



Community and government planning authority use of social media in planning practice: A mixed methods analysis from Sydney

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Declaration

I certify that the work in this thesis entitled 'Community and government planning authority use of social media in planning practice: A mixed methods analysis from Sydney' has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree to any other university or institution other than Macquarie University.

I also certify that the thesis is an original piece of research and it has been written by me. Any help and assistance that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself have been appropriately acknowledged.

In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Wayne Williamson (Student ID:)

October, 2019

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As this is a thesis by publication, I have gained a significant amount of experience with the journal peer-review process. While I can safely say all my draft manuscripts benefited from the comments of anonymous peer-reviewers and journal editors, I would especially like to thank Jill Grant, Associate Editor of Planning Theory and Practice, for her interest in my manuscript throughout the peer-review process and then her thoughtful and well considered editorial for the issue in which the article was published.

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Publications from this thesis

Book chapter

Williamson, W & Ruming, K 2016, 'Social Media Adoption and Use by Australian Capital City Local Governments', in MZ Sobaci (ed), *Social Media and Local Governments: Theory and Practice*, Springer, Berlin.

Journals

Williamson, W & Ruming, K 2019, 'Can social media support large scale public participation in urban planning? The case of the #MySydney digital engagement campaign', *International Planning Studies*, DOI: 10.1080/13563475.2019.1626221.

Williamson, W & Ruming, K 2019, 'Urban renewal and public participation in Sydney: Unpacking social media strategies and use for contesting consensus', *Urban Policy and Research*, vol. 37, no. 3, pp. 350-366.

Williamson, W & Ruming, K 2018, 'Live tweeting the planning reform workshop', *Australian Planner*, vol. 55, no 1, pp. 1-11.

Williamson, W & Ruming, K 2017, 'Urban consolidation and discourses in Sydney: Unpacking social media use in a community group's media campaign', *Planning Theory and Practice*, vol. 18, no 3, pp. 428-445.

Williamson, W & Ruming, K 2016, 'Visualizing community group social media networks using Social Network Analysis: Two case studies from Sydney', *Journal of Urban Technology*, vol. 23, no. 3, pp. 69-89.

Williamson, W & Ruming, K 2015, 'Assessing the effectiveness of online community opposition to precinct planning', *Australian Planner*, vol. 52, no. 1, pp. 51-59.

Peer-reviewed conference papers

Williamson, W & Ruming, K 2017, '#PressPause: Large scale urban renewal and public participation', paper presented at 8th State of Australian Cities Conference, University of Adelaide, Australia, 28-30 November.

Williamson, W & Ruming, K 2017, 'Large scale community engagement using social media and public participation GIS', paper presented at 15th International Conference on Computers in Urban Planning and Urban Management, University of South Australia, Australia, 11-14 July.

Williamson, W & Ruming, K 2016, 'Urban planning process and discourses in Sydney: Positioning social media use within a community group's campaign', paper presented at 4th World Planning Schools Congress, Federal University of Rio De Janeiro, Brazil, 3-8 July.

Williamson, W & Ruming, K 2015, 'Assessing social media use by community groups using social network analysis', paper presented at 7th State of Australian Cities conference, Gold Coast, Australia, 9-11 December.

Williamson, W & Ruming, K 2015, 'Who's talking, who's listening: exploring social media use by community groups using social network analysis', paper presented at 14th International Conference on Computers in Urban Planning and Urban Management, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, 7-10 July.

Forward

After completing a Masters by Research degree in October 2012, which investigated the adoption and use of information and communications technology in the NSW planning system, I settled back into working life as a planning officer for the NSW Department of Planning and Environment (Department). While my Master's thesis touched on the adoption of social media by NSW local government between 2009 and 2012, I had no plans to continue studying.

However, in early 2013 I noticed a number of planning matters where community groups were using social media, in particular Twitter. In some cases, social media was being heavily used to support their campaigns. This was particularly the case for the *Save Bronte* community group which had formed to oppose the redevelopment of the Bronte RSL Club in Sydney's eastern suburbs. As the Bronte planning matter unfolded in 2013, I began to realise that the community group was using social media to an extent never before seen by the Department and I started to collect the social media data being generated with a view to potentially undertaking a research project in the future. By early 2014 I had collected a significant data set and proceeded to write a research proposal and search for a supervisor at one of Sydney's universities that was actively researching community groups and public participation in planning. I literally showed up at Kristian Ruming's office with a pocket full of social media data and a group of case study ideas that I thought were worthwhile pursuing. And so my #PhDLife began.

This investigation of social media use in planning practice has morphed into a long term project of discovery for me as I chose to undertake this PhD on a part time basis. This gave me the time to undertake long term observations and data collection for case studies that can last for several years. The long term nature of this project has also given me the opportunity to become an active participant in an emerging body of academic literature; thus, as my work has progressed it has benefited from the work published by others over the past 5 years. I hope others can also benefit from the work that makes up the body of this thesis.

Abstract

Community participation in planning is generally considered crucial for the delivery of positive planning outcomes and has been the subject of considerable research. Likewise, community contestation and resistance to neighbourhood scale urban consolidation has been the subject of much research, while less attention is given to metropolitan wide participation. Community participation manifests itself in many different forms, including routine consultation embedded in development processes through to short and long term engagement strategies that mobilise activities, such as workshops, to discuss a large range of planning ideas.

More recently, some have speculated on the role social media may play in participatory planning. Since its inception the Internet has generated debate over its likely role in reinvigorating democracy. The more recent appearance of social media and its ubiquitous use via smartphones has added fuel to the debate. Within planning literature, discussion has centred on the value of social media as a tool for community participation and the offer of an opportunity to engage a wider urban public in planning processes.

In the first instance, this thesis by publication explores the use of social media, specifically Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, by community groups, individual citizens and planning authorities to communicate during strategic planning processes. The case studies in Part I investigate a range of planning matters from small site specific planning matters to large urban renewal sites led by state government development agencies. Part II examines how both local and state government planning authorities use social media using two case studies. Firstly, a large workshop where Twitter was used by planners and other stakeholders as a digital backchannel that runs parallel to the proceedings in the shared physical space. Secondly, an eight week metropolitan wide campaign that utilised three social media channels to engage Sydney's citizens.

This thesis employed multiple data sources for multiple case studies that were analysed using predominantly qualitative methods. A mixed methods approach is considered appropriate as it provides the opportunity to answer research questions where either quantitative and/or qualitative methods are most suitable. For example, social network analysis is appropriate for visualising community group social media

networks. At the same time, discourse analysis and content analysis are suitable for exploring the discourses and topics that are circulated through social media networks and mainstream media by all stakeholders. Sentiment analysis was also used to capture an aggregated snapshot of social media content.

For the community groups investigated, it was found that they do not attract large numbers of followers on Twitter. Moreover, a community group's social media presence is led by a small number of people, while the other Twitter users had a low-participation rate. This was also observed for a social media campaign initiated by the state government where the response rate per capita was consistently very low throughout the campaign. On a more positive note, over time the community group's knowledge of the planning process improved to the extent that they developed a strong awareness of a larger planning system which broadened the scope of their social media strategy. This is demonstrated through their use of social media as an effective platform for connecting to other community groups experiencing similar planning processes. Community groups also draw on social media's potentially wide geographic reach to broadcast emotional strategies which raised Sydney-wide claims about consultation and equity.

The case studies also consistently found that key stakeholders play a passive listening role in social media networks. In the only case study that found dialogue between a community group and a planning authority, social media seemed to strain the internal processes of the planning authority. Furthermore, in instances where the Department of Planning prompted the social media campaign as a conversation with the community, it only responded to the communities' comments with thankyou notes. The case studies also highlight the difficulties of moderating participation on social media and keeping comments on topic, which demonstrates the agency of individuals and groups to shape the discourse.

The overall contribution of this thesis is the presentation of detailed empirical case studies of both community and government planning authority social media use in strategic planning. There is a mismatch between communities that utilise social media as an additional communications channel to engage and/or disrupt planning processes, while planning authorities implement social media to mimic traditional engagement processes, but seem very reluctant to engage in any specific questions

or discussions through social media. While there seems to be a data collection or listening aspect to planning authority social media use, there is no public evidence that they review, analyse or use the social media data to change or influence decision-making.

This research is a step towards a better understanding of community and government planning authority use of social media in planning practice. Further research should utilise social network analysis to investigate whether the availability of social capital in a network results in a community group's campaign succeeding or not. This analysis may also identify opposing views within communities and how these views are expressed through social media. To build on the live tweeting results of this thesis it would be useful to survey participants of a workshop or meeting to ascertain what percentage are aware of Twitter, the live tweeting that may be in progress and what they may want to get out of social media use. Lastly, further research should examine how planning authorities can prepare and implement multi-disciplinary teams to conduct a multi-directional dialogue with citizens through social media.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

"Politicians use technology like drunks use lamp posts, for support, not illumination"

Richard E Klosterman, 9 July 2015
14th International Conference on Computers in
Urban Planning and Urban Management, MIT, MA

The quote above was made by Dick Klosterman during a conference panel session designed to share the panels' thoughts and experiences regarding the impacts of information technologies on planning practice, research and education. The remark dominated the discussions of those present and on the conferences' Twitter hashtag for the remainder of the conference. If one puts aside the somewhat amusing metaphor for a moment and considers that this comment reflects the experiences of an academic who devoted a career to educating planners and trying to introduce information technologies into strategic planning practice, it says a lot about the political environment that planning operates in, and how key actors use it. This thesis focuses on only one aspect of the use of information technology in planning practice - social media.

Although this thesis is examining the use of social media, specifically Twitter, Facebook and Instagram by community groups and planning authorities to communicate during strategic planning processes, it is important to consider the context in which these planning matters are being conducted. Planning reform programs, the introduction of new processes and the over-utilisation of existing processes, all have an effect on the community's understanding of planning and how it is conducted.

The majority of the case studies in this thesis were observed during or immediately after the New South Wales (NSW) planning system was the subject of a major reform process between 2011 and 2013. The reform process sought to "simultaneously increase certainty in planning and assessment, simplify the planning process, promote strategic planning, increase community participation and improve the economic performance of the state" (Ruming & Davies 2014, p. 122). In particular, the planning reforms sought to increase community participation with a particular

focus on engaging the community in strategic priority setting and defining the vision for their local area (DP&I 2013b). Although the planning reform package failed to reach implementation (Hazzard 2013), during the reform process the then Minister for Planning introduced a new process to allow proponents seeking a rezoning of their land the option to request an independent review of a council's decision, if a council had refused or failed to respond to their rezoning request (Hazzard 2012). This new process was called the *Pre-Gateway Review* and was introduced to provide the planning system with a mechanism to allow proponents a right-of-review for final decisions made by councils. The pre-gateway review is a two-step process whereby an application is lodged with the Department, who then undertakes an initial assessment of the application and supporting documents. If the proposal is deemed to have strategic merit, the application is referred to the Sydney Planning Panel (Panel) or Independent Planning Commission (IPC) for review and advice for the Minister for Planning. There is no opportunity for community consultation during the pre-gateway process. The Minister then makes a final decision on whether the proposal should proceed. At this point Council is asked to take back the proposal they have previously refused and progress it, otherwise the Panel is appointed as the relevant planning authority (DP&I 2013a). Since its introduction, the pre-gateway review has been controversial with several community groups calling for it to be scrapped as it is perceived to represent an avenue for property developers to side-step councils and their communities (Grennan 2014). The process also highlights the operation of independent planning panels in the NSW planning system. Williams (2014) concludes that there is a role for independent panels, however, the 'panelization' of planning in NSW has become somewhat of a growth industry, which leaves planning open to claims of fragmented and complex decision-making. Case studies in this thesis were subject to this process, which had the effect of elevating the controversy of what would normally be a local planning matter.

As well as the state government introducing new processes which allowed it to step into local planning matters, large urban renewal projects are also increasingly being redeveloped via state-owned land development agencies (Davison & Legacy 2014; Harris 2018; Shaw 2018). Urban renewal projects tend to be characterised as neoliberal urban policy as they are typically property-led initiatives that centre on supply-side intervention to promote economic growth (Sager 2011). Moreover, it is suggested that governments are attempting to rescale decision-making from the local

government level to district and metropolitan levels that are potentially less vulnerable to community opposition (MacDonald 2018). Urban renewal sites are often located in existing urban areas and proposals frequently encounter resistance from local communities (Dixon 2007). Both of these directions by the NSW planning system have created confusion for communities directly impacted by development proposals, as the government's discourse of early strategic planning informed by community consultation is at odds with the state government increasing its role in local planning and also using quasi-state development agencies to redevelopment large urban renewal sites, often with staged managed consensus building consultation processes.

As part of the planning reform process (2011 to 2013), the use of technology as a means for increasing public participation was regularly discussed. Planners and government officials involved in the planning reform process argued "we have to unlock the power of technology to have wider and better engagement – to have two-way engagement" (Turnbull 2012). The use of new technologies was seen as a mechanism to overcome many of the shortcomings of traditional public participation approaches, such as community meetings and information sessions that often results in people being excluded from the process because of their inability to attend 6pm town hall meetings due to employment and family commitments (Turnbull 2012). Given community engagement has been entrenched in planning not because it will necessarily influence outcomes, but because it is an expected part of the politicised process (Grant 2017), it is logical that a planning reform process would focus on traditional public participation and argue for new approaches. The appearance of social media in recent years has introduced another potential channel to facilitate communicative planning practice.

For Evans-Cowley (2010), the use of social media offers a new avenue of communication between communities and planning authorities. Two separate groups can be identified: Citizen-initiated social networks and Government-initiated. Social media networks organised by communities to oppose a proposed development were predominantly used to share information (Evans-Cowley 2010). However, traditional participants were more knowledgeable and engaged than online participants and online participants were largely new, compared to the traditional participants (Evans-Cowley & Hollander 2010). More recently, Afzalan and Muller (2014) found that

social media did not create a collaborative communications process in isolation, but integrated well with other communication methods to support traditional engagement mechanisms. Despite opportunities for stronger interaction, a one-way communication “paradigm” where citizens are still receivers of public policy seems to prevail (Mergel 2013). Falco and Kleinhans (2018a) suggests the lack of progress cannot be ascribed only to technological issues, but rather, the evidence points to governments’ organisational and human resources as a bottleneck. Grant (2017, p. 339) reflects on an extensive body of research and experience on public participation, community groups and the emergence of communications technologies, such as social media, by noting that the “arguments citizens make in opposition to change have not altered as much as have the technologies of engagement and citizen action” to highlight the lingering challenges for planners seeking to meaningfully engage with citizens.

This thesis builds on an editorial by Kleinhans et al. (2015) for a special edition of the *Planning Practice and Research* journal which focused on the potential of social media and mobile technologies to foster citizen engagement and participation in urban planning. Kleinhans et al. (2015) notes that although a growing body of literature is focusing on the presence and potential influence of social media in planning processes, they conclude that multi-directional communication between residents and government authorities using social media is still scarce and also note that governments seem unable to ‘tap into’ citizens’ online social networks. In effect, the research that had been published up to 2015 contained much wishful thinking and little empirically validated knowledge about social media use in planning (Kleinhans et al. 2015). In the first instance, this thesis acknowledges this gap in planning literature and contributes to the literature by presenting a series of empirical case studies that explore social media interactions between citizens and planning authorities during various strategic planning processes. The questions which guided this research are outlined in the next section.

1.1 Research questions

This research focuses on the use of social media by community groups, individual citizens and planning authorities to communicate during strategic planning activities. It provides a comprehensive study in that it firstly aims to understand how community groups use social media through detailed case studies of social networks and text based discourse analysis. Secondly, it examines how both local and state

government planning authorities adopt and use social media by analysing the promotion of public participation through social media and planning authority responses to community comments. For this reason this thesis by publication is split into two distinct parts.

The overarching Research Question is:

How do community groups and planning authorities use social media during strategic planning processes in Sydney?

The overarching Research Question is tested using five research questions:

Part I – Social media use by communities

- One:** Who participates in social media networks created by community groups?
- Two:** What discourses are mobilised in social media networks and are there differences between communication channels?
- Three:** Is social media an effective communication channel for community groups to challenge planning processes?

Part II – Social media use by government agencies

- Four:** What is the level of Twitter adoption, activity and influence by local governments in Australian capital cities?
- Five:** How do Government planning authorities use social media to engage stakeholders and the public in planning processes?

Each Research Question is addressed by a case study in Chapters 4 to 10.

Research Questions three and five are addressed by two or three case studies. In most cases the Research Question is not explicitly stated in the published paper that constitutes the results chapter, with the exception of Chapter 8 as it is based on a pre-set structure required by the book editor. Thus, Chapter 8 explicitly lists a set of research questions and the results section explicitly discusses the findings in relation to the research questions. Figure 1 provides a graphic representation of how each chapter corresponds to each Research Question.

| | |
|--------------------------------|-------------------|
| Research Question one | Chapter 4 |
| Research Question two | Chapter 5 |
| Research Question three | Chapter 5 |
| | Chapter 6 |
| | Chapter 7 |
| Research Question four | Chapter 8 |
| Research Question five | Chapter 9 |
| | Chapter 10 |

Figure 1: Research Questions by thesis chapter

1.2 Research approach

This thesis employed multiple data sources for multiple case studies that were analysed using predominantly qualitatively methods with quantitative methods used to supplement the results, where appropriate. A mixed methods approach can be mobilised for research projects that involve collecting, analysing, and interpreting qualitative and quantitative data in a series of studies that investigate the same underlying topics. Moreover, this approach provides the opportunity to answer research questions where either quantitative and/or qualitative methods are most suitable. In some instances, a single case study is not sufficient, thus multiple cases were used to test different research methods on similar data sets, in lieu of other published evidence. This approach also provided an opportunity to publish multiple articles from a single case study. Overall, the use of multiple data sources facilitated a more in-depth understanding of the stakeholders and their interaction in social media networks.

This thesis used social media data collected from Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. Table 1 shows the active monthly usage of the top 10 social media platforms by Australians. It is noted that the high usage of Facebook and Instagram makes them obvious choices for social media research. However, Twitter has a lower usage rate in the Australian population, but is a commonly used platform by community groups and provides relatively open access to its data compared to Facebook and Instagram. This research did not find any evidence of community groups and planning authorities using other social media platforms with high usage rates such as WordPress, WhatsApp, LinkedIn and Snapchat. The Department of Planning uses YouTube and video of a planning workshop was used as part of the analysis in the case study in Chapter 9.

Table 1: Social Media Statistics Australia – March 2018

| Platform | Monthly Australian active users |
|---------------|---------------------------------|
| Facebook | 15,000,000 |
| YouTube | 15,000,000 |
| Instagram | 9,000,000 |
| WordPress.com | 5,800,000 |
| WhatsApp | 5,000,000 |
| LinkedIn | 4,300,000 |
| Snapchat | 4,000,000 |
| Tumblr | 3,800,000 |
| Twitter | 3,000,000 |
| Tinder | 3,000,000 |

Source: Cowling 2018

NOTE: All figures represent the number of Unique Australian Visitors to that website over the monthly period. Data includes users of desktop, mobile, application and messenger services.

The following provides a summary of how social media data was obtained and which chapters analysed the data.

Facebook has broad usage across all age groups in Australia and is evenly used by people in both metropolitan and regional areas. Given the size and popularity of Facebook, obtaining and analysing Facebook data is an obvious choice for researchers. Facebook data was collected for the case studies in Chapters 7 and 10 using the Netvizz data extraction application. Until late 2015, third party applications such as Netvizz had unrestricted access to Facebook data. Since then, privacy rules have placed some restrictions on access, before more restrictions were implemented in February 2018. Direct access to Facebook data was effectively shut down in April

2018. Restricting access to Facebook data will impair content-based research (Bastos & Walker 2018). However, it is still possible to use data scraping techniques such as Nvivo's NCapture to obtain some Facebook data.

Twitter is less popular than Facebook in Australia, with approximately 3 million users actively using the service on a monthly basis (Cowling 2018). Unlike Facebook, Twitter allows unrestricted access to its data, which leads to it being overrepresented in social media research. Twitter data also has a simple structure, meaning that it is easily formatted and analysed and is a good source of political and academic debates. Hence, this thesis analyses Twitter data in the case studies in Chapters 4, 5, 6, 8, 9 and 10. All the Twitter data used in this thesis was collected directly from the Twitter application programming interface (API) using the TAGSv6 and Friends and Followers Google spreadsheets created by Hawksey (2011; 2013). This thesis used Twitter data for both qualitative methods such as discourse and content analysis and converted the data into network files so quantitative network analysis could be performed.

Instagram is the third most popular social media platform in Australia with approximately 9 million Australians using the service on a monthly basis (Cowling 2018). It is very popular with younger age groups. Instagram is predominantly a visual platform, but also allows users to post short messages with their photographs. Instagram data was collected for one case study that is presented in Chapter 10. Like Facebook, Instagram has also introduced privacy restrictions. It was useful to include Instagram data in this research. However, it was of limited use as it was a very small data set and only a portion of the data set was applicable to the case study.

In addition to Twitter data, the case study in Chapter 8 also used data collected from council web sites. A desktop review of social media service availability on 127 local government web sites that operate in Australia's 6 state capital cities was undertaken. This data was used to establish a baseline and provided a contextual snapshot for further social media analysis undertaken for the Chapter 8 case study. Likewise, the case study in Chapter 10 used data collected from Social Pinpoint. Social Pinpoint can be defined as a public participation Geographic Information System (PPGIS) which allows the public to post feedback, concerns and ideas related to a consultation project on an easy to use drag and drop digital map. Social

Pinpoint data was collected as it was being used in tandem with social media. Unlike the majority of social media data collected, Social Pinpoint data also included location details which allowed additional geographic analysis of the data.

For each case study in this thesis, the community group and council that were the focus of the study were approached for an interview. The purpose of the interviews was to gain an understanding of stakeholders' perspectives on how they started using social media, what were their experiences and if they think social media is an effective communications tool for communities and planning authorities. Potential participants were identified through the social media analysis and contact details on web sites. Interviewees included the NSW Department of Planning, local government, an advocacy group and community groups actively using social media. In total, 12 interviews were undertaken with 18 participants between March and July 2015. The interviews were all semi-structured, which allowed the interviewee to focus on the topics that were important to them. The interviews lasted between 45-60 minutes. The semi-structured approach enabled interviewees' perspectives to be articulated in a comprehensive manner. It is noted that the most valuable insights were offered by the interviewee towards the end of the interview, perhaps when they had become more comfortable. The interview data for this thesis is limited as a number of stakeholders that were considered important for the research, either did not respond to an invitation or declined to participate. Therefore, interview data was only utilised in the case studies in Chapters 6 and 10. It is only an observation, but the timing of the request to participate may play a role in the decision to participate, as community groups that agreed were in the initial stages of their campaign and seemed eager to speak about it. Interest in participating in the research seems to drop off once planning decisions have been made.

This thesis also mobilised multiple data analysis methods. The results chapters of this thesis starts with a case in Chapter 4 that mobilised the quantitative analysis technique of social network analysis (SNA) to visualise the structure of social media networks, as well as investigate who is connected and who is participating in the networks. The use of SNA in this first case study addresses the initial Research Question of who participates in social media networks created by community groups. The case studies in Chapters 5 through 10 then mobilise sentiment analysis, discourse and content analysis methods to explore the text that is being distributed

through social networks and also compare it to more traditional data sources, such as mainstream media, planning reports, submissions and interview transcripts.

Sentiment analysis was chosen for Chapters 7 and 8 as it is a commonly used method for analysing social media data in other disciplines. For this thesis, sentiment analysis was used in Chapter 7 to test if aggregating the attitude of residents during a planning process provides useful insights and in Chapter 8 for comparing the social media use of different councils and also comparing social media use of councils and mayors.

The qualitative discourse method was applied in Chapter 5. The long running and controversial case study in Chapter 5 required an analysis method that would take into account both the social context of the discourse and the rhetorical organisation of the discourse. The application of discourse analysis to this case study was primarily to test what the method could provide for case studies based on social media text. Hence, the case study draws together Fairclough's (1989) approach for analysing a range of traditional texts and Herring's (2004) computer-mediated discourse analysis (CMDA) approach to gain a better understanding of the production and interpretation of social media text. Discourse studies on social media is an emerging research area, and early work demonstrates that discourse analysis of text produced on the Internet should be pursued, when available.

Content analysis is the most commonly used method in this thesis as it was mobilised in Chapters 6, 9 and 10. This is because content analysis has a flexible systematic approach, it can effectively reduce the size of a data set and it can be supplemented with time series graphs and frequency counts to provide a high level description of the data. Social media data sets vary in size and complexity, thus the flexible nature of content analysis suggests it is an appropriate method of gaining an understanding of how social media is being used in the case studies (Schreier 2013).

This research has been undertaken in accordance with the Macquarie University guidelines for ethical research to ensure all research is done in an ethical way that will not harm the researcher, participants or anyone else affected by the research. The risk was particularly relevant for interviewees representing community groups, as the subject matter typically generated passionate responses and opinions. In regards

to social media data collection and use, the Ethics Committee does not require a formal application and/or approval. However, the published research outputs of this thesis avoid republishing personnel identifier details, such as name, email address or location of social media uses.

It is acknowledged that the mixed methods approach to this thesis applies a significant number of data collection and analysis techniques to a large number of case studies. Table 2 below summarises which data collection and analysis methods are used in each results chapter.

Table 2: Thesis chapters by data collection and analysis methods

| | | Thesis chapters | | | | | | | |
|-----------------|-------------------------|-----------------|---|---|---|---|---|----|--|
| | | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | |
| Data collection | Facebook | | | | ● | | | ● | |
| | Twitter | ● | ● | ● | | ● | ● | ● | |
| | Instagram | | | | | | | ● | |
| | Social Pinpoint | | | | | | | ● | |
| | Web sites | | | | | ● | | | |
| | Interview | | | ● | | | | ● | |
| | Mainstream media | | ● | ● | | | | ● | |
| Data analysis | Social Network Analysis | ● | | | | | | | |
| | Discourse Analysis | | ● | | | | | | |
| | Sentiment Analysis | | | | ● | ● | | | |
| | Content Analysis | | | ● | | | ● | ● | |
| | | | | | | | | | |

1.3 Main contributions

This thesis makes the following contributions. First, by visualising social media network structures created by community groups, the various stakeholders such as politicians, journalists, planning authorities, local governments and other community groups are identified. Previously, these networks were not widely understood. For the two community groups investigated, they do not attract large numbers of followers on Twitter and key stakeholders play a passive listening role in the networks.

Second, social media dialogue between a planning authority and a community group is quiet rare and has not been explicitly analysed in planning literature to date. In the case study in Chapter 5, the dialogue was highly disjointed and generated

misunderstandings and mixed messages that frustrated the community group. This demonstrates that it is difficult to explain complex planning concepts and process in social media format. This case study also revealed insights into how the speed of engagement is changing due to the use of social media platforms.

Third, to date, social media has been largely absent from research looking at attempts to resist post-political planning efforts and research looking at the role of social media in planning participation has not investigated the post-political condition. Hence, this thesis contributes to a growing literature seeking to understand the post-political condition for urban planning and introduces social media as a tool to support alternative politics.

Fourth, the community group case studies in this thesis intentionally looked for links between social and mainstream media to understand if there are different messaging strategies for these communication channels. This thesis makes a distinct contribution by highlighting a community group that was providing particular information to journalist to aid campaign exposure in the local and regional newspapers and using more emotive language and themes on social media. This is the only known case study, published in urban planning literature, of a deliberate strategy to mobilise different messaging for different communication channels.

Fifth, this thesis provides a rare analysis of “live tweeting” at a planning workshop. This analysis represents a Twitter data set generated over a 4 hour period in response to a Department of Planning initiated hashtag at a Department hosted planning reform workshop. Moreover, the Twitter data was mostly generated by a group of people sitting in a large room together. This case study contributes to the extensive planning literature on participatory planning with a detailed analysis of a contemporary data set.

Sixth, the results chapters of the thesis conclude with a case study of a state government initiated campaign using multiple social media platforms. The Department sought to utilise social media to conduct an engagement campaign implemented through the Department’s media team and based on a marketing methodology. This case study contributes a discussion on how social media gives the impression that engagement is open and far reaching, but in reality this form of

engagement can be described as consultation/placation, as participation allows citizens to be heard, but citizens lack the control to ensure that their views will be heeded. In this instance, social media was deployed to brand the Department, while the intent should have been to listen to the community and build on their likes and dislikes through a series of activities. The Department's lack of engagement in the questions, topics and discussions throughout this campaign reflects the minimal participation observed in the live tweeting case study previously discussed.

Overall, the contribution of this thesis is the presentation of detailed empirical case studies of both community and government planning authority social media use in strategic planning in Sydney. There is a mismatch between communities that utilise social media as an additional communications channel to engage with planning authorities to seek further information on planning processes, clarify technical information or highlight inaccuracies in an attempt to disrupt the planning process. Conversely, planning authorities implement social media to mimic traditional stage-managed engagement processes, but seem reluctant to engage in any specific questions or discussions regarding the planning concepts being presented for comment and discussion. While there seems to be a data collection or listening aspect to the Department's social media use, there is no public evidence that they review, analyse or use the social media data generated by these events and campaigns.

1.4 Thesis structure

This document follows a thesis by publication structure. It is divided into three parts: the literature review and methodology, the research findings in Parts I and II and the conclusion. As this is a thesis by publication, the results chapters were produced as peer-reviewed journal articles and an edited book chapter. All seven results chapters were co-authored with Kristian Ruming and all have been published. Table 3 outlines my contribution to each manuscript.

Table 3: Candidate's contribution to each journal article

| Chapter | Experimental design | Data collection | Data analysis | Writing | Overall |
|----------------|----------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|----------------|----------------|
| 4 | 100% | 100% | 100% | 85% | 96% |
| 5 | 90% | 100% | 100% | 80% | 92% |
| 6 | 70% | 100% | 85% | 70% | 81% |
| 7 | 100% | 100% | 100% | 90% | 97% |
| 8 | 100% | 100% | 95% | 90% | 96% |
| 9 | 100% | 100% | 95% | 90% | 96% |
| 10 | 80% | 100% | 80% | 70% | 82% |

The main purpose of each chapter is as follows:

Chapter 2 is the literature review. This chapter is divided into four sections. The first section presents an overview of public participation through a discussion of key concepts of communicative planning including collaboration, deliberation and consensus building. The second section reviews the emerging post-political framework as an alternative lens to analyse public participation. The third section reviews the extensive body of literature regarding community groups. The final section focuses on the growing body of literature that analyses the adoption and use of social media in planning.

Chapter 3 is the methodology chapter. This chapter is divided into five sections. The first section discusses the mixed methods approach adopted for this thesis. The second section provides a detailed discussion of the data collection and analysis techniques, including the benefits and limitations of the methods employed. The third section discusses the secondary data sources used to contextualise the case studies. The fourth section provides an overview of the data analysis methods used in the case studies. The final section of the chapter outlines the ethical considerations of the research.

PART I: SOCIAL MEDIA USE BY COMMUNITIES

Part I examines social media use by community groups and is organised into four chapters based on case studies of four community groups' use of social media.

Chapter 4 addresses Research Question One by using social network analysis (SNA) to visualise who participates in Twitter networks generated by community groups. The analysis in this chapter demonstrates that various stakeholders follow community groups, including politicians, journalists, planning authorities, local

governments and other community groups. The network structures most closely resemble opinion leader networks, which are good for collective action, but not problem solving. This chapter finds that the two community groups investigated did not attract large numbers of followers on Twitter and key stakeholders play a passive listening role in the networks. However, the stakeholder's low level of participation is balanced by their large networks of followers that create the potential for the community groups reach on social media to be significantly increased. While SNA provides researchers with the ability to capture a snapshot of a network and identify who has the capacity to circulate ideas and opinions across the network, qualitative methods are also required to gain a better understanding of what information flows through the community group's network

Chapter 5 addresses Research Question Two by investigating the discourses mobilised in social media networks and if there are differences between communication channels. This chapter builds on the findings of Chapter 4 by analysing the discourses which circulate through the *Save Bronte* community group's Twitter network. This chapter analyses dialogues between the Department and a community group which was highly disjointed and generated misunderstandings and mixed messages that frustrated the community group. It became clear that it is difficult to explain complex planning concepts and processes in a short social media format. This case study also revealed insights into how the speed of engagement is changing due to use of social media platforms. In fact, this open and expeditious channel of communication strained the internal processes of the Department, which suggests that contemporary communications platforms do not align with the traditional practice of short exhibition periods as a discrete step in the planning process. This chapter also found the use of social and mainstream media peaked at different points in the process, which suggests the community group used a sophisticated media campaign that utilised the strengths of several communications channels.

Chapter 6 addresses Research Question Three by examining if social media is an effective communication platform for community groups to mobilise opposition to planning proposals. In this chapter the post-political theoretical framework is mobilised to analyse how the state government development agency pursued a consensus building approach for this project. To date, social media has been largely

absent from research looking at attempts to resist post-political planning efforts and research looking at the role of social media in planning participation has not investigated the post-political condition. This chapter builds on the initial analysis in Chapter 4 by investigating how the *North Parramatta Residents Action Group* used Twitter to make explicit connections with other community groups contesting state government led urban renewal projects. Furthermore, it captures a community group's effort to mobilise provocative hashtags to re-scale participation from a site specific contest to the larger geographic region of Sydney. This demonstrated a deliberate strategy to mobilise different discourses through different communication channels. In contrast to Chapter 5, the planning authorities in this case study remained silent on social media throughout the process.

Chapter 7, in conjunction with Chapter 6, addresses Research Question Three by examining if social media is an effective communication channel for community groups to challenge planning processes. The analysis in this chapter is informed by applying sentiment analysis techniques to Facebook data. This case study found the community group's activity on Facebook was very similar to traditional community group actions such as information distribution and motivating others to get involved. The community group also seized upon an opportunity to broaden the scope of their campaign with the local government election falling within the timeline of the planning process. This chapter concludes that social media may be good for initiating group activities and distributing information, but in this instance, there was little evidence of debate, even though the opportunity for multi-directional open dialogue is available through Facebook.

PART II: SOCIAL MEDIA USE BY GOVERNMENT

Part II examines social media adoption and use by local and state government. This section is organised into three chapters. Chapter 8 examines the adoption and use of social media by local governments, while Chapters 9 and 10 present detailed case studies of instances where the state government has initiated social media use in conjunction with a planning process.

Chapter 8 addresses Research Question Four by examining the level of social media adoption, activity and influence by local governments in Australian capital cities. The data collection and analysis in this chapter is based on a desktop review of social

media availability on local government web sites. This chapter found that there is a high social media adoption rate for local governments and a clear correlation between population size and social media use. Local governments are using social media to engage with a wide variety of topics that cut across several sections of their local communities, with examples of inner city councils using social media to promote events that reach beyond their local government area.

Chapter 9 addresses Research Question Five by analysing live tweeting during a planning reform workshop. This case study has several unique characteristics as it mobilises a Twitter data set generated over a four hour period in response to a Department of Planning initiated hashtag at a Department hosted planning reform workshop. Moreover, the Twitter data was mostly generated by a group of people sitting in a large room together and can be described as a form of real-time engagement. This is in direct contrast to the community initiated case studies in Part I, where no deadlines create long term community resistance campaigns and there is often some confusion regarding the planning process and next steps. This chapter found that Twitter use during the workshop was commentary in nature, with less sharing and low hashtag use, compared to the case studies in Part I. The Twitter activity stopped shortly after the workshop concluded - there was no reflection on the workshop's content and process in the days after the workshop. Although the workshop hashtag was initiated by the Department, it did not engage with any topics or questions raised during the workshop on Twitter.

Chapter 10, in conjunction with Chapter 9, addresses Research Question Five by analysing the #MySydney social media campaign undertaken by the Department of Planning. This campaign was conducted exclusively through Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and Social Pinpoint over an eight week period in June and July 2015. The #MySydney campaign was an attempt to engage with Sydney through social media at the early visioning stage of a district planning process. This chapter found that the Department sought to utilise social media to conduct an engagement campaign, but the campaign was implemented through the Department's media team and based on a marketing methodology. In effect, social media was deployed to brand the Department, while the intent should have been to listen to the community and build on their likes and dislikes through a series of activities. Furthermore, the open nature of social media offers opportunities for multi-directional engagement, but there is no

way of moderating participation, therefore it is very difficult to keep comments on topic. This case study demonstrated that social media can be just another avenue used by the most active and engaged citizens to mobilise antagonistic political campaigns to pursue their own objectives. The chapter concludes that for this type of engagement to be more useful, planning authorities must utilise the full functionality of social media and be prepared to respond to the concerns of citizens, not just broadcasting questions and replying with generic thankyou notes.

Chapter 11 is a conclusions chapter that reflects on the contribution of the thesis as a set of detailed empirical case studies of both community and government planning authority social media use in strategic planning. The research questions set out here in Chapter 1 are revisited and accompanied by a discussion of the overall conclusion that these case studies show a disconnect between communities using social media as a lobbying tool in the same manner as traditional methods, whilst planning authorities are experimenting with social media as a digital version of traditional consultation methods. Moreover, this thesis demonstrates that planning authorities are “tapping” into social media networks initiated by community groups. However, in most cases this is a listening role, rather than an engagement role. For planning authorities to use social media more effectively would require a complete rethink of how communication with the community has traditionally been undertaken. Chapter 11 concludes with a discussion on the limitations of this research and suggestions for further research projects and directions.

1.5 Reflections on insider research

As mentioned in the Forward to this thesis, I undertook this research on a part-time basis, while working full-time at the NSW Department of Planning and Environment and more recently at City of Sydney Council. This created a situation where I found myself being an insider in the planning profession with certain access and assumed knowledge and then having outsider status in the community groups I studied. In the first instance, permission was sought from my employer to undertake interviews with Department staff. Secondly, ethics approval required an explicit statement on the participation and consent form for all interviews with planners and community groups that “Mr Williamson is a part time student, who is also employed by the Department of Planning and Environment”.

The dual roles of a full-time planner and a part-time academic researcher had no effect on interviews with planners and had no effect on my day-to-day working relationships with colleagues (DeLyser 2001). However, it is possible that my position at the Department had an effect on my ability to secure interviews with community groups. Although interviews were conducted with community groups as part of the research plan, some interview requests were declined and perhaps my employee status played a role. However, this was not stated in their decline to be interviewed.

As an insider researcher, you have the advantage of possessing specific knowledge of planning processes and procedures and a professional network that allows you to gain access to people that may otherwise be difficult to make contact with. However, there is an element of suspicion when an outsider seeks an interview with people representing community groups, as their campaign is personal and the subject matter typically generates passionate responses and opinions.

Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1 Overview

The overarching goal of this thesis is to unpack and investigate how community groups and planning authorities use social media during strategic planning processes in Sydney. The individual papers presented in Chapters 4 to 10 discuss certain aspects of the literature and theoretical concepts relevant to that case study. This chapter draws together the key theoretical foundations that the thesis relies upon. This is done by reviewing four areas of literature. The chapter concludes with identifying current research gaps and how this thesis sought to address them.

In section 2.2, public participation is defined as various processes where members of the public share power in government decision-making for their community. Public participation comes in numerous forms including public meetings, citizen juries, focus groups, visioning and scenario workshops. Over the past four decades, public participation has been largely absorbed into planning practice. However, participation remains a contested concept in planning literature. Arguments for participation highlight that increased opportunity and access to planning processes leads to better decision-making. Conversely, others argue that participatory processes do not provide significant information to government officials, do not satisfy members of the public and do not improve decision-making.

In section 2.3, the post-political framework is a theoretical lens that is mobilised to examine community resistance to communicative planning approaches. In particular, community participation techniques that seek to build consensus, but do not challenge the objectives of an existing urban elite. This is most obvious in consensus-based events and processes that seek to disarm potential resistance through appealing narratives such as sustainable development and smart growth. The post-political lens allows researchers to highlight how planning authorities attempt to limit opportunities for disagreement, which in turn, may undermine community trust. In many cases community groups form to oppose planning proposals that exhibit post-political tendencies.

Section 2.4 discusses community groups that often appear to oppose a development proposal. These groups are typically labelled as 'Not-in-my-backyard' (NIMBY) in reference to their protectionist attributes and their oppositional tactics. Community

groups are not new. For several decades planning literature has focused on their activities and tactics including town hall meetings, public protests, lobbying elected officials through private meetings and phone calls and lodging submissions to formal planning processes. Recently, community groups have mobilised social media as part of their communications strategy and to build their communities.

Finally, Section 2.5 moves to the most relevant literature on the role of social media in planning practice. In the first instance, planning literature speculated that information and communication services via websites could increase the number of participants in the planning system. The emergence of social media then led to speculation that this open and unfettered communication channel may enable more participation for communities. A growing body of literature has focused on the presence and potential influence of social media in planning processes. However, open communication between communities and government planning authorities using social media is still scarce. Examples of social media communication between communities and government planning authorities are the focus of this thesis.

2.2 Public participation in planning

Public participation in planning processes became a central component of the communicative planning theories that emerged in the late 1980s and 1990s (Healey 1993; 2006; Forester 1989). The shift to the communicative turn in planning theory was particularly focused on community engagement as a re-orientation from technocratic planning models towards a more interactive understanding of planning activity (Harris 2002). Communicative planning theory draws on Habermas' (1984) theory of communicative action. Habermas distinguished communicative rationality as the separation of 'the sphere of everyday life' and 'the system' which reflects economic or administrative systems (Tewdwr-Jones & Allmendinger 1998).

Communicative rationality centralises consensus through deliberation by harmonising plans of action on the basis of common definitions (Habermas 1996).

Communicative or collaborative planning approaches have emerged as important directions for both planning theory and planning practice (Tewdwr-Jones & Allmendinger 2002), as these approaches strive to increase opportunity and access to planning processes (Healey 2006; Innes 1995; Innes & Booher 2004). Others have further developed the area of communicative planning and added terms such as deliberative planning (Forester 1999) to facilitate practical and timely participation

and planning through consensus building as a form of negotiation and mediation in planning processes (Innes 1996).

Public participation in planning is a fundamentally contested concept in planning literature (Day 1997), although since the 1960s, public participation has been largely absorbed into planning practice (Innes & Booher 2004). While public participation is not questioned as a democratic practice (Fung 2005), different accounts of public participation have raised questions about the rhetoric and efficacy of participatory approaches. For Adams (2004) public meetings do have a role, but they do not give citizens a sense that they are affecting decisions, while Halvorsen (2003) argues that current approaches to public participation are fundamentally flawed due to a general lack of trust between government officials and citizens. Moreover, Innes and Booher (2004) clearly articulate several flaws with public participation methods:

“The traditional methods of public participation in government decision-making simply do not work. They do not achieve genuine participation in planning or decisions; they do not provide significant information to public officials that makes a difference to their actions; they do not satisfy members of the public that they are being heard; they do not improve the decisions that agencies and public officials make; and they don’t represent a broad spectrum of the public” (Innes & Booher 2004, p. 1).

Given that there are numerous approaches to collaborative planning including public meetings, citizen juries, focus groups, visioning and scenario workshops, the *International Association of Public Participation* (IAP2) has developed a model that promotes a variety of participation methods. The IAP2 (2012) model bases participation methods on public participation goals, including the goals of informing, consulting, involving, collaborating and empowering. Each goal sets a promise to uphold and use techniques to achieve the goal. The IAP2 (2012) approach seeks to provide participants with information about getting involved and clearly communicates how their input will affect decision-making. This information highlights the formalised statutory processes requiring certain minimum standards of public notification and objection rights for new development proposals. The tension between government and citizen control has long been recognised as sitting at various levels on Arnstein’s (1969) ladder, which ranges from tokenistic consensus building to full

citizen control. For Arnstein (1969), when the power relationship is balanced, participation can be considered as a form of cooperation between citizens and government officials. Furthermore, Fung (2006, p. 69) defines participation mechanisms that allow citizens to exercise direct influence as a “co-governing partnership” in which citizens join officials to develop plans, policies and strategies. However, the act of providing opportunities to take part in planning and decision-making may not necessarily lead to real participation (Maier 2001).

Although it is considered important to offer the opportunity for the public to participate, there are several barriers faced by the community in daily life, including transportation, time and family commitments (King et al. 1998). Issues that also inhibit the effectiveness of participation are perceptions that information is controlled and distributed in an adversarial manner (Hillier 2003). For example, by the time information is distributed about a planning proposal, it is often too late in the process to make changes. Furthermore, the way planning meetings are advertised, the location and timing all affect meeting attendance and effectiveness.

Collaborative planning sees conflict as creative tensions between different spheres of a pluralist society. It assumes people confront each other from different relational positions (Healey 1999) and clearly defines the planner in the role of facilitator (Healey 2006). Innes (1996) argues that collaboration functions best when all participants are equally empowered and fully informed, hence, planning reflects the ideals of democracy. Innes and Booher (2010) have further developed the collaborative approach to planning by arguing that participants must represent a diverse group, participants should be interdependent on each other and dialogue is authentic.

The collaborative planning approach makes the somewhat utopian assumption that individuals and key stakeholders are interested in finding middle ground, when numerous examples demonstrate that this is often not the case (Huxley 2000). For Brand and Gaffikin (2007) the paradox of collaborative practice is that it seeks values of ‘cohesion, solidarity and inclusivity’ in an increasingly uncollaborative society. Although communicative rationality has been adopted in numerous planning systems, researchers question the limits imposed by political and economic contexts on the communicative planning approach (Huxley 2000; Huxley & Yiftachel 2000;

McGuirk 2001). In particular, McGuirk (2001) asserts that communicative planning pays insufficient attention to the politics and power-laden interests that infiltrate planning practice. Moreover, communicative planning underestimates the challenges for planners to navigate a power and knowledge nexus, which validates expert advice above other forms of knowledge (McGuirk 2001). Thus, planning needs to recognise conflict rather than consensus in its practical operation (Flyvbjerg 1998). The next section discusses an emerging body of literature that does this.

2.3 Post-political framework

Despite a focus on the collaborative planning ideal in planning theory and practice, the communicative planning approach has been challenged as researchers question the capacity of processes which seem to work to maintain the powerful position of certain actors via “consensus building” processes that seek to delegitimise opposition and define the wider good by working towards general agreement through engagement (Rancière 1998).

In turn, agonistic pluralism has emerged in planning scholarship as an approach which positions power, conflict and difference at the centre of collaboration in planning (Mouffe 1999; Mouat et al. 2013). From the agonistic perspective, consensus building as a conflict management tool is accused of facilitating neoliberal governance as it relies on decision-making practices that are widely accepted as democratic, but do not challenge existing power relations (Purcell 2009). Others have interpreted notions of collaborative planning as systems of domination rather than emancipation (Bickerstaff & Walker 2005), due to insufficient attention to the power structures in which planning is practised (McGuirk 2001). Hence, Yiftachel and Huxley (2000) argue that the collaborative approach entrenches the power of the ruling elite and fails to draw attention away from the underlying political processes that shape the city, rather than creating a space where a diverse set of actors can come together to discuss and define future planning.

In response to these critiques, the post-political analytical framework has emerged in planning literature as a lens to examine underlying urban politics and the way they are manifest and maintained via planning processes (Rancière 1998; Allmendinger & Haughton 2015; Inch 2015; Raco 2015; Legacy 2016; 2017; Ruming 2018). Wilson and Swyngedouw (2014) define ‘post-political’ as the political space of public engagement, which is being increasingly colonised by technocratic mechanisms and

consensual procedures that operate within a framework of representative democracy. To this end, post-politics reduces democratic contest by managing planning processes with expert reports and legitimises decisions through participatory processes where the scope of possible outcomes is narrowly defined in advance to align with the development objectives of an existing urban elite (Wilson & Swyngedouw 2014; Inch 2015; Raco 2015; Legacy 2016; 2017; Ruming 2018). Allmendinger and Haughton (2015) advise that post-political planning is notable for consensus-based events and processes that seek to promote a growth-led agenda. This pursuit of consensus has manifested itself through appealing narratives such as 'sustainable development' (Bunce 2018) and 'smart growth' which disarm effective opposition as these phrases seem uncontroversial and appeal to common sense. Hence, economic growth is presented as something which is good for everyone, but actually disproportionately benefits some actors over others. Furthermore, Schatz and Rogers (2016) and Rogers (2016) argue the state government has sought to manage participation by using temporary consensus-seeking consultation events. However, the rhetoric of citizen involvement in decision-making does not explain the mechanisms through which representation can influence the planning process (Schatz & Rogers 2016).

While consensus building has been a focus to advance the participation of citizens via collaborative planning frameworks and tame antagonism in order to strengthen the claims and positions of powerful urban elites, framing the two concepts renders invisible the fluidity and political formation of participation (Legacy 2017; Legacy et al. 2019). For Beveridge and Koch (2017) the post-political thesis captures the spirit of the current political malaise, but it is perhaps a rather monolithic view that negates the in-betweenness and contingency of actual urban politics. Thus, a reflection on the plurality of perspectives on what is politics and more specifically the politics of the urban is required to understand contemporary urban governance (Beveridge & Koch 2017).

The post-political condition should be viewed as overarching objectives driven by state and market actors (Davidson & Iveson 2015). According to Davidson and Iveson (2015) post-political consensus is an unstable, emergent process that can be challenged by community groups which form alternative politics in response to the post-political tendencies of state governments under a neoliberal regime. This

echoes Swyngedouw (2010) who notes searching for consensus and limiting opportunities for disagreement and contest is bound to fail, as the process undermines trust and destabilises implementation.

Community conflict has variously been positioned as, on one hand, the actions of a set of self-interested residents seeking to maintain their own material, financial and social well-being (Dear 1992) and, on the other hand, as an expression of active citizenship and democracy, particularly within the context of planning systems, which have actively sought to constrain participation opportunities (Wilson & Swyngedouw 2014). The next section discusses the key literature on the formation and operation of community groups.

2.4 Community groups

Public participation is actively encouraged by planning authorities so that the community can exercise their democratic rights and also assume their civic responsibility (McClymont & O'Hare 2008). At the same time, terms such as Not in My Backyard (NIMBY) and Locally Unwanted Land Use (LULU) are used to refer to locally based protest groups or individuals who oppose a planned development or land use (McClymont & O'Hare 2008; Schively 2007). These groups are often labelled as NIMBY or LULU in reference to their protectionist attributes and the oppositional tactics they adopt towards unwelcome development in a neighbourhood (Dear 1992). These tactics are not new - Cook et al. (2013) reminds us that community opposition has been present in planning for several decades, with notable conflicts observed in inner city suburbs by Jacobs (1961) in the early 1960s, while Sydney's green bans of the 1970s shaped urban social movements in Sydney.

The formation of a community group to oppose a new development traditionally sees a group organise town hall meetings, plan public protests to coincide with major planning milestones, lobby elected officials through private meetings and phone calls and lodge submissions to formal planning processes (Dear 1992). A common goal of community groups is to engage politicians in their campaign (McClymont & O'Hare 2008). In particular, strategic planning projects are often characterised by controversies, opposition and community resistance (Dear 1992).

Initial community opposition can be a small highly localised number of individuals in the immediate neighbourhood, before seeking to mobilise a much larger group (Dear

1992). A small core group of individuals tend to use their skills and experience to research issues and coordinate the group's contributions to the planning process (McClymont & O'Hare 2008). To this end, community opposition can take a diverse range of activities and include an equally diverse range of actors whose boundaries are fluid and somewhat reliant on connections to other groups (Ruming et al. 2012).

Community opposition tends to be cyclical, with periods of intense activity followed by extended periods of inactivity. Dear (1992) defines the three stages of activity:

Youth: News of a proposal is released and opposition is expressed by a small vocal group that resides close to the proposed development site. Sentiment is usually expressed in raw and blunt negative terms at this early stage.

Maturity: The community group moves away from personal complaints and towards a public forum model. This stage sees the community group trying to enlist supporters and opposition arguments become more rational and objective. The more measured arguments become focused on concerns such as impacts on property values and increased traffic generation.

Old age: The final stage is a sometimes long and drawn out conflict resolution stage. The victory tends to go to the groups with the persistence and stamina to maintain their position. This stage typically concludes with concessions being made by all interested parties.

Dear (1992) notes there are three typical arguments expressed by community groups:

- perceived impacts of property values,
- personal security, and
- negative impacts on neighbourhood amenity.

Although no research has been able to directly attribute declining property values or impacts on neighbourhood amenity with new development in a neighbourhood, public participation is generally reactionary as citizens only engage in the planning process, regardless of its delivery mechanism, when they are opposed to something in their immediate vicinity (Dear 1992). Alternatively, in reaction to rising property prices and

rents, some cities are seeing the appearance of Yes in My Backyard (YIMBY) groups that are primarily concerned with property developers building more housing, rather than less. In theory the cost of rent in cities like San Francisco, Boston, and Portland will not rise so quickly and people with different economic backgrounds will be able to secure affordable housing (Semuels 2017).

As communities tend to have a low level understanding of planning policy (Ruming et al. 2012), consensus building is frequently used to potentially reduce frustration, animosity, finance and time costs associated with decision-making. Schively (2007) argues that formal public hearings do not account for the wide range of potential impacts a decision may have on a community, whereas informal processes can be more effective in promoting consensus. Effectively, varied interests can be discussed with smaller groups to increase the likelihood of acceptable solutions being achieved. This aligns with communicative planning goals for reaching consensus, but does not recognise that consensus processes are often used to manage resistance to the development objectives of a powerful urban elite (Wilson & Swyngedouw 2014; Legacy 2016; 2017).

Others take a psychological approach to place attachment and threat to place commonly identified by resident opposition (Devine-Wright 2009). Similar to Dear's (1992) three-staged approach above, this process considers citizens actions as they become aware of a proposal through to deciding to take action or not. Devine-Wright (2009) suggests engaging with community opposition should move beyond labelling opponents and needs to expect and understand emotional responses by local residents. By using psychology based communications, stakeholders should seek to objectify rather than threaten place related community distinctiveness and self-esteem. Likewise, the capacity of groups to speak on behalf of a broader public is an important strategy to delegitimise claims of self-interested NIMBYs concerned only with protecting their immediate neighbourhood (Ruming et al. 2012). The formation and activities of community groups is the focus of Part I of this thesis. The concept of delegitimising claims of being self-interested NIMBY groups is explored in detail in Chapters 5 and 6.

Thus far this literature review has focused on the discussions and debates in communicative planning theory, the emergence and use of the post-political lens and

the role played by community groups in urban planning. In recent years it has become apparent that social media is being mobilised by some community groups, as part of their broader communication strategy. The next section discusses the literature investigating the role of Internet based communications and social media in planning practice.

2.5 Information and communication technology and planning

This section focuses on how planning practice utilises information and communication services through the use of the Internet and how it promises to increase community understanding of planning, while also increasing the number of participants in the planning system (Conroy & Gordon 2004; Yigitcanlar 2005). For example, residents can go online at their own convenience and answer questions, draw on maps and in various ways express their preferences regarding planning issues (Conroy & Evans-Cowley 2005). More recently, social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter have appeared and have the potential to completely turn civic engagement on its head (Evans-Cowley & Hollander 2010). According to Hollander (2011), only through open, unfettered dialogue can problems be understood and addressed, with online dialogue being the most open and unfettered form of communication. This early research speculated that social media had the potential to put an enormous amount of power in the hands of ordinary people and allow them to mobilise themselves into an effective lobby (Shipley & Utz 2012). Shipley and Utz (2012) reflected on these early impressions by noting the social media could be a game changer and called for further research to be conducted to determine whether these methods can gain ground in reducing public cynicism and distrust through their ease of use and multi-pronged approach.

2.5.1 Internet based communication

To gain an understanding of how planning authorities communicate with its community via the Internet Evans-Cowley and Conroy (2006) categorized typical U.S. Municipal Council website functions into the four-part model developed by McMillan (2002). McMillan's model was used to categorise the various forms of Internet based communication into the following communication types:

Monologue: One-way communication with the receiver, being the public, having no control over the format or type of information provided.

Feedback: The receiver has some control of the interaction. However, the extent of the communication is not guaranteed.

Responsive Dialogue: Multi-directional communication which is typically initiated by the public. When a government authority responds to the communication, it becomes responsive dialogue, however, the government authority retains control of the communication.

Mutual Discourse: Pure multi-directional communications where both parties have control of communication, and both parties have the opportunity to send and receive messages.

Evans-Cowley and Conroy's (2006) conclusions were, firstly, that the monologue approach is the most common form of communication because it saves time and costs to the council and is relatively simple to implement. Secondly, responsive dialogue and mutual discourse are challenging both technically and financially, with little expertise for these processes employed in-house. Thirdly, citizens have increasing expectations for planning websites, with the public regularly inquiring about information availability. And finally, a small portion of local government is providing the full array of communications. Likewise, Simpson (2005) conducted a large survey of U.S. local government as a representation of the various interactions that occur between government and citizens, observing that planning is a unit of local government that most often affects people at the property level and actively seeks community input on planning issues (Simpson 2005). Simpson concluded that the majority of U.S. planning authorities were not using web-enabled technology to engage the public in discourse, rather they are providing a one-way communication channel in the form of static documents and maps. Furthermore, most planning authorities in the U.S. are considering the adoption of more interactive applications, but most activity is focused on basic information (Simpson 2005).

Evans-Cowley and Conroy transformed their 2003 study into a longitudinal study that reviewed Municipal Council websites on an annual basis. Evans-Cowley and Conroy's (2009) concluded that municipal planning websites are still dominated by simple monologue information, although the number of municipalities offering this information has increased between 2003 and 2007. Municipalities are also

experiencing significant technical and financial challenges in adding tools such as interactive Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and e-commerce to their websites, because planning department staff are responsible for maintaining the websites. Finally, there is evidence of an increase in online participation tools, although the number of municipalities offering discussion forums and special interest group listservs has decreased since 2003. Evans-Cowley and Conroy (2009) conclude that all levels of government are facing continuing challenges to be more responsive to their citizens and engage them in decision-making; however, the success of online participation tools is tied to the public's use of these services.

From an Australian perspective, Williamson and Parolin (2012; 2013) conducted similar data collection and analysis for New South Wales (NSW) councils which demonstrated that local government are familiar with monologue communication. The low costs and simple functionality associated with monologue communications represents quantifiable time and cost savings for local government customer service. However, the implementation of more interactive tools that act in *feedback*, *responsive dialogue* and *mutual discourse* communication modes was significantly lower. These studies also tracked NSW local government's rapid adoption of social media between 2009 and 2013.

The results of the studies by Simpson (2005), Evans-Cowley and Conroy (2006; 2009) and Williamson and Parolin (2012; 2013) demonstrated that local government is familiar with monologue communication; however, the implementation level of more interactive tools that act in *feedback*, *responsive dialogue* and *mutual discourse* communication modes was low. While Internet based communications and the emerging social media platforms exhibit the potential to expand the communication choices of both government and the community by creating a channel for authentic dialogue, there was little evidence they were facilitating practical and timely participation or providing a platform for negotiation and mediation as envisaged by Innes (1996) and Forester (1999).

2.5.2 Social media

An area of online participation that has emerged since the initial studies by Evans-Cowley and Conroy (2006; 2009) and Simpson (2005) is social media, which includes Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Google+, Pinterest, Flickr and LinkedIn. The use of social media for the purpose of engaging with planning

processes can be broken into two separate groups: government-initiated and citizen-initiated social networks (Evans-Cowley 2010; Evans-Cowley & Hollander 2010). Citizen-initiated social networks focusing on planning issues form the majority of social networks found by Evans-Cowley (2010), and are typically organised to oppose a proposed development or draft plan. Facebook is a popular social network that attracts millions of users across the world; however, the use at a personal level may not constitute what is required for participation in planning processes. This is due to people's interpretation of what a 'friend' is, and their belief that simply joining a network is an action for a cause (Evans-Cowley 2010). Evans-Cowley and Hollander (2010) found significant challenges for planners attempting to use Facebook due to its closed network nature. Planners were unable to create connections with the public in this sense. However, Evans-Cowley and Griffin (2011) identified Twitter as a powerful tool to engage the public. Twitter's open style allows planners to read, see or listen to what the community is saying (Mergel 2013). Hence Evans-Cowley and Griffin (2011) suggested Twitter is an opportunity to engage with the public in a different way. Evans-Cowley and Griffin's (2011) early study of Twitter data using sentiment analysis proved that aggregation of social media can create meaning and help to understand the communities' perspective. However, the results did not satisfy expectations of decision-makers as they expected real-time data analysis with more meaningful results. This study also noted the decision-makers were generally interested in the identity of the users, in addition to the aggregation of their opinion (Evans-Cowley & Griffin 2011).

While it has been shown that planning authorities have increasingly adopted Internet enabled communication technologies as a means of engaging with the public, a series of questions remain about the capacity of Internet-based communication methods to reach a broad audience. This is particularly the case where public access to a computer or the Internet is potentially limited (Mandarano et al. 2010). Existing research illustrates how the value of Internet participation differs considerably between population groups, depending on variables such as age, education level and interest in the planning process (Ertiö et al. 2016). Furthermore, well-organised community groups can produce their own material through several communication channels including: YouTube videos, websites and posts on social media platforms to create a perpetual digital footprint (Trapenberg Frick 2016), which may result in a loud minority putting their interests over those of the majority (Carver et al. 2001).

Effectively, community groups can use multiple digital channels to elevate their concerns with a planning process (Trapenberg Frick 2016), which is no different to traditional community group activities, such as town hall meetings, public protests, phone calls and formal submissions (Dear 1992).

Afzalan and Muller (2014) found that social media is often used as complementary to traditional planning processes. From the perspective of communicative planning theory, a platform such as Facebook may help facilitate dialogue, consensus building, and organising activities among its participants. But, the value of the dialogue can also be distorted by participants introducing inaccurate information that can be difficult for others to validate (Afzalan & Muller 2014). This lack of control and potential distortion of facts that can be distributed through social media is a key consideration for this thesis and is explored in detail from a community group's perspective in Chapter 5 and a planning authority's perspective in Chapter 10.

An individual's use of the Internet within community groups increases over time and so does their level and types of involvement in the group (Kavanaugh et al. 2007). Hence, social media can provide a platform to quickly launch a community group's campaign and distribute information to a wider audience which aligns with Dear's (1992) initial 'youth' stage of a group's lifecycle. Notwithstanding, Johnson and Halegoua (2014; 2015) discovered that the use of social media, particularly Facebook, can be beneficial to neighbourhood communication, access to information, and participation, but also found mismatches between the perceived affordances of social media and the neighbourhood context. People are willing to experiment with or use social media to communicate with neighbours about neighbourhood matters, but they were hesitant to use social media without pre-existing neighbourhood ties (Johnson & Halegoua 2015).

With the appearance of more social media platforms in recent years, researchers have turned their attention to how government agencies may use multiple social media platforms in their communications strategies (Gruzd et al. 2018). Likewise, research has also investigated the how government authorities are combining social media with other online participatory technologies. An example of this in Chapter 10, which discusses the combined use of Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Social PinPoint to engage the community. Empirical explorations of Instagram use in

planning processes are relatively scarce. Gruzdt et al. (2018) found in their study of Twitter and Instagram that by combining multiple social media platforms the planning authority could connect with different audiences and use the powerful visual nature of Instagram to alleviate boarder community concerns. New tools such as Neighbourlytics (www.neighbourlytics.com) have been developed to collect and analyse social media data for a geographic location and “democracy as a service” software applications such as New Vote (www.newvote.org) which generates social networks for collaboration, voting and sharing information. These new apps are based on the communicative principles of most social media platforms and could be examples of how social media may be used in the future.

Despite potential demographic usage issues and the experimental nature of many attempts by communities and planning authorities to utilise social media, Fredericks and Foth (2013) suggest that a well-managed and funded engagement strategy using social media can help to actively involve communities in the planning process by providing complimentary avenues for participation. Furthermore, Schweitzer (2014) suggests engagement with individuals on social media may prove more beneficial than broadly distributing information – this could improve a government agency’s reputation and their planning dialogue more generally. While a growing body of literature is focusing on the presence and potential influence of social media in planning processes, Kleinhans et al. (2015) conclude that multi-directional communication between communities and planning authorities using social media is still scarce and also note that governments seem unable to ‘tap into’ citizens’ online social networks. This thesis seeks to address the conclusions of Kleinhans et al. (2015) by exploring instances of communication between residents and government authorities using social media and how each party uses social media for their own ends.

2.6 Chapter summary

The purpose of this chapter has been to provide a broad discussion of the theoretical and practical concepts being examined by this thesis. More specifically, it focuses on the foundations of collaborative planning and the widely studied response to urban development through community groups. This chapter also provided a summary of the post-political framework which is increasingly being used to understand planning processes under various forms of neoliberal governance.

By understanding the theoretical foundations of public participation, the known opportunities and issues inherent in communicative planning theory and the alternative participation tactics put forward by the public in the form of community groups, this chapter has put forward a broad theoretical framework to consider what social media may add to the discussion. Although this framework encompasses a diverse, but also somewhat related set of theories, the knowledge and experience from all of these fields of expertise are required to analyse the current and future role of social media in planning processes.

The next chapter discusses how social media data was captured for the case studies and how various methods were employed to analyse and present the data.

Chapter 3: Data collection and analysis

3.1 Overview

This chapter discusses the research design used for this thesis. Exploration of the thesis questions required an approach that examines the relationships of government authorities, community group members and other stakeholders and also their experiences. Thus, the research project employed a mixed methods approach across seven case studies.

This chapter is divided into five sections. The first section discusses the mixed methods approach adopted for this thesis. The second section provides a detailed discussion of the data collection and analysis techniques, including the benefits and limitations of the methods employed. The third section discusses the secondary data sources used to contextualise the case studies. The fourth section provides an overview of the data analysis methods used in the case studies. The final section of the chapter outlines the ethical considerations of the research.

3.2 Adopting a mixed methods approach

Mixed methods research involves collecting, analysing, and interpreting qualitative and quantitative data in a single project or in a series of studies that investigate the same underlying phenomenon (Leech & Onwuegbuzie 2009). The central premise of mixed methods research is that the use of qualitative and quantitative approaches in combination provides a better understanding of research problems, than either approach used alone (Creswell & Plano Clark 2017).

When undertaking mixed methods research, the researcher may use qualitative research methods for one phase of a research project and quantitative research methods for another phase of the research. Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2009) note that this phased approach can be conducted either concurrently or sequentially. Essentially, once a study combines qualitative and quantitative techniques, the study can no longer be viewed as utilising a single method, but employing a fully mixed or a partially mixed research design (Leech & Onwuegbuzie 2009). A fully mixed methods approach involves the mixing of qualitative and quantitative techniques within one or more phases of the research process, while a partially mixed methods approach does not mix quantitative and qualitative techniques within or across phases.

The purpose of mixed methods research is not to replace either qualitative or quantitative research, but rather to extract the strengths and diminish the weaknesses in both approaches within a single study (Greene 2007). In effect, the researcher is harnessing the strengths of both techniques. For example, qualitative research is stronger at understanding the context of a given process. However, qualitative research is often criticised for the personal interpretations that may be made by the researcher and the difficulty of generalising findings to a large population (Creswell & Plano Clark 2017). Although critics of mixed use methods argue that mixed methods research is inherently wrong because qualitative and quantitative approaches represent different and inherently incompatible research paradigms (Greene 2007), there are instances where the researcher needs to evaluate the most appropriate methodological approach to answer specific research questions.

Generally, research projects suited to the mixed methods approach are those in which one data source may not be sufficient. Hence, one type of evidence may not tell the complete story (Creswell & Plano Clark 2017). Furthermore, one research technique may be used to explore what data and variables are available, before applying another technique to gain an in-depth understanding of the content of the data. For example, Marwick (2014) notes that Twitter provides a rich repository of data for researchers interested in online interactions, information distribution and activism. However, interviews and content analysis can provide a richer analysis that goes beyond simple queries. Qualitative methods can reveal information about social norms and the appropriateness and/or concerns of the technology. Essentially, the mixed methods approach triangulates different sources of data and/or research methods.

Triangulation is defined as the intentional use of multiple methods in investigating the same phenomenon to strengthen the results of an inquiry. The core premise being that all research methods have limitations (Greene 2007). When the concept of triangulation was introduced by Denzin (1978) it was suggested that the concept could be applied to data sources, research methods, investigations and theories as a way of overcoming any limitations of a single data generation perspective or event. A focus of the triangulation concept is the importance of both asking participants for their interpretations of their experiences and observing the same individuals in action.

For Denzin (1978), what people say and what people do are not always the same. Thus, triangulation can provide a more coherent and comprehensive account or story of the phenomenon being studied (Greene 2007). However, as advised by Patton (2002), triangulation is not being used in this thesis to reinforce the findings of other sources, but instead to strengthen the overall conclusions.

For such ends, this thesis employs multiple data sources for multiple case studies that are analysed using predominantly qualitative methods with quantitative methods used to supplement the results, where appropriate. This approach provides a fuller understanding of specific research questions (Hesse-Biber 2010). Mixed methods research also allows researchers to produce multiple articles from a single case study, such as an article from the quantitative phase for the project and an article from the qualitative phase of the project (Creswell & Plano Clark 2017).

In summary, the reasons for this thesis utilising the mixed methods research approach are threefold:

1. To answer research questions where either quantitative and/or qualitative methods are required.
2. Multiple case studies were used to test different research methods on similar data sets, in lieu of other published evidence.
3. Opportunity to publish multiple articles from a single case study.

Overall, the use of multiple data sources facilitated a more in-depth understanding of the stakeholders and their interaction in social media networks.

3.3 Social media data collection

This thesis uses social media data collected from Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. As each thesis chapter provides a detailed description of how social media data was collected, this section provides a high level overview of the data collection technique and a discussion of any learnings.

3.3.1 Facebook

Facebook is a social networking website where users can post comments, share photographs and links to news or other content on the Web, play games, chat live, and stream live video (Fuchs 2017). According to Cowling (2018) approximately 15 million (60%) Australians are actively using Facebook on a monthly basis, with 50%

of Australians logging in at least once a day. Facebook has broad usage across all age groups and is evenly used by people in both metropolitan and regional areas (Sensis 2018). Given the size and popularity of Facebook, obtaining and analysing Facebook data is an obvious choice for researchers.

Facebook data was collected for the case studies in Chapters 7 and 10 using the Netvizz data extraction application developed by Rieder (2013). Netvizz allowed data to be exported in a standard file format from a number of sections of Facebook, such as personal networks, group pages and page likes. Netvizz is accessed by typing the software application name into the main search box in Facebook. The researcher must be an active member of Facebook and logged in to Facebook to access Netvizz. The data extracted by Netvizz consists of anonymous nodes (people), edges (communication links) and comment text, which represent the Facebook users' interactions with the Facebook group page.

The Facebook data for this thesis was collected for Chapter 7 in August 2013 and for Chapter 10 in July 2015. Until late 2015, third party applications such as Netvizz had unrestricted access to Facebook data. Since then, privacy rules had placed some restrictions on access, before more restriction were implemented in February 2018. Access to most Facebook data was effectively shut down in April 2018 after the Cambridge Analytica scandal became public (Bastos & Walker 2018). Bastos and Walker (2018) suggest the decisions to restrict access to Facebook data will impair content-based research and could create incentives for researchers to scrape Facebook directly. Data scraping or harvesting is a method by which a computer program extracts information from web pages. Data scraping is a human-intensive means of data collection which represents a data sample, not a complete data set (Bastos & Walker 2018).

The lack of access to Facebook data is a concern for researchers interested in this data source as Rogers et al. (2017) found that residents looking to engage with planning matters are most likely to use Facebook, if they use social media at all. On the other hand, Twitter allows unrestricted access to its data, which leads to it being overrepresented in social media research (Bastos & Walker 2018).

While this thesis predominantly frames Facebook, Twitter and Instagram as communication channels for the purposes of discourse, sentiment and content analysis, it is noted that social media platforms are corporations which are compelled to strive for monetary profits. Hence, the data access constraints that Facebook and Instagram have introduced are in part attributed to their efforts to monetise their corporate reputation and keep control of the data generated by their users (Bastos & Walker 2018). There is a fundamental tension between social movements using social media as a platform to pursue social change and the commercial orientation of most social media platforms towards the profits that can be made by exploiting user's personal data (Rodan & Mummery 2018). This contradiction is explored in the case study in Chapter 6.

3.3.2 Twitter

Twitter is a service that allows people to publish short messages on the Internet and is commonly referred to as microblogging. Twitter allows people to "follow" other people, non-government organisations, special interest groups and institutions they are interested in and be followed back. Twitter enables users to broadcast messages using hashtags (#) and send direct messages using the "@" symbol. However, direct messages are publically available (Java et al. 2007). Twitter is the 9th most used social media platform in Australia with approximately 3 million users actively using the service on a monthly basis (Cowling 2018). Twitter is more commonly used by males and people who reside in metropolitan areas (Sensis 2018).

All the Twitter data used in this thesis was collected directly from the Twitter application programming interface (API) using the TAGSv6 and Friends and Followers Google spreadsheets created by Hawksey (2011; 2013). Depending on the planning process, the data were either collected on the day of the event or collected approximately every seven days throughout the duration of the process, in order to create the most accurate data sets possible. Although Twitter data is freely available, the challenge is collecting it at the right time, as Twitter data is only available through the API for approximately 9 days. Hence, to collect an accurate data set, the researcher must be aware of the event or longer term process when it starts and continue to collect the data at regular intervals throughout the process. The data collected for this thesis was done every 7 days for periods of up to 3 years, such as the *Save Bronte* case study discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.

As previously mentioned, Twitter is somewhat overrepresented in social media research due to the availability and the potential richness of the data. Furthermore, Twitter data also has a simple structure, meaning that it is easily formatted and analysed in a spreadsheet. There are also numerous third party software applications that can be used to collect and analyse Twitter data.

These third party software applications have either improved significantly since 2012 or appeared since 2015. A recommended data collection tool is the NodeXL Excel spreadsheet plugin (<https://www.smrfoundation.org/nodexl/>) as it seamlessly transfers data from the Twitter API into an Excel spreadsheet format and also exports the data to Gephi (<https://gephi.org/>) data files for visual analysis. These are functions previously performed manually in the initial stages of this research project. The NCapture plug-in incorporated into versions 10 and 11 of NVivo is also a useful social media data scrapping tool. More recently, free web based software applications such as SocioViz (<http://socioviz.net/>) have appeared. This application will import Twitter data for a specific hashtag or Twitter user search, then generate various statistics, time series graphs and network graphs. SocioViz is particularly useful for getting a quick snapshot of the activity being generated by a hashtag or Twitter user. Finally, public archives have also now appeared such as the State Library of NSW social media archive (State Library of NSW 2018), which is harvesting social media data on a daily basis and presenting “live” statistical information on sentiments and trends in the data. Additional functionality to allow researchers to query the State Library archive is currently under development.

This thesis used Twitter data for both qualitative methods such as content and discourse analysis and converted the data into network files so quantitative network analysis could be performed. Hence, the majority of the social media data analysis in this thesis is based on Twitter data.

3.3.3 Instagram

Instagram is predominantly a visual platform, but also allows users to post short messages with their photographs. Instagram data was collected for one case study that is presented in Chapter 10. There is no “free” software application that could be used to extract the user data from Instagram, therefore Instagram data was obtained from the Tag Slueth (www.tagsleuth.com) social media analytics and archiving

service. For a small fee, this service provides historical data in spreadsheet format that can be used to identify trends in user activity.

Instagram is the third most popular social media platform in Australia with approximately 9 million Australians using the service on a monthly basis (Cowling 2018). Instagram tends to lose appeal up the age scale with above average use seen in the under 40s and below average use in the 50 plus age groups (Sensis 2018). The demographic profile of Instagram makes it an important platform to capture the activities of younger generations and should be collected, where available, as younger generations are often underrepresented in planning participation (Evans-Cowley & Hollander 2010). Like Facebook, Instagram has implemented further privacy restrictions (Bastos & Walker 2018). It was useful to include the Instagram data in this research for triangulation purposes. However, it was of limited use as it was a very small data set and only a portion of the data set was applicable to the case study.

3.4 Other data sources from the Internet

In addition to social media data, the case studies in Chapters 8 and 10 also used data collected from Social Pinpoint and council web sites. In particular, Social Pinpoint data was collected as it was being used in tandem with social media. This additional data source provided an improved understanding of the case study context and aided triangulation of the findings with the social media data.

3.4.1 Social Pinpoint

Social Pinpoint describes their web based mapping application as “an online community engagement tool that allows users to publicly post feedback, concerns and ideas related to a consultation project on an easy to use drag and drop mapping tool” (www.socialpinpoint.com.au) which could be defined as a public participation Geographic Information System (PPGIS) (Carver et al. 2001). Although Social Pinpoint data was crudely copied directly from the web browser screen into a text file (manual data scrapping), importantly the data contained basic location and timestamp data for each comment. This allowed further analysis with census data that could not be done with social media data and allowed the research to compare data from a more established public participation software application with social media data.

3.4.2 Web site review

This data collection was done as an update on previous research by Williamson and Parolin (2012; 2013) and partially addresses the Research Question; “What is the level of Twitter adoption, activity and influence by local governments in Australian capital cities”. Essentially, the data was used to establish a baseline and provided a contextual snapshot for the social media analysis undertaken in Chapter 8. The data collection involved a desktop review of social media service availability on 127 local government web sites that operate in Australia’s six state capital cities. Local governments located within capital cities were the focus of this study as they have higher social media adoption and usage rates compared to local governments in rural and regional areas. Comparative analysis of capital cities adoption rates is also considered more equitable than comparisons of regional areas that vary significantly in geographic size and population.

3.5 Semi-structured interviews

For each case study, community groups and councils were approached for an interview. The purpose of the interviews was to gain an understanding of stakeholders’ perspectives on how they started using social media, what were their experiences, and did they think social media is an effective communications tool for communities and planning authorities. As the researcher had already collected social media data for the case studies, collecting qualitative interview data aligned with Denzin (1978) triangulation concept of observing the individuals/groups/government agencies social media actions and secondly discussing their firsthand experiences.

Potential participants were identified through the social media analysis and contact details on web sites. Interviewees included the NSW Department of Planning, local government, an advocacy group and community groups actively using social media. Two community groups that do not use social media were also interviewed to gain an alternative perspective. A full list of interviews is provided in Appendix 1. Possible participants were approached by email. If they responded, a place and time was organised to meet.

In total, 12 interviews were undertaken with 18 participants between March and July 2015. The interviews were all semi-structured, which allowed the interviewee to focus on the topics important to them. The interviews lasted between 45-60 minutes. The

semi-structured approach enabled interviewees' perspectives to be articulated in a comprehensive manner. It is noted that the most valuable insights were offered by the interviewee towards the end of the interview, perhaps when they had become more comfortable. A full list of interview of possible questions, prepared in advance, is at Appendix 2.

The interview data for this thesis is limited as a number of stakeholders that were considered important for the research were invited, but either did not respond or declined to participate, including *Friends of North Ryde*, *Save Bronte*, *Warriewood Residents Action Group*, City of Sydney Council and Warringah Council.

Notwithstanding, the positions of these stakeholders were broadcast in both social and mainstream media and therefore captured to some extent. That said, it would have been valuable to discuss the approach to social media use taken by the *Save Bronte* group, in particular. Due to the contentious nature of the planning matters studied in the case studies, community groups that agreed to be interviewed mostly would not allow it to be recorded, but allowed the interviewer to take notes. This made it difficult to use direct quotes and also made it difficult for the interviewer and interviewee to build a rapport. The position of the researcher at the Department of Planning may have also affected this process.

In conclusion, the interview data was valuable to the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of community groups and their experiences with social media and dealing planning authorities. However, interview data was only directly quoted in the case studies in Chapters 6 and 10. It is only an observation, but the timing of the request to participate may play a role in the decision, as community groups that agreed were in the initial stages of their campaign and seemed eager to speak about it. Interest in participating seems to drop off once planning decisions have been made.

3.6 Secondary data sources

Background material and observation were used to improve the researcher's understanding of the case studies. This generated a better understanding of the context and aided triangulation of the findings the other data sources. The inclusion and analysis of several communication channels is considered crucial for a better understanding of the process of communication for a given case study. In particular,

the case studies that employed content and discourse analysis included the following texts, where available:

- Planning proposal(s) prepared by the property developer,
- Report(s) prepared by local government planners,
- Report(s) and media release(s) issued by the Department of Planning, and
- local and metropolitan newspaper articles.

By including mainstream media, the researcher was able to identify themes, concerns and issues as a starting point for analysis of social media data.

In practice, observations were comprised of attendance at “town hall” meetings held by the local community and council meetings where a planning matter relevant to the case studies was being considered. Visiting the sites and walking the surrounding streets was done for all community group case studies. Basic Australian census data are used to present a demographic profile of the neighbourhood/suburb where the case study is located.

3.7 Data analysis methods

Each chapter discusses the data analysis method employed for that case study. As an introduction, this section provides an overview of each data analysis method used and why.

3.7.1 Social network analysis

Social network analysis (SNA) is a quantitative analysis of relationships between individuals and organisations in a network. In this thesis, SNA techniques have been used to visualise the structure of social media networks, as well as investigate who is connected and who is participating in the networks. This is done by using SNA measurements such as degree (number of network connections), tie strength, and community detection methods which highlight sections of networks with high connectivity, sub-networks, and areas of significant network density. The use of SNA addresses Research Question One: “Who participates in social media networks created by community groups”.

Evaluating the potential for generating social capital through community participation is an advantage of using SNA (Mandarano 2009). Social capital refers to the value that people find within social networks. Social capital tends to be an intrinsic and

instrumental notion of social networks. Research on social capital focuses on network structures such as strong and weak ties and dense clustering in a network. Putnam (2001) asserts that “bridging” social capital refers to social networks that bring together people of different sorts, and “bonding” social capital brings together people of a similar sort. For researchers, an affordance of social media is the ability to harvest network data and visualize such networks with a view to describing the network structure and significant sub-groups. SNA highlights important positions within networks by identifying relationships between organisations and their positions in the network, including who are the information bridges that may distribute information more broadly.

For this thesis, Twitter data was collected directly from the Twitter application programming interface (API) using the freely available software. The data were then manually converted into network data files and network analysis was performed using Gephi visualization software. A major consideration for research design using network analysis is bounding the set of people and organizations to be included in the study. In this instance, the Twitter network boundary is clearly marked by the immediate followers of the community group’s Twitter account. However, data have also been collected from a sample of followers of the community group’s followers. This approach was taken to allow the capture of all retweeting activities and to investigate how far this activity reaches through the network. This data represents two degrees of separation from the community group.

SNA gives researchers the ability to capture a snapshot of a network and identify who has the capacity to promote ideas and opinions across the network. However, qualitative methods are also required to gain a better understanding of how the community group network functions in terms of information flows and why stakeholders and decision-makers are listening in. For these reasons, the research project also applied the qualitative methods of content and discourse analysis to the same data.

3.7.2 Sentiment analysis

Sentiment analysis, also known as opinion mining, is a quantitative method that predicts the sentiment of texts based on identifiers, such as key words used. This type of software typically bases its analysis on a list of words known to normally be used in positive or negative contexts (Hollander et al. 2016). Each word is associated

with the appropriate positive or negative score. Sentiment analysis is used to identify trends in sentiment, which is achieved by plotting average sentiment over time. Sentiment analysis software is limited in that it cannot identify complex linguistic formulations, such as sarcasm or irony. Thelwall (2014) suggests that incorrect sentiment readings should not distort results when averaging sentiment over a large number of texts. However, if unusual expressions are repeated, it can systematically distort sentiment analysis results. Moreover, results should not be taken at face value, but should be checked for anomalies and if found, steps taken to rectify the problems. This thesis deployed three freely available sentiment analysis tools, being Semantria software (<http://semantria.com/>), sentiment140 (<http://www.sentiment140.com>) and Twitalyzer (<http://www.twitalyzer.com>). This approach has previously been adopted by Evans-Cowley and Griffin (2011). However, harvesting relevant items from the potentially large collection of user generated content and analysing it to achieve meaningful results required analysis tools that did not formally exist at that time.

Sentiment analysis was used in the thesis to test a method for gaining a better understanding of the overall attitude of residents during a planning process as expressed through social media. Secondly, sentiment analysis can be applied to different social media data, i.e from Facebook and Twitter. As discussed by Hollander et al. (2016), sentiment analysis is a complex procedure, particularly on large data sets, that requires several iterations of testing and improving word classification to provide some comfort with the results. While Sentiment analysis is a valid analysis method, more traditional discourse and content analysis methods may yield more useful results, at least in urban planning based research areas.

3.7.3 Discourse analysis

Fairclough's (1995) critical discourse analysis (CDA) was employed for an in-depth case study (Chapter 5) that looked at the social context of the discourse, and secondly, the rhetorical organisation of the discourse. This qualitative method offers a three-tier framework of textual analysis, discursive practice and social practice from which to conduct discourse analysis (Lees 2004).

Importantly, due to the significant use of social media text, the case study draws together Fairclough's approach for analysing a range of traditional texts and Herring's (2004) computer-mediated discourse analysis (CMDA) approach to gain a better

understanding of the production and interpretation of social media text. Herring (2004) formulated this approach as an additional layer of consideration when using any form of discourse analysis (KhosraviNik 2014). Hence, all forms of text collected have been analysed using Fairclough's (1989) three-tier framework. However, where the text has been sourced from social media, Herring's (2004) CMDA approach was also used. For example, the case study in Chapter 5 focuses on dialogues between a government agency, the community group and other citizens using Twitter. While applying Fairclough's notion of turn-taking to these texts, it was also acknowledged that social media allows unfinished conversations and asymmetrical conversations where there is an interruption of an unknown length of time (Herring & Androutsopoulos 2015), to recognise that social media operates differently to mainstream media text production and consumption.

Discourse studies have traditionally focused on the top-down texts and discourses of the elites, such as mainstream media, which is an integral component of analysis to understand the production, distribution and consumption of texts (KhosraviNik & Zia 2014). However, the emergence of digital media, such as social networking sites, has challenged the notions of audience, representation and text producer/interpreter at the core of discourse analysis. The traditional asymmetrical, one-to-many flow of text has been partially replaced by many-to-many flows of text which undermine the assumed power behind discourses (KhosraviNik 2014). In effect, social media is a circularly networked model, as opposed to the linear source-message-audience flow of other forms of media (KhosraviNik 2014).

Discourse studies on social media are not yet common in planning literature, however, early work by Wodak and Wright (2006) and Mautner (2005) demonstrated that CDA could be extended to analyse text produced on the Internet and urged others to explore this new data source. More recently, an emerging body of literature including Unger (2012), KhosraviNik and Zia (2014), Kelsey and Bennett (2014), Penney (2015), McLean (2016) and Sandover et al (2018) have all considered social media text using discourse analysis frameworks. Unger (2012) notes discourse analysis is well placed to investigate new forms of text and their context due to its loose, adaptable theoretical approach. The inclusion of several communication channels within an established methodology is considered crucial for a better understanding of the process of communication in the case studies.

3.7.4 Content analysis

Finally, this thesis also used content analysis as both a qualitative and quantitative method to systematically describing the meaning of social media data (Krippendorff 2013). The key features of qualitative content analysis are its flexible systematic approach and its ability to reduce the size of a data set (Schreier 2013). Qualitative content analysis also shares many features with other qualitative research methods, such as the concern with meaning and interpretation of symbolic material and the importance of context in determining meaning (Schreier 2013). Moreover, quantitative content analysis such as time series graphs and frequency counts have been used to provide a high level description of the data (Schreier 2013). Content analysis was used where the case study was focused primarily on understanding the social media content generated for a single event over a number of hours or campaigns running over a number of months. Content analysis was undertaken by assigning comments and statements to the categories of a coding frame. The coding frame was successively modified and expanded as the data were analysed. Content analysis was conducted on various textual sources including planning reports, newspaper articles, interview transcripts and social media data.

3.7.5 Ethical standards

This research has been undertaken in accordance with the Macquarie University guidelines for ethical research. Approval for the project was formally obtained through the Faculty of Arts Human Research Ethics Committee on 10 March 2015 (Appendix 3). This approval sets out the procedures to ensure all research is done in an ethical way that will not to harm the researcher, participants or anyone else affected by the research.

For this research, the risk was particularly relevant for interviewees representing community groups, as the subject matter typically generated passionate responses and opinions. To minimise these risks the researcher obtained informed consent in the first instance, so participants understood the purpose of the research and what would be asked of them. They were made aware that their participation is voluntary, and that they could opt in or out at any stage. Secondly, they were informed that any participant comments used would be anonymised in research dissemination.

Although it is not an employer-employee relationship between the researcher and participants, at the time, the researcher was an employee of the NSW Department of

Planning and Environment and would be interviewing other employees of the Department of Planning and Environment. The researcher-participant relationship could be described as colleagues at relatively equal levels of employment. To mitigate any perceived ethical issues, the researcher sought permission to interview Department of Planning and Environment employees prior to any contact being made. Written agreement was received from the Department on 21 April 2015 (Appendix 4). I was also required to state on the participation and consent form for all interviews with planners and community groups that “Mr Williamson is a part time student, who is also employed by the Department of Planning and Environment”.

The following measures ensured confidentiality and privacy:

- no individual will be identified in any publication of the findings;
- transcripts will only be available to the researchers; and
- transcripts will be securely stored for five years from final submission of the thesis and then destroyed.

In regards to social media data collection and use, the Ethics Committee does not require a formal application and/or approval. Thelwall (2014) advises that Twitter data does not have the same ethical and privacy issues as interview and questionnaire data, because tweets and posts are inherently public and readable when posted to a public account. However, researchers should avoid republishing the personnel details of social media uses, as this could have privacy implications by drawing attention to individuals concerned (Ackland 2013). For Twitter and Instagram, any messages reproduced in journal articles have had personal identifiers such as names removed. From a Facebook privacy perspective, each data extraction using Netvizz is “signed” with the researchers Facebook profile details and Facebook privacy settings determine the level of information extracted by Netvizz. Personal details that are visible in Facebook are not extracted. Essentially the Netvizz data file contains no personal identifier details, such as name, email address or location.

3.8 Chapter summary

This chapter has discussed the research approach mobilised by the case studies in the following chapters. It has argued the appropriateness of adopting a mixed methods approach and the use of multiple case studies. This chapter has also provided some background details and discussions on the sources of data and

methods of analysis employed across the case studies. Followed by a discussion about using multiple communications streams and data sources to unpack the role of social media in broader discourses, and using interviews to gain an understanding of the challenges of using social media and its relationships with mainstream media from the community groups' point of view.

Part I: Social media use by communities

Part I of this thesis examines social media use by community groups. This section is organised into four chapters based on case studies of four community groups' use of social media. This section starts with Chapter 4, which uses network visualisation techniques to uncover who is connected to social media networks initiated by community groups. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 then use qualitative methods to unpack the content, discourse and sentiment that is created and mobilised by community groups to oppose development proposals. These networks are reactionary in nature as they are initiated by community groups in response to site specific planning matters.

Part I answers the following Research Questions:

- One:** Who participates in social media networks created by community groups? (Chapter 4)
- Two:** What discourses are mobilised in social media networks and are there differences between communication channels? (Chapter 5)
- Three:** Is social media an effective communication channel for community groups to challenge planning processes? (Chapters 6 and 7)

The main findings for Part I are:

Kleinhans et al. (2015) conclude that two-way communication between residents and governments using social media is scarce, and also note that governments seem unable to “tap into” the online social networks of citizens. These conclusions are valid; however, this thesis demonstrates that some government agencies and politicians, at least in the Sydney context, are tapping into online community networks, although their presence in these networks is a passive listening role, rather than an active communications role. Moreover, the networks analysed are highly centralised, which is characterised by a few nodes holding the majority of connections with others in the network. Lyles (2015) notes that centralised networks are good for building support for collective action; however, they are not so good for problem-solving. In the case of community groups, centralised networks are good for collective action. With the strongest ties concentrated on the community group's Twitter account there is a suggestion that social capital is being generated within this segment of the social network (Putnam 2001).

The formation of a community group to oppose urban consolidation is not new and the community's arguments and use of multiple communications channels is also well understood (Dear 1992). However, many of the community's discourses are not publically available. The case studies in this thesis played out on social media, which created a highly accessible digital public record, including dialogues between a government agency and the community group, which has not been present in previous contributions (Evans-Cowley 2010; Evans-Cowley & Griffin 2012; Evans-Cowley & Hollander 2010). The use of social media in these case studies highlight the difficulties encountered by the planning authorities attempting to interact with the community using social media to explain government processes and procedures. Government agencies can lose control of the message as community groups use online communications to relentlessly distribute a counter narrative that increases public awareness of the planning process (Trapenberg Frick 2016). Furthermore, government agencies must be prepared to engage with individuals to discuss their concerns, it is not enough to have a social media presence that just broadcasts announcements (Schweitzer 2014).

This thesis contributes to a growing literature seeking to understand the post-political process for urban planning (Allmendinger & Haughton 2015; Davidson & Iveson 2015; Inch 2015; Legacy 2016; 2017; Butt & Taylor 2018, Cook 2018, Ruming 2018) and introduces social media as a tool to support alternative politics that generates a useful additional data source for researchers, when the data are available. The temporary consultation processes observed in these case studies are often used by planning agencies to manage opposition from community groups and is a typical post-political approach to control and reduce discensus (Rogers 2016; Legacy 2017). The use of state planning legislation supports MacDonald's (2018) claim that the NSW Government has attempted to diffuse community opposition by rescaling consultation and decision-making to the metropolitan level. However, the rescaling of participation may promote alliances between community groups who seek to articulate dissent at a broader geographic level. This case study in Chapter 6 confirms that while journalist may be observing the community groups activities on social media, using social media does not constitute a direct link to coverage by mainstream media. Furthermore, the community group used social media to promote emotive arguments that transcend the site-specific resistance the local mainstream media may have been looking to cover.

For this part of the thesis, each case study employs different methods. Methods were selected based on the data collected and the best approach to answering specific research questions. Although the qualitative approaches chosen have specific methods and applications, they all identify and analyse the underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations in the text collected from Twitter and Facebook. All case studies use time-series analysis as a common approach to understanding key check points in longitudinal social media data sets.

While this thesis explores four community group case studies, Chapters 4 and 5 are based on a detailed analysis of the *Save Bronte* case study. It should be noted that the key conclusions of Chapter 5 have informed the analysis and conclusions of Chapters 6, 9 and 10.

Chapter 4: Using Social Network Analysis to visualize the social-media networks of community groups: Two case studies from Sydney

This chapter addresses Research Question One by using social network analysis (SNA) to visualise who participates in social media networks generated by community groups. It is noted that although planning literature has begun to deal with network-based research, the work is underdeveloped. In order to create the most comprehensive data sets possible, the Twitter data was collected approximately every seven days throughout the duration of the community group campaigns. For the *Save Bronte* case study the data was collected for a significant period of just over two and half years (November 2012 to July 2015). The *Warriewood Residents Acton Group* (WRAG) data collection was undertaken for a shorter period of 8 months (December 2013 to July 2014). After the conclusion of the community group campaigns the data was manually converted into network data files and network analysis was performed using *Gephi* visualization software.

This chapter demonstrates that using SNA provides researchers with the ability to capture a snapshot of a network and identify who has the capacity to circulate ideas and opinions across the network. However, qualitative methods are also required to gain a better understanding of what information flows through the community group's network. By using these case studies to gain an understanding of the social network structures generated by community groups, this chapter acts as an introduction to this first part of the thesis before Chapters 5, 6 and 7 explore the content, discourse and sentiment that flows within the networks.

This paper was co-authored with Kristian Ruming and has been published in the *Journal of Urban Technology*, volume 23, issue 3 in November 2016. Candidate's contribution to experimental design - 100%; data collection - 100%; data analysis - 100%; writing - 85%; overall – 96%.



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Using Social Network Analysis to Visualize the Social-Media Networks of Community Groups: Two Case Studies from Sydney

Wayne Williamson and Kristian Ruming

ABSTRACT *Community participation in planning is generally considered crucial for the delivery of positive outcomes; however, the network structures that can be created by community groups that use social media and participate in the network are not widely understood. This paper explores the use of social media, specifically Twitter, by two community groups in Sydney. In the context of this study, community groups are self-created and organized groups of citizens that form to oppose a proposal to amend planning controls for a specific site. Employing the research technique of Social Network Analysis (SNA), this paper seeks to visualize community group social media networks, as well as understand who is connected and who is participating within the networks. For the two community groups investigated, it was found that they do not attract large numbers of friends and followers on Twitter and key stakeholders play a passive listening role in the networks.*

KEYWORDS *community groups; social media; social network analysis; participation; Australia*

Introduction

Community participation in planning is generally considered crucial for the delivery of positive outcomes. While the literature acknowledges the formation of community groups and their intended goals (Dear, 1992), knowledge of the network structures that can be created by community groups that use social media and participate in the networks is not widely understood. By visualizing their social media networks, we can gain an understanding of who their networks consist of and what keeps them working towards common goals (Innes, 2005). Dempwolf and Lyles (2012) argue that although planning literature has begun to deal with network-based research, the work is underdeveloped. Innes (2005) advises that future research should consider linkages between stakeholders, the information content that flows through networks, who benefits from inclusion in the network, and what network patterns emerge. This paper, following that lead, explores the use of social media, specifically Twitter, by two community groups in their opposition to proposed changes to planning controls in Sydney. In the

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context of this study, community groups are self-created and organized groups of citizens of various sizes that form to oppose a proposal to amend planning controls for a specific site or precinct. These groups usually try to sustain ongoing communication with the responsible planning authorities outside of the formal consultation periods or avenues. Traditional communication channels used by community groups include face-to-face meetings, letters, petitions, and telephone calls (Dear, 1992). In recent years, some community groups are now employing social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter to open up an additional communication channel (Williamson and Ruming, 2015).

This paper seeks to contribute to the small amount of literature on the use of Social Network Analysis (SNA) in planning research by visualizing social media networks created by community groups in opposition to site-specific changes to planning controls. To achieve this, the results of applying SNA to two community group social media networks are presented before providing a discussion of who is participating in the networks, what types of networks emerge from the analysis, and the limitations of using social media data and SNA. The paper concludes that social media networks led by community groups do not attract large numbers of followers on Twitter; furthermore, key stakeholders and decision-makers with larger numbers of followers, including politicians, journalists and government agencies, play a largely passive listening role in the networks. These conclusions will be unpacked and discussed throughout this paper.

Framing the Research

Healey (1993) refers to a shift from a modernist to a post-modernist view of planning as the communicative turn in planning theory, where formal community engagement is undertaken during the planning process. This shift is described by Harris (2002) as a reorientation from technical planning models towards a more interactive understanding of planning activity. Others have further developed the area of communicative planning and added terms such as deliberative planning (Forster, 1999) to facilitate practical and timely participation and planning through consensus building as a form of negotiation and mediation in planning processes (Innes, 1996). The appearance of social media in recent years has introduced another potential channel to facilitate communicative planning practice.

In the multi-disciplined literature on urban planning and Internet-enabled communications, much of the discussion has centered on the potential capacity to facilitate community participation and consultation (Evans-Cowley and Hollander, 2010). More recently, focus has shifted to the role of social media as a way of engaging citizens in the planning process, with a focus on online forums and Facebook (Afzalan and Muller, 2014; Afzalan and Evans-Cowley, 2013). The use of social media can be broken into two separate groups of Government-initiated and Citizen-initiated social networks (Evans-Cowley, 2010; Evans-Cowley and Hollander, 2010). Citizen-initiated social networks focusing on planning issues form the majority of social networks found by Evans-Cowley (2010) and typically were organized to oppose a proposed development or draft plan.

Hampton and Wellman (2003) describe citizen-initiated social networks as communities consisting of far-flung kinship, workplace, friendship, interest group and neighborhood ties that form to provide networks of sociability,

support, and control. Hence, Hampton and Wellman (2003) argue that communities are not geographically defined groups, but loosely bounded networks. Furthermore, Hampton and Wellman (2003) argue the Internet has neither weakened nor transformed communities; rather it has enhanced existing relationships, thus the utopian and dystopian claims the Internet will drastically alter communities remains largely unrealized. Most online contacts are with the same friends, family, colleagues, and neighbors that were in contact before the emergence of the Internet (Hampton and Wellman, 2003). However, it provides additional opportunity to communicate and sometimes replaces face-to-face and telephone contact.

To gain a better understanding of whether collective action can be assisted by the Internet, Hampton and Wellman (2003) conducted an extensive study of an Internet-enabled community with access to e-mail distribution lists, called Netville. This case study demonstrated that computer mediated communications were useful in reducing barriers to collective action. Hampton and Wellman (2003) conclude that the Internet intensifies the volume and range of community relations, rather than reducing or transforming them into an online-only community.

More recently, Afzalan and Muller (2014) found that social media did not create a collaborative communications process in isolation, but integrated well with other communication methods. Moreover, Kavanaugh et al. (2007) found that an individual's use of the Internet within community groups increases over time and so does their level and types of involvement in the group. Hence, social media can provide a platform to quickly launch a community group's campaign and distribute information to a wide audience. Recent literature on social media found it being used as a supplementary communication channel that is being mobilized to support the traditional mechanisms of community opposition (Afzalan and Muller, 2014; Williamson and Ruming, 2015).

Johnson and Halegoua (2014, 2015) discovered that the use of social media, particularly Facebook, would be beneficial to neighborhood communication, access to information, and participation, but also found mismatches between the perceived affordances of social media and the neighborhood context. People are willing to experiment with or use social media to communicate with neighbors about neighborhood matters, but they were hesitant to use social media without pre-existing neighborhood ties.

It is acknowledged that recent social media studies have not returned results as positive as Hampton and Wellman (2003), and Kleinhans et al. (2015) argue there is little empirically validated knowledge available in the field of digitally supported engagement. To contribute to this growing area of research, this paper focuses on the use of social media by two community groups and it provides a snapshot of who in the community is participating on social media and to what extent.

Social Network Analysis in Planning Literature

Dempwolf and Lyles (2012) note the use of SNA in planning literature is rare. The research that has been conducted under the broad banner of urban and environmental planning includes: Investigating opportunities to use social ties through dispersed low-income housing (Kleit, 2001); relationships between multi-organizational partnerships and community leaders (Provan et al., 2005); examination of

participation as a network structure phenomenon in a redevelopment project (Holman, 2008); evaluation of social relationships in collaborative planning processes (Mandarano, 2009); the role of planners in natural hazard mitigation (Lyles, 2015); and the role of social networks in self-organized communities (Afzalan and Evans-Cowley, 2013). Dempwolf and Lyles (2012) argue that SNA research may have a positive influence on public participation in the planning process, and has the potential to uncover the presence of complex formal and informal relationships involving a wide array of stakeholders (Thurmaier and Wood, 2002).

The literature has found several advantages of using SNA, including being a useful tool for evaluating community participation as a builder of social capital (Mandarano, 2009). Social capital refers to the value found within social networks. Social capital tends to be an intrinsic and instrumental notion of social networks. Research of social capital focuses on network structures such as strong and weak ties and dense clustering in a network. Putnam (2001: 22–23) asserts that “bridging” social capital refers to social networks that bring together people of different sorts, and “bonding” social capital brings together people of a similar sort. SNA can also reveal how internal and external factors influence participants’ capacity to build networks and understand network structures (Mandarano, 2009; Provan et al., 2005); however, simply increasing network involvement is not an efficient strategy, due to added complexity (Siegel, 2009).

Notwithstanding, Innes and Booher (2002) argue the diversity and interdependence of stakeholders can be leveraged to produce better outcomes in planning processes. Conversely, SNA research can be constrained to micro-level relationships due to the complexity of collecting inter-organizational data. Moreover, difficulties can be encountered when communicating SNA concepts to community leaders (Provan et al., 2005; Mandarano, 2009). Dempwolf and Lyles (2012) argue that understanding the complexity associated with the diversity and interdependence of actors in a network is a challenge. Furthermore, although planning literature has begun to deal with network issues regarding the knowledge contained within networks and how the structure of networks enables or inhibits individuals, the work is underdeveloped.

Afzalan and Evans-Cowley (2013) found that although community groups believe online activities have the capacity to inform others of neighborhood issues, their online activities are rarely used for these purposes. Innes (2005) advises that future research should consider linkages between actors and the information content that flows through networks, while Afzalan and Evans-Cowley (2013) argue that in order to gain an understanding of online community activities, researchers also need to analyze the role of key members and their face-to-face or on-the-ground activities with community groups.

These challenges are further amplified by Baum’s (2005) argument that few planners are required or allowed to interact with community groups. As a result, few planners are sufficiently involved to understand the perspective and structure of community groups. Planners that do work with these groups tend to engage with readily accessible individuals rather than trying to understand the full extent of the community, organizations, and institutions involved (Baum, 2005). Dempwolf and Lyles (2012) challenge planners to work at multiple spatial scales to engage with more precise definitions of community and place. SNA provides a framework and methods to visualize communities as relational networks separate from their geographic locations.

Planning Context

The New South Wales (NSW) planning system is a two-tier system, with the NSW State Government's Department of Planning focusing on high-level policy and major development assessment, while local government planning staff focus on strategic and development assessment within local political boundaries (Farrier and Stein, 2006). NSW Local Government uses statutory Local Environmental Plans (LEP) to provide land use zoning, broad development controls, and planning objectives. The objectives and controls of an LEP can cover zoning, height, floor space ratios, landscaping, overshadowing, and heritage and conservation areas.

Amending Local Environment Plans

NSW plan making involves preparing a planning proposal, issuing a "Gateway Determination" by the Department of Planning, consulting community and state agencies on the planning proposal, and then finalizing the planning proposal by preparing a legal instrument to amend the LEP (DP&I, 2013). Planning proposals are initiated by the landowner or local government and are documents that provide statements of the objectives and intended outcomes of changing the planning controls, an explanation of the intended changes and justification for doing so, draft maps (where relevant), and details of community consultation to be undertaken. The Gateway Determination is a checkpoint in the plan making that ensures there is sufficient justification early in the process to proceed with the planning proposal before resources are committed for research, preparatory work, and consultation (DP&I, 2013).

In 2012, the Minister for Planning introduced a new process to allow proponents seeking a rezoning the option to request an independent review of a council's decision, if a council has refused or failed to respond to their rezoning request (Hazzard, 2012). This new process was called the pre-Gateway review and was introduced to provide the planning system with a mechanism to allow proponents a right of review for final decisions made by councils. The pre-Gateway review is a two-step process whereby an application is lodged with the Department of Planning, which then undertakes an initial assessment of the application and supporting documents. If the proposal is deemed to have strategic merit, the application is referred to the Joint Regional Planning Panel (JRPP) or Planning Assessment Commission (PAC) for review and advice for the Minister for Planning. There is no opportunity for community consultation during the pre-Gateway process. The minister then makes a final decision of whether the proposal should proceed to the Gateway (DP&I, 2013). Since its introduction, the pre-Gateway review has been controversial, with several community groups calling for it to be scrapped as it is perceived to represent another option for property developers to side step councils and their communities (Grennan, 2014).

The pre-Gateway process has made significant use of planning panels since its introduction. The PAC was established in 2008 to provide advice to the minister on a range of development matters and assumes a determination role for major project applications delegated to it by the minister. The JRPP was established in 2009 to determine development applications with a capital investment value greater than \$20 million that have been lodged with councils. Both panels consist of between two and five independent experts who are appointed by the

minister. Although the JRPP was originally formed to make decisions on regionally significant development applications, their functions have been broadened by the introduction of the pre-Gateway review (Williams 2014). Williams (2014) concludes that there is a role for independent panels, however, the “panelization” of planning in NSW has become somewhat of a growth industry, which leaves planning open to claims of fragmented and complex decision-making.

The Case Studies

The case studies in this paper are based on two community groups operating in Sydney that are opposed to proposed changes to site-specific planning controls. Although in both cases, the relevant planning authorities turned to the proposals, the local communities perceived the opportunities for participation to be inadequate and formed community groups to facilitate further participation in decision-making processes. Social media were adopted by both groups as supplementary means of communicating. Both case studies are consistent with the urban consolidation paradigm that has been pursued in Sydney for the past 30 years (Ruming et al., 2012), with a strong emphasis over the past decade (DP&E, 2014). Urban consolidation has experienced considerable resistance in some areas of Sydney (Searle, 2007; Searle and Filion, 2011) and the case studies in this paper are just two examples of the processes and debates occurring across Sydney.

Bronte Returned and Services League (RSL) Club

The Bronte Returned and Services League (Bronte RSL) Club in the eastern suburbs of Sydney (See Figure 1) ceased operations in 2012 and sought to redevelop the site as a mix of retail, club, and residential uses (Inspire Planning, 2012). The RSL is a support organization for men and women who have served or are serving in the Australian Defense force. RSL Clubs are licensed venues that provide food and entertainment to their local communities. Rezoning RSL clubs is a common occurrence in Sydney, as Peacock (2013) reports “declining membership and rising real estate prices are seeing clubs deciding to sell their valuable properties to developers.” The developer of the Bronte RSL site first lodged a development application, which was rejected in July 2013 by Waverley Council and the JRPP because the proposed building envelope was of considerable excess of the permissible planning controls (JRPP, 2013). A Save Bronte community group was formed in late 2012 to voice citizen concerns over the proposed building height and traffic that would be generated by the retail component of the development. Save Bronte established a social media presence at the same time as the group was formed.

Warriewood Valley

Warriewood Valley consists of 190 hectares of mostly undeveloped land in the northern suburbs of Sydney (See Figure 1). A draft Warriewood Valley Strategic Review Report (Strategic Review) was publicly exhibited by Pittwater Council in mid-2012, including community briefing sessions and meetings

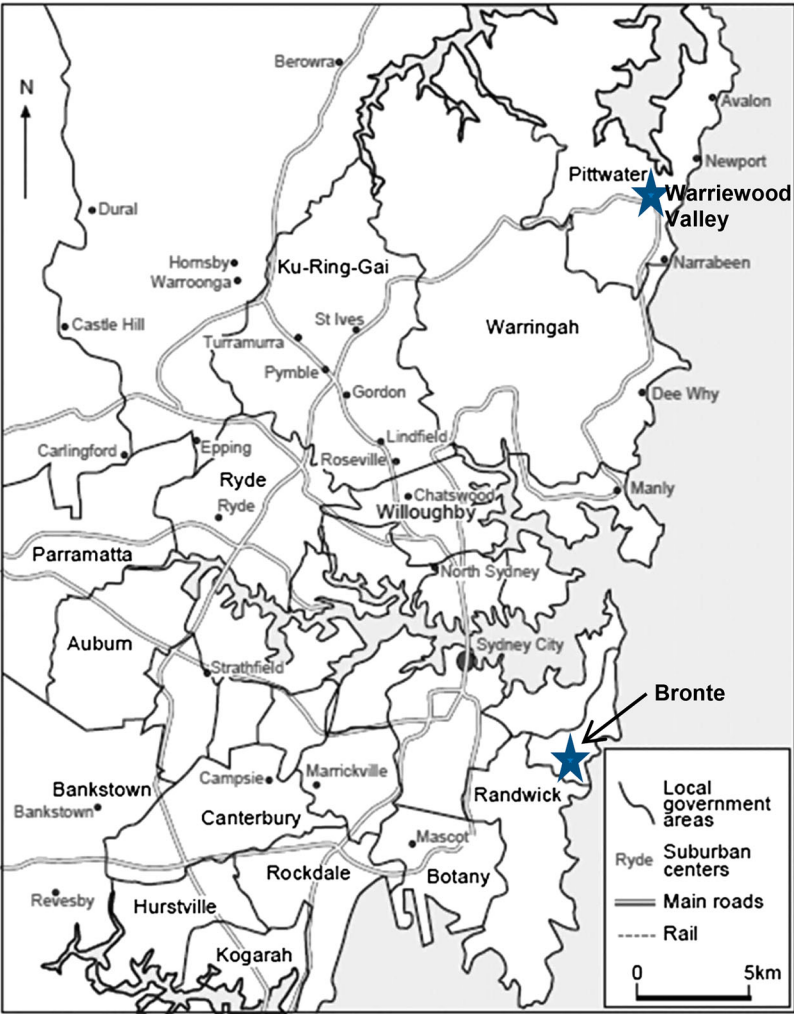


Figure 1: Map of Sydney. (Source: Rumung, Houston and Amati, 2012)

with landowners. The Council received 350 written submissions and considered them as part of the strategic planning process. The Strategic Review recommended dwelling densities of up to 32 dwellings per hectare, which was subsequently endorsed by the Department of Planning in May 2013 and adopted by Pittwater Council in June 2013 (Pittwater Council, 2013). Within weeks of the council’s adopting the Strategic Review, a proposal to increase the dwelling density to 80 dwellings per hectare was lodged by a property developer (Urbis, 2013).

The Warriewood Residents Action Group (WRAG) was formed in late 2010 because of concerns regarding the potential over development of the Warriewood Valley. The group established a social media presence in December 2013 in response to the community’s concerns that the pre-Gateway review was an additional layer of decision-making and could override participation and decision-making of a local matter (WRAG, 2014).

Case Study: Twitter Accounts, Friends, and Followers

The Save Bronte community group established a social media presence in November 2012. It had a following among citizens of 71 percent and among state and local politicians of 14 percent (see Figure 2). The primary reason for this level of participation was the opposition to the development by the community, the state member, and local politicians. These three elements joined together in their opposition to the local planning matter moving through the pre-Gateway review process. The group created the Twitter handle @savebronte and utilized #savebronte and #BronteRSL. The group has been active on social media since November 2012, has attracted 220 followers, and generated over 2,200 tweets between November 2012 and July 2015. While most citizens are likely to be local residents, the limited information available on Twitter cannot confirm this in all cases.

WRAG established a social media presence in December 2013. The proposal gained a significant amount of media attention due to the long-running community group campaign and the high-profile property developer involved (Grennan, 2013, 2014). While 35 percent of Twitter followers were citizens, this was nearly matched by 30 percent being journalists, a further 6 percent being state and local politicians, and 9 percent being state and local government agencies. Nine percent of followers were other community groups. The Warriewood proposal was refused relatively quickly by the pre-Gateway review process, and the community group ceased its social media activities in June 2014. The group created the Twitter handle @stophighrise and occasionally used #overdevelopment. The group was active on social media from December 2013 to July 2014, attracted 89 followers, and made 220 tweets.

The relatively small Bronte RSL redevelopment site was followed mostly by local citizens. Conversely, the large Warriewood Valley site attracted a more diverse array of followers, including significant numbers of journalist, politicians, and other community groups. The large Warriewood Valley project seems to have attracted a very different social network audience which suggests that simply looking at counts of followers and tweets for a community group can be misleading in terms of potential reach by a network.

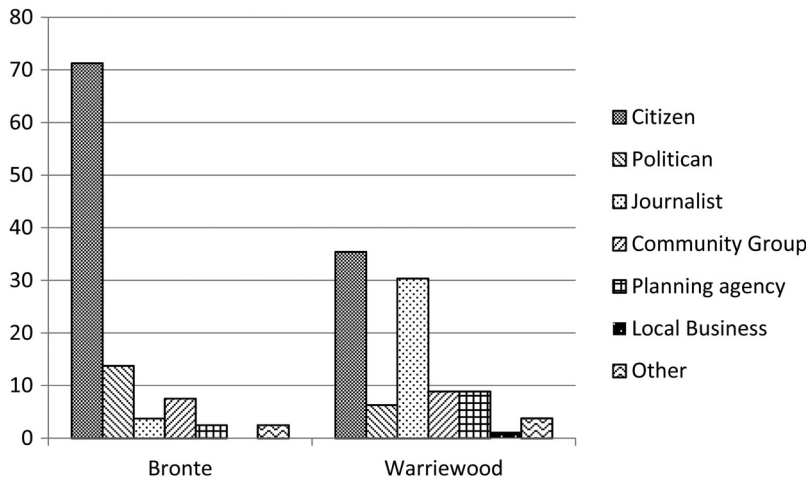


Figure 2: Community group social media participants

Methodology

Utilizing the research technique of Social Network Analysis (SNA), this paper seeks to visualize the structure of community group social media networks, as well as investigate who is connected and who is participating in the networks. SNA is a quantitative analysis of relationships between individuals and organizations. By analyzing social structures, it is possible to identify important individuals and group formations (Prell, 2012: 22). SNA does not consider individuals as a unit of analysis, but rather a set of individuals and their relationships. Wellman (1998) argues that analyzing network structures offers a comprehensive approach to understanding the allocation of resources in a social system. Borgatti and Foster (2003) note growth in SNA research is based on the digitization of everything, increased computing power, and the free availability of large databases.

Two distinct network types can be identified using SNA. The ego-centered network consists of a network structure with a focal actor and a set of alters, who have ties to the ego. These networks are usually referred to as personal networks. Second, full networks are a collection of actors and ties that are not driven by a focal actor (Wasserman and Faust, 1994). Social networks can be represented in mathematical or graphic form (Prell, 2012). This paper seeks to describe social networks in graphic form. The network measurements include the analysis of degree (number of network connections), tie strength, and community detection methods to visualize sections of the network with high connectivity, sub-networks, and areas of significant network density.

Data Collection

Twitter data were collected directly from the Twitter application programming interface (API) using the *TAGSv6* and *Friends and Followers* Google spreadsheets created by Hawksey (2011, 2013). The data were collected approximately every seven days throughout the duration of the community group campaigns, in order to create the most accurate data sets possible. The data were then manually converted into network data files, and finally, network analysis was performed using Gephi visualization software (<http://gephi.org/>).

Twitter is a service that allows people to publish short messages on the Internet and is commonly referred to as microblogging. Twitter allows people to “follow” other people they are interested in. Twitter enables users to broadcast messages using hash tags (#) and send direct messages using the “@” symbol; however, direct messages are still publically available (Java et al., 2007; Borgatti et al., 2013: 260). Java et al. (2007) consider the Twitter follower structure to be a social network. Moreover, Twitter is a directed social network, as someone who is followed by another Twitter user may not necessarily follow that user. Huberman et al. (2009) define a friendship as two or more direct messages between Twitter users. By this definition, Twitter social networks are a fraction of the size of the dense friends and followers networks that can be observed. However, Huberman et al. (2009) also argue that although Twitter following may not define a social relationship, the number of followers may determine the role and importance of a person within a network. Accordingly, a person with a high number of followers has a stronger communication function than someone with a small number of followers.

A major consideration for research design using network analysis is bounding the set of people and organizations to be included in the study. In some instances a clear boundary will appear around the study group, in others it is not so clear. The chosen boundary is primarily based on the research question(s), but is also based on two sets of actors; the egos' personal networks and their alter egos, with whom the ego has ties. This does not imply the network does not have ties to the outside world. In the real world, most groups have fuzzy boundaries. A common approach to approximating the network boundary is a snowball or respondent-driven sampling, when surveys or interviews are being used to collect data (Borgatti et al., 2013: 33–34).

In this instance, the Twitter network boundary is clearly marked by the immediate friends and followers of the community group's Twitter account. However, data have also been collected from a sample of friends and followers of the community group's followers. This approach was taken to allow the capture of all retweeting activities and to investigate how far this activity reaches through the network. This represents two degrees of separation from the community group. An artificial boundary must be set for social media data as the social networks are theoretically infinite.

Results of Social Network Analysis

This section presents a series of network diagrams to illustrate who is involved in the community group's social media networks, who has the capacity to distribute information across the networks, and finally, who does distribute information at key points during the plan-making process. The network diagrams are a visual representation of community group Twitter networks. In the network diagrams, a network consists of points which represent a person or organization and is referred to as a node. A connection between two nodes is represented by a line and commonly referred to as an edge or vertice (Wasserman and Faust, 1994: 94). Various characteristics of the nodes and edges, such as size, shape, and color, can be used to communicate information about the nodes and the relationships among them (Borgatti et al., 2013: 100). We use size to indicate nodes with a high degree of connectivity in the networks, and colors to indicate sub-networks and areas of significant network density.

The network diagrams in [Figure 3](#) are the result of loading raw Twitter data into Gephi and applying the *Force Atlas 2* layout algorithm, which is a force-directed layout algorithm that transforms raw data into a network diagram. The nodes with the highest degree have been enlarged to identify their location within the network. High degree nodes are important for mobilizing the network and for bringing other nodes together. However, as high-degree nodes must exert significant energy to maintain a large number of ties, their ties are often weak. Hence, high-degree nodes can be trusted to use their links to diffuse information and potentially mobilize the network, but there is no guarantee that they can significantly influence those they are connected with (Prell et al., 2009).

The Save Bronte community group's social media network consists of 58,852 nodes and 90,783 edges, while the WRAG network has 85,034 nodes and 135,056 edges, and represents a larger network. The Save Bronte community group's Twitter account has more followers on Twitter, but they are mostly citizens with

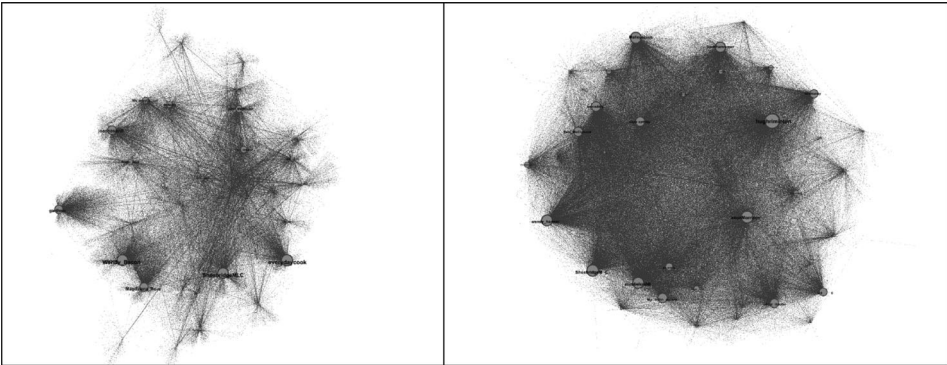


Figure 3: Degree (left: Save Bronte; right: WRAG)

relatively low numbers of friends and followers. Contrastingly, the WRAG Twitter account attracted more highly connected followers, such as journalists and politicians, which generates a larger network.

There are various network structures depending on the network type, including *small world*, *village*, *opinion leader*, and *hierarchical* networks (Lyles, 2015). The networks depicted in Figure 3 most closely resemble the opinion-leader structure. Lyles’ (2015) analysis of network structures concludes that opinion-leader network structures limit opportunities for discourse and joint problem-solving. However, the opinion-leader network structure seems a logical fit for community groups who are typically led by a small number of people who are seeking to distribute their ideas and opinions (Dear, 1992; McClymont and O’Hare, 2008).

While Figure 3 provides an overall view of the network structure, Figure 4 represents the network of high degree nodes with all other nodes filtered out. Figure 4 identifies the nodes that have the potential to influence the network, due to their highly connected status. In terms of Twitter usage, if these nodes tweet or retweet a message, it will be distributed further across the network. They are the bridges (Putnam, 2001) or information brokers to sub-groups within the broader network. The node labels in Figure 4 are mostly state and local politicians, journalists, local newspapers, and citizens. The community

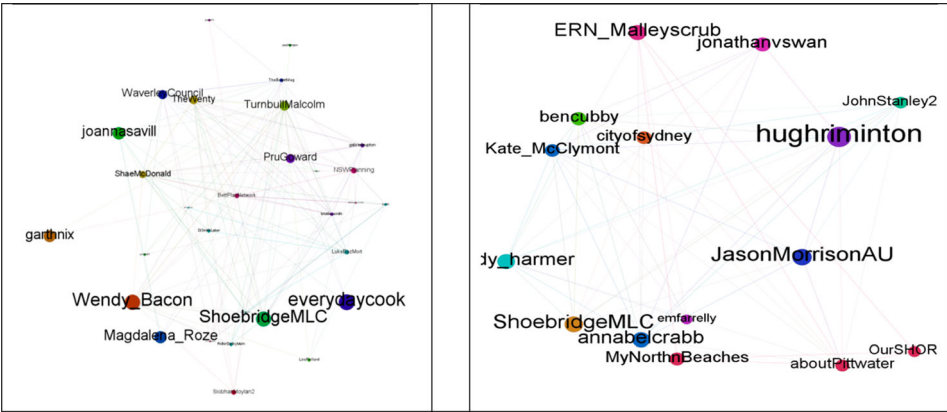


Figure 4: Filtered degree (left: Save Bronte; right: WRAG)

group Twitter account does not appear in either of these network diagrams, as their degree is insignificant compared to the high-degree nodes in the network. The Save Bronte community group is positioned in the vacant center right location and the WRAG is positioned in the vacant center left location in [Figure 4](#).

Tie strength is displayed in network diagrams by line thickness/color, which represents the portion of communications that has occurred between the nodes (Borgatti et al., 2013: 112). Tie strength is closely associated with social capital, which refers to the value found within social networks and typically focuses on network structure attributers such as strong and weak ties and dense clustering of nodes (Wellman and Frank, 2001). The network diagrams in [Figure 5](#) expose the strongest ties in the network, which also identifies the core network of the community group. These are the people who are using the network on a regular basis. In both network diagrams in [Figure 5](#), the strongest ties are centered on the node that is the community group's Twitter account, which plays the role of providing regular information, suggested activities, and behaviors to its close ties, which are in some cases the high-degree nodes identified in [Figure 4](#). However, the majority of strong ties are between low-degree nodes. This suggests the strong ties are being formed and maintained between community group members, while weaker ties are trying to be maintained with high-degree nodes. The Save Bronte group campaign ran continuously for 2.5 years and [Figure 5](#) suggests more strong ties formed over the longer period, while the shorter six-month campaign by WRAG has a much smaller network of strong ties fanning out from the community group's Twitter account. There is little evidence of strong ties being built among other nodes in the WRAG network.

[Figure 6](#) presents the networks with a filter applied to remove all nodes that have not sent a tweet. The pattern of ties clustered around the community group's Twitter account and the other nodes that have actually sent a tweet closely matches the strong ties in [Figure 4](#), especially for the Save Bronte community group. This represents the people who are directly communicating with each other and promoting the opinions of others. The nodes in [Figure 5](#) are potentially building social capital within the community group, in the social network context discussed by Wellman and Frank (2001) and Mandarano (2009).

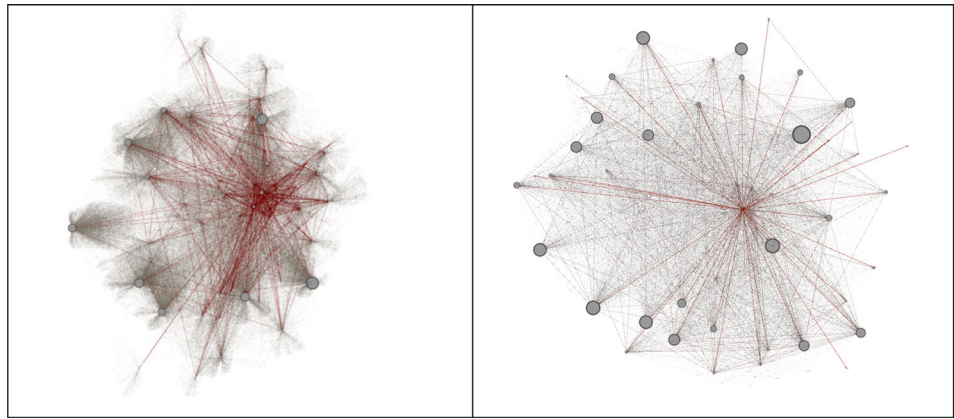


Figure 5: Strong and weak ties (left: Save Bronte; right: WRAG)

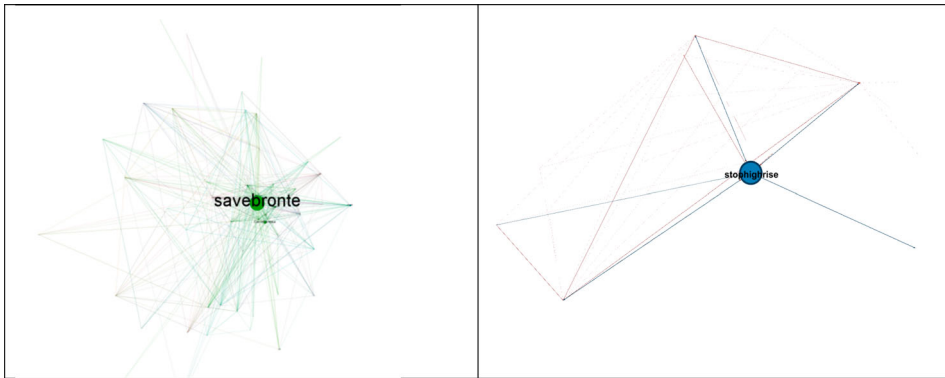


Figure 6: Tweets (left: Save Bronte; right: WRAG)

Conversely, WRAG had a significantly lower number of tweets during their shorter campaign which is reflected in the tweet network diagram that is centered on the community group's Twitter account, with fewer than 10 other Twitter accounts contributing to the discussion.

Community detection in networks is the identification of densely connected groups of nodes, with sparse connections with other sub-groups. These groups of nodes connect with each other to the extent that they could be considered a separate network. The identification of these groups can be of significant practical importance, as they identify social forces operating through direct contact among sub-group members, through indirect contact transmitted by information brokers or relative cohesion compared to outside the sub-group (Wasserman and Faust, 1994: 251).

Gephi's community detection function was run to produce the network diagrams in Figure 7. The communities identified are sub-groups clustered around the highly connected nodes in the network, which highlights the importance of attracting highly connected nodes to a network to act as bridges to other communities (Putnam, 2001). Essentially, these network diagrams are focused on the same highly connected nodes in Figure 4; however, Figure 7 presents the size of their sub-groups.

Finally, to gain a better understanding of what kind of reach re-tweeting would have in a community group's social media network, the tweet and re-tweet data for the Save Bronte case study were investigated for the month of October 2014. This time period was relatively active for this community group as the proposed planning control changes were placed on formal public exhibition. Figure 8 shows the daily activity for the month, which consisted of 226 tweets and 430 re-tweets. On October 13, the community group organized a meeting at the local school hall for local residents to discuss the formal public exhibition and written submissions process. This event resulted in the most active day of social media use, with 36 tweets and 75 re-tweets.

The Green nodes in Figure 9 are the nodes that may have seen a tweet or re-tweet during October 2014, while the red nodes did not. The activity is concentrated in the center right portion of the network where the node that is the community group's Twitter account is located. This is unsurprising as the community group was communicating daily that the public exhibition was in

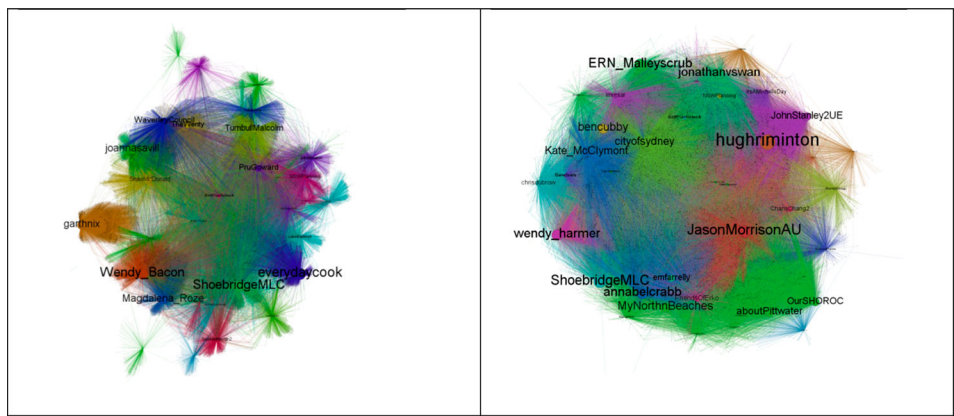


Figure 7: Community detection (Left: Save Bronte; right: WRAG)

motion and how people can make a written submission. This network diagram also highlights which high-degree nodes were not passing on the messaging. The nodes across the top of the network diagram including the responsible local government, the Department of Planning, the Minister for Planning, a state member of parliament and two local newspapers did not tweet or re-tweet during this time. High degree nodes across the bottom of the network diagram—being another state member of parliament, and two citizens with significantly high connections—were also silent.

It is acknowledged that some nodes in this network have approval or advisory roles and may not communicate through social media at any time during the plan-making process. It is also important to note that some nodes may not actually agree with the concerns of the community group and would not seek to distribute the community group’s opinions. Social media platforms such as Twitter operate on a self-selection model, and it should not be assumed that all nodes are supporting the objectives of the community group. By visualizing the community group’s social media network using SNA techniques, there is a possibility of overestimating the community group’s potential reach using social media.

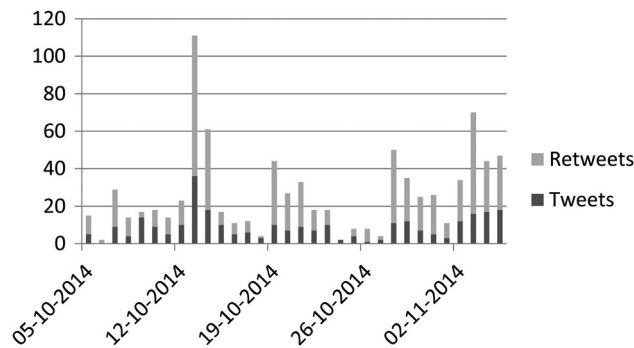


Figure 8: Re-tweet activity during public exhibition

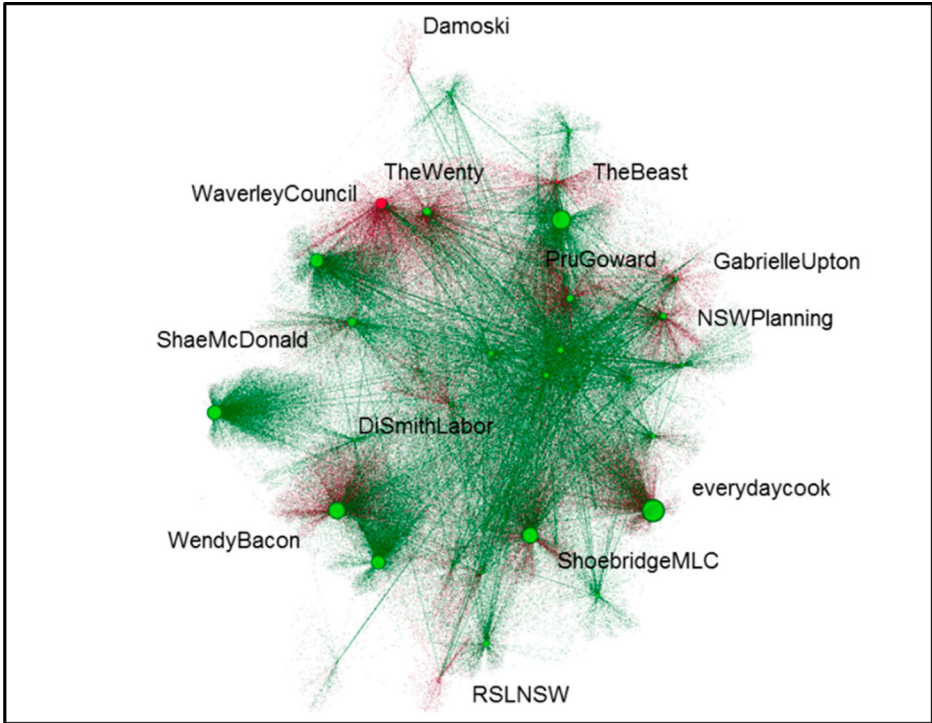


Figure 9: Twitter activity in October 2014 (Save Bronte)

The nodes that did actively re-tweet during this time were citizens, a local journalist, and the Better Planning Network (BPN). The BPN is a volunteer-based organization founded in 2012 in response to the NSW Government’s proposed planning reform package. The BPN claims to have affiliations with over 470 community groups across the State. This analysis suggests that although key stakeholders are connected to the social media network the community group has built on Twitter, they are passive listeners and do not necessarily promote the ideas and opinions that the community group is trying to distribute across the network. However, it is positive that key stakeholders may be listening in on the network.

Discussion: Employing Network Analysis to Assess the Use of Social Media by Community Groups

Employing Social Network Analysis to Understand Participation within Community Group Networks

The social media networks of community groups attract key stakeholders, such as politicians, planning authorities, and local governments, who mostly have a significant following on Twitter. Journalists, news agencies, local businesses, and other community groups are also well represented within the network diagrams. However, it was found that community groups are led by a small number of active people, with a low number of followers, in an opinion-leader network structure. This analysis shows that even during the most

important times in the planning process, numerous key stakeholders in the social media network did not participate, which suggests that participation is largely being pushed by the community group with little engagement from key stakeholders. This finding concurs with Highfield's (2013) analysis of Twitter use in mainstream national and state politics which revealed that a small highly engaged group of citizens invoke politicians and journalists, but politicians do not directly contribute to the discussion. On the occasions when politicians and journalists do engage, their contributions are overshadowed by the sheer volume of tweets by other users. Moreover, Grant et al. (2010) notes that politicians use Twitter for broadcasting their messages, and also as a way of getting "frank and spontaneous" feedback on their policies and plans without necessarily getting involved in a conversation. Anyone can listen to a community on Twitter without leaving a recognizable trace by simply searching user handles or hashtags, which suggests that by following community groups, politicians are demonstrating that they are listening. Furthermore, social media openly display network connections, which provides information about a person or organization. Donath (2004) argues that knowing that someone is connected to people you already trust is one of the most basic ways to establish trust. Thus, network connections are an implicit verification of identity (Donath, 2004).

Kleinhans et al. (2015) conclude that two-way communication between residents and governments using social media is still scarce, and also note that governments seem unable to "tap into" the online social networks of citizens. These conclusions are valid; however, this paper demonstrates that some government agencies and politicians, at least in the Australian context, are tapped into online community networks, although their presence in these networks is a passive listening role, rather than an active communications role.

Employing Social Network Analysis to Visualize the Network Structures of Community Groups

A highly centralized network is characterized by a few nodes holding the majority of connections with others in the network. Lyles (2015) advocates that centralized networks are good for building support for collective action; however, they are not so good for problem-solving. A more decentralized structure provides better access to resources and stakeholders. Nonetheless, the goal of a community group is to generate collective action, thus the network structures discussed by this paper are appropriate for undertaking a successful community group campaign. Furthermore, SNA illustrates the network's strongest ties are concentrated on the community group's Twitter account and suggests there is social capital being generated within this segment of the social network as group members generate opinions, distribute information, and support each other's activities. When looking at these networks with Putman's (2001) concepts of social capital bridging and bonding, it can be concluded that both concepts are present. The bonding network is visualized by the tie strength diagrams in Figure 5 and represents those with a shared goal. The bridging network appears in the diagrams in Figure 4 and represents network connections that link to people in an information exchange type function, with differing interests that may not be directly related to the community group's campaign.

Adoption of Social Media by Community Groups

The Save Bronte community group commenced using social media in January 2012 and WRAG in December 2013. Each community group's social media profile was "followed" by several other community groups. This suggests that these groups are observing each other's actions and potentially emulating them for their own campaigns. This echoes Mergel's (2013) suggestion that the key to the rapid diffusion of social media by local governments in the US can be attributed to the free and open nature of social media, and the fact that practices of others can be openly observed and emulated. It is difficult to identify social media use by community groups in Sydney prior to 2012; however, since 2012, numerous short- and long-term examples can be found.

Positioning within a Network, Subgroups, and Bridges

Holman (2008) concludes that local groups could use network data to visualize themselves in a network to determine where contacts with others playing the role of information brokers or bridges could improve communications. Access to this kind of network visualization may provide greater ability to influence network members and feed their own ideas and opinions into the network with greater effectiveness and go beyond the simple count of followers, which can be misleading. An affordance of social media is the ability to harvest network data and visualize such networks with a view to describing the network structure and significant subgroups. SNA highlights important positions within networks by identifying relationships between organizations and their positions in the network, including who are the bridges that may distribute information more broadly.

SNA techniques can be taken a step further to demonstrate participation at important points in the planning process. The network diagrams demonstrate that politicians, journalists, and other community groups can play an important bridging role, as can highly connected citizens who can increase the network's reach to their followers. While the community group's Twitter account may not attract large numbers of friends and followers on Twitter, their combined network can become large and, during periods of high tweeting and re-tweeting activity, information and opinions can be distributed to a significant number of people. However, it should not be assumed that all participants are following the community group on social media to promote the community group's campaign.

Sample Population Being Measured

The network diagrams in this paper appear to present a snapshot of the community groups being investigated; however, it must be noted that the use of social media by community groups is a sample of the group and does not necessarily represent the entire group or a comprehensive audit of all the connections they are pursuing. Community groups are also a relatively small percentage of the local community that is not considered to be representative of the entire community—their opinions often reflect the attitudes of a small self-organized minority who research issues and coordinate the group's contributions to the planning process (Dear, 1992; McClymont and O'Hare, 2008). Goggins et al. (2011)

remind us that online groups are not bounded by time, space, or even membership, and engagement by online groups is unstructured. Furthermore, suggestions of concepts of community, network, or group can be misleading as images of the physical world do not easily align to online group experiences (Goggins et al., 2011). Notwithstanding, network diagrams generated from social media data reveal a wealth of information about community groups that is difficult to gather by any other means.

Limitations of Social Network Analysis

Wellman (1983) states that SNA cannot provide an understanding of human agency and its influence upon communities, thus a complete understanding of community groups and their associated networks needs to be undertaken using a combination of research techniques, including qualitative methods. SNA gives researchers the ability to capture a snapshot of a network and identify who has the capacity to promote ideas and opinions across the network; however, qualitative methods are also required to gain a better understanding of how the community group network functions in terms of information flows and why stakeholders and decision-makers are listening in.

Conclusion

Undertaking analysis of social media networks can provide useful information about community group network structures, including the stakeholders the communities are choosing to connect with. Furthermore, the use of SNA in participatory planning research could promote network thinking by providing links between real world case studies and planning research. Social media gives a community the opportunity to participate throughout the planning processes regardless of when the statutory consultation period occurs. This is not new as community groups have traditionally used letters, petitions, and telephones calls to facilitate ongoing participation, but it provides an additional communications channel. The network diagrams presented in this paper could also be a valid tool for planners to use to gain a better understanding of how community groups are operating and who they seek to engage with. This paper contributes to the small amount of literature on the use of SNA in planning research by investigating social media networks created by community groups in opposition to site-specific changes to planning controls. Future research could use SNA to gain an understanding of the success or otherwise of community group campaigns. With enough case study evidence, one may be able to determine whether bridging and/or bonding in a network results in a community group's campaign succeeding or not.

Notes on Contributors

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Chapter 5: Urban consolidation process and discourses in Sydney: Unpacking social media use in a community group's media campaign

Chapter 4 visualised the social media networks generated by two community groups and established that while key stakeholders are typically present in these networks, they play a passive listening role. This chapter addresses Research Question Two by investigating the discourses mobilised in social media networks and if there are differences between communication channels. This chapter builds on the findings of Chapter 4 by using the *Save Bronte* case study to analyse the discourses which circulate through the community group's Twitter network. This case study makes a contribution to planning literature by presenting and analysing social media discourse between the NSW Department of Planning and *Save Bronte*, and also between *Save Bronte* and other individuals in the community.

As observed in Chapter 4, *Save Bronte* used social media when immediate collective action was required, particularly during the public exhibition of the planning proposal. This seemed to draw a cautious Department of Planning and Environment into publicly communicating about the process. However, the dialogue between the Department and *Save Bronte* was highly disjointed and generated misunderstandings and mixed messages that frustrated the community group. It became clear that it is difficult to explain complex planning concepts and process in social media format. This case study also revealed insights into how the speed of engagement is changing due to community group, planning authority and individual use of social media platforms. In fact, this open and expeditious channel of communication strained the internal processes of the Department, which suggests that contemporary communications platforms do not align with the traditional practice of short exhibition periods as a discrete step in the planning process. Hence, an ongoing engagement model should be considered.

While *Save Bronte's* social media campaign peaked during the public exhibition and the decision to refuse the planning proposal, the mainstream media mentions peaked at the beginning of the process and at key decision points such as the referral to the Planning Assessment Commission for independent advice. It is difficult to quantify which communications channel had the most effect on the decision-makers, but it

can be concluded that *Save Bronte* conducted a sophisticated media campaign that utilised the strengths of several communications channels.

The *Save Bronte* case study was a relatively small site with both local and state planning processes involved at various times during the 3 year campaign by the community group. Chapters 6 and 7 examine large urban renewal sites where state government agencies led the process. The size and complexity of urban renewal sites often makes them more contentious with the local community.

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Urban consolidation process and discourses in Sydney: unpacking social media use in a community group's media campaign

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ABSTRACT

Community resistance to urban consolidation has been the subject of much research. However, dialogue through social media between citizens and planning agencies is rarely captured and analysed. Using discourse analysis we explore the discourses employed by local government, a state planning agency, an independent expert panel, journalists and a self-organised community group to either support or oppose a proposed development. Due to the significant use of social media by the community group and other stakeholders, we include Twitter dialogues in our discourse analysis. Three key findings emerge; first, a central strategy mobilised by all stakeholders was the tendency to appropriate the arguments of other stakeholders in order to support their own arguments. Second, the community group's knowledge of the planning process improved to the extent that they developed a strong awareness of a larger planning system which broadened the scope of their social media strategy. Third, social media's provision to the public of an open and expeditious channel of communication strained the internal processes of a planning agency.

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Introduction

Since the 1960s the dominant paradigm for planning in Sydney has been urban consolidation in the form of medium and high density housing (Searle & Filion, 2011). Successive state government arguments for urban consolidation have varied from decade to decade. The main policy justification of the 1960s to 1970s centred on the efficient use of existing infrastructure services such as water, sewerage, electricity and roads. Since the 1990s urban consolidation has shifted to a solution for housing affordability, housing an ageing population and efficient use of public transport. Environmental arguments have also emerged and further changes to household demographics such as delaying marriage and children have created an increased demand for higher density housing (Searle & Filion, 2011). Throughout this time, urban consolidation has experienced considerable opposition from some communities who mobilise various arguments of resistance, including increased traffic, loss of privacy, loss of streetscape and an influx of lower socio-economic households (Searle, 2007). According to Dear (1992) and McClymont and O'Hare (2008) initial community opposition can be a small highly localised number of individuals in the immediate neighbourhood, before seeking to mobilise a much larger group. Traditional communication channels used by community groups include face-to-face meetings, letters, petitions and telephone calls (Davison, Legacy, Liu, & Darcy, 2016; Dear, 1992). The Bronte

Returned and Services League (RSL) case study is consistent with the urban consolidation paradigm that has been pursued in Sydney for the past 30 years (Ruming, Houston, & Amati, 2012), with a strong emphasis over the past decade through planning system reforms that proposed the introduction of up-front strategic planning informed by community consultation (Ruming & Davies, 2014).

In this paper we investigate community opposition to a proposed higher density development in the beachside Sydney suburb of Bronte. The proposed redevelopment of the Bronte RSL was the subject of considerable public debate and protest in the period from November 2012 to November 2015. In unpacking debate around this proposed development we explore the discourses mobilised by local government, a state planning agency, an independent expert panel, journalists and a self-organised community group to either support or challenge the proposed redevelopment of the Bronte RSL site. More specifically, we explore how discourses differed between communication modes, such as planning reports, newspaper articles and social media, as the planning process progressed. Importantly, social media dialogues between citizens, and between citizens and the Department of Planning (Department) emerge as a key mode of communication and contest in the planning and assessment process.

Nevertheless, conversations between the Department and citizens using social media are highly disjointed, often generating mixed messages in relation to a wider process of planning reform and specifics of the proposed development, further confusing and frustrating the community. In response, social media emerges as the principal communications channel when members of the community feel immediate collective action is necessary. To these ends, social media represents a tool used to engage with the wider community and planning authority at key points in the planning process. The findings represent a distinct contribution to the literature through a comprehensive analysis of social media use during an urban planning process, as this is the only known case study that shows actual dialogue between a government agency and a community group on Twitter.

Before outlining the Bronte RSL redevelopment and community opposition, we provide a review of the emerging body of literature on planning participation and social media. The following section provides an overview of discourse analysis, which we used to provide a detailed analysis of debate and contestation over the Bronte RSL site. Some conclusions follow.

Participation and social media

Healey (1993) refers to a shift from a modernist to a post-modernist view of planning as the communicative turn in planning theory, where formal community engagement is undertaken during the planning process. This shift is described by Harris (2002) as a re-orientation from technical planning models towards a more interactive understanding of planning activity. Others have further developed the area of communicative planning and added terms such as deliberative planning (Forester, 1999) to facilitate practical and timely participation and planning through consensus building as a form of negotiation and mediation in planning processes (Innes, 1996). According to Healey (1998), communicative planning aims to involve a wide set of stakeholders and to address a diverse set of meanings and values.

Mandarano, Meenar, and Steins (2010) notes planners are using Internet-enabled communications to facilitate direct civic engagement and cites potential advantages as making information available 24/7 and making it easier for citizens to follow and engage in the planning process. On the other hand, they question whether Internet-based methods of communication reach a broader audience, especially those with limited access to a computer or the Internet.

While evaluations of how Internet-enabled communications are being used in planning practice as a forum for direct citizen engagement have been scant (Mandarano et al. (2010), Stern, Gudes, and Svoray (2009) demonstrates that Internet participation differs according to age and educational background, and while citizens felt empowered by the opportunity to use both traditional and Internet-enabled participation tools, Internet participation tools were not yet a replacement for traditional participation. Carver, Evans, Kingston, and Turton (2001) also note that well-organised community groups could use all channels of participation, resulting in a loud minority putting their interests above those of the majority. This concern has been confirmed by Trapenberg Frick (2016) who found that community groups that utilise both digital media and mainstream media such as newspapers heighten other residents' concerns about the planning process and the proponents involved. Moreover, digital media allows participants to produce their own material through several communication channels including YouTube videos, websites and posts on social media platforms to create a perpetual digital footprint (Trapenberg Frick, 2016). Afzalan and Muller (2014) and Williamson and Rumung (2015) also found that social media did not create a collaborative communications process in isolation, but integrated well with mainstream media communication methods.

The development of social media networks has offered a new avenue of communication between communities and planning authorities. The use of social media for the purpose of engaging with planning processes can be broken into two separate groups: government-initiated and citizen-initiated social networks (Evans-Cowley, 2010; Evans-Cowley & Hollander, 2010). Citizen-initiated social networks focusing on planning issues form the majority of social networks as found by Evans-Cowley (2010), and are typically organised to oppose a proposed development or draft plan. Facebook is a popular social network that attracts millions of users across the world; however, the use at a personal level may not constitute what is required for participation in planning processes. This is due to people's interpretation of what a 'friend' is, and their belief that simply joining a network is an action for a cause (Evans-Cowley, 2010). Evans-Cowley and Hollander (2010) found significant challenges for planners attempting to use Facebook due to its closed network nature. Planners were unable to create connections with the public in this sense. However, Evans-Cowley and Griffin (2012) identified Twitter as a powerful tool to engage the public. Twitter's open style allows planners to read, see or listen to what the community is saying (Mergel, 2013). Hence Evans-Cowley and Griffin (2012) suggested Twitter is an opportunity to engage with the public in a different way. Furthermore, Schweitzer (2014) suggests engagement with individuals on Twitter may prove more beneficial than broadly distributing information, and those benefits can improve a government agency's reputation and their planning dialogue more generally.

While a growing body of literature is focusing on the presence and potential influence of social media in planning processes, Kleinhans, Van Ham, and Evans-Cowley (2015) conclude that two-way communication between residents and government agencies using social media is still scarce and also note that governments seem unable to 'tap into' citizens' online social networks. This gap in planning practice and literature is acknowledged, and this paper contributes to the literature by presenting a case study that explores social media interactions between citizens and a planning agency at various stages during a planning process. The following section introduces the case study and its planning context.

Redeveloping the Bronte RSL

The RSL of Australia was founded in 1916 and supports serving and ex-service Defence Force members and their families. The RSL is governed by a national president, state branches and local sub-branches. Licensed clubs were formed by sub-branches as commercial activities to provide hospitality



Figure 1. Map of Sydney.

and entertainment to their members¹. International equivalents are the American Legion, the Royal British Legion and the Royal Canadian Legion. The Bronte RSL Club, located in the eastern suburbs of Sydney (Figure 1), ceased operations in 2012. The RSL Club had served the community since 1946, but the current building, constructed in the 1970s, had become increasingly dilapidated. To create a long-term, sustainable and financially viable solution, the RSL Club entered into an agreement with a property developer to develop the land and provide new club facilities as part of a mixed-use project comprising a range of retail, residential and club uses (Inspire Planning, 2012, p. 5). This is a common occurrence in Sydney, where “declining membership and rising real estate prices are seeing clubs deciding to sell their valuable properties to developers” (Peacock, 2013).

Bronte is characterised by a mix of low density detached dwellings and medium density apartment buildings. Bronte has a Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) score of 1131, which puts it in the top 2% of localities in the state with regard to socio-economic advantage (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011). In the Australian context there is a strong correlation between high socio-economic status suburbs and the likelihood of planning objections and appeals (Taylor, 2013). Furthermore, Galster, Tatian, Santiago, Pettit, and Smith (2003) observe that community opposition tends to be strongest in socially homogenous middle- and upper-income neighbourhoods. Thus, Bronte is typical of locations which experience contest over plans for higher density development in Sydney (Ruming et al., 2012). The Save Bronte community group was formed in late 2012 to voice their concerns over the proposed redevelopment of the RSL Club site. Table 1 summarises the Bronte RSL planning process.

Table 1. Timeline of planning actions and outcomes.

| Date | Action | Outcome |
|-----------------------------|---|--|
| October 2012 | Council commenced review of neighbourhood centre planning controls including a public information session | Initial community consultation undertaken |
| November 2012 | Landowner hosted a public meeting to present their preferred proposal for the site | Initial local community resistance |
| March – July 2013 | Development application assessed by local council | Application refused due to inconsistency with current planning controls |
| June – July 2013 | Landowner lodged a planning proposal with Waverley Council to increase planning controls | Council resolves not to proceed with proposal |
| August 2013 – February 2014 | Review of planning proposal by Department of Planning and Planning Assessment Commission | Recommended proposal proceed to public exhibition |
| June – September 2014 | Modified planning proposal lodged with Department of Planning for Gateway consideration | Gateway determination issued in September 2014 to proceed to public exhibition |
| October – November 2014 | Public exhibition | Formal community consultation |
| December 2014 – March 2015 | Post-exhibition report submitted to Department of Planning | Proposal refused in March 2015 |

Waverley Council and the Joint Regional Planning Panel² (JRPP) rejected the original development application in July 2013 on the grounds that the proposed building envelope was in excess of the permissible planning controls (Joint Regional Planning Panel (JRPP), 2013). When Waverley Council's intention to refuse the development application became public, the property developer lodged a planning proposal to amend the Waverley Local Environmental Plan (LEP) to increase the statutory building height from 13 to 20 meters and increase the floor space ratio from 1:1 to 2.1:1. In New South Wales LEPs are the principal local planning instruments. LEPs outline the planning objectives and development controls of the local council and set conditions related to zoning, height, floor space ratios, landscaping, overshadowing, and heritage (Farrier & Stein, 2006). To amend an LEP, a proponent must prepare a planning proposal. The proposal provides a statement of the objectives and intended outcomes of changing the planning controls. The Bronte RSL planning proposal was refused in July 2013 by Waverley Council on the grounds that the proposal was inconsistent with Waverley Council's urban design analysis and the current neighbourhood centre zoning (Waverley Council, 2013).

Subsequent to the refusals by Waverley Council, the property developer requested a review by the Department of Planning. The Department's review and recommendation that the application had strategic merit (Department of Planning & Infrastructure (DP&I), 2013) was supported by the Planning Assessment Commission³ (PAC) (Planning Assessment Commission (PAC), 2014). Waverley Council then agreed to progress the planning proposal through to public exhibition in October 2014. Importantly, the revised proposal included a number of amendments to address issues raised by Save Bronte in informal written submissions and social media. Following public exhibition the planning proposal was lodged with the Department for a final decision. In March 2015 the amended planning proposal was refused by the Department because the site was not identified as a priority for urban renewal, was not close to public transport and was inconsistent with the neighbourhood centre zoning (Department of Planning & Environment (DP&E), 2015). The remainder of this paper explores how Save Bronte engaged with the planning process, with a view to oppose development. Twitter was especially important to Save Bronte's communication strategy at certain stages in the planning process.

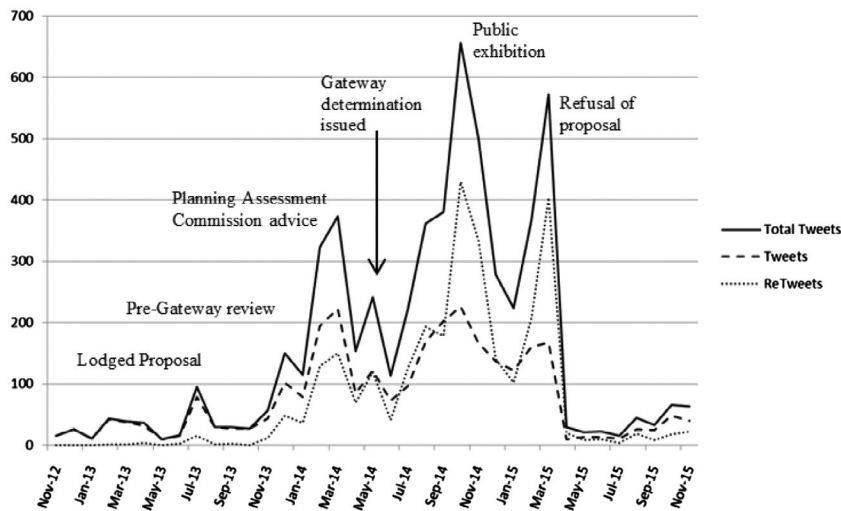


Figure 2. Number of Tweets by month.

Save Bronte in the (social and mainstream) media

Throughout the planning process Save Bronte actively employed social media, especially Twitter, as part of their campaign to oppose the redevelopment of the Bronte RSL. Twitter is a service that allows people to publish short messages on the Internet and is commonly referred to as microblogging. Twitter allows people to subscribe, known as ‘following’ other people they are interested in. Twitter enables users to broadcast messages using hash tags (#) and send direct messages using the ‘@’ symbol. Direct messages are still publicly available (Java, Song, Finin, & Tseng, 2007). Just a month after being founded in 2012, Save Bronte had established a social media presence on Twitter. The group created the Twitter handle @savebronte and utilised #savebronte and #BronteRSL, attracted over 230 followers and made over 2300 tweets between November 2012 and November 2015. Save Bronte’s monthly use of Twitter is presented in Figure 2. Save Bronte averaged 2.1 tweets per day for 3 years. This activity increases to 5.3 tweets per day when retweets and tweets from other parties are included. Thelwall (2014) advises that it is appropriate to observe social media data in segments when looking at a long-running topic. Social media time series graphs are likely to be spiky due to natural variations in the data, rather than due to external events; hence the largest spikes should be investigated as they may represent specific points of interest. There are six clear spikes in the Twitter data that relate to specific stages of the plan-making process.

Twitter data was collected directly from the Twitter application programming interface (API) using the TAGS v6.0 application created by Hawksey (2013). The data was collected approximately every 7 days throughout the duration of the planning process. Twitter data compiled in November 2015 illustrates that the highest proportion of followers were citizens (71%) and state and local politicians (14%). Citizen followers were most likely local residents, but the limited information available on Twitter means this is difficult to confirm in all cases.

A number of researchers have employed statistical software to interrogate large social media data sets of millions of tweets (Schweitzer, 2014). As the Twitter data-set used in this case study was relatively small, at 2300 tweets, the data was manually coded and examined for conversations/interactions. Researchers have also applied sentiment analysis (Williamson & Ruming, 2015), content analysis

(Afzalan & Evans-Cowley, 2015), linguistic analysis (Evans-Cowley & Griffin, 2012) and social network analysis (Williamson & Rumming, 2016) to social media data. We add to this suite of analytical approaches by adopting discourse analysis to investigate what was being said by various stakeholders in the changing contexts of a long-running planning process.

Between November 2012 and November 2015 the Bronte RSL redevelopment proposal was mentioned in mainstream media a total of 75 times: 65 occasions in print media (50 articles written by journalists and 15 letters to the editor); four times on television news bulletins; and, six occasions on radio news programs. Peaks in mainstream media mentions were recorded in December 2012 – at the beginning of the process – and July 2013, February 2014 and March 2015 – at the key decision points. Interestingly, the peak in social media use (October 2014), which was centred on the public exhibition, was not matched by the mainstream media. This is likely due to the fact that no decision was made at this point, making it less newsworthy to a wider public.

Critical discourse analysis

Discourse analysis has its origins in both social theory and linguistics (Hastings, 1999). According to Lees (2004) there are two main strands of discourse analysis. The first strand descends from Marxist traditions of critiquing the political economy and is referred to as critical discourse analysis (CDA). The second strand draws on post-structural theory, in particular, the work of Michel Foucault (1977, 1980). The Foucauldian approach views discourse both as performative practice, and also representations of reality; thus ‘regimes of truth’ are created as an acceptable formulation of problems and solutions to problems (Foucault, 1980).

To undertake discourse analysis researchers look to highlight two aspects of discourse: first, the social context of the discourse, and second, the rhetorical organisation of the discourse. Fairclough (1989, 1992, 1995) offers a three-tier framework of textual analysis, discursive practice and social practice from which to conduct discourse analysis (Lees, 2004). Following Hastings (1999), our use of CDA is predominantly concerned with how and why language is used by stakeholders, particularly the local community, how particular rhetorical strategies are deployed by government agencies, and the effect of those strategies on the urban planning process. The work of Fairclough draws widely on Foucault, but focuses on the recursive relationships between language and power rather than seeing language as a reflection of power relations (Jacobs, 2004). The merit of Fairclough’s approach is his adoption of a three-tier framework which situates texts within a wider social context; thus we have chosen to use Fairclough’s approach to investigate this long-running complex planning process and its changing social contexts.

In order to use CDA, the rhetorical strategies and effects of language in the texts must be situated and analysed within their wider social, political and cultural context. To achieve this, the three-tier framework formulated by Fairclough (1989) was applied. Initially the grammar, vocabulary and structure of the textual documentation were examined for evidence of linguistic structures. Second, discursive practices in the textual documentation were examined to identify topic statements and how they were framed by the relevant stage of the urban planning process. The intention of this method is for simultaneous analysis rather than a linear process (Fairclough, 1995, p. 98). Members of Save Bronte were invited to participate in interviews. All invitations were declined.

The inclusion and analysis of several communication modes is considered crucial for a better understanding of the process of communication in this case study. Discourse analysis was conducted on the following texts:

- Planning proposal by property developer
- Planning reports by local government planners
- Planning report and media release by the Department
- Sixty-five local and metropolitan newspaper articles
- Social media data in the form of Twitter text by all interested parties and stakeholders throughout the planning process

Due to the significant use of social media text in this case study, we draw together Fairclough's approach for analysing a range of traditional texts and Herring's (2004) computer-mediated discourse analysis (CMDA) approach to gain a better understanding of the production and interpretation of social media text. Herring (2004) formulated this approach as an additional layer of consideration when using any form of discourse analysis (KhosraviNik, 2014). Hence, all forms of text collected have been analysed using Fairclough's (1989) three-tier framework. However, where the text has been sourced from social media, we also consider Herring's (2004) CMDA approach. For example, our case study focuses on dialogues between the Department, the community group and other citizens using Twitter. While we apply Fairclough's notion of turn-taking to these texts, we also acknowledge that social media allows unfinished conversations and asymmetrical conversations where there is an interruption of an unknown length of time (Herring & Androutsopoulos, 2015), to recognise that we are not dealing with traditional mass media text production and consumption.

In the remainder of the paper we mobilise the critical discourse methods developed by Fairclough (1989, 1992, 1995), with particular attention paid to the notions of intertextuality, framing, turn-taking and genres to analyse traditional and social media texts.

Discourses of development

This section investigates the discourses of planning documents, mainstream media and social media, with a focus on the six stages of the plan-making process (Figure 2). Critical discourse analysis reveals three dominant discourses regarding overdevelopment, assisting the local community, and strategic planning reform versus local planning functions. These discourses reflect concerns for local impacts, a protracted and confusing planning process, and mixed messages.

A discourse of overdevelopment

This first discourse discusses initial reactions to the planning proposal and how key planning decisions were framed by local and state government agencies. Prior to the commencement of any formal planning process, the local print media reported on community meetings held by the property developer and Waverley Council at the Bronte RSL Club in November 2012 (McDonald, 2012; Healey, 2012). These reports describe local residents carrying "Save Bronte" signs and having an overwhelmingly negative response to the suggestion of a 20-metre tall building. Comments from attendees stated "We all recognise there needs to be a development here" and "we don't want a major retailer like Harris Farm", in response to the proposal to include an up-market fruit and vegetable store in a redeveloped site. By using the pronoun 'we', the text producer was asserting relational value to these utterances in the form of social relationships, and made an implicit claim of authority (Fairclough, 1989). The main observation by a journalist from this early consultation was "there's an astonishing amount of opposition to the development currently being proposed" (Healey, 2012). Save Bronte and the subsequent reporting by the journalist are examples of framing (Fairclough, 1989), in which

the topic of resistance to overdevelopment is represented. The textual cues in these texts such as 'development', 'don't want' and 'major retailer' accord with the dialectical relationship between texts and member resources, which sets precedence for subsequent textual cues and their interpretation. Fairclough (1989, 1992) uses the concept 'member resources' to place a value on the knowledge, values, beliefs and assumptions of text producers and interpreters. Although member's resources are largely in people's minds, it is also social, as one's member resources are shaped by social experiences.

The dominant discourse by Waverley Council in the initial stages of the site's proposed redevelopment is one of incompatibility with the zoning and built form of the neighbourhood centre. This is evident in the perceived local retail catchment of the neighbourhood centre as it currently operates and the impacts of potentially drawing residents from neighbouring suburbs, which may impose a significant burden on the local residents, particularly in terms of vehicle traffic, parking and delivery trucks (Waverley Council, 2013). Waverley Council's use in discourse of the reporting genre is at a more abstract level than Save Bronte's discourse; however, the point of the text represents cohesion between the local community and Waverley Council. Fairclough (1989) advises that the point of a text is important, as it is the point that will be memorised, recalled and intertextually alluded to in subsequent texts.

The community's concerns regarding overdevelopment and the safety of school children were mentioned with a strong emotive component: "If an oversized development were to go ahead against Council rulings, it would be a question of how many injured and dead children we would be looking at, and how often" (Healey, 2014). This text can be analysed using Fairclough's (1989) notion of 'modality'. The textual cues in this statement indicate a significant degree of affinity with the proposition of injury or death as a result of overdevelopment, and also apply a categorical modality by placing it in the future tense. Fairclough (1989) notes that the extent to which the modality of a proposition is contested is important. In this case, the proposition was not contested by Waverley Council or the Department, which aligns with Baum's (2015) conclusion that planners resist emotional concerns. Conversely, the community contested the statement by saying "there were now four-wheel drives parked at every school intersection" in direct reference to issues of children's safety on streets adjacent to schools (Horscroft, 2013).

The Department's position was to proceed to public exhibition, with amendments to the proposal, including restricting the size of retail premises, removal of delivery vehicular access in close proximity to the school, and building design amendments to reduce overshadowing and privacy impacts, as requested by Waverley Council and Save Bronte. The Department also utilised intertextuality by referring to previous stages of the planning process:

This decision will allow the community to comment on the planning proposal as amended which has responded to a number of significant community concerns including traffic, access and preference to keep the Macpherson and St Thomas Streets Bronte Neighbourhood Centre serving the local community (DP&I, 2014).

Conversely, Save Bronte expressed continuing concern for a planning process that is in favour of overdevelopment:

The PAC has now ridden roughshod over the council and community and handed a recommendation to the Department of Planning that is firmly in favour of overdevelopment (Save Bronte, 2014).

This first discourse looks at the various genres and textual cues that can be used, both for and against overdevelopment. Overdevelopment is a discursive debate and needs to be considered on a site-specific basis. The texts used in this site-specific debate do not define over-development, but imagine how over-development may impact the local community in the future. As follows, the planning authorities used a formal reporting style to discuss potential impacts and to influence the process, while Save

Bronte used emotive statements with little reference to the size of the development to contest the perceived negative impacts at the local level. These different genres and styles demonstrate different interpretation of the context. It is important to recognise these relational values and framing early in the process to understand whether these early reactions are used continuously or evolve into different arguments. In this case, Save Bronte repeatedly used relational values, intertextuality and negative interpretations throughout the planning process to create community awareness and increase the significance of the project to gain the attention of the media and politicians. From the initial concerns for overdevelopment, the discourse started to shift to a lack of community participation and confusion regarding the planning process.

A discourse of assisting the local community

This second discourse looks at how the community group positioned itself to represent the Bronte community, with a particular focus on their interactions with other parties through social media. Save Bronte positioned itself to protect the local community from what it perceived to be a proposal for significant overdevelopment of the site by engaging the Department on the current status and next steps in the planning process. This was particularly the case using Twitter. Below is one such dialogue. The main topic of this exchange was the community questioning which stage of the planning process they were at. The Department directed Save Bronte to a web page that explained how planning decisions are made. A key point to note is the time lag between each Department tweet, while the person in control of Save Bronte's Twitter account would reply within minutes. This demonstrates the difficulty for a government department that requires approval for each tweet (Williamson & Parolin, 2013).

This is a particularly useful dialogue, as it highlights Save Bronte's interpretation of the Department's media release that it is "implying gateway decision already made". This demonstrates Save Bronte was increasing their knowledge, or member resources, by this stage of the planning process and interpreting the Department's text from both a situational and intertextual context. This dialogue can also be analysed using Fairclough's (1989) notion of turn-taking. Fairclough advises that power relationships between participants can be used to control other participants using interruptions, enforcing explicitness and formulation. The Department is the more powerful participant in this dialogue; however, Save Bronte uses formulation to reword what was previously said to enhance their own understanding of the context. This in turn forces the Department to make their second Tweet less ambiguous. Save Bronte also repeatedly asks questions of the Department in an attempt to control the topic. Fairclough (1989) advises the strongest form of control in turn-taking is silence. Although Herring and Androutsopoulos (2015) note long silences are minor in social media use, in this case study silence was the norm and most likely due to internal approvals needed by Department staff to send a tweet. This suggests social media may be an inefficient communication tool if internal approval processes are not streamlined.

@NSWPlanning you obviously know something we don't. The next stage is the gateway decision by the Minister. Are you skipping that stage? See <https://twitter.com/savebronte> and NSW Plannings Twitter page is <https://twitter.com/NSWPlanning> (Save Bronte, 2/02/2014, 21:07).

@savebronte The dept has been delegated to make all Gateway determinations on behalf of the Minister – see <http://t.co/JbELdzgSWV> (NSWPlanning, 3/02/2014, 18:05).

@NSWPlanning so has the dept already made the gateway determination after carefully considering the PAC advice? #savebronte (Save Bronte, 3/02/2014, 18:08).

@NSWPlanning because you put out your press release implying gateway decision already made pretty soon after the PAC advice was released (Save Bronte, 3/02/2014, 18:20).

@savebronte PAC recommended proposal proceed to gateway, dept has agreed. Determination has not been made. See FAQs <http://t.co/6aqxdVTf5z> (NSWPlanning, 4/02/2014, 21:25).

@NSWPlanning so doesn't community consultation take place after the gateway determination? See pg 14 of your guide to leps (Save Bronte, 4/02/2014, 22:16).

While the discourse outlined above is an instance of Save Bronte trying to assist their community during the planning process, an open letter in a local newspaper by a co-convenor of Save Bronte provides a glimpse of the day-to-day aggression by some in the local area towards Save Bronte. The letter advises that local residents who support the proposal are shouting slogans at Save Bronte members such as "You're all yuppies" and "I've lived here longer than you" (Lightfoot, 2014). The letter asks local residents to argue on the basis of facts that appear in Waverley Council's reports, instead of casting aspersions at them. This is a curious request, as Save Bronte is generally quite flexible with the facts and much of their discourse uses relational values to generate emotional arguments. Mirroring the day-to-day aspersions, Save Bronte was also the focus of abusive tweets from January to May 2014 on Twitter. Approximately 60 direct tweets were sent to Save Bronte, often invoking politicians as well. Examples of the negative tweets are:

@savebronte you guys are morons. Again the vocal minority calling the shots. i hope u fail (citizen, 10/01/2014, 12:08).

@fox66 @PruGoward @bnotleysmith @gabrielleupton @savebronte @icac Bronte is shafted by selfish NIMBYS (citizen, 20/05/2014, 15:00).

These discourses highlight that Save Bronte did not speak for the entire community. While Save Bronte utilised Twitter to engage with the Department, people in the community used Twitter to remind Save Bronte that their interpretation of what may constitute overdevelopment was not universally accepted. The concept of "community" is not fixed, but is socially constructed through discourse to convey harmony and stability (McManus, 2001). These discourses also tend not to use the term community unfavourably and there is no opposing term (McManus, 2001). Planners also treat community as a place, which underpins most principles followed by planning practice (Ziller, 2004). Conversely, Talen (1999) argues that communities are not defined by places, but views them instead as dynamic entities based on relational ties operating across various scales. In this case, Save Bronte seems to be interpreting community as a place, while others with no ties to the community group refute that Save Bronte is representative of a community.

Towards the end of the planning process, Save Bronte started commenting on other planning matters the Department was promoting through social media: for example the draft New South Wales South Coast Regional Strategy, which had a media campaign running in late 2014. This was a shift from the local matter that initiated the group to a broader agenda of alerting the wider community to planning processes currently being undertaken in other areas.

The following conversation was between Save Bronte and two citizens and demonstrates that social media is an open conversation and that others may not agree with opinions offered. The first tweet directed at @NSWPlanning and @savebronte was by a citizen suggesting the New South Wales Government allows property developers to set their own planning rules. This was followed up by another citizen, not linked to Save Bronte, asking Save Bronte to explain the situation.

@NSWPlanning @savebronte Developers Rule- yes NSW govt allows them2 set Rules. Residents ignored, beware central coast and all NSW residents (citizen, 20/09/2014, 18:16).

@savebronte explain? (citizen, 21/09/2014, 8:49).

In response Save Bronte explained their interpretation of this situation through a number of tweets. The citizen then asked Save Bronte why they were slandering the Department on Twitter and then concluded that Save Bronte has its own way of twisting the truth.

@savebronte don't think the dept is the only one capable of spin (citizen, 21/09/2014, 12:52).

The notion of 'explicit addressivity' (Herring & Androutsopoulos, 2015) refers to naming a speaker or next speaker which is used to select others or self-selection to take the next step in a conversation. In computer mediated discourse the traditional cues for turn-taking are not available; thus Herring and Androutsopoulos (2015) advise that messages directed at individuals calling for a response are more likely to receive a response and participants who receive a response are more likely to post again. This may explain Save Bronte's extensive use of social media as they directed messages to the Department, who on three occasions directly responded. In turn, this may have validated the communications channel for Save Bronte, whose use of social media escalated through the process and expanded beyond their own local matter in the later stages of the process. In fact, Save Bronte used social media to pose questions to the Department and comment on other Department projects hundreds of times. While impossible to quantify, this relentless activity is assumed to have raised the profile of the community group.

While engaging in other planning matters did not seem to advance Save Bronte's own campaign, an open letter by a Save Bronte member provided an insight into the community's frustrations and what may have triggered them to start to look at a wider context: "Everyone in NSW should be very nervous about what's happening to planning in NSW and should be watching very closely what is happening in Bronte" (Lewis, 2013). This text references a high level debate unfolding in New South Wales regarding a planning system reform package, and also suggests that what is happening in Bronte will happen to other suburbs. It also demonstrates an affordance of social media in that Save Bronte were easily able to find these activities and were able to publicly express their opinions of Department process.

A discourse of strategic planning reform and local planning functions

This third discourse investigates how the community group raised the profile of their local planning matter by linking it to state government planning policy and a failed attempt to reform the planning system. The proposal to redevelop the site aligned itself with the metropolitan wide strategy (DP&E, 2014) in the form of the delivery of community and economic benefit. The positive narrative of the proposal was that while the proposed development can only deliver a small number of additional dwellings, it will "satisfy State Government objectives in the *Metropolitan Plan for Sydney to 2036* to focus and encourage employment and services in a conveniently accessible network of evolving centres connected to homes via good public transport" (Inspire Planning, 2012, p. 18). Likewise an assessment report by the Department (DP&I, 2013) concluded that the proposal and supporting studies provide detailed strategic information to support the site's redevelopment. Essentially, the state government's strategic planning framework emphasises local development as being good for local and metropolitan economies.

In response, Save Bronte were at one level demonstrating opposition to a site-specific proposal, while also elevating their arguments directly at state government planning policy and what they perceived to be an inadequate planning process. Save Bronte did this by repeating a state government policy statement: "It is NSW Liberal/National party policy that councils and local communities set the rules and vision for development in their local area" (Waverley Council, 2014, p. 155). Furthermore, they attack the planning system itself by noting the process for the site has been "Discarding and ignoring the results

of the recent due and proper council-led strategic planning process at the request of a developer is an example of bad process and bad planning” (Waverley Council, 2014, p. 135). This is not surprising and echoes previous research that finds community groups focusing on the process as much as merit assessment (Rumung & Houston, 2013).

An open letter by a local resident invoked the recent debate regarding the state government’s planning reform package (Hazzard, 2013) by stating “the government pitches its new planning laws as a modern and easy planning system for the twenty-first century that will put the community first; however, the community feel like they are being placed last” (Lewis, 2013). This led to some confusion towards the government’s discourse of early strategic planning informed by community consultation (O’Farrell, 2013) and Save Bronte raised the questions “How is this community consultation in action?” and “How is it reasonable that people who don’t live in our suburbs are making decisions about what’s right for us?” (Lewis, 2013). This much wider debate being played out in Sydney was a matter of timing, which allowed Save Bronte to tap into a much larger campaign opposing the state government’s planning reforms and represents a keen awareness of their own situational context. By redefining their focus from a single issue to an example of a poorly functioning planning system, Save Bronte both delegitimised claims of only being concerned with protecting their own backyard (Rumung et al., 2012) and afforded them the opportunity to position themselves as public defenders (Iveson, 2007).

In early March 2015, the Department determined the proposal should not proceed and provided five reasons for the decision (DP&E, 2015). Incorporating the broader planning reform discourses the Department was seeking from a new planning system, the media release declared the Bronte site was not a priority and was not close to a major transport corridor. The media release employed intertextuality to refer to Waverley Council arguments such as incompatibility with the neighbourhood centre zoning. Finally, it was acknowledged that even though the Department had amended the proposal in line with community concerns, the public exhibition demonstrated that community opposition persists. The topic statement in the media release read:

This shows that the process works. The Department’s process meant that the Council was able to seek formal community feedback and then consider it in the context of *A Plan for Growing Sydney* and local planning strategies (DP&E, 2015).

By unpacking this statement the following points can be noted. First, the blunt opening remark, “This shows that the process works”, suggests from the Department’s point of view, that a process was initiated by an application and followed through to completion, including formal public exhibition and consideration of public submissions. The Department never wavered from this position throughout the process. Second, the Department continued to make a discursive link to the metropolitan strategy, now titled *A Plan for Growing Sydney*, but this time it was to justify the refusal of the proposal. Overall, the media release suggested the process worked correctly and that the inevitable decision in favour of Save Bronte’s concerns was made. This is in contrast to all previous discourses by the Department which repeatedly linked the proposal to positive community and economic benefits to be gained by redeveloping the site.

Conclusions

According to the New South Wales State Government, urban consolidation is a process that addresses the changing demographics of a growing population and the demand for existing infrastructure and stimulates economic development (DP&E, 2014). Nevertheless, urban consolidation, often in the form of medium density housing, occurs with a direct interface with existing communities and established

businesses. This development can act as a catalyst for a struggle between the property developer, the broader strategic needs of metropolitan planning and the local community. In the case of the Bronte RSL redevelopment, Save Bronte received the decision they campaigned for – the application was rejected. However, there was no certainty throughout the process which was evident in the public discourses of anger and frustration played out through both mainstream media and social media. While social media played a role in this instance, it is difficult to quantify which communications channel had the most effect on the decision makers. However, it is fair to say that the sustained use of social media seemed to draw a cautious Department into publicly communicating about the process. The distinct contribution of this case study is its analysis of Twitter dialogues between the Department and the community group. The following conclusions can be made.

The formation of a community group to oppose urban consolidation is not new. The community's arguments and use of multiple communications channels is also well understood (Dear, 1992). However, many of these discourses would have traditionally taken place in town hall meetings, private meetings with elected officials and phone calls with planning staff, which would only be accessible to those present at the time. This case played out on social media, which created a highly accessible digital public record, including dialogues between a government agency and the community group and also between people in the community itself, which has not been present in previous contributions (Evans-Cowley, 2010; Evans-Cowley & Griffin, 2012; Evans-Cowley & Hollander, 2010). The level of public transparency provided by social media may go some way to reshaping the accepted notion of a short formal consultation period within planning processes to an ongoing discussion with the community at all stages of the process. To this end, letters to newspaper editors and quotes for journalists were fundamental to Save Bronte's campaign on a weekly and monthly basis; however, social media afforded them an additional communications channel to initiate interactions with other individuals and organisations on a daily basis. This suggests planning practice needs to recognise that social media is changing how communities are choosing to communicate at different stages of the planning process and consider how they may respond in a timely and helpful manner.

This case study highlights difficulties encountered by the Department's attempts to interact with the community using social media to explain government processes and procedures. Trapenberg Frick (2016) notes that government agencies can lose control of the message as community groups use online communications to relentlessly distribute a counter narrative that increases public awareness of the planning process. Furthermore, Schweitzer (2014) argues that if government agencies want to use social media they must be prepared to engage with individuals to discuss their concerns. It is not enough to have a social media presence that just broadcasts announcements (Schweitzer, 2014). However, in this instance, the Department interacted with the community group, but that did not lessen their abusive behaviour. Not only do government agencies need to engage with the community's concerns, but the vitriol may only stop when the Department's responses align with the desires of the community. Where this is not the case, the residents will continue to seek dialogue with the Department. Thus, government departments need to recognise the speed of public engagement is being influenced by social media, and should have processes in place which allow for continued dialogue to happen in a timely manner (or accept the ongoing critique given their unwillingness or inability to respond). The dialogues outlined here also reveal a serious limitation facing planning practitioners in that it is very difficult to discuss planning matters in the short message format Twitter operates on.

The Save Bronte case highlights how community groups publicly opposing a development using social media can attract negative attention or abusive behaviour from other people in the community. Social media was effectively used to raise a community group's profile, but social media also magnified

the level of opposition to their campaign. Further research into opposing views within communities and how differences are expressed through social media may provide planning practice with additional insights.

We observed a government department's attempts to 'tap into' citizens' online social networks, with questionable success. We also found that although community groups are utilising social media as part of their communications, the stakeholders and decision makers they attract mostly played a listening role instead of getting involved. Trapenberg Frick (2016) notes that participation is changing as citizens now have the means to communicate publicly outside of government agencies' controlled information networks. Thus we see that social media text can provide a useful resource in discourse studies when the data is available.

Notes

1. See www.rsl.org.au.
2. The JRPP was established in 2009 to determine development applications with a capital investment value greater than \$20 million that have been lodged with councils. Panels consist of five independent experts that are appointed by the Minister for Planning (jrpp.nsw.gov.au).
3. The PAC was established in 2008 to provide advice to the Minister on a range of development matters and assumes a determination role for major project applications delegated to it by the Minister. Panels consist of two or three independent experts that are appointed by the Minister (www.pac.nsw.gov.au).

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The views expressed in this article are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the New South Wales Department of Planning and Environment.

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Chapter 6: Urban renewal and public participation in Sydney: Unpacking social media strategies and use for contesting consensus

This chapter addresses Research Question Three by examining if social media is an effective communication platform for community groups to mobilise their opposition to planning proposals. This chapter uses content analysis to examine the dialogue of key stakeholders on social media. The post-political theoretical framework is also employed to analyse how the state government development agency pursued a consensus building approach for this project. This paper contributes to a growing literature seeking to understand the post-political condition for urban planning and explores social media as a tool to support alternative politics in planning matters. As with Chapter 5, this case study does not look at social media in isolation, but analyses the themes emerging in and circulated by both mainstream and social media, with a focus on Twitter.

Chapter 4 discussed how various stakeholders follow the social media activities of community groups, including other groups. This chapter builds on that initial analysis by investigating how the *North Parramatta Residents Action Group* (NPRAG) used social media to make explicit connections with other community groups contesting state government led urban renewal projects, often with the use of strong language to unify their own efforts with that of other groups. Furthermore, in Chapter 5, *Save Bronte* tried to broaden their arguments to align with issues raised wider in planning reforms, while NPRAG used the provocative "second best for the west" hashtag to re-scale participation from a site specific contest to the larger geographic region of Sydney. This theme was almost exclusively used on social media, but not in mainstream media, which demonstrated a deliberate strategy to mobilise different discourses through different communication channels.

In contrast to Chapter 5, UrbanGrowth NSW (government development agency) and the Department of Planning, in their state significant sites assessment roles, remained silent on social media throughout the process. While unable to secure an interview with the *Save Bronte* group, an interview with NPRAG discussed how the community group fed information to journalist to aid campaign exposure in the local and regional newspapers and used more emotive language and themes on social media, in an effort to gain attention on social media platforms.

These case studies provide examples of how social media can be used as a supplementary communications channel to empower collective action. However, there are also consequences as social media blurs the boundaries between the private and public lives of the people involved with community groups and can magnify the level of opposition to their campaign, which was explicitly played out in a public forum in the *Save Bronte* case study.

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Urban Renewal and Public Participation in Sydney: Unpacking Social Media Strategies and Use for Contesting Consensus

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Urban Renewal and Public Participation in Sydney: Unpacking Social Media Strategies and Use for Contesting Consensus

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores how the politics of contestation and resistance attempted to influence a government initiated urban renewal project. The declaration of the site as state significant and the subsequent formal consultation activities are positioned as post-political efforts by planning and development agencies to limit antagonistic politics and secure consensus. However, conflict appeared through a community group who opposed the planning process and its intended outcomes. Central to this resistance was the use of a symposium, main-stream and social media, Twitter in particular. This paper provides a post-political analysis to provide insights into resistance strategies mobilised by community groups.

本文探讨对抗和抵制的政治如何影响政府主导的城市改造计划。政府宣布涉事地点为国家重点保护区，随后进行了正式的咨询活动。这些都是规划和开发部门采取的后政治措施，以减少对立，保证共识。然而矛盾还是通过一个反对规划过程及其预期结果的社区团体爆发了。这种抵制活动的核心是利用研讨会、主流媒体和社交媒体，特别是推特。本文对此进行后政治分析，以理解社区团体动员起来的抵制策略。

ARTICLE HISTORY

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1. Introduction

Conflict surrounding urban planning and development is common, with strategic planning projects often characterised by controversies, opposition and community resistance (Dear 1992). Such conflicts emerge across various project types, planning systems and geographic locations (Brand and Gaffikin 2007). Within public, policy and academic debates, community conflict is often viewed as the product of self-interested NIMBY (not-in-my-backyard) groups seeking to maintain their own material, financial and social well-being (Dear 1992). However, more recent analysis argues that community conflict emerges as an expression of active citizenship and democracy, particularly within the context of planning systems, that have actively sought to constrain participation opportunities (Wilson and Swyngedouw 2014). Such conflicts are often exacerbated by strategic planning projects that translate into perceived losses for existing communities (Pacchi and Pasqui 2015). In many cases, planners are dealing with intractable differences between stakeholders and institutions who suggest there is no rational solution (Mouffe 2013). Within urban planning research there has been a growing literature which positions plan making as a post-political act where opportunities for true political action are restricted and channelled by planning practice in such a way to generate a form of consensus that aligns with the

development objectives of an existing urban elite (Allmendinger and Haughton 2015, Inch 2015, Raco 2015, Legacy 2016, 2017, Ruming 2018a). Within this body of literature, the idea of communicative and participatory planning is challenged as a means of restricting political action (Legacy 2016, 2017). In contrast, Brand and Gaffikin (2007) argue that when conflicts are properly harnessed they can confer positive frictions and drive dissent against superficial consensus. In this paper, we examine attempts to resist post-political planning efforts by analysing the themes emerging in and circulated by mainstream and social media, for a large brownfield urban renewal project – the North Parramatta Urban Renewal (PNUR) area – in the western suburbs of Sydney. Before outlining the PNUR area proposal and community opposition, we provide a review of literature on post-political theory, urban renewal and mainstream and social media. We then provide a detailed post-political analysis of the contestation over the PNUR area proposal. Some conclusions follow.

2. Participation and Politics

The post-political analytical framework has emerged in planning literature as a lens to examine underlying urban politics and the way they are manifest and maintained via planning processes (Rancière 1998, Allmendinger and Haughton 2015, Inch 2015, Raco 2015, Legacy 2016, 2017). Wilson and Swyngedouw (2014) define post-political as the political space of public engagement that is being increasingly colonised by technocratic mechanisms and consensual procedures that operate within a framework of representative democracy. For Wilson and Swyngedouw (2014) post-politics reduces democratic contest by managing planning process with expert reports and legitimises decisions through participatory processes where the scope of possible outcomes is narrowly defined in advance. The desire for economic growth facilitated by private sector development often lies at the centre of post-political efforts to secure consensus around a planning and development project (Raco 2015, Ruming 2018a).

Allmendinger and Haughton (2015) advise that post-political planning is notable for consensus-based events and processes that seek to promote a growth-led agenda. This pursuit of consensus manifests itself through appealing narratives such as ecological development, which acts to “greenwash” development with environmental initiatives (Bunce 2018) and “smart growth”, which disarm effective opposition as these phrases seem uncontroversial and appeal to common sense (Allmendinger and Haughton 2015). For Swyngedouw (2005), urban governance has been depoliticised by shifting from the implementation of outcomes representative of democratic decision-making to consensus building among multiple public and private stakeholders. For instance, post-political strategies have been observed keeping business cases confidential, fast-tracking contracts and avoiding public discussion (Legacy 2016). Decision-making processes are also mobilised to create false consensus by reducing broader policy issues to a planning decision about policing boundaries, buffers and distances (Butt and Taylor 2018). At an even broader level, post-political strategies have been observed through governments attempting to rescale decision-making in planning, from the local government level to district and metropolitan levels that are potentially less vulnerable to community opposition (MacDonald 2018). In all these examples, economic growth is presented as something that is good for everyone, but disproportionately benefits some actors over others (Swyngedouw 2010, Inch 2012).

Attempts at consensus are often built through narratives about reducing regulatory burden, responding to key stakeholders and ensuring certainty in the planning process (Inch 2012). In response, alternative political strategies appear in many forms. A growing body of literature provides examples of resistance to post-political strategies in Australian. For example, opponents mobilise protests, public meetings and forums, newspaper articles, local television and radio programmes and material elements of the built environment (Legacy 2016, Butt and Taylor 2018, Cook 2018, Ruming 2018a). These examples highlight that the post-political turn has not removed politics from planning. On the contrary, politics often emerges through alternative

spheres of engagement, led by citizens (Legacy 2016). To this end, the narrow application of participatory planning is a political act to manage contestation used by citizens to unsettle the planning process (Legacy 2017). Furthermore, Rogers (2016) argues the NSW Government has sought to manage participation by using temporary consensus-seeking consultation events. For Rogers (2016), the rhetoric of citizen involvement in decision-making does not explain the mechanisms through which representation can influence the planning process.

The post-political condition should be viewed as overarching objectives driven by state and market actors (Davidson and Iveson 2015). According to Davidson and Iveson (2015) post-political consensus is an unstable, emergent process that can be challenged by community groups that form alternative politics in response to the post-political tendencies of state governments under a neoliberal regime. This echoes Swyngedouw (2010) who notes searching for consensus and limiting opportunities for disagreement and contest is bound to fail, as the process undermines trust and destabilises implementation. For case studies analysed by Legacy (2017) and Ruming (2018a), the post-political planning efforts crumble as the alternative politics of residents destabilised consensus claims. However, as examined below, resident efforts can be unsuccessful. Despite community efforts to resist the timing and form of the PNUR redevelopment, the precinct's planning controls were significantly increased by the Minister in November 2015 to allow high density residential development. The overarching legislative planning framework, which declared the site as state significant and guided the consultation process, emerged as vital to securing the planning vision promoted by the State Government. This paper draws on a content analysis of planning documents, mainstream and social media and an in-depth interview with the convenor of the community group to examine the post-political efforts of a state development agency and subsequent community opposition.

3. Urban Renewal and Collaboration with Local Communities

Our focus is on the renewal of brownfield sites – any land that has been previously developed, including post-industrial, derelict or vacant land, that may or may not be contaminated (Dixon 2007). Urban renewal implies a process of modernising declining buildings, streets and neighbourhoods to extend their life. Inherent in the notion of renewal in the Australian context is urban densification and consolidation (Ruming 2018b). Densification of renewal sites fits closely with the notion of the compact city (Randolph 2006), which seeks to reuse previously developed and/or under-utilised land in established urban areas (Davison and Legacy 2014). Thus, urban renewal is mobilised by state governments, and their planning agencies, as a potential panacea for many of the challenges facing cities, including, but not limited to, housing supply and affordability, increased use of public transport and a reduction in private motor vehicles use, and a host of environmental sustainability measures (Ruming 2018b).

Beyond the broader policy ambitions of enacting urban renewal across cities, the renewal of brownfield sites has been established as a central policy position of Australian strategic planning, with large brownfield renewal sites, such as Barangaroo (Harris 2018) in Sydney and South Bank (Shaw 2018) in Melbourne, emerging as central elements of global city ambitions (Baker and Ruming 2015). Large brownfield renewal projects tend to be characterised as neoliberal urban policy as they are typically property-led initiatives that centre on supply-side intervention to promote economic growth (Sager 2011). Healey (1991) suggests property-led urban renewal, often led by quasi-state development agencies, is preoccupied with overcoming public-sector constraints on land supply in local economies, while ignoring other potential constraints that may affect development in that locality. A consistent critique of renewal projects has been the tendency to focus primarily on the physical transformation of a location and its built environment (Harris 2018, Shaw 2018), without addressing the socio-economic and cultural implications of regeneration (Dinçer 2011).

Increasingly, large brownfield urban renewal projects are being redeveloped via state-owned profitmaking land development agencies (Davison and Legacy 2014, Harris 2018). Land development agencies have become involved in the management and delivery of complex strategic planning projects (Gleeson and Coiacetto 2005), in particular, brownfield renewal sites, which are usually more difficult and costly to develop than greenfield sites. These sites require government intervention in order for them to become an economically viable proposition for developers (Davison and Legacy 2014). Land development agencies under conservative Australian state governments have also become land asset managers, including the disposal of surplus land and the management and sale of public buildings (Gleeson and Coiacetto 2005).

Brownfield sites are often located in existing urban areas and proposals frequently encounter resistance from local communities (Dixon 2007, Dinçer 2011). Community groups traditionally organise town hall meetings, plan public protests to coincide with major planning milestones, lobby elected officials through private meetings and phone calls and lodge submissions to formal planning processes (Dear 1992). These actions are typical of the alternative politics of community groups seeking to challenge post-political planning efforts (Ruming 2014, Legacy 2016). Thus, engaging and consulting with local communities in the planning and redevelopment process is a key role for land development agencies. Much of the community groups' efforts to resist post-political planning at PNUR played out on social media, which created a highly accessible digital public record of the themes and strategies mobilised to resist development.

4. Social (And Mainstream) Media and Political Participation

Understanding the use of social media as a tool used to facilitate planning is now a topic of considerable interest in academic literature (Kleinhans *et al.* 2015). The adoption of social media responds to concerns about the use of traditional methods of consulting via questionnaires, public meetings and mainstream media, that are effective for reaching older, politically engaged residents, but have proved to be less effective in engaging younger age cohorts (Ertiö *et al.* 2016). In this era where social media is increasingly important in framing planning by informing people of the planning processes or as a means of communication between key stakeholders (Williamson and Ruming 2017), it is vital that we examine social media's role as a means of destabilising the planning efforts of a state government and powerful development interests. To date, social media has been largely absent from research looking at attempts to resist post-political planning efforts and research looking at the role of social media in planning participation has not investigated the post-political condition. Moreover, research exploring intricate relationships between mainstream and social media in planning participation (Trapenberg Frick 2016), using social media to connect with other community groups (Williamson and Ruming 2016) and distributing emotive narratives through social media are rare. In this section, we draw upon the neoliberal functions of social media and digital activism to introduce the role of social media, within a broader media environment, in resisting post-political planning efforts.

We have witnessed many so-called Twitter revolutions in Iran, Moldova, Tunisia and Egypt where social uprisings were facilitated by technology (Tufekci 2017). These social movements have seized upon the networking capabilities inherent in social media, within a broader media environment (Tufekci 2017). We no longer live in a mainstream media world where newspaper editors are in charge, but a digitally connected world where the public can spread news of events and instantly respond to mainstream newsfeeds (Tufekci 2017). However, Rodan and Mummery (2018) acknowledge there is a fundamental tension between activist aims for social change and the neoliberal assumptions, systems and expectations informing the commercial orientation of most social media platforms towards the profits that can be made by exploiting user's personal data. For Fenton (2016), the Internet has ushered in new forms of political activism, but the Internet does not contain the essence of openness that will lead us directly to democracy. Although social media may feel liberating for the individual user, the hyper commercialised configuration of social media

enhances rather than disrupts global capitalism and encourages individual and connective responses, rather than collective politics (Fenton 2016). The complex interactions between mainstream and social media may heighten residents' concerns about the planning process and the proponents involved (Trapenberg Frick 2016), but not all actors receive equal attention, reach and credibility (Tufekci 2017).

Notwithstanding social media's commercial orientation, social media has become an important component of contemporary representation, the articulation of political identities and various forms of political mobilisation (Fenton 2016). Being political often operates under serve constraints. Rancière (1998) notes that real politics is rare due to the vastly unequal access to resources required to do politics at the intensity that will effect change (Fenton 2016). However, Fenton (2016) argues that being political has stopped being about voting once every few years or signing a petition, it has become about doing and being and social media is increasingly playing a role in how people are being political. To this end, social media affords citizens a platform that can be quickly mobilised; however, such quick and easy access to the public sphere can create problems due to a lack of formal organisation and leadership (Tufekci 2017). The struggle to attract likes, views and other endorsements in the "attention economy" can create de-facto spokespersons of citizens whose role is not necessarily organising a group's alternative politics (Tufekci 2017, p. 79). Attention is oxygen for being political, but there are significant challenges associated with controlling the volume of information and the consistency of the messaging through social media (Tufekci 2017).

In the initial stages of social media adoption and use, the simplistic use of social media drew Morozov (2011) to coin the phrase *slacktivism*, to describe how users are able to play the role of activists by liking a group's Facebook page or liking a tweet, while having no other interaction. More recently Margetts *et al.* (2016) found that social media is now a permanent feature of the political context and allows individuals to make "micro-donations" with very small costs in terms of time, effort and monetary value. Further, social media supports a continuous stream of public information about issues, actions, opinions and the behaviour of others. Margetts *et al.* (2016) contends this easily created information stream is disrupting political participation as the information and actions of others is more visible than in the pre-social media era. For Mouffe (1999, 2013) and Rancière (1998) conflict rather than consensus defines the political character of a democratic ethos. Moreover, it is conflict rather than consensus that characterises both the practice and experience of alternative politics for many who use social media (Fenton 2016).

There is an intricate interrelation between social media based activism and neoliberal governance that suggests many have accepted neoliberal norms which advocate that no matter what an individual's circumstances, he/she is personally responsible for changing them for the better (Rodan and Mummery 2018). For this reason, it is important to analyse social media use for community resistance. We propose to contribute to the literature focusing on the presence and potential influence of social media in planning processes (Kleinhans *et al.* 2015) by presenting a case study that explores mainstream and social media use as an attempt to dispute a post-political planning effort. The following section introduces the case study and its planning context.

5. Redeveloping North Parramatta

The Parramatta North Urban Renewal (PNUR) area consists of 146 ha of NSW Government owned land located in the western suburbs of Sydney (Figure 1). The site consists of four precincts referred to as Cumberland (40 ha), Sport and Leisure (21 ha), Old Kings School (4 ha) and Parramatta Park (81 ha) (Figure 2). The PNUR area is located west and north-west of the Parramatta Central Business District (CBD) and is separated from the Westmead Medical Precinct by the Parramatta River (UrbanGrowth NSW 2014). An established residential area adjoins the east of the site and is comprised of 2–3 storey residential flat buildings and single storey detached dwellings (DP&E 2015). A light industrial precinct is located to the north of the



Figure 1. Location of Parramatta within Sydney (Source: Williamson and Ruming 2016).

site. Parramatta Park and the western rail line are located to the south of the site. Parramatta Park includes the UNESCO World Heritage listed Old Government House (DP&E 2015).

In October 2015, UrbanGrowth, the state development agency in New South Wales (NSW), lodged the proposal with the Department of Planning and Environment (Department). The proposal sought to rezone 50 ha of land in the Cumberland and the Sport and Leisure Precincts. The current land uses in the Cumberland Precinct include Cumberland Hospital and associated health services and the former Parramatta Gaol. Current uses in the Sport and Leisure Precinct include Parramatta Stadium, public swimming pool, club facilities and open parkland (UrbanGrowth NSW 2014).

The Cumberland precinct is home to some of NSW’s and European Australia’s most important heritage locations and assets including Australia’s first farm and water mill, Parramatta Female Factory and the Old King’s School. The proposal provided a series of recommendations on the

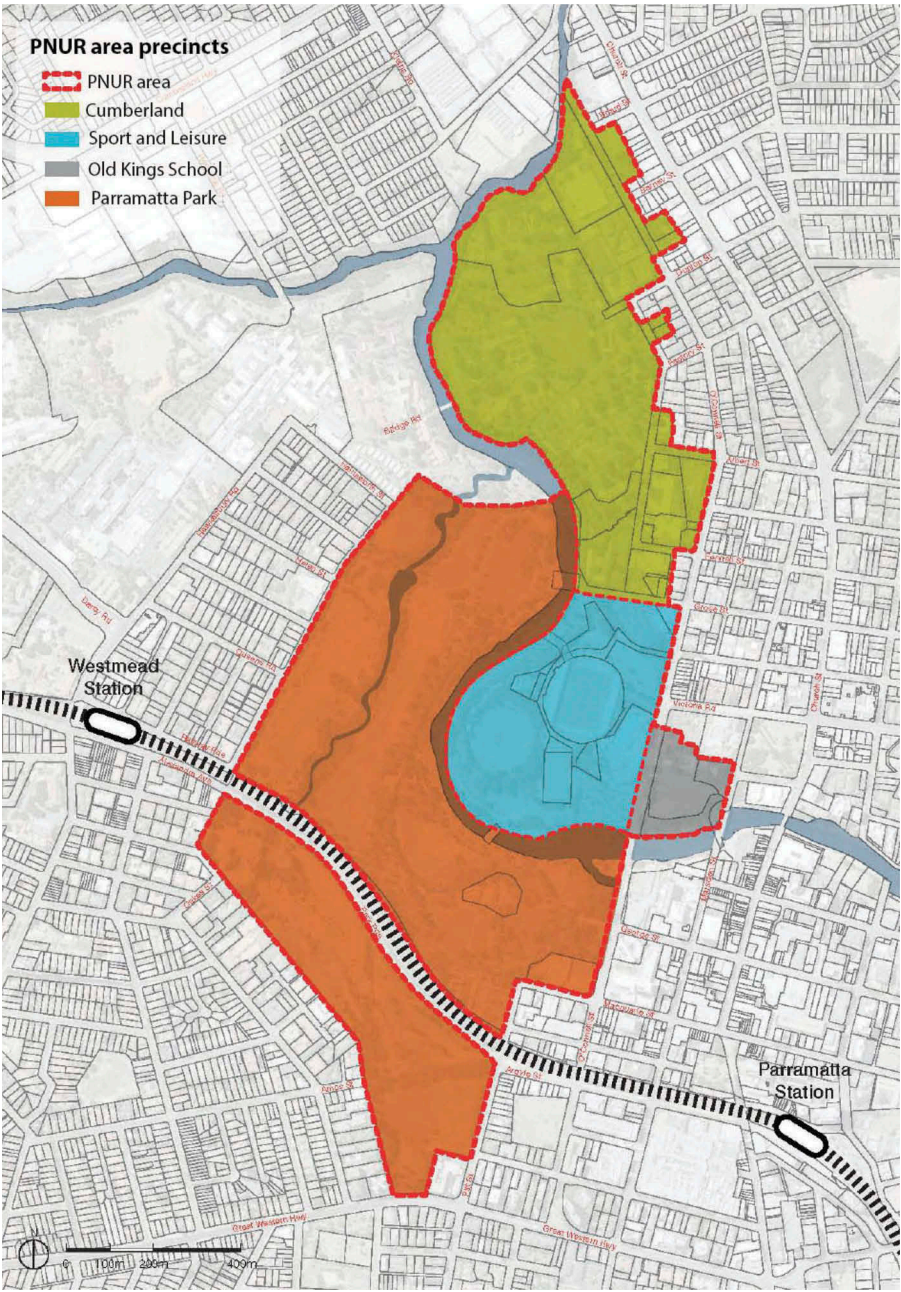


Figure 2. PNUR area precincts (Source: UrbanGrowth NSW 2014).

retention and adaptive re-use of the heritage buildings and the need for archival recording. All buildings identified as having exceptional and high significance would be retained, while buildings with moderate to low significance would be demolished (SJB Planning 2014). A second and arguably more important heritage aspect of the PNUR area is archaeological evidence of Aboriginal settlement dating back more than 30,000 years. The proposal recommended excluding Parramatta Park from the rezoning and undertaking research on Aboriginal associations with the PNUR area (SJB Planning 2014).

The PNUR area proposal suggested the Cumberland precinct be rezoned to provide approximately 4,100 dwellings, 20,000 square metres of adaptively reused heritage building floor space and up to 4,000 square metres of retail floor space. The Sports and Leisure precinct would be rezoned to provide approximately 34,000 square metres mixed use floor space, predominantly for commercial uses. The proposed building heights consisted of medium density buildings of 4–8 storeys and high-density buildings of 12–30 storeys (SJB Planning 2014).

6. Planning Context

In the case of a precinct where the majority of land is government owned, the Minister for Planning (Minister) may declare a state significant site to enable the delivery of planning and infrastructure. This process is deliberately flexible to allow for a site-specific planning regime to be established outside of the established formal mechanisms of consultation, assessment and approval. The state significant status gives the Minister a significant degree of power. It is a means of initiating a planning process that does not need to adhere to standard planning processes.

State significant sites are typically declared because of their social, economic or environmental characteristics (DP&E 2015). This is characteristic of a planning regime that is mobilised in specific locations to align with the economic ambitions of a global city by delivering housing supply and providing employment (Baker and Ruming 2015).

In 2012, the Liberal local member for Parramatta requested the State Government develop a master plan for Parramatta's Heritage Precinct. The rationale for this request was based on the preservation, refurbishment and adaptive reuse of a collection of early colonial buildings, which would open up the precinct for tourism and recreation for the general public. The local member asserted this would be important for State, interstate and international tourism (Hansard 2012). There was no mention of residential development at this point. The State Government agreed and the Minister appointed UrbanGrowth as the project manager in September 2013. To create an approval body for the master plan and subsequent land rezoning, UrbanGrowth requested that the Minister consider declaring the PNUR as a state significant site. This would allow the State Government to override existing local planning instruments and rezone the precinct.

UrbanGrowth¹ is the current development agency in NSW and can be traced back to its initiation in the early 1970s (Gleeson and Coiacetto 2005). The predecessor to UrbanGrowth was Landcom, which was corporatised in 2011 under its own legislation. UrbanGrowth is tasked with delivering large scale urban renewal projects that support the NSW Government's then 20-year growth strategy – *A Plan for Growing Sydney* (DP&E 2014). Current projects are geographically dispersed across the Sydney and Newcastle CBDs, the Bays Precinct, Western Sydney and the NSW Hunter region. UrbanGrowth's modus operandi most closely resembles government led development and holding of undeveloped land in several European cities (Gleeson and Coiacetto 2005).

UrbanGrowth's role in the planning and development of PNUR was twofold. First, UrbanGrowth was to manage the delivery of a strategic planning proposal to rezone the PNUR area on behalf of the various government landowners. Second, UrbanGrowth would then act in a coordinator role to deliver enabling works such as heritage restoration, roads and public domain works (SJB Planning 2014), prior to lots being sold to property developers for commercial and residential development. Prior to the formal public exhibition period, consultants were engaged to undertake a consultation process with the local community. The two rounds of consultation in November 2013 and July 2014 consisted of design charrettes, online surveys, community and industry forums and information stands in public places. The proposal and supporting studies were formally placed on public exhibition in November and December 2014. The Department received 166 public submissions. The public debate around the consultation and exhibition phases is the focus of this paper.

7. Method

This paper is based on qualitative content analysis as a method for systematically describing the meaning of qualitative data (Schreier 2013). Given the qualitative nature of the data, a combined approach of automated data collection and manual coding was adopted (Lewis *et al.* 2013). The key features of the content analysis method are its flexible systematic approach and its ability to reduce qualitative data (Schreier 2013). Content analysis was undertaken by assigning comments to the categories of a coding frame. The coding frame was successively modified and expanded as the data were analysed. Qualitative content analysis shares many features with other qualitative research methods, such as the concern with meaning and interpretation of symbolic material and the importance of context in determining meaning (Schreier 2013). Content analysis was conducted on the following texts:

- Planning proposal prepared for UrbanGrowth NSW (SJB Planning 2014);
- Consultation report prepared for UrbanGrowth NSW (Elton consulting 2014);
- Planning assessment report prepared by the Department of Planning and Environment (DP&E 2015);
- Thirty-five local and metropolitan newspaper articles (Munro 2015, Fitzgerald 2015a, 2015b, Stevens 2015a, 2015b);
- Six television and radio transcripts (Channel 9 News, ABC News, ABC Radio702, Alive 90.5 FM);
- an interview transcript; and
- Social media data in the form of Twitter text by all interested parties and stakeholders throughout the planning process.

In this case study we present the findings in terms of time series graphs, frequency counts and through quotes. A detailed explanation of the Twitter data collection technique is provided below.

8. Community Opposition and the Role of (Social and Mainstream) Media

In January 2015, the North Parramatta Residents Action Group (NPRAG) was established in response to the public exhibition of the PNUR proposal. The purpose of NPRAG was to raise the broader community's awareness of the PNUR proposal and to seek a "pause" from the State Government to enable further consultation with a view to creating a dialogue about alternative visions for the precinct. NPRAG believed that such a genuine dialogue was never afforded to them through the process undertaken by UrbanGrowth in 2014 (nprag.org/about). NPRAG's objective was:

To promote the preservation and activation of Parramatta's publicly owned parklands and public landscapes in order to enhance the historical, cultural, economic and social capital of our city, while showcasing it to the world (nprag.org)

Just a month after being founded NPRAG had established a social media presence on Facebook and Twitter. The NPRAG convenor suggested "social media helps us, I think, broaden support in the community. It helps us connect with other groups that have got the same issue, helps strategize" (NPRAG Interview).

The group created the Twitter handle @NthParraRAG and utilised numerous hashtags including; #losingourpast, #betterplanning4parramatta, #handsoffourheritage, #handsoffourassets, #presspause, #onceitsgoneitsgone and #2ndbest4thewest. NPRAG attracted over 260 followers and posted 752 tweets between February 2015 and February 2016. It should be noted the Minister at the time did not have a Twitter account and while UrbanGrowth had a twitter account they did not engaged with NPRAG via Twitter. Newspaper articles were UrbanGrowth's only public communication channel.

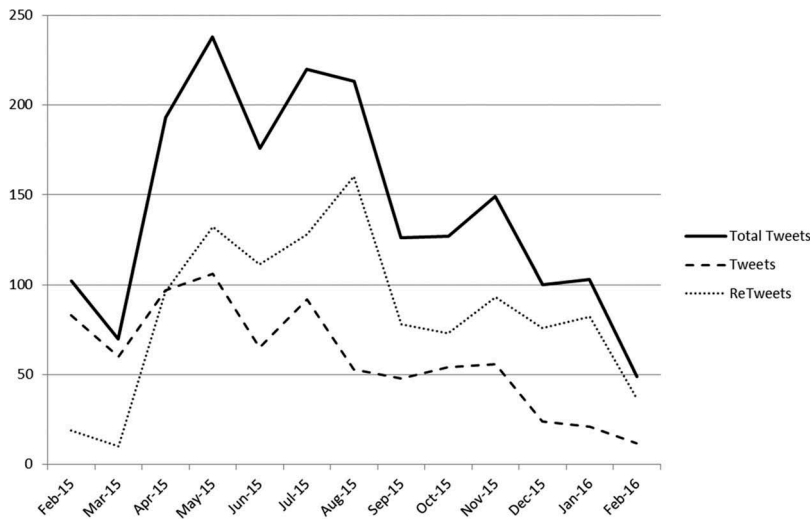


Figure 3. Number of Tweets by month.

Twitter data was collected directly from the Twitter application programming interface (API) using the TAGSv6 application created by Hawksey (2013). The data were collected approximately every 7 days throughout the duration of the planning process. Across this period 1,872 tweets were recorded related to NPUR. NPRAG's monthly use of Twitter is presented in Figure 3. NPRAG averaged 2 tweets per day throughout 2015. This activity increases to 7 tweets per day when retweets and tweets from other parties are included. There are 3 clear spikes in the Twitter data. The peak in May 2015 corresponds with a final report included responses to submissions being made public on the Department's website. The peak in late June 2015 corresponds with a newspaper article suggested the process would continue without further consultation. The third peak in November 2015 was when the Minister approved the rezoning.

The remainder of the paper examines, first, UrbanGrowth's efforts to establish consensus, via emphasising the virtues of collaborative planning, around the proposed redevelopment of the PNUR area, and second, how NPRAG mobilised mainstream media, a symposium and social media to challenge and destabilise these planning efforts.

9. Creating Consensus: Collaborative Planning and Participation

This section analyses a stage-managed planning process with subtly defined parameters of what is open for consultation with the broader community. For state significant sites, the Minister is required to determine the public exhibition requirements on an individual basis (DP&E 2015). In addition to public exhibition, the PNUR assessment report states:

UrbanGrowth NSW also carried out additional consultation including stakeholder design charrettes and forums, agency consultation and community drop in sessions. (DP&E 2015, p. 37)

This statement gives the appearance of engagement and legitimacy to strengthen UrbanGrowth's position, while also minimising the potential for those with conflicting views to be given a meaningful hearing (Allmendinger and Haughton 2015). Moreover, participation was illustrated by reference to additional consultation described as:

The concentrated consultation approach was designed to deliver a fast-paced, saturation-style of communications and engagement activities. The approach was prepared to trigger constructive stakeholder conversations about urban renewal on the unique Parramatta North site, as well as inviting new community voices to be part of the consultation, ahead of rezoning application lodgement with the Department. (Elton consulting 2014, p. 5)

The consultation report then stated the three charrettes were attended by 45, 43 and 39 participants who were invited representatives of government landowners, other government agencies, community and business groups, but not the public. The attendees were described as the prominent voices (Elton consulting 2014, p. 13). Other less formal events that were designed to attract participation from the public recorded 18 participants at the “sit and chat” session. No numbers for “swing by” sessions were documented. Overall, 17 responses were received through online feedback forms handed out at the “sit and chat” and “swing by” sessions (Elton consulting 2014, p. 13). In response, NPRAG noted that “of the two drop-in sessions UrbanGrowth planned, one was postponed and never rescheduled” (NPRAG in Stevens 2015a). UrbanGrowth’s claims around the representative nature of the consultation process were challenged by NPRAG as the formal planning documents only provided a partial story of the consultation process in an effort to maintain its stability.

Furthermore, the claims of UrbanGrowth that they conducted saturation-style engagement activities relies on a small and unrepresentative sample of stakeholders who were invited to contribute to the process, but who might not be representative of wider concerns around the process or likely to challenge the process. This process follows a post-political tendency to control and restrict opportunities for participation to limit conflict (Legacy 2017). Accordingly, the post-political efforts at consensus were challenged by the community group as they perceived consultation was an industry driven agenda with a predetermined outcome:

All we want is timely, genuine consultation that’s not driven by an apparent predetermined industry agenda. (NPRAG in Fitzgerald 2015a)

Baird [NSW Premier] has indicated there was wide consultation and therefore the government had a mandate to move ahead with the development. (NPRAG in Fitzgerald 2015b)

In October 2015, NPRAG met with senior planners from the Department, the then Minister and a representative from UrbanGrowth “to get an idea of what is this process” (NPRAG Interview). NPRAG explained that they directly contacted the Minister’s office to organise this meeting; “I emailed the office of Rob Stokes [Minister] and you put in a meeting request”. The fact that NPRAG was afforded this meeting suggests their alternative politics was gaining some momentum and the State Government was looking to neutralise the situation.

NPRAG claims the Minister explained to them that “consultation was adequate. UrbanGrowth told me so” (NPRAG Interview). NPRAG challenged the planning process, but the State Government maintained the legitimacy of the consultation process. Following Allmendinger and Haughton (2015), this is a post-political response that seeks to overcome alternative politics by emphasising the collaborative engagement methods mobilised throughout the plan-making process. The act of not agreeing to NPRAGs request for expanded consultation is a post-political strategy to limit contestation. Agreeing to NPRAGs request would potentially lead to opposition that would destabilise UrbanGrowth’s claim of representative and comprehensive consultation. However, agreeing to meet with NPRAG, suggests UrbanGrowth also employed a strategy to limit the circulation of (alternative) information about the planning process. This was evident by the fact that NPRAG was given the impression changes would be made to the plans; however, no indication of what the amendments would be were forthcoming. NPRAG voiced their frustration by saying “They keep saying we’ll be happy, but no one is sharing anything” (NPRAG in Stevens 2015a). It is not only that UrbanGrowth resisted the challenges to the consultation process that is of importance, but also that the consultation process was being used to manufacture consensus by giving the impression that UrbanGrowth had listened and would modify the plans. This aligns with the typical post-political tendency to restrict and curtail opportunities for participation to limit conflict and challenge (Legacy 2016).

10. The Local Community Group and the Politics of Resistance

Outside of the formal public exhibition and consultation activities, NPRAG engaged in a plurality of media strategies to challenge and disrupt UrbanGrowth's efforts to mobilise collaboration as a strategy to secure a particular development outcome. As previously noted, using the mainstream media is a common strategy for community groups to challenge planning decisions (Ruming 2018a). However, there is a lack of research that examines the use of social media as part of these strategies. To understand NPRAG's strategies, this section focuses on two distinct themes: "pressing pause" for further consultation; and, the perceived different approaches to planning between central Sydney and western Sydney.

10.1. Pressing Pause

In response to their limited success in engaging with (or altering) the formal planning process, NPRAG mobilised a media campaign that centred on a dominant theme of "pressing pause" for further consultation. While the narrative of community groups is often to stop development (Dear 1992), NPRAG adopted a more nuanced approach of requesting a pause in the process. Any pause in the planning and development process would give NPRAG the opportunity to introduce alternative politics that may ultimately destabilise the entire process. To supplement their approach, NPRAG began to look wider at State Government planning projects. A connection was found with another community group's contestation of an UrbanGrowth project 160 kms north of Sydney in the city of Newcastle:

Thanks to our comrades in Newcastle. United we Stand saving public land to remain in public hands
#handsoffourassets. (Twitter 28/08/2015)

To put this tweet in context, NPRAG were referring to an opinion piece by a member of the Newcastle Inner City Residents Alliance (NICRA) regarding UrbanGrowth's consultation for the Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy:

The language of this briefing also suggested that "consultation" is conceived by UrbanGrowth (as it often is by politicians and bureaucrats) as a one-way flow of information from officials to citizens, with the latter giving feedback on proposals, but having no opportunity to negotiate changes to them. (Foley 2015)

In the case of Newcastle, post-political efforts were linked directly to the need for high-rise developments to overcome existing environmental constraints and a neoliberal undercurrent that supports large-scale private development as a catalyst for urban renewal (Ruming 2018a). By linking to UrbanGrowth's planning and consultation occurring elsewhere, NPRAG sought to destabilise the legitimacy of the planning process. This allowed NPRAG to draw the discensus of other projects into their own claims about the planning process. In fact, the NPRAG tweet takes this association to the extreme by using socialist language such as "comrades" and "united we stand" to refer to the perception they were locked in some type of battle with UrbanGrowth to be heard during consultation processes. For Tufekci (2017), connectivity through social media can create a sense of camaraderie. In this instance, the common traits of the projects and the connection through Twitter seem to have created a sense of unity for NPRAG.

NPRAG also enrolled process issues from another project when they utilised a newspaper article in which the Minister admitted UrbanGrowth's consultation for another project, known as the Parramatta Road Corridor, was inadequate:

Rob Stokes admits @UrbanGrowthNSW consultation process flawed <http://t.co/xtXn6OkE5H> Write to rob today #presspause on PNUR .@emfarrelly. (Twitter 31/05/2015)

At this stage of the process NPRAG utilised Twitter to, firstly, support their call to pause the planning process and expand consultation opportunities, and, secondly, to distribute their message as quickly and widely as possible by tweeting directly to public figures such as Alan Jones, a talkback radio host:

Ask us what WE want don't tell us what YOU want. #Handsoffourassets #handsoffourhistory @AlanJonesMBEASM. (Twitter 18/03/2015)

To illustrate that there was no consensus around the planning vision for NPUR and UrbanGrowth's claims of adequate consultation, NPRAG organised a symposium to generate ideas. This all day event organised an extensive list of speakers including academics, politicians and heritage experts to provide their views on the PNUR area. An afternoon session titled "blank canvas" asked attendees to provide their ideas on what should guide development of the site. Twitter was one of the communication channels used to distribute invitations for the symposium:

Registration opens sept 11 for the visionary consultation that was never provided for this unique precinct #OzHist. (Twitter 8/09/2015)

Community creating their OWN consultation against #urbangrotopia for #fleetstreetheritageprecinct #betterideas. (Twitter 14/09/2015)

This event demonstrated how NPRAG acted as a stimulus for grassroots resistance and represented a direct challenge to the dominant urban renewal process being undertaken by the State government. Legacy (2016) contends that in these informal spaces, community groups are seeking ways to not only drive an alternative political agenda, but are also advocating for ways to reinstate democratic practice into decision-making. However, throughout this process UrbanGrowth remained largely silent, particularly on Twitter, which highlights their authority to regulate how participation may, or may not be used as part of the planning process. UrbanGrowth's ability to diminish protest through their absence in informal spaces was made possible through the planning powers provided to them by state significant site legislation. The procedures for consultation were governed by legislation devised and used by the State Government.

10.2. *The West is Second Best*

The heritage significance of the site was never in dispute; however, the underlying financial rationale that the redevelopment site would generate its own funding for heritage restoration works emerged as a point of contest. This condition provides some insight into why UrbanGrowth's particular planning vision was strictly adhered to throughout the planning process. This is not surprising as UrbanGrowth, as a state development authority, is a product of the dominant neoliberal planning and urban governance model that required the development to generate a profit and fund heritage restoration works (Davison and Legacy 2014). The need to generate funding was made evident by a spokesperson for UrbanGrowth who said:

the heritage precinct redevelopment plan seeks to transform NSW government-owned land into a vibrant area that respects and preserves some of our most important heritage. In fact, as well as providing new housing and jobs, one of the drivers for the project is to create a long term funding program for heritage restoration and management. (Munro 2015)

The interpretation of UrbanGrowth's statement by NPRAG is quite different to what may have been intended:

It's another case of 'second best for the west' being told we have to self fund our heritage restoration and cultural amenities – when Sydney city gets massive government funding for the Art Gallery, White Bay and Macquarie Street without selling Hyde Park or the Domain for residential apartments. (NPRAG in Stevens 2015b)

The "second best for the west" theme was only mentioned in one newspaper article, but was used provocatively on Twitter throughout 2015. Examples of it being used in conjunction with various aspects of the NPRAG campaign included:

Australia's other UNESCO listed sites didn't have residential development on it to fund restoration. Why Parramatta? #secondbestforthewest. (Twitter 11/04/2015)

@UrbanGrowthNSW where's the call for great ideas for the PNUR state significant site #secondbestforthewest ??? (Twitter 2/07/2015)

We thought #robstokes was a visionary not a vessel for property developers #2ndbest4thewest #betterideas #nswpol. (Twitter 26/11/2015)

@mikebairdMP have you forgotten your [sic] minister for western Sydney don't sell our #oz history #2ndbestforthewest #nswpol. (Twitter 27/11/2015)

The NPRAG convenor explained that they used the “second best for the west” hashtag because “you need to use more purple language [on social media]. You need to be more emotive, because people only retweet something that's interesting and emotive” (NPRAG Interview). Conversely, getting attention through a radio interview and subsequent newspaper article seemed to increase the NPRAG social media following “after our ABC Australia Wide interview, which we promoted heavily obviously on Twitter and Facebook. And as soon as we had that really big media article, my following went up on Facebook and Twitter” (NPRAG Interview). This suggests hearing about the community group and its campaign through mainstream media was a catalyst for some to search for less formal communication channels being used by NPRAG. When asked about the groups strategies for mainstream and social media, the convenor explained “I don't believe any of the news articles we've obtained in the Parramatta Advertiser and Sun [local newspapers], have come from social media at all. I think that's because I've been feeding those journalists” (NPRAG Interview).

This case study demonstrates there are intricate relationships between mainstream and social media that are worth exploring. As a way of challenging a post-political planning effort, the “second best for the west” theme moved beyond the perceived inequalities encountered through the site-specific planning process and raised wider claims about consultation in the western suburbs of Sydney. The majority of mainstream media coverage was limited to two local newspapers, but NPRAGs social media strategy employed a hashtag that applied to a large metropolitan area. To this end, Twitter was used to set and maintain a mood of protest that felt bigger than the immediate physical boundaries of the site-specific protest (Tufekci 2017). Additionally, NPRAG puts forward emotive statements regarding the funding for other developments in different geographic locations. In this sense, social media blurs the boundaries between public and private life, as it has the capacity to intertwine personal spheres of representation with public spheres of political interaction (Rodan and Mummery 2018). Such intertwining of public issues and private feelings is a commonly used strategy by community groups (Dear 1992) and has been mobilised by digital activists seeking to personalise participatory politics by invoking emotions that may mobilise broader political action (Rodan and Mummery 2018). Once again, UrbanGrowth's silence on the matters raised in this theme illustrates their capacity to reduce democratic contest by only engaging in narrowly defined consensual procedures that legitimise their process (Wilson and Swyngedouw 2014). Engaging with NPRAG via Twitter (or other means) might have emerged as a legitimisation of their position, potentially destabilising UrbanGrowth's claim around the consultation process and the planning vision that emerged from it.

11. Conclusions

To gain insights into a state-led planning process, this study adopted a post-political lens to examine community resistance to a large scale urban renewal project. While the community group used traditional media channels, they also adopted social media as a significant component of their communication and resistance strategy. The paper contributes to a growing literature seeking to understand the post-political process for urban planning (Allmendinger and Haughton 2015, Davidson and Iveson 2015, Inch 2015, Legacy 2016, 2017, Butt and Taylor 2018, Cook 2018, Rumung 2018a) and introduces social media as a tool to support alternative politics that generates a useful additional data source for researchers, when the data are available.

The initial consultation phase around the NPUR area was repeatedly referred to by state agencies as adequate and was used to resist calls for further community engagement. This concurs with previous

findings that temporary consultation early in the planning process is often used by planning agencies to manage opposition from community groups and is a typical post-political approach to control and reduce discensus (Rogers 2016, Legacy 2017). In the case of PNUR, the State Government sought to secure the planning vision for the site by limiting initial consultation to landowners and expert reports. This process developed a consensus around the form of redevelopment that aligned with the planning and funding objectives of the State Government. Hence, state significant sites legislation emerged as a mechanism to close off alternative politics and secure a large scale urban renewal project as a form of urban development in Sydney. The use of state significant site legislation at NPUR supports MacDonald's (2018) claim that the NSW Government has attempted to diffuse community opposition by rescaling consultation, planning and decision-making to the district and metropolitan level, which is perceived to be less vulnerable to community opposition. However, the rescaling of participation may promote alliances between community groups who seek to articulate dissent at a broader geographic level. This argument is observed through this case study by NPRAGs use of social media to seek alliances with other community groups and also by adopting the emotive "second best for the west" theme that rescaled their resistance from the local to the metropolitan level.

Our analysis of NPRAGs social media use highlights how social media can be used as a means of connection with other opposition groups in an effort to destabilise the legitimacy of the planning process and avoid being accused of site-specific NIMBY activities. This case study also illustrated how NPRAG employed social media as means of promoting their mainstream media coverage, rather than as a tool for attracting mainstream media to their protest. The social media networks of community groups often attract key stakeholders, such as politicians, planning authorities, local governments, journalists, news agencies, local businesses and other community groups, but these stakeholders generally do not participate in the discussions being pushed by the community group (Williamson and Rumung 2016). This case study confirms that while journalist may be observing the community groups activities on social media, using social media does not constitute a direct link to coverage by mainstream media. Furthermore, the community group used social media to promote emotive arguments that transcend the site-specific resistance the local mainstream media may have been looking to cover. The changing nature of how communities are choosing to communicate presents challenges for government agencies, as it is difficult to explain planning processes and procedures using social media (Williamson and Rumung 2017).

The post-political efforts of UrbanGrowth succeeded even though a community group mobilised a significant antagonistic political campaign to destabilised UrbanGrowth's efforts to secure consensus about the need for urban renewal and self-funded heritage restoration. We argue that, in this instance, the planning process mobilised post-political efforts to secure neoliberal urban policy objectives that seek to promote economic growth. Part of this growth agenda is an emerging vision for Parramatta to become Sydney's second central business district (GSC 2018). Over 2 years after the PNUR planning process was completed, the PNUR area has been identified as a central component of a period of "transformational change" that is being "driven by an unprecedented level of government and institutional investment" (GSC 2018, p. 104). Legacy (2017) and Rumung (2018a) present case studies which demonstrate that post-political efforts are far from secure; however, in this instance, the post-political effort successfully resisted alternative politics in an area that has emerged with explicit links to Sydney's global city ambitions.

Note

1. At the time of fieldwork, project planning and development UrbanGrowth NSW was a single agency. However, in mid-2017 the NSW Government reassigned UrbanGrowth NSW's projects into three separate agencies. UrbanGrowth NSW's is now responsible for managing the development of five Growth Centres in metropolitan Sydney. Landcom is focused on unlocking surplus or underutilised government-owned sites or large institutional land holdings in metropolitan Sydney, particularly in greenfield areas. The Hunter Development Corporation is tasked with the Revitalising Newcastle project (Rumung 2018a).

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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Chapter 7: Assessing the effectiveness of online community opposition to precinct planning

This chapter (in-conjunction with Chapter 6) addresses Research Question Three by examining if social media is an effective communication channel for community groups to challenge planning processes. The data for this case study was collected from Facebook between February 2012 and August 2013, before restrictions were placed on Facebook's data access. This chapter was a pilot project to see what can be done by testing sentiment analysis, a common approach used in other disciplines to analyse social media data. There are numerous sentiment analysis tools available to analyse social media data, which are based on linguistic and textual assessments of word use and word combinations and categorising strings of text as positive, negative or neutral. The sentiment tool used for this case study also categorised the Facebook data into share, engage and analysis. It is noted that this chapter was published before Chapters 5 and 6 and does not include more recent literature discussing the role of social media in politics and digital civic activism, which are included in the earlier chapters.

This case study examined a large planned precinct in North Ryde and a relatively small community group's efforts to oppose the planning process. The group's activity on Facebook was very similar to traditional community group actions such as information distribution and motivating others to get involved. As was evident in Chapters 5 and 6, social media was used as a supplementary communications channel to motivate collective action by a small number of dominate group members posting the majority of the activity on the group's Facebook page. The community group also seized upon an opportunity to broaden the scope of their campaign with the local government election falling within the timeline of the planned precinct. As such, the community group garnered position statements on the precinct plan from 11 Ryde City Council election candidates and posting them on the group's Facebook page.

This chapter concludes that social media may be good for initiating group activities and distributing information, but in this instance, there was little evidence of debate, even though the opportunity for multi-directional open dialogue is available through Facebook. There was also a lack of interaction with any other stakeholders, such as state government agencies involved in the project.

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Assessing the effectiveness of online community opposition to precinct planning

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Since its inception the Internet has generated debate over its likely role in reinvigorating democracy. The more recent appearance of social media and its ubiquitous use via smart phones has added fuel to the debate. Within planning literature, discussion has centred on the value of social media as a tool for community participation. This paper explores the use of social media by a community group in their opposition to a large urban regeneration project – the North Ryde Station Urban Activation Precinct – in Sydney’s north-western suburbs. Utilising the research technique of sentiment analysis, a picture of the community group’s activities can be captured, including the community’s self-organisation, information distribution, recruitment, analysis of issues and sentiment at different times during master planning process. In this instance, the community group is led by a small number of people, while the majority has a low-participation rate. The community group takes a generally positive approach to distributing information and motivating local residents to get involved in the opposition of the master plan.

Keywords: community engagement and participation; social media; Sydney

Introduction

A significant amount of academic and policy debate has been generated over the past decade on the extent to which the Internet might work to reinvigorating democracy (Bakardjieva 2009; Polat 2005). On one hand the Internet has been identified as a useful tool for informing political choices through free access to a marketplace of ideas (Bakardjieva 2009), while on the other, is it argued that Internet use will mainly apply to those who are already politically engaged offline (Ostman 2012). In the field of urban planning, much of the discussion around the Internet has centred on its potential capacity to facilitate community participation and consultation (Evans-Cowley and Hollander 2010). More recently, focus has shifted to the role of social media as a way of engaging citizens in the planning process, with a focus on online forums and Facebook (Afzalan and Muller 2014).

The use of social media can be broken into two separate groups of *government-initiated* and *citizen-initiated social networks* (Evans-Cowley 2010; Evans-Cowley and Hollander 2010). Citizen-initiated social networks focusing on planning issues form the majority

of social networks found by Evans-Cowley (2010) and typically were organised to oppose a proposed development or draft plan. In order to determine if Internet-based participation is effective, Evans-Cowley and Hollander (2010) argue that more evidence needs to be produced on who is using these social networking tools, which tools are working and who is being included or not included in the planning processes.

Internet and social media use by New South Wales (NSW) councils have been tracked over the past four years by Williamson and Parolin (2012, 2013). These studies have found the uptake of social media has increased rapidly since 2009. Studies by Evans-Cowley (2010), Evans-Cowley and Hollander (2010) and Brabham (2009) demonstrate that there is potential for social media to supply a platform for public participation in planning processes and even if planners do not take up the technology to engage their community, the community is looking to take it up to engage the planners.

This paper explores the use of social media by a community group in their opposition to a large urban regeneration project – the North Ryde Station Urban Activation Precinct (UAP) – in Sydney’s north-

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western suburbs. Utilising the research technique of sentiment analysis, a picture of the community group's activities can be captured. Drawing data from the groups' Facebook page, this analysis unpacks the motivations for opposing strategic planning and the information circulated through the network to recruit and maintain community involvement. Reflecting a broader literature on community activism (Ruming *et al.* 2012; Schively 2007), the network was led by a small number of highly engaged individuals whose purpose was to distribute information and motivate other local residents to get involved. This paper concludes that social media have come to represent an increasingly important tool mobilised by citizens seeking to engage with community issues in the public sphere – not least of which is urban planning. Nevertheless, despite the growing use of social media, this case study identifies these technologies as supplementary communication channels often mobilised to support more traditional mechanisms of community opposition and formal engagement in the planning process.

Social media use in planning practice

Understanding the use of social media as a tool used to facilitate planning is now a topic of considerable interest in both academic and policy literature. Recent research suggests that there is growing expectation from the communities that online tools and social media platforms are provided as part of the suite participation options mobilised by planning authorities (Bittle *et al.* 2009; Evans-Cowley and Hollander 2010). Fredericks and Foth (2013), in their study of local government use of social media and Web 2.0 technologies in public participation, argue that a well-managed and funded engagement strategy using social media and smartphone applications can help to avoid political backlash and actively involve communities in the planning process by providing a complimentary avenue for participation.

Grennan (2011) reports that NSW councils are embracing social media, particularly for citizens under the age of 40 years – who are the most frequent users of social media technology (Sensis 2013, 10). The adoption of social media comes in response to concerns about the use of traditional methods of consulting via questionnaires and public meetings which are effective for reaching older, politically engaged residents, but have proved to be less effective in engaging younger age cohorts. Furthermore, Schubert (2012) describes social media as the new door-knock, as politicians seek to get into their communities Facebook feed, Twitter stream or email inbox, especially for time poor people or community members that do not engage with the

mainstream media of television and newspapers. Furthermore, Armitage (2012) argues that smartphones may become the primary point of contact between government and citizens, meaning public servants will need to learn a new set of skills as collaborators and community curators. Evans-Cowley (2012) also suggests that smartphone usage has the potential to improve productivity, share information and engage with the public. However, Twitchen and Adams (2012) argue that those in communities that are already politically active will be most likely to meaningfully engage in any online scenarios.

While there is potential for governments to use social media for community engagement, Evans-Cowley and Hollander (2010) note that it is unclear exactly how social media might positively improve traditional communication/participation processes. For example, Afzalan and Muller (2014) found that social media did not create a collaborative communication process in isolation, but integrated well with other communication methods. Moreover, Kavanaugh *et al.* (2007) in their longitudinal survey data of voluntary online community group activity found that an individual's use of the Internet within community groups increases over time and so does their level and types of involvement in the group. Furthermore, people active in multiple local groups frequently act as opinion leaders and create weak social ties across groups.

The North Ryde Station UAP

Planning in Sydney has pursued an urban consolidation paradigm for the past 30 years (Ruming *et al.* 2012), with a strong emphasis over the past decade (DPI 2013c). UAPs are the NSW Government's most recent urban consolidation programme, which was initiated in 2012 to increase the supply of housing and employment, while attempting to improve housing choice and affordability. The objective of the UAP programme is to increase housing density in both greenfield and infill development sites with access to infrastructure, particularly transport, and provide certainty about built form to both the community and other stakeholders (DPI 2012). The UAP programme is intended to undertake broader strategic planning at the precinct level and work closely with relevant councils to identify and plan individual precincts (DPI 2012).

The UAP programme places a strong emphasis on community and local government engagement. First, councils and NSW Government agencies are consulted and a working group is set up to formulate the requirements for planning studies and set the overall objectives for the precinct. Second, the proposed

planning controls are drafted and a community reference group is formed to provide informal feedback. Third, all information are placed on formal public exhibition, including community information sessions displaying detail maps, indicative urban design and planning staff available to answer questions. Finally, formal written submissions are considered and where relevant modifications are made to the master plan. The UAP programme is also linked to the NSW Government's growth infrastructure plan and precinct support scheme, which seek to provide coordination and financial support for infrastructure needs as a result of rezoning (DPI 2012). While community consultation is considered to be an essential element of the UAP process, the formation of a community group opposing the North Ryde Station UAP suggests the local community deemed the process inappropriate. Importantly, echoing the work of McClymont and O'Hare (2008), it became apparent that social media were mobilised by opponents, as part of a broader engagement strategy, as a means to provide information to their community, who, despite a formal consultation process, might otherwise not have had any discernible input into the process.

The North Ryde Station UAP is a 14-hectare site divided by the M2 Motorway, Epping Road and Delhi Road (Figure 1). The North Ryde



Figure 1. North Ryde Station precinct.
Source: DPI (2013a).

underground railway station entrance is located adjacent to Delhi Road. To the north-west and south-east of the site is the commercial and retail centre of Macquarie Park. To the north is Macquarie Park Cemetery and Lane Cove National Park. To the south and south-west is the residential suburb of North Ryde. The majority of land is government owned, while one site is privately owned (DPI 2013a). The North Ryde UAP is located within the global economic corridor (Figure 2). The corridor has been identified to strategically protect and generate clusters of professional and service industry employment (DPI 2013c). The North Ryde railway station is one of a number of transport modes servicing Macquarie Park – a cluster of communications, medical research, pharmaceutical and information technology businesses (RCC 2014).

The master plan will inform planning controls for the site that will result in the construction of buildings between 4 and 33 storeys (maximum 108 m). When completed, the precinct will provide approximately 2500 residential dwellings, 85,000 m² of commercial floor space, 6000 m² of retail floor space and 24,800 m² of open space. The master plan was placed on public

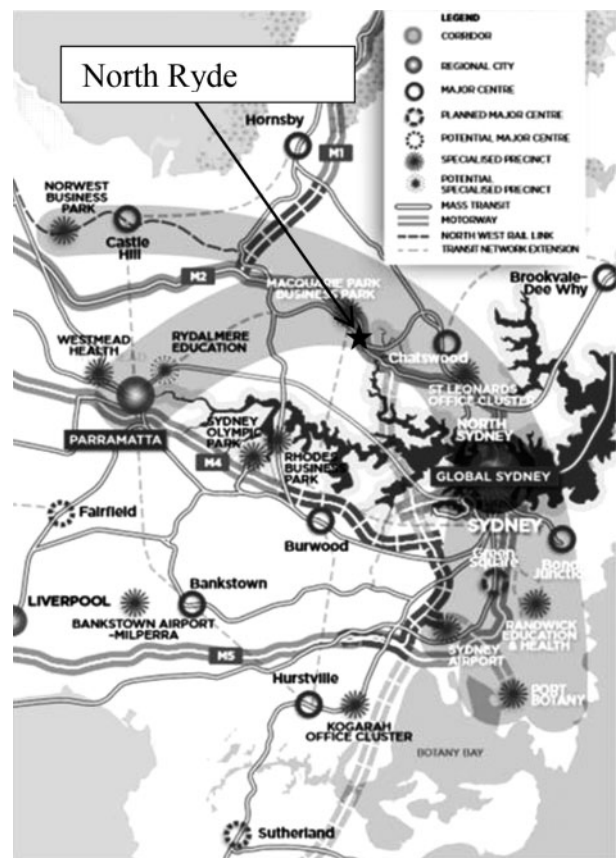


Figure 2. Sydney and the global economic corridor.
Source: DPI (2013c).

exhibition from 16 March to 19 May 2013 and generated 279 written submissions from the public, with 67% by North Ryde residents. Formal submissions are accepted via post, website submission page or email attachment. Forty-six percent of submissions were a form letter written and made available by the *Friends of North Ryde* community group. The form letter provided a list of issues, which resulted in 10 issues dominating the post-exhibition analysis: increased traffic, building height, built form, loss of recreation facilities, lack of open space, poor community consultation, negative environmental impacts, lack of independent assessment and limited access to train station (DPI 2013b).

The DPI post-exhibition response dealt with traffic, access to the train station and open space issues by referencing the transport-orientated nature of the master plan and open space being planned for the site. Community consultation and environmental impacts were considered adequate, while independent assessment was satisfied by the master plan's consistency with the draft Metropolitan Strategy for Sydney (DPI 2013b) and objective to maximise the use of NSW Government investment in railway infrastructure. Additionally, the visual impacts created by building heights and loss of recreation space prompted the reduction of certain building heights from 108 to 92 m and the removal of existing recreational facilities from the master plan. The absence of a long-term strategic plan for the lands south of Epping Road was cited as the main reason for the substantial post-exhibition change (DPI 2013b). The master plan's amended planning controls were made into law in August 2013.

The current demographic profile of North Ryde is dominated by residents aged 20–44 years (54%), while only 9% of residents are over 65 years. Seventy-four percent of housing is either fully owned or being purchased, which suggests North Ryde is a suburb where people settle, invest economically and become part of a stable community (Urbis 2012). Galster *et al.* (2003) advise that community opposition tends to be strongest in socially homogenous middle and upper income neighbourhoods, especially areas containing single-family homes with children. Furthermore, Pendall (1999) found proposed development adjacent to single-family housing was 28% more likely to experience community opposition, than those adjacent to other land uses. Essentially, the literature and demographic profile of North Ryde suggest the community was likely to oppose the master plan and the age range was likely to mobilise social media.

The *Friends of North Ryde* community group was formed as a response to perceived inadequate planning processes and outcomes. As part of this response, social media in the form of a *North Ryde Precinct*

Residents Discussion Page on Facebook were adopted as a supplementary means of communicating.

Method

Using the Netvizz data extraction application developed by Rieder (2013), we analyse data collected from the *North Ryde Precinct Residents Discussion Page* on Facebook between February 2012 and August 2013. Netvizz allows data to be exported in a standard file format from a number of sections of Facebook, such as personal networks, group pages and page likes. Netvizz is accessed by typing the software application name into the main search box in Facebook. The researcher must be an active member of Facebook and logged in to access Netvizz (found by typing the software application name into the main search box in Facebook). The data extracted by Netvizz consist of anonymous nodes (people), edges (communication links) and comment text, which represent the Facebook users' interactions with the Facebook group page. Once collected, these data were analysed using a sentiment analysis technique.

Sentiment analysis is a form of data mining performed on social media data using a range of techniques to determine the sentiment expressed on particular topics. Sentiment analysis uses linguistic and textual assessment to analyse word use and word combinations, to categorise a string of text as positive, negative or neutral (Kennedy 2012). Automated sentiment analysis was conducted using the Semantria software (<http://semantria.com/>). This software is a Microsoft Excel add-on, which is specifically designed to analysis multiple rows of text, such as comments and status updates on a Facebook page. Semantria returns a positive, negative or neutral result for each row of text analysed. Difficulties with cleanliness of data can affect sentiment analysis accuracy (Kennedy 2012). Accuracy can also vary on highly topic dependant data and cannot identify complex linguistic formulations, such as sarcasm or irony (Thelwall 2014). To mitigate these potential accuracy issues, the automated results have been manually verified.

To gain a more in-depth understand of the structure of the information contained on the Facebook group page the comments and status updates were manually coded into three groups, being *share* for comments sharing information, *engage* for comments trying to engaging with others and *analyse* for comments that try to analyse an aspect of the group's special interest. This approach has previously been adopted by Evans-Cowley and Griffin (2011).

Mapping community opposition via social media: the case of the North Ryde Precinct Residents Discussion Page on Facebook

This section provides a detailed analysis of the data extracted from the Facebook group page. In particular we explore the Facebook data by unpacking it into share, engage and analysis communication types and investigate the sentiment analysis of each grouping. Then we map the entire data-set in a time-series graph and identified two periods of high usage for further investigation.

Sentiment analysis

The sentiment analysis results presented in Table 1 indicate 41% of online comments posted by the community group are sharing interactions of a neutral or positive nature, while 10% were of an engaging or analysis interaction. Other interactions such as Facebook 'Likes' accounted for 48% of the activity on the Facebook page. Essentially, Table 1 highlights the main functions of the group, which was first, a means of communicating information to local residents, and second, to a lesser extent, sharing negative sentiment regarding the master plan.

Share interactions

The positive and neutral *sharing* interactions ranged from calls for volunteers to attend photograph opportunities with newspaper journalists through to sharing links to master plan-related information released by the NSW Government. Furthermore, the shared information also provided details of

community hall meetings organised by the community itself, Ryde City Council and the NSW Government. There is also evidence of group members sharing ideas on how to oppose the proposed development and sharing pre-written objection letters to submit to the NSW Government, both prior to and during the formal public exhibition period.

The negative sharing interactions consisted of an announcement that a state politician was eager to meet face-to-face with community members to talk about their concerns, lengthy monologues regarding the ongoing residential densification of Sydney, and surveyor markings that appeared on local roads. A negative interaction was also posted from another community group in the same suburb that had been campaigning against another development proposal. In fact, four instances of other community groups from nearby suburbs were observed actively sharing information about their campaigns and trying to enlist the support of *Friends of North Ryde*. This demonstrates an affordance provided by social media to allow community members to find and contact others in a similar situation and concurs with Ruming *et al.* (2012) that community group boundaries are fluid and rely on connections to other groups.

Engage interactions

The smaller number of positive and neutral *engaging* interactions included questions regarding the clarification of public exhibited materials, specifically overshadowing and visual impact diagrams. There was one instance of a community member directly asking why this local community is so afraid of development. No response was provided by the community group.

Conroy *et al.* (2012) found that online group membership on social media sites such as Facebook can increase levels of political participation; however, a similar effect on levels of political knowledge is not assured. Conroy *et al.* (2012) analysis of user generated content suggests that the quality of information is generally lacking, was incoherent, or overly opinionated. Effectively, group members are not exposed to new or well-articulated information about issues, but given information in a mode of reinforcement. Furthermore, Kushin and Kitchener (2009) found that Facebook has the ability to allow citizens of different persuasions to engage in political debates, and while discussion was found to be mostly civil, Kushin and Kitchener (2009) noted that 73% of group members agreed with the stated views of the group. In this case study, the sentiment analysis results of the *engage* interactions were coded as positive/neutral, as the interactions take a generally

Table 1. Sentiment analysis by category.

| Sentiment group | Comment/post count | Percent |
|-----------------|--------------------|---------|
| <i>Share</i> | | |
| Negative | 7 | 6.8 |
| Positive | 38 | 36.8 |
| Neutral | 58 | 56.4 |
| | <i>N</i> = 103 | 41.4 |
| <i>Engage</i> | | |
| Negative | 0 | 0 |
| Positive | 7 | 53.8 |
| Neutral | 6 | 46.2 |
| | <i>N</i> = 13 | 5.2 |
| <i>Analyse</i> | | |
| Negative | 1 | 8.4 |
| Positive | 4 | 33.3 |
| Neutral | 7 | 58.3 |
| | <i>N</i> = 12 | 4.8 |
| <i>Likes</i> | 121 | 48.6 |

helpful tone, to assure others that the community group is playing a helpful role. Essentially, the low number of engaging activities suggests this group has a common interest and understanding, with little scrutiny of the group's opinions.

Analysing interactions

The mostly neutral or positive interactions coded as *analyse* were questions regarding the details of the master plan. The main topics involved the master plan's lack of analysis on enrolments in local schools; the use of infrastructures levies; use of open space; the land use planning process; the speed to which the master plan has moved from concept to public exhibited; the residential density of the development and the impacts of overshadowing on surrounding land uses. The negative comment coded as *analyse* was an aggressive post discussing the potential loss of a recreational facility, which was one of the most contentious issues for the community group.

Overall, the interactions of the Facebook page consisted of people supporting other people's comments by using the 'Like' button and sharing information about offline activities that the community group was organising. Our analysis found some evidence of mutual discussions regarding the community's main concerns of the master plan; however, this only made up 10% of the Facebook pages activity. In essence, the Facebook page served more like a notice board, rather than a platform for discussion and debate.

Time-series analysis

The *North Ryde Precinct Residents Discussion Page* on Facebook was intermittently used throughout the master planning process (Figure 3). Thelwall (2014) advises that it is appropriate to observe social media data in segments when looking at a long running topic. Social media time-series graphs are likely to be spiky due to natural variations in the data, rather than due to external events, hence the largest spikes should be investigated as they may represent specific points of interest. The following sentiment analysis focuses in on the two highest peaks in usage and seeks to understand what was happening in the planning process at the time and why it resulted in the highest spikes in social media use.

The largest spike in posts on the community groups Facebook page occurred between August and September 2012 and was the result of the community group obtaining position statements on the master plan from 11 Ryde City Council election candidates and posting them on the group's Facebook page. Not

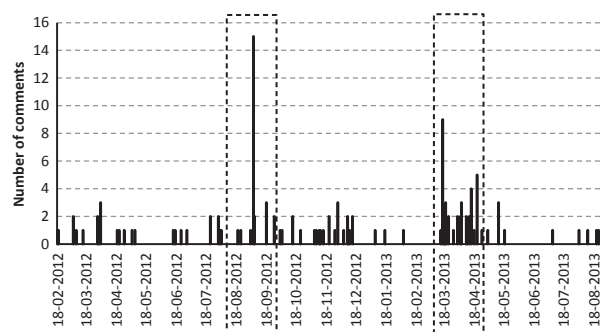


Figure 3. Facebook group page activity February 2012 to August 2013.

Source: Author.

all candidates responded to the group's request, however, the majority of candidates running in the wards close to the master plan site did. The local elections were held late in September 2012. Sentiment analysis ranked six position statements as using neutral language, while two were positive and three were negative. The tone of language used by the election candidates was careful throughout and while all opposed the master plan to some degree, most tried not to use negative language in explaining their position. The main topics raised by election candidates were loss of open space, traffic, transport, infrastructure and environmental impacts, without discussing any impacts in detail. Two position statements stated they do not oppose development in appropriate areas with good access to services, as it prevents development encroaching on low-density areas, however, they also stated they do not consider the North Ryde Station precinct to be an appropriate site for development. Although the local election had no direct connection with the master plan, it was used by the community group to enlist support of potential elected officials. This episode within the community group's campaign demonstrates an affordance of social media to act in a fast and opportunistic fashion and also reflects a common goal of community groups to engage politicians in their campaign (Dear 1992; McClymont and O'Hare 2008).

The period of sustained activity on the community group's Facebook page between March and April 2013 corresponds with the formal public exhibition period of the master plan. The activity in this period was characterised by sharing information and to a lesser extent analysing exhibition materials. The community group repeatedly posted information throughout this period trying to enlist volunteers to do pamphlet letterbox drops advising residents that the exhibition was on and how to make a written submission. This suggests the community group needed to move beyond the interested visitors to the

Facebook page and reach out to the community through more traditional communication modes. There was also detailed information distributed regarding information sessions held by NSW Government. The community group also attempted to get the exhibition extended from 6 to 12 weeks, by sending emails to the DPI. The wording of these emails was provided on the Facebook page, which highlights another potential advantage of social media, being its ability to support the rapid development and circulation of a central narrative during the planning process and therefore increase the speed and penetration of such efforts.

Overall, the volume of activity on the Facebook page was consistently low throughout the life of the community group, with peaks in activity appearing immediately before a local government election and during the formal public exhibition period. The state government announced it would remove the disputed recreation facilities from the master plan on 30 August 2013. The final message posted on the Facebook page shared the announcement and there have not been any page posts since. Kavanaugh *et al.* (2007) argue the survival and strength of community groups depend on the willingness of individuals to volunteer their time to support the group's activities and that group convenor(s) can use the Internet to lighten the communications workload. However, once the convenor feels the group's goals have been achieved or defeated and stops participating, communications within the group can cease abruptly. Essentially, social media can provide a platform to quickly launch a community group's campaign and distribute information to a wide audience, but it also seems to cease functioning just as quickly.

Community participation

In this case study the community group was dominated by four members, who made a significant contribution to the interactions on the groups Facebook page, while the majority of members had very little interaction. Dear (1992) explains that initial community group opposition can be a small highly localised number of individuals in the immediate neighbourhood, before seeking to mobilise a much larger group. McClymont and O'Hare (2008) found that a small core group of individuals tend to use their skills and experience to research issues and coordinate the group's contributions to the planning process. This case study demonstrates a similar situation; however, the core group of individuals seem to have made a considerable contribution throughout the entire campaign.

Specifically, the Facebook page contained a total of 128 comments. Although 67 people interacted with the Facebook page, all the comments were posted by 29 people. To illustrate the activities of the core group, the Facebook page convenor posted 68 comments, 3 people posted between 5 and 7 comments and 25 people posted 1 or 2 comments. The remaining 38 people only clicked the 'Like' button on posts or the group page itself. This scenario is characteristic of Morozov's (2011) notion of *slacktivism*, where users are able to feel like activists by liking a group's Facebook page or comments, while having no other interaction. Hence, the number of 'Likes' on a Facebook page should not be seen as indicative of people's commitment to the community group's campaign.

While the community group contained some evidence of considering potential impacts of the master plan, in reality it was a small group of members reinforcing their views of the potential impacts in a generally neutral or positive tone. It should be noted that the Facebook page only mentions approximately 50% of the issues raised in written submissions, and second, the people who interacted with the Facebook page only accounts for 24% of the 279 people who made written submissions. This suggests most residents did not interact with the Facebook page and the offline activities such as town hall meetings and pamphlet letterbox drops may have made a more significant contribution to the community group's campaign. In this instance, it could be argued that social media are a supplementary communication channel, which has been mobilised by this community group to support traditional mechanisms of community opposition.

Conclusions

In summary, this paper has employed a contemporary approach to collecting and analysing publically accessible data to provide a snapshot of a community group that formed to oppose a transport-orientated master plan. In this instance, the community group was led by a small number of people, while others had a much lower online participation rate. This suggests the Facebook page played a minor role in the community group's activities and was one of several communication channels used. Furthermore, the interactions of the group were a monologue communications style, with little evidence of debate, even though the opportunity for mutual discourse is available. This may be due to the lack of interaction with any other stakeholders, including elected officials from local and state government, with the exception of the position statement posts collected from the local election candidates. Additionally,

unlike other social media sites, Facebook is not anonymous; therefore, local residents may not be prepared to engage in public debate when there is potential for them to be identified. Although the master plan was amended post exhibition in line with community submissions, in this instance, it could be concluded that social media only made a moderate improvement to communications for this community group during the planning process.

While information distribution using social media seems to be a supplementary channel to other forms of communication, such as face-to-face meetings, community events and volunteering activities, it may prove to be a good way to initiate community group activities and regularly distribute information to the most dedicated members. Community groups should also be careful not to separate those who do not have or do not want access social media. The emergence of social media is the latest progression for the Internet to provide citizens with the opportunity to debate community issues in the public sphere. However, this case study found the reinforcement of opinions by a core group, rather than a marketplace of ideas and interactions.

Acknowledgement

The views expressed in this article are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the New South Wales Department of Planning and Environment.

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Part II: Social media adoption and use by government

Given that local and state government played a mostly passive listening role in the case studies in Part I, the aim of Part II is to examine social media adoption and use by local and state government. This section is organised into three chapters. Chapter 8 utilises sentiment analysis techniques to examine the adoption and use of social media by local governments, while Chapters 9 and 10 present detailed case studies of instances where the Department of Planning has initiated social media use in conjunction with a planning process. Although both local and state government have a role in urban planning, local government is focused on the implementation of local planning strategies and development for a specific area, while the state government is focused on the maintenance of the overall planning systems and state significant infrastructure and development. Therefore, to gain an understanding of their social media use, Part II has collected data from local government websites and specific planning events and campaigns to answer the research questions for the second part of this thesis.

Part II answers the following Research Questions:

Four: What is the level of Twitter adoption, activity and influence by local governments in Australian capital cities? (Chapter 8)

Five: How do government planning authorities use social media to engage stakeholders and the public in planning processes? (Chapters 9 and 10)

The case studies in this section have different geographic scales and utilise different engagement techniques to the case studies examined in Part I. Firstly, local government is responsible for a range of community services, including urban planning and have a group of elected officials that communicate independently of their local government. Secondly, the Department undertakes community and industry engagement to develop strategic principles and visions for state and regional planning matters that may inform future reforms to the entire planning framework. Effectively, these types of engagement are planned for a specific time period and usually have a specific outcome in mind, while the case studies in Part I are largely the result of a local community's reaction to a planning proposal.

In line with Part I, these case studies employ sentiment or content methods to analyse the underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations in the text collected from

Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. Chapters 9 and 10 also use time-series analysis to identify key check points in longitudinal social media data sets.

The main findings for Part II of the thesis are:

Whilst Part I found local and state government played a mostly passive listening role in planning processes on social media, there is a high level of social media adoption by these organisations. These findings concur with Evans-Cowley and Conroy (2006; 2009), Norris and Reddick (2013) and Mossberger et al. (2013) whose studies also observed local government adoption of social media, with Facebook being the most common platform. This also supports Bonsón et al.'s (2012) conclusion that local governments are taking steps to adopt social media. Furthermore, Chapter 8 identified a significant correlation between local government mayor use of Twitter and the corresponding use by their local government organization. This finding confirms Mossberger et al.'s (2013) observations that the primary social media activity was taking place in either the parks department or the mayor's office and concurs with Mergel's (2013) observations that local government reacts to observations of stakeholders changing preferences for using social media, the mayor's use of social media seems to be a significant driver of adoption.

For the two state government initiated case studies, social media activity was dominated by a small number of people voicing their concerns and opinions. At the same time, the Department did not engage with any topics or questions raised through social media platforms, even though it was initiated by the Department. Moreover, social media based engagement generally emulates traditional consultation and does not utilise mutual discourse characteristics of social media. These findings are at the centre of this thesis and mirror the concerns of Schweitzer (2014) and Trapenberg Frick (2016) who note if government agencies want to use social media, it must be prepared to engage with individuals to discuss their concerns. It is not enough to have a social media presence that just broadcasts announcements (Schweitzer 2014). Mutual dialogue between communities and government agencies would enable social media to become a more meaningful component of public consultation. These case studies also reflect the findings of Part I of this thesis that government agencies and politicians, at least in the Sydney

context, are tapping into online community networks, although their presence in these networks is a passive listening role, rather than an active communications role.

Chapter 8: Social media adoption and use by Australian capital city local governments

This chapter addresses Research Question Four by examining the level of social media adoption, activity and influence by local governments in Australian capital cities. Hence, this chapter is an analysis of data collected by a desktop review of social media availability on local government web sites. This is an extension of previous work by Evans-Cowley and Conroy (2006; 2009) and Williamson and Parolin (2012; 2013) that periodically collected and analysed social media adoption. For this reason, this chapter focuses on local government as a larger data set that more meaningful statistics could be generated from. To gain a better understanding of state government social media use, Chapters 9 and 10 look at specific examples of social media use initiated by the Department.

This chapter is structured differently to all other published papers in this thesis due to a pre-set structure required by the book publisher. Hence, this paper explicitly lists a set of research questions and the results section explicitly discusses the findings in relation to the research questions. This is not a common format for urban planning related journals.

This chapter found that there is a high social media adoption rate for local governments and a clear correlation between local government area population size and social media use, which will also be explored in Chapter 10. Local governments are using social media to engage with a wide variety of topics that cut across several sections of their local communities, with examples of inner city councils using social media to promote events that reach beyond their local government area. This was demonstrated by high *Impact* and *Klout* scores for inner city councils. Moreover, this chapter identified a significant correlation between local government Mayor use of Twitter and the corresponding use by their local government.

This chapter was co-authored with Kristian Ruming and has been published as Chapter 7 in the edited book - *Social Media and Local Governments: Theory and Practice* in February 2016. Candidate's contribution to methodological design - 100%; data collection - 100%; data analysis - 95%; writing - 90%; overall - 96%).

Pages 147-166 of this thesis have been removed as they contain published material. Please refer to the following citation for details of the article contained in these pages.

Williamson, W., & Ruming, K. (2016). Social media adoption and use by Australian capital city local governments. In M. Z. Sobaci (Ed.), *Social Media and Local Governments: Theory and Practice* (pp. 113-132). (Public Administration and Information Technology; Vol. 15). Springer, Springer Nature. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-17722-9_7

Chapter 9: Live tweeting the planning reform workshop

This chapter addresses Research Question Five by observing and analysing live tweeting during a planning reform workshop. This case study has several unique characteristics as it mobilises a Twitter data set generated over a four hour period in response to a Department initiated hashtag at a Department hosted planning reform workshop. Moreover, the Twitter data was mostly generated by a group of people sitting in a large room together and can be described as a form of real-time engagement. The temporal component of this case study is a defining characteristic as the 4 hour workshop followed tight timeframes for presentations, discussions and voting via electronic devices. This is in direct contrast to the community initiated case studies in Chapters 4 to 7, where no deadlines create long term community resistance campaigns and there is often some confusion regarding the planning process and next steps.

This chapter found that Twitter use during the workshop was focused on commenting on the workshop proceedings, with less sharing and low hashtag use, compared to case studies in Part I. The Twitter activity stopped shortly after the workshop concluded as there was no reflection on the workshop's content and process in the days after the workshop. This clearly separates this case study from others in this thesis as a very different form of social media use. However, like the case studies in Part I, the Twitter activity was dominated by a small number of people voicing their own concerns and opinions. Although the workshop hashtag was initiated by the Department, the Department did not engage with any topics or questions raised during the workshop on Twitter.

The chapter concludes that the Twitter component of the workshop was a missed opportunity for the Department as this public record could have contributed to the workshop proceedings. The integration of Twitter into the workshop could have been a positive outcome for both users and organisers.

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Live tweeting the planning reform workshop

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ABSTRACT

Planning conferences and workshops create opportunities for distributing ideas and learning for planning practitioners, stakeholders and the community. Social media can contribute to communications at these events. This article employs content analysis to examine how Twitter can be used by planners and other stakeholders at workshops as a digital backchannel that runs parallel to the proceedings being conducted in the shared physical space. Our Analysis reveals Twitter can provide alternative questions and answers and raise topics or issues not discussed in the formal consultation space. Additionally, Twitter users also switch between roles of commenting directly on workshop proceedings to describing or commenting on other aspects the workshop such as presenters and audience behaviour to provide an extended commentary of proceedings. Accordingly, Twitter extends participation and information distribution beyond the physical space by allowing those unable to attend, or who may not be invited, to potentially contribute to the discussion.

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Introduction

Twitter is a social media service that has successfully embedded itself in the daily lives of its users (Harrington, Highfield, and Bruns 2013). The short message length and ‘follower’ rather than ‘friend’ characteristics of Twitter allows it to be an effective platform for random and regular updates on almost any form of personal or professional activity (Harrington, Highfield, and Bruns 2013). In an urban planning context, social media has been studied in relation to crisis communication (Afzalan, Evans-Cowley, and Mirzazad-Barijough 2015), citizen activism (Trapenberg Frick 2016), transport planning (Schweitzer 2014) and community consultation (Evans-Cowley and Hollander 2010; Fredericks and Foth 2013; Afzalan and Evans-Cowley 2015; Johnson and Haleboua 2015; Williamson and Ruming 2015, 2016). In these instances, social media does not replace existing media channels, but complements them, providing its users with opportunities to communicate using an alternative media channel (Evans-Cowley and Hollander 2010; Harrington, Highfield, and Bruns 2013).

Live tweeting using conference hashtags is now commonplace and is referred to as a digital backchannel in a shared physical space (McCarthy and Boyd 2005; Ross et al. 2011; Kimmons and Veletsianos 2016). Although studies of digital backchannels in the urban planning context are scarce, Evans-Cowley (2016) has blogged about Twitter use at American Planning Association (APA) National conferences since 2011, which shows year on year growth in Twitter use at these events. To contribute to this limited

knowledge base, this paper unpacks the use of Twitter at a major New South Wales (NSW) planning event.

The NSW planning system was the subject of a major reform process between 2011 and 2013. At the centre of this reform process was a desire by the state government to rewrite the existing legislative framework. The process explored fundamental policy changes to planning in NSW and also conducted large-scale engagement and participation activities, including town hall meetings, exhibition of discussion documents and stakeholder workshops (Ruming and Davies 2014). This paper focuses on one stakeholder workshop of approximately 400 representatives from local and state government, the planning profession, community organisations, academia and peak industry bodies held in late 2012. The workshop was organised by the Department of Planning as an opportunity to discuss some of the most challenging policy ideas it saw as critical to the success of a new planning system. By mobilising a stakeholder workshop as a case study, this paper examines how Twitter can be used by planners and other stakeholders as a digital backchannel that runs parallel to the proceedings and the scope of issues raised by workshop participants. The case study reveals Twitter can provide alternative questions and answers and raise topics or issues not discussed in the shared physical space or as part of the formal workshop agenda. Additionally, Twitter also allows users to switch between roles of commenting directly on workshop proceedings to describing or commenting on other aspects of the workshop such as presenters and audience behaviour. In this sense, Twitter extends

participation and information distribution beyond the physical space by allowing those unable to attend, or who may not be invited, to potentially contribute to the discussion.

The paper begins by providing an overview of Twitter and the concept of a digital backchannel, the case study and its planning reform context. To present this case study the paper is then organised into three sections. The first section analyses the workshop and Twitter activity using time series analysis. The second section draws on qualitative content analysis to gain an understanding of the topics raised on Twitter during the workshop. The concluding section provides a discussion regarding the merits of incorporating Twitter into a planning workshop and makes some recommendations.

Twitter

Twitter is a service that allows people to publish short messages on the Internet and is commonly referred to as microblogging. Twitter allows people to subscribe, known as following other people or organisations they are interested in. Twitter enables users to broadcast messages using hashtags and send direct messages using the '@' symbol. Direct messages are still publicly available (Boyd and Ellison 2007; Java et al. 2007). Below is a list of specific Twitter terms used by this case study:

- Hashtag – A classification, tagging, and categorisation mechanism, consisting of a keyword preceded by the '#' symbol.
- Workshop tweet – Any tweet with a hashtag that was created by a Twitter user during a workshop. There can be multiple hashtags used.
- Retweet – A tweet that is reposted from an earlier tweet, as when one user shares or quotes another user's tweet for others to see.

Digital backchannel

The mobilisation of people for events such as the *The Arab Spring*, *UK Riots*, *Occupy* and *flash-mobs* are all examples of digitally-connected individuals gathering in physical spaces (Jurgenson 2012). The primary role of social media in these movements has been the effective linking of online communications with the timely coordination of people gathering in physical spaces. As such, Jurgenson (2012) suggests it is incorrect to view the online and offline as separate spaces, often referred to as *digital dualism* and argues that the digital and physical enmesh to form an *augmented reality*. Thus, the online and offline are not separate spheres as social media and smartphone technologies augment our offline lives and influence how we

experience reality (Hampton et al. 2011; Jurgenson 2012). Social media use during professional conferences are examples of merging online (Twitter) and offline (formal workshop attendance) spheres.

Live tweeting using conference hashtags is now commonplace and is referred to as a digital backchannel (McCarthy and Boyd 2005; Ross et al. 2011; Kimmons and Veletsianos 2016). Recent research has shown digital backchannels are used for a variety of purposes in conferences including collaborative note-taking, resource-sharing, professional network-building, and help-seeking (Reinhardt et al. 2009; Li and Greenhow 2015). It is increasingly common for conference organisers to encourage and support live tweeting by prompting the conference hashtag before the event, arranging for session chairs to encourage Twitter use and relaying questions raised via Twitter to presenters (Ekins and Perlstein 2014). For Ebner (2009) the potential benefits of digital backchannels at conferences included enhanced conversations between attendees and the sharing of conference insights with individuals who were not present at the conference (Kimmons and Veletsianos 2016). Thus, the digital backchannel can potentially overcome geographic and physical space constraints. Nevertheless, Mahrt, Weller, and Peters (2014) suggest the use of Twitter at conferences also has the capacity to generate multiple monologues which segregates discussions, rather than creating a space for conversation amongst interested parties (Ross et al. 2011).

Live tweeting is also used alongside other media such as television, as a simple digital backchannel to live programming. Harrington, Highfield, and Bruns (2013) discuss how the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's live talk show Q&A, which focuses mainly on political themes, asks its audience to use #qanda and promotes the best tweets (often the most clever, incisive or funny) by displaying them at the bottom of the screen. Such activities raise the potential for making television a more interactive, dialogical experience. Live tweeting is also used for sports events (Highfield 2013) and other major events such as the global telecast of a British royal wedding (Brunns 2011).

Planning literature on the use of Twitter as a digital backchannel at professional workshops or conferences is scant; however, Evans-Cowley (2016) has blogged about Twitter use at American Planning Association (APA) National conferences since 2011. Evans-Cowley (2016) notes a consistent increase in the use of Twitter at the APA conferences with over 4000 tweets collected in 2016. The dominant topics of the APA 2016 conference were planning in the host city of Phoenix, housing, bikes and transportation. While Evans-Cowley (2016) has built an important data set over several years, the only other example of a digital backchannel in planning literature was by Trapenberg Frick (2016) who observed citizens using Twitter to

distribute updates about planning meetings as they unfolded. This paper seeks to extend this literature by examining the use of Twitter at a planning workshop.

Planning reform and consultation in NSW

A significant round of planning reform was initiated in July 2011 with an Independent Review of the NSW planning system. This process included meetings with a wide range of peak interest groups in Sydney, a two-month listening and consultation phase and town hall meetings in over forty locations across the state. This exercise sought the community's views on what should underpin the principles for new legislation to replace the existing legislative framework. The Issues Paper for the NSW Planning System Review was released for public comment in December 2011 (Rumming and Davies 2014).

The Issues Paper comprised of over 200 hundred questions that were picked up through submissions and comments in the listening and scoping stage. The planning system was criticised for its lack of relevance; its overly legalistic language; its overly complicated processes for plan making and development assessment and its failure to ensure openness and transparency of decision-making. Stakeholders overwhelmingly requested a new planning system be simple, accountable and transparent, written in plain English and eliminate unnecessary delays in planning processes (DPI 2011).

In July 2012, the *A New Planning System for NSW – Green Paper* (DPI 2012a) was released, outlining its broad proposals and policy directions for a new planning system. The Green Paper provided four broad policy directions of community participation, a strategic focus, provision of infrastructure and a delivery culture. With a White Paper, which would provide more detail on the proposed changes to the planning system, being scheduled to be released in early 2013, the Minister for Planning hosted a workshop consisting of stakeholders, council and community representatives in October 2012.

White paper workshop

On 11 October 2012, approximately 400 representatives from local and state government, the planning profession, community organisations, academia and peak industry bodies (Figure 1) attended a half-day workshop to discuss some of the most challenging policy ideas critical to the success of a new planning system (DPI 2012b). For the first stage of the workshop, the Minister convened a stakeholder panel comprising representatives from industry, community, local government practitioners and state government to provide an overview of the challenges facing the new planning system. The panel responded to a range of questions



Figure 1. White paper workshop (Source: Twitter).

about key issues under consideration as part of the development of a new planning system. The second phase of the half-day workshop focussed on three key sessions:

- Community Participation – how are we going to effectively and genuinely engage the community in strategic planning?
- Strategic Planning – how will Subregional Delivery Plans work and how will decisions about these plans be made?
- Infrastructure provision – who pays for infrastructure and who allocates the funds?

Each workshop was presented to the entire audience, was led by subject matter experts and included the opportunity for members of the audience to provide feedback on a number of questions via a digital voting system.

The Department announced on Twitter that they would be using Twitter throughout the workshop and would utilise the hashtag #newplanningsystem, which had been used by the Department since the planning reform process was initiated in July 2012:

<@NSWPlanning> “We’ll be tweeting today from the white paper workshop at Redfern where some 400 people will be discussing options for a #newplanning-system.” (9:05 AM)

A Department staffer posted the first workshop tweet:

<Department staff> “Packed house at NSW Planning System White Paper workshop #newplanningsystem.” (10:14 AM)

Method

This paper is based on qualitative content analysis as a method for systematically describing the meaning of qualitative data (Krippendorff 2013). Given the

qualitative nature of the data, a combined approach of automated data collection and manual coding was adopted (Lewis, Zamith, and Hermida 2013). The key features of the content analysis method are its flexible systematic approach and its ability to reduce qualitative data (Schreier 2013). Content analysis was undertaken by assigning comments to the categories of a coding frame. The coding frame was successively modified and expanded as the data were analysed. As in quantitative content analysis, presenting the findings of qualitative content analysis can involve frequency counts to provide a high-level description of the data (Schreier 2013). Moreover, qualitative content analysis shares many features with other qualitative research methods, such as the concern with meaning and interpretation of symbolic material and the importance of context in determining meaning (Schreier 2013).

Data collection and coding

Twitter data was collected directly from the Twitter application programming interface using the TAGSv6 application created by Hawksey (2013). The data was collected on the day of the workshop. Data collection retrieved 148 workshop tweets consisting of 108 unique tweets and 40 retweets during the 3-hour workshop. As the Twitter data set was relatively small, manual coding was a straightforward exercise. The workshop agenda provided a clear coding frame as the tweets were time stamped and generally aligned with the timing of the agenda. Although this data set is slightly dated, there has not been a planning workshop of this scale since 2012. It is important to acknowledge the fact that had an event been held since Twitter use would likely be higher. To provide context, we also transcribed video recordings of the workshop, which are available on YouTube (Planning System Review 2012a, 2012b, 2012c).

Twitter participants

There were 35 (approximately 9% of attendees) Twitter users who utilised #newplanningsystem during the 3-hour workshop. It is assumed that all were present at the workshop; however, that cannot be confirmed. To gain an understanding of the background of the Twitter users each Twitter user profile was inspected and categorised into a defined professional group, where possible. Table 1 shows that the three main groups were planning consultants, communications consultants and lawyers. The remaining Twitter users were made up of State and local politicians, the Department of Planning, a Daily Telegraph journalist, an academic, a community group and a property industry advocacy group known as the Urban Development Institute of Australia (UDIA).

Table 1. Twitter users by profession.

| User description | Number of users |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|
| Planning consultant | 8 |
| Communications consultant | 6 |
| Lawyer | 5 |
| Unknown | 3 |
| State politician | 2 |
| Academic | 1 |
| Community group | 1 |
| Department of planning | 1 |
| Department staff | 1 |
| Engineer | 1 |
| Journalist | 1 |
| Local government councillor | 1 |
| Local government planner | 1 |
| Region of councils group | 1 |
| Property industry advocacy group | 1 |
| Spatial data consultant | 1 |

Unique tweets

Twenty-one Twitter users posted unique tweets during the workshop. The activity level of Twitter users varied significantly as five Twitter users made 70 (65%) workshop tweets, while 16 Twitter users made the remaining 38 (35%) workshop tweets. It is noted that 8 Twitter users only posted 1 workshop tweet. This suggests that only a small number of Twitter users chose to become engaged with the digital backchannel for the entire duration of the workshop. Twitter use also fluctuated during the workshop. Figure 2 shows three distinct peaks during the workshop between 10:45–11:00 a.m., 11:30–11:45 a.m. and 12:45–1:00 p.m.

Peaks in Twitter use (Table 2) correspond to 3 items on the workshop agenda. At 10:45 a.m. the panel began discussing the use of 'Randomly selected community panels'; at 11:30 a.m. community panels were discussed again, this time focussing on how community is defined if these panels were to be introduced into the planning system; the final peak corresponded with the workshop being wrapped up by the Minister and was dominated by tweets making overall comments about the workshop and suggestions that some attendees did not trust the way the workshop was conducted or the data collection technique used. The second and third agenda items of *strategic planning* and *infrastructure* saw very little Twitter activity. There seem to be two explanations for this; firstly, workshop attendees seemed to use Twitter predominantly when they opposed a topic being discussed and secondly, the significant number of communications consultants activity using Twitter dropped off after their topic of expertise was completed, particularly when infrastructure was being discussed.

Retweets

Twenty-three people retweeted someone else's tweet during the workshop. This group of Twitter users consisted of 9 people who also posted unique tweets and 14 people who only retweeted. The professional groups

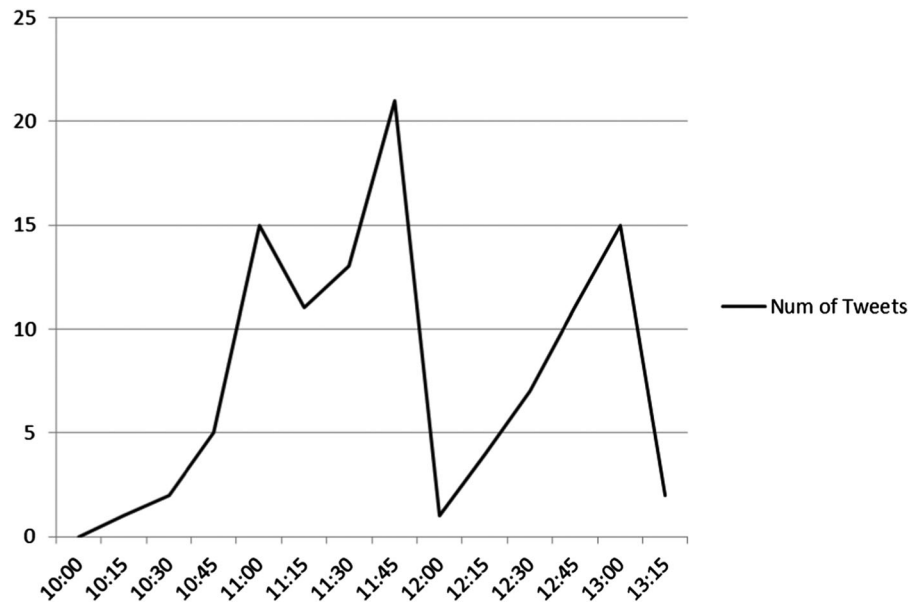


Figure 2. Workshop tweets by time.

most likely to only retweet were planning consultants, State and local government representatives, lawyers and the UDIA. Of the 40 retweets during the workshop, 21 were people retweeting Department tweets, the most popular retweet was:

@NSWPlanning: “Developers are moving back from Victoria to NSW due to new confidence and planning reforms: Stephen Albin from UDIA #newplanningsystem.”

This Department retweet is actually quoting the UDIA and as such is a UDIA message, not the Department. On the one hand the Department sought to distribute this message as it is a positive statement regarding the planning reform process; however, retweeting the UDIA suggests the Department is endorsing the UDIA message, which may raise questions from others.

The high level of retweeting Department of Planning tweets suggest people were looking to distribute comments originating from the workshop organiser, rather than members of the audience. The remaining retweets were made by communications consultants and the Daily Telegraph journalist. The group that were tweeting and retweeting throughout the workshop were communications consultations, a State

politician, the journalist, a lawyer and local government planner. It could be argued that it is the job of the communications consultants and the journalist to use social media during this workshop.

Content analysis of Twitter data

Content analysis of the 108 workshop tweets revealed 9 distinct topics (Table 3). These topics relate directly to the presentations, panel discussions and questions from the audience. These topics also correspond to the peaks in Twitter activity.

Our analysis also revealed three general workshop tweet types that were more or less a running commentary made up of various comments and observations by the Department and workshop attendees (Table 4). The tweets by workshop attendees were not necessarily

Table 2. Workshop agenda and social media peaks.

| Time | Agenda item | Dominant topic on social media |
|-------|--|-----------------------------------|
| 10:00 | Welcome | |
| 10:15 | Panel discussion | |
| 10:45 | Questions to the panel | Randomly selected community panel |
| 11:00 | Policy discussion workshops introduction | |
| 11:10 | 1. Community participation | Definition of community |
| 11:45 | 2. Strategic Planning | |
| 12:15 | 3. Infrastructure | |
| 12:45 | Wrap up | Trust |

Table 3. Topics by number of workshop tweets.

| Topic (number of coded Tweets) | Description |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Definition of community (24) | Comments regarding the role and definition of community in planning |
| Random selection panels (16) | Comments in reaction to notion of using randomly selected panels in a new planning system |
| Trust (7) | Comments using words cynicism, distrust and trust in relation to the NSW planning system |
| Voting (7) | Comments regarding the real-time voting system not being used by many workshop participants |
| Story boards (5) | Questions and suggestions regarding the use of story boards in strategic planning |
| Assessment and approval (3) | Comments linking strategic planning to better assessment outcomes |
| Developer contributions (3) | Comments in response to proposed developer contributions system |
| Technology (3) | Comments regarding panel members suggestions that more technology is needed in public participation |
| Planning system culture (2) | Comments regarding culture of planning professionals |

Table 4. Topics by number of tweets.

| Topic (number of coded Tweets) | Description |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Workshop comments by audience (24) | Comments from the workshop participants regarding the speakers, questions and behaviour of workshop participants, assumed knowledge and other comments not directly related to the workshop topics |
| Department comments (8) | Progress updates by Department. Targeted at people not present at the workshop |
| Comments about the Minister (6) | Comments regarding how the Minister handled the event |

aligned with what was being presented or discussed at the time and often were comments about the presenter or the behaviour of the audience.

Findings

In this section, we present the findings of the study. We have chosen to discuss 4 points of interest that demonstrate how the digital backchannel was used at the workshop. Each discussion includes quotes from the workshop transcripts to set the context of the workshop.

Digital backchannel as commentary and an eyewitness account

At 10:45 a.m. after a number of presentations from a panel regarding the need for a new planning system the discussion was then opened up to the audience to ask questions of the panel. The first question from a lawyer in the audience referenced a number of issues with community engagement and initiated the debates that would ensue over the following 2 hours:

In this debate and we can see it already, you begin to talk about the community as if it's one amorphous group and it's something separate from the industry, from politicians, yet in our system of government the community votes regularly, elects local councillors, elects state politicians. When we dialogue with the community outside of that process we are not dialoguing with everyone, we are dialoguing with people who self-select and that will be skewed no matter what time the hours of the meeting [$<$] so when we chose to dialogue directly with the community outside of elected representations, how do we ensure that process isn't skewed in favour of small minority but vocal groups? (Planning System Review 2012b)

A panel member provided an answer to this question by saying:

One way of course is to randomly select and I think we've seen some very good models from around the world where community panels have been randomly selected in total or in part, to break through and to encourage a debate about the common good, rather than the individual interests. (Planning System Review 2012b)

This was the first mention of community panels which triggered the first spike in Twitter activity. Some workshop tweets were in favour of the idea and included a somewhat derogatory hashtag to refer to loud minority groups:

<Planning consultant> "Geoff Gallop on noisy minority groups - the hardest thing is to truly find the public interest #newplanningsystem #squeakywheel." (10:46 AM)

While others agreed with the audience members position that we already have elected representatives and questioned why we should create another panel:

<Academic> "#newplanningsystem <name removed> is right. Elected representatives are already representing local communities. Dangers if we duplicate." (10:55 AM)

Discussion was then redirected by a comment from a representative of a community group in the audience which questioned the makeup of the workshop attendees and where they live; 'I just wanted to say it was very interesting that it was 7% of community. Every one of you live in a neighbourhood' (Planning System Review 2012c) in direct reference to 7% of the 400 attendees identifying themselves as community representatives. This comment triggered a number of tweets from different audience members which echoed the point:

<Planning consultant> "#newplanningsystem 'we are all part of community.'" (11:31 AM)

<State politician> "#newplanningsystem 'we are all part of community' notion that professionals n politicians etc aren't part of community wrong." (11:34 AM)

<Communications consultant> "Interesting to ponder what we mean by 'community' and who decides who is legitimately part of it. #newplanningsystem." (11:35 AM)

While impossible for everyone to vocalise comments on what was being said in the room, Twitter allowed these people to comment through the digital backchannel using the workshop hashtag. In effect, this allowed more people to put their thoughts on the public record and was also being monitored by the Department.

The Minister then explained that the workshop was not perfect, but also made the following remark that:

we are here to discuss the importance of getting random selection and yet this process today has been self-selection, you just said you fought to get to the room, there are others from development and local government, also there's a limited number. (Planning System Review 2012c)

This comment refers to community groups, particularly the Better Planning Network (BPN) (MacDonald 2015) attending the workshop and seems to suggest the

Department was not initially open to community groups/representatives attending the workshop. This is a product of traditional consultation/engagement processes where community and industry tend to be consulted in isolation. It should also be noted that this was not the only workshop run by the Department, with a number of open community meetings held earlier in the reform process. However, had the Department designed a more sophisticated digital backchannel for this workshop, the Department could have used the digital backchannel for a more open consultation to a wider audience that could not physically attend on the day.

Although BPN representatives were in the workshop audience they did not engage with the workshop hashtag on Twitter, rather they reverted to direct dialogue with workshop presenters and the Minister. This suggests being 'in the room' is very important for community groups and is in contrast to previous research which found the BPN to have a strong social media presence (Williamson and Ruming 2015, 2016). Thus, it would seem that community groups prefer the formal consultation process – perhaps seen as a more legitimate form of participation, whereas, Twitter is mobilised as an alternative strategy when community groups are not directly involved in the process.

The digital backchannel continued to follow the proceedings which saw audience members echoing the Minister's comments:

<Journalist> 'Just relax do what you can today' says Hazzard. 'It's not perfect.' #newplanningsystem (11:33 AM)

This first session saw a robust discussion between the presenter and due to time limits, a small number of audience members. However, other audience members also used Twitter to post their agreement or concerns with the debate they were witnessing. When the debate became difficult for the presenter to contain, the Minister attempted to calm some sections of the audience, in particular the community representatives. In turn, this saw Twitter users start commenting on the workshop process, instead of the content, which shows that the form of consultation was just as important as the content for users of the digital backchannel.

Digital voting devices

At 11 a.m. the first of three 30-minute workshops commenced. The first workshop was on community participation. The workshop sessions had an initial presentation of an idea and then proceeded with a question and voting format. The voting was through handheld devices (Figure 3) and results displayed on large screens almost immediately.

The first question to the audience was 'do you support a proposal for randomly selected community



Figure 3. Handheld voting device (Source: Twitter).

panels?' (Planning System Review 2012c). Initial comments via Twitter suggested some audience members were impressed with the digital voting device and process:

<Lawyer> "#newplanningsystem the instant feedback technology is great ..." (11:05 AM)

However, prior to the workshop registering their first vote on the proposed question, audience members voiced concerns with the community panel concept such as different levels of experience between panel members, using a range of engagement strategies, inability to simplify procedural law and acknowledging community organisations for their experience and knowledge of local areas (Planning System Review 2012c). Workshop tweets by the audience suggested they were not completely supportive of the concept and how the Department was seeking engagement with the audience:

<Lawyer> "Random panels for consultation is only one way must use with other methods to engage. Councils been doing this for years #newplanningsystem." (11:19 AM)

<Communications consultant> "#newplanningsystem being polled on random selection. I would like us to do more learning and deliberating first." (11:10 AM)

As reflected on Twitter, several workshop attendees raised issue with the closed questions being asked. In an attempt to calm the audience the Minister explained:

I love the energy in this room. Can I say when I look at this question I understand what the community groups were actually saying. In a sense your opportunity to highlight the inconsistencies that may come, I

think what where on here in NSW at the moment is a massive learning curve. (Planning System Review 2012c)

The Minister then tried to explain to the audience that despite the strict agenda no topics are locked in and the Department is just trying to engage with stakeholders, the process may not be perfect (Planning System Review 2012c). The issues raised by the workshop audience were twofold, firstly they were concerned with the wording of the questions, which a lawyer suggested maybe due to the voting device being used:

<Lawyer> “#newplanningsystem has the keypad tech influenced the questions asked?” (11:28 AM)

Secondly, the workshop audience raised concerns with the representative nature of the results as significant percentages of the workshop audience were not registering a vote:

<Local Government planner> “this was not the real result the vast majority did not vote.” (12:26 PM)

<Local Government planner> “People not liking the questions nearly 40% not voting #newplanningsystem.” (12:40 PM)

The question and answer consultation undertaken at this workshop highlights the difficulties of consultation. This sentiment was expressed clearly through Twitter:

< Local Government planner> “Community consultation can not even work at #newplanningsystem workshop first question.” (11:19 AM)

What seemed at first glance to be an innovative approach to consultation was subject to multiple issues, particularly regarding the wording of questions, which may have been due to the binary yes/no responses required by the voting device. There was also significant concern about how the data would be used and its lack of representation due to up to 40% of the workshop audience not participating. The digital backchannel highlighted these issues and also made it publicly known that workshop attendees were raising issue with the wording of the questions and that large percentages of the audience were not voting. Even in a small targeted consultation process, this case study highlights the difficulties of consultation in regards to varying levels of knowledge, different interpretations of questions and a willingness to actively participate.

Information sources through the digital backchannel

Positive examples of Twitter users using a digital backchannel were observed. In particular, a communications consultant helped another with concepts being discussed such as approaching strategic planning as storey telling for the community:

<Communications consultant 1> Gary white described strategic plans as telling the story of communities. (12:32 PM)

<Communications consultant 2> <@Communications consultant 1> Can you give more context on story-based approach? #newplanningsystem (12:35 PM)

<Communications consultant 1> <@Communications consultant 2> if we follow this thru makes complex system legible and encourages human real side to shine thru (12:36 PM)

<Communications consultant 2> <@Communications consultant 1> thx much appreciated #newplanningsystem (2:36 PM)

There was also evidence of Twitter users providing links to research papers relevant to the discussion:

<Communications consultant> “One piece of the research http://www.activedemocracy.net/articles/04_consultation.pdf ... Raises many questions about extent community feels represented.” (11:10 AM)

The communications consultants at the workshop were some of the most active Twitter users and engaged with the digital backchannel to a higher level than other Twitter users. This is not surprising as social media has become a significant part of communications consultants work and they would likely have previous experience with using Twitter in this type of workshop situation. Sharing information is commonly cited as a positive example of digital backchannel use at conferences (Reinhardt et al. 2009; Li and Greenhow 2015). However, it is noted that a 3-hour workshop provides limited time to undertake this activity, particularly when the agenda is fast moving.

Walking out the door

An element of the digital backchannel that is not cited by other literature is the opportunity to collect comments and thoughts of attendees as they are exiting the workshop. The previous 3 topics discussed by this paper were closely aligned with the activities of the workshop; however, this final topic was exclusively on Twitter in the final 15 minutes of the workshop. The following workshop tweets by planning consultants suggest the audience was suspicious of the workshop questions and data collected:

<Planning consultant> “A level of distrust demonstrated in #newplanningsystem workshop about use of data from the workshop. Starting to flat spin.” (12:21 AM)

<Planning consultant> “yep. It has been an ‘interesting’ morning. Lots of mistrust.” (12:31 PM)

<Planning consultant> “#newplanningsystem needs to find the love and regain confidence and trust of stakeholders/community.” (12:45 PM)

A workshop tweet by one of the communications consultants also seemed to spread a rumour that the workshop was tokenistic and the next step in the planning reform process is already decided:

<Communications consultant> “#newplanningsystem I’m hearing people say they are convinced the white paper has already been written. Indicates low trust. A challenge.” (12:46 PM)

The concept of trust was used by the Department in its initial arguments for reforming the planning system (DPI 2012a, 23) and comments by attendees exiting the workshop continue to raise the concept of trust by questioning if the consultation process, such as this workshop, was actually improving peoples trust in the NSW planning system. The Department utilised and monitored the workshop hashtag throughout the workshop; however, chose not to engage with any of the comments on Twitter regarding the problematic consultation or the low level of trust in what the results of the workshop would be used for. While the Department committed to posting comments about the workshop proceedings, it would have been difficult to engage with the broad range of questions and comments being posted on the digital backchannel as Department posts typically require approval before being posted (Williamson and Parolin 2013). In effect, the bureaucracy of government agencies actively curtails the possibilities of the digital backchannel functioning in a two-way dialogue mode.

In the final minutes of the workshop, the digital backchannel functioned somewhat like an exit survey, with Twitter users offering their final thoughts on the workshop. However, these final thoughts are instantly on the public record and could influence the perceptions of people that did not physically attend the workshop, but there is no evidence it influenced the planning reform process.

Discussion

The White Paper workshop was an attempt to engage with a limited representation from local and state government, the planning profession, community organisations, academia and peak industry bodies to discuss some of the most challenging policy ideas critical to the success of a new planning system. The Department promoted the use of Twitter on the day by establishing a hashtag prior to the workshop starting and then regularly posted updates throughout the workshop, but did not engage with any digital backchannel discussions. To gain a better understanding of the Twitter usage during the workshop we now address a series of discussion points related to the use of social media as a form of participation at planning events.

Compared to general Twitter use, tweets in the digital backchannel were more commentary in nature and

directly connected to a topic they were witnessing. There was also less sharing of resources in the form of URL links due to workshop time limits and less use of hashtags not associated with hashtag announced for use at the physical event. The hashtag was used by the Department for a further 12 months. However, from the data collected there was no evidence of Twitter activity regarding the workshop after it concluded.

While there are distinct peaks in Twitter usage and a dominant topic at the time, the topic shifts quickly, typically within 15 minutes to stay aligned with the workshop agenda. There were also multiple topics emerging and disjointed discussions which concur with Ross et al. (2011) who found conference back-channels are not distributed conversations amongst interested parties. Our data analysis suggests that a small number of Twitter users engaged with the workshop hashtag throughout the event, while others drop in and out.

Twitter usage at the workshop consisted of people commenting on remarks being made by the audience, thinking out loud or contemplating the issues being raised and also commenting on the workshop process. In this sense, Twitter was being used in various modes that provided a public record of the workshop, but did not contribute to any workshop discussions as there was no mechanism in place to incorporate feedback from the digital backchannel. Further, this public record was instantaneous for anyone who may have been following the hashtag live and would have provided a virtual account of the workshop proceedings.

The digital backchannel of the workshop was dominated by five Twitter users, while the majority made less than 5 posts, which suggests the digital backchannel is driven by a relatively small number who are using it as a means to voice their own concerns and opinions or posting updates on Twitter as part of their daily work practices. It is suspected that some Twitter users had difficulty connecting with the topics and thus did not post a high number of tweets at the workshop. Kimmons and Veletsianos (2016) note that popular conference hashtags feature a small number of Twitter users that make a significant contribution. While these negative aspects of the digital backchannel are acknowledged, integrating the digital backchannel into the proceedings of the workshop could produce a more positive outcome for Twitter users and the organisers. It is noted that many workshop tweets take a reporting role and it could have been the Twitter users’ intention to update colleagues not present at the workshop.

Apart from the Department announcing on the day that a Twitter hashtag would be used during the workshop, Twitter was not integrated into the formal proceedings. We suggest Twitter could have been more constructively used during the workshop if the workshop hashtag was promoted before the event. Secondly,

the workshop host could have announced Twitter would be used to raise questions that would be answered by the Department via Twitter or relayed to the presenters for consideration during the question and answer sessions. The Department could have also announced if questions and comments raised through Twitter would be incorporated into the data collected at the workshop. Twitter also allows interested parties to raise questions even though they are not physically present at the event. If possible these questions could have been identified and answered post-workshop to positively enforce participation.

It is unknown if the Department reviewed or used any Twitter data generated on the day. There is certainly no publically available evidence of the Department doing so. To this end, planning practice needs to recognise that social media is changing how communities are choosing to communicate and consider how they may respond in a timely and helpful manner (Williamson and Rumung 2017). Government agencies who want to use social media must be prepared to engage with individuals to discuss their concerns. It is not enough to have a social media presence that just broadcasts announcements (Schweitzer 2014). Mutual dialogue between communities and government agencies would enable social media to become a more meaningfully component of public consultation.

Conclusion

It is safe to assume that social media will never replace face-to-face engagement in urban planning; however, the analysis of Twitter data from a planning workshop or meeting is considered an important form of feedback for the organiser. This paper demonstrates that Twitter can provide alternative questions and answers and raise topics or issues not discussed in the physical space. Additionally, Twitter users also switch between roles of commenting directly on workshop proceedings to describing or commenting on other aspects of the workshop such as presenter and audience behaviour. We suggest this method could also be applied to other planning processes including, council meetings, town hall meetings and public protests.

Future research is needed to further explore how social media (particularly Twitter) use at planning workshops and meetings may contribute to enhancing engagement in planning from both theoretical and practical aspects. In particular, it would be useful to survey participants of a workshop or meeting to ascertain what percentage are aware of Twitter and the live tweeting that may be in progress. This would help to address questions regarding the representativeness of those participating on Twitter.

Finally, insights from this case study hold some promise for academics and practitioners responsible for organising planning workshops and meetings to

capture a more productive online-offline experience that may expand the data collection and participation in their event.

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Chapter 10: Can social media support large scale public participation: The case of the #MySydney digital engagement campaign

In-conjunction with Chapter 9, this chapter addresses Research Question Five by observing and analysing the #MySydney social media campaign undertaken by the Department of Planning. This campaign was conducted through Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Social Pinpoint over a 8 week period in June and July 2015. This case study provided the opportunity to compare and contrast how different social media platforms may be used to engage with the public. The #MySydney campaign was an attempt to engage with Sydney through social media at the early visioning stage of a district planning process and aligns with the Department's aspirations for open engagement early in the planning process. Due to community groups using the campaign to strategically mobilise planning matters that they wished to promote, this case study also utilises the post-political theoretical lens.

This chapter found that the Department sought to utilise social media to conduct an engagement campaign, but the campaign was implemented through the Department's media team and based on a marketing methodology. Social media gives the impression that engagement is open and far reaching, but in reality this form of engagement can be described as consultation/placation, as participation allows citizens to be heard, but citizens lack the control to insure that their views will be heeded. In effect, social media was deployed to brand the Department, while the intent should have been to listen to the community and build on their likes and dislikes through a series of activities. The open nature of social media offers opportunities for multi-directional engagement, but there is no way of moderating participation and it is very difficult to keep comments on topic, which demonstrates the agency of individuals and groups to shape the discourse. Hence, this case study demonstrated that social media can be just another avenue used by the most active and engaged citizens to mobilise antagonistic political campaigns to pursue their own objectives.

The chapter concludes that for this type of engagement to be more useful, planning authorities must utilise the full functionality of social media and be prepared to respond to the concerns of citizens, not just broadcasting questions and replying with generic thankyou notes.

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Can social media support large scale public participation in urban planning? The case of the #MySydney digital engagement campaign

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Can social media support large scale public participation in urban planning? The case of the #MySydney digital engagement campaign

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ABSTRACT



Public participation in urban planning often focuses on the effectiveness of participation at the neighbourhood scale, while less attention is given to metropolitan wide participation. The growth of social media offers an opportunity to engage a broader geographic area. This study investigates the #MySydney social media campaign undertaken in Sydney, Australia. The #MySydney campaign utilized three social media channels and the Social Pinpoint application to engage Sydney's citizens during the preparation of district plans. Our examination of the campaign makes the following contributions; Firstly, although the Department prompted the campaign as a conversation with the community, it was more consistent with a branding strategy. Secondly, the case study highlights the difficulties of moderating participation on social media. Thirdly, the response rate per capita was consistently very low. Finally, we demonstrate a weak link between mainstream and social media in this instance.

KEYWORDS

Public participation and engagement; metropolitan planning; social media; content analysis

1. Introduction

Increasing public participation in planning is a core goal of the New South Wales (NSW) Department of Planning and Environment (the Department) (DP&E 2014). By 'Frontloading' public engagement in the early stages of a planning process, stakeholders are encouraged to participate in developing ideas and sharing knowledge (Brownill 2009). This aims to build sustained involvement rather than a series of discrete episodes of consultation based around applications or plans (Albrechts 2006). In this era of digital communication, government agencies are also becoming aware of the need to pursue social media strategies in an attempt to encourage greater levels of engagement with the public (Schweitzer 2014; Afzalan and Muller 2014; Bonsón, Royo, and Ratkai 2015; Williamson and Ruming 2015, 2017; Trapenberg Frick 2016). However, for many government agencies, social media operates as a one-way style of information distribution (Evans-Cowley and Hollander 2010; Evans-Cowley and Griffin 2012; Mergel 2013a). This paper investigates the social media strategy mobilized for a metropolitan wide public engagement campaign by the Department in 2015. In particular, we investigate how government agencies use multiple social media platforms in their communications strategies, how they may adapt communication on these platforms over time (Gruzd, Lannigan, and Quigley 2018) and how they combine social media with other online participatory technologies, such as public participation geographic information systems (PPGIS).

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Prior to releasing a set of district plans for metropolitan Sydney and undertaking a formal community consultation process, the Department conducted a digital engagement campaign called #MySydney. The #MySydney campaign most closely resembles a community visioning process that uses community events to generate concepts of place, supporting arguments and a degree of ownership amongst the community (Healey 1998). The Department advised that feedback from the campaign would be used to inform district plans and stated the aim of the campaign was to invite the citizens of Sydney to talk about their local area, in particular, why they love where they live, and what they would change, if they had the chance (DP&E 2015a). The campaign was a significant departure from traditional community consultation undertaken by the Department, which typically involved the exhibition of a draft plan and supporting documents via a web site, advertising in newspapers, community information sessions and stakeholder briefings.

In this paper, the #MySydney campaign is used to explore the ways Government planning agencies use social media to engage stakeholders and the public in planning processes. We examine the use of social media as an engagement strategy, the subsequent participation rate, attempts to promote a social media campaign through mainstream media, the use of a generic hashtag and the activity of single issue community groups. This paper makes the following contributions. First, although social media provides for two-way dialog, the campaign was promoted as a question and answer strategy that did not generate discussions. This is contrary to the Department's posts suggesting there was a conversation between the Department and the community, but is consistent with a *branding* strategy typically used to promote both physical and city planning concepts such as open space, creativity and knowledge economies (Listerborn 2017). Second, the case study highlights that unlike traditional engagement processes used by urban planners, such as town halls meetings, there is no way of moderating participation on social media, and it is very difficult to keep comments on topic. These issues can be exacerbated by using a generic hashtag that has no clear relationship with urban planning. Finally, in this instance, we found a weak link between mainstream and social media.

This paper will firstly provide a brief overview of the case study, strategic planning and citizen participation using social media. The paper then draws on qualitative content analysis to explore the topics raised by the public during the campaign. The concluding section provides a discussion of the success of social media as an engagement tool in urban planning. Some conclusions and suggestions for further research follow.

2. Background and literature Review

2.1. The #MySydney case study

Increased public participation in plan making has been mobilized as a central justification for new planning configurations in New South Wales (NSW), including recent planning reforms (O'Farrell 2013; DP&E 2014) and the newly formed Greater Sydney Commission (GSC) (GSC 2015). During 2012–2013 the NSW Government pursued a planning reform agenda that targeted upfront strategic planning and public participation as key elements of a new planning system (Rumung and Davies 2014). The then Premier announced a new planning system would provide community participation backed up by a community participation charter enshrined in law to guarantee participation (O'Farrell 2013). Furthermore, 'communities across NSW would shape the future of their streets, suburbs and regions' (O'Farrell 2013). As part of the workshops held during the planning reform process, the use of technology as a means for increasing public participation was regularly discussed. Planners and government officials involved in the planning reform process argued 'we have to unlock the power of technology to have a wider and better engagement – to have two-way engagement' (Turnbull 2012). The use of new technologies was seen as a mechanism to overcome many of the shortcomings of traditional public participation approaches, such as community meetings and information sessions, which often led to people being excluded from the process because of their

inability to attend 6pm town hall meetings due to employment and family commitments (Turnbull 2012).

The majority of literature and practice guidelines are focused on local participation, while the scale of metropolitan wide engagement increases the number of potential participants and complexity (Pickering and Minnery 2012). Further, Ruming (2014) found a low level of citizen knowledge of Sydney's metropolitan wide strategic planning, which highlights the challenge of promoting strategic planning through community participation. Moreover, the broad vision presented by strategic plans is often detached from the expectation and experiences of residents at the local scale and engagement campaigns often lack sufficient time for citizens to engage in genuine inclusionary argumentation and social learning (Maginn 2007).

Prior to releasing a set of district plans for metropolitan Sydney and undertaking a formal community consultation process, the Department conducted a digital engagement campaign called #MySydney. The Department advised that the feedback from this campaign would be used to inform district plans (Figure 1) (DP&E 2015a). The aim of the campaign was to invite the citizens of Sydney to talk about their local area, in particular, why they love where they live, and what they would change, if they had the chance. For Shipley (2000), such visioning processes with the community

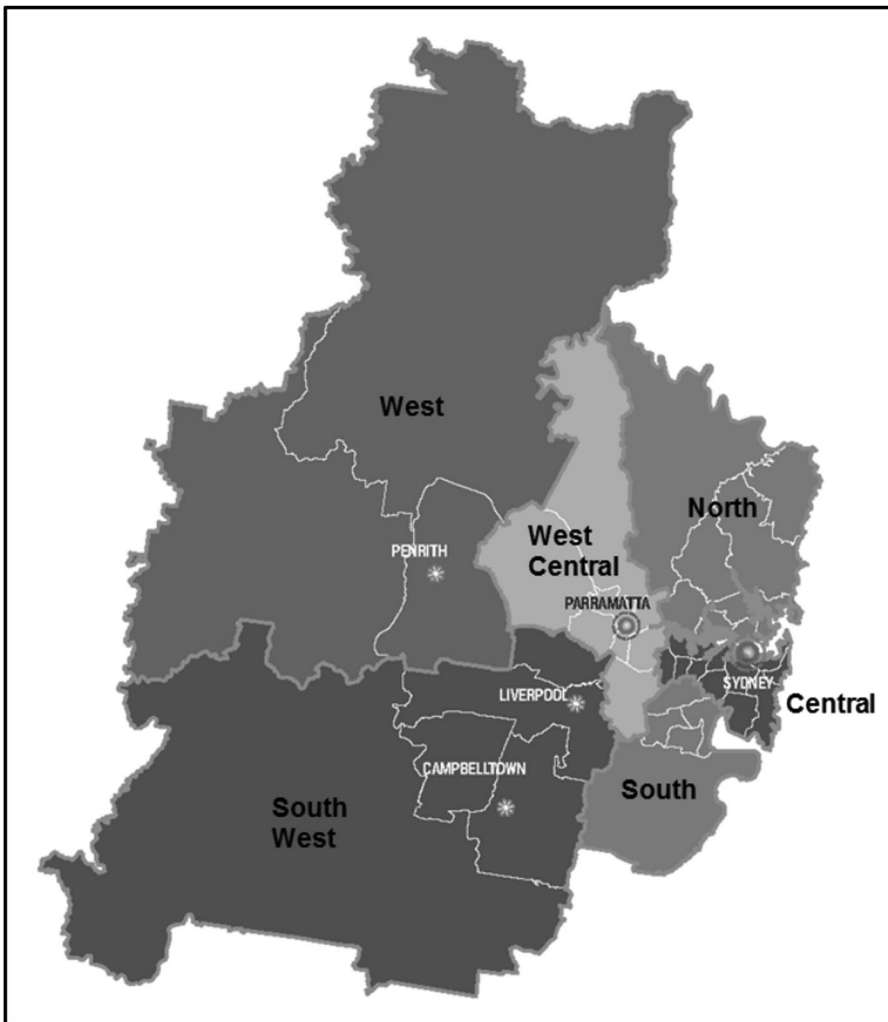


Figure 1. Sydney districts (Source: A Plan for Growing Sydney).

are part strategic planning, part engagement and part public motivation. The campaign was a significant departure from traditional community consultation undertaken by the Department, which typically involve the exhibition of a draft plan and supporting documents via a web site, advertising in newspapers, community information sessions and stakeholder briefings. The Department invited citizens to have their say through the following communication channels:

- commenting on Department Facebook posts,
- uploading photos to the 'PlanSydney' Facebook page,
- dropping a comment on the Social Pinpoint Map,
- posting comments on Twitter using #MySydney, and
- posting photos on Instagram using #MySydney.

The #MySydney campaign was initially run from the 25 June to 22 July 2015 and was launched on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram and requested social media users to 'join the conversation' by telling the Department what 'you love about your suburb'. The Facebook posts and tweets by the Department's @PlanSydney handle also contained a URL link to the Social Pinpoint platform on the Department's website. The Facebook and Twitter accounts were not established especially for this purpose, but had been used by the Department since 2012, particularly to promote two metropolitan strategies – *The draft Metropolitan Strategy for Sydney to 2031* publically exhibited in March 2013 and *A Plan for Growing Sydney* publically exhibited in December 2014. Thus, it could be assumed that some followers were familiar with previous metropolitan planning documents.

2.2. Citizen participation and social media

An increasingly important aspect of strategic planning is the notion of visioning, which Albrechts (2006, 1160) describes as 'a conscious and purposive action to represent values and meanings for the future to which a particular place is committed'. Such processes generally involve gathering groups of stakeholders to develop conceptual framings and discuss overall goals for urban development (Shipley 2000). Traditionally, these gatherings take the form of community meetings and workshops that are facilitated by independent, professional facilitators (Cuthill 2004). In these controlled environments, citizens are led through a series of tasks or activities to help them develop some empathy for each other's values, experiences and the diverse perspectives existing within the community (Cuthill 2004). Managing these complex community engagements requires imagination, consensus building and argumentation skills that can only be achieved by a multi-disciplinary team with expertise in urban planning, participatory processes, facilitation and research (Healey 1998; Cuthill 2004).

Frameworks that consider the influence of citizens in participation exercises describe a hierarchy of power relationships between citizens and government agencies (Arnstein 1969; Fung 2006). These spectrums range from public officials maintaining all the power through to arrangements where citizens hold the majority of decision making power. For Arnstein (1969), when the power relationship is balanced, participation can be considered as a form of cooperation between citizens and public officials. Furthermore, Fung (2006, 69) defines participation mechanisms that allow citizens to exercise direct influence as a 'co-governing partnership' in which citizens join officials to develop plans, policies and strategies. However, a recent analysis of public participation argues that community conflict emerges as an expression of active citizenship and democracy, particularly within the context of planning systems, which actively seek to use participatory processes where the scope of possible outcomes is narrowly defined in advance (Wilson and Swyngedouw 2014). These attempts at consensus are often built through appealing narratives about reducing regulatory burden, ecological development to 'greenwash' planning with environmental initiatives (Bunce 2018) and ensuring certainty in the planning process (Inch 2012). These approaches effectively disarm opposition as they

seem uncontroversial and appeal to common sense. Urban visioning and branding is central to neo-liberal planning through a strong connection to urban competition and attracting new capital (Sager 2011). In particular, the use of branding in planning practices may lead to the commodification of public spaces (Listerborn 2017). The appearance of social media has introduced another potential channel to facilitate engagement with citizens in government urban planning processes.

Social media services, such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, and Flickr, are designed to connect people and to share information through ‘many-to-many’ interactions (Bertot, Jaeger, and Grimes 2010). For Linders (2012) social media provides channels not just for mass dissemination, but also for mass production and collaboration. However, empirical research of governments using social media are mainly as an information *push* strategy, rather than a platform to encourage citizen collaboration (Mergel 2013a; Bonsón et al. 2012). Mergel (2013a) developed a three-stage typology of *push*, *pull*, and *networking* social media strategies. Depending on a government’s existing communications strategy, agencies may take on three social media tactics: the *push* strategy to represent formal government information as an additional communications channel, the *pull* strategy to engage and include information from the public, and the *network* strategy, which includes both push and pull functions (Mergel 2013a). Using Mergel’s (2013a) three-stage typology, Mossberger, Wu, and Crawford (2013) case studies found local governments’ use of social media is primarily using the *push* strategy; however, there was some evidence of using *pull* and *networking* strategies. This confirms observations that citizen behaviour drives adoption in government. Essentially, governments have reacted to stakeholders changing preferences for using social media to receive information and news (Mergel 2013b). Despite advances in social media, participatory platforms and mobile apps, government agencies still seem to be locked in to one-way communication flows from government to citizens and seldom vice-versa (Falco and Kleinhans 2018).

In the literature on urban planning and Internet enabled communications, much of the discussion is centred on the potential capacity to facilitate community participation and engagement at the local or neighbourhood scale (Evans-Cowley and Hollander 2010; Afzalan and Muller 2014; Williamson and Ruming 2015, 2017). While it has been shown that urban planners have increasingly adopted Internet enabled communication technologies as a means of engaging with the public, questions remain about the capacity of Internet-based communication methods to reach a broad audience. This is particularly the case where public access to a computer or the Internet is limited (Mandarano, Meenar, and Steins 2010). Existing research illustrates how the value of Internet participation differs considerably between population groups, depending on variables such as age, education level and interest in the planning process (Ertiö, Ruoppila, and Sarah-Kristin 2016). Furthermore, well-organized community groups can produce their own material through several communication channels including; YouTube videos, websites and posts on social media platforms to create a perpetual digital footprint (Trapenberg Frick 2016), which may result in a loud minority putting their interests over those of the majority (Carver et al. 2001). Alternative political strategies appear in many forms, for example, opponents mobilize protests, public meetings and forums, newspaper articles, local television and radio programmes (Legacy 2016; Ruming 2018). Effectively, community groups can utilize both digital media and mainstream media to elevate their concerns with a planning process (Trapenberg Frick 2016; Williamson and Ruming 2019).

For Evans-Cowley (2010), the use of social media offers a new avenue of communication between communities and government planning agencies and two separate groups can be identified: citizen-initiated social networks and government-initiated. Social media networks organized by communities to oppose a proposed development are predominantly used to share information (Evans-Cowley 2010). However, traditional participants were more knowledgeable and engaged than online participants and online participants are largely new, compared to the traditional participants (Evans-Cowley and Hollander 2010). When compared to traditional participation, such as town hall meetings, posting throughs, comments and opinions on social media theoretically has a lower threshold for public involvement (Evans-Cowley and Griffin 2012) and is increasingly an additional communications channel for government officials to engage with the public. While social media is

yet to demonstrate how it can foster a strong sense of community, or enable the public to establish a significant voice in planning (Evans-Cowley and Griffin 2012), it does provide the public with an opportunity to easily view and respond to the views of government agencies, when they chose to use it as an engagement tool. Conversely, a recent case study highlights that it is difficult to discuss planning matters in the short message format that most social media operates on and government departments need to recognize the speed of public engagement is being influenced by social media, and should have processes in place that allow for continued dialogue to happen in a timely manner (Williamson and Ruming 2017). Government agencies can lose control of the message as community groups use online communications to relentlessly distribute a counter narrative that increases public awareness of the planning process (Trapezberg Frick 2016). Moreover, if government agencies want to use social media they must be prepared to engage with individuals to discuss their concerns, it is not enough to have a social media presence that just pushes announcements with little concern for the publics' response (Schweitzer 2014). While there is a growing body of literature focusing on the presence and potential influence of social media to promote two-way communication in urban planning processes, little evidence of government-initiated activity has been observed (Falco and Kleinhans 2018).

3. Data collection and methodology

This section outlines the data sources, data collection techniques and methodology undertaken for the case study. By utilizing three social media platforms, the #MySydney campaign theoretically reached a significant proportion of Sydney's population that actively uses social media.

3.1. Facebook

Facebook is a social networking website where users can post comments, share photographs and links to news or other content on the Web, play games, chat live, and stream live video (Fuchs 2017). According to Cowling (2018) approximately 15 million (60%) Australians are actively using Facebook on a monthly basis. Facebook has broad usage across all age groups and is evenly used by people in both metropolitan and regional areas (Sensis 2018). At the time of the campaign, the Department's Facebook account had 12,000 likes. To collect Facebook data we used the Netvizz data extraction application developed by Rieder (2013). Data was collected from the PlanSydney Facebook page on 30 July 2015 and represents Facebook posts from 24 June to 22 July 2015. The use of Facebook during the campaign was comprised of 11 questions posted by the Department, 49 comments posted by the public, and 19 responses posted by the Department.

3.2. Twitter

Twitter is a social media platform that allows people to publish short messages on the Internet and is commonly referred to as microblogging. Twitter allows users to 'follow' other user accounts they are interested in. Twitter enables users to broadcast messages using hash tags (#) and send direct messages using the '@' symbol. Twitter is the ninth most used social media platform in Australia with approximately 3 million users actively using the service on a monthly basis (Cowling 2018). Twitter is more commonly used by males and people who reside in metropolitan areas (Sensis 2018). At the time of the campaign, the Department's Twitter handle (@NSWPlanning) had 1,800 followers. The Department also uses the @NSWPlanning Twitter handle to distribute daily information about the Department's projects. Twitter data was collected directly from the Twitter archive application programming interface (API) using the TAGSv6 application created by Hawksey (2013). Twitter data was collected weekly from 26 June until 7 September 2015 using the keyword '#MySydney' to collect any tweets containing that term. The TAGSv6 application retrieves the user name, tweet content, date of publication and the number of retweets in a spreadsheet format. Twitter data was collected

throughout the campaign and also after the conclusion of the campaign to ascertain if the conversation continued without being prompting by the Department. During the campaign, 82 tweets were collected between 29 June and 9 August 2015.

3.3. Instagram

Instagram is predominantly a visual platform, but also allows users to post short messages with their photographs. Instagram is the third most popular social media platform in Australia with approximately 9 million Australians using the service on a monthly basis (Cowling 2018). Instagram tends to lose appeal up the age scale with above average use seen in the under 40s and below average use in the 50 plus age groups (Sensis 2018). The demographic profile of Instagram makes it an important platform to capture the activities of younger generations. Instagram data was obtained from the Tag Slueth (www.tagsleuth.com) social media analytics and archiving service. There were 16 comments using #MySydney during the campaign.

3.4. Public participation geographic information systems

Social Pinpoint could be defined as a public participation Geographic Information System (PPGIS) (Carver et al. 2001) that provides a web based mapping application as ‘an online community engagement tool that allows users to publicly post feedback, concerns and ideas related to a consultation project on an easy to use drag and drop mapping tool’ (www.socialpinpoint.com.au). The term PPGIS was conceived in the mid-1990s to describe a GIS technology that could support public participation (Sieber 2006). PPGIS technology has improved significantly since its inception and the idea of crowd-sourcing public participation using PPGIS is tracking towards mainstream use in planning (Brown 2015). PPGIS methods excel in the identification and mapping of place-based social values and land use preferences (Brown 2015). This digitized and geotagged data can be integrated with other forms of spatial data more easily (Saad-Sulonen 2012). Unlike Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, there is no access to public facing report tools or an API for Social Pinpoint. However, the data is publically available during and after the campaign. Public comments were copied directly from the web browser screen into a text file and then the raw data was exported into a spreadsheet for analysis. The Social Pinpoint data consisted of 355 comments with date stamps between 30 June and 27 July 2015. The Social Pinpoint data contained basic location information for each comment.

3.5. Interviews

To supplement our digital data, an interview with the Department’s Digital Media Officer was conducted in May 2015, with follow up questions in July 2016. The Department declined to comment on follow up questions.

3.6. Data collection limitations

These forms of digital data collection only represent a sample, and should not be considered a complete data set. For instance, the Netvizz and Twitter archive services do not extract data for users whose privacy settings do not allow data sharing through data extraction applications. For Twitter, Tromble, Storz, and Stockmann (2017) advises that Twitter prioritizes original tweets, tweets with more hashtags and tweets by verified accounts for data extraction applications. Thus, researchers should not assume a complete representation of the tweets they are seeking to analyse. We acknowledge the limitations of the data collection methods used for this paper. Therefore, we do not claim that our analysis draws on the entire data set, but it does provide an important insight into the process and feedback. Unfortunately there is no way of knowing exactly how many posts and tweets are missing from our data set, so we are unable to estimate our sample size. However, Tromble, Storz,

Table 1. Topics by number of comments.

| Topic (Number of comments) | Description | Percentage of total |
|------------------------------|--|---------------------|
| Bike paths (101) | Citizens protesting against planned cycleway demolition | 20.5 |
| Recreation (68) | Citizens commenting on recreation spaces in their area | 13.8 |
| Nature (47) | Citizens commenting on access to bushland, beaches in their area | 9.6 |
| Train timetable (45) | Citizens protesting against timetable changes | 9.1 |
| WestConnex (44) | Citizens protesting against construction of WestConnex road way and traffic congestion | 8.9 |
| Housing density (36) | Citizens either opposing or supporting higher density housing | 7.3 |
| Open space (22) | Citizens commenting on access to open space in their area | 4.5 |
| Town Centres (22) | Citizens commenting on aspects of local town centres they either like or could be upgraded | 4.5 |
| Community (20) | Citizens commenting on sense of community or village atmosphere in their suburb | 4.1 |
| Public transport (18) | Citizens commenting on positive aspects of public transport or requesting improvements to current routes or interchanges | 3.7 |
| Retail (16) | Citizens commenting on retail centres or specific shops they like | 3.3 |
| Pedestrians (15) | Citizens commenting on pedestrian routes used or requesting pathways be installed | 3.0 |
| Infrastructure (8) | Citizens requesting bridges be built or existing bridge be upgraded | 1.6 |
| Heritage (7) | Citizens commenting on heritage aspects of specific suburbs | 1.4 |
| South West Rail Link (7) | Citizens protesting against proposed new railway line | 1.4 |
| Governance (4) | Question from citizens regarding decision making role of Greater Sydney Commission | 0.8 |
| Light rail (4) | Citizens requesting light rail be constructed to service various suburbs | 0.8 |
| Lockout laws (3) | Citizens opposing or supporting lock out laws | 0.6 |
| Railway station upgrades (3) | Citizens requesting railway station improvements or upgrades | 0.6 |
| Schools (2) | Citizens suggesting new schools are needed in certain areas | 0.4 |

and Stockmann (2017) suggests keyword searches from the Twitter archive service will retrieve at least 80% of tweets.

3.7. Method

Qualitative content analysis is a method for systematically describing the meaning of qualitative data (Krippendorff 2013). Given the qualitative nature of the data, a combined approach of automated data collection and manual coding was adopted (Lewis, Zamith, and Hermida 2013). The key features of the content analysis method are its flexible systematic approach and its ability to reduce qualitative data (Schreier 2013). Qualitative content analysis shares many features with other qualitative research methods, such as the concern with meaning and interpretation of symbolic material and the importance of context in determining meaning (Schreier 2013). In this instance, content analysis was undertaken by assigning citizens' comments to topics derived directly from the textual data being analysed. The topics were successively modified and expanded as the text was explored. In the majority of cases, keywords or themes were easily identified in the text and their frequency was recorded as a percentage of the data set (Table 1).

4. Results

Content analysis of the 492 social media and Social Pinpoint comments revealed 20 distinct topics (Table 1). Due to the open ended questions from the Department, the campaign attracted comments from a wide array of citizens and single-issue groups. Approximately 41% of responses were from citizens answering the fundamental question: 'tell us what you like about your suburb', which was dominated by localized comments regarding existing access to nature, open space, recreation areas, community and retail facilities. For example, 'The most beautiful park in Sydney', 'Love easy access to beaches and bush walks' and 'Great bushwalking'. These are valid responses that reflect the questions posed by the Department. Conversely, the dominant single-issue group topics

consisted of bike paths and WestConnex.¹ The presence of single-issue groups in our data is an important aspect of public participation in planning and is analysed in detail below.

Changes to a train timetable that runs through the west central and south west districts also attracted a significant number of comments, as well as contemporary issues in Sydney such as the 'lock out laws' that apply mandatory closing times for licenced premises in certain inner Sydney suburbs were identified in the data, but have nothing to do with the district planning processes. The following sub-sections of the paper analyse the social media engagement strategy mobilized by the Department, the participation rate and relationship with mainstream media, the use of a generic hashtag and the presence of single issue community groups.

4.1. Social media as an engagement strategy

The social media strategy used by the Department is critically important as it will determine the type of engagement and the data generated by the campaign. To examine the engagement strategy we draw on our interview with the Department's digital media officer and Facebook data.

The Department sought to engage citizens across a large geographic area of Sydney on the basis that feedback will inform district plans (DP&E 2015a). Over the duration of the campaign the Department posts evolved from 'tell us what you like about your suburb' to 'join the conversation' to seeking specific feedback with leading questions about local open space, for example:

Join in and tell us about your favourite local parks beaches and green spaces. (Facebook 17 July 2015)

The Department described their engagement strategy and the use of multiple social media platforms in the campaign with a wider communications context as the:

social strategy forms part of a broader digital marketing strategy, and it's generally what's known as a channel strategy (Interview with Department's digital media officer).

The Department intended to use the campaign to produce digital content that would eventually transform into an ongoing self-moderated conversation:

the idea is that you start to produce content that's rich, it's unique, it's engaging, it's expert, but then you've also got the moderation and the community management side of things (Interview with Department's Digital Media Officer)

Although social media can provide a two-way dialog, the campaign was conducted in a question and answer format that collected answers without engaging in discussions. This strategy resulted in predominantly one-way communication with limited or generic responses by the Department, which only thanked citizens for their input, rather than further discussing their likes and dislikes. An example comment by a citizen and response by the Department follows:

I love Camden!! It's the last frontier of country in the Sydney basin. We are surrounded by development and our country feel is slowly disappearing. (Facebook 25 June 2015)

Hi [name removed]. Thank you for sharing your thoughts. They are vital to helping us shape a better suburb. (Facebook 25 June 2015)

The Department's response to the citizen's comment is generic in that it does not engage with the specific concern raised or prompt ongoing discussion from the participant. This is contrary to the Department's posts suggesting citizens 'join the conversation' between the Department and the community, but is consistent with the 'branding' (Listerborn 2017) style of engagement strategy described by the Department's Digital Media Officer:

You should respond back with your brand saying thanks for your feedback we really love to hear from you. The more that you start to do that the more that the audience or the community start to understand that the brand is listening to them. (Interview with Department's digital media officer)

The campaign mobilized by the Department fulfils the communications strategy to brand the Department through social media and is consistent with planning departments undertaking visioning exercises to creating ‘stories of identity’ to inform city branding policies, rather than informing strategic plans (Listerborn 2017, 12). However, the lack of two-way dialogue during the campaign appears to have been a missed opportunity, as the Department appears to have only used media staff and resources. The need for dedicated staff who have the knowledge and authority to respond and create a more open and fluid form of engagement via social media is critical (Trapenberg Frick 2016). It is not enough to have a social media presence that just broadcasts announcements (Schweitzer 2014). If Department staff were prepared to respond with secondary questions that prompted citizens to then think about how urban planning might protect their favourite spaces and places, this would have created a more valuable dataset for further consideration in the next phase of district planning. However, the Department explained that success for the campaign was measured by actually undertaking the campaign and the metrics used to measure each of the social media channels:

So success is timeliness to implement, [and] the department’s ability to adapt ... each channel has its own method and then it’s your basic metrics against each of those channels. (Interview with Department’s Digital Media Officer)

While the successful implementation of the campaign is an outcome facilitated by social media technology, just undertaking a campaign, measured by basic metrics, does not define success in terms of feedback into the planning process. To further analyse the campaign, we now explore the volume of participation that can be explained by our data, in particular, the Social Pinpoint data as it included locational details.

4.2. Participation rates and mainstream media

In this section we analysis the overall engagement generated by the #MySydney campaign and how the Department attempted to encouraging more participation through mainstream media.

As Social Pinpoint was the only data set which allowed for geography to be recorded, the data was contrasted with population and land size data. Unsurprisingly there is a correlation between population size and participation levels. For example, the large population of the central district resulted in the highest number of responses on Social Pinpoint, as it accounted for 33% of all responses recorded (Table 2). Likewise, the west and south west districts have the lowest population densities and also collected the lowest number of comments on Social Pinpoint. Table 2 also shows the breakdown of ‘like’ and ‘change’ comments as categorized by the citizen when they dropped their comment on the Social Pinpoint map. The central, north, south and west districts all collected more ‘like’ comments indicating aspects of citizen’s suburbs or neighbourhoods that they like. These areas collected high numbers of comments regarding recreation, nature and retail. Conversely, the south west and west central districts collected more ‘change’ comments. These areas collected high numbers of negative comments regarding train timetables and infrastructure projects, such

Table 2. Districts by population, land size and social pinpoint responses.

| District | Population [^] | Land size (km ²) | Density* | Social pinpoint responses | Responses per capita [#] | Like/Change |
|--------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|----------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------|
| Central | 819,400 | 188 | 4,359 | 118 | 0.14 | 60/58 |
| North | 853,150 | 900 | 948 | 78 | 0.09 | 47/31 |
| South | 610,550 | 450 | 1,357 | 45 | 0.07 | 27/18 |
| South West | 636,800 | 3,445 | 185 | 35 | 0.05 | 15/20 |
| West | 327,500 | 4,612 | 71 | 13 | 0.04 | 8/5 |
| West Central | 1,036,850 | 851 | 1,218 | 66 | 0.06 | 23/43 |
| Totals | 4,284,250 | 10,446 | N/A | 355 | N/A | 180/175 |

*People / square kilometre.

[^]Population figures sourced from a plan for growing Sydney.

[#]Response rate per 1,000 people.

as WestConnex and the South West Rail Link, which were not within the scope of the district planning process.

The response rate per capita is consistently very low for each district. In an effort to generate more engagement, the Department advertised the campaign in local newspapers in districts with a low response rate.

On the 17 July 2015, the Department issued a media release encouraging citizens to join the conversation (DP&E 2015a). This was accompanied by an extension of the process, allowing an additional 2 weeks to 31 July 2015. The media release was the first non-social media based communication from the Department regarding the campaign. The media release stated that there were hundreds of people across Sydney joining the conversation and encouraged others to get involved (DP&E 2015a). The media release asked for photographs and comments which would be 'compiled and used to help shape localised plans known as District Plans' and explained that district plans were the next step in implementing the Department's metropolitan wide strategic plan. The media release coincided with eight newspaper notices published between 14–23 July 2015 in suburban newspapers promoting the campaign, particularly in western and southern Sydney (Blacktown Sun 2015; Parramatta Sun 2015; Penrith City Star 2015; St George and Sutherland Shire Leader 2015). An example of the community notices (Figure 2) states that residents are being encouraged to take a picture of their favourite area in the community and upload it to either Facebook or Instagram using the hashtag #MySydney and that the pictures will be used for a localized plan for the area (Parramatta Sun 2015). It is noted that the newspapers notices focused on uploading photographs to Facebook or Instagram instead of posting comments, there was no mention of 'joining the conversation' and there was little mention of the district planning context in which the campaign was being undertaken.

This segment of the campaign illustrates the difficulty of using social media as an engagement tool, as only citizens who have 'liked' the Facebook page or are aware of the Twitter handle and hashtag(s) are directly notified of the campaign and its strategic planning context. Figure 3 shows the media release and eight suburban newspaper notices did not have a noticeable impact on the use of Social Pinpoint, which indicates that residents who saw the initial engagement requests via social media and were willing to participate had already done so. In this instance, our data sample demonstrates a weak link between mainstream and social media. While government departments are using social media to tap into segments of the community that they do not necessarily engage with through

Plan shape of future

Parramatta residents have until July 31 to be a part of the #MySydney campaign to help shape the future of the area.

Residents are being encouraged to take a picture of their favourite area in the community and upload it to either Facebook or Instagram using the hashtag #MySydney or post a comment on the campaign's website.

The pictures will then be collated to create an individualised plan for the Parramatta area.

More information can be found at planning.nsw.gov.au/MySydney.

Figure 2. Community notice (Parramatta Sun 2015, 9).

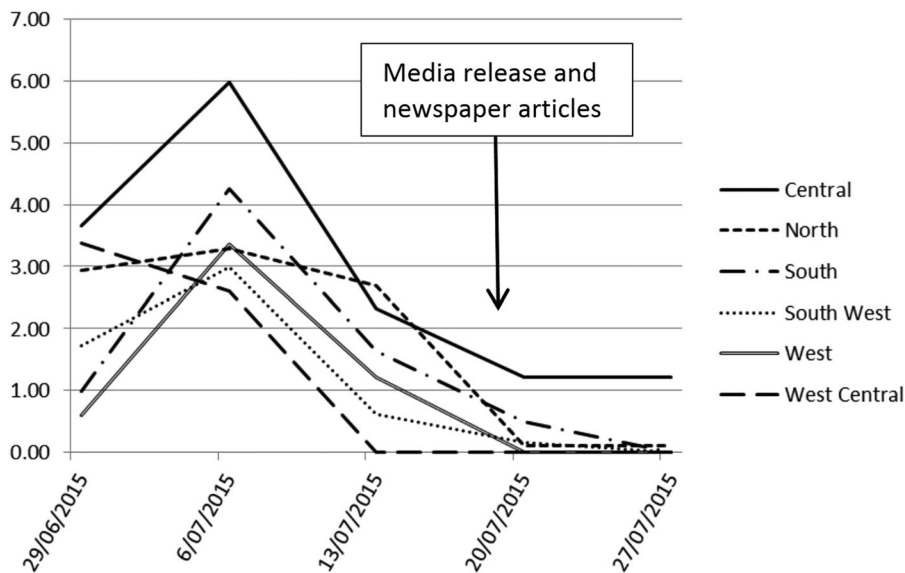


Figure 3. Social pinpoint comments by district and date (normalized by district population).

mainstream media channels, using traditional media methods to more broadly advertise a social media campaign remains questionable.

Two months after the conclusion of the campaign, a Department media release advised that the #MySydney campaign engaged with 36,000 Sydney residents using social media. According to the Department, elements of Sydney ‘loved’ by residents were: the community feel, open space, proximity to the CBD, cafes and restaurants and diversity. The community also told the Department they would change public transport and roads and would like more cycleways and parks. The Department concluded that the #MySydney campaign gave them a unique perspective on what Sydney wants from their city and said the results provided ‘a deeper insight into Sydney’s suburbs, from people who may not ordinarily participate in consultation about the city’s future’ (DP&E 2015b). While the Department declined to respond to our follow up questions regarding how they estimated the campaign engaged with 36,000 Sydney residents, our data clearly shows that the participation rate was much lower. We suggest that the Department’s engagement rate was deduced from the number of web page hits that hosted the Social Pinpoint application, which is a valid statistic, but does not constitute engagement or participation. In turn, this then raises the question of why only approximately 1% of citizens who arrived at the web page chose to drop a comment on the Social Pinpoint map. This could be partly explained by the somewhat generic #MySydney hashtag utilized by the campaign.

4.3. Using a generic hashtag

In this study many of the citizens who used the generic #MySydney hashtag, especially via Twitter and Instagram, may not have been aware there was a set of framing questions and therefore did not respond directly to the Department’s questions. This is particular evident through bike paths and WestConnex protestors raising issues and circulating content that had nothing to do with the district planning processes.

Hashtags assign a keyword(s) to a tweet as a form of metadata referencing the topic of a message as specified by the user (Zappavigna 2012, 85). This topic tag assumes that other users will also adopt the tag and use it as a keyword for other tweets on the same topic, thus, the use of hashtags presupposes a virtual community of interested listeners. Unlike other forms of metadata, hashtags are

visible in the text and can hold functional roles in the linguistic structure of the tweet (Zappavigna 2012, 85). Twitter handles are often used in a similar manner. The social function of a hashtag is to provide an easy means of grouping tweets, which in turn can create an ad hoc social group. Zappavigna (2012, 96) terms the searchable aspects of hashtags as ambient affiliation in the sense that while tweets can be grouped by a hashtag the users may not interact directly, are unlikely to know each other and may not interact again. Although the bike paths and WestConnex protestors used #MySydney, they also used various other hashtags to broadcast messages to as many people as possible. It is obvious that many tweets collected because of the affiliation with #MySydney have nothing to do with engaging with the district plan making process and suggests that online participation must be careful to acknowledge that others will use affiliations for different reasons. For example, the timing of the bike path demolition enabled an active group of cyclist to utilize a government promoted social media campaign for their own ends. This may have widened the cyclists social media reach and also got their message directly into a government department, albeit, not the department responsible for decision making regarding transport in the CBD. Moreover, the majority of comments collected from Instagram were attributed to a series of posts by a fitness company. Effectively, the hashtag was being used during the campaign as a generic hashtag for posts about Sydney businesses and highlights the uncontrollable nature of social media.

The #MySydney campaign illustrates that unlike traditional engagement processes used by urban planners, such as town halls meetings, there is no way of moderating participation and it is very difficult to keep relevant conversation on the topic. These issues can be increased by using a generic hashtag that has no clear relationship with urban planning.

Ten months after the conclusion of the #MySydney campaign, the Department thanked citizens for their contribution using #MySydney and directed citizens to a new Twitter handle @gscsydney established by the recently formed GSC to start the next step:

@PlanSydney Thanks for #MySydney input – for next step follow: @gscsydney [<http://www.greater.sydney>]
(Twitter 16 May 2016)

Importantly, the GSC personalized their messaging to talk directly to citizens with tweets like ‘We need you to help shape the future of #GreaterSydney’ (Twitter, 26 May 2016) and used a more distinguishable hashtag that related to the GSC.

4.4. Single issue community groups

As previously mentioned, the #MySydney campaign was utilized by single issue-based community groups, particularly bike paths and the WestConnex construction project. This form of activism is common for groups that are organized to oppose change (Mouat, Legacy, and March 2013). The most dominant topic in our dataset was bike paths, especially the College Street bike path in Sydney’s central business district. The #MySydney campaign was underway during the time leading up to the demolition of the bike path. At the time, cyclists were also utilizing Twitter as a communications channel to protest against the bike path changes. This was a form of citizen activism rather than a form of participation in the strategic planning process as envisaged by the Department (Williamson and Ruming 2017). As with the cyclists, a community group contesting the construction of the WestConnex project utilized Social Pinpoint and Twitter during the campaign. For these citizens, engaging with the campaign was done by adding #MySydney to a list of hashtags mobilized to resist a particular planning and development decision. Thus, a challenge with using social media to engage with the broader community is the capacity for citizens to fill up their tweet with as many hashtags as they can, many of which may not be directly relevant to urban planning.

In this case, a government initiated campaign to engage the wider community on what they would like their suburbs to be like, had effectively been strategically mobilized by groups with planning matters that they wished to promote. This is no different to more traditional forms of engagement (Mouat, Legacy, and March 2013) and concurs with a growing body of literature that positions

plan making as a post-political act where opportunities for true political action are restricted and channelled by planning practice to generate a form of consensus (Legacy 2016; Rumung 2018). This case study also highlights the complexity of public engagement in an environment where numerous planning matters are at various stages in their respective processes. It should also be noted that the issues raised in this case study are tied to the timing of the campaign and if conducted 12 months before or after June 2015, the dominate content would be different, although WestConnex would probably still feature due to its long term construction programme. For this case study, the Department chose not to engage with the content that was outside of the scope of the fundamental questions broadcast at the beginning of the campaign and only responded to topics within scope with generic thank you messages. As such, we suggest the Department could have better prepared for what topics may be raised by citizens and community groups and sought to actively respond to create a sense the government is listening and understands the concerns being raised, regardless of what government agency may be responsible for the topic.

5. Discussion

The #MySydney campaign was an attempt to engage with Sydney through contemporary digital communications channels at the early visioning stage of a district planning process. This consultation was undertaken during the initial preparation of the district plans, thus there were no details for the community to consider or comment on. While it is difficult to ask citizens to comment on a blank page, this form of engagement aligns with the aspirations of open engagement that allows citizens to join-in with government officials to develop plans early in the process (Fung 2006; Arnstein 1969). To this end, using social media gives the impression that engagement is open and far reaching, but in reality this form of engagement sits in the consultation/placation levels of Arnstein's (1969) ladder of citizen participation as it exhibits a degree of tokenism. For Arnstein (1969) these levels of participation allow citizens to be heard, but citizens lack the control to insure that their views will be heeded. This lack of citizen control is most evident in the Department's limited engagement with issues and lack of feedback on how citizen's comments would be fed into the district planning process. Notwithstanding, the campaign did achieve its primary goal of collecting data from citizens regarding spaces and places they like in their suburb and is consistent with traditional community visioning workshops that seek to generate important concepts for places and potentially generate some ownership among those who chose to participate (Cuthill 2004).

Based on our observations, the Department sought to utilize social media to conduct an engagement campaign, but the campaign was implemented through the Department's media team that used a marketing methodology as the basis for the campaign. To this end, the Department was looking to use social media channels to brand the Department, while the intent should have been to listen to the community and build on their likes and dislikes through a series of activities that identified what citizens want to improve and how planning can assist in getting there (Cuthill 2004). Up front strategic planning activities are not new and many lessons have been learned through managing these complex community engagements using multi-disciplinary teams of experts (Healey 1998; Cuthill 2004). However, in this instance, new communications platforms have been adopted, but the complexities of managing the public's issues, which are often deeply felt, were not planned and resulted in only a small amount of the data being useful for the planning process.

Social media platforms offer citizens the possibility to engage through all stages of the planning process (Evans-Cowley and Hollander 2010). The Department's media officer also suggested the #MySydney campaign was the first step of an ongoing conversation through social media. However, the campaign was too short to generate ongoing self-moderated conversation and ultimately resulted in another instance of a government agency using social media as a one-way communication platform (Bonsón et al. 2012; Mergel 2013a; Falco and Kleinhans 2018). Furthermore, while it is very difficult to discuss planning matters in the short message format Twitter operates on (Williamson and Rumung 2017; Gruz, Lannigan, and Quigley 2018), the campaign also mobilized Facebook

and Instagram, which have a much higher character limit on posts and comments, but there was no evidence of more detailed dialogue on these platforms.

This case study has also provided a snapshot of how different social media platforms were used during the campaign. Citizen engagement was most evident on Facebook, as the Department followed up citizen posts with regular and timely responses. Conversely, Twitter data was dominated by the single-issue community groups. Although the participation rate was generally low across all platforms, participation was very low on Instagram. This could be explained by the use of a generic hashtag on Instagram that did not explicitly link to the engagement campaign. This suggests that Facebook may be the most appropriate social media platform for an open engagement at the beginning of a project as its structure allows contextual information, in various formats, to be made available on the Facebook page. If planning agencies are looking to utilize Twitter and Instagram, it is probably more productive to engage the community through traditional engagement processes as they are more directed and can frame the purpose of the engagement process and then use Twitter and Instagram to distribute concepts, ideas and findings for further comment.

6. Conclusions

This paper has explored how the #MySydney campaign attempted to utilize contemporary communications platforms to engage with the population of a large geographic area. The campaign demonstrated that social media can be just another avenue used by the most active and engaged citizens to mobilize antagonistic political campaigns to destabilize planning processes. For this type of engagement to be more useful, planning agencies must utilize the full functionality of social media and be prepared to respond to the concerns of citizens, not just broadcasting questions and reply with generic thank you notes. Further, research should examine how planning agencies can prepare and implement multi-disciplinary teams to conduct a two-way dialog with citizens through social media. Until this issue is resolved, planning agencies using social media to engage with the public will continue to demonstrate little evidence of genuine engagement with the public.

Note

1. WestConnex is a 33 kilometre motorway project designed to link Sydney's west and south-west with the central business district, airport and Port Botany (www.westconnex.com.au).

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Chapter 11: Conclusion

11.1 Overview

This thesis has investigated community and government planning authority use of social media in planning practice. Chapters 1 to 3 provided the introduction, the research background and the design of this research. The contribution of this thesis is articulated through Chapters 4 to 10. In each of these chapters, the results and contributions are discussed through specific case studies. This chapter discusses the key contributions of the overall thesis and draws conclusions with respect to the research questions. In addition, it provides a discussion on possible areas for further research.

11.2 Key contributions from each chapter

This thesis has contributed to the small amount of research done on the adoption and use of social media in strategic planning, with specific focus on Sydney, where no published academic research of this kind has been undertaken previously. Internationally, this research has contributed to a small, but growing theme of research that investigates social media in urban planning practice. This contribution has been done by presenting case studies of the stakeholders and planning processes in which social media appears in planning practice. This thesis has made the following contributions.

Chapter 4 has made a practical contribution to the literature by identifying that various stakeholders follow community groups, including politicians, journalist, planning authorities, local governments and other community groups. The social media network structures identified most closely resemble opinion leader networks, which are good for collective action, but not problem solving. This is a logical finding for a community group whose main goal is direct action in response to a site specific planning matter. For the two community groups investigated, they do not attract large numbers of followers on Twitter and key stakeholders and decision-makers play a passive listening role in the networks. However, the stakeholder's low participation is balanced by their large networks of followers that create the potential for the community groups reach on social media to be significantly increased.

A significant contribution by this thesis is the case study in Chapter 5, which analysed the Department of Planning's attempts to communicate about the planning process

through Twitter. Social media dialogue between a planning authority and a community group is quite rare and has not been explicitly analysed in any other known planning literature. In this instance, the dialogue was highly disjointed and generated misunderstandings and mixed messages that frustrated the community group. This demonstrates that it is difficult to explain complex planning concepts and process in social media format. This case study also revealed insights into how the speed of engagement is changing due to the use of social media platforms. In fact, this open and expeditious channel of communication strained the internal processes of the planning authority and raises the question of whether planning should be moving to an ongoing engagement model instead of short exhibition periods as a discrete step in the planning process. Notwithstanding, there are digital mapping, consultation and decision support platforms that have been developed for ongoing public engagement, such as Carticipe (www.carticipe.net), Citizenlab (www.citizenlab.co), Commonplace (www.commonplace.is), and Social PinPoint (which is analysed in the case study in Chapter 10) that facilitate various means of community consultation and engagement (Desouza & Bhagwatwar 2012; Ertiö & Bhagwatwar 2017; Falco & Kleinhans 2018b; Afzalan & Muller 2018).

From a theoretical perspective, Chapter 6 makes a contribution by applying the post-political lens to the use of social media by a community group. To date, social media has been largely absent from research looking at attempts to resist post-political planning efforts and research looking at the role of social media in planning participation has not investigated the post-political condition. Hence, this paper contributes to a growing literature seeking to understand the post-political condition for urban planning and explores social media as a tool to support alternative politics.

The final case study for Part I in Chapter 7 investigated a community group's use of Facebook. Community groups traditionally organise town hall meetings, plan public protests to coincide with major planning milestones, lobby elected officials through private meetings and phone calls, write letters to newspaper editors and lodge submissions to formal planning processes (Dear 1992). This case study found the community group's activity on Facebook was very similar to traditional community group actions such as information distribution and motivating others to get involved. The community group also seized upon an opportunity to broaden the scope of their campaign with the local government election falling within the timeline of the planning

process. This chapter concludes that social media may be good for initiating group activities and distributing information, but in this instance, there was little evidence of debate, even though the opportunity for multi-directional open dialogue is available through Facebook.

The community group case studies in this thesis intentionally explored links between social and mainstream media to understand if there are different messaging strategies for each communication channel. All case studies found community groups using various communications channels. Although it is difficult to quantify which communications channel had the most effect on the decision-makers, social media played a role. Moreover, this thesis makes a distinct contribution through the findings of Chapter 6 which highlighted that the community group was feeding particular information to journalist to aid campaign exposure in the local and regional newspapers and using more emotive language and themes on social media. This is the only known case study, published in urban planning literature, of a deliberate strategy to mobilise different messaging for different communication channels.

Given the findings of the community group case studies which identify the passive listening role of key stakeholders, including the Department, the second part of the thesis focused on the level of social media adoption by local governments and specific events and campaigns initiated by the Department to gain an understanding of how the government planning authorities seeks to engage with social media.

The broad data collection and analysis of capital city local governments in Chapter 8 found a high social media adoption rate and a clear correlation between local government area population size and social media use, which was also explored in Chapter 10. Local governments are using social media to engage with a wide variety of topics that cut across several sections of their local communities, with examples of inner city councils using social media to promote events that reach beyond their local government area.

The “live tweeting” case study in Chapter 9 has several unique characteristics in that it represents a Twitter data set generated over a 4 hour period in response to a Department initiated hashtag at a Department hosted planning reform workshop. Moreover, the Twitter data was mostly generated by a group of people sitting in a

large room together. The temporal component of this case study is a defining characteristic and represents a specific checkpoint in an extensive planning process. This is in direct contrast to the community initiated case studies in Part I, where there is no deadline and often some confusion regarding the planning process and next steps. It is noted that although the Department initiated the hashtag, they did not engage with any content generated by workshop participants during the workshop. There is a mature body of research on the opportunities and challenges of live tweeting at conferences and large professional gatherings, particularly by education and journalism scholars; however there is no other known research in planning literature.

In order to undertake a similar analysis on a much large data set, Chapter 10 mobilised a case study of a government initiated campaign using multiple social media platforms. In this instance, the Department sought to utilise social media to conduct an engagement campaign implemented through the Department's media team and based on a marketing methodology. This case study contributes a timely discussion on how social media gives the impression that engagement is open and far reaching, but in reality this form of engagement can be described as consultation/placation, as participation allows citizens to be heard, but citizens lack the control to insure that their views will be heeded. In effect, social media was deployed to brand the Department, while the intent should have been to listen to the community and build on their likes and dislikes through a series of activities. The open nature of social media can be a good tool for engagement, but it is also uncontrollable. Hence, the case study in Chapter 10 reaffirms that social media can be just another avenue used by the most active and engaged citizens to mobilise antagonistic campaigns to destabilise planning processes. The Department's lack of engagement in the questions, topics and discussions throughout this campaign concurs with the live tweeting case study. When considering the Department's activity during these two case studies and the community initiated case studies in Part I of the these, it can be concluded that planning authorities do not engage with questions, queries, debates or discussions on social media about specific planning matters - even when they initiate the engagement. It is not entirely clear if this is a staff or organisational issue and should be the subject of further research.

The overall contribution of this thesis is the detailed presentation of both community and government planning authority social media use in strategic planning. There is an obvious mismatch between communities that utilise social media as an additional communications channel to engage with planning authorities to seek further information on planning processes, clarify technical information or highlight inaccuracies in an attempt to disrupt the planning process. Conversely, planning authorities implement social media to mimic traditional stage-managed engagement processes, but seem very reluctant to engage in any specific questions or discussions regarding the planning concepts being presented for comment and discussion. While there seems to be a data collection or listening aspect to the Department's social media use, there is no public evidence that they review, analyse or use the social media data generated by these events and campaigns to inform decision-making.

11.3 Research questions revisited

An overarching Research Question and five sub-questions were posed in Chapter 1 of this thesis with respect to community and government planning authority use of social media in planning practice. The overarching Research Question is: How do community groups and planning authorities use social media during strategic planning processes in Sydney?

Responses to the research sub-questions are as follows:

11.3.1 Participation in social media networks

The first Research Question: Who participates in social media networks created by community groups, was explored in Chapter 4 by visualising social media networks initiated by two community groups. These case studies demonstrated that various stakeholders follow community groups, including politicians, journalists, planning authorities, local governments and other community groups. Of the community groups investigated, they do not attract large numbers of followers on Twitter and key stakeholders play a passive listening role in the networks. However, the key stakeholder's low participation is balanced by their large networks of followers that create the potential for the community groups reach on social media to be significantly increased.

11.3.2 Discourses mobilised in social media networks

The second Research Question: What discourses are mobilised in social media networks and are there differences between communication channels was approached through the case studies in Chapters 5 and 6. To answer the question these case studies explored dominant discourses and themes in the mainstream and social media activity of the relatively small Bronte RSL planning proposal and the large Parramatta North urban renewal area.

While the dominant discourse of Waverley Council was one of incompatibility with the zoning and built form of the neighbourhood, the *Save Bronte* group sought cohesion between the local community and Waverley Council to challenge state government involvement in the planning process. The community's concerns regarding overdevelopment and traffic safety were evoked by strong emotive terms of injury or death. This proposition was not contested by Waverley Council or the Department. However, the individuals in the community contested the statement by referencing the size of vehicles used by local residents. These discourses demonstrate that planning authorities use a formal reporting style to discuss potential impacts and to influence the process, while the community group engage with emotive statements, often with little reference to the proposed development, to contest the perceived negative impacts at the local level. These different genres and styles demonstrate different interpretations of the context.

While *Save Bronte* positioned itself to protect the local community from what it perceived to be a proposal for significant overdevelopment, they were also using mainstream and social media to explain their position to community members that did not appear to entirely agree with their campaign. In this instance, the discourses of different communication channels were very similar. Likewise, *Save Bronte* attempted to raise the profile of their local planning matter by linking it to state government planning policy and a failed attempt to reform the planning system. To this end, *Save Bronte* both delegitimised claims of only being concerned with protecting their own backyard and afforded them the opportunity to position themselves as public defenders. The approach taken to this topic was also very similar in both mainstream and social media. However, *Save Bronte* used social media to pose questions to the Department and comment on other Department

projects hundreds of times. While impossible to quantify, this relentless activity is assumed to have raised the profile of the community group.

Whilst *Save Bronte* tried to broaden their arguments to align with issues raised in planning reforms, the NPRAG case study in Chapter 6 also mobilised the provocative "second best for the west" hashtag to re-scale participation from a site specific contest to the larger geographic region of Sydney. This theme was almost exclusively used on social media, but not in mainstream media. NPRAG noted that they fed information to journalists to aid campaign exposure in the local and regional newspapers, while using more emotive language and themes on social media to gain attention on social media platforms.

For these case studies, discourses are mobilised in different formats depending on the role of the stakeholder. In the NPRAG case study, the delineation of communications channels was clear as planning authorities provided formal comments to journalists, but were silent on social media. Overall, discourse mobilised by the community are more emotive, and can attract personal attacks when the community group positions itself to represent the local community. These case studies represent heterogeneous communications strategies, as there was no evidence that *Save Bronte* used different discourse strategies for different communications channels, conversely, NPRAG used a deliberate strategy of mobilising different discourses for different communications channels.

There is no clear answer to this question as the communications strategies pursued by a community group are tailored to their specific planning matter and subject to change depending on the actions of the government authorities and other stakeholders involved.

11.3.3 The effectiveness of social media communication

The third Research Question: Is social media an effective communication mode for community groups to challenge planning processes was explored by the three case studies in Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

While social media played a role in all the case studies, it is difficult to quantify which communications channel had the most effect on the decision-makers. However, the sustained use of social media seemed to draw a cautious Department into using

Twitter to publically comment about the process in Chapter 5. In turn, this case study highlights difficulties encountered by the Department's attempts to interact with the community using social media to explain government processes and procedures in the short text format offered by Twitter. Whilst the success of the Department's attempts to respond to a community group using Twitter is questionable, the *Save Bronte* case study also showed that although community groups are utilising social media as part of their communications, the stakeholders and decision-makers they attract mostly played a listening role, instead of getting involved. This finding is reinforced by the case studies in Chapters 6 and 7 which found a distinct lack of interaction with any other stakeholders, including elected officials from local and state government through social media.

Although only based on a small set of case studies, it can be concluded that social media does not seem to be an effective communication channel for community groups to directly challenge state government authorities during a specific planning process. However, the case studies demonstrated that community groups used social media as an effective communication channel to raise the community group's profile and seek alliances with other community groups. Importantly, Chapters 5 and 6 highlight how a community group used social media to promote emotive arguments that transcend a site-specific challenge. In doing so, the community group effectively utilised social media to destabilise the legitimacy of the planning process and also avoid being accused of site-specific NIMBY activities. This was particularly evident in the Chapter 6 case study where the community group adopted the emotive "second best for the west" theme that rescaled their challenge from the local to the metropolitan level.

However, in line with previous research on community groups, they are led by a small number of people, while others have a much lower participation rate. This suggests the social media played a supporting role in the community group's activities, as it was one of several communication channels used. The case study in Chapter 5, also observed that while social media may raise a community group's profile, it can also magnify the level of opposition to their campaign within the local community.

Overall, social media only made a moderate improvement to communications for the community groups studied for this thesis. Information circulated using social media seems to be a supplementary channel to other forms of communication, such as face-to-face meetings, community events and volunteering activities, but plays a stronger role in initiating community group activities and regularly distributing information to the most dedicated community group members.

11.3.4 Twitter adoption, activity and influence by local governments

The fourth Research Question: What is the level of Twitter adoption, activity and influence by local governments in Australian capital cities was approached by measuring Twitter activity of capital city local governments in Chapter 8.

Chapter 8 confirms that 91 percent of local governments sampled displayed links to Facebook, while 83 percent displayed a link to Twitter. Furthermore, inner city local governments have significant numbers of Twitter followers and healthy *Impact* and *Klout* scores. All inner city local governments were labelled as Reporters, which reflects the volume of tweets and followers. Conversely, suburban local governments were given very low *Impact* and *Klout* scores, which reflects the low number of followers for an organization, and in most cases, low Twitter activity. This suggests that inner city local governments are looking to engage with communities of a larger geographic area. Suburban councils use social media for more local issues compared to their capital city counterparts. This analysis also found a significant positive relationship between Mayor social media use and the corresponding local government's use of social media.

Overall, the level of Twitter adoption, activity and influence by inner city local governments is very high for Mayors and their organisations. Therefore, it can be assumed that local governments have mature internal processes for using social media. However, it is noted that these assumptions are based on general use of social media, rather than specific use for planning matters.

11.3.5 State government use of social media

The fifth and final research question: How do Government planning authorities use social media to engage stakeholders and the public in planning processes was addressed by two case studies in Chapters 9 and 10. Rather than collecting data on the day-to-day social media activities of the Department of Planning, the approach to

this question was to identify and analyse specific events and campaigns initiated by the Department and how they utilised social media.

The case study in Chapter 9 analysed how the Department promoted the use of Twitter for a large workshop by establishing a hashtag prior to the workshop starting and then regularly posting updates throughout the workshop, but did not engage with any digital backchannel questions and discussions. It was observed that a small number of Twitter users engaged with the workshop hashtag throughout the event, while others dropped in and out. There is no publically available evidence that the Department reviewed or used any Twitter data generated on the day. Chapter 9 concludes that it is safe to assume that social media will never replace face-to-face engagement in urban planning. To further explore this Research Question, Chapter 10 reviewed an 8 week social media campaign by the Department that sought to replicate a traditional community engagement process with an online version.

The case study in Chapter 10 followed the #MySydney which had the primary goal of collecting data from citizens regarding spaces and places they like in their suburb and is consistent with traditional community visioning workshops. However, a major point of difference is that this engagement campaign was implemented through the Department's media team which used a marketing methodology as the basis for the campaign. In this instance, new communications channels have been adopted, but the complexities of managing the public's issues, which are often deeply felt, were not planned and resulted in only a small amount of the data being useful for the planning process. The campaign did achieve its primary goal of collecting data from citizens regarding spaces and places they like in their suburb, but the campaign also demonstrated that social media can be just another avenue used by the most active and engaged citizens to mobilise antagonistic political campaigns to destabilise planning processes or seek alternative outcomes.

Like most of the community group case studies in Part I, the Department did not engage in any meaningful dialogue through social media during the campaign. For this type of engagement to be more useful, planning authorities must utilise the full functionality of social media and be prepared to respond to the concerns of citizens, not just broadcasting questions and reply with generic thankyou notes.

These case studies found the Department using social media, but it is by mimicking traditional processes rather than using the full functionality of social media to improve the discourse of their events, or provide feedback to questions or concerns raised by the community. Moreover, Chapters 9 and 10 found no evidence of social media data being used by the Department after these events to influence decision-making.

11.4 How is social media being used in planning in Sydney?

There is limited evidence in this thesis suggesting that social media will improve communication between communities and government planning authorities in Sydney. Planning authorities undertake community consultation through a statutory process with strict conditions for collecting and processing community responses and reporting this feedback to elected officials. The political process of consultation is not set up to listen to a stream of community comments and opinions flowing through to them on social media. To use this information effectively would require a complete rethink of how comments and feedback from the community have traditionally been handled by government planning authorities.

When taken as a complete thesis, these case studies show a disconnect between communities using social media as a lobbying tool in the same manner as traditional methods, whilst planning authorities are experimenting with social media as a digital version of traditional consultation methods that are subject to normative rules, regulations and political context.

This thesis demonstrates that planning authorities are “tapping” into social media networks initiated by community groups. However, in most cases this is a listening role, rather than an engagement role. This reflects Klosterman’s quote at the beginning of this thesis, in that planning authorities are listening to social media to gain an understanding of what community groups are saying and doing, but they are not necessarily using this information to highlight issues and concerns and acting upon them.

11.5 Theoretical contribution

Despite being focused on case studies sourced from planning practice, this research makes a broad contribution to academic debates, in particular, planning theory regarding participatory planning and single issue community groups.

First, participatory planning has been largely absorbed into planning practice (Grant 2017). However, participation remains a contested concept in planning theory (Day 1997). Arguments for participation highlight that increased opportunity and access to planning processes leads to better decision-making (Brand & Gaffikin 2007). Conversely, others argue that participatory processes do not provide significant information to government officials, do not satisfy members of the public and do not improve the decision-making (Innes & Booher 2004). Moreover, the post-political framework is a theoretical lens that is increasingly being used to challenge participatory planning approaches (Allmendinger & Haughton 2015; Inch 2015; Raco 2015; Legacy 2016; 2017; Ruming 2018). In particular, community participation techniques that seek to build consensus, but do not challenge existing power relations (Legacy 2016; 2017). This thesis has framed its case studies within these theoretical frameworks and found that whilst social media in planning may give the impression that engagement is open and far reaching, in reality this form of participation can be described as consultation/placation (Arnstein 1969), as participation allows citizens to have their say, but citizens lack the control to insure that their views will be heeded. Likewise, planning authorities using of social media take a distinctly stage-managed approach to public engagement that does not allow the community to gain any control of the dialogue.

Second, community groups are often labelled as 'Not-in-my-backyard' (NIMBY) in reference to their protectionist attributes and oppositional tactics (Dear 1992). In many cases community groups form to oppose planning matters that exhibit post-political tendencies (Davidson & Iveson 2015). For several decades planning literature has focused on the activities and tactics of these groups. Recently, community groups have mobilised social media as part of their communications strategy (Afzalan & Muller 2014; Johnson & Halegoua 2015; Ertio & Bhagwatwar 2017; Enzo & Kleinhans 2018a). This thesis has made a theoretical contribution by examining how community groups have adopted contemporary communications channels to support their oppositional tactics and how they are tailoring their communications strategies to utilise the best attributes of each communications channel.

11.6 Limitations

This thesis presented seven case studies, but it should not be taken as an exhaustive representation of all possible cases where social media may appear in

planning processes. While the case studies examined a number of strategic planning processes that captured the activities of several stakeholders, it is acknowledged that other planning processes, such as development assessment, heritage and infrastructure planning, have not been covered in any detail. These processes may include different stakeholders that act in different ways. Although the case studies covered strategic planning in the form of site specific planning proposals to change planning controls, large scale precinct planning and broad engagement processes, they are a somewhat disparate collection of case studies. This has allowed this thesis to cover a significant range of cases. However, there is also limited ability to compare them.

All case studies in the thesis rely on social media data. Although these case studies have successfully incorporated social media data into their data analysis, there are significant challenges with this approach. First, free access to Twitter data is only guaranteed when the planning matter is in progress, and this means that to collect a useful data set, the researcher must be aware to the project and actively collecting data as it happens. Second, access to Facebook and Instagram data has become increasingly restricted by privacy rules and corporate control, which limits its use for research purposes. Finally, any social media data collected represents a sample and should not be considered a complete data set. Access to social media data can be restricted by user's privacy settings and account verification. For Twitter, Tromble, et al. (2017) advise that Twitter prioritizes original tweets, tweets with more hashtags and tweets by verified accounts for data extraction applications. While it is not possible to measure your exact sample size, as you do not know the size of the full data set, Tromble et al. (2017) suggests keyword searches from the Twitter archive service will retrieve at least 80 percent of tweets, which is considered suitable of the data analysis methods used in this thesis.

11.7 Further research

This research is a step towards a better understanding of community and government planning authority use of social media in planning practice. Four of the published results chapters provide suggestions for further research, these are summarised as follows:

Chapter 4 notes that due to the small amount of research using social network analysis in planning research, future research could use social network analysis to

gain an understanding of the success or otherwise of community group campaigns. With enough case study evidence, one may be able to determine whether the availability of social capital in a network results in a community group's campaign succeeding or not.

Chapter 5 highlighted how community groups publicly opposing a development using social media can attract negative attention or abusive behaviour from other people in the community. Social media was effectively used to raise a community group's profile, but social media also magnified the level of opposition to their campaign. Thus further research into opposing views within communities and how differences are expressed through social media may provide planning practice with additional insights for site specific planning matters.

For Chapter 9, further research to explore how social media (particularly Twitter) use at planning workshops and meetings may contribute to enhancing engagement in planning from both theoretical and practical aspects. In particular, it would be useful to survey participants of a workshop or meeting to ascertain what percentage are aware of Twitter and the live tweeting that may be in progress and what they may want to get out of social media use. This would help to address questions regarding the representativeness of those participating on Twitter.

Finally, Chapter 10 suggests further research should examine how planning authorities can prepare and implement multi-disciplinary teams to conduct a multi-directional dialogue with citizens through social media. Detailed case studies of local government and Greater Sydney Commission based social media campaigns may provide further insights and a good comparison to the #MySydney campaign. It is acknowledged that Falco and Kleinhans (2018a) suggest further research is required to understand organisational requirements and potential changes that may be needed for handling social media engagement. In particular, Falco and Kleinhans (2018a) note *online* multi-directional communication between planning authorities and citizens requires *offline* follow-up actions to consider policy changes.

11.8 Future research directions

Public knowledge of planning comes from multiple sources, including media, local council, friends, family and community groups and state planning authorities (Ruming 2019). In particular, up to 59 percent of a large survey by Ruming (2019) stated their

planning knowledge came from local media such as newspapers. Rogers et al. (2017) also found that gaining mainstream media attention is an effective means of influencing planning and government decision-makers. However, almost eight in 10 Australians (79%) now use social media, of which 36 percent use social media for news and current affairs (Sensis 2018). While 73 percent of current social media users nominate traditional media as a more trusted news source than social media (rises with age), the 18-29 years age group are above average in trusting social media news sources (Sensis 2018). This suggests a generational change in the preferred source of news, which in turn may have an effect on the public's source of planning knowledge. Currently, homeowners and mortgagees are the most aware of planning strategies that cover their area (Ruming 2019). It remains to be seen if younger generations will continue to preference social media as they move into age groups that have more interactions with the planning system. If they do, it will certainly have an impact on planning theory and practice in the medium term.

While several of the case studies in this thesis have focused on the issues faced by community groups and planning authorities attempting to use social media, there are numerous examples of planning authorities using social media to support community engagement. For instance, the Greater Sydney Commission (GSC) has utilised the Twitter handle @gscsydney to personalise direct engagement with citizens with posts like "We need you to help shape the future of #Sydney" (Twitter, 26 May 2016) and use inventive hashtags like #GreaterSydney to capture a broader audience. The GSC approach has no end date and may be the beginning of sustained dialog between planning and the citizens of Sydney on social media, which in turn may evolve into ongoing engagement beyond short term planning timelines. Thus, there is a place for social media in planning, particular as younger generations being to engage with the planning system.

Finally, as discussed in Chapter 6, a body of literature has emerged in recent years that focuses on the role of social media in politics (Fenton 2016; Margetts et al. 2016; Sunstein 2017), social movements and activism (Tufekci 2017; Lee & Chan 2018) and digital culture in Australia (Rodan & Mummery 2018). This research represents a new wave of findings that suggests social media's impact in political processes, events and movements is increasing. For planning, the most obvious association with politics is manifest in planning processes and decision-making that displays post-

political tendencies. Thus, a deeper investigation of how social media may be used by planning authorities to mobilise post-political efforts and how communities may use social media as a tool to support alternative politics is recommended.

References

Note: These references are for Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 11. The references for Chapters 4 to 10 are at the end of each chapter.

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Appendix 1: Interviews summary

| Description | Participants | Date | Location |
|---|--------------|------------|---------------------------------|
| Pymont Action Group - Co-convenor (non-social media) | 1 | 13/04/2015 | Telephone |
| Friends of Erskineville - Active member | 1 | 14/04/2015 | Erskineville Hotel |
| Ryde Community Alliance - Co-convenor and active member | 2 | 22/04/2015 | North Ryde Library |
| Department of Planning staff – Media & Comms Manager | 1 | 24/04/2015 | Café |
| Department of Planning staff – Planning Manager | 1 | 29/04/2015 | Interviewee's place of business |
| Department of Planning staff – Planning Manager | 1 | 1/05/2015 | Interviewee's place of business |
| Department of Planning staff – Social media officer | 1 | 15/05/2015 | Interviewee's place of business |
| Department of Planning staff – Planning officers | 5 | 21/05/2015 | Interviewee's place of business |
| Better Planning Network - Active member | 1 | 5/06/2015 | Café |
| Willoughby Area Action Group - active member (non-social media) | 1 | 4/07/2015 | Café |
| North Parramatta Residents Action group - Co-convenor | 1 | 15/07/2015 | Café |
| Ryde Council Staff - Media & Comms manager and Social media officer | 2 | 17/07/2015 | Interviewee's place of business |

Appendix 2: Interview questions

Community group using social media

- When did you first hear about the community group?
- When and how did you become involved?
- What are you trying to achieve by being involved with the community group, what was the primary impact of the proposal that triggered local resistance?
- How would you describe your community?
- When did the community group start using social media?
- Which social media profiles has your group created and use regularly?
- What skills did people bring to the group? Were there designated roles in the group?
- Did you know the people who got involved in the group before the proposed development?
- Do you think social media is an effective tool for communicating with community group members?
- Do you think social media is an effective tool for communicating with the wider community?
- What do you think is the best way to engage with your Council and/or the Department of Planning and Environment?
- How do you feel about Sydney's proposed urban densification and how that's affecting your community?
- Has the group continued to meet and/or communicate regularly and monitor local development activity?

Community group not using social media

- When did you first hear about the community group?
- When and how did you become involved?
- What are you trying to achieve by being involved with the community group, what was the primary impact of the proposal that triggered local resistance?
- Were there designated roles in the group?
- Has your community group tried to use social media? Which social media profiles did you consider using?
- Did you have any problems trying to use social media?

- Do you think social media could/would be an effective tool for communication with the wider community?
- What do you think is the best way to engage with your Council and/or the Department of Planning and Environment?
- Has the group continued to meet and/or communicate regularly and monitor local development activity?

State or local government staff

- When did your organisation start using social media?
- Do you have a social media strategy?
- If yes, how do you measure the success of your strategy?
- Which social media profiles have you created and managed?
- Which social media sites do you recommend for a public organisation? Why?
- Do you think social media is an effective tool for communication with community groups?
- Do you think social media is an effective tool for communicating government policy/ actions to the wider community?
- What do you think is the best way to engage with Councils and the Department of Planning and Environment?
- What social media monitoring/analytics tools do you use?
- How does the organisation handle abusive users or complaints?
- any other comments?

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Appendix 4 removed from Open Access version as it may contain sensitive/confidential content.