

The wander years: Estate renewal, temporary relocation and place(less)ness in Bonnyrigg, NSW

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Abstract: The regeneration of the Bonnyrigg estate in western Sydney takes a unique approach that it is being delivered through 18 stages over a 13-year renewal timeframe. This especially distinguishes itself from other previous estate renewal projects that, rather than relocating residents off-site and offering a right of return, it aims to keep a community (physically) intact and on-site throughout the renewal timeframe. This ambitious aim, however, comes at a cost to both the consortium established to deliver this estate renewal (Newleaf Communities) but also to the residents themselves. To Newleaf Communities, the complex logistics of rehousing residents on-site both temporarily and permanently necessitates long-term forward planning of its renewal strategies and extensive resources in preparing and assisting residents for these moves. For the residents, multiple moves are often necessary before finally settling into their new permanent home 3-4 years after first moving out of their original home.

A longitudinal study, which included interviews with 97 Bonnyrigg families that are living through various stages of the renewal, was conducted during 2012. Outcomes of these interviews show that while the community physically remains 'in place' during renewal, feelings of 'limbo' and a sense of placelessness were pervasive amongst sections of this community. This paper will unpack this paradox of placelessness while remaining 'in place' and look to compare early tenant outcomes with other renewal projects.

1. Introduction

Historically, public housing has not been a dominant tenure in Australia, which, as a result of a number of political and strategic decisions to restructure the sector, became increasingly stigmatised in recent decades (Troy, 2012). Programs aimed at addressing a range of social 'problems' associated with large public housing estates – e.g., crime, vandalism, and concentrated disadvantage – began to emerge in the 1980s, and often involved elements of neighbourhood renewal. Early programs (e.g. the Neighbourhood Improvement Program) promoted minor physical renewal such as new fencing and streetscape improvements with the aim of removing estate stigmas through improving physical amenity and safety, though their successes were often mixed (Randolph *et al.*, 2001). In the larger estates such as Mount Druitt and Minto¹ built in the outer suburbs of capital cities, however, the social problems these estates face were often considered more complex and too entrenched for these earlier, 'softer' approaches. With deteriorating housing stock, these larger estates are gradually put through major renewals in an attempt to (1) revitalise local housing stock; (2) improve life chances at the local level, often by significantly changing the local demographics in order to avoid further concentration of social problems and disadvantages; and (3) disassociate these estates from their stigmatised past. As a result, displacement was a common outcome for sections of the original community, even if right-of-return policies were put in place (Arthurson, 1998).

The renewal of the south-western Sydney suburb of Bonnyrigg offers a contrasting case study to other large-scale estate renewals in Australia. Implemented through a unique approach where the majority of the original Bonnyrigg community remains 'in place' and on-site throughout the renewal, though minor levels of displacement still exist. Using a grounded theory approach, this paper considers impacts of the first stages of the neighbourhood renewal of Bonnyrigg on the local community through nearly 100 interviews conducted with families that have remained but also families that decided to relocate. In particular, it provides a conceptual exploration of a sense of loss and placelessness – two concepts more often associated with displaced populations – that sections of the

¹ Both Mount Druitt and Minto are large public housing estates built during the 1970s in suburban western Sydney, both of which were built to the Radburn plan. Through various renewal strategies, Mount Druitt nowadays resemble more of a dispersed estate, with social and private market housing pepper-potted throughout the entire suburb of more than 2,000 dwellings. Minto remained a predominantly public housing suburb until its renewal was announced in 2002, with the replacement of 1,000 public housing dwellings completed by late 2016 (Coates *et al.*, 2010). Unlike Bonnyrigg, the renewal of Minto takes the more 'traditional' right-of-return approach, where all tenants are relocated off-site and all dwellings demolished at commencement. A dispersal strategy is also employed as part of the Minto renewal in order to reduce the concentration of social housing in the new suburb to around 30% (down from around 90% pre-renewal) as a strategy to reduce neighbourhood stigma and improve (perception of) safety (Coates *et al.*, 2010; Rogers, 2012).

remaining community and former residents feel. This exploration is preceded by a brief overview of the renewal of Bonnyrigg and an explanation of the methodology.

2. Background

2.1. Senses of place and place(less)ness

Rigorous academic research into the concept of place first emerged in the 1960s. These early studies into place were generally phenomenological in nature and focused on the relationships between humans and the environment, particularly within the fields of architecture and human geography (e.g. Norberg-Schulz, 1980). Since then, research into place has expanded into many other social sciences, including environmental psychology, planning, and sociology (Patterson and Williams, 2005). In more recent times, research into place more likely follows an epistemological rather than phenomenological approach, where the origin and theory of place as a concept rather than simply a physical being are more likely the focus (Tuan, 1979; Relph; 1976; 1993). This latter focus, at least amongst the humanities fields, has been especially common since the cultural turn of the 1990s (Kearns and Moon, 2002). Continued interest on place from multi-disciplinary perspectives has led to a further lack of consensus on its definition (Hidalgo and Hernández, 2001). Early research commonly defined place spatially, though often with relational considerations, so that:

Places occur at all levels of identity; my place, your place, street, community, town, city, county, region, country and continent, but places never conform to the tidy hierarchies of classification. They all overlap and interpenetrate one another and are wide open to a variety of interpretation. (Donat, 1967, p. 9)

Early spatial definitions of place such as Donat's (1967) gradually gave way to more nuanced interpretations, with Relph (1976) being one pioneer. In his seminal work, Relph's (1976) deconstruction of the concept led to a number of dimensions – location, landscape, time, community, privacy, and rootedness – all of which contribute to forming the essence of place. According to Relph (1976, p. 43), the essence of place exists within our subconscious and forms “a vital source of both individual and cultural identity and security”. In later research, this essence is sometimes referred to as a sense of place (Arefi, 1999).

International research into neighbourhood renewal often highlights the loss of this sense of place and the displacement experienced by residents as they are relocated out of their former neighbourhoods (Koebel, 1996; Pfeiffer, 2006), and that this sense of loss is particularly deep if the relocation is forced rather than voluntary. Manzo and Perkins (2006, pp. 337-338) explained that this sense of loss can have profound impact on residents' “commitment to, and participation in, neighbourhood processes”, with forced relocations particularly disruptive to a sense of continuity, which often leads onto feelings of alienation that, if not properly addressed, “could divide a community”. Relph (1976) noted, however, that while these disruptions to continuity can have profound impacts, these are generally of relatively short term. As such, sense of loss and the feeling of placelessness may only be temporary, though their duration would vary from individual to individual, depending on the level of disruptions experienced, the circumstance under which the relocation occurred, and the mental state of the relocated. For example, individuals who suffer from health problems may be additionally compounded by the sense of loss brought on by forced relocations, and their ability to ‘recover’ from this loss may be diminished.

There has been limited research into restoring a sense of place. Of the published work thus far, these have mainly focused on post-war or post-disaster physical reconstructions, where the sense of place is ‘restored’ mainly through like-for-like replacement and spirituality (Cox, 1965; Whisenhunt, 2013). Relph (1976), however, argued that like-for-like replacements often lack authenticity and the restoration of a sense of place requires more organic (i.e. less artificial) efforts. As such, knowledge into sense of place and placelessness is necessarily complex as both of these are highly conceptual and idiosyncratic.

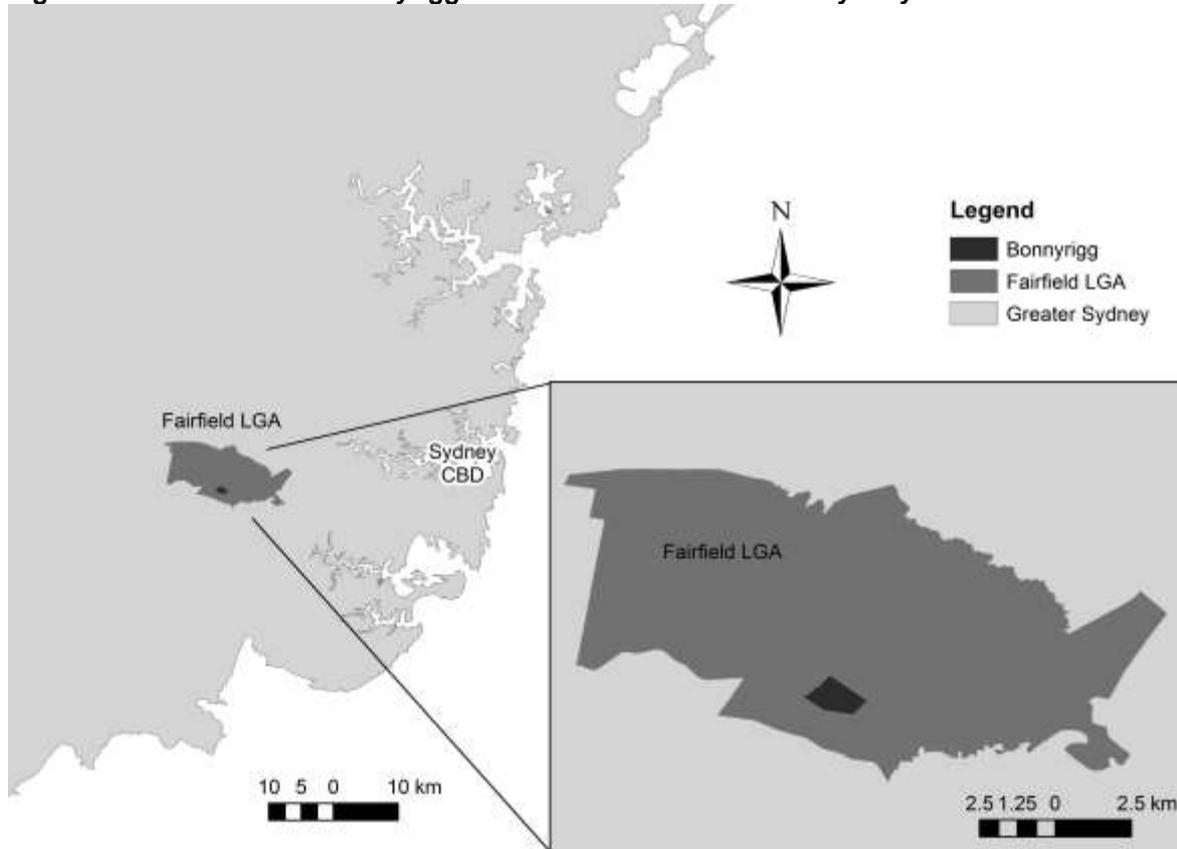
2.3. Public estate renewals and Bonnyrigg

Early efforts into urban renewal often took the ‘slum clearance’ approach, where entire communities are displaced and whole neighbourhoods demolished, with little consideration given to the impacts on the displaced communities (Spearrit, 1974). Public housing estates were often highlighted as sites of concentrated social disadvantage and were commonly the focus of these early neighbourhood renewal projects in Australia (Pawson *et al.*, 2012). More recent strategies take on a more multifaceted and integrated approach, with the introduction of education, employment, health and other community services mixed in with physical improvements to residential and public spaces in efforts to creating a more ‘appropriate’ mix of dwellings to meet changing household and tenure

structures, and changed needs for and uses of public space, infrastructure and community facilities but also needs for improving education, employment, health, and other community service provisions, improvements in community safety, and reduction in neighbourhood stigma (Coates *et al.*, 2010). While the 'slum clearance' model is still used sometimes (such as in Minto; see Stubbs, 2005a; 2005b), there are growing recognitions of the impacts renewals have on communities that are displaced through these clearances and also those who eventually return (Arthurson, 1998; Goetz, 2002; 2010; Kleit and Carnegie, 2011).

The suburb of Bonnyrigg is located in the western Sydney Local Government Area (LGA) of Fairfield, approximately 35km west of the Sydney Central Business District (CBD; see Figure 1). The suburb was first built during the late 1970s, and is considered a relatively large estate with around 900 homes. Most of the housing was built for public tenancies using the Radburn plan, and as such all sat on large, communal 'superlots' (where several attached dwellings shared the same lot title). The rest of the suburb is made up of detached houses on large quarter-acre blocks, some of which were later sold off to private households as part of the state housing authority's (Housing NSW) early deconcentration strategies. Most public housing dwellings were built to relatively poor quality and by the early twenty-first century attract significant maintenance costs. From the 1980s onwards, Bonnyrigg, like many other 'public housing estates' built to similarly large scale and to the Radburn plan, became increasingly stigmatised, partly the result of residualisation of public housing in Australia (Atkinson and Jacobs, 2008; Hall, 2004), which led to departmental decisions to implement deconcentration strategies (Weatherburn *et al.*, 1999; Woodward, 1997). An early deconcentration strategy employed in Bonnyrigg was through private sell-off, so that by mid-2000s close to 100 dwellings had been sold to existing tenants or to other buyers, reducing the overall concentration of public housing to just over 800 households. Compounded by a deteriorating public housing stock that accrues significant on-going maintenance costs for Housing NSW, a decision was made to further reduce the concentration of public housing through a neighbourhood-wide renewal which, while renewing public housing stock, significantly alters the density and layout of the suburb (Coates and Shepard, 2005). This follows recent housing-led neighbourhood renewal strategies in the Australian context, especially as a remedy to addressing sites of concentrated disadvantages (Pawson *et al.*, 2012).

Figure 1: Location of the Bonnyrigg renewal site in the Greater Sydney context



The neighbourhood-wide renewal for Bonnyrigg was announced in late 2004, and it is being delivered through a public-private-partnership (PPP), the first for social housing construction and management in Australia. The PPP consortium, Newleaf Communities, comprises five public, private and non-profit partners, each tasked with specific assignments within the wider renewal timeframe, from demolition and construction to tenant relocations and community renewal. As part of the neighbourhood renewal, all public tenants who opted to remain are transferred to community housing under the management of the PPP's non-profit partner, St George Community Housing Ltd (Pinnegar *et al.*, 2011). In contrast to previous approaches, the renewal is being delivered by dividing the entire renewal site into 18 stages, with each stage demolished and reconstructed in succession within an overall 13-year timeframe. Each renewed stage consists of a mix of returning tenants and new private residents, so that at completion there will be no concentrated pockets of social housing within the suburb. This is an innovative model that is now employed in other similar estate renewal projects worldwide (e.g. the Alma Estate renewal in the UK; Enfield Council, n.d.). This approach enables the existing community to remain on-site (and theoretically 'in place') throughout the renewal, potentially side-stepping community displacement and residents' relocation distress, and community well-being issues that previous renewal models consistently failed to address satisfactorily (Arthurson, 2002; 2004; Manzo *et al.*, 2008; Popkin and Cunningham, 2000; Popkin *et al.*, 2005).

From a logistical perspective, while the community remains on-site throughout the renewal, this approach necessitates a complicated relocation plan where sections of the community are temporarily relocated out of their 'original' homes while waiting for their stage to be renewed. For Bonnyrigg, tenants are temporarily relocated to homes vacated by around 160 former tenant households that, rather than live through the renewal, decided to leave and transferred to other public housing dwellings elsewhere at the commencement of the project. Around 70 tenant households are temporarily relocated at any given time throughout the renewal, with a 'normal' temporary relocation lasting up to two years.

Demolition commenced in 2007, and by June 2013 the first three stages were reconstructed with original and new residents settled in. As a result of the renewal, the density and tenure mix of the suburb will change significantly: the new Bonnyrigg will become much denser, with the original 800 public housing dwellings being gradually replaced by more than 2,000 homes, most of which will be attached row houses or apartment flats; while the number of social housing will be reduced slightly (down to around 700), with significant increases in private market housing, its concentration will decrease from around 90% down to 30%, in line with the current Housing NSW policy of reducing the overall proportion of public housing within any identifiable estate to this lower level (Rogers, 2012).

3. Methodology

As part of the renewal project, a longitudinal panel study was commissioned by Newleaf Communities to track the past, present and future outcomes the renewal has on residents. This is especially important given the unique circumstances of keeping residents on-site throughout the renewal, but also growing recognitions of the impacts renewals have on communities that are displaced or those who eventually return (Arthurson, 1998; Goetz, 2002; 2010; Kleit and Carnegie, 2011). This longitudinal panel study takes after similar work conducted in the US throughout the 2000s regarding the Housing Opportunities for People Everywhere (HOPE VI) program, where nearly 900 heads of household were interviewed across five separate renewal sites at baseline then two and four years thereafter (Popkin, 2010). It differs from the Popkin (2010) study by taking a whole-of-household approach, akin to the Dundee Families Project (Dillane *et al.*, 2001), whereby the views across different members of the households are considered. For details on how the Bonnyrigg Residents Panel was set up, see Liu and Pinnegar (2011).

Recruitment for the Bonnyrigg Residents Panel commenced in mid-2011 and continued through to early 2012. In all, nearly 200 households were recruited – mainly through doorknocking and snowballing – representing a mix of social tenants and private households. Housing NSW assisted in the recruitment of former residents of Bonnyrigg that decided to leave the suburb around the time of the renewal commencement, with 12 families recruited through this method. Attrition between recruitment and interviewing was high, with fewer than half eventually interviewed.

The first wave of interviews took place between April and October 2012. In all, 97 households were interviewed, including seven households that have left Bonnyrigg. These households were categorised into six distinct cohorts, reflecting the stages of relocation they were experiencing at the time of the interviews. For clarity in this paper, these are condensed to three broad cohorts – tenants who have left; tenants who have stayed; and private owners and renters. Reflecting the diversity of the Bonnyrigg population, 56 of these interviews were conducted in eight different non-English

languages with the assistance of native speakers (see Table 1). In all, nine researchers were involved in conducting the fieldwork.

Table 1: First wave interviewees by language interviews conducted in, 2012

	Tenants who have left	Tenants who have stayed	Private owners and renters	Total
English	5	28	9	42
Vietnamese	0	28	2	30
Khmer	0	9	0	9
Spanish	1	6	0	7
Arabic	0	3	1	4
Assyrian	0	1	0	1
Greek	0	1	0	1
Indonesian	1	0	0	1
Mandarin	0	0	1	1
Thai	0	1	0	1
Total	7	77	13	97

The interviews were semi-structured and covered four main topics: residents' experiences of Bonnyrigg over time, resident and community aspiration, people-based impacts (i.e. changes to life outcomes), and place-based impacts (i.e. sense of community and connection). The duration of the interviews varied in length between 15 minutes and two and a half hours but generally lasted around 45 minutes. Variation in duration generally corresponded with the interviewees' length of residence in Bonnyrigg but also their involvement in the local community. Most interviews were conducted face-to-face with one household member, with only one-third of the households interviewed opting to have more than one household member participate. All but one interview was voice-recorded.

Each interviewer wrote a two-page summary report at the conclusion of each interview. These included key quotes from the interviewees as recorded during the interviews, with quotes from non-English interviews translated by the native speaker interviewers. These summary reports were used as the basis of analysis for this paper. A thematic analytical framework was employed, with the four main interview topics used as guides. This paper focusses specifically on residents' experiences of the relocation (or anticipated relocation) and their sentiments regarding these moves.

4. Findings

Of the 97 households interviewed, only 17 (17.5%) had relocated into their new homes by the time of the first interview, with a further 17 households experiencing temporary relocation. Additionally, seven households had left Bonnyrigg (7.2%) and 13 were private owners and renters (13.4%). As such, the majority of the experiences reflected in this paper are of those who have yet to but are anticipating relocations in the coming years (43 households, or 44.3%). Context regarding their relocation/ownership status is provided when interviewees are quoted throughout this paper.

4.1. Disruptions to sense of place

While geographic displacement often occurs during estate renewals (Pfeiffer, 2006), this was not the case in Bonnyrigg as most residents (aside from those who decided to leave permanently) remain on-site due to its unique approach. To facilitate this, residents are assisted in their relocation, with most moving to properties vacated by the households that have left while their home stage is renewed. For many residents who have experienced (or are experiencing) this temporary relocation, this signifies a "new beginning, new life" (tenant in new home); for others, this model is welcomed so that early mistakes can be corrected in the later stages.

While the Bonnyrigg approach allowed residents to remain living in the same suburb as it undergoes renewal, in practice it divides the suburb into 18 different stages, with residents in each stage experiencing different phases of the renewal at different times. At the time of the writing of this paper, residents from the first three stages had already experienced temporary and final relocations, with another three stages currently experiencing temporary relocation. In contrast, residents in the final stages are still more than five years away from their first (temporary) relocation and seven or more years away from finally settling into their new homes. To some residents, this division, together with having more than 100 households relocated off-site permanently, has disrupted Bonnyrigg's sense of place and the residents' sense of community. This sentiment is felt by social tenants and private householders alike:

We were a community, but it's been broken up now. You've got people who moved off; you've got people in other areas. Will all that come back? It'll be something interesting to see. Can you build a new community? (tenant in new home)

The people that made up Bonnyrigg had moved out. There is no cohesion in the neighbourhood anymore. (original private owner)

For a number of the interviewees, the period of temporary relocation was particularly stressful and was likened to being in limbo, where plans (both short- and long-term) were often interrupted. For example, several interviewees said they delayed plans to attain further qualifications or withdraw from partaking in social activities while being temporarily relocated; others said that many boxes remained unopened as they did not see the point in unpacking when possessions would need to be repacked in the not too distant future anyway. This anxiety surrounding temporary relocation is also shared by some households that are still awaiting temporary relocation:

The only concern in that respect is the length of time we're going to be in this other new house; whether we just live off suitcases or we unpack properly, you now, because we're going to be stuck here for a couple of years before they get built. (tenant awaiting first relocation)

These differences in their relocation experiences so far further contributed to a sense that the community, like the suburb itself, is divided and fractured, with many more concerned about their own (and their families') immediate well-being, brought on by the force relocation, than working with the rest of the community to maintain a sense of place.

Cox (1965) noted that there are many different means and degrees to which individuals' sense of place can be disrupted. One which applies to the case of Bonnyrigg, particularly regarding the private owners, is radical changes to the physical landscape, which can be more disorienting than renaming a place. For the 100 private households that would live through the entire renewal project, the disruptions to their sense of place differ to those of the tenants'. While there were early discussions regarding the PPP consortium acquiring these private properties with compensation, no formal arrangements were finalised and to date none of these private homes has been acquired by the development. Instead, demolition and reconstruction occur around these private homes (see Figure 2). Further, unlike social tenants who wished to leave, private households that did not wish to live through the renewal must leave on their own accord (by selling their homes) rather than requesting to be transferred by the housing authority. There is little interest from the market to buy old, un-renovated properties in the midst of a renewal, and many private households would not commit to renovating when the decision over compulsory acquisition remains unclear. As such many of these private households are stuck in limbo very much differently compared to tenants who have been temporarily relocated:

We can't sell, because no one would buy into the estate. People have had auctions and no one's turned up. What's the point? You don't know whether you're going to keep your house, do renovations. We're just nowhere land. (original private owner)

Figure 2: View of the Stage 3 reconstruction from Bunker Parade, August 2012. The detached house in the centre-foreground of the image is owned and occupied by a private household, a family that lived in the middle of a construction site for nearly two years due to delays in construction.



Source: Author

Another main concern that some private households have over the renewal project was the renaming of the streets. Most of the streets within the renewal site, aside from the main thoroughfares and connecting roads, will be renamed as part of the renewal process. This is partly the result of the radical changes occurring in the suburb, that most cul-de-sacs would be opened up and a number of new streets created. The renaming is also favourable for branding and marketing purposes, as all of the new street names follow a floral theme (e.g. Birch Street and Lilac Place) to reflect the legacy that the PPP consortium (Newleaf Communities) will imprint on the suburb and distinguishes it from other suburbs nearby. The renaming of streets is seen favourably by some social tenants, especially those who lived on streets of notoriety where “big fights out there in the dead ends” (tenant awaiting first relocation) were commonplace. The renaming makes way for a positive disruption to their sense of place, where previous disreputations of their streets are metaphorically washed clean. For the private households, however, the renaming creates an unusual circumstance in which they, while not having relocated physically, will live under a different address. To one private household, this is of particular concern. Not only have they assumed that there will be significant effort on their part to legally change their title deed and service contracts, but the very act of renaming essentially instigates an ideological disconnect between them and their home, that their shared history may be lost in the process. To this private household especially, they fear that the significance and historicity of their to-date 30-year association with their home will be lost as a result of an involuntary change of address. While this fear of the disconnect is not a prevalent view amongst most private households that remain on site throughout the renewal, it nonetheless highlights the very different concerns and experiences that social tenants and private householders have regarding the renewal, differences that, while acknowledged by the renewal consortium, are exacerbated by the very different treatments that each group receives throughout the process.

4.2. Placing place(less)ness

The different treatments that social tenants and private households receive from the renewal consortium, together with their individual circumstances, contributed to differing senses of placelessness and, much like the varying reception towards street renaming, the onset of a sentiment of placelessness is viewed positively by some and negatively by others.

As Relph (1976, preface) had defined, the phenomenon of placelessness results from “the casual eradication of distinctive places and the making of standardised landscapes that results from an insensitivity to the significance of place”. In the case of Bonnyrigg, this standardised landscape is most plainly interpreted in the design-blind principle used when constructing the new housing. This design-blind principle means that all new housing within the renewal site would look indistinguishable from the outside, bar minor differences in wall colours and dwelling type and was applied specifically so that people would not be able to distinguish whether one dwelling is social or private housing, thereby facilitating the reduction of the stigma of social housing. Indeed, most of the interviewees who live in the renewed stages have little idea if they lived next door to a social tenant or private household, and most said that their neighbour's tenure would not make a difference “so long as they are good people” (new private owner). To this end, the design-blind principle has been successful in creating a new indistinguishable suburban setting that departs from its social housing past:

With my mum and my brother and sister, at first when we said we bought a house here, the first impression was ‘why would you? You know it’s Bonnyrigg, it’s Housing Commission [former name of the NSW State Housing Authority, now commonly used to convey a negative connotation to public housing], are you sure you want to live there? Is it safe?’ ... and then they actually came here and had a look themselves. It kind of gave them a different impression. [new private owner]

Even though there had been no discussions about officially renaming the suburb, to emphasise the renewed suburb's distance from its stigmatised past, many of the residents have unofficially renamed the renewed stages: “It's not Bonnyrigg; it's Newleaf” (tenant in new home). To this, a former resident said that, while the new sections of the suburb look aesthetically pleasing, little has been done to address the issues that underlie the social problems that once plagued Bonnyrigg and stigmatised it as a ‘Housing Commission’ area. As such, renaming the suburb (unofficially or otherwise) is merely a superficial change that has had few other impacts: “painting over walls does not completely erase everything” (tenant in new home).

In practice, and especially with the compulsory acquisition policy failing to materialise, the renewal has created a hodgepodge of new housing with the occasional old private house pepper-potted throughout the suburb. To some residents, this detracts from the modern look of the new suburb and leaves these old private houses standing out: “If they want everything new, spotless, they

have to do like that, but old house, new house, old house, new house, why? Why bother?" (original private owner). Many of these private owners thus worry that, as the renewal activities continue, they are left behind as the rest of their suburb progresses while they are not afforded the same opportunities. Many private owners said that this sense of exclusion is further exacerbated by a general lack of communication from Newleaf Communities, that they are often not consulted until it was too late in the process: "They do it, then they ask for our advice; a bit late for that isn't it?" (original private owner). According to some private owners, the lack of communication between Newleaf Communities and the private owners is based on an assumption that, as their private homes are not reconstructed as part of the renewal, the impacts on them are less so than compared to social tenants who must relocate. To this, innovative mechanisms are being considered to lessen the impacts on these original private owners, including title exchange where an existing private home (and its title) be moved to a renewed property of comparable value, though these are have yet to be finalised and put into practice. The lack of communication from Newleaf Communities, and the lack of clarity over their homes' future, has rendered these private owners to a placeless situation within the renewal that many now find difficult to live with:

It would've been a far simpler solution for them if they had bought us all out when they all started, then there'll be nobody, they can do what they like, wouldn't have any problems. Now they've given themselves this sort of itch on their back which is us caused by the fact that they didn't want to buy us out. ... but we can't live like that. [original private owner]

Amongst some of the social tenants who have yet to relocate there also exists a sentiment of placelessness, though this is experienced less geographically but more ideologically. For these social tenants, especially if they are older and/or suffering from ongoing health issues, the involuntary nature of their impending relocation highlights their disempowered position within the social housing system, that they have little control over decisions regarding their homes and living situations. For some of these social tenants, their inability (or unwillingness) to find out what their new homes could be like other than simply driving by the "pigeon houses" (tenant awaiting first relocation, referring to how densely the new dwellings are built together) has caused additional stress and anxiety for the period prior to their first relocation, which for some are still years away:

I don't know how I will deal with it when it comes to the time. It's going to be difficult. The trauma and the stress of leaving behind everything I know and love here is very, very hard. [tenant awaiting first relocation]

This resonates with previous work by Baeten (2001) and Stewart and Taylor (1995), and that efforts must be made (by the conductors of the renewal, in this case the PPP consortium, as well as the residents themselves) to minimise exclusion, isolation, marginalisation, and service dependency. The latter, of encouraging resident interests and participation, has historically been one of the biggest challenges in any estate renewal projects, and one which does not have a simple solution despite agency efforts. In the case of Bonnyrigg, a dedicated Community Renewal team was established to ensure engagement and participation opportunities exist, though resident buy-in to date has been less than expected, with many preferring to keep to themselves rather than remain engaged throughout.

The sentiment of placelessness resulting from disempowerment is shared by some former residents who left Bonnyrigg as the renewal commenced. While we only spoke with a few, most of the former residents we interviewed spoke of their decision to leave Bonnyrigg, or rather that they had no choice but to leave. Despite their feeling of a lack of choice, most of these former residents agree that leaving Bonnyrigg has given them better outcomes than had they stayed. This realisation, however, took time. Most of the former resident interviewees left early in the process, three to four years before our first interviews. In recalling their relocation experience, most found the initial year or two a difficult adjustment period. Partly, all have relocated off a large estate like Bonnyrigg to other suburban settings where social housing is not the dominant tenure; partly also, as Relph (1976) argued, a true sense of belonging takes time to form organically, and as such these former residents' identification with their new home and suburb was still to take shape. For those who relocated to suburbs nearby to Bonnyrigg rather than further afield, frequent visits to Bonnyrigg were common during these early adjustment years, though as the renewal progresses their familiarity and resonance with the place also wane, especially if their former homes had been demolished and redeveloped:

We virtually spend all our time over there. It's probably only this year that we stopped going there so much. ... Every time we go there she gets upset, especially when we walk past where our old house was. [tenant who left Bonnyrigg]

5. Conclusion

The renewal of Bonnyrigg presents a unique case study where most residents remain on-site and in-place throughout the process. While in theory this circumvents previously unsatisfactory

arrangements where displacements often result as part of public housing estate renewals (Arthurson, 1998; Koebel, 1996; Pfeiffer, 2006), many residents felt disruptions to their sense of place, with a sentiment of placelessness set in amongst different groups of the community currently experiencing different aspects and stages of the renewal. Some have viewed (and indeed lived through) these changes positively, while others less so. These varying receptions highlight the complexity of neighbourhood renewals no matter the approach taken. The longitudinal study of Bonnyrigg, therefore, presents important lessons regarding the wellbeing of residents and their sense of place throughout the renewal even though many residents can see positive outcomes in the long term.

Of all the different groups currently living on-site, the original private owners feel the most disenfranchised, partly resulting from a lack of clarity over the future of their homes, but also from a lack of opportunities in contributing to the renewal of their neighbourhood. Sentiments of placelessness are also the most pervasive amongst this group, as their neighbourhood changes physically and rapidly around them. For some social tenants, sentiments of placelessness were at times conflated by the involuntary nature of their need to relocate: "I'm bitter with the government because they do whatever they want with us, and abuse our rights" (tenant awaiting first relocation). As such, their sentiments of placelessness are less geographical but more ideological within the social housing system, and more akin to disempowerment, which gradually wanes as they settle in and realise better housing outcomes.

The notion of 'settling in', however, is temporally dependent. Much like Relph's (1976) discussion regarding restoring a sense of place, residents' ability and length of time required to 'settle in' is dependent on the circumstance under which they relocated as well as their personal situations at and around the time of relocation. For many, it is during this adjustment period when the sentiments of placelessness prevail. These sentiments would slowly wane with time, as interviewees who relocated to their new homes (in Bonnyrigg or off-site permanently) realised, when a new place identity (whether by name or otherwise) emerges. Minimising community disenfranchisement with increased participation and clearer channels of communication can facilitate this process, the latter of which, sadly, has been lagging in the case of Bonnyrigg though not necessarily due to a lack of opportunity but also some residents compartmentalising their grief through temporary withdrawal.

Discussions detailed in this paper highlight the complexity of neighbourhood renewal projects like Bonnyrigg's. These discussions especially demonstrate the sentiments of placelessness and loss of a sense of place, two concepts more conventionally associated with renewal projects where large sections of the community is physically displaced rather than one where the majority of the suburb remain to live on-site throughout the renewal. These findings point to the need for more careful considerations regarding place attachment irrespective of which approach a neighbourhood renewal takes in order to present residents, the ones who will go on living in the estate, better outcomes both during and post-renewal.

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