddyville — a name with which one of my sister’s friends had furnished us, and one we will still use on occasion to describe a suggested route. However, it is now not so accurate to describe myself as travelling through Beacon Cove to visit family. My parents moved into the estate in recent years (after my siblings and I had ‘moved out of home’, as the common expression goes), so now I actually travel to Beacon Cove.

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56 Gavin’s assessment of Beacon Cove as lacking a sense of community is not one I share. Beacon Cove, with a residents association, was a neighbourhood in which many residents described having a sense of community. However, in the fieldwork that followed I did not hear Gavin’s name, or that of his real estate agency, mentioned by Beacon Cove residents when listing real estate agents in the area (which people did at times to consider who they would approach with a request of support for their event in the form of an advertising board). Their experiences of ‘community’ may have been outside of his awareness.

57 My memories of moving through Melbourne to visit relatives in different areas may be read to position me and my family in terms of class by those familiar with Melbourne’s social geography.
As a young adult driver (before I, and then my parents, moved), ‘through Noddyville’ continued to be the route I took to many of Melbourne’s freeways; I passed through when I went to Footscray for ‘soup van’ or to St Albans for ‘refugee tutoring’. But I also started travelling to Port Melbourne for volunteer work, as Young Vinnies — a group with which I also volunteered elsewhere — supplied volunteers to cover the Saturday morning visits to those who had contacted St Vincent de Paul for material relief. Volunteering occasionally to undertake these visits, I became aware of the public housing nestled in Beacon Cove and scattered in other pockets of Port Melbourne. However, those visits also reinforced what I had long learnt elsewhere: that, for example, the fact somebody lived in a ‘fancy’ apartment building rather than the public housing walkup flats did not mean this person was not experiencing material hardship; and that the security screens with their ineffective metal knockers, rather than the presentation of the properties themselves, is an effective (if imperfect) indicator of the ‘public housing’ status of a property in Victoria.

When selecting a field site, I initially set out to choose a place ‘publicly perceived as disadvantaged’ — with my interest in suburbs being determined not so much by whether they showed various indicators of disadvantage as by their position in public discourse. I did not want to go back to the Olympic Village area of West Heidelberg (or Heidelberg West as it is now called in official documents), where I had lived for a year, volunteered and undertaken an internship. Renegotiating existing relationships and fostering new ones with my new identity as a field worker did not seem impossible, but it felt like an extra hurdle given I lacked experience in ethnographic research. Inner-city suburbs were of particular interest to me, because the boundaries of those suburbs marked particular stark distinctions in reputations and property values. But — as I disentangled discourses about poverty from those about sociality in places, became more familiar with the sheer volume of research on place-based disadvantage from Australia and elsewhere, and attempted to explain that my interest was not in mobilising normative models of place-based sociality to assess disadvantaged places but, rather, in engaging with sociality within a place — my enthusiasm for selecting a ‘disadvantaged place’ fell away. Listening to how I explained my project to friends, I realised my encounters with Beacon Cove were cropping up as examples when I described my critical approach to notions such as place based-disadvantage and social inclusion. When I set out to investigate my perceptions of Beacon Cove, I found some academic
literature (e.g. Dovey 2005; Dovey, Woodcock & Wood 2010; Kingsley & Townsend 2006; Kingsley, Townsend & Henderson-Wilson 2009; Shaw ed. 1998). I also soon discovered earlier planning studies for Port Melbourne where the fear was not of existing ‘disadvantage’ but that Port Melbourne might not remain an area with affordable housing for working class people (e.g. Loder and Bayly & Port Melbourne Council 1974).

While I was initially reluctant to choose Port Melbourne because of my familial entanglement in the place, there was much to recommend it — not as an archetype from which to generalise but for the questions I wanted to explore (see my discussion of the anonymising of places in Chapter 1). The presence of distinct housing estates within Port Melbourne, including public housing, seemed to go some way to addressing my concerns about studying only a single suburb, as an element of comparison should be possible — as effectively demonstrated by Gavin’s maps, and my comparison of housing estates in Chapter 3. While I was always aware of the arbitrariness of suburb boundaries for governing people’s movements, the physical location of Port Melbourne at the end of a tram line, rather than along a major transit route out of the CBD, lent its boundaries greater tangibility. This would be useful in a field site because I was interested in place-based sociality that centred on where people lived, rather than where they might travel to or through for particular activities. Port Melbourne felt like a sensible place for my project.

The process of selecting my field site would not stand up in many disciplines (or, at least, it is unlikely this account would be the official version that made it beyond post-seminar drinks). Even the supposed choice of Port Melbourne over Prahran or Fitzroy in Melbourne, or Glebe in Sydney, because of its status as not being a place people tend to transit through, seems contradictory. My experience travelling through Port Melbourne, and Beacon Cove in particular, played a significant role in my identification of the suburb of Port Melbourne as a field site. Furthermore, passengers from all over the world first set foot on Australian territory at Station Pier — a pier that juts out from Beacon Cove. While some passengers on shore leave travel by charter bus, others walk from the pier and through the car park to catch a tram into the city from the Beacon Cove tram stop. There are countless incidental stories, too, that I could use to undermine my own representation of Port Melbourne as a place where a resident, rather than a
passersby, will be encountered. For example, after I had already finished fieldwork, two residents at my work place — an accommodation service for homeless men located in an inner-suburb on the other side of Melbourne’s CBD from Port Melbourne — asked me if I had ever been to Port Melbourne. They had started catching the tram from Fitzroy to Beacon Cove, where they would purchase cheap beers from the bottle shop and sit drinking. For these two men, Beacon Cove was a location for an activity. However, these two men were proud of their new recreational activity of choice because they thought they were clever for coming up with such an unusual idea.

In fieldwork, I found Beacon Cove was not mentioned only (or even most usually) as a spatial reference to describe a route or activity, but was often talked of in a way consistent with Gavin’s commentary on his maps — in a way that evoked a social geography.

**Socially positioning Beacon Cove**

I was part of a small group conversing at the conclusion of a particularly well attended historical society meeting in Port Melbourne when Nick asked, ‘How many people here would be from Beacon Cove?’ He went on to declare, ‘We don't want them here, anyway.’ But the conversation was moved on to other matters when Shirl’s curt reply — ‘You could not really tell if there were some from there.’ — undercut Nick’s declaration.

As I frequently encountered in moments such as this, to talk of people from Beacon Cove was taken to make sense. Shirl, in suggesting that he would not be able to tell if there were some people from Beacon Cove present, might appear to have been disputing Nick’s position. But both Shirl and Nick’s contributions are consistent with *le partage du sensible* in which people from Beacon Cove were not visible — either in person or ‘as such’ — as part of the crowd conversing at the conclusion of the historical society meeting.

Now, using such talk and my own descriptions of Beacon Cove, I return to some of the questions raised by Gavin’s sketch map of the two estates. In particular, I discuss how ‘people from Beacon Cove’ can be perceived and verified as a sensible category to draw
on in conversation. Importantly, as I argue here, a sensible category is not a neutral
category. Ordering imposes inequality. Even though it is not a stigmatised place, 38
Beacon Cove residents were devalued when they were singled out. Justifications for my
claim are advanced through my discussion here. After sketching out what I mean by
Beacon Cove being devalued, I look at how this can be understood as the partition of
the sensible, the distribution of the sensible and the broader configuration of sense.

People from Beacon Cove were not visible to Nick and Shirl but, at the same time,
Beacon Cove residents were not absent from Port Melbourne’s groups and the public
spaces in which I spent time. Pointing out people from Beacon Cove as already present
could be a way to falsify the claim they were not part of Port Melbourne sociality, and
this was the strategy of a SouthPort DayLinks staff member I met. SouthPort DayLinks
was an organisation in the area that organised volunteers who helped ‘older persons’ in
the local area with particular tasks and transport. (I return to the significance of being an
older person for being associated with Port Melbourne in Chapter 5 and comment on the
dynamic of receiving help in Chapter 6.) At the launch event for the City of Port
Phillip’s (2011) ‘Social justice charter’, I was talking with a SouthPort DayLinks staff
member working on her organisation’s information stall. This staff member described
her efforts to break down the stereotype of Beacon Cove residents. She role-played for
me what she said to some of the people who used their services: ‘You know that guy, he
lives over in Beacon Cove.’ Yet, in making visible the presence of people from Beacon
Cove in their volunteer team, ‘Beacon Cove’ was still treated as a sensible description
by this staff member. The presence of people from Beacon Cove was remarkable — it
was remarked upon — because of the type of talk about Beacon Cove exemplified by
Nick and Shirl’s exchange. To suggest that the stereotype of people from Beacon Cove
could be, or — as suggested by this SouthPort DayLinks staff member — should be,
broken down is to work from the premise that it exists. Her role was still consistent with

38 Stigma is considered a problem of ‘deprived or declining neighbourhoods.’ (Hastings 2004: 233).
Stigma has been associated with estates of public housing in Britain (e.g. Hastings & Dean 2003) and
Australia (e.g. Palmer et. al. 2005; Kelaher et. al. 2010). Goffman’s (1963) work is generally held up as
the grounding for current work on stigma (Australian examples on place based stigma that set up their
discussion with reference to Goffman 1963 include Kelaher et. al. 2010: 381; Palmer et. al. 2004: 412;
Warr 2005: 288). As it is used in academic discourse, stigma requires not only that there are negative
perceptions of a place or people but that these result in particular types of discrimination. Link and Phelan
(2001: 375-376) insist that stigma can only be enacted by those with power, as those labels that are not
able to result in discriminatory consequences (deemed serious by the researchers) are not included as
stigmatising. Therefore using the language of stigma relies on a pre-existing account of who does or does
not have power.
other aspects of the common understanding of the types of people who live in Beacon Cove. ‘That guy’ from Beacon Cove was, in her role play, a volunteer rather than somebody making use of the service. So, once again, as with Gavin’s map, Beacon Cove is distanced from understandings of disadvantaged or stigmatised places.

I want here to reintroduce the term assigned to a particular *partage du sensible* — ‘the police’. A police order must appear as without supplement, so nobody is left out, particularly those labeled as excluded. Who/what was visible in the conversations reported above, however, was the category or the label of ‘people from Beacon Cove’, not particular people who happened to live in Beacon Cove. The SouthPort DayLinks staff member was acknowledging a stereotype but, in introducing particular people who did not fit the division that underlay it — the expectation that those who volunteered were not people from Beacon Cove — she sought to interrupt the taken for granted status of this stereotype. In contrast with Shirl’s reply, the SouthPort DayLinks staff member was making it known that there were indeed people from Beacon Cove present. However, Shirl’s reply could be taken to go further in challenging the very distinction (in the form of marking off) of some people as being from Beacon Cove by dismissing not just Nick’s, but anybody’s, capacity to recognise ‘people from Beacon Cove’. (Then again, Shirl could be understood as claiming Nick simply lacks knowledge as to who people are.) The significance of ‘making visible’ for interrupting an existing order is not, and cannot be, completely bracketed out of my discussion of order here but, again, this is returned to in all the later chapters.

The category of ‘people from Beacon Cove’, then, featured in the conversation at the end of that historical society meeting and the social geography ascribed to others by the SouthPort DayLinks staff member. Its constituents were brought up in conversation — they were discussed — but assigned the space of not being present. Although Nick assumed the position of a ‘we’ in claiming that their presence was not wanted, there were efforts to include people from Beacon Cove. Beacon Cove residents were marked as a group to be consulted by the Port Melbourne Neighbourhood House (Pahor 2011), rather than being included in the definition of Port Melbourne residents already included in the consultation. Seeking to ‘consult with’ people from Beacon Cove maintains the existing distinction between people who are/are not from Beacon Cove. Sensible categories of people not only shape the way that people participate in conversations at
the end of an event or talk to a researcher, they underpin the problem of identification and evidence-gathering in much academic and social policy-focused enquiry.

**Beacon Cove as partitioned**

Both Beacon Cove residents and Beacon Cove as a place were divided off and named as distinct from Port Melbourne in conversation. The very material properties of Beacon Cove can be used to mark it off from the rest of Port Melbourne. It is possible to trace the boundaries of Beacon Cove on the ground or using a map.

![Beacon Cove boundaries marked on a schematic map](image)

Annotations (Beacon Cove boundary) by Tracey Pahor using fieldwork experience and information from Beacon Cove guidelines (see List of other cited documents).

*Excerpt from “The field site: Port Melbourne, Victoria, Australia” (see Chapter 3) used under Open Data Commons Open Data Base License © OpenStreetMap contributors, OpenStreetMap.org, opendatacommons.org*

If you are looking at a schematic map, as found in a street directory (see above), the bay and Garden City Reserve provide the southern and northern boundaries. The western boundary is Beacon Road, with blocks of walk-up public housing flats occupying the other side. To the east, Princes Street provides a boundary with housing occupying much of the space beyond, including sites that were previously industrial and even a school. Towards the eastern boundary, the 109 light rail tram service cuts through
Beacon Cove, running along the easement once used for the Port Melbourne train line. Here using a satellite image, such as from Google Earth (see below), may be more instructive; the continuation of Beacon Cove either side of the light rail line is discernible through the high degree of uniformity in the colour and style of buildings. In particular, the orange and grey-green roofs can be used to distinguish Beacon Cove from the rest of Port Melbourne. The two blocks of terrace houses, encircled by Swallow Street and Little Swallow Street, which predated Beacon Cove are distinguishable. So are the metal and white (pebble) roofs of the apartments and the First Point buildings occupying the blocks that run along the waterfront but part of Beacon Cove. Blocks of metal roofs indicate the public housing properties in the north-east section.39

![Satellite image of part of Port Melbourne, including Beacon Cove](image)


The public housing properties in the north-east section are described as ‘visually and functionally’ walled off from the rest of Beacon Cove by Dovey (2005: 226) in Fluid City. Beacon Cove more generally is criticised in this book for lacking permeability, with Dovey (2005: 226) using terms such as ‘seclusion’, ‘segregation’ and ‘suffocating’. He described the area as lacking ‘integration with its context’ and

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39 This is the housing that Dovey (2005: 226) complains Beacon Cove is cut off from by ‘the Berlin Wall’.

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suggested the streets should be reconfigured and, to redress the physical barriers
between the public housing and the rest of Beacon Cove, argues one house should even
be knocked down (Dovey 2005: 226). Physical barriers are treated as problematic not
just because they can prevent movement but because, in doing so, they are barriers to
social engagement.

Dovey’s account of Beacon Cove has shaped expert knowledge — made this partition
visible to urban planners. Although Dovey (2005: 226) credits local parlance with
offering ‘the Berlin Wall’ to describe the walling off of the public housing from the rest
of Beacon Cove, this account was not a common one in Port Melbourne. In fact, the
only time I heard it mentioned during fieldwork was by a consultant I was chatting with
at a community consultation event. The consultant had trained in the department in
which Dovey worked. I found out that he did not live in the area, and had only started
work on a project in Port Melbourne, but he often brought colleagues to see ‘the Berlin
Wall’ — this wall between the public housing and the rest of Beacon Cove — on their
visits to Melbourne. There was a third person standing with the consultant and I as we
spoke, a Port Melbourne resident who lived near the suburb’s boundary with South
Melbourne (and so some distance from Beacon Cove), and she had no idea what we
were talking about until I explained to her that there was a wall at the back of a property
facing the public housing component of Beacon Cove.

The category of ‘people from Beacon Cove’ was a reference to a particular geographic
space that would be literally located in the everyday geography of many Port Melbourne
residents. Yet Beacon Cove could be treated as a partitioned zone because its location
was such that many Port Melbourne residents would have no reason to move through
the space on a regular basis. Because of this, they may not have formed a cognitive map
(Tolman 1948) of, and so be unfamiliar with, the space. Yet there would be many other
streets across the suburb that any one resident would not traverse regularly that were not
evoked in conversation.

Criticisms of Beacon Cove as segregated were not repeated in Becoming Places by
Dovey (2010). In the chapter on Beacon Cove (Dovey, Woodcock & Wood 2010),
rather than the academics’ interpretation of the material properties of the space,
interviews with people from Beacon Cove are the focus. The interview data presented
suggests that residents sought to distance themselves from notions of social closure through assertions that their area had social heterogeneity and ‘a more complex social reality’ than implied by ‘the closure and uniformity of the urban form’ (Dovey, Woodcock & Wood 2010: 71). In this chapter, however, residents’ voices are presented in their own words, rather than being subsumed into the voice of the researcher. Therefore, claims made by people from Beacon Cove that they live in a socially complex area can be bracketed out as their opinion, rather than accurate description. The claims need not reconfigure the description of Beacon Cove as segregated.

However, descriptions of a place as segregated cannot be equated with a negative assessment. As I discussed above, Gavin claimed hardship had fostered community — a good thing — within the bounded estate of Fishermans Bend. ‘Closed-ness’ is often an important factor for how people talk about community (Bauman 2001; Dempsey 1990; Newman & Paasi 1998). Although, in contrast with Dovey (2005) crediting social engagement (or its lack) is attributed to the configuration of streets, Gavin contrasted Fishermans Bend to Beacon Cove to argue that that the configuration of the streets are not the determining factor. Yet, one thing remains consistent across these two accounts; it is the segregation of the wealthy that is considered objectionable.

**Beacon Cove as a concentrated cluster of characteristics**

The appearance of buildings featured in my description of how material properties could be used to distinguish Beacon Cove from other parts of Port Melbourne. The observable material characteristics can also demonstrate, however, that identifying what is included in or external to Beacon Cove is not so clear. Princes Street was one of the boundaries I named, but visual differences in the external designs of buildings were not enough to discern this boundary. You can find greater variation in house design within Beacon Cove than between some Beacon Cove properties and external developments. At least one block of units on the non-Beacon Cove side of Princes Street used colour schemes and designs similar to those in Beacon Cove. The choices made in terms of the external appearance of buildings may have more to do with design trends at the time they were constructed than their location in space. Yet, as Beacon Cove was built as an estate, it is a concentration of a particular built form. Working with a concept of order as a distribution, rather than strictly partitioned, allows observations that could otherwise
interrupt the order to be accounted for as simply variation. For example, Beacon Cove residents cited in the chapter by Dovey, Woodcock & Wood (2010) in *Becoming Places* did mention varying social characteristics of the people in their area. However, their awareness of a particular person with a particular trait living there would do little to challenge official accounts of the population of Beacon Cove, particularly as represented by the Australian Census.

The Australian Census is not only an enumeration of the nation’s population; a range of demographic information is collected as well as information on housing (Pink 2011). The Australian Census collects this information, based on the overnight location of each person in the country on a set night, every five years. Processed data is publicly released based on both the place of enumeration and on an individual’s usual place of residence. It is this second set of data that is most commonly drawn on in social analysis. Usual place of residence is also the basis on which Australian voters are organised into electorates. (Only in recent years have those without a fixed address been able to be included on the electoral role.) Although academic conceptualisations of ‘home’ are often much broader (Mallett 2004; Peirano 1998), in the conversations or talk overheard during fieldwork the primary place people were associated with was the place where they lived. This is the case with the expression ‘people from Beacon Cove’ as it references people who live there — whose usual place of residence is there — rather than people who happen to be in Beacon Cove at a particular moment.

Responses to census questions are able to be geographically mapped. This geographic mapping is possible through the way the data are partitioned. The smallest scale for which 2011 census data was made available is ‘Statistical Area Level 1’ (SA1) (Pink 2011). The boundaries of the SA1 areas do not cross housing estates in Port Melbourne. Data is collected at the smaller scale of ‘Mesh Blocks’. However, due to the potentially identifying nature of such small scale data, this is not released. The Australian Bureau of Statistic’s stated goal of minimising the potential for identification is in contrast with many publications within Port Melbourne where proper names are used for people.

For the 2011 census data, there are 35 SA1 codes in the State Suburb area of Port Melbourne. They range from having 0 (SA1 2113101) and 3 (SA1 2113102) residents to 945 residents (SA1 2113018). Although the ABS reminds those using its data that ‘[n]o reliance should be placed on small cells’ and ‘[c]ells in this table have been randomly adjusted to avoid the release of confidential data.’ (Disclaimers on all tables downloaded from their TableBuilder application). The median number of residents for all SA1 areas in the State Suburb of Port Melbourne is 193. A justification for this being the smallest unit of information released, and also for randomised changes being introduced into the data, is to prevent particular individuals being identified.
Melbourne. This enactment of the partition between estates makes it possible to compare different estates in Port Melbourne such as Beacon Cove (SL1 2113027, 2113028, 2113029, 2113030 and 2113031), Garden City (SL1 2113023 and 2113024) and Fishermans Bend (SL1 2113013, 2113014 and 2113015). This is one way that the partition of Beacon Cove from other areas is enacted in administrative representations of the area.

Census data can be turned towards describing a geographic distribution of characteristics. For example, there is a smaller proportion of dwellings in Garden City that are rented, compared with the Beacon Cove and also the rest of Port Melbourne. However, not all Garden City residents are owner occupiers and the use of statistics does not require this to be the case for a description of Beacon Cove as having more rental properties than Garden City to be sensible. Generalisations allow Beacon Cove to be compared with other parts of Port Melbourne, but they are sensible generalisations only; they are not an accurate description of each resident. A SouthPort Day Links volunteer from Beacon Cove may be an example of a person who deviates from what is considered normal, as with Durkheim’s (1982) distinction between normal and pathological behaviour. If this is the case, to refer to that person as ‘from Beacon Cove’ in conversation may reinforce that it is sensible to talk of people from Beacon Cove as not participating in Port Melbourne.

**The broader configuration of sense**

The Australian Census is designed to allow comparisons to be made across places but also across points in time. The character of Port Melbourne, as both a built environment and a community of residents, was spoken of by some people as being eroded by changes over time (with that time extending back within living memory to a working class history rather than a more distant origin myth). The demographics of the suburb have changed in recent decades, with rapid population growth being driven by a large number of new residential developments, including Beacon Cove.

Beacon Cove was built between 1995 and 2006 on a beachfront industrial site previously owned by the State of Victoria. As it was a brown field development, there were already buildings on the site. These buildings were part of Port Melbourne and so
the built form of the suburb, not just the demographics, changed with the construction of Beacon Cove. To build Beacon Cove, the existing industrial infrastructure was demolished, along with other structures such as the Seafarer’s Mission and Centenary Bridge. The space was reconfigured, with an existing road closed and new streets created, as I experienced travelling through the area as a child. The industries there before had contaminated the soil, so the very soil on which Beacon Cove now sits was all treated or trucked in from elsewhere. Even the shore line bordering Beacon Cove was reconstructed as part of the development (an area that some official documents, but nobody I spoke with, called New Beach). There is little continuity in the space pre and post Beacon Cove, other than the water of the bay and the iconic beacons. If the Sandridge City development plans for the site had been realised, the bay would have been reconfigured with a canal system, and the beacons removed. But they were not, and now the beacons are evoked in Beacon Cove’s name. While the beacons are still operating, when students in a Bachelor of Environments program were sent to undertake a field observation project in Port Melbourne one of the questions in their guide notes implied the opposite.

Note that the navigational beacons are no longer used for navigational purposes. Do you think they should have been retained in the design of Beacon Cove? Why/why not?

I suggested to the academic who coordinated this subject that the beacons were still in operation. However, the academic said that the beacons ‘are not really used’ because they are not necessary for commercial shipping. Whatever their actual status, they have been assigned the role of a historical ornament (e.g. Dovey 2005: 226).

While the beacons may remain, most of the structures on the site before Beacon Cove was built are gone. These changes are described by some people as loss. The demolition of Centenary Bridge and the Seafarer's Mission was contested, ultimately unsuccessfully, by Port Melbourne residents. As a result of this community mobilisation, these structures have not been completely erased from the built environment in that the foundation stone from the Seafarer's Mission is now part of the sea wall near the site and one pillar from Centenary Bridge continues to stand on a strip of lawn between the bike and pedestrian paths running along the beach. They have been retained for their historical significance, the same significance accorded to the beacons. Yet a relocated foundation stone and a pillar that no longer supports a bridge
communicate the absence of the building and bridge — the displacement of these parts of Port Melbourne by Beacon Cove (as discussed further in Chapter 5).

Beacon Cove is an extreme example of the changes to the built environment across Port Melbourne more generally in the face of not only a changed shipping industry but also the movement of industry out of the suburb and brownfield redevelopment. In acknowledging Beacon Cove as part of Port Melbourne, people would perhaps be legitimating further change in Port Melbourne. Perhaps this making visible of uncomfortable ‘truths’ may be reason enough for the estate and its residents to be split off and marginalised by those seeking to deny such truths (the move away from ambiguity is discussed further in Chapter 7). Discussing what was built, in terms of the material properties of the buildings and existing accounts of the planning undertaken to build them, not only makes visible material, social and administrative aspects of the estates but also characteristics of the broader configuration of sense as one where particular buildings, and also people, belong.

Both knowing and being present in what is considered the history of the area were ways to enact membership of, or ‘being a part of’, Port Melbourne (something I discuss further in the next chapter). The local government area within which Port Melbourne is located — the City of Port Phillip — held a photographic display for the 2011 Seniors’ Week. When talking about the photographic display with somebody else who had seen it, I was told, ‘The Beacon Cove people have no things on display: it is like they have erased their past.’ While residents from across the City of Port Phillip were encouraged to submit photographs though an advertising campaign that featured in promotional material for Seniors’ Week, as well as the local paper and council publications, the exhibition was titled, ‘“Life in Port Phillip” old photographs exhibition’. The residents of Beacon Cove could have been living in those particular houses only since the 90s. Although that does not necessarily mean they could not have lived elsewhere in Port Melbourne or the municipality of Port Phillip previously, as a group Beacon Cove residents were generally described in conversation by others and themselves as newcomers to Port Melbourne. With the title ‘“Life in Port Phillip” old photographs exhibition’, the personal history of Beacon Cove residents seemed to me to be actively excluded in as much as it did not unfold in Port Phillip; Beacon Cove residents might have old photographs and they might have photographs of life in the City of Port
Phillip, but they are unlikely to have photographs that met both criteria. Therefore the ‘they’ who have erased the past of people from Beacon Cove might better be seen as the City of Port Phillip. Yet the speaker in this conversation, it seemed, rather than acknowledging that they may have been left out of the project by its title, was inferring wilful erasure of photographic history by the people from Beacon Cove. Following Graeber (2012), her comment, if read as an indication that she had not thought about how it would make sense to understand the past of Beacon Cove residents within the context of this exhibition, could be read as being underpinned by a position of relative power. I am not ascribing to Beacon Cove residents as a group the same experience of structural violence of gender and race as that of Graeber’s subjects. But, the absence of imaginative identification on the part of the speaker is yet another instance of the demand being issued for ‘people from Beacon Cove’ to demonstrate that they are part of the suburb above and beyond having their house there.

Newcomers to a place, by definition, do not have a personal history of living there. In some contexts, this was equated with not belonging. The historical society in Port Melbourne letter-boxed new apartment developments with a flyer titled ‘To the new kids on the block’, until the rate of development outstripped their ability to keep pace (Pahor 2011: 7). This was described to me as a project to help newcomers ‘belong’ through getting to know about Port Melbourne. It enacts a division between those who belong and those who need to learn about the place. In reaching out to the newcomers through letter boxing a flyer about history, the historical society was extending an opportunity to learn in order to be included in the community (see Chapter 5), but also because it was thought that if people knew the history they would join the fight against particular changes to the area. Yet, in other places, anthropologists have found that interest in local history marks people off as newcomers (Kohn 2002), and does not necessarily lead to newcomers being taken seriously as belonging (Edwards 1998; 2000).

Beacon Cove did have residents who had formed attachments to and identified with the history of the area in which they lived. At the very least, there was no sign that the Beacon Cove residents rejected public history objects or stories. The old beacons that had been retained were used for the Beacon Cove Neighbourhood Association logo. The few times I asked probing question in an attempt to see if anybody else thought that the
beacons were amusingly phallic, my enquiries were dismissed because ‘liking’ and photographing the beacons, not thinking about them, was taken to be sensible.

The cluster of existing terrace houses in and around Swallow Street that were retained and are now surrounded by Beacon Cove were also well liked (see also Dovey, Woodcock & Wood 2010). However, when those who lived in Beacon Cove spoke positively about these terrace houses, there seemed to be no question of the speaker’s entitlement to be living in a brownfield development. In fact, through understanding the housing estate to have replaced industrial uses of the land around the house, Beacon Cove could be seen as improving the amenity of the area around the Swallow Street terraces. By taking such an approach, Beacon Cove can be described as contributing to the area, instead of Batten’s (1998: 22) assessment that Beacon Cove ‘is perhaps the best that could be hoped for in the situation’ because it resulted in less displacement than the Sandridge City plan.

Perhaps by ruling people from Beacon Cove as absent, or invisible, some of those I heard commenting on the area were guarding against a reappraisal of Port Melbourne itself — a forced redistribution whereby the people from Beacon Cove become visible as people from Port Melbourne. Complaining about people from Beacon Cove not being present at the end of a meeting, or not amongst photograph contributors, imposes the very order in which the presence or absence of those who live in Beacon Cove is considered a sensible question to ask. It is a sensible question because of the broader configuration in which being present in, having the characteristics of and belonging to Port Melbourne are defined.

*Let me tell you what I think about social inclusion*

Beacon Cove was treated as a problematically distinct part of Port Melbourne, and talk about people from Beacon Cove as being absent was a means through which this distinctness was staged. In other words, an order was imposed on the material and social world. This was reinforced when actions were undertaken in Port Melbourne to try to remedy the perceived partitions between types of people in Port Melbourne.
A project was organised to bring different types of people together in Port Melbourne by an interagency working group called Connecting Port Melbourne. I was told that this interagency working group was initially convened because there was not much happening at the Port Melbourne end of the City of Port Phillip. Meetings were attended by representatives from council programs, local welfare agencies, the local neighbourhood house and a local church, as well as the local councillor. Although talk at those meetings I attended was dominated by the group’s planning for a social inclusion project, it operated as a forum to share information and build relationships. Therefore, I presumed that the reference to ‘connecting’ in the chosen name referred not only to connecting Port Melbourne residents with each other, but also representatives working in different agencies.

When I was invited by one of the members to attend the meetings of Connecting Port Melbourne, my attendance was described as a win-win situation because I could both contribute to and benefit from the group. I was familiar with the ‘common sense’ content of some academic, social policy and day-to-day discourses about Port Melbourne. The depth and breath of my fieldwork engagement in the suburb was praised, and so it was thought my knowledge of issues, groups and individuals would be a useful contribution. My absence from Connecting Port Melbourne meetings may have been seen as either a notable gap in my fieldwork or, alternatively, as an assessment of the working group as peripheral to questions of community in Port Melbourne. Some of the working group members also mentioned that my familiarity with academic concepts would be valuable because I could potentially give their projects, such as the social inclusion project they were discussing, a theoretical grounding.

They were right in that I was familiar with the concept of social inclusion. While conceptually, I was more familiar with work on social exclusion, references to ‘social inclusion’ were part of the Victorian Labor Government’s framing of policy, targeting those defined as disadvantaged, while I was planning my project, and they become part of the national policy-scape under the Commonwealth Labor Government in power during my fieldwork (see Reddel 2004; Smyth 2010). Following in the ‘third way’ tradition (Reddel 2004), social inclusion was framed as a win-win with positive

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41 Social exclusion, as with social inclusion, is a nebulous concept. Silver (1994) offers a typology of three different paradigms of social exclusion, with each grounded in a different ideology: solidarity in republicanism, specialisation in liberalism and monopoly in social democracy (also see Levitas 2004).
outcomes on offer for the economy (Smyth 2010: 30) and everybody’s quality of life (State of Victoria 2010). Rather than being framed in terms of a political agenda for contentious change, commentary on social inclusion from Victorian and Australian governments and the NGO community was frequently framed as evidence-based (Saunders 2014). While held up as something that was needed, rather than already happening, it did not need to interrupt ideological commitments; it was described as consistent with the Federation Settlement by academic and NGO employee Paul Smyth (2010) and with the Australian social and political tradition by the then treasurer Wayne Swan (2005: 15).

Social inclusion fits into wider discourses about sustainability (Cozens 2007: 189). However, particularly within the Australian context, it has been written up as the prescription for disadvantage by groups such as The Australian Institute of Family Studies (see Price-Robertson 2011: 4). Connecting with my earlier discussion of the focus on disadvantaged places in the academic and social policy consideration of places, place-based disadvantage has been seen as manifesting a type of social exclusion (see Chapter 1). Wayne Swan’s\textsuperscript{42} (2005) book Postcode Nation defines a policy problem.

Mostly Australians go about their business oblivious to the plight of places like Palm Island, Redfern and the Glenquarie Estate. Usually they're out of sight and out of mind. But they're always simmering away in a stew of crime, violence, neglect, ill health and school failure until a sudden crisis puts them onto our TV screens and the TV screens of the world. (Swan 2005:26)

In Swan’s (2005) description, these events are not to be treated as moments where people have been able to make themselves visible as part of an intentional, radical politics. Rather, it appears as an example of naming what Rancière describes as ‘the poor’ — ‘those who are spoken for, described and named by thinkers and experts’ (Tyler 2013: 173). The people in Palm Island, Redfern and the Glenquarie Estate are caught up in a stew that might appear on the television, but it is noise that needs to be turned off. The ‘suffering’ hosted by disadvantaged places may, as in Gavin’s account of his sketch maps, be seen to act as the catalyst for community. As imagined by Swan (2005), however, those places evoke the image of an underclass in the sense described by Bauman (1998: 66). As with the ‘culture of poverty thesis’ (Lewis 1966), if such

\textsuperscript{42} Later to be treasurer under Prime Minister Kevin Rudd (3rd December 2007 to 24th June 2010) and then the Deputy Prime Minister under Prime Minister Julia Gillard (24th June 2010 to 27th June 2013).
people became ‘included’ in their own area they would not fit the normative standards. This risk of creating an ‘us’ versus ‘them’ is identified in Australian Catholic Social Service’s (2010) report on the Social Inclusion Agenda. Yet, while those working with the concept of social capital have often scrambled to preserve understanding of social capital as a good thing by splitting off its ‘bad side’, introducing a taxonomy of social capital (bonding, bridging and linking; Devadason 2011), such a project has not been undertaken within work on social inclusion.

When it came to public discourse in Australia, opinions on The Social Inclusion Agenda were voiced along party lines and there was little sign of concern how policies could enact marginalisation. In particular, The Australian — the national newspaper which is generally considered to take an anti-Labor stance — ran articles critical of The Social Inclusion Agenda and associated activities as simply wasteful. That members of the government had sought advice as to what is meant by social inclusion (e.g. Dunlevy 2011), and how the concept was described in work from the Social Inclusion Unit, was held up for ridicule (e.g. Johns 2012). The application of social inclusion was described as promiscuous (e.g. Furedi 2012). The dominant line taken in The Australian was that the Social Inclusion Unit was ineffective or, in the words of another headline, that it should ‘Include this: Stop faffing about and do something’ (Fifield 2012). The newspaper even adopted a patronising tone: ‘So how’s that social inclusion thingy? Cut & Paste’s Red Guide for the incoming minister’ (The Australian 2011). These headlines and articles use inclusion-exclusion to poke fun at ‘big government’ ideology more generally.

Of course, a newspaper is not a single voice (and even a single person can utter contradictions). Yet the limited positive commentary in The Australian has notably been authored by those supportive of the Labor party. Social inclusion was part of Tony Nicholson’s (2007) commentary supportive of Labor policies. A defence of social inclusion by Mark Butler (2011) also appeared in The Australian. The partisan nature of support for framing policy in terms of social inclusion is demonstrated by the fact that the Coalition Commonwealth Government disbanded the Social Inclusion Unit on 18th September 2013, the same day that this new government was sworn in following their defeat of the incumbent Labor Party government. Yet, when Connecting Port
Melbourne was planning its social inclusion project, The Social Inclusion Agenda was part of national policy.

That talk of social inclusion generally opens a large role for the state is welcomed by some as a counter to the tendency of ‘social capital’ to be used in a way that assigns blame for suboptimal socio-economic conditions to those with the least (Blackshaw & Long 2005). Yet there is a strong body of evidence that those programs framed as addressing ‘marginalisation’ often themselves result in marginalisation. Cameron and Gibson (2005: 1), drawing on Annette Hastings’ work on discourse analysis, demonstrate how Australian urban regeneration and renewal programs, underpinned by a particular consensus about appropriate economic arrangements, place the state ‘in the role of the expert who devises and implements intervention programs, while those who live in these areas are expected to voluntarily cooperate in the “treatment”.’ Povinelli (2011) shows the Australian government enacting the economic marginalisation of particular people — some Indigenous Australians — to increase their control over decisions regarding how those people use resources.

Critical commentary in The Australian claims social inclusion is being used as a smokescreen (e.g. Owen 2011). Although, as with complaints from Janet Albrechtsen (2012) about the word ‘social’ being used as an artificial sweetener, it is the broader voting public that is said to be duped. Instead of a critique of statistical or anecdotal evidence of disadvantaged or socially excluded people, effacement is achieved through presenting any justification as conceptual trickery. Amartya Sen’s warning about the broad adaptability of ‘the language of exclusion (inclusion)’ was referenced in an evocatively titled article, ‘Social inclusion swindle’ (Pearson 2008). This is part of the broader configuration of sense in which certain people are perceived as able to be in a particular discursive space; even in calling for policy attention on social exclusion Swan (2005) spoke about rather than to any such population.

People who will be impacted on by The Social Inclusion Agenda have also been evoked in The Australian. However, there is so little attention given to the lived experience of anybody defined as needing social inclusion that ‘the people’ are everybody other than those suffering marginalisation. This is what is demonstrated when the name of the unit itself is played with, for comic effect, in headlines like ‘Social Inclusion Unit? Leave
me out’ (Furedi 2012), ‘Now all we need is a department to cover those left out by social inclusion’ (The Australian 2012), and ‘Minister still ‘excluded’ on job’ (Dunlevy 2012b). With the headline ‘Board’s travel bill reveals the cost of social inclusion’ (Dunlevy 2012a), The Social Inclusion Agenda is not considered against social mobility or claims of the moral and economic ‘cost’ associated by some with social exclusion. Instead, the mobility brought about and costs incurred are to do with the bodies of board members.

Social inclusion can be a call to incorporate all people within existing social order, and so avoid the calls of accepting difference through multiculturalism or redistributing resources to address material inequality. However, in positing that there are the included and the excluded, it also imposes social order. In Australia, this has largely taken the form of concerns about material disadvantage being reframed as concern about social exclusion. This resembles little the concerns I encountered in Port Melbourne about the perceived absence of people from Beacon Cove. Yet, just as in Port Melbourne, talk about social inclusion in Australia (including the strong criticism of the concept of social inclusion in The Australian) has overwhelmingly been premised on the perception that inclusion is good, while exclusion is bad.

**Connecting Port Melbourne**

Those who attended Connecting Port Melbourne meetings did not ask me for my thoughts on the concept of social inclusion, and I did not offer them. As discussed in Chapter 1, I take ethnographic research to be premised on equality and so it was not because I thought the meeting participants and I could understand each other. But this was, after all, a forum to share information and build relationships; the group was working not on analysing public discourse on social inclusion, but rather a ’social inclusion project’. The first Connecting Port Melbourne meeting I attended featured enthusiastic brainstorming about ‘participatory’ theatre and ‘hands-on’ arts projects. Talk eventually centred on a hands-on art project in which people from Port Melbourne would come together to represent local landmarks through a collage, mural or even a quilt. Although well aware that art projects are frequently used in community development (even in the City of Port Phillip, e.g. Gorjanicyn 2007), I was not sure if I
missed the link between social inclusion and landmarks or if the conversation had strayed from ‘social inclusion’ to representing Port Melbourne as a place through art.

As a participant in this group seeking to carry out a social inclusion project, and in this particular meeting (which was not following formal meeting procedures and where the floor was largely open to those present), I discursively distanced myself from other speakers and asked how they would ‘get from landmarks to social inclusion’. I was told you cannot just talk about social inclusion because it is not tangible for people, and also that social inclusion necessarily incorporates places in terms of how places are used and what they mean to people. Furthermore, I was told, coming together to talk about places is a way to foster social inclusion. My response was a ‘tongue-in-cheek’ comment, ‘What is trendy at the moment is mapping.’ My preface — ‘What is trendy …’ — did receive a bit of a laugh, with the word ‘trendy’ not one in common use in such circles. However, my mention of a mapping activity was taken up as a sensible suggestion. By the end of that meeting, my impression was that Connecting Port Melbourne was setting out to organise a large project with two components: a theatre of improvisation with audience participation and the collaborative production of a large fabric map of Port Melbourne which people would walk on to attach fabric squares they painted to represent landmarks in the suburb.

I did not feel comfortable as a participant or a researcher in the meeting, I did feel like an outsider. Overall, I was a ‘thin’ (as opposed to thick; cf Geertz 1972) ethnographer of, and participant in, meetings of Connecting Port Melbourne. My fieldnotes from the meeting are not particularly evocative and in them I recorded my assessment of the project as ambitious, resource intensive and lacking an audience. There were meetings I missed because I was (officially accidentally) dropped off the email list, but I was quick to use this to justify absence as if it was the excuse rather than the reason. The active Connecting Port Melbourne participants were people I had already come to know, and so I was able to background some of what I otherwise would have been struggling to hold in mind regarding small things like names, jobs, relationships to others in the setting and their own particularities of style. However, my existing relationships with these people may also have made it more difficult for me to engage in the type of tirade against their project that I have often directed at the concept of social inclusion. The people and the project offer a more complicated story than the contemptible consensus
politics I ascribe to the more abstract concept of social inclusion. Yet I simply assigned Connecting Port Melbourne and their project to the category of ‘social inclusion talk’, and that meant I did not feel the need to engage more substantially with the goals and strategies. Order is not interrupted if something or someone is assigned a space or role, even if that is to be ‘a problem’ (see Chapter 8). The existence of problems, the excluded or the absent are constitutive parts of, not invalidators of, social order.

However, I did attend the next meeting held after the one at which I made my comments about the trendiness of mapping. By then, the plan had changed. The ground-work had been done to merge the Connecting Port Melbourne project with another event — SkillsFest. This merger was introduced for ratification at the meeting as the only sensible thing to do given resources. The social inclusion project planned by Connecting Port Melbourne had been pared down, but it was still an exercise in which participants would attach landmarks to a map. The project was still supposed to be creative because, the meeting was told, they — Connecting Port Melbourne — would not mind if there were multiple lighthouses; an accurate representation of Port Melbourne’s physical environment was not the goal. The local councillor responded that she liked the approach of not minding if there are multiple beacons. What had been referred to as the lighthouses were actually the beacons of Beacon Cove — the little emblems of public history mentioned by Dovey (2005). Differently representing the physical structures of the suburb on a map was welcomed, but the local councillor was keen to have the correct name used for these physical structures. In a similar way to new residents of Port Melbourne receiving a flyer about the history of the area, people were invited to participate in Port Melbourne through adopting, or on, the terms taken to be sensible for describing the place and the people.

This mapping exercise went ahead. The street outline of the residential part of Port Melbourne, along with some parks in green, was drawn on the back of an old, pre-used banner. The banner was hung up on a wire fence during a community group showcase and a ‘have a try’ event held at the site of one of Port Melbourne’s churches and childcare centres. Multiples of the same image cut outs, such as a coffee cup, a cyclist and — of course — a beacon, were provided for people to attach to the map. People could participate in this mapping exercise — if they found it — but the map outline and
the landmarks to attach were provided. Connecting Port Melbourne had even declared what the mapping exercise with landmarks would achieve: social inclusion.

Port Melbourne did not end up being covered in beacons. In fact, the map was not popular and there were no interactions with the broader public to observe when I spent a bit of time talking with the volunteer assigned to the activity as she waited around. I felt I should not dwell by the unvisited map for too long: I had limited time to survey the event as I had my own volunteer shift to fill at a different stall and I could not even see the other activities from there. The volunteer and I agreed that this location for the mapping activity contributed to its unpopularity. From the other activities, you needed to walk through an open gate, around a corner and cross some asphalt.

My records of the map are inadequate, just as my fieldnotes from those Connecting Port Melbourne meetings are very thin. I took some photographs of the resulting map after it was taken down off the fence at the end of the day. My photographs are a better record of the shadows cast by the trees overhead than what was [not] recorded on the maps. It is hard to even see it in the shadows of the trees. It seemed silly and I probably felt my association with it was not to be celebrated. I thought I would chase up and more closely examine the map when I had more time, but I never did. Participants were given a framework in which to articulate a preset message but they did not articulate much and I made very little effort to record what was or was not made visible on the map. My interest in problematising ‘social inclusion’ sat uneasily with my participation in this project and so perhaps I struggled to articulate what I thought was a sensible account of it.

In the end two beacons were represented on the maps. While there was little else represented on the maps, it may well be that adding any more than are physically present would have been perceived as extraneous. The material world, it seems, mattered in what were treated as sensible descriptions and depictions of places in Port Melbourne. In my discussion of an imposed order, the estate of Beacon Cove was still able to be traced on a map or an aerial photograph with references to the material world. Yet the material world can be drawn on in very different accounts (as has occurred with different descriptions of Beacon Cove and as I discuss in greater detail in Chapter 5). Differing assessments of Beacon Cove as displacing or contributing to Port Melbourne
are possible and there is the potential that images of beacons or calls for social inclusion can be used to verify different claims. In Part III I go further in exploring this relationship between inclusion as order and inclusion as interruption.

The orders imposed on the world do shape it, as is demonstrated by the construction of the places we live (see Chapter 3). I have described Beacon Cove as displacing the Port Melbourne buildings that were previously on the site but also as added to Port Melbourne. The construction of Beacon Cove may have been deemed sensible, but it still interrupted the space of, and even my car trips as a child through, Port Melbourne. The beacons are old but they represent a newer housing estate in Port Melbourne and were endowed by Connecting Port Melbourne with the potential (or even the sympathetic magic) to work towards social inclusion.

Descriptions of what is treated as sensible can multiply out into countless alternative accounts (a configuration of sense is perhaps not so deterministic as I represented in Chapter 3). In theory, anybody could join me in offering countless alternatives (we are all already ‘emancipated spectators’ [Rancière 2009c]), but what is a landmark is not usually contested. For this reason, rather than offering more detailed close readings of the housing estates in Port Melbourne, it is how people talk of, write about, and represent places and people that has been my primary empirical focus in the chapters of Part I. In this chapter I have shown that talking about places, particularly when it conflates a space and a stereotyped identity — ‘talk of Beacon Cove’ — is a way to enact social order. In a similar way, talk of social inclusion in public policy discourse is most often a way to reassert the existing social order. The enactment of order leads to particular descriptions and actions being treated as sensible. But this order is only ever imposed on the world and the people by which it is inhabited.
Part II: Equality

The next two chapters, comprising Part II of the thesis, serve primarily to verify Rancière’s presupposition of the equality of intelligences. I thus present here a less linear introduction than that provided for Part I. The order I deemed sensible to impose on these chapters thus is more one of function than a justification for the empirical content that does or does not appear. As I argued in Part I, all order is underpinned by social order, so imposing order is imposing inequality. This means that while Part II may appear to only engage with small domains of life, the selection of which was not arbitrary but could have been made differently, the ramifications extend much further.

It is order that appears as sensible in day-to-day life, yet close enough inspection of any order shows it to be ridiculous. This was foreshadowed in Chapter 4. For example, the talk of people from Beacon Cove was less successful as a sensible ‘device’ in conversation when particular individuals were evoked; referring to particular individuals was useful not so much for illustrating order as for unsettling the meaning attached to ‘people from Beacon Cove’. Therefore, as I move my focus in Part II to particular stories and people I came to know and understand in Port Melbourne, the very orders that I presented as sensible in Part I are problematised.

In Part II, I analyse stories and characters of and in Port Melbourne, to reveal that even when people are perceived as unequal, the presupposition of the equality of intelligences is valid. In Chapter 5, I move through stories of particular photographs, particular objects and the narrative of a particular store, in doing so I show that all people have the capacity to learn. Then, for Chapter 6, my frame of analysis shifts to characters, allowing me to show up the difference between talk about, and the capacities demonstrated by, particular people. Even in my relatively short and selective accounts about these particular things and particular people, my own representations are undermined. So the imposed nature of all order (including such social order) is demonstrated in Part II by paying attention to how people always already have the capacity to enact equality, but also through the very impossibility of producing a narrative that accounts for everything.
Most importantly, I show that classifications of people are never just descriptions of difference; they impose inequality. Extending my demonstration of this regarding talk of people from Beacon Cove in Chapter 4, I demonstrate such imposition of inequality in regard to the unequal status given to some different social identities assigned in Port Melbourne and more broadly in Australia. However, I have promised to not only show the imposition of inequality, but also verify equality in Part II, and this I do in Chapter 5 when it comes to newcomers to the suburb and in Chapter 6 when it comes to older persons. The potential for people socially identified as members of these groups to demonstrate capacities that, based on this identification, they were not expected to have did not overturn the ordered world. My discussion of the potential for such interruption of order is largely held off until Part III.

What is demonstrated empirically in Chapter 5 is that when new arrivals, through learning the stories of Port Melbourne, enacted membership of the community of those who ‘know’ that place, they were simultaneously demonstrating the capacity to exceed the identity they had been accorded in the prevailing order. The characters I discuss in Chapter 6 do show capacities that exceed those designated as belonging to the category of older persons in which they were socially positioned. Yet social identifications, such as that of being an ‘older person’, still matter in Port Melbourne. I show how such identifications are not assigned based on a set of criteria against which capacity is universally evaluated but, rather, are co-opted into a broader binary classification of effective subjects/objects of care that operates in Port Melbourne.

The empirically grounded case that I make here for my Rancièrian presupposition of equality is an important aspect of the path that I set out. If the presupposition of the equality of intelligences is valid, then there is always the potential for the operation of social order to be interrupted. Just as the descriptions of some aspects of order in Port Melbourne offered in Part I can now be drawn on as I problematise these very orders here in Part II, my contribution to verifying the equality of intelligences helps provide the path that, in Part III, I take to illustrate the processes through which order is imposed and interrupted.
Chapter 5: Telling stories

Knowing Port Melbourne

How we represent the world matters. Representations of the world do not just partition, distribute or configure what is taken to be sensible because they are themselves perceived as sensible within a taken-for-granted order. So far, my accounts of these taken-for-granted orders in Port Melbourne has emphasised how they are underpinned by social order. Social order is imposed on the world. In Port Melbourne, ‘people from Beacon Cove’ is a classification of people represented as absent from the suburb. Although I have shown that this representation is challenged, in the examples I offered it was not people from Beacon Cove disputing their representation as absent. The people from Beacon Cove were conceivably undermining the claim of their absence by simply being present. Yet their physical presence was not necessarily perceived as such. A configuration of sense may shape who is where to some extent, but it is primarily who is seen that matters. Who gets to ‘see’ who is present in Port Melbourne?

In this chapter and Chapter 6, I set out an empirically grounded case for my Rancièrian presupposition of equality, with this chapter problematising the orders described in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4. Of course, this chapter still uses mechanisms of ordering, such as moving through stories of particular photographs, particular objects and then a particular narrative. However, even in my relatively short and selective accounts about these particular things, my own representations are undermined.

To jump ahead and introduce a character who plays a large role in Chapter 6, I thought that if anybody could speak for Port Melbourne, Pat could be counted among their number. So it surprised me one day when Pat told me she felt like she comes from Port Melbourne even though she wasn’t born in the area. She credited her identification with Port Melbourne because she would visit its places and see its stories there, even though the stories are ‘not hers’. I was surprised to hear her say they are not her stories because many of the stories visible to her in Port Melbourne are stories that involve her. She has been a key member of the historical society and the author of many books and pamphlets about Port Melbourne. Pat’s work has turned many images, log entries and verbal accounts into written texts and exhibitions. She has not only learnt about Port
Melbourne but also shaped it as a place. With much of her work directed at securing significant planning controls in the area and heritage projects in the area, Pat’s shaping of Port Melbourne reaches beyond the discursive.

In this chapter, I use how people in Port Melbourne see stories to show that people can enact the capacity to belong to the community of people who not only know, but also tell the stories of Port Melbourne. If stories exist within a configuration of sense, and so some — rather than all — are taken to be visible, then enacting membership of the community of those who know the stories is to enact not just belonging to a static order but a position from which to represent the world. (I account for why this is significant for then shaping the suburb in Chapter 8.) It is people who always have the capacity to ‘speak’ (Rancière 2010a: 32).

I use stories about Port Melbourne gathered through fieldwork. I offer these stories as a series of episodes — one at a time — not because they are independent of each other but because, even though they intersect, they never quite fit. Just as with the talk of Beacon Cove in Chapter 4, counts and accounts may contradict one another because they are only ever imposed on the world. The contradictions can be experienced as disorientating to a reader, and so here I chart a narrative my audience can use to navigate what follows. While I clearly have a conceptual argument about the equality of people that is fundamental to my thesis, and setting down some of what I have learnt about Port Melbourne is key to my empirical contribution to studies of place-based community, my aim is not to guard against alternative readings. The text is a particular type of thing but, like the photographs and other objects discussed in this chapter, it does not have capacities outside of those that people enact.

After considering in more general terms how photographs may be used to reveal, interrupt or maintain order, I introduce a photograph of the City of Port Melbourne from the local historical society’s collection. A photograph captioned and catalogued as one of the City of Port Melbourne (an institution that no longer functions as an administrative body), it is a photograph of people, the tally of whom is unclear. Using it to pose questions that have no easy answers, I get closest to offering a definition of the concept of community: a community where people can enact their equality is necessarily one in which the count and identities remain unclear. The photograph exists
whether or not stories about it are told, but I argue there functioned in Port Melbourne a community of people who could tell the stories of Port Melbourne. Telling these stories allow people to enact their membership in this community, and so belonging in this sense required the capacity to learn the stories. As follows from the presupposition of the equality of intelligences, it is not possible to prove that anybody lacks capacity to learn and so potentially anybody could belong. The stories I discuss in this chapter also demonstrate the contingency of partitions between physical spaces and moments in time.

In describing how Beacon Cove could be distinguished from Port Melbourne (see Chapter 4), I have already posed questions about the role of evidence in ascribing boundaries or borders. Within the broader configuration of sense, not everybody is included in the community of people who can tell the stories of Port Melbourne. However, questions regarding community, belonging and representation are not considered by me alone and, to work with some of this questioning I encountered in fieldwork, I include part of an email received from the local councillor. Her email included the story of a family discovering the story of their house. The family used items left behind by the previous resident to verify the story. While people can demonstrate the capacity to learn the stories of Port Melbourne (as a way of enacting belonging in the place), things do not have the same narrative capacity. As the objects did not tell a story, the story I tell about this email and the house illustrates equality as enacted by anybody, not anything.

The telling of stories is used by people across each of these episodes to enact their belonging to a community of people who know about Port Melbourne. Although never overturning the administrative order of legal property ownership, those who use these stories to offer alternative accounts of Port Melbourne interrupt (at least at times) processes of accounting for how the social and built environments should be that are premised on a strong public-private distinction.

Although the stories below about people enacting their membership in the community of Port Melbourne explore what it is like to share a suburb with other people, they unsettle rather than improve definitions of community. Even within the stories, counts
and accounts contradict one another because the orderings they represent are only ever imposed on the world.

**Photographs**

As described in Chapter 4, one person looking at the “Life in Port Phillip” old photographs exhibition said that it was as if the people from Beacon Cove had erased their past. I felt that, given the way the photography exhibition was presented, the photographs of those living in Beacon Cove were not really invited because chances were that the past of these people had not been lived in the City of Port Phillip. This could be an example of interpellation, whereby particular people hear themselves as called forward (Althusser 2012). I presumed that what the photographs depicted would be treated as mattering. I presumed that others would operate within the same broader of configuration of sense I discerned in selecting which photographs to submit (or if to submit any at all). In Chapter 7 I will return to the processes through which the imposition of order is achieved. However, what appears noteworthy here is that, for someone whose thesis is that people are equal, I have offered a remarkably long verification of the operation and the enactment of order.

The presupposition of the equality of intelligences is the presupposition that people have the capacity to learn. Language offers a stand-out example of rules being both constraining and useful (Graeber 2015), but a language is viable only while it is being acted on by people (e.g. Deleuze & Guattari 1987). However, the broader configuration of sense in which it makes sense to talk of community in Port Melbourne is demonstrated in more than the words people use to describe the place. Stedman et. al (2014: 113) claim that, when it comes to ‘studying place meanings and attachments’, visual approaches have been under used. Irving (2011) demonstrates that photographic methods can build narratives that the researcher did not anticipate. I found that, in Port Melbourne, people were using visual technologies like photographs to both represent and learn about their suburb. Rather than claiming photography as a research method for specialists, it is the presence and use of photographs by those living in Port Melbourne that I am interested in here. Moments and spaces can be made visible with the use of photographs.
Photographs can be used to capture moments considered special. Boswell (2015) offers the example of an eel crossing a road. The presence of an eel on land should, in theory, not be treated as ridiculous in its own right. However, it is not just because Boswell is writing about New Zealand that roads are considered a space for cars and not eels. The photograph of the eel crossing the road interrupts our taken-for-granted perception of what roads are for. We can attribute the wide circulation of the image to its disruptive potential: what the photo shows is unexpected. Whether an image is taken to reinforce existing order or presents an alternative order as sensible, however, is impossible to say in the abstract (Rancière 2009c: 72-73).

Photographs have been discussed as a particular technology perhaps most famously by Walter Benjamin (1980). Photographs can be kept and referred to over time. This means that old photographs can be used to manifest – render visible – differences between then and now, whether or not this is what the photographer or archivist intended. While people in Port Melbourne have used photography to capture images of sites before they change, there are also many photographs employed in narratives that were not taken with the intention of being used that way. Yet, I found in Port Melbourne that the historical society’s archiving of old photographs and the society’s selection and display of some of these images in public and private spaces occurred within an existing social order. My experience of working with photographs in Port Melbourne is therefore different to Boswell’s (2015) account because I make no suggestion that there are two worlds in operation but, rather, I argue that order is only ever imposed. The processes of ordering and interrupting order are carried out by people.

Photographs had a special position in Port Melbourne’s historical society; all photographs offered were automatically accepted into the collection, regardless of source or subject. In contrast, other objects offered were considered and sometimes rejected by the acquisition committee. Although the expectation was that photographs offered were connected to Port Melbourne’s places or people, they were automatically catalogued. Partly pre-populated hard copy forms expedited the cataloguing process.

The historical society was open to the public on Tuesday mornings. One week, a woman who lived in a converted pub visited looking for old photographs of her house. She had planter boxes either side of her front door but these were no longer permitted; the new
footpath trading regulations prohibited objects protruding into the line along which buildings met the footpath. As I discuss further in Chapter 7, these regulations were justified largely on grounds of equal access for the mobility or vision impaired. The woman visiting the historical society wanted to keep her planter boxes and was challenging the order issued to her by a council officer to remove the planter boxes. She suggested that she could add ‘tactile strips’ to alert vision impaired pedestrians to the objects. She claimed, moreover, that the planter boxes mattered because they contributed to the public realm by creating a ‘sense of address’ for the historic building.

She thought that it was sensible and desirable for the planter boxes to be retained. Therefore, it was unsurprising that when she sought out ‘evidence’ in the form of old photographs of the building she expected it to support her case. Of all the photographs of pubs in Port Melbourne in the early 20th century, none showed planter boxes outside. In fact, it was rare any vegetation to be visible on the streets of the Port Melbourne ‘township’ area (the area first developed for housing and industry). In this situation it appeared that making visible the history of a building was not to argue for it to be restored to its earlier appearance. In fact, this woman did not try to argue that the planter boxes were part of what the building had been but, rather, argued that they were a way of drawing attention to the building now. If she was aware of the gap between how things were in the past and what she thought looked good, she would not be alone. (For example, as I discussed in Chapter 3, the Garden City resident with the nice window frames made sure that the other resident who complimented her knew that she knew such window frames would not be permitted now.) The woman wanting to retain the window boxes premised her argument on a sense that, as a special building, her home deserved special treatment in the form of planter boxes. Images may be used to verify accounts, but they are unlikely to interrupt people’s projects.

In Chapter 4, I described the newcomers from Beacon Cove as absent from the “Life in Port Phillip” old photographs exhibition’ organised by the City of Port Phillip for the 2011 Seniors’ Week. Many newcomers to Port Melbourne were interested in old photographs. As with those moving into Edwards’ (1998) fieldsite wanting ‘a bit of history’ or Zukin’s (2010) account of the popularisation of ‘authenticity’ as a style in city resulting in history as a marketable quality for a place, an interest in the past was shown by many people who had recently moved into Port Melbourne. This often
translated into displaying old photographs. Displayed in the foyer of an apartment
development, in what had been an industrial building on a bank of the lagoon, was a
photograph of this now filled-in lagoon.\footnote{My attention was directed towards this photograph when I was on one of the City of Port Phillip
sponsored walking tours, guided by the then local councillor Janet Bolitho.}

Although not a weekly occurrence, Port Melbourne residents did at times visit the
historical society looking for old photographs of Port Melbourne for no other project
than seeking something to display in their home. One visitor lived in a unit that was part
of a development on the site previously occupied by the Swallows and Ariel biscuit
factory. She wanted a photograph of the factory to frame and give to her husband as a
birthday present. Such an image could re-inscribe what had been replaced, and so make
changes visible in the area. By making visible what their apartment building had
displaced, the residents can be shown to be complicit in this displacement. However,
this woman was not suggesting that her and her husband should not be living in this
space which had been a biscuit factory.

Other visitors, who lived in apartments that had replaced factories or a school, were not
concerned whether or not the photograph they displayed was of the particular site now
occupied by their home. Images such as those by Charles Nettleton were popular and so
well known that many volunteers knew ‘the Nettleton series’ by name. Such an image
of the area can draw attention to the contingency of the current built environment; it had
been different and it could be different. However, a general image like this can also
enact a different order in which the images do not communicate the loss of a particular
building. One particular image shows the bridge over the now filled-in lagoon with the
gasometers in the background. The images of a desolate area with the polluting
gasworks can allow the differences between then and now to be read as development
rather than displacement. Displaying old photographs is not only a way of making
visible what is no longer there. These narratives, however, are selected. While
photographs such as Nettleton’s image of gasworks can be interpreted as demonstrating
how changes to the area were building up the place rather than destroying what was
there, nobody treated the earlier watercolours by members of the Liardet family of the
area before it was deforested in the same way.
The historical society volunteers could have avoided a great deal of work by directing many visitors to such iconic images of the general area. While those volunteers knew the location of many of the iconic images by heart, using the catalogue to find an image of a particular, particularly a more obscure, site was difficult. Catalogued information about photographs does reflect what the cataloguer would anticipate would be of value, but you cannot write down every single thing. Moreover, only that information known about the provenance and subject of each photograph could be recorded in the first place. I found it to be a particularly challenging task to catalogue photographs if I had not been provided with a description of who, what and/or where were being depicted and/or when the photograph was taken. And yet the volunteers, whether cheerfully or expressing frustration at the large amount of work to be done, sought out for visitors the particulars rather than just generic images.

After the manager of one of Port Melbourne’s pubs visited to see if he could find photographs of old Port Melbourne sport teams to replace some of the generic posters, that stated ‘Have a Guinness’, in his pub, one of the volunteers explained to me that he did not understand they would not be able to help him. Although the historical society had many photographs of old sports teams in their collection, this particular pub never had its own team. The pub manager did not really mind, and perhaps did not even realise that early sports clubs in Port Melbourne were associated with businesses such as pubs. While the manager thought he was making his pub more ‘local’ by replacing the posters used in pubs across Melbourne with photographs from the suburb, the volunteers thought that the appropriate history to re-inscribe in that building was one captured by photographs of sports teams from that particular pub.

There are different opinions, among people in Port Melbourne, as to what were appropriate images to display, and what stories should be told by the images. As Berger (1972: 10) asserts, ‘although every image embodies a way of seeing [of the person who created it], our perception or appreciation of an image depends also upon our own way of seeing.’ There were different logics at work in how photographs were used and treated. But quite consistent was the way people enrolled the images in existing projects. Consistent with the representations mobilised in the conversations I discussed in Chapter 4, it was the project of Port Melbourne’s historical society that was most likely to be treated as that of representing a Port Melbourne community.
City of Port Melbourne

By taking a closer look at the accounts presented by equality to community we shall see the image of the single great body crumble, and encounter all the deficit and discord which ensure that the community of equals can never materialize without some cement plugging the cracks in the image, without some obligation to keep tallying members and ranks and retranslating the terms of the formula. (Rancière 1995a: 65)

Last photograph of the City of Port Melbourne

One photograph appears as particularly useful for my project of telling stories that evoke Port Melbourne community without offering a definition. This is a photograph billed as being of the City of Port Melbourne. In the ‘last’ photograph of the City of Port Melbourne, four dogs and around 285 people are gathered outside the Port Melbourne Town Hall on Saturday 26th June 1994. Most of the people are looking towards John Kirby, the photographer, who was standing in a cherry picker to take the photograph as
part of an afternoon of activities organised as a wake for the city. The City of Port Melbourne no longer exists as an administrative body. Since local councils across Victoria were amalgamated by the state government in 1994 (for discussion of Victorian amalgamations see Alexander 2012; Boyle 2001; Dollery & Crase 2004).

The City of Port Melbourne encouraged residents to be part of the photograph through means such as circulating a flyer with the invitation, ‘Council invites all citizens to come along and take part in the last photo of the city’ (text on a handbill held in the PMHPS collection). However, the official date that The City of Port Melbourne was dissolved and the City of Port Phillip came into being was the 22nd June 1994, four days before the photograph. Would it be a different photograph if it was taken while the City of Port Melbourne still existed?

When I describe this photograph as being of the City of Port Melbourne, I am joining the organisers by equating the City with the people. Is this conflation justified? Should the dogs be included in this? The photograph is not of everybody who lived in Port Melbourne – 285 people would have been under 4% of the suburb's population at the time. As I know that at least one person in the photograph no longer lived in Port Melbourne at the time, not all of these 285 people were actually residents of the City. Are the right people in the photograph? The historical society has a list of the names of 150 of the people in the photograph. This list of names has been collected after the photograph was printed. Yet some people cannot be recognised in the photograph and remain unnamed. Can those who are not recognised still be included in the count?

Each copy of this photograph in the historical society’s collection, and the key for the list of names, is numbered as an item and has a description stored in the historical society’s catalogue. These descriptions provide information about the production of this image:

The photo was commissioned by the City of Port Melbourne and shot by photographer John Kirby from the height of a cherry picker positioned beside the former Quinn’s Hotel. Prints were sold at the Town Hall.

(PMHPS catalogue entry for item 730.01 – see image of item above)

Yet the accuracy of some of the information can be called into question, with that catalogue entry claiming the photograph was taken on the 24th June, instead of the 26th
June. To consider this photograph as it is treated in the historical society collection can remind us that the passage of time is not just about loss of memory or distortion of the story; more names can still be gathered and errors spotted. Does the existence and revisiting of records address the attrition of memory with time?

These questions are not just about archives and records; accounts of the world at any particular moment can be used to account for how the world should be. The City of Port Melbourne ceased to exist, but a photograph claiming to be of the City of Port Melbourne was able to be taken a few days later, suggesting it was not able to be erased.

It is possible to point out the mismatch in dates, who is and is not there, and that the event was organised by people in particular roles within Port Melbourne, and that the image is described as a photograph of something that administratively did not even exist anymore. However, even with the gaps multiplying as I advance my description of it, ‘this last photograph of the City of Port Melbourne’ can be used to make visible something quite different to questions of representation and accuracy. This is democratic community, a community that is always to be constituted or constructed (Davis 2013).

This photograph can be used to challenge any criteria imposed for being an equal part of the community of Port Melbourne, because who is excluded from the count quickly becomes difficult to say. Returning to the start of my description, even the count of 285 in the photograph was an approximation. There is the odd partly hidden figure making it difficult to tell if everybody has been counted or if somebody has been missed. There are people included who could have been excluded by the criteria of residence in the suburb. There are people absent who lived in Port Melbourne at the time — but, as some of those in the photograph remain unnamed, perhaps they were there and just have not been recognised. To close down these disputes, to offer an exhaustive count rather than a motivated account, is to close down democracy (Rancière 1995a: 98). But this ‘closing down’ can always be interrupted by paying attention to the details. Descriptions of the photograph may draw on many taken for granted understandings of what identities are part of the community. However, the photograph also allows these understandings to be extended and reconfigured. As I stated in Chapter 2, according to Rancière (2009b: 61-62), ‘[t]his is what the democratic process implies: the action of
subjects who, by working the interval between identities, reconfigure the distributions
of the public and the private, the universal and the particular.’ The grievances,
disagreements and the always existing potential for any shared dialogue to be shown to
be contingent may interrupt any unified account of Port Melbourne as a place and a
people. This is because there is always the potential for equality to be enacted in, and so
interrupt, any order. As Rancière describes in the epigraph used above, ‘a community’
can only exist through the work undertaken to make it appear as such. What appears
visible within a partition of the sensible is never the totality of what one can potentially
see.

If community is a classification then there is the need to continually re-tally the
members. This is not the result of the faulty definition of the community boundaries, but
rather because the always existing potential for somebody else to assert membership,
thereby redrawing the line between inclusion and exclusion. When it comes down to it,
Port Melbourne is a place. That it refers to a geographic space means that people can
literally enter it, even if they are discursively excluded. That the borders need to be
policing suggests that those who are being excluded could, at least in theory, gain entry
otherwise. In other words, finding that people are being excluded verifies that otherwise
they could join and be counted as present.

**Pins**

The tallying of community was often implied in the stories people told me, like that in
an email I received from the local councillor.

A further detail: one of the young families on the walk are now living in
Norah [sic] Howard's house on the corner of Poolman/Crichton. I am not
sure if you ever met Norah, but she was a legend of the historical society.
She was an accomplished dressmaker who had had her own shop. She
started work in dressmaking as a very young teenager. She didn't just make
dresses — she made gowns. It turns out that the family have found pins
everywhere especially in the room Norah must have used for a sewing
room, so they had more or less worked out that she was someone who
sewed. They were so interested in her — and I think as a consequence might
keep the old fence that until then they were planning to remove. (Personal
correspondence)

In the analysis offered in the email, the pins — objects — played a part in making
Nora/Norah visible in the present. The family living in the house was aware of the pins
before being told about the past resident. The history offered was congruent with finding pins in their house. The pins in their own right did not tell a story about Nora. Even the assumption of a previous resident as having sewed was created by the new residents. As Walter Benjamin observed, ‘[h]istory decomposes into images, not into narratives’ (cited by Buck-Morss 1993: 313). It was only through the new residents being told and listening to something of the story of Nora that these pins were able to be part of the historical narrative of the house visible in the present. The pins were one way that the new owners of the house could verify the story, and so they matter. If a story is to be convincing, it must make sense within the existing context. Not too much must be left for the storyteller to have to convince her audience of.

The email expressed high hopes for the fence being retained. Those countless moments in which a pin was dropped inside a house, or put aside never to be retrieved by the dressmaker, would not usually be visible from the footpath. However, if they then played a role in the retention of the fence, they could be described as implicated in the street-scape’s resulting appearance. It was when the previous resident became visible that the new owners perceived the fence as having heritage significance that made it sensible to retain the fence.

Retaining the fence would comply with the requirements set out in the heritage guidelines. As changes may have been knocked back by council officers when the necessary permit was applied for, retaining the fence might not have been the new resident’s decision to make. However, the email featured enthusiastic reporting of it as a hopeful sign. One explanation could be that Port Melbourne may be inhabited by new people, but they would be inhabiting a suburb where Nora’s old fence still bounded that house. This may be all the more noticeable because these fences would be unlikely to be considered attractive by many people. Garden City’s original fences were low post and wire constructions. Perhaps the disconnect between a post and wire fence and the high house prices in the area would encourage people to consider the history of the estate. In such a way, the fence could be understood as part of a context in which the uninitiated could be prompted to ask questions, but a fence does not itself tell a story as to what it means.
I discussed in Chapter 2 why I do not join those who criticise the presupposition of equality being extended only to people in the work of Rancière. It makes little sense in this story of Nora to speak of the pins wanting to have the fence saved. The pins ended up on the floor in all likelihood by accident and it seems absurd to suggest that anybody, never mind the pins, ever intended that they save the old fence from removal. They did serve a purpose they were not designed for, to the new residents and those who had the story about Nora to tell. Perhaps I am guilty of the anti-materialism of which Miller (2010: 76-77) accuses social science. However, in my account here, the pins function as an index of human activity. It was through not just the existence of a story, but also the telling of that story, that the house could be located in a broader socio-historical context. Telling the new residents about the previous resident placed other Port Melbourne people in a position of authority; it was now their story to tell. It was their ‘place’ to tell this story because they knew about the space. The existence of stories to learn in order to be a member of the community who know the stories of Port Melbourne shows that community is not democratic in the sense outlined by Rancière (1999; 2007; 2009b) of democratic qualification to rule being based on the absence of qualification.

Existing Port Melbourne people may not have any control over who purchases houses in Port Melbourne, but they were able to enact their role as tellers of the stories of those houses. Their role as storytellers does set them apart. Once the story was told, however, the new residents could also be counted amongst those Port Melbourne people who can tell the story about Nora the dressmaker. Through reading the local councillor’s email, even I was able to learn to see Nora as part of the history of that house. Therefore nobody is completely excluded from potentially becoming a member of the community who knows the story of Nora. This example demonstrates the universal capacity for people to learn stories that may not have otherwise belonged to them. Learning these stories is a means through which people can challenge their exclusion from a community — in this case, the community of Port Melbourne people who know the place. Of course, these stories can be appropriated to achieve ends other than the one for which they were told. The pins, on their own, would not have protected the fence or demanded the recognition of Nora’s past presence in the house.

The death of the woman who used to live in the house could be understood as the loss of a Port Melbourne person. However, through the new residents coming to know a little
about her, the continued recognition of the social identity of this now deceased woman may mean she continued to be counted as a Port Melbourne person. Although speaking about somebody who is no longer alive may seem to be the ultimate way of treating a person as an object, that Nora was an active subject has also been made visible. Even though the pins were unlikely to have been intentionally discarded for discovery by future residents, Nora’s actions that resulted in the pins remaining behind made her presence visible to the next residents. The new residents could not know the story directly through the pins. But, once the story was told, it could be ‘pinned down’ through these objects. Arguably, the existence of the pins in the first place is what resulted in the residents listening for the story about the previous resident who had left them.

Yet, within the broader configuration of sense in which my accounting for the operation of this story about the pins operates, social recognition is granted a privileged position. It was not just a matter of newcomers learning particular stories to enact membership in an existing community of people who knew the stories of Port Melbourne, the ongoing operation of this story identifying Nora with the house or as a Port Melbourne person relied on recognition being extended by people beyond the local councillor. (The significance of such recognition will be further demonstrated in Chapter 8.) The story of this family can offer hope to somebody such as the local councillor, because the new residents were willing to recognise the significance of the found pins, to learn enough about the previous resident to recognise her as a Port Melbourne person, and to recognise the fence as having heritage value. Social order underpins the operation of these stories in how people understand Port Melbourne, and so how these stories (or the written guidelines discussed in Chapter 3) are implicated in what actions on the built environment are treated as sensible.

**Faram Brothers**

Faram Brothers had been a hardware store on Bay Street ‘forever’ (by Australian colonial-settlement standards). One resident even reported that the wonderful Port Melbourne hardware stores, such as Faram Brothers, were how she knew where Port

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44 This does not diminish the value of drawing on Latourian actor network theory methods (Latour 2005), particularly if concepts of ‘heritage’ and ‘belonging to the community of people who know the stories of Port Melbourne’, as well as things such as the fence and a population of people, are included in a mapping exercise.
Melbourne was before moving there. The hardware store had closed before I started my fieldwork, but it was often mentioned in my presence. It was common for Faram Brothers to be described to me as a hardware store where they would fix your shopping jeep\(^45\) wheel on the spot and only charge you for the bolt. Faram Brothers had been part of the commercial and social geography of many people in the area. It was one of the sites people thought of as making up Port Melbourne.

When the store was closing down, it was no secret. A filmmaker with ties to the area recorded the last days of business, the street party held to celebrate the shop, and the auction of the building. The resulting documentary — Anderson (2010), *The Last of the Independents* — includes interviews with the staff and footage of many Port Melbourne people who had visited Faram Brothers on its last day. The documentary provides enough background information to suggest that the closure of the store was inevitable in the face of a changing retail sector, dominated by large companies, and a changing Port Melbourne, where their commercial customers had moved out of the area in response to Port Melbourne’s deindustrialisation and rising property values. Changes in broader patterns of consumption and land use were experienced personally by Port Melbourne residents through the closure of Faram Brothers, as it was no longer possible to visit this store to have a wobbly shopping jeep wheel fixed or even just a chat. Although the Faram Brothers hardware store no longer operated as a business, it continues to be spoken about as making the Port Melbourne community visible. Furthermore, these positive reminiscences about ‘the’ Port Melbourne community define it as generous, helpful and friendly.

Faram Brothers hardware store, as I encountered the store in fieldwork, can be fruitfully interrogated with the aid of Foucault’s (1986; 1994) concept of the heterotopia\(^46\). These are differently ordered spaces that sit in contrast to the other spaces of the society in which they are found. Foucault presented heterotopias as a function of classification in language, before then presenting them as material spaces (Harvey 2000: 537). With heterotopias being real spaces (not utopias) that exist in relation to all other space in the

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45 Shopping jeeps are trolleys (a basket, or perhaps a large bag held up with a frame, on wheels) that a person can push in front of or pull behind them to carry items. They hold a privileged position in the self-image of some long-time Port Melbourne residents. Shopping jeeps were even mentioned in earlier media on the suburb (‘You know how you tell a real Port person? They have the right shopping jeep.’ The Age Weekend 1984)

46 This is unrelated to the use of the word ‘heterotopia’ by Rancière (2010b: 20).
culture in which it is found (Foucault 1986: 27), the concept engenders reflection on
how this space may function within the broader configuration of sense I have described
operating in Port Melbourne. Saldanha (2008: 2084) describes heterotopology as ‘a kind
of geographical structuralism, or even functionalism, dealing with the work parts do in
sustaining the whole.’ This criticism may seem particularly injurious for the concept’s
coopitation into my project; with social order underpinning all the order I have been
describing as imposed on the people and place of Port Melbourne, the potential always
exists for the functioning of any order to be interrupted (see Chapter 6). However, rather
than just presuming a totality, as Saldanha (2008) suggests the concept does, the
approach can be used to understand how a totality is constructed so that the loss of the
store can be treated as the loss of Port Melbourne. This construction, I argue, is largely a
social project. Yet, as pointed to by Povinelli (2011: 7), the sites that function as
heterotopias are implicated in social projects along with ‘concepts, materials, and
forces’. As it pulls together all that is treated as sensible to observe and comment on, it
follows the logic of ‘the police’ — the processes that I return to demonstrate the
functioning of in Chapter 7 (see also Chapter 2). Even so, heterotopology is a powerful
method of critique (Hook & Vrdoljak 2002). In looking for the demonstration of
heterotopias as already existing, rather than leaving it to political theorists to envision a
utopia (Mendel 2011), it is consistent with the approach regularly taken by Rancière of
finding the logic of equality already at work, rather than a property to be introduced in
an imagined future (see Chapter 2).

As I did little to initiate or direct conversations on the topic, the accounts I heard of
Faram Brothers were configured by what those who spoke about it in my presence
treated as worthy of remark. A presumed familiarity with the archetype of chainstore
hardwares owned by large corporations appeared to form the assumed knowledge
against which comparisons could be made. As it was explained in countless
conversations to me and other people presumed to be unfamiliar with the store, Faram
Brothers hardware was somewhere you could find ‘anything’. (It was not the same as
the big chains in which a customer could not find the location of what they were looking
for.) You could purchase small items individually, rather than in packs of 50. Bills were
added up on scrap paper from old telephone books. The staff would help you not just
with advice, but might fix something (such as the often mentioned shopping jeep wheel)
then and there for you. This utopian description of a place where you could get your
problems solved and nothing went to waste could be labelled as nostalgic. This does not require that recollections of the store be always positive: ‘[e]ven horrendous memories can evoke nostalgia’ (Lowenthal 1985: 7). Traces of economic and social hardship can be found in the description of this hardware store; it implies customers only able to afford the two nails required for the job, and with nobody living at home or next door who could fix their shopping jeep wheels for them. These particular hardships had often not been experienced by those who told me about Faram Brothers during the time it was open.47 This, however, might not reduce the likelihood of them being nostalgic for the possibility of going into such a store if ‘[w]hat pleases the nostalgist is not just the relic but his own recognition of it, not so much the past itself as its supposed aspirations, less the memory of what actually was than of what was once thought possible’ (Lowenthal 1985: 8).

Many people who told me about the hardware store had only visited it once, if at all. As with the newcomers to Port Melbourne learning the story of Nora, this did not stop people from learning to talk about the store. When Faram Brothers no longer existed as a business, it was available to be imagined in a way disconnected from the demands of service and payment. In the jumble of items on shelves and messy demands of being a store and a place to belong, consistent with the definition Foucault (1986: 27) offers for heterotopias, it was able to be understood as a more perfect space than others (see also Wesselman 2013). However, it had existed as a real space which people did enter and out of which exited shopping jeeps able to be pulled or pushed once again: heterotopias are different from utopias because they are real spaces.

The closure of Faram Brothers had an impact on people who purchased items at the store, as well as those who dropped in to socialise. But it was not just the loss of the store as a business or a social space that was spoken about; the material space the store had occupied was also considered significant. At one historical society meeting I attended, somebody stood up to describe how the building previously occupied by the hardware store had been gutted, with just the front wall, windows and veranda posts left. The person reporting this was clearly distressed. The retention of the front walls

47 My predominately female, widowed interlocutors had not necessarily relied on their husbands at the time for such tasks, but I was being told about this hardware store by people involved in local activities, and so who did not appear to have a history of social isolation or extreme economic hardship (see also Barnes, Harrison & Murray 2011).
and veranda posts was lamented as facadism by many people, although in later conversations somebody else explained that there was not much to keep as there was only a shed behind that facade. As the street front was retained, this distress cannot be explained solely as an expression of people not wanting the look of Bay Street’s buildings to change. There was a sense of loss associated not just with the closure of the hardware store years before, but also with this new assault on the building it once occupied. The internal configuration of the space itself was treated as important. In remembering the store, people spoke about the way things were stacked on the shelves. The very mishmash of screws in little boxes on the tall shelves were missed. It was as if the loss of the space inside the building mattered. Even though, with the closure of the shop, Faram Brothers did not exist as a commercial entity to walk into, people still treated that space as significant and its loss as a loss for, and a constitutive part of, Port Melbourne.

Following Foucault’s (1986: 25) third principle for heterotopias, Faram Brothers was able to juxtapose spaces that are incompatible. Although a business, it can be mobilised as a critique of neoliberalism to the extent it made visible the possibility for different logics to exist. The trade orders made by businesses effectively subsidised the store for other customers. While there were staff and customers, there was also a sense of belonging. This came across in the documentary about the closing of the store (Anderson 2010). The historical society held a documentary screening and, during what is better described as a whole room conversation than a question and answer session afterwards, one man described how his son came to work at Faram Brothers: the young man was employed there not because the manager was looking for new staff but because the young man was looking for a job. The store had been a business, but its presence in discourse also revealed its status as standing in for much more.

When the building was sold, nobody expected it to be reopened as another hardware store. This site was part of a ‘mixed use zone’, and so could be used for commercial and/or residential purposes. While there is no serious questioning of the existence of zoning laws in Victoria, for residents or government to specify that the property continue to fill the role of supplying hardware or providing a place for people to socialise would violate the principles of a free market. Precedent set by nearby premises suggested that this would become the site for an apartment development. The
construction of apartments was expected to add to the population of Port Melbourne through increasing housing stock for private sale. Furthermore, apartments are a particular type of housing stock and so could be expected to be occupied by particular types of households. Changing the building once occupied by Faram Brothers to an apartment building would further contribute to the broader changes occurring in Port Melbourne — the continuation of capitalist development.

The demolition of everything behind the front facade meant any other use of the site would lack more than the mishmash of screws in little boxes on the tall shelves. Future uses of the building would not respond to the internal configuration of what was once the store and were not even going to be contained by its roof, resulting in a second symbolic loss. The space was privately owned and so the public had no right to demand that a new owner or tenant adapt their activities around the existing configuration of space inside the building. Yet some people in, or who claimed a connection to, the suburb of Port Melbourne voiced the demand anyway.

This was not the only time that people demonstrated an attachment to spaces they could not enter or even see. One of the grandest houses in the old township area of Port Melbourne was largely gutted as part of renovations. Not only was the facade retained, but so were most of the external walls. However, as explained to me by Pat, the unusual floor plan with a smattering of small rooms was lost. She, and everybody else, can still walk past the building, but the people who now inhabit the building will not go about their lives around the walls set out over a century ago. Pat had never lived in that house and she had only entered the building once but, according to her, the maze of rooms mattered. The unusual floor plan of this house, and the shed behind the veranda poles and window frames of the closed down hardware store, are not spaces people could expect to spend time in the future. The configuration of these spaces were still spoken about as if they mattered, demonstrating that people’s attachments extend beyond spaces they can physically occupy. (Which contrasts with the VCAT decision cited in Chapter 3, whereby it was suggested existing properties needed to be modified to fit around the expected lifestyles of the anticipated newcomers to the suburb.)

Stories, about inside the building that was once Faram Brothers hardware or the layout of an old house, can be used to indicate knowledge about what was there. A screw — a
mere object — can no longer be obtained through this shop which no longer exists, but
to share stories of Faram Brothers indicates a shared history in the group. Expressing
concern about the loss of the inside of the building can be understood as indicating
knowledge of how it was before, and so of identifying with a community which ‘knew’
Faram Brothers. Such claims to knowledge can be understood as indicating that you
belong to the space and the space belongs to you. Conversations where stories rely on
such shared understandings could enact a claim of belonging to a group of people who
know these things. They can act as abbreviating icons indicating broader shared
experience.

Claims to knowledge also criticise what might otherwise be accepted as ‘expert
knowledge’. Current accepted heritage practices were often treated, by people in Port
Melbourne, as inadequate for retaining what was considered meaningful (also see
Chapter 3). Even the documentary about the last days of the Faram Brothers hardware
store included a few little digs at the heritage movement. In one scene it is revealed that
council officers obliged the hardware store owners to paint the veranda poles subdued
‘heritage colours’, although in the past these had always been fire engine red to attract
customers.48 The telling of the story about the veranda posts seeks to demonstrate that it
is not the heritage ‘experts’ who ‘know’ Port Melbourne.

I do not think, however, that these stories can be written off as grandstanding about who
knows more history. As I have already demonstrated, it is possible for people to learn
the stories that are considered history. I learnt a lot about Faram Brothers when people
shared their distress with each other over the gutting of the building. Johnson (2006: 84)
argues,

Heterotopias draw us out of ourselves in peculiar ways; they display and
inaugurate a difference and challenge the space in which we may feel at
home. These emplacements exist out of step and meddle with our sense of
interiority.

The stories that evoked the shelves, and were at times evoked by the loss of the shelves,
made me want to be there in the hardware store. While I have described discursive
representations of Faram Brothers, the material site mattered. Physical space, in my
analysis, is always configured (see Chapter 4). This is not to argue against descriptions

48 Clearly a standard definition of ‘heritage colours’ was used by council officers in setting this
requirement, rather than research into this particular building’s history.
of heterotopias as ordered and disordered (Rodman 1992), but rather to conceive of
disorder as not the condition of space pre-ordering. Instead, and perhaps this is what
Foucault (1994) can be read as saying in his claim that all people have an experience of
order (as discussed in Chapter 4), it is a certain type of ordering.49

The more I learnt about Faram Brothers, the more I came to ‘see’ and experience the
loss of a particular sociality I had never even experienced in Port Melbourne. This
sociality was forged through — not just the prerequisite for — social recognition
through kind service, the protection offered through stable retail employment, and the
equalising practice of larger trade orders financially subsidising products and staff time
to make this possible. To the extent that Faram Brothers is represented in totality by the
narrative, its functioning as a heterotopia is consistent with the claim of Saldanha (2008)
of heterotology being premised on functionalist logic, where the function can be
discerned within an assumed totality. I learnt to see the shelves as an icon, standing in
not just for the whole of the store but a heterotopia where everything and everyone has a
place. As I stated above, this is the logic not of equality, but rather of ‘the police’.

The story of Faram Brothers, in offering a discursive escape that is nice for a holiday
but not considered widely considered a sensible way to live life in the way the
Caribbean cruise is described as a heterotopia by Harvey (2000: 538), does little to
interrupt the existing order in which Faram Brothers no longer sells hardware. Such
stories can also be used to argue that a material structure has significance and so should
be considered heritage, as was the case with Nora’s old fence discussed in this chapter.
On the other hand, they may be coopted into any narrative of ‘authenticity’ that is sold
with the apartments that replace the hardware store (Zukin 2010), and the new residents
may one day join those described in this chapter who go visit the historical society to
find an old photograph to display in their new apartment.

Stories, like the old photographs, can make visible that things were, and so can be
different. One realisation of the project of finding the ‘politics of the police’ called for
by Chambers (2011b; also see Ruez 2012) may indeed be this ‘knowing where to look’
for the sites of resistance to neoliberalism that McSweeney (2010) associates more with

49 Just as Swann, in presenting the picture of social disorder I quoted in Chapter 4, is claiming that the
effects of social exclusion are predictable.
the work of Harvey than Rancière (see Chapter 2). Stories may be one of those sites, and so they can provide an opportunity to observe how order is imposed on the world by people.

**Stories**

This chapter has been built on stories. In this way, it is consistent with a large body of ethnographically informed work. The use made of stories, particularly as the narrative form, has been pointed out in social worlds of ‘native informants’ (Bruner 1997), urban groups (Myerhoff 1992), and formal organisations (Chen 2012). Stories can be used with instructive intentions but, as Ross (1991: 69) puts it, ‘[t]he very act of storytelling, an act that presumes in its interlocutor an equality of intelligence rather than an inequality of knowledge, posits equality just as the act of explication posits inequality.’ Those who work on or with ethnographies will also be familiar with their treatment as stories (Abu-Lughod 1993; Bruner 1997; Erami 2015). Good ethnography has been defined as good, evocative storytelling because a story is not impenetrable to those uninitiated to the discipline and so it can be used to communicate with a broader audience (Stoller 2007; Van Maanen 1998). Anybody could potentially be the audience. The narrative structure of a story is always simultaneously a structure of power (Bruner 1997), albeit a structure of power that can be read in different ways (Rosaldo 1986). In this way, ethnographic work presented in the form of stories will still be consistent with the assertion of Rancière (2012a: x): ‘A narrative is not a simple relating of facts. It is a way of constructing — or of deconstructing — a world of experience.’

Across chapters 4 and 5, I have offered examples of people being treated as more or less part of the Port Melbourne community. These cannot be tallied together to provide a clear count of community members; spaces and groupings of people, to the extent they are communities, are not a set of babushka dolls neatly nested inside each other (Ingold 2011: 146). Although I have argued that people can learn stories, thereby enacting the capacity to belong to the community of people who know the stories about Port Melbourne, such a boundary is constructed in the first place through the use of stories.\(^{50}\) The stories recounted in this chapter did not make anybody else equal (see also my discussion of metapolitics in Chapter 2). For example, that newcomers might not know

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\(^{50}\) Rancière (2006) describes how it is stories that are used to construct the boundaries between the discourses that do, or do not belong in disciplines.
the stories of Port Melbourne was treated, in the email about Nora and her left-behind pins, as a deficiency of understanding that people could and did overcome. The stories I used have been recruited, defined and partially represented because they allow me to follow a particular path. This is not unusual for ethnographic work (Clifford 1986). As with all methods, I construct a path that allows me to make some things, but never everything, visible (Rancière 2009a).

Stories are part of broader narratives that order understandings of Port Melbourne in such a way that particular actions are considered sensible, and so being part of this community of people who know the stories of Port Melbourne matters. I return to the processes through which this occurs in Part III (The processes of policy and politics). In this chapter, I have demonstrated that people I encountered in fieldwork perceived the potential for stories to communicate what should happen in, and to, Port Melbourne. This was most clearly demonstrated through the local councillor’s enthusiasm regarding the potential for the old fence to be retained after the new property owners learnt about Nora. However, I also read this into the old photographs searched for, the commemorative photograph and wake for the City of Port Melbourne that was organised, and the distress expressed at the gutting of the building that used to be the Faram Brothers hardware store. Those who have accounts of Port Melbourne taken seriously also enact the authority to account for the way Port Melbourne should be.51

Stories are well suited to the verification of equality, even though they are configured by their teller. The stories about Port Melbourne are able to be understood by those who do not already know the information about the place, person or event spoken about. Stories ‘condense, exemplify, and evoke a world’ (Van Maanen 1998: 119). This may be because audience members are familiar with the larger narratives that the storyteller draws on, such as national tropes like the Great Australian Dream I discussed in Chapter 3. Storytellers may also reference what is more broadly treated in Australia as evidence relevant for verifying the story (the records left behind such as a log of administrative borders and objects like the pins dropped by Nora). These strategies rely on recognition from the audience. As I argued in Chapter 1, one of the reasons the presupposition of the equality of intelligences is consistent with the broader ethnographic tradition in

51 For an example of different readings of stories not being treated as equal, see the discussion of syllogisms by Fernandez (1986: 175).
anthropology is that to undertake fieldwork or write ethnographic texts is to presume that people have the capacity to understand cultures that they have not already lived their life through. The presupposition of the equality of intelligences is valid, even in situations it is not acknowledged. Even though to explain is to presume that somebody cannot understand on their own, even the most patronising explanation presumes that the person it is directed at has the capacity to understand.

The social order in which certain people are perceived as knowing the stories of Port Melbourne is not only enacted through this story telling. It is this social order that functions to authorise the story as one that is not only an interesting tale to tell or accurate, but a story significant for understanding what should happen in Port Melbourne. The equality of intelligences does not prevent social order functioning in this way, but it does mean that it is not possible to prove that somebody lacks the capacity to learn the stories of Port Melbourne, and so that it is valid to presuppose anybody could enact membership in the community of people who know the stories of Port Melbourne. As the presupposition of the equality of intelligences is also the claim that different categories of people do not have different types of intelligences — there might be different things to learn or know, but to know something demonstrates the intelligence necessary for learning any other thing (Rancière 1991) — it is also valid to presuppose that the stories widely recognised as those about Port Melbourne could be authored and told by anybody.

Considering ‘things’ may appear to allow me to engage on my own terms with Port Melbourne. However, as demonstrated by the examples in this chapter, whether I was considering pins or photographs, I had to draw on written accounts captured in the archives or the stories I was told. Spaces I had never entered were able to enter my awareness through the stories told about them. Taking the time to learn something about the inside of spaces such as the Faram Brothers hardware store was a way for me to feel that I had entered the community of Port Melbourne. It was part of the order I too could learn to impose. To be an effective storyteller is to effectively be a subject — not an object of the actions of others, but still subject to the ordering within which recognition as part of a community is afforded.
The stories I have pulled together from my time in Port Melbourne verify the presupposition of equality because (rather than despite the fact) they do not portray a suburb-wide community nor the existence of multiple partitioned communities of equals. Stories about the past, or even about still-existing spaces inside buildings, can allow somebody to know parts of and events in Port Melbourne that they were not present in or for. So readers of this chapter can also be part of the community who know stories of Port Melbourne — a community for which I have claimed the authority to delineate who counts as a member. Yet, if I take the presupposition of the equality of intelligences seriously, this is also a community for which I will never produce a valid tally.
Chapter 6: Object of care

Older people as objects of care

In 2003 a City of Port Phillip resident, Andrew Heslop (2003: 14), wrote in The Age,

> The eventual discovery of the remains of 75-year-old Elsie Brown in her Melbourne home last week, almost two years after her death, is an appalling indictment on a supposedly civilised society in one of the world's most affluent countries. [...] ‘So let’s do something about it. I propose we designate Sunday March 30 “National Check On Your Neighbour Day”.’

This proposal was in earnest, not in jest, and Neighbour Day was born. In Heslop’s (2003) article, Elsie Brown’s age signifies her as somebody who was vulnerable to dying, and to doing so alone and unnoticed. I return in Chapter 7 to look at a program in the City of Port Phillip that explicitly sought to stop older people dying alone going unnoticed. In this chapter, I continue describing how, in response to the boundaries of community, equality was demonstrated in Port Melbourne. I look at how care in Port Melbourne works to position older people as objects and I argue that an effective subject/object of care binary can be traced.

I found older people were likely to be treated as objects of care, with any demonstration of limits to their capacity for undertaking particular tasks more likely to be treated as a sign of decline in functioning more generally. I structure my discussion around two main characters. The first, Peter, was moving house to no longer live ‘independently’. The second, Pat, was less physically mobile than Peter but she still lived alone. Both of these people were treated as objects of care by many people even though, as I will show, they demonstrated they were effective subjects. Yet this chapter is not just about these two people. Nor is this chapter just about older people; any adjective can function as a qualifier. As shown in Chapter 4, adjectives are often used to mark out categories of people. People are made to appear not only different, but unequal, through the use of categories.

There are different ways of defining stages of life, including not just age but also psychological, biological and legal status (Meyerhoff 1992a: 108). Age measured in years is not globally the most common way to categorise life stages (Keith 1980: 341). Nevertheless this is the most commonly used criterion in Australia. While the
Australian Bureau of Statistics (2013c) considers ‘older people’ as aged 65 years or over, The City of Port Phillip document ‘Ageing well in Port Phillip strategy 2006-2016’ defines ‘older persons’ as those aged 55 years or over. The characters I describe and discuss in this chapter, aside from myself, are over the age of 65 and so able to be classified as ‘older persons’ in an administrative sense. I assert they were frequently treated as objects of care. Such treatment was not directly attributed to their chronological age, in the contexts I observed, but this did operate as a latent prejudice.

Australia as a whole has an ageing population, which is commonly described as a problem and is of policy interest (Boer 2014). There is a significant body of research addressing issues to do with ageing, both within the field of gerontology and across the social sciences more generally, including in my discipline of training — anthropology. Perhaps most sensationally with Margaret Mead’s (1961) *Coming of Age in Samoa*, efforts to denaturalise the experience of life stages is a claim to widen relevance staked out by anthropology. The anthropology of (old) age has been set out as a field of inquiry with review articles by Cohen (1994) and Keith (1980) and a volume edited by Keith and Kertzer (1984). Ageing has been treated as a useful process to investigate for shedding light on theoretical questions; a relevant example for issues discussed above is how old age has been studied to investigate conceptualisations of time (Hazan 1984). Reflexive anthropological projects have also been advanced through consideration of the aged (Behar 1996; Myerhoff & Tufte 1992).

I contribute to the catalogue of examples of how people make and perceive power in their social relationships, but I am also drawing on many observations that here remain unreferenced. Across the Port Melbourne activity-based groups in which I participated, much conversation was directed at providing offers of assistance to fellow members. My focus on such conversations is not just a writing device because it is easier for the audience to relate to (or the researcher to collect) stories about a few people than to claims supported by statistics (c.f. Rancière 1994). My attention to the details of a specific instance offers methodological and conceptual insight into the imposed nature of social identifications as order (whether imposed by us within the situation or to describe it afterwards). Most importantly for my Rancièrian approach is the claim that, if I provide enough detail about the particular people around whom I have formed this chapter, it will become apparent that this social order is only ever imposed. Peter and
Pat may be treated as objects of care or effective subjects, but ultimately they are people who exceed any identity that may be ascribed to them and mobilised in how they are socially recognised.

**Being moved**

Let me start by telling you that, treated by many with the reverence due to a living relic, Peter lived alone in the same Port Melbourne terrace house he had been born in more than seven decades earlier. He had worked to retirement with the same employer. Now, however, Peter was moving house. He was to leave behind the day to day routines of living in his old home, including the sound of his next door neighbour sweeping her kitchen each morning heard through the shared wall. Not only was hearing his neighbour through their shared wall something Peter tolerated, he anticipated that it was something he would miss. When he told me about this, Peter jokingly contemplated whether his neighbour would also miss the noise travelling through that wall every time he ruined his dinner.

Peter’s mention of sound moving through the walls between his terrace house and that of his neighbour did not seem to me to be a complaint about his neighbour being noisy. Noise is generally considered sound out of place — that which is a problem, reducing enjoyment and contributing to poor health (Stansfeld & Matheson 2003; Goines & Hagler 2007). In fact, as Stoke and Hepburne (2005: 648) express it, ‘to call a sound a “noise”, or a person “noisy”, robs sound of the meaning for its producers, and so also robs them of membership of the category of ordinary, moral folk who live meaningful lives.’ Not all sounds are necessarily unwanted or experienced as a stressor or nuisance.

In Victoria, there are regulations covering what times of day certain activities, such as vacuuming, can be carried out (Environmental Protection Act 1970 section 48A(5) - prescribed items, see Group 3). People are not protected from all sounds at all times; sweeping with a broom is not even included in the list. The sound of somebody sweeping could be understood as an annoyance and an interruption, but would probably be considered a minor one (and possibly less of an interruption than whatever was uttered when Peter ruined his dinner). For Peter, this every-day experience was spoken

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52 It was Peter who opened up this conversation one day at historical society, when just the two of us were working in one of the rooms.
about as part of the relationship with his neighbour he would miss when he moved away.

Sound provides a means for those who live near each other to monitor behaviour. Writing of a Dayak community in Borne, Helliwell (1992: 1988) describes younger couples as planning to ‘build free-standing dwellings’ to leave the long house and the associated community pressure. However, she also describes how an apartment that is not being inhabited through having the hearth lit is seen as ‘a denial of the rights of neighbours to live next to an apartment that is inhabited’ (Helliwell 1992: 187). Awareness of the presence of other people is not just an inconvenience; these experiences can be the very parts of life understood as community. If community pressure is to exert any influence on the way people live, it necessarily moves through walls.

To the best of my knowledge, Peter’s neighbour had nothing to do with his move. Peter said he did not speak with his neighbour much, other than saying hello in the street, but he felt it was important to visit her to let her know he was leaving. It also seemed that Peter felt he had to explain his upcoming move to other people in Port Melbourne, such as those of us who volunteered alongside him on at the historical society on Tuesday mornings. Peter was aware that people saw him as part of ‘Old Port Melbourne’ with his lifelong residence, and even a career worth of employment, within the suburb. That Peter was moving away was seen by some of us who knew him as a sad thing.

Place-based community is not the only type of community significant to older people, but communities of place and communities of interest can intersect (Means & Evans 2011), and this seemed to be the case for Peter. The place attachment demonstrated by Peter was not just a passive legacy of not once having moved; his place attachment was lived through activity. Peter had retired from paid work but was an active volunteer in a number of organisations including the historical society in Port Melbourne. I learnt the

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53 According to Helliwell (1992), voices move (and visual sighting occurs) through the walls of the Dayak longhouse, even though families have their own apartments. The activities of neighbours can be monitored, increasing awareness of whether households are conforming to norms relating to the redistribution of resources (Helliwell 1992: 188). Activities undertaken within and the treatment of the apartment itself are understood as impacting on those in neighbouring apartments. Norms regarding activities carried out inside the apartment include the regular lighting of the apartment’s hearth and keeping the apartment in good repair (Helliwell 1992: 186-187). These obligations are enforced not only through the threat of shame but also demands for compensation (Helliwell 1992: 187).
details about sounds travelling through the wall and burnt dinners from Peter, but the rest of the narrative I quickly internalised through repeated exposure. Whatever Peter’s sense of attachment to Port Melbourne, some of us who spent time in the suburb were attached to him.

News of Peter’s upcoming move seemed, to me, to come out of nowhere. It seemed to be a bit of a surprise to him too. I had been aware that Peter’s time was increasingly taken up with treatment for some health issues, but it was a unit becoming available in a retirement village that precipitated his move. Peter had not even known that his name had been put on the waiting list by relatives. This appeared to me to be an assault on Peter’s self-determination. Older people may be seen as having ‘attachments to place’ but, as people age, they are also more likely to rely on care-givers. They are also more likely to be treated as objects of care. It was not just the supportive environment of the retirement village that influenced the move; Peter was also moving to be closer to some of his relatives. This would allow easier provision of informal care. Relationships of care, rather than just his ability to pursue activities that interested him, shaped the choice of new location.

It is possible to position this story about Peter into a broader narrative about ageing. Old Port Melbourne — a classification of ‘locals’ — was associated with older people such as Peter, who lived in the same Port Melbourne house he had been born in more than 70 years earlier. Older persons are often associated with community, being described as both bastions of and dependent on the community. Before the waves of newcomers, Port Melbourne had an ageing population. With the rise in popularity of Port Melbourne as a place to live and the high rate of new residential development, demographics in the area were shifting. Yet, as shown in Chapter 3, it was Old Port Melbourne that was discursively liked by many with community.

Even outside the very particular discourse surrounding ‘Old Port Melbourne’ people, such as many of my door knock survey respondents, often made a distinction between old-timers and newcomers. Newcomers were not necessarily young, but old-timers were often expected to be old. While generally there was a positive valuation associated with being an old-timer, this was a passive representation of a status that accrued through not moving, rather than through action. Old-timers had ‘stayed’ and were now at the mercy
of the newcomers who were actively moving to Port Melbourne. Many local activities and groups, whether formally or in practice, targeted older people. For example, the Port Melbourne Bowling Club was associated with older, retired people. However, the club’s historic reputation was of being a club for the who-is-who of Port Melbourne’s business elite, and those familiar with the club during my fieldwork usually marked it off as a closed social group. Older people are seen as exemplifying community mindedness more generally, such as when they are described as valuing particular approaches that are simultaneously considered part of community, such as face-to-face conversations (e.g. Purdue et al. 1997: 652).

With advancing age being correlated with the increased likelihood of more years lived in a particular location, decreased physical mobility and retirement from paid work that may require spending time in other locations, older people are often associated with stronger attachments to place (Kearns & Andrews 2005: 15; Means & Evans 2011: 3; Wiles et al. 2009). Place-based community for older people has been described as important in the City of Port Phillip. This is reflected in both the City of Port Phillip having a document titled ‘Ageing well in Port Phillip strategy 2006-2016’, and in the consultation with residents for this strategy:

> When asked what makes the city special, residents foregrounded: connecting with family and friends, long term ties, attachment to the city and its neighbourhoods and a strong sense of belonging. (Ageing well in Port Phillip strategy 2006-2016: 5)

Older people are seen as having higher ‘care needs’ that need to be met by other people (Weicht 2013). More generally in the literature on ageing, there is an expectation that people should receive the physical care they need, be able to stay in the same area and to ‘benefit’ from being active participants in the (place-based) community (Bartlett & Peel 2005). However, Peter is not the only one who would move to another area to move into specific accommodation for older people because, even if people want to stay in the area, this cannot always be achieved as The City of Port Phillip has a shortage of aged care places (Ageing well in Port Phillip strategy 2006-2016: 6).

Yet tales of older people moving house are not necessarily examples of failures of social and housing policy. It is important to note that older people do not necessarily reject movement or change (Wiles et al. 2009) and they can have dislikes about their house
and neighbourhood (Hillcoat-Nallétamby & Ogg 2013). Older people often move to
different types of housing and there is an established body of research into the housing
transitions of old people (Perry, Andersen & Kaplan 2014). The movement of older
people into smaller, retirement properties can free up larger housing stock, and is even a
strategy considered in some places to free up public housing properties (for an example
from rural England, see Gallent & Robinson 2012: 374). However, even such seemingly
positive valuations about older people moving are overwhelmingly based on
disempowering stereotypes or representations of older people as a population to be
managed.

Older people living alone are not likely to be represented as free from having to wait for
somebody to finish in the bathroom or other hassles associated with cohabiting. Instead,
and consistent with Heslop’s (2003) story of Elsie Brown, they are often described by
other people as lonely (Hess 2004; Warr et al. 2007: 752; Weicht 2013: 192). Whatever
their housing arrangements, older persons are often seen as vulnerable to loneliness. It is
treated as an exception, rather than the norm, when older people are presented in the
media as not being lonely (for analysis from Canada, see Rozanova 2010: 220).
Participation may be undertaken to counter loneliness (Brodie et al. 2011) and this may
be successful if it does result in social networking (Son, Yarnal & Kerstetter 2010).
However, instead of participation being important for ‘people’, we find it is prescribed
to address a deficit exhibited by those over a certain age.

There are some push backs against older people being treated as needing care, but, the
way these have often translated into policy actually enact an order where people are
treated as objects of care. The operation of a distinction between passive and active
ageing comes with a strong judgement as to how people ‘should’ age (see Weicht 2013:
189). Privileging active ageing can fail to take account of the fact that many activities,
such as alienating work, may actually contribute to feelings of loneliness (Korczynski
2009). Designations such as ‘the fourth age’ as a social imaginary can imply a criticism
of those who do not meet its criteria of being a particular type of ‘active’ and being able
to live without certain types of assistance (Gilleard & Higgs 2013), rather than more
substantially challenging such loss-based representations of those in older age (see also
Dawson 2002). Ageist assumptions and dehumanising language have often influenced
anthropological discussions of old age (Cohen 1994: 140).
Peter — the man moving from Port Melbourne for the first time in his life — was not just moving away. He was moving closer to family members who were not just ‘care givers’, they were family members who wanted to have the opportunity to spend time with Peter. As Peter had stopped driving, the travel to visit fell on the others. Peter’s active life meant that he interacted with many people in the suburb of Port Melbourne and beyond, but he could no longer independently visit family living elsewhere. Family relationships can be significant for decisions made by (or for) older people as to where to live, even though they are often not the only relationships that matter (Allan & Phillipson 2008: 170). It has often been suggested in American ethnographic texts that there are only weak intergenerational ties that are noticeable as people age (Moffatt 1992: 219-220). That this is seen as a problem (or at least remarkable) for older people, in a way that it is not for other age groups, suggests that older people are more at the mercy of relationships of attribution rather than being able to go out and foster their own ties.

To say that Peter was well liked would be an understatement. Although he would express his frustration when interrupted, he went about his volunteer work with the historical society in a quiet, kind-hearted and generous manner. Peter would respond to queries from the public if they were in his area of expertise (ships). However, he usually worked on these tasks at times other than the Tuesday morning time slot when most of us volunteered. Tuesday mornings, Peter spent most of his time cataloguing. His progress on the work of cataloguing was interrupted for other projects such as the months when I and another volunteer joined him in undertaking a stocktake of the map drawers. Peter was an active and important volunteer in the historical society and his familiarity with the suburb meant that he was often the person I interrupted to seek advice on what was depicted in photographs I was trying to catalogue. In other words, he was active in shaping the historical society’s collection and people’s knowledge of Port Melbourne.

It was Peter who finally said that the historical society should stop updating the card catalogue and just use the digital system. It was decided that to do this, the society should purchase another laptop computer able to be used in the room where some of us, including Peter, undertook most of the cataloguing work. His involvement in the
making of this decision was often repeated as if his blessing was the ultimate justification for purchasing another computer.

Peter’s suggestion to cease using the card catalogue and purchase another laptop computer was not, in my perception at least, an instance of Peter ‘giving in’ to a new digital epoch: he clearly had an aptitude for devising solutions. One week Peter explained to me how, before his retirement, every year he would set up a projector to show the children a movie at his workplace’s annual Christmas party. Peter took on this responsibility even though he did not have any children himself. He explained to me how he used a mirror, carefully removed from and then returned to the site’s bathroom, to screen the movie in such a way that there would not be cables running where the children were. In this account, Peter self-represented as competent. Not only was he able to foresee potential issues but he had the skills to devise and implement a workable solution.

Yet, in waiting for Peter to suggest putting an end to updating the card catalogue the society was sending a somewhat different message. The waiting suggested that not only was he being treated as important (he was taken seriously), or that he was involved in making a decision about changing work practices in the society, but also a perception that he would find change difficult. That the question of whether or not to stop updating the card catalogue was not directly raised with Peter could imply that he had the informal power to set the agenda, even if he achieved this through indirect means rather than direct demands. However, to wait for Peter to arrive at this suggestion instead of raising the idea with him directly, also implies an assessment of Peter as too fragile to withstand such direct engagement. Avoiding the making of direct requests was part of a more general trend in ways that volunteers with the historical society showed care for others.

Historical society volunteers also tried to look out for Peter in a way that did not appear on the surface to be directed at him as an individual, but nonetheless was an instance of him being treated different to other volunteers. Tuesday mornings always featured two rounds of tea and coffee, 10am and 11.30am, at the start of working and then again at the half way point. Everybody was offered a cup of tea or coffee, but a white coffee was always made for Peter and taken to him. As with securing a unit in a retirement village,
this was done for him without his direct consent. Peter’s diabetes was one justification for this. It was also a practical approach because Peter had difficulty hearing (yes, even though he discussed with me hearing his neighbour sweeping through the wall). It may have been considered respectful to simply bring Peter in the drink, as to ask him would require diverting his full attention away from his work. And it was also feasible as, while some volunteers (like Pat) would vary their request for tea or coffee week-to-week, Peter always expressed being pleased to receive a white coffee (particularly if it was not too weak). I never asked him what he thought of being given a coffee without being asked first. Perhaps Peter’s special treatment was not even worthy of notice as everybody present (including visitors) was offered a tea or coffee at both times. This little routine was embedded in the pattern of work, as demonstrated by its continuation in those weeks Peter was absent because of medical appointments and even after he moved away from Port Melbourne.

Peter did not want to be singled out, as shown by his reaction when this wish was violated. An example of this was at one of the monthly historical society meetings. These meetings always featured a guest speaker and were well attended by those of us who volunteered on Tuesday mornings, but also many other members who were not weekly volunteers. A portable PA system was used in the room, but many months during my fieldwork there were still issues with the volume and clarity of the sound at meetings. One meeting Peter, sitting in the audience, was asked by those chairing the meeting if he could hear. He would not have been the only person who struggled to hear, and so perhaps it was less a case of him being singled out for not being able to hear and more that he was being asked to make an assessment of what it was like in the audience. Yet, the following day, he explained to me that he did not like a fuss being made. Peter did use hearing aids and often found it difficult to hear. But he had not wanted a fuss to be made over his (in)capacity to hear. In part, Peter did not like to be the centre of attention; although he never expressed concern that his suggestions to use only the digital catalogue and to purchase another laptop were taken seriously and acknowledged.

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54 This destabilises my earlier analysis of Peter hearing his neighbour sweeping through the wall. Unfortunately, at the time, I did not think to question Peter as to how he heard his neighbour sweeping.
The Tuesday Peter told us volunteers that he was going to be moving away to a retirement village, some of us looked sad and I certainly felt sad. It was rare for Peter to set aside whatever task he was working on during a Tuesday morning to engage in an unrelated conversation, but he was willing to discuss the upcoming move. Some of the volunteers tried to offer positive feedback that it was ‘the right decision’, particularly (but not exclusively) when they were in Peter’s presence. Trish repeated many times, ‘He won’t have to worry about anything.’ To no longer have responsibility for ‘worrying’ about things was for her a positive thing, but at the time I struggled with her enthusiasm for such a state. If there was nothing to worry about, what was there to do in life? Trish happily named specific tasks he was to be relieved of: Peter would no longer have to clean the gutters on his roof or cook meals. At the time of these conversations, I had never cleaned gutters and was subsisting largely on whatever muesli-bar type product was discounted in the Bay Street Coles supermarket. I had never included these tasks in the criteria for being able to live independently in a house. I had no doubt that many people, myself included, would like to be free from the hassle of coordinating and being home for visits by those carrying out maintenance. Given that he had mentioned that his neighbour might have heard his yelling the many times he burnt his dinner, Peter might not miss cooking dinner for himself. Yet moving away from being an owner-occupier of a house seemed like a step away from Peter living the Great Australian Dream (see Chapter 3).

In contrast to praise of arrangements that would free Peter from tasks, other research has found that having domestic duties can be a positive experience. In the northern Italian city of Trento, ten widows participated in research workshops and follow-up interviews to look at their experience of the homes they continued to live in after the death of their husbands (Cristoforetti, Gennai & Rodeschini 2011). Although care activities of the widows changed after children had grown up and husbands had died, they continued activities of care not just for the house but also the garden (Cristoforetti, Gennai & Rodeschini 2011: 230-231). Being able to carry out day-to-day activities in accordance with a routine and maintain the garden could be one way that people not only keep busy but also see themselves as providing care. However, people, including older people, also participate in their broader neighbourhood in many other ways (Wiles & Jayasinha 2013).
As Peter’s primary interest was in ships, however, perhaps I fell into over emphasising the home as a site for security, identity or belonging in my initial reaction to Peter’s move (see Kearns & Andrews 2005: 16). Not only would the area he was going to provide opportunities for watching the movement of ships, but he would be able to continue to assist with questions on shipping and pursue his own research. There were many objects he would be leaving behind, but his shipping books and computer were going with him, and he would have an internet connection in his unit. Historical society volunteers such as me would not interrupt his work on a Tuesday morning, but maybe a sibling or a new friend might. Anyway, maybe Peter wanted a break from volunteer work (c.f. Martinson & Halpern 2011).

**Not working**

Pat, like Peter, was an example from my fieldwork of somebody who was both subject to being treated as an older person and incredibly busy. Pat did not consider herself a Port Melbourne person, because she was not born there (or even in Australia), but she was an active resident of the suburb and held a key role in the historical society.

During my fieldwork Pat had accepted a physiotherapy intervention in her day-to-day life, in the form of a rollator style walking frame (commonly referred to in Australia as a walker). A fall while shopping at the market with a friend was the catalyst. Pat was not the only person in the suburb who I had thought would benefit from one. I had held my tongue, however, as to call somebody out as being a candidate for equipment associated with older persons would be likely to cause offence, and many of the women got by with shopping jeeps anyway (see Chapter 5).

Once she had the walker, Pat seemed to make the most of it. As we walked together, she explained how uneven surfaces or curbs were a problem, but that she was able to walk much faster now. I did not see Pat’s use of the walker as acceptance of less independence. Rather, this was consistent with my perception of Pat as highly capable of adopting new technology and putting it to use in projects she had chosen to take on. In other words, while the walker might have been an assistive technology, it did not impact on her autonomy.
About a year into my fieldwork, the fact that Pat’s home phone was not working was the topic of much worried discussion amongst the historical society volunteers. Pat had changed her home phone connection to a plan with an internet focus that came with a VoIP phone service\textsuperscript{55}. There were cabling issues in her street, but even after those had supposedly been rectified her phone was still not working. Pat was not a luddite: her heavy internet use made it cost effective to switch to an internet service provider plan where the phone was run through VoIP. The state requires of phone networks that those at risks of falls be able to be listed for ‘priority access’ — meaning any phone faults would be fixed in 24 hours — but that was not available to her with this internet-based service.

This was seen as a problem by those at the historical society for a few reasons: Pat might need to get in contact with others as she lived alone and was considered by us to be at risk of a fall; her volunteering roles meant that lots of people needed to get into contact with Pat by phone, and she had misplaced her mobile phone. Even when Pat could locate it, she was not a keen mobile phone user. This attitude was understandable; if anybody could justify not carrying a mobile because it would constantly ring, it was Pat.

Having a home phone seemed like a sensible thing for Pat, as it provided a tool she could use to access help if she ended up in a situation where help was needed. It allowed Pat to have responsibility for summoning help if something went wrong. This both recognised Pat’s independence and reduced the responsibility of others to notice if something went wrong. But the phone connection was also important to the historical society because Pat’s home phone and email account were the primary channel through which many of the week-to-week tasks of the historical society were carried out. After Pat’s phone had been out of service for a few days, there were complaints about the inconvenience of not being able to leave a message on her full voicemail account. The reliance of this group on Pat’s labour, which was important to her but also of interest and use to a number of other people and groups, was highlighted by the interruption to usual methods of communication. So concern about Pat’s phone was not just benevolent care.

\textsuperscript{55} VoIP stands for Voice over Internet Protocol. If you do not understand what this is, just let it contribute to your perception of Pat as technologically savvy.
Help with fixing the phone was deemed by me and some of the other historical society volunteers, a necessary intrusion. This was not solely because Pat had not been able to fix her phone by herself. I saw helping Pat fix her phone as a way I could contribute to this group and begin to reciprocate for the wide ranging assistance Pat had given me with my research project. Talk of maintenance issues and how to get them resolved was rather common within the volunteer and social groups I became familiar with. Such talk served multiple roles. The speaker could demonstrate competence in terms of knowing how to resolve issues. It was a way to instruct people without the direct assault on their independence of telling them what to do. This was also a topic of conversation to be employed when chatting for entertainment. However, visiting somebody’s house to attend to something yourself was very unusual. In fact, I would have considered it unheard of if it was not something I did myself.

As I mentioned above, this episode of the broken phone unfolded about a year into my fieldwork. I had also been to Pat's house early in my fieldwork. The first time I attended the historical society’s weekly open hours, I found myself sitting at the table drinking a cup of tea during a conversation about a dilemma Pat was facing that afternoon. Pat had a steam-cleaning contractor coming to clean some of her carpets, but she had things on the floor that needed to be moved. Moving these things was not an easy task for Pat because her fingers were now limited in their range of movement. I offered assistance and, with the mediation of one of the other volunteers, Pat agreed that I could visit her that afternoon to help. The other volunteers present exclaimed out loud that it would be a way to assist me with my research. Perhaps Pat’s consent to my assistance was a demonstration of acceptance of my project.

On that first visit I learnt Pat’s house was a cottage that had been renovated when she had bought it with her now late husband, approximately three decades ago. While we sat in her backyard eating the fried sandwiches she made and drinking tea, she pointed out places where the builders had not quite realised the architect’s plans. Pat also pointed out where her daughter used to feed the possums. Her daughter and son-in-law had recently lived with her for about a year, after her husband had died and while the couple was between homes. I often wondered about the balance in terms of who was being ‘helped’ by them living with her. (Having an adult child return to live with you was a
position a few other people I knew found themselves in.) The urgency with moving the items was because there was a rush to steam clean the carpets before Pat’s new bed — a gift from her daughter — arrived. My assistance with moving items off the floor can therefore be understood as occurring within a broader context of assistance and intervention.

Nearly a year later, on the day we found out at historical society that Pat’s home phone was still not working, I returned to her house. Pat agreed that I could come but, again, other volunteers participated in the conversation to push her towards granting consent. It was assumed that I could plug and unplug things more easily than Pat. But the primary assistance I was able to offer was my mobile phone, as we could use it to ring the phone service’s help line for assistance. Both times I entered Pat’s home to help, I was conscious of my attempts to not intrude on her sense of independence as I was entering her home to do something we — some of the historical society volunteers sitting around the table — had deemed her unable to do herself. This concern was even more acute the second time I entered her home, when I knew Pat a bit better. Rather than my relationship with her resulting in me feeling more comfortable about entering her home, I perceived myself as a threat to her autonomy. However, she did not really have a choice as to whether or not the phone would be fixed. In her role as contributor to the society she lost some autonomy.

This is not a simple account of Pat’s phone not working, or of Pat not being able to fix her phone. The problem with Pat’s telephone and internet was not only a problem experienced within her home; it impacted on the activities of a volunteer group. Therefore help extended to Pat, so she could continue to look after the administrative activities of the historical society, was also help for the group. Pat’s work for the historical society allowed others not to have to do this work. When such labour could no longer be taken for granted, it made visible the work she did do when her telephone was working. Yet, when we were negotiating with Pat to have me come to her house to try and help, the conversation did not reflect all this work that Pat did every day. Pat’s phone and internet not working was experienced as an interruption (e.g. people complained they could not leave a voicemail message). As Pat had the role of receiving and responding to enquiries, it was experienced as a problem of Pat not being effective in her role, rather than a problem with the historical society more generally.
This description of some assistance Pat accepted shows how help, especially when it is
given in a caring way, can contribute to a person appearing as an object. Rather than
Pat’s independence being demonstrated through her reluctance to accept help in the
form of a walker or for somebody to assist her to fix her phone, we (the historical
society volunteers) treated this reluctance as an obstacle to be negotiated. She was
treated as not having the physical capacity to walk unassisted or fix her phone. Rather
than just having opinions on her choices, as we demonstrated when it came to Peter’s
move from Port Melbourne, we took the authority to decide what Pat ‘should’ do and
sought to implement this plan. Perhaps our treatment of Pat was analogous to that which
Peter received from his family.

Our treatment of Pat did not mean that she was incapable. Perhaps some goading was
necessary for Pat to overcome norms around independence. Instead of being an older
person needing help, Pat could be described as a ‘good sport’ — humouring us
meddling volunteers (including one student researcher who was looking to procrastinate
from writing field notes or doing ‘real work’). Pat did not just receive the walker but,
rather, used it to move around faster and carry more things, particularly once she learnt
to select routes that had the necessary curb cuts and flat enough surfaces for the wheels
to roll.

When it came to Pat’s phone not working, it was not just her safety that was at risk. The
group’s work depended on the labour of Pat and her use of the phone and internet as a
tool to provide this. The issues were more complicated because she was technologically
savvy enough to have a VoIP system. The physical challenges Pat faced were not the
only obstacle to her phone working as I, without such limitations, was still unable to fix
the connection. The problem was with the connection, not with Pat. I did not help her
find her mobile phone either (a few days later she emailed me to let me know she had
found it in one of the re-useable shopping bags she had for shopping at the market).
Bringing the instance of my first entry into Pat’s house into consideration, while moving
things off the floor for the carpet to be cleaned was more directly an issue of physical
capacity, Pat had independently organised the contractors to come carry out the work.
Even having her daughter stay was not just about her being helped but also provided a
means by which her daughter could save money.
Assistance can be interpreted as social recognition offered to members of a community, but this recognition is unlikely to be empowering. Gestures of help can be interpreted as assigning older people an inferior status (Hazan 1984: 570). Care may be an affective bond of community both in that it is felt and in that it brings about the actions considered evidence of community. Being treated as an object of care, however, is to not be acknowledged as an effective subject. We cared that Pat was without a phone, not just for the work she could not do, but because we were worried. I am certainly not suggesting that this is to be avoided at all costs, but it does demonstrate why what may appear to be well motivated and ethical policies, such as encouraging active ageing, are actually ways that social orders make people unequal.

Effective subjects
The stories I have told about Peter and Pat raise questions of consent and care. Peter had not consented to having his name listed on the waiting list for the facility he was then moving to. Once his name came up, he legally had a choice because there was no order in place ruling otherwise. It was family members who helped Peter travel to medical appointments, so perhaps the choice was not so simple; if they refused to come to Port Melbourne to transport him, he would have to make other arrangements. The support he received from others meant that the choice to move was not Peter’s alone.

The story I told about Pat was not about her moving out of her house but rather of me entering it. I was extending help, maybe as much to those people trying to get in contact with Pat as to Pat herself. But again it was not that simple. I never fixed her phone or found her mobile, but I learnt from (and ate lunch thanks to) Pat.

Both Pat and Peter used new communicative technologies. Neither of them were keen mobile phone users, but they used email as well as a range of computer programs and both online and offline databases. The choice not to conduct much communication through mobile phones meant that it was harder for people to get in touch with them while they were out. On the other hand, aside from when I went into Pat’s home to try to give her a hand, or for her to be a helpful interviewee, my conversations with Peter and Pat were conducted when they were out of their homes. Most often we would
encounter each other in predictable ways as we went about our routine activities in Port Melbourne. Even during our shift at the historical society, I would usually know in which of our three separate spaces in the Port Melbourne Town Hall Peter or Pat could be found. That they were active within Port Melbourne specific groups meant that we would physically cross paths.

To me, the threads of these tales about Peter and Pat feel rather messy and contradictory. They may be the main characters of this chapter but other people have been drawn into my narrative. At the time of fieldwork, I felt that who had a choice and what options were sensible was ambiguous. A more specific question could be constructed around whether it mattered that Peter was moving house and that it was Pat that I visited in an attempt to assist. As with the stories in the last chapter, there is the sense that there are boundaries between those people included, and excluded, from being a ‘Port Melbourne person’. These boundaries can be re-drawn. Social recognition matters but, as I argued was demonstrated by the family learning the story of Nora, people can enact capacities that may then have them meet a particular criterion.

You cannot enact belonging for somebody else. You can draw lines that appear to include or exclude people, and justify those lines by particular accounts of the world. You can change the frame in an attempt to determine the picture. However, it is not possible to prevent anybody else from attempting to use their own frame. To stop alternative orders appearing to be sensible, requires an active process of policing (a process I discuss in Chapter 7).

Throughout Part II, I have shown it being people that exclude. There is the appearance of a type of methodological individualism, but I have been much more concerned with socially-recognised people. Capacities may exist whether we recognise them or not. But people only gain recognition by enacting recognisable capacities. What is recognised is what is consistent with the broader configuration of sense. But this does not mean that what is recognised is the only thing that could potentially be recognised; what is treated as sensible can be shown to be ridiculous, and what is dismissed as ridiculous may be shown not to be worthy of ridicule at all. The frames are enacted, and may be difficult to portray. But there are ways that they are supposedly negotiated in Port Melbourne.
This chapter has focused on older people. In the attention paid to those defined as ‘older’ in the policies of The City of Port Phillip and a range of place-based formal groups, older people become an easily identified group of people who receive ‘care’. The way that material spaces are configured or tasks are set up can make things more or less difficult for different people. Although there is no formally specified yardstick for measuring ‘an effective individual’ or ‘an object of care’, the broader configuration of sense provides the context in which such evaluations are made. The language I have used to talk about the older people in this chapter does play a role in casting them as objects of care. (For example, I described Peter being moved away from Port Melbourne, rather than moving to another area.) Withdrawing is seen as a cumulative process of retreat from being an active participant. Help is required in general, rather than somebody just needing assistance with carrying out a single task. Instead of people just being active, they participate in programs that make them active.

However, as I also demonstrated in the descriptions above, nobody is ever only an object of care. Peter, Pat or any other person may demonstrate capacities that exceed any definition of them as a member of a particular group or as a type of person. As Tyler (2013: 157) remarks, ‘people are never identical to the categorical versions of themselves that circulate in the public sphere and, indeed, they often actively reject class names and other classifications imposed from outside.’ In giving the space for situations concerning some of the people from Port Melbourne to be discussed at length, I might not have allowed them to speak for themselves, but I have contributed to the empirical demonstration of equality.
Part III: The processes of policy and politics

Part III of my thesis discusses the processes of policy and politics, mobilising the conceptual framework I have outlined, demonstrated and verified. I have argued that the orders we work with and on are only ever imposed on the world and that it is sensible to presume that anybody has the potential to understand and work within these orders. In Part III, I draw on this to discuss the process through which order is imposed (in Chapter 7 as policy) and argue that different orders can be enacted (in Chapter 8 though politics).

To follow the discussion of policy and politics I offer in chapters 7 and 8, readers are somewhat obliged to follow the path I have set down so far: Part I was used to try to give an account of what is sensible and Part II was turned towards the verification of equality. I expect that readers will not only need to rely on the path I have constructed with concepts regarding order and equality I have drawn from the work of Rancière, but also to draw on their understanding of the material and social geography of the suburb. Of course, processes of imposing and interrupting order have already been present in my discussion and here their operation takes centre stage.

In the introductory chapters I took the position offered by Rancière of rejecting as unsound the status of the social researcher as the expert with a unique capacity to understand the social world. Yet I went on to show, in Part I, that not all ideas or plans expressed by all people are taken to be sensible. In Chapter 6 it was clear that the same [lack of] capacity demonstrated by people was taken as justification for some people, and not others, being classified as belonging in the positions they were already treated as occupying in the social order.

My approach, in Chapter 6, to seeing acts of care as imposing inequality was uncompromising, but I am not arguing for a world without acts of care. Rather, my reason for offering this analysis was to point out how radical the ramifications of the equality of intelligences are. The equality of intelligences shows why doing good is always fraught. In my discussion of policy in Chapter 7, I show the same to be the case for the pursuit of fairness. What is judged to be fair is contingent on the order in which such an evaluation is made. Furthermore, policies directed at fairness are mechanisms...
by which social order is imposed. Acts of care and the pursuit of fairness may indeed be noble, but the notion of nobility is certainly one consistent with social order rather than equality.

I use strong language in offering a reading of policy as ‘the police’ and drawing on Rancière’s diagnosis of a ‘hatred of democracy’. This is not to attack the people who work within and on policies. Many people in these fields demonstrate that they understand much of what I am going to go on to say. To write every contingency into policy would be impossible, and to try is absurd. Instead, policies deal with everything that matters, and only what matters. It is this ordering that makes some things, but not everything, visible that I explored in Part I, and that I have acknowledged as also operating in structuring the discussion I offer in this dissertation. However, there is sometimes a fear of how the ‘right’ decisions could possibly be made if everything said by everyone was accorded equal weight. After all, what if some people do not offer sufficient care or they fail to make decisions that are fair?

To hate democracy makes sense when you are calling for order. However, any claim that a particular order is sensible can always be called into question. As any order is only ever imposed on a world that is irreducibly complex, people can notice its partiality. This means that any evaluation of fairness can always be shown to be deficient. I have already offered some discussion of alternative orders that can be imposed on the material and social space of Port Melbourne (in Part I), and of how paying attention to the details renders suspect the order in which any analysis is offered (in Part II).

In Chapter 8, I offer analysis of moments that can be evaluated as politics within the conceptualisation I outlined as that of Rancière’s in Chapter 2. On close inspection, claiming that Chapter 8 is about politics could appear as ridiculous. After all, many of the examples are not actually politics. However, if politics is the process of subjectivization — where a person who was not considered to have anything important to say, or any right to say it, redefines the world so that their words can be considered speech rather than noise — there is a more fundamental level at which Chapter 8 is not only my attempt at metapolitics, but provides evidence of how it is precisely those
people that I say were not taken seriously in Port Melbourne who needed to be taken most seriously in this dissertation.

Our words will never only be our own. There is always the potential that readers will come to different understandings and draw very different conclusions to my own, as any person who reads my words will also have their own experience of engaging with the world to make use of when understanding what I have written. Other readings can be made, and even I could have told other stories or argued for a different understanding of the stories I have presented. Yet, when faced with the contingency of the order I have imposed on the world in my attempts to understand Port Melbourne, it is not the case that the only sensible conclusion is to fall mute. Partly for this reason, then, my dissertation does not end with Chapter 8. Rather, in the short concluding comments of Chapter 9, I engage with the question of why what I have presented matters.
Chapter 7: Policy

Sensible processes

Chatting at a community event, Louise, told us she had called the City of Port Phillip to lodge an objection to the proposed sale of the council owned laneway that ran behind her Port Melbourne home. The person on the other end of the telephone told her that she was too old to understand. Those of us in the conversation agreed that such comments were ridiculous and out of line. Although Louise was (and must have been assessed over the phone as sounding like) an ‘older person’ (see Chapter 6), there was certainly nothing written into the policies of the City of Port Phillip to disqualify Louise from lodging an objection on the grounds of her age. As an owner of a property that backed onto the laneway, the City of Port Phillip itself had advised Louise that she had the right to object. Furthermore, her objection to the sale was vindicated as a sensible position when the laneway sale was stopped. During the conversation, the local councillor apologised and claimed ‘it’ — the proposal to sell off the back laneway — never should have happened in the first place. As a laneway that still provided back gate access to a street for Louise and the residents of a few other houses, it did not meet the City of Port Phillip’s guidelines for which laneways could be sold. Talk of the sale of this back lane way should have been ruled out as noise, rather than a sensible proposal, before it reached the stage where Louise had to object.

I found the operation of distinctions between sensible and ridiculous, appropriate and out of line, and fair or unfair discernible in Port Melbourne. The City of Port Phillip is expected to provide fair and consistent outcomes, only taking relevant differences between cases and people into consideration, although people often complain that they fail to reach this ideal (see Chapter 3). The officially promoted representations of Australians as larikins and Australia as the place of ‘the fair go’ (Goddard 2009; Tweedie 2013; Sinkeviciute 2014) are consistent, because if there is a rule then people can be held to the rule rather than being subject to the personal whims of a person in authority. 56 Fairness depends on what Benedict (1935) describes as culture, not just in

56 Weber (1991) on bureaucracy comes close to the ideal of policy that I outline in this chapter, both through the emphasis on regulating matters abstractly and, as mentioned here, impersonal decision making. As was being much discussed in some community groups during my early fieldwork because stronger rules were being enforced in the City of Port Phillip, councillors were kept are at arms distance from the day-to-day work of council officers, if not achieving tenure for life, at least a degree of independence. However, the technology of ‘guidelines’, which I discuss in this chapter, was a way that

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terms of being a set of standards but also a patterned way of going about living life. Certain orders are able to be evaluated as fair but, to use the concept developed in Part I, this is always contingent on the broader configuration of sense in which some claims are taken seriously and others dismissed. It was the institution (see Douglas 1987) of policy that came into play in accounts such as the one offered by Louise with which I started this chapter.

In everyday use in Australia, the word ‘policy’ is used across the public, private and community sectors to refer to a particular type of document or an authoritative statement about intentions (Althaus, Bridgman & Davis 2013: 5). In this chapter, Chapter 7, I demonstrate how policy works, and is worked on, to impose order on the world. (Actions directed at interrupting such policies are my focus in Chapter 8.) It is the first of two chapters that, together as Part III, focus on processes rather than the orders themselves. My analysis puts to work the concepts I have verified and extended in earlier chapters. I will return to use characters I have already introduced, particularly Pat, but I move to considering formal institutions in terms of both organisations and specified policies. In Part III, the City of Port Phillip, the municipal government in which Port Melbourne is located, is the object of much of my analysis.

According to Althaus, Bridgman and Davis (2013), ‘good policy’ is able to achieve the specified objectives because it does not contain conflicting directives and a systematic approach is taken to implementation. As I show in this chapter, the ideal that policy is measured against in the City of Port Phillip is that it sets out a course of action for responding to what should be taken into consideration. In this way of being presented as accounting for everything that matters, its logic is that of ‘the police’. As discussed in Chapter 2, Rancière (1995b) even uses the English word ‘policy’ to outline ideas that subsequently have been translated as ‘the police’. ‘The police’ is not a particular actor; it is not a person or category of people. It is a term used to denote a category of process imposed by people. The functioning of a police order is not because the particular people I spent time with in Port Melbourne, and those making up the staff and elected councillors of The City of Port Phillip, want to make things difficult for others. As Rancière (2009a: 119) clarifies, ‘the police’ is not a pejorative term. In fact, this order of

Council sought to determine the processes used to make decisions.

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‘the police’ is enacted because they attempt to use ‘good policy’ to make the world fair. Assessments of fairness only make sense in orders, and thus impose inequality.

I argued, in Part I, that the orders enacted through decisions considered sensible in Port Melbourne are always underpinned by social order. As demonstrated in Chapter 6, making people visible as vulnerable may be useful for extending acts of care, but it imposes social order. Just as being treated as an effective subject, instead of an object of care, is still to be assessed against socially recognised criteria and ranked within social order, policies never make anybody equal. Equality is verified in the enactment of capacities. Policies may define some people as able or disabled, and call for modifications to the world on this basis, but policies do not enact capacities for people. Even if — or perhaps especially if — the policy document does not define its object in such terms, an order in which some people require the policy is necessary for the policy to appear as sensible. Particular categories of people were more or less successful in having their accounts taken seriously and so, as demonstrated across the examples I offer in Part III, social recognition matters.

In this chapter, I start with a particular person’s demonstration of capacity in a context where she appears to be positioned as disabled. Issues of fairness are brought into view as I contrast my own walking with how this person moves in some public and civic spaces of Port Melbourne. The material configuration of these spaces do matter for how easy or hard it is for people to move along footpaths or enter buildings, and The City of Port Phillip was doing much work during my fieldwork to develop a policy for the fair use of space on footpaths. As I discuss to conclude this chapter, the fear of the absence of order, or the imposition of an unfair order, can manifest as what Rancière (2009b) terms the ‘hatred of democracy’ — the fear of the potential for anybody at all to be taken seriously and so the fear of equality.

**Offered a seat**

For an hour on Wednesday mornings, a coffee group for seniors met at ‘P.M.’s Cafe’. People of a similar age group meeting for a coffee in a cafe would appear rather unremarkable in the suburb of Port Melbourne. As noticeably younger than the others, my presence may have suggested that I had a reason for participating that differed to
others present. However, what I think was most remarkable about this group was its large size. Enough people gathered each week that the furniture had to be rearranged to accommodate us.

I will return to the topic of moving furniture and the specific program this coffee group had grown out of, but first I want to introduce a particular person: Irena. I was already a regular at this coffee group before Irena, a Russian migrant and Port Melbourne resident, joined. One morning, Irena explained to me that she used to do so many things but now she sits at home. She used her finger to trace the path of a tear down her cheek. Whether she did not have the words to describe her tears in English or did not want to put them into words, I did not know. Irena appeared to enjoy attending Linking Neighbours, expressing enthusiasm for finding us there when she arrived, yet Irena’s claim not to do anything suggests she did not treat her participation in Linking Neighbours, and a range of other activities in the area, as ‘doing something’. Is it that activities resulting in a material product were ‘doing something’ in a way that joining others for coffee was not?

Another week, Irena had brought along some small, decorative weavings she had made. We took turns admiring them, but she explained to us that she was no longer able to make them. Along with getting older, over recent years Irena had experiences changes in her embodied activities in the world; she was not able to do the same handiwork with her fingers, and now used a walker to move around. She appeared to experience this as a loss of capacity.

There was yet another week when Irena communicated in a mixture of words and gestures how she had tried to attend a community lunch but, as it was upstairs and there was no lift, she had to sit on her walker outside. Later in the year, when another lunch was being organised for a venue with a large number of stairs and no lift, she expressed disappointment as it would not be possible for her to attend.

Irena’s use of a walker did not prevent her from participating in these weekly coffees at which I met her. However, the space between the chairs and tables was often too narrow for Irena to pass through with her walker. Other people in the cafe, particularly those attending the coffee group, would anticipate the obstacles when they saw her and would
move them out of the way. This was an act of care, not unlike those discussed in Chapter 6. Yet, as I argued in Chapter 6, whether treated as an object of care or an effective subject, a person will demonstrate capacities that exceed this. Irena may not have had confidence in her spoken English, but she was able to communicate with us and make her own stories visible.\footnote{Sure, I am representing her here, she is not speaking for herself. I have translated her mixture of words, props and gestures into a story, and even stories told entirely in words are always interpreted by the listener (see Chapter 2).}

As mentioned above, rearranging the furniture in the cafe was an ordinary part of the weekly get together. As people arrived, chairs and tables would be rearranged by those present so the group could sit together. If there were no unoccupied chairs at the table when somebody arrived, generally somebody already seated would get up to fetch one. This was so even if the person who arrived appeared to be physically capable of fetching his or her own chair; it was part of the actions undertaken to make people feel welcome in the group by giving them the physical space to participate. In this context, moving the furniture out of the way for Irena to move through the cafe was not, in itself, an indicator of her incapacity do it for herself. Accepting help is a means by which a person can provide opportunities for others to participate (for an example of older people accepting help from children described as a way for children to participate in the community, see Weller & Bruegel 2009: 639).

Irena did not fetch chairs for others, and she did not help with returning the furniture to the cafe’s usual set up at the end of the hour. She was not alone in this. For example, many weeks I did nothing to help with returning the furniture to its space, as I would move too slowly to be useful. However, I am sure our experiences of this were very different. My hesitation was, in part, a result of being more concerned about being seen as treating those present as if they were not capable than about being seen as lazy or unhelpful. This was compounded by people taking an opportunity to furnish me with information they thought relevant to my project. Irena was not able to participate in the movement of furniture because of her reduced physical mobility, and this was perhaps compounded during the flurry of rapid movement, by her limited spoken English. In other settings, it has been found that providing help to others can become an even more valued means of participation by those who think that they appear less able bodied (e.g.
Hazan 1984). It seemed that only the older persons were to be protected from appearing incapable. I was just busy.

This coffee group, as an informal activity loosely organised by Linking Neighbours, was intended to help people. At the centre of this program was a membership list with which older people could register. That list was supposed to help prevent instances of nobody noticing when an elderly person living alone had an accident or even died. The expectation was that the list could be used to check in with members in a heat wave, as older persons are seen as particularly at risk (Department of Health and Human Services 2011; Victorian Council of Social Service 2013). During my fieldwork, all registered members were contacted after an extreme storm that had resulted in many broken windows and flash flooding in the municipality. Those people I happened to be sitting near and chatting with on subsequent Wednesday mornings spoke positively about having somebody check that they were okay.

The membership list was also used to promote the regular social activities and one-off programs or outings. These activities were explained in the City of Port Phillip flyer, and by the members, as being directed at reducing isolation. By participating in the social events, such as the coffee group at which I met Irena and monthly dinners, people could also help make themselves recognised; if a ‘regular’ was not present, enquires might be made about them. If somebody had not been seen for a while, they could be contacted and, if something had happened to them, information about their next of kin was on file if needed.

The City of Port Phillip employed a part time facilitator to establish and work across the suburb-based Linking Neighbours groups. The person who held this position during my fieldwork himself fell into the age category of older persons (see Chapter 6) and was semi-retired. Most weeks, he dropped into the coffee group for part of the time we assembled, joining in and initiating general conversation or disseminating information. The main focus of his position was to administer the membership list and to organise activities to which everyone on the register in the municipality was invited, with activities he coordinated during my fieldwork ranging from a group aqua therapy program to outings every few months.
At the time of my fieldwork, the Linking Neighbours program in the City of Port Phillip had been rolled out in a couple of suburbs in the municipality, including Port Melbourne. Flyers had been printed promoting the Linking Neighbours program, and information about it appeared in council publications and the local newspapers. So called ‘word-of-mouth’ — people being told about it by others — was also a way that people found out about the program. My participation had come about because I heard one of the other historical society volunteers talking about the group, and I asked if it would be okay if went along. On arriving at a coffee group, I asked if it would be okay if I stayed and then if I could keep coming back. I also joined the monthly pub dinners. The weekly coffee and monthly dinner was largely organised by members. Other friends were welcome too and so, even though I was not eligible for inclusion on the register, I was often reassured that I was welcome at events through being described by other members as a Linking Neighbour.

When describing how he had joined Linking Neighbours, one man explained that he had thought it was the sensible thing to do. This question of how a person came to find out about and participate in Linking Neighbours was regularly used at the weekly coffee or monthly dinner to strike up conversation on meeting a new person. This was something in which many of us were interested. While I was the only student researcher at the table, others felt they had a stake in letting other people know about the group and encouraging them to join in the events. The strength of feeling towards supporting and growing the program amongst those who came to the weekly coffee and monthly dinner was demonstrated in their reaction to a focus group held as part of a review of programs for seniors in the municipality. Not only was there a strong turn out on the day, which far exceeded the expectation of the consultants organising the focus groups, but what to say at the focus group was repeatedly raised in conversation over coffee for many weeks leading up to the event. Those at the coffee group wanted to communicate a message that would be interpreted by Council as evidence that Linking Neighbours was a great program that should be rolled out to other suburbs, and that its part time coordinator should have his hours extended. The way it was brought up over coffee suggested that people felt they could not just say that Linking Neighbours was great, they had to go about communicating in a way that ensured this would be the interpretation reached by Council.
My discussion of Linking Neighbours is one in which we see not only particular processes operating in which some stories about people or things appear sensible, but also one where particular processes of living — not just being alive — were treated as important. It was part of a larger framework in which it was sensible for Irena to not just care about sitting at the table, but also care how she got there. Linking Neighbours was not just a matter of saying that nobody should die alone, unnoticed, but also emphasising that people should actively register themselves and make themselves visible. Linking Neighbours program for seniors positioned older persons as needing help, but what it provided was help to be active. Being a Linking Neighbour was an act of self-care, but in worrying about extending membership to others who are probably less isolated, existing members could show themselves to be active. Linking Neighbours members and the program itself operated with the presumption that others needed ‘help’. Even my concern not to make others look incapable of moving furniture positioned me as capable of making others appear capable or not. In other words, there was the presupposition of unequal capacities.

The program of Linking Neighbours did not make anybody equal; there was always the imagined isolated older person to be targeted. Yet, I enjoyed being part of Linking Neighbours, and going for coffee and dinner with the group. I liked the sense of openness to newcomers, including people like me who were ineligible to register. This program still mattered, and provided opportunities for people to meet others and try new activities. However, the program was formally premised on a social imagination in which particular people were in need of support. The program had older persons as its object of care, even though there were also benefits for broader society in that actual neighbours could be freed from the discomfort of looking out for others. It was older people who were considered at risk of becoming bodies decomposing unnoticed (see Chapter 6), but also these same people were called forth to register themselves in order to reduce their risk of inconveniencing others.

**Consistently assigning space through the footpath trading guidelines**

Above, I described that people would move furniture to create a path through the cafe for Irena when we had the weekly Linking Neighbours social coffee. Some weeks, before coffee, I would encounter Irena using her walker to move along Bay Street. Most
weeks, we would depart at the same time and we would walk together as she went the short distance to the local neighbourhood house. Out on the footpath, there were no obstacles to move out of Irena’s path, and I did not need to assist her to get into the building at the neighbourhood house because she was able to push her walker up the gentle ramp to the electronic doors.

It was no coincidence that objects on the footpath did not need to be moved out of the way for Irena; the City of Port Phillip had policies intended to have this space left clear. Of course, the policy was not implemented to make it possible for Irena in particular to make her way along the footpath using a walker, but the City of Port Phillip did specify that they were concerned with providing ‘an accessible path of travel for all’ (Footpath trading guidelines: 9).

When I started fieldwork, the City of Port Phillip had been developing a new set of guidelines for the private use of footpaths as a site to place objects. Use for retail and hospitality purposes was the primary demand anticipated, though other requests were encountered (as shown by the story in Chapter 5 of the woman looking to find photographs of her home when it was still a pub to use in her arguments that she should be able to retain the planter boxes on the footpath). The guidelines were to specify which placement or types of furniture and other object installations should be approved, in accordance with bylaws in the municipality. A statement of the purpose of the guidelines was included in the document itself.

The Guidelines have been developed by Council in consultation with the local community to provide a framework for the sustainable use and management of our footpath trading areas. They are in line with Council’s four strategic directions contained within the Council Plan 2009-13: engaging and Governing the City; Taking action on Climate Change; strengthening our Diverse and inclusive Community; and enhancing Liveability.

The Footpath Trading Guidelines of the City of Port Phillip show commitment to supporting and enhancing the vibrancy of our local communities and the sustainable growth of local business. They demonstrate this by allowing private businesses to trade on the city’s footpaths, enabling those enterprises to profit from the use of public land.

These Guidelines explain when and how to trade on the footpath. However, there are times when it will not be possible for businesses to use the footpath in the way that they would like. On these occasions Council is fulfilling its
obligations to the broader community by putting the public’s needs ahead of individual businesses. In summary, it is important to acknowledge that the commercial use of public space is a privilege, not a right. (Footpath trading guidelines: 8)

I have quoted this section at length because it indicates the multiple types of legitimation employed. The development of guidelines, not just their existence, is treated as a legitimating factor. Consultation and development from the higher order principles of sustainability (preserving for the future) and the City of Port Phillip’s strategic directions are part of this. The guidelines anticipate conflict but, by portraying it as one between what an individual business ‘would like’ and ‘the public’s needs’, the guidelines are useful for keeping decisions consistent with higher order principles. There may be disagreement but, within the order that the guidelines treat as sensible, dissenting opinions can be ruled the erroneous result of not paying attention to what actually matters. It is an exercise in consensus making through imposing an order of what is and is not to be treated as visible. By now, this construction should be familiar to readers as the process of ‘the police’ (see Chapter 2).

Footpath trading — businesses placing objects like chairs and tables for the use of customers, section or displaying objects to sell and promotional signs on the footpath — was the main use of footpaths anticipated by the guidelines. An early section in the document does pose and answer the question, ‘Why do we have footpath trading?’ (Footpath trading guidelines: 9). However, this same section also takes a clear position that such uses of space are subordinate to ensuring ‘the footpath provides an accessible path of travel for all’ (Footpath trading guidelines: 9). The benefits from placing objects on the footpath is the reason to permit footpath trading in the first place, but the guidelines are primarily concerned with specifying and assessing permit applications against what is defined as providing for a safe and accessible path through. A permit would not provide blanket approval for any objects to be installed or placed within a particular space; details of quality and appearance would be specified. Clearly, therefore, the guidelines were not just directed at ensuring there was sufficient clear space on the footpath for people such as Pat and Irena to use their walkers. The clearway requirements were central, however, and spelt out in detail. In the guidelines, the footpath is divided into three zones: pedestrian, trading and kerb (Footpath trading guidelines: 15). A footpath trading permit is only to be approved if a minimum
pedestrian zone is provided, with the width of this zone increasing with width of the footpath as a whole (Footpath trading guidelines: 16).

The rationale for these guidelines was consistent with devaluation of the smaller scale (individual businesses were considered less important than the public as a whole). However, very specific details are included in the ‘Footpath trading guidelines’. These details need to be specific so principles can be consistently enacted by council officers. For example, if where a space was to be measured from and to was not specified, each council officer could be left to make a decision every time. Decisions whether or not to issue a permit are made but, to achieve consistent and fair decisions on applications, Council seeks to make the decision a predictable outcome of enacting the guidelines.

Where applications meet all the Guidelines, the Council will normally grant a permit. In cases where an application does not clearly meet the Guidelines or where there are special circumstances, the application will be referred to the Council’s Footpath Trading Panel for further consideration. […] Once the panel has made a recommendation the authorised officer will either approve or refuse the permit application. (Footpath trading guidelines: 32)

As the footpaths and what the applications are for vary, these specifics must be dealt with in such a way that they can be absorbed within a general policy. In prioritising ‘the public’ over any one individual business, Council demands that the different widths of footpaths be accommodated by the business seeking to put objects on, rather than by those who may move along, the footpath. These guidelines, therefore, are not only about predictability in the allocation of permits, but also about achieving predictable material conditions on the footpaths. Guidelines, and policy in general, as the police, are predictable. The predictability achieved by the Footpath trading guidelines allowed Irena, and others, to expect to be able to move along the footpaths of the Bay Street shopping strip in Port Melbourne.

The ‘Footpath trading guidelines’ do go into great detail, but they do not contain an audit of every piece of footpath in The City of Port Phillip. This is in contrast to the City of Port Phillip street tree strategy document, ‘Greening Port Phillip’, which included an audit of every street tree in the council area. In part, this lack of specificity about existing footpaths appears to be sensible because the guidelines are intended to deal with future requests to place objects in the space. What applicants are likely to request can be anticipated, but the future is not known. If the guidelines claimed to list each
possible demand for space and the decision that should be made in that case, then they would not be able to be applied to any demand that was not already specified in the list. Guidelines are useful to the extent that they do not claim to make everything visible. Council officers are instructed how to perceive the world and order demands so they ‘know’ what is to be given attention.

What should be considered in granting a permit was represented in a diagram (reproduced below, diagram 01 in Footpath trading guidelines: 10).

![Diagram 01: Council’s Footpath Trading Priorities](image)

The diagram, labelled ‘Diagram 01’, is a triangle, with the pinnacle being the top priority rather than the base being the founding concern. The area taken up by each priority in the triangle increases as decreasing priorities are listed. It can be read as the first consideration — public safety — requires less space to explain, while those lower down — ending with leisure opportunities — include ever more numerous (but subordinate and even ‘noisy’) claims.
The diagram communicates the frame through which implementation should be evaluated.

Council’s highest priority at all times is public safety, although this is not the only concern. Public safety can be addressed while also creating a vibrant street life, ensuring accessibility for all and balancing a prosperous local economy with residential amenity. Achieving all these priorities is Council’s goal.

However, there are times when this is not possible and so Council must favour one over another. For example, footpath trading gives streets a vibrancy and liveliness but it must be limited (in amount and location) to ensure that the footpath can be used safely by all members of our community. Council has used this order of priority to determine the Guidelines and will use it when making decisions on permit applications. (Footpath trading guidelines: 10)

The ideal is for all of the criteria to be met but, in situations where this is not possible, ‘Council’s footpath trading priorities’ can be followed. Thus, instead of considerations being seen as contradictory, priorities are ranked. Named considerations can be relegated to the position of being less, or not, significant. Yet the guidelines do not have to name everything. Sitting below a bylaw and within the City of Port Phillip’s broader policy framework, with which the ‘Footpath trading guidelines’ had to be consistent, the guidelines are able to function as part of ‘the police’ — a particular distribution of the sensible that presents itself as without any potential supplement that might interrupt the order.

**Implementation**

In 2010, during the consultation phase for the ‘Footpath trading guidelines’, presentations were made at Council meetings by the traders associations — recognised groups run to promote retail and hospitality businesses in various shopping precincts in the municipality. This did result in changes to the document. Those who ran businesses that put objects on the footpath treated the hierarchy of priorities as mattering to them. The specific change made during the consultation process was that ‘a local prosperous economy’ was included in Diagram 01. Including ‘a local prosperous economy’ in the priorities was a way of recognising that the placing of objects on footpath space by traders was not ‘only’ an expression of individual business interests but, rather, a way that traders contribute to the municipality. This did not interrupt the process articulated
in Council policies regarding the development and adoption of guidelines. Their addition to the ‘order of priorities’ was identified during the consultation phase and voiced in meetings, but ‘a local prosperous economy’ was articulated as a sensible consideration within the existing process for decision making.

Furthermore, this was not an addition that forced a redistribution of the stated priorities, because it was specified as subordinate to other concerns. Its introduction appeared as a supplement to what had already been specified in Diagram 01: the prosperity of the local economy already mattered in the City of Port Phillip but it just had not yet been specified in the draft document. It is possible to look back on decisions made by Council to see that supporting ‘a local prosperous economy’ was already prioritised in the City of Port Phillip. For example, the City of Port Phillip supported ‘a special rate’ for retail precincts, with this special rate going towards activities that would promote trade in them.\(^\text{58}\) This is precisely why the traders associations that spoke at the meeting existed. As the commitment to ‘a local prosperous economy’ already existed, it was quickly incorporated into the ‘order of priorities’. Although this initially had been left out, the traders were not treated as having identified something that had really been excluded in the drafting of Diagram 01. My notes from the meeting where the 2010 guidelines were approved describe councillors making remarks in the meeting to the effect of that, ‘Of course they wanted a prosperous local economy.’

Implementation of Port Phillip’s footpath trading policy appeared to me to be interrupted when one cafe successfully challenged refusal of a footpath trading permit. This cafe, Wall 280 in Balaclava, had a pass-through window and bench seat along its exterior wall — hence its name. Although the outside seat was already there, footpath trading permits expired annually and, in 2011, the business owners had to apply for a permit under the new policy. The bench seat, protruding from the building line into the footpath, was clearly in violation of the specifications in the new ‘Footpath trading guidelines’, and the council officer had refused the permit application. This refusal was

\(^{58}\) As described in the ‘Public notice of intention to declare a special rate for the Port Melbourne special rate precinct’: ‘The special rate is for the purpose of defraying marketing, management, business development and other incidental expenses associated with the encouragement and development of commerce, trade and associated employment in the Port Melbourne Special Rate Precinct. In proposing the declaration of the special rate, Council is performing functions and exercising powers relating to the peace, leadership and good governance of the municipal district of the City of Port Phillip and the local community, in particular, the encouragement of employment opportunities and commerce.’
upheld at the tribunal hearing. The business owners persisted in their challenge of the refusal, however, and the application was presented at a City of Port Phillip Ordinary Meeting (8th August 2011).

At this meeting, the business owners represented their permit application as consistent with the priorities specified in the guidelines. Rather than starting with reference to ‘a local prosperous economy’, they argued that public safety and accessibility would be enhanced by their plan, because staff and patrons would not need to cross the footpath to reach the pass-through window. They presented an expert report that accessibility requirements could be met by installing a barrier on the footpath that would mimic a building line for any vision impaired person using a cane to shore-line. In other words, they presented granting them a footpath trading permit to use space along the building line as a sensible decision and, indeed, as an even better way to implement the new policies regarding footpath trading than the alterations council had proposed. However, they also challenged the social legitimacy of the permit refusal, by having many customers who frequented Wall 280 come to speak in support of the cafe. They spoke passionately about it as a site of community, suggesting that the local council should be motivated to preserve sites of community. The customers credited the proxemics of the bench seat with a particular sociality that fostered a sense of community.

The owners of Wall 280 did not advocate for changes to the guideline document. Instead, the permit applied for was presented as a sensible way to deal with a situation not anticipated by the Footpath trading guidelines. However, this was not universally accepted. Janet Bolitho, the local councillor for Sandridge Ward (the Port Melbourne area), voted with one other councillor against the motion to approve Wall 280’s footpath trading permit. According to my notes, Janet declared in the council meeting:

I speak against and, by implication, in favour of the officers’ recommendation. Policies and frameworks are to assist us in decision making … firstly safety and access. It is a matter of consistency … e.g. Port Melbourne [was where similar cafes had to change their set-up to accommodate the new guidelines].

Janet went on to state that she rejected the applicants’ assertion of ‘community’ being under threat in this particular case, and re-emphasised that this was an issue of ‘fairness.

59 Shore-lining refers to the cane technique of tapping along a structure while walking to maintain a straight line of travel.
as other businesses were ‘similarly constrained’. She described the work done by the council consultant as compelling and argued that accessibility was a Human Rights issue. According to Janet, in other words, this was precisely the sort of situation the guidelines anticipated.

The application by Wall 280 received the support of the majority of councillors, and a motion approving the permit (counter to the officer’s recommendation and Janet’s position) was carried. As with the introduction of ‘a local prosperous economy’ to the hierarchy in the ‘Footpath trading guidelines’, this case was not a strong candidate for an example of politics in a Rancièrian sense. The permit approval was counter to the officer’s recommendation but it was still dealt with through existing council processes and, most significantly, the issuing of the footpath trading permit did not redistribute the right to speak. This is even though there were elements of dissensus — competing regimes of sense — with expert reports (from the council consultant and the cafe’s consultant) pitted against each other. Although not voiced by the business owners as an issue of prosperity, the decision to grant the permit is consistent with the dominance of market discourses (see Little 2002). The community that spoke in favour of the bench was, in the terms of Bourdieu (1984), made up of those with the cultural and economic capital to occupy the bench and then translate their position into social capital (i.e. develop the social relationships negotiated at the bench). The capacity of customers to speak as ‘the community’ obscured the exclusionary nature of cafes (and other ‘third places’, see Oldenberg 2013).

The footpath trading permit did redistribute bodies on the footpath, but so would have its refusal. There was no redistribution of social order. Wall 280 increased seating capacity, as it screened itself off from the footpath to meet the accessibility requirements to facilitate shore lining. In this way, listing ‘public safety’ as the first priority for Council’s footpath trading guidelines was useful for imposing order — the very sort of privatisation and commercialisation councillors had claimed they sought to avoid. As the area behind the screen was populated with tables, the sociality of the bench was no more. As policy, however, the outcome was not fair, in that other cafes did not receive the same concessions. Perhaps the existence of a cafe with screened footpath trading along the building line would be referred to as evidence if another business wanted to secure a permit to use the footpath in such a way, and this was one
of Janet’s concerns, but the guidelines made no mention of a need to avoid establishing, or the importance of drawing on, precedents.

To offer an ideological diagnosis of who is absent and whose speech is taken seriously, or to provide a cultural explanation of why such decisions were always going to be made, is to engage in metapolitics (see Chapter 2). As demonstrated in Rancière’s treatment of literature, the shifting of frames conducted as metapolitics can be useful for verifying the excess of words (and, I would add, policy, people, situations or potentialities). However, in the face of Rancière’s critical approach to metapolitics, a hermeneutic of suspicion is appropriate even when faced with situations where inequality has already been demonstrated. After all, Brash (2011: 279) concludes that unmasking class politics does not achieve a ‘more just urban order.’ Instead, Brash (2011: 279) concludes, ‘softening of the Bloomberg Way’s antipolitics and the concomitant acknowledgment of its rooting in upper-class power only cemented its dominance of New York City’s politics.’

Wall 280 argued that their application did meet the important spirit of the guidelines and the broader priorities of the City of Port Phillip. They were able to force a change to the implementation of the guidelines, just as the priorities were altered when ‘a local prosperous economy’ was shown to be missed. Speakers for Wall 280 did not appear to be trying to influence the development of policy but rather its implementation. The separation of policy development from policy implementation is acknowledged in broader literature on public policy as a distinction made for the convenience of analysis, as the line between development and implementation is rarely clear in practice (deLeon & deLeon 2002). For example, developing a set of footpath trading guidelines in the City of Port Phillip was itself an instance of the implementation of policies on producing and adopting guidelines. Yet this distinction between policy development and its implementation is a useful ordering mechanism, and is one that I encountered being used by people within community groups in Port Melbourne.

If an issue under consideration is one of policy implementation, rather than policy development, then the perception is that the rules are already set and the policy merely needs to be followed. Even with the frequent demonstration that written policies diverged from what happened in practice, disagreements in Port Melbourne were not
usually voiced as being conflict over what the parties wanted. Rather, what the parties wanted was voiced, on both sides, as being the correct way to realise relevant policies. For example, discussion of what extensions to houses in Garden City were being approved was often directed at the experience of frustration at what was being approved (see Chapter 3). The greatest concern was expressed by residents when they felt that Council’s own policies (in the form of the Garden City Guidelines) were supposed to prevent the designs of these extensions that they did not like, but their implementation failed to do so. Although those residents expressing concerns about the extensions approved did find which extensions the council officers approved predictable, because they were what they described as ‘glass and concrete box’ extensions, they thought it was unfair the council officers were not following the rules laid out in the guidelines.

Even though members of the traders associations and the owners of Wall 280 were not experts in council policy, they were taken seriously in these contexts. ‘The police’ is a process of ordering in which not all concerns voiced by all people count. When Wall 280 argued that it could meet the spirit of the footpath trading policies, it relied on arguing that the specifications in the ‘Footpath trading guidelines’ were not the only way to achieve council’s specified priorities. Developing and adopting documents like guidelines occurred within the broader configuration of sense. So did their implementation.

**Hatred of democracy**

As my discussion of policies on footpaths shows in this chapter, the most well meaning of programs still codify and institutionalise the various criteria against which people are measured as disabled or otherwise deficient (McDermott & Varenne 1995). Even if it was an enactment of equality that forced a change to policy (McGoey 2011), equality is not a horizon that will be reached through the systems of care that the state offers (Pelletier 2011). Framing policies that seek to make life better for people through the language of rights, rather than presenting them as benevolent care, does not prevent the policies from being premised on, and being implicated in the ongoing imposition of, an unequal social order (Rancière 2004g).
As a particular technology for arriving at decisions, policy was a way to ensure broader goals were worked towards. Safety for people moving through the space was prioritised over the ‘sense of address’ the owner of the old pub claimed was offered by her planter boxes outside her front door (see Chapter 5). It appeared that the footpath trading policy could work against the endless wishes of individuals and ‘individual businesses’, although it proved to be more negotiable when it came to the profitability of Wall 280. Still, it was a way to work against the tragedy of the commons (see Feeny et al. 1990), with the concern being voiced by councillors that uncontrolled footpath use by businesses would result in the privatisation of public space that would leave no way for anybody to get through safely, particularly not those who needed walkers. If just one cafe was given an exception, then it was okay (although this does not automatically mean the granting of an exception is fair).

There is a fear of policy, or at least bureaucratisation, running out of control; to enforce each detail written into policy can lead to infinitely absurd outcomes (Graeber 2015). The justification for the variation in the case of Wall 280 is that it would still achieved the intent of the guidelines. Having the mechanism by which decisions made by council officers in adherence to the guidelines could be contested at a meeting of Council, allowed councillors to maintain control over the decisions made. To prioritise strict adherence to the guidelines might be to miss the broader goals they are intended to achieve or, even worse, fail to achieve sensible outcomes. However, what is ‘sensible’ is an imposed order.

To adopt into policy every concern uttered by any person seriously would result in absurd situations. I believe this was demonstrated when, one Sunday morning, a Port Melbourne resident told a council officer to do something about the ‘dogs weeing on trees’ in the park. The council officer was in the park that morning to monitor and receive feedback on a trial session before the weekly Sunday morning dog club meet was moved to that park permanently. The complaining resident explained that even before an extra 40 dogs were brought to the park once a week for the sessions, the bottom of the conifers that lined the path in the park had already been burnt from dog urine. Her concerns were not taken seriously and there was no follow up action from the City of Port Phillip on the matter. After all, within the broader configuration of sense, parks are an appropriate place for dogs to urinate. There were the discoloured leaves to
point to as evidence that the dogs were having an impact, but this impact was not significant enough to matter.

Policy is a method for imposing order, so as to work against what Rancière (1995a: 2) so evocatively describes as Plato’s fear of the bad smell that comes from democracy. Democracy, ‘a government based on no qualification other than the absence of qualification’ (Rancière 2007: 562), is underpinned by what I outlined in Chapter 2 as politics. It is not the rule of those who are sanctioned as properly qualified (archipolitics), and it is not premised on ignoring the exclusion of most people and ideas to achieve equality within a bounded community (parapolitics). Rancière does not offer a policy that can be followed to reach, or even invest in, democratic politics (Tambakaki 2009: 113). Democracy is underpinned by equality, which can always be enacted to interrupt order.

It is one thing to use policies to impose order on the world in a way that is considered fair within its context, but this does not nullify the demand that social researchers take seriously what is voiced by the people they claim to be describing. Taking the people I encountered in Port Melbourne seriously was not achieved when, at the time of the complaint in the park, I made the strategic decision to suppress a snort of laughter. I am not arguing for a world in which the colour of those bottom few leaves are taken as significant in decisions around where dog activities are held. However, this same mechanism — that particular concerns being voiced by certain people did not need to be taken into consideration in the implementation of particular policies — was in operation in the example with which I started this chapter of the initial dismissal of Louise’s attempt to make an objection to the sale of the back laneway because she was too old to understand. This response to Louise was clearly not fair because it was not an accurate assessment within the framework of the policy; Louise, as an affected resident, was identified as a valid objector and, when the sale was stopped, her position was held up as valid too. However, it appears that the day-to-day practicalities of administering even local government areas requires mechanisms whereby not everything needs to be seriously entertained, or no action will ever be able to be progressed.

To write every contingency into policy would be impossible; to be able to give any account as to what should happen in the world order must be imposed on a world that is
irreducibly complex. There may be space within policy development for feedback, as with Louise’s objection to the laneway being sold off (once she was able to lodge it) being effective within the operation of the guidelines on such matters, and members of the traders associations advocating for the inclusion of ‘a local prosperous economy’ in the priorities during the development of a set of guidelines. However, as I illustrate further in Chapter 8, there are always limits to whose submissions are taken seriously in the City of Port Phillip.

Both to argue that the policy must be enforced, or that the policy must be interpreted within a broader order, can be underpinned by what Rancière (2009c) describes as the hatred of democracy. The hatred of democracy is not the wish to make the world worse for people; it is generally quite the opposite. The hatred of democracy is the fear of the excess, whether the excess of market consumerism or the excess of bureaucratic regulation. Against this hatred, Rancière argues for the presupposition of the equality of intelligences. This does not mean that the decisions people make should be abstracted from their broader context, or that they should not be measured up against an order of priorities. What it does call for is to take seriously the possibility that anybody at all may be making a valid observation, no matter how ridiculous the claim or delivery appears.
Chapter 8: Politics

Interrupting

The ideal of policy operated in Port Melbourne, but orderly agreement was often interrupted. In this chapter, I work with stories of interruption and consider whether they are politics in the sense put forward by Rancière. As discussed in Chapter 2, one example of politics used by Rancière (2004g: 303-304; 2009b: 60) is that of Olympe de Gouge asserting that ‘women are men too’. This Rancière discusses as an instance of interruption to the taken for granted interpretation of particular words. Her assertion can be described as politics because it was an enactment of equality that disrupted the imposition of inequality through social order, forcing a redistribution of social order. This does not happen often (Rancière 1999: 17; McGoey 2011: 153). While my fieldwork did not give rise to any events that are likely to appear in history in the same way as the story of Olympe de Gouge, there were many interruptions to the taken for granted use and circulation of processes.

Not all of these moments of interruption or expression of different opinions appeared as instances of politics or even dissensus — conflict over what is sensible. If a particular moment was able to be sidelined as ‘just’ an interruption, it had been dealt with within the police logic. For it to be politics, a supplement must have appeared (was staged and perceived) as relevant to what was already treated as mattering. Therefore, in truly political moments, there is a degree to which the words of the speaker (with the speaker being a person who previously was not recognised as a sensible person to comment) are a verbalisation of something that was already right (as both sensible and correct), though not previously recognised as such. Framed by Stoneman (2011) as ‘appropriate indecorum’, this tension between the circulation of the police and the introduction of a supplement of politics is constitutive of a Ranciérian approach. It relies on the process of subjectivization — somebody speaking not ‘just’ as an individual, but so as to speak into existence a group identity that forces the redistribution of all social roles.

The four examples I work though in this chapter demonstrate why, unless social recognition is brought about through subjectivization, an interruption will not be disruptive and will not be staged as politics. This is my answer to the question of why
the attempts to use policy discussed in Chapter 7 were largely ineffective. As my
discussion of politics is advanced through attention to the messy details of some
particular situations, the style of this chapter will be familiar to a reader who has
progressed through each chapter in turn. These examples are ordered from one in which
speech was most unambiguously marginalised as noise in an encounter between two
individuals, to where people in Port Melbourne were able to interrupt the movement of
a draft document through the City of Port Phillip’s community consultation process.
Again, I do not posit my approach as one of progressive revelation. Politics is how
equality is staged in the face of inequality but, as most clearly demonstrated in the
second and third example, actively setting out to stage politics is not valued by people in
Port Melbourne; politics happens when people go about enacting what they hold to be
sensible in such a way that other people also recognise the actions or claims as sensible
ways to realise what they already held to be fair, even though they have interrupted the
order that existed before.

**Cracking the shits**

Regardless of whether you treat social inclusion as a win-win or part of the ongoing
imposition of social order, surely an op shop should be considered an ideal site of social
inclusion. Op shops, with the name abbreviated from ‘opportunity’, generally refers to
charity stores that sell donated items (including clothes, accessories, books and
homewares) to raise money for charity organisations. Horne (2000) describes the
functions of charity shops as providing cheap goods, recycling goods, awareness raising
for charitable causes, and fundraising. It is fair to extend to Australian op shops the
description of UK charity shops as ‘inhabit[ing] a tension between commitment to
values related to charity and compassion, and demands for economic efficiency’ (Flores
2014: 387). Social good is perceived amongst the public as the primary intention of this
sector, with environmental gains from recycling items generally perceived as secondary
to the role of charity shops in addressing social needs (Dururu et al. 2015). Operating in
‘the border zone between commercialism and voluntarism’ (Parsons 2004: 259),
multiple functions of charity shops are directed towards social good, as it is not only a
site for circulating objects, but also of volunteer labour.
Once a week during my fieldwork, I volunteered at the local op shop. Demonstrating the unpaid manager’s interest in fostering social relationships amongst volunteers, and an example of the charitable actions and sensitivity towards needs of volunteers described as important by Parsons (2004), I felt that it was not a number of hours a week I signed up for so much as to be part of the team for the afternoon on a particular day of the week. When my availability changed after 6 months, the manager suggested that I swapped to a day which was staffed with almost the same team. Although the most active volunteers did more than one day a week, a weekly shift fitted with normal volunteering patterns in the sector. As part of a broader drive towards maximising the funds raised, there has been an increase in the use of paid staff and an attitude of professionalisation in the sector (for Australia, see Podkalicka & Meese 2012; for UK see Horne 2004; Parsons 2004; Maddrell 2000). During my fieldwork, this op shop was experiencing increasing intervention from the owning organisation, which appeared to me to be directed at standardisation across the op shops and increased formalisation of store processes. The store itself was still staffed exclusively by volunteers at the time of my fieldwork.

During my shift at the op shop one week, I approached a woman who came in with two suitcases and told her that I had bad news if they were to be a donation because I could not accept them. She offered no sign of agreement by gesture or verbal back-channelling; indeed, she appeared angry. She explained that the suitcases were full of ‘things’. We did try to refuse old suitcases; they took up a lot of space and they were rarely purchased. But on that day, and as I told her, the problem was that there was no space ‘out the back’ and so we were not accepting anything. Instead of accepting my refusal, she added that she had three more in the car. I was annoyed: if we did not have any space to hold more objects, how could the sheer quantity of things help her cause? Another person browsing in the shop told her, ‘Just leave it at the door,’ asserting that it was ridiculous for me not to take the donation as this was an op shop. The woman did leave the suitcases outside the front door. Or, as I described it when I later recounted the story to the other volunteers, she dumped (rather than donated) the suitcases full of items when she ‘cracked the shits’.

60 Maddrell (2000) found that the majority of charity shop volunteers in Oxford volunteered either a half or one day a week.
Behaviour of the sort displayed by this woman was something that the other volunteers and I anticipated when we refused items. Though we expected it would happen, it still felt like an interruption to carrying out our duties and was always treated as a violation of sensible and appropriate behaviour. The woman appeared in my recount as a selfish member of the public who had, to use a colloquial expression found in Australian English, ‘cracked the shits’. ‘Cracking the shits’ is letting frustration spill out so that you expose emotion inappropriately, albeit on a less dramatic scale than ‘loosing your shit’. ‘Cracking’ suggests that control has been lost under pressure. ‘Shit’ — literally faeces — is something that people may all have, but to expose it is seen as inappropriate and unpleasant. ‘The shits’ is also colloquially used to refer to diarrhoea, which is itself a symptom of things moving through the digestive system and being expelled without the proper measure of control. When I say she ‘cracked the shits’, I am asserting that, acting without proper control, she behaved inappropriately and created an unpleasant situation. By ruling her leaving the suitcases as ‘out of order’ I, or any other volunteer, could return to the sense of being a ‘good person’.

Donating to an op shop is generally seen in Australia as an act of charity, and thus a good thing. The woman may have felt justified to protest my refusal and leave the suitcases as, in refusing her items, I had interrupted her ‘good deed’ of donating to the op shop. But, as in much consumption it is the market value rather the physical object itself that is consumed, her donation was also a way to get rid of excess objects. As a man yelled at me when I had refused his items earlier the same day, my refusal was an inconvenience. This man, like other donors, had gone to the effort of packing the items in the car and driving to the op shop. Taking the carload elsewhere would take more time. Taking the items back home to throw them out would lack the sense of doing a good deed (i.e. it would be seem wasteful) and would also require effort. In Port Melbourne, the local government provides domestic garbage collection, with a weekly collection using council-issued bins paid for by property owners. Volumes above this require special arrangements, and often an extra fee, for pick up or drop off.

Items donated to the op shop were not only being put in circulation, they were being put to use in ways perceived as having positive moral value. As charity, some donated items would be used for material aid. People identified as being in need, by workers or volunteers associated with the organisation could be issued a voucher to use in the op
shop or delivered furniture items that were sent by the op shop to the organisation’s warehouse. Also, although in violation of the organisation’s rules, op shop volunteers sometimes diverted items to people who came in asking for assistance, or who they knew were in need. The relatively low cost of items in the op shop also provided a way that people with little financial capital could afford to purchase things, whether they actually wanted these items or just wanted to shop as a recreational activity. The main charity role of the op shop, however, was to raise money for the organisation through sales. This was made visible when head office sent memos (along with instructions that they be displayed) telling volunteers that taking items, even items otherwise to be sent to landfill, was considered, and would be prosecuted as, stealing.

In other words, when it worked seamlessly, donating to an op shop appeared as a mutually beneficial ethical act. The socially responsible appearance of these two would-be donors was, in my opinion, displaced by the frustration they expressed when their plans were interrupted. It was as if the messy reality of the motivations that resulted in them being there, trying to get rid of excess things, became apparent. When the volunteers already could hardly move to carry out the work of sorting and pricing items, dumping more items reduced the efficiency of the op shop, thus reducing the capacity of the op shop volunteers to do their own good work.

We often ran out of space in the storage and sorting area behind the shop front. Donations had to be sorted and priced before being placed in the op shop for sale. This took labour. If there was a shortage of volunteers that day, the items could pile up. Labour was divided, with particular people sorting and pricing particular items, so things could also build up quickly if a lot of things in a particular category came in or if a particular person was away.

Only a small proportion of the items received went onto the shop floor. Many items were sent to the organisation’s warehouse (to be sorted and distributed across the world), and others to landfill. Therefore, if the items for the warehouse or landfill had not been picked up, there could also be a shortage of space. This was part of the issue on the day that woman had come in; ‘the bales’ — textiles put into large sacks to go to the warehouse — had not been picked up. The reason for this, as I later found out, was that head office had changed the system for picking up bales. This change had been
explained via email but the volunteers, not knowing how to access the emails, did not know this. Furthermore, the new system entailed a move from the truck coming out twice a week on the same scheduled days to pick-ups being initiated as needed by stores sending off an email. Not knowing how to log into the email account meant the volunteers could not use this new system. When I described those would-be-donors who expressed frustration at being told we would not accept their items as ‘cracking the shits’, I could leave unexamined the organisational issues that led to there not being space for more donations in the first place. I could blame those at head office who instituted the new system without attention to the skill set of the volunteers. (Even though, as demonstrated when I showed a volunteer how to turn on the shop computer, the volunteers could learn.)

Volunteers had little means to challenge directives from head office and did not even know when systems that they used were altered. We could, however, take a position of authority against would-be-donors, and refuse to accept items. To do this, and so work within existing power structures in the op shop or to explain what happened in the op shop, is the process of ‘the police’. Therefore, neither the actions of the customers nor those of the volunteers was politics. It is unlikely anyone involved would have wanted their actions to be described as politics.

Just politics

In Port Melbourne, ‘politics’ was often used as a term of derision. For example, ‘It’s all just group politics!’ I was told with a laugh, when I tried to ask Zoe about the steps taken in considering whether or not Dig In Community Garden would allow chickens. 

Dig In Community Garden, run by its own committee but as a program of the Port Melbourne Neighbourhood House, has been a fenced off area within a larger reserve since 2002. An accurate description of the garden is offered by Kingsley and Townsend (2006), although there had been some changes by my fieldwork as, by 2010-2012, a few

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61 I had to ask about this process because, while I attended most of the monthly working bees and two of the annual Christmas parties, I only observed one committee meeting for this community garden. The participant observation I undertook in the garden was relevant for my understanding of the decision making regarding the chickens because, similar to the fieldwork experience of Flachs (2013), it contributed to me being recognised by gardeners and people took the opportunity to educate me. This education, however, was less in the domains of gardening techniques or the issues inciting grassroots organising mentioned by Flachs (2013) than in group dynamics amongst gardeners.

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raised plots had been added and a few others had changed hands. At the time of my fieldwork, nearly 50 plots of varying sizes, were being used to grow food on a small scale. Plots were assigned to individuals or a couple (sometimes on behalf of a nuclear family) who live in the City of Port Phillip. Some plot holders travelled from apartments in the St Kilda Road precinct 6kms away, but the majority of plot holders lived in houses or apartments in Port Melbourne. After a decade in operation, with a two year waiting list to get a plot at the garden, there was a plan to add more plots.

During my fieldwork, plot holders made a small financial contribution once a year (this was termed ‘plot fees’ by the gardeners and was around AUD$50). Fees varied based on the area of the plot and remeasuring was undertaken in 2011 to ensure the fees were set on the basis of accurate measurements. Plot holders were also expected to attend the working bees held once a month on a Sunday. Although attendance dropped as low as 16 people and there was a suggestion of setting a mandatory minimum attendance for working bees. The working bees were one hour of work on common areas followed by a BBQ and wine lunch. Lunch was partly funded by the garden, but there was also a roster for plot holders to bring food along. Plot holders were also invited to volunteer for an annual fundraising activity of selling sausages outside the local Bunnings (chain) hardware store. External support that Dig In Community Garden in Port Melbourne received during my fieldwork included unpaid use of council administered land, funding for projects through council grants, and the free use of some resources from the Port Melbourne Neighbourhood House. State support of community garden projects like Dig In Community Garden in Port Melbourne is called for by Kingsley, Townsend and Henderson-Wilson (2009) because such gardens are a way to enhance something desirable: social capital.

These researchers are not alone; much research on community gardens uses the language of social capital. One common aspect of the definition of social capital is that social relationships are perceived as a resource.62 Spending time with other people

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62 The concept of ‘social capital’ features in the work of Loury (1989), Coleman (1988), Putnam (2000) and Bourdieu (1984), amongst others (see Portes 1998). Increasing social capital became a policy goal in 1990s Australia and it was Putnam’s work that was particularly influential (Adams 2009). The concept soon received increasing critical attention; particularly the valorisation of social capital derived from the work of Putnam has been seen as resulting in blaming people for their own poverty (Blackshaw & Long 2005). The concept continues to be mobilised in research, with sometimes rather thin readings of Bourdieu’s work on social capital (which emphasises the potential for social, cultural and economic capital to be converted into each other) being treated as a less offensive manner of doing this because it
through engaging in the leisure activity of gardening together has been said to build
social capital (Glover, Parry & Shinew 2005). By some accounts, the way the garden
operates is significant in influencing social capital, with at least one set of findings of
positive benefits associated with projects that involve collective gardening rather than
individual allotted plots (Alaimo, Reischl & Allen 2010). The organisational structures
used to administer the community garden also play a role in the perception of social
capital (Alaimo, Reischl & Allen 2010; Drake 2014; Firth, Maye & Pearson 2011;
Kurtz 2001) and, particularly when conflicts that arise regarding the garden are resolved
within such structures, they can foster a sense of community (Kurtz 2001). The positive
effects of community gardens are not universally demonstrated (Firth, Maye & Pearson
2011: 557), but nor is social capital always seen as resulting in desirable outcomes as
the relationships of social capital can be exclusionary and existing economic
inequalities can be reinforced (Crisp 2013: 327; Woolcock & Manderson 2009). This is
demonstrated in Kingsley and Townsend’s (2006: 535) prediction for Dig In Community Garden: ‘Care will need to be taken to ensure that any development in the
depth of social capital flowing from the garden does not occur at the expense of
openness and inclusion.’

As Drake (2014) describes, while some academic attention direction towards
community gardens celebrates the potential for social capital, there is also a body of
work that critically reviews discourse about community gardens through the lens of
governmentality. Yet it is within the project Drake (2014) sets out of examining the
formation of subjects through the unstable process of those perceiving and enacting an
ideal that Zoe’s laughed response of ‘just politics’ can be understood.

Zoe was an active member of this community garden and had been supportive of Dig In
going chickens. The decision-making process undertaken amongst the community
garden plot-holders seemed to be modelled on the same policy ideals I described as the
police in Chapter 7. Zoe’s support for chickens in the garden was aligned with the
dominant, but not uncontested, position. Certain community garden plot-holders had
been working towards having chickens at the garden for some time. What was referred
to by gardeners as the ‘chicken working group’ had been established before I started

acknowledges that social capital functions to reproduce inequality (e.g. Carpiano 2006; Carpiano 2007;
DeFilippis 2001; Siisiainen 2003; Son, Yarnal & Kerstetter 2010).
fieldwork. Only after demonstrating that it would be sensible to have chickens in the community garden (through using evidence from other community gardens that already had chickens and a preliminary plan for where the chickens could be accommodated within the garden), did the working group receive approval from the garden’s management committee to conduct a survey that would gauge support amongst members of the community garden. I did not see the survey schedule, but garden members — those with a plot at Dig In — were asked, as separate questions, whether they supported chickens in the garden and if they would assist in looking after chickens. More respondents apparently supported than objected to there being chickens in the garden, and it was deemed that enough people had indicated their willingness to help. The garden’s management committee gave the working group permission to proceed.

The survey had established a space allowing those who did not want chickens to be counted. Disagreement was acknowledged without interrupting the face-to-face pleasantries in the garden. This process also separated supporting or objecting to the presence of chickens from agreement to be involved in looking after them. When it came to social capital, the potential for cordial relationships amongst people may have been protected, but the process was designed so that the significance of relationships between people, which might be able to be translated into influence, were minimised. This was an attempt to arrive at a decision in a fair way, as characteristic of ‘the police’. Rather than describing the process as fair or bureaucratic, however, when I brought up the topic Zoe expressed amusement at ‘group politics’.

Initially, I felt that this conversation with Zoe contributed little to my knowledge of how the decision making process had unfolded. Zoe understood I was interested in processes of negotiation and looking at commonalities across situations, and often brought examples to my attention. Also, while always busy, Zoe often took the time to describe the context for her explanations. Therefore, I interpreted her reply as an assertion that the details did not bear considering. Even if Zoe was deflecting the question simply because she could not remember the details, it suggests they were not important. At the same time, naming what unfolded pertaining to the chickens as ‘group politics’ interrupted expression of the decision-making process as a perfect representation of the gardeners’ interests: it was not the taken for granted operation of the police.
Zoe’s characterisation of the process as ‘just politics’ could itself be considered an explanation of what had occurred. A definition of politics that is mobilised in ordinary English is to do with competition over who gets to decide who gets what. Group politics describes jockeying for power, to be taken seriously, and so influence decisions within the group. Such activity is not usually celebrated, although it can be seen as strategic. ‘Group politics’ carries the connotation of positioning yourself not just on a particular issue, but for the future. Therefore, using the label ‘group politics’ is different to describing someone’s actions as ‘cracking the shits’. ‘Cracking the shits’ is demonstrating impotence in a particular moment while ‘group politics’ is strategising for the future. Both labels can be used to account for, and so contain, particular actions. ‘Group politics’ might be denigrated because group members ‘should’ be concerned with their position in larger scale affairs, and might be ascribed to the failure of formal and informal internal processes. ‘Cracking the shits’ appears as an individual’s failure to act on the self (Foucault 1988) and ultimately as futile. This is the case even though a reputation for ‘cracking the shits’ might have a significant impact on your future treatment in decision-making processes.

To use the qualifier ‘just’ is to say that it is ‘only’, generally meaning it is nothing more significant and so does not need further analysis to be perceived accurately. To describe something as ‘just politics’, in this context and others, was to dismiss it as nothing more worthy of consideration than people trying to position themselves to get what they want. In a similar way to my description of how ‘cracking the shits’ functioned, the claims made by those engaged in ‘just politics’ can be marginalised as noise. Such claims can be dismissed as simply the multiplication of illustrations showing why proper processes are necessary for sensible decision making.

Zoe, as an active member of the working group, had been involved in these processes she was mocking. Her laughing response was interpreted by me as her taking a position of ironic distance (Rapport 2002), even though she was one of the key community gardeners involved in campaigning for the community garden to have chickens. Perhaps Zoe had the luxury of laughing at the process because her position on the matter — in support of having chickens in the garden — was accepted as the dominant one. Although a lengthy process of arriving at the decision was undertaken, her project was ultimately realised and she did not experience the frustration of her project being
rejected. Zoe took pleasure in taking a position of ironic distance in discussing the community garden with me, but she still signed up to help look after the chickens. She did not need to interrogate the processes in their own right because she understood, and was able to work effectively within, them.

**Sideline speaker**

Working to position oneself within a group might be dismissed as ‘just group politics’, but being socially recognised as having a part to play in sensible public deliberations matters. Politics may be the enactment of the equality people already have, but people live in a world where social order operates. Within order, not all words uttered by all people are taken seriously. The noise-speech distinction takes on a very literal meaning within the City of Port Phillip policies on public representation and consultation. However, policies and procedures for written submissions and speaking at meetings are operationalised in a relational social world where people come to know and recognise each other as particular people, not just at representatives of group-level social identities.

On the 9th May 2011, at the City of Port Phillip Ordinary Meeting in the Port Melbourne Town Hall, the chair turned off the microphone while it was still being spoken into. The speaker, John Kirby, had used public question time in the meeting to ask if the councillors had read his submission to Heritage Victoria, a copy of which he had sent council. John Kirby continued to talk after his microphone was turned off. His voice, however, was reduced to background noise (and silenced from the audio recording of the meeting). The question did appear in the minutes of the meeting, and so did the mayor’s reply that she had not, and would not, read the submission. But the other details of their exchange, observable by those of us in the meeting room, did not appear in the minutes.

In the meeting, a person sitting nearby whispered to me that she thought John Kirby was not getting a fair go. Somebody speaking at a formal meeting having their microphone turned off, rather than being asked to conclude, was unusual. The chair ruling out reading correspondence addressed to her seemed absurd. The issue John Kirby was commenting on, however, was one that the chair thought should not be on the agenda:
the matter had already been decided by council and so his question was not sensible. Indeed, the application itself was an inappropriate interruption of process. The mayor’s position had previously been made clear in a media release from the City of Port Phillip:

Mayor Cr Rachel Powning said Council is extremely disappointed that a single objector has nominated the building for the Register; particularly given Heritage Victoria determined the building did not satisfy the necessary requirements to be added to the register back in August 2009. (Delayed kindergarten jeopardises hundreds of places 2011)

The ‘single objector’ mentioned in this City of Port Phillip media release was immediately recognisable to me, and others, as John Kirby. As the media release said, he had applied a second time to have Lady Forster Kindergarten added to the Victorian Heritage Register in an attempt to stop its demolition, thereby delaying work to build the proposed Liardet Street Family and Children’s Centre. By referring to him as a ‘single objector’, rather than an opinion being voiced by ‘the people’ (c.f. Iveson 2014a) or even a group, the mayor dismissed the significance of John Kirby’s nomination for heritage listing.

As I discussed in Chapter 1, using an individual’s proper name can contribute to a piece of information being identified through an internet search engine and also the potential for people to associate information with an individual. Erroneous connections are possible, with names generally not being unique to one individual; another ‘John Kirby’ I knew through fieldwork in Port Melbourne had photographs in the collections of the City of Port Phillip and the Port Melbourne Historical and Preservation Society, including the photograph of the City of Port Melbourne discussed in Chapter 5. In the case of this kindergarten, however, with the name of the nominator was already on public record through Heritage Victoria and the City of Port Phillip, not naming John Kirby seems primarily an act of withholding recognition. This was a strategy also adopted by the Port Phillip Leader, as the claim that there was only one objector had already been mentioned without naming John Kirby in one of the local newspapers on the 12th April 2011 (Port Phillip Leader 2011). It is difficult to see this as part of a broader and shared understanding not to identify members of the public as the City of Port Phillip publishes the names of those who speak at ordinary and planning meetings and both local newspapers publish names with letters. Perhaps it could be a reluctance to publish proper names when the individual is not self-representing. However, the other
local newspaper named a different member of the public they were ridiculing for his many questions during a council meeting a couple of weeks earlier (Melbourne Weekly Port Phillip 2011).

John Kirby — the objector — and Rachel Powning — the mayor — may have disagreed as to whether the kindergarten building should be demolished but, I argue, they both worked from the assumption that to be ‘a single objector’ was not a valid position from which to speak on the future of this site. They also had understandings of what was sensible that had much in common. In his submission to Heritage Victoria, John Kirby tried to explain his position as one that should be treated as sensible within the existing context. This suggests John Kirby was aware that his application was not already accepted as sensible. His right to speak to council also seemed in doubt when he asked if, instead of presuming that, his correspondence had been read.

While John Kirby’s submission covered a lot of ground, what he later told me was particularly significant about the building was that its supposed poor design built good relationships and so a sense of community. For example, the inadequate building brought people close together but also forced conversations between staff and parents into the garden. John argued for the garden to be included in the scope of the assessment, likening it to the harbour and reflecting pools being components of the Sydney Opera House and the Taj Mahal.

The VHR tries to ignore LFCK’s [the kindergarten’s] garden and only wants to look at the building. Here too it wants to leave things out. When the VHR looks at architecture it concentrates only on the form and the components of the building using Meis van der Rohe’s edict ‘God is in the details’. But, in obsessing about the details the VHR forgets about how the building functions ie how the sum of the components add up. (Submission to Heritage Council 2011)

According to John, it was sensible to apply the heritage criterion of time to gardens because, ‘Gardens need time, the longer the time the better the garden’ (Submission to Heritage Council 2011). He argued, ‘LFCK has evolved into a great playground garden over 82 years, a tribute to the Port Melbourne community, the local council and the state government’ (Submission to Heritage Council 2011).
These quotes show John Kirby referring to the kindergarten as LFCK — Lady Foster Community Kindergarten. He had inserted ‘community’ into the name, an insertion rejected by Heritage Victoria, which continued to refer to it as LFK — Lady Foster Kindergarten (Decision of the Heritage Council 2011). He was energetic when he spoke to me about his strategies for objecting to council’s plans, and perhaps injecting the word ‘community’ into this was intended to be strategic in order to position the dispute as something other than just the building itself. Yet John also had a great enthusiasm for reflecting on what the site offered. While acknowledging that the kindergarten building was small and did not have sufficient space for particular activities, he asserted that these same properties of the site, which others described as deficiencies, resulted in behaviours that brought people close together in a non-confrontational manner that fostered community.

The theme of ‘community’ was returned to many times in John’s submission. Not just concerned with a building or the garden as a distinctive and/or enduring physical assemblage, he also highlighted the role played by past community advocacy in gaining sufficient garden space for the kindergarten. Community advocacy was associated with ‘heritage’ through John’s representation of the history of Port Melbourne as a history of advocacy, and through the idea that community effort should be rewarded with the designation of ‘heritage’:

All this has been achieved by the local Port Melbourne community, a great contribution and inspiration to the ‘kindergarten movement’ by any standard, certainly of great significance to the State, as LFCK is now the model kindergarten, a mantle once held by LGK. The community effort to keep LFCK going through all its struggles should be rewarded as an encouragement for other community effort. (Submission to Heritage Council 2011)

The story of the institution was treated as contributing to the heritage value of the site itself, and also as positioning John Kirby’s own advocacy as appropriate. However (and/or because of the symbolic significance of community), the media release features the mayor positioning this nomination for the Victorian Heritage Register not as ‘community effort’ but rather as the work of ‘a single objector’ (Delayed kindergarten jeopardises hundreds of places 2011).
John Kirby was able to hold up council processes through making the application to the Victorian Heritage Register, but he did not prevent the demolition of the kindergarten (Decision of the Heritage Council 2011). John Kirby’s position was also dismissed in the report by the Victorian Heritage Register officer prepared for the hearing (Recommendation and determination 2011). Lady Forster Kindergarten is described in this document as being ‘of local historical, architectural and social significance, but as not having sufficient cultural heritage value to warrant being added to the Victorian Heritage Register’ (Recommendation and determination 2011: 2). It was not that John Kirby could not understand the processes used by the City of Port Phillip or Heritage Victoria in arriving at decisions. Rather, he wanted to interrupt the justifications offered for the decisions made, so that the kindergarten building would not be demolished. Yet he sought to use the policies of those organisations to achieve this.

John Kirby did appear to me to enjoy attempting to ‘save’ the kindergarten, as a game or contest in its own right. On the other hand, I never doubted that he cared passionately about saving the kindergarten. A councillor described him to me as, ‘Somebody who cares deeply about the kindergarten.’ But not for a moment did this description imply that he should be taken seriously. John spoke with passion about ‘community’, yet was left being singled out as a ‘lone objector’ by the mayor.

**Politics is social recognition**

John Kirby was not taken seriously. He was not the only one to be dismissed as an individual ‘out of step’ and thus not making sense. Based on the examples throughout my dissertation, it appears the odds are against successful advocacy or being able to use policy to initiate a successful change of direction. However, the City of Port Phillip has been the site of notable interruptions. There was the rejection of plans for the St Kilda Triangle, as depicted in the documentary directed by Rosie Jones (2011) *The Triangle Wars*. In Port Melbourne, there had been the collapse of plans for the Bayside Development (Batten 1998). From my fieldwork, the withdrawal of the Draft Port Melbourne Waterfront Urban Design Framework (UDF) can fruitfully be considered another example. This example also goes some way to verifying why the process of subjectivization — the process of somebody speaking not ‘just’ as an individual, but so
to speak into existence a group identity that forces the redistribution of all social roles — is key to Rancière’s conceptualisation of politics.

The Draft Port Melbourne Waterfront UDF was a document setting out a framework for future changes in part of Port Melbourne. I had followed the development of it through a series of community consultation events and precursor documents. When approving the draft of the UDF document for public consultation was on the agenda for an Ordinary Meeting of Council, members of the public spoke against its release. One councillor seemed to sum up the dominant attitude of councillors when he described those speaking against the draft UDF as not seeing the forest for one very tall tree. This was a riff on a common idiom — not to see the forest for the trees — used to claim someone is too focused on a specific detail to notice what is significant about the bigger picture. This idiom is another instance of the devaluation of smaller scale and specific considerations (see Chapter 1). The ‘tall tree’ was interpreted by me, and others, as referring to the document’s inclusion of tall buildings at a particular site — entailing a change to existing height limits. In the months that followed, however, (and unlike with the Garden City Guidelines discussed in Chapter 3), ultimately it was the councillors and council officers, rather than the ‘objectors’, who appeared to have misread the broader configuration of sense.

At this meeting, councillors approved the motion releasing the draft UDF for public consultation. After all, at least as councillors asserted, it was released ‘only’ as a draft document. Yet objectors continued to campaign against that release. The campaign against this draft of the UDF had been, and took on momentum, not ‘just’ as an objection to specific content — e.g. a height limit at a particular site — based on an argument that the document failed on its own terms. The argument succeeded. Council took the remarkable step of withdrawing the document (instead of simply collating and responding to comments). The objectors had been successful in representing the terms on which the Draft UDF should be evaluated — as a document representing community opinion, which would enact the authority of the City of Port Phillip in future planning decisions.

People in Port Melbourne often consciously chose and reflected on the words they and others used. As with the practices of community I discussed in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6,
this was not always made explicit. But often it was. Within the internal meetings of
neighbourhood associations, community organisations, volunteer groups and those who
gathered to object to approval of a planning permit, what words to use was part of their
strategising as to which arguments to make. This was not ignored by the group of
people who formed to object to the document, but I did notice that a smaller proportion
of their organisational effort was invested in finding ways to use existing planning
policies to justify their position than was invested in planning and undertaking
communication through written materials and at face-to-face events with other Port
Melbourne residents. This made sense as they were commenting on a draft of an UDF,
which could result in changes to planning schemes, rather than on a particular
application to be assessed against the existing planning scheme. My perception was that
those campaigning against this draft UDF were primarily trying to stage community
opinion. They communicated technical information to the community, rather than to the
City of Port Phillip, and then staged community opinion through writing submissions
and appearing at meetings of Council.

As a document purporting to represent community opinion, if those rejecting the height
limit put forward in the draft UDF were ‘the community’ then the document was
inconsistent, and so something clearly had gone wrong in the process of its
development. The argument was made by the objectors that something went wrong. The
council eventually accepted that a mistake was made when it approved the draft UDF,
but there was a time before that when councillors knew there was opposition to the
document's contents but still accepted the draft UDF as valid. During the campaign
against the draft UDF before it was withdrawn, people demanded, in conversation and
during public question time at council meetings, the full records of what members of the
public had written down in responses elicited as part of community meetings. Yet these
documents were already available. The pages on which groups had written down their
responses had been digitised and included as an appendix in each subsequent report.
These reports were available online, and in hard copy at council service locations and at
consultation events. The words they contained had not determined what appeared in the
draft UDF. They had been read and interpreted within a broader configuration of sense,
just as the renovations approved for Garden City were not determined by what was
specified on page 17 of the guidelines document discussed in Chapter 3, but by a pre-
existing view of what made sense.
Height limits for the Port Melbourne waterfront area covered by the UDF had been indicated as a community concern in the consultation process, and the gap between what was voiced in the consultation process and the height limits that appeared in the draft UDF were commented on by the objectors. However, rather than explaining repeatedly how the feedback collected in community consultation should be interpreted, objectors pushed for recognition of the increased height limit as significant for the built environment. They prepared images of tall buildings on the site that indicated the overshadowing and interrupted view lines that would result. They showed that, rather than just impacting on people who lived nearby, tall buildings would negatively impact on visitors to the area. These image mock-ups took the perspective of international travellers arriving by cruise ship into Station Pier. As tall buildings would obstruct the view to Melbourne's CBD skyline for international tourists, significance beyond a ‘local issue’ was demonstrated. In this way, the height limit appeared to be a sensible (rather than petty) concern of people self-identifying respectively as the community and City of Port Phillip councillors.

The attitude of the councillors regarding the significance of this height limit was also challenged less formally. Some objectors pushed for realisation that the UDF processes had been gone through in part to provide a robust planning basis to hold back tall buildings at this site. Furthermore, a lower height limit would be a useful strategic position for the City of Port Phillip to adopt. The reality of planning in Victoria, according to many (including UDF objectors), was that developers would continue to successfully push for taller buildings to be approved. Therefore, the UDF would end up functioning as a starting point in negotiations if something taller was (as it almost certainly would be) approved by VCAT further down the track. The logical response to this situation would be for Council to set a height limit far below what they believed would be an acceptable outcome.

The councillors were lobbied to see the UDF as something other than a matter of specifying what they thought of as a feasible and likely design outcome: it was supposed to capture community opinion and establish the City of Port Phillip as a legitimate decision maker when it came to approving or rejecting developments at this site in the future. On these grounds, the councillor’s insulting riff on an idiom ‘stuck
out’ as ill informed; it was as if he was ignorant of the broader configuration of sense. Objectors to the document were able to position the appearance of a lower height limit in the Draft UDF as being both a more accurate representation of community opinion and as an intelligent strategy for allowing council to have a say in the future.

To be fair, the position taken by this councillor was not necessarily ignorant: the less restrictive height limit that appeared in the draft document could also be justified as an attempt to be taken seriously by being realistic about likely planning outcomes. Being realistic could save expensive VCAT challenges, or council processes being bypassed by the planning minister ‘calling in’ any application (overriding decisions made by the City of Port Phillip). Order is only ever imposed on contexts that are contingent, so alternative arguments as to what would be a sensible position for a UDF to take can be justified by reference to other material and institutional factors.

The argument against the draft UDF was more successful at defining how decisions should be evaluated and who could make them. Objectors interrupted ‘business as usual’ carrying on after the approval of the draft document. This was not primarily achieved by the objectors through arguing for a particular height limit so much as it was achieved by the objectors achieving social recognition as the ones who could define what actually was going on — in terms of specifying not just the material conditions of the site and community opinion, but also the institutional order in which future planning decisions will be made. The draft UDF appeared sensible to councillors when it was initially put in front of them for approval. The objectors were able the re-draw the order in which its merits were evaluated so that it appeared that some of the content of this particular document should not have made it into the draft in the first place.

**Concluding politics**

The important premise of this chapter has been that politics is a process. Politics is not just interruption, but also a reconfiguration (Rancière & Panagia 2000: 115), although the orders then instituted are not politics. Working with concepts drawn from the work of Rancière, I have shown that drawing together a socially recognised identity is important. Constituting part of the process of subjectivization, it is why to stage equality in the face of order requires an assertion of social order (Rancière 1995b). As this then
imposes that social order, it is clear why Rancière (2009b: 73) asserts that we do not live in democracies.

As I discussed in Chapter 2, Rancière describes politics as equality enacted by ‘the poor’ in the face of social order. ‘The poor’ is a reference not to those with particular economic resources but, rather, to whoever is marginalised within the existing order. This does not mean the words of the marginalised are never heard, but institutional approaches to allowing them to be heard and counted (as with the survey for those who did not want chickens in the community garden) can be part of the effective functioning of ‘the police’.

Politics is not the realm of effective subjects — such as those at Dig In debating the introduction of chickens — and it is not politics when somebody’s words are able to be sidelined as noise, as John Kirby’s were when his microphone was turned off at the meeting and his submission left unread by the mayor. Key to politics is the drawing together of a new subject position with the authority to act in the future. When this is lacking, actions can result but, as in Chapter 7, they are likely to reinforce existing social order. This is why so many of the interruptions I discussed here in Chapter 8 are not instances of politics. Naming instances of interruption that are politics is only possible after the event. Being able to draw together a subject position from which to effectively act in the future is unpredictable. It also results in the enactment of social order: Rancière’s conceptualisation of politics is not an individualistic one.

The physical, administrative and social order configures perception and evaluation of our world. The broader configuration of sense positions some concerns as those that ‘matter’ or are even worth counting. Yet, as I have stated many times and demonstrated through consideration of the ascription of group identities (Chapter 4) and the identification of particular people (Chapter 6), order is only ever imposed on a world that is irreducibly complex. Any imposed order is never complete, and it becomes increasingly incoherent the more that the particular details of a situation or a person are examined. With the second chapter of each part of my dissertation undermining the validity of the imposed order I showed to be operating in the first chapter in that part, I have shown that order will always be interrupted by the enactment of equality. Not only does the imposed nature of order become apparent with attention to its particular details
(as I showed in Chapter 6 in regard to care and Chapter 7 in regard to fairness), we evaluate what is ‘good’ within a configuration of sense. To the extent that this is a police order, and so lived within as if it is ‘the whole’, reordering will be forced when a supplement is introduced through the enactment of equality. In this chapter, I argued John Kirby did not manage to do this. When politics occurs, an alternative is made visible (as in the examples of Chapter 4); a supplement is introduced that forces a redistribution of material, administrative and social order.

While it is not possible to predict when, or if, politics will occur, the prediction of an ever moving world is a reasonable one. Therefore, it is more promising for future effectiveness to institute an order in which you are taken as a sensible speaker on matters for the future. To do this is difficult. My project does not offer to a road map to follow in order to achieve this. What I have shown, however, is why the presupposition of equality is a productive starting point for an understanding of politics.
Chapter 9: Concluding remarks on how equality appears as the sensible conclusion

[W]e have wonderful tools and methods for reading images, deconstructing discourses, unmasking the fallacies of the media, etc. We easily settle into a comfortable relation with an enemy whose messages have no secret for us. Perhaps we should lose some of this comfort and ask ourselves what exactly we are doing with this smooth-running critical machinery: are we framing a world of idiots where we play the part of the smart guys, or are we framing new spaces for the manifestation of the un-qualification, which is to say, the capacity of anybody? (Rancière 2007: 569)

One night, Eco Paul (a regular at the weekly ‘pay by donation’ dinner) gave me a gift. It was a deaccessioned library book on writing up qualitative research. Dissatisfied with my interest in ‘merely’ making happenings in Port Melbourne visible, Eco Paul instructed me to write my thesis in such a way that I ‘do something that matters’. Reframed as a question, I have re-encountered Eco Paul’s instruction many times over the years since my fieldwork. My lack of a sensible answer to this question may be why so many years have passed since that fieldwork.

I asserted in my introduction that there is no temporal or social vantage point from which to offer a definitive account of Port Melbourne. At many points I have demonstrated that even the accounts I have offered of various places, people and events in Port Melbourne are partial. Yet I have offered a coherent text in support of my thesis. It is the presupposition of the equality of intelligences that has configured my approach by functioning as my fixed reference point, and provided a starting point, a method and a conclusion. Many details that would obscure, or potentially even destabilise, this account are set aside as noise. Not only have I imposed order, I have also attended to the processes by which this is done both in Port Melbourne and in the text of my dissertation.

My Rancièrian approach is distinctive, but I have shown that it is a sensible contribution to anthropology (the discipline in which I position my work)63 and valid (through my verification of equality). The significance of my work, doing something that matters, is more problematic. Considered within the conceptual framework I have advanced, what

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63 As Rancière argues about disciplines, 'they must borrow their presentations of objects, their procedures for interaction and their forms of argument from language and common thought.' (2006: 11-12)
is reasonably considered to matter is evaluated within a broader configuration of what is
taken to be sensible. I have argued that this can, and even should, be interrupted by the
verification of the equality of intelligences. However, as equality is always enacted in
an existing world and the question of significance is very much part of the academic
world in which I want to participate, there are still good reasons for engaging with
questions of why it is that my thesis matters.

Rancière’s work, while not a comprehensive political philosophy, has been useful for
my project, and can be in future projects. It offers a particular path to follow that I
showed is consistent with the anthropological approach to ethnographic research. I have
put forward concepts able to be mobilised by anthropologists, along with anybody else
who seeks the language to describe why their attempts to be taken seriously are
frustrated. This justification looks to the future (these concepts might be useful in future
projects), and yet it makes no substantive claims as to what that future will be. After all,
order is imposed on a world that is irreducibly complex. This imposed order imposes
inequality and makes people appear to be unequal. I have shown how ‘the police’, as a
particular configuration of sense presented as accounting for everything that matters, is
imposed. Yet, in this world, people can enact equality, thereby interrupting and forcing
a redistribution of order. Democracy is not the only game in town, and so we do not live
on an ever-advancing path towards a world where only equality, and never social order,
is enacted. The future is unpredictable.

My verification and discussion of equality, drawing on my fieldwork in Port Melbourne,
has productive implications for training in ethnographic methods, future anthropological
projects and how I live in the world with other people. By starting with the
presupposition of the equality of intelligences, it has been less of the topic of my
enquiry than a tool. As a topic of enquiry, it is rather abstract because it does not really
result in a plan for building better housing estates or allocating space on the footpath.
(e.g. That people could learn stories about Port Melbourne showed a processes by which
plans for building or preserving the built environment were legitimated, not a process
for determining which claims should be legitimated in the future.) As a tool, however, it
demands attention to those very details that are screened out of sensible accounts. It has
been useful for making visible the significance of drawing together an identity that is
socially recognised as legitimate for carrying out particular actions in and on the world.
(e.g. The significance of being, or failing to be, recognised as speaking as the community in Chapter 8.) It goes some way to explaining why many of the moments of interruption I discuss are not examples of politics.

I have described instances of equality being verified, but also order being enacted. Making this visible does not undo inequality, but it can provide the conceptual language to understand the imposed nature of inequality. Graeber (2015: 203) remains unconvinced by the argument to render the functioning of power explicit on aesthetic grounds (i.e. those who ‘insist it’s simply distasteful to have structures of real power that are not recognized’). On the other hand, Rancière’s interest in aesthetics demonstrates that understanding can result from serious consideration of aesthetic arguments. To see what is made visible appears in Rancière’s recent work as both an interesting intellectual project and an exercise in dissensus — disagreement that is not just about what it is being observed, but as to what this means.

My method is turned towards problematising order: order is always imposed and — as no order is disconnected from social order — it makes people unequal. I have been able to problematise any particular order presented, while still demonstrating the utility of order itself through mobilising ‘higher order’ explanations. Moving to a higher order explanation (particularly my analysis of the verification of the equality of intelligences and attending to the processual) is a way that I can pin down aspects of the world for a moment to offer an account. While my use of higher order explanations could less flatteringly be referred to as a retreat from engaged analysis that could be turned towards practical recommendations, I argue the abstraction on which the advancement of my thesis is premised is defensible and useful. I have imposed and explained a particular order. Orders are useful.

Working with ethnographic methods, the empirical content of my work is highly specific. I hoped to turn an understanding of a specific place towards interrogating assumptions built into an always shifting cluster of policy and academic domains. Yet the interrogation of assumptions and the provision of a map are not mutually exclusive projects. To offer an account of the world is to shape plans for how the world should be.
Explanations, as they are authorised through order, impose inequality. To explain is to presume that somebody cannot understand on their own (Rancière 1991). Yet to explain your position is also to acknowledge that this position may not be inhabited by others. To bother to do this is to work from the premise that others can understand your position. So what appears as inequality is actually dependent on, and so at a higher level of abstraction we find, what Rancière describes as equality. This higher order explanation is useful.

The physical, administrative and social order in which we live matters too. The houses people live in and the space available for people to move along footpaths are not just part of the material world, they are part of the social imaginary that people inhabit. Structures — both physical and social — do not determine what capacities people have, but they do configure the world and so shape people’s experiences and stories. This is worth interrupting with different stories, even though these stories are not used to make another person equal. The messy violations that function as ‘community’, and some of the acts of care that are undertaken and received, can be useful for understanding what the ‘problem’ is in the systems discussed as unfair. If fairness is only ever decided within an order, not only can equality can be introduced to interrupt the functioning of any order, the presupposition of equality is the order in which judgements should be made.

My stories, carved up in a distinctive way, do not make anybody equal. The furthest they can function in that regard is as metapolitics (see Chapter 2 & Chapter 5). They are part of my continual learning about, living in, and acting on the world. Represented in written words, they are also available to be part of this for other people. As much as I set out to make visible something other than that was immediately apparent, my work also enacts the existing orders I take for granted. However, in theory at least, anybody can [mis]read them. Imposing the presupposition of equality is something I am willing to do without reservation because it also entails this belief in the capacity of anybody to speak into being an alternative position. Some people may ask, ‘What about those who cannot speak for themselves because they don’t have the capacity (have their mouth wired shut or are not socialised into being upfront)?’ In the framework I have been setting out, the premise of this question — that some people cannot speak — is rejected.
To argue, as I have done, that being successful in campaigning for a particular position is not just a matter of ‘talking the talk’ is to dismiss the illusion of a particular neutrality of the administrative order in which such decisions are made. It is not just that particular people are not using the right words to put forward their point, or need to learn to operate within the structure. They do not need to change their words, so much as to change the world so their words are accepted as speech.

To argue that what is described as new must also appear as sensible within the existing order is to argue that the structures themselves matter. There is a good reason to always be ready to show up the inequality at the heart of social order, even (and especially) when we think the outcomes of this social order are fair. If we do not, then I think we will miss out on the pleasure to be gained from the presupposition of equality: the enjoyment of enacting the universal capacity to learn and understand other than what we appear to already know, or even be capable of knowing. This is not to say that humanity is on a continual path of intellectual progress. To say something is not to say everything. Any account requires imposing order, and orders are inequality.

My project’s grounding in ethnographic methods is an important contribution to the growing body that draws on Rancière’s concepts in collecting, presenting and discussing empirical data (see Chapter 2). As demanded by the Rancièrian framework I set out, I have elucidated, verified and developed the concepts through the consideration of specific spaces, places, documents, conversations and people. I was not able to speak for other people, or let them speak for themselves. But it does mean that the specificity of the situations has ‘slowed down’ my analysis and intruded to undermine (or at least side track) my accounts (c.f. Stengers 2005). The specific spaces, moments and people might not be familiar to my audience, thereby making different interpretations more difficult for my academic audience to offer (people often reported that they felt ‘stuck’ when faced with my earlier work, as if their wish to argue against my analysis was foreclosed by the lack of different details for them to draw on). However, what has been gained is an understanding of particular details, stronger concepts, a way of talking about what is often just lived, and the circulation of some stories that might otherwise not be deemed significant enough.
Projects in ethnography and anthropology are underpinned by a continual investment in understanding. This is consistent with, and supported by, my thesis that people are equal. Rancière’s presupposition of equality is a useful conceptual language to learn if you want to enquire into social conditions to interrogate what is happening. It is a starting point that offers no end (c.f. Miyazaki 2003) and a method that demands attention be paid to the ridiculous. Equality ultimately appears as the sensible conclusion.
Appendices
Data collection

List of participant-observation sites

One off events

- Princes Pier
- Princes Pier history workshop (2-4pm on 17/11)
- Celebration in the park
- Port Melbourne Primary School Maytime Fair
- SkillsFest
- PMNH Planning Day
- Anzac Day
- Seniors Week- Tea Dance
- Seniors services review focus group
- City of Port Phillip Social Justice Charter Launch [not in Port Melbourne]
- City of Port Phillip Foreshore consultation [not in Port Melbourne]
- City of Port Phillip Sustainable Transport Strategy – Gasworks park
- Port Melbourne Waterfront UDF events
- Port of Melbourne information evening
- City of Port Phillip – walks program
- Piers festival
- Lagoon Reserve planting day

Regular sites

- 250 Garden City Bus
- 109 Beacon Cove Tram
- Bay Street Coles
- Bay Street Shopping Strip
- Port Melbourne Library
- Genesis Gym
- Prince Alfred Public Bar

Groups and regular events

- Port Melbourne Historical and Preservation Society open hours
- Port Melbourne Historical and Preservation Society meetings
- BCNA meetings
- BCNA social dinners
- Port People meetings
- Celebration in the park working group meetings
- Gentle Exercise- PMNH
- Dig-in Community Garden- PMNH
• Kitchen Skills- PMNH
• Knitting Group-PMNH
• Pay by donation dinner- Hare Krishna
• Fit Chick- CoPP
• Tai Chi - CoPP
• Op-Shop
• Linking Neighbours – weekly coffee
• Linking Neighbours – monthly dinner
• Holy Trinity Anglican Church
• Uniting Church
• St Joseph’s Catholic Church
• Simply Living community garden working bees- Uniting Church
• Williamstown Road flats community BBQs
• Friends of Perc White Reserve
• 3207 Beach Patrol
• Connecting Port Melbourne
• Storytime at Port Melbourne Library
• Storytime at Readings
### List of meetings with key people

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation/Representative</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Real estate agent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local councillor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public housing resident</td>
<td>01/10/10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(community organiser)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Melbourne</td>
<td>05/10/10</td>
<td>2 staff members present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbourhood House</td>
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<tr>
<td>Port Melbourne Library</td>
<td>06/10/10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Meals Program</td>
<td>08/10/10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Port Phillip Community</td>
<td>08/10/10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group (volunteer), Public</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>housing resident</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Past council employee</td>
<td>09/12/11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office of housing</td>
<td>13/10/10</td>
<td>2 staff members present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greens member</td>
<td>16/11/10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Port Melbourne Bowling</td>
<td>20/05/11</td>
<td>2 people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Club - present member and</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>past member</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Local State MP</td>
<td>22/09/10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Council officer</td>
<td>28/09/10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Port Phillip Community</td>
<td>29/02/10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group (staff)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Past mayor</td>
<td>29/09/10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bay Street shop manager</td>
<td>09/08/11</td>
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### List of semi-structured interviews

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recruitment</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Comment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exercise group participant</td>
<td>17/11/11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Volunteer group organiser</td>
<td>13/12/11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Op shop regular</td>
<td>15/11/11</td>
<td>Not audio recorded</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community event attendee</td>
<td>28/11/11</td>
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Title:
Understanding Port Melbourne: accounting for, and interrupting, social order in an Australian suburb

Date:
2016

Persistent Link:
http://hdl.handle.net/11343/112445

File Description:
Understanding Port Melbourne: Accounting for, and interrupting, social order in an Australian suburb