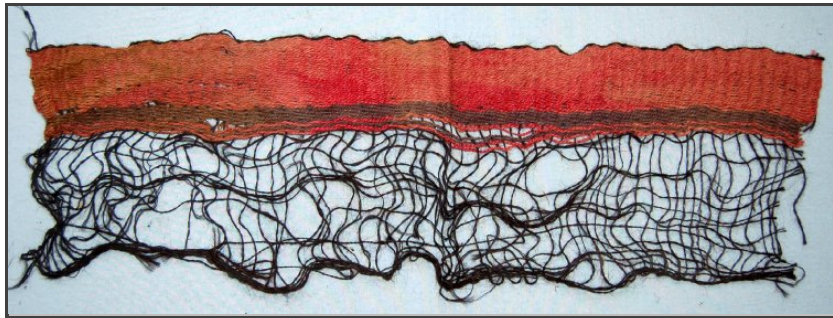# THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND

AUSTRALIA

Loose Praxis: Methodological assemblage in the social complexity of the Australian private rental system

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Bachelor of Arts

Master of Education in Adult Education

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at

The University of Queensland in 2017

School of Earth and Environmental Sciences

Abstract

Rental housing systems are examples of 'social complexity' – with many interdependencies that may only be discerned and understood in hindsight. The methodological question then is: How can we come to discover and make (some) sense of significant, system-scale, and potentially problematic complex system interdependencies, the impacts of these on actors (in this case renters), and also plan for improved outcomes at various scales and levels of such a system?

In response to this methodological conundrum, this research trialled a nested methodological assemblage of narrative based tools and processes, Sensemaker™ and the multi-ontological Cynefin Framework for decision-making as core tools of a wider assemblage of praxis.   Grounded in participatory/action research and planning, and enacted as 'loose' praxis, the research responded to emerging concerns from housing advocates in the rental system.   The thesis therefore explores the methodological conundrum of understanding (research) and planning (action) through the problematic of a complex rental housing system with multiple sectors, scales and contextual constraints.

The tools and processes of the core methodological assemblage have indeed revealed complex issues and extensive new findings and understandings about cultures within the Australian private rental system (PRS) as well as potential experiments to enact change in the PRS. These are key contributions of the research.   However, this ostensibly methodological thesis also reflects on the usefulness of the tools and processes trialled - in the context of this particular action research process and more widely in researching and planning in complexity.   Hence, there are many threads and layers to the research process and thesis.   Content/case study and methodological assemblage intertwine with the fluid positionalities of an action researcher, also a renter, in and within the research.

Two additional, organising questions of the research intertwine with the opening question and relate to both case study and methodological process findings and outcomes:

- What knowledge and potential impact emerges from collaborative, participatory and researcher's sensemaking, for application to rental housing environments, policy, and social and urban planning processes? And
- Beyond shelter, what socio-spatial, material, and conditional attributes of rental housing environments support and enable, (or challenge or impede as the case may be) the flourishing of persons who rent, their sense of home and their connectedness to wider communities?

Findings and conclusions

The research reveals stark system patterns pertaining to attitudes and behaviours and the inspection practices of landlords and real estate agents; factors that challenge renters' sense of security and privacy, and their capacities for flourishing and feeling 'at home' as renters. These and other patterns, supported by strong correlative statistics, reveal complex interrelationships that support multiple, proprietary interests, most often to the detriment of renters. This includes their financial security - the longer they remain as renters in the system. Thus behaviours and practices of both rental agents and landlords in the social complexity of the PRS are revealed as cultural problems that need addressing to improve private rental life in Australia and redress imbalances and increasing inequalities. The research also finds that informal relationships between renters and property investors, disintermediated by real estate agents, offer Australian renters significantly more security in maintaining a secure occupancy in place over time, and therefore a greater sense of home in line with community housing outcomes.

Methodologically, the research concludes that core Sensemaker™ tools and methods support the development of shared heuristics and understandings for planning in response to complex issues - planning in social complexity that both include and move beyond policy planning. Therefore, as generic process the assemblage is found to be useful in support of collaborative planning and research processes in complex public policy and advocacy realms.

However, the research also found that unacknowledged subjectivities of actors and entrained ways of thinking impacted potential outcomes. The planning of action to address identified complexities thus resulted in a limited range of potentially useful, safe to fail, experiments aimed at improving outcomes for Australian renters.

Finally, in reflecting on this 'loose praxis' as collaborative and participatory urban/planning and research method in social complexity, the thesis proposes a *transrational* planning praxis with the potential to shift actors' subjectivities and attend to their learning of, and subsequent planning in, complexity.

Declaration by author

This thesis is composed of my original work, and contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference has been made in the text. I have clearly stated the contribution by others to jointly-authored works that I have included in my thesis.

I have clearly stated the contribution of others to my thesis as a whole, including statistical assistance, survey design, data analysis, significant technical procedures, professional editorial advice, and any other original research work used or reported in my thesis. The content of my thesis is the result of work I have carried out since the commencement of my research higher degree candidature and does not include a substantial part of work that has been submitted to qualify for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution. I have clearly stated which parts of my thesis, if any, have been submitted to qualify for another award.

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Publications during candidature

Conference Proceedings

Ballard A. Archetypes and other heuristics: Planning in the social complexity of the Australian private rental system   State of Australian Cities Conference 2015 Gold Coast, Queensland http://soacconference.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Ballard..pdf

Publications included in this thesis

 "No publications included".

Contributions by others to the thesis

This research trialled participatory planning processes based in the basic, open access methods of Cognitive Edge P/L and narratives captured and analysed through the proprietary software architectures of Sensemaker™ and Sensemaker Explorer for IOS™.

Complexability P/L contributed an adaptation of a Cognitive Edge process for Workshop Two.

Research participants, alongside myself as researcher:

- Collaboratively developed a signification framework for narrative based data
- Extracted key issues and archetypes from a narrative data set and also
- Planned potential experiments for change in the private rental system.

I gratefully acknowledge the input of research participants who remain nameless under human research ethics requirements.

Statement of parts of thesis submitted to qualify for the award of another degree

None

Acknowledgements

basic training and feedback on signification framework design before embarking on a collaborative design process and then before going live with the collection tool.

Australian and New Zealand Standard Research Classifications (ANZSRC)

ANZSRC code: 160514, Urban Policy, 20%

ANZSRC code: 120501, Community Planning, 40%

ANZSRC code: 120503, Housing Markets, Development and Management, 40%

Fields of Research (FoR) Classification

FoR code: 1205, Urban and Regional Planning, 60%

FoR code: 1604, Human Geography, 40%

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List of Acronyms

AR   Action Research

CHP   Community Housing Provider

PAR   Participatory Action Research

P/AR   Participatory/Action Research[1]

PLL   Private landlord

PRS   Private Rental System

REA   Real Estate Agent

WS1   Workshop One (participatory process extracting shared heuristics)

WS2   Workshop Two (participatory planning process designing experiments for complex issues)

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[1] I use P/AR to denote action research that has participative elements but which is not fully PAR. PAR reflects smaller scale action research, often situated, with one single group of participants working together throughout the process

Introduction: Loose warp and weft

A methodological conundrum

Social systems are complex, at every scale, with power an ever present problematic for some people or cohorts within a system. By simple definition, complex social systems have many interdependencies, many of which can only be discerned and understood in hindsight. This all too human complexity poses a problem for planning and research. How can actors within a social complexity (planners, researchers, policymakers and constituents) usefully come to discover and make (some) sense of interdependencies and problematic impacts experienced by people in a system? How then might these actors plan potentially transformative change that addresses significant, complex problems?

These big questions lie at the heart of this ostensibly methodological thesis. At its core, this research has trialled a methodological approach applied to understand, and then plan change within, a large social complexity – the Australian private rental system. This thesis however is also concerned with human flourishing and planning praxis too; the latter as a function of people's participation in planning that relates to and impacts their capacities for flourishing, as well as our own capacities for reflexivity as planners and researchers. The thesis therefore aims to deepen a conversation between the praxes of participatory/action research, planning and learning that began some time ago.

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At the beginning of this research a university methodologist suggested I had a methodology in search of a case study. This was partially true. I was keen to investigate a housing system using a particular methodological frame – action research – as the structural warp of another methodological approach, the use of narrative within Sensemaker™ architecture and the multi-ontological Cynefin framework for decision-making. These latter elements, with associated participatory processes, constitute the main threads of the weft; the core approach I have trialled in this research in the context of planning in the complexity of a housing system. Familiarity with the Cynefin Framework supported an ontologically based understanding; that research into any system

with social complexity may best be served with an *emergent*, responsive approach to research. Action research seemed to align in useful ways with the emergent and nonlinear nature of a complex, adaptive social system.

Sensemaker™ too, seemed to offer levels of responsiveness and flexibility in inquiry. Substantively, this proprietary software application also appeared to overcome longstanding conundra pertaining to the evidence base for complex policy and program planning as well as ongoing monitoring and evaluation. This was intriguing. One conundrum related to what constitutes sufficient evidence for planning in social complexity. Another related to qualitative depth versus quantitative span and yet another pertained to the knowledge of expertise vis à vis that of lived experience and being. I pondered a sense that action research combined with narrative within Sensemaker™ architecture and processes, may lend a new rigour to planning in large social systems that also honoured the lived experiences, voices and participation of individuals - the micro level of a complex system. Importantly, the assemblage of the methodological approach also supported real time collaborative inquiry, decision-making and planning action for potential change at wider meso and macro scales of a system. Methodologies, ontologies, and transdisciplinarities were pointing a way through planning in complexity.

The emerging and burgeoning problem of the Australian private rental housing system

Thirty per cent of Australian residents live in rental housing, a number that has been steadily increasing over the past two decades. They reside hidden, in a culture and political economy that privileges the new Australian dual dream of home ownership *and* property investment. Yet, despite many more people becoming long-term and lifelong renters, the state of renting is still largely regarded in the public domain of policy as a temporary staging point on a housing continuum that leads to home ownership. A tsunami is on the horizon. The long held macro scale policy assumptions of mortgage free home ownership supporting people in their pensioned retirements will never stack up for a significant and increasing number of Australians who rent. And for some - low income people and no asset pensioners unable to access a decreasing pool of social housing - that wave has already arrived. The failures of macro policy are impacting the micro lives of individuals who rent in profound ways and their needs remain subsumed in myriad complexities. During the period of this research interest (2013 – 2017) renters in all rental housing sectors, in specific cities and state jurisdictions in Australia, have appeared to be under increasing duress - in part the result of both turbo-charged property investment and a resurgent neoliberalism. For example, in the Australian state of Queensland from where I write, radical conservative government hastened the devolution of public housing provision as a function of government via management

transfers to the community housing sector. Thousands on social housing waiting lists have found themselves funnelled into a private rental system where regulation and security, relative to the social housing sector, remains extremely limited. That same conservative state government completely defunded advocacy services for tenants – services funded by tenants' rental bonds – as well as all other housing advocacy. Elsewhere, tenants' advocacy services, well across the multitude of issues facing renters in their respective Australian states, remained funded but under threat. A period of voiding renters' voices - had begun.

Small insurgent aims

This research aimed to step into that void with a methodological approach that gathers individuals' experiences – self-signified and aggregated - and generates patterns of impacts in and of complex social system(s). As a small piece of experiential, experimental, insurgent planning/research the research then also aimed to explore the possibilities for change in a rental system, based in the evidence of data collected and made sense of in participatory ways.

In smaller and more subtle ways this research and thesis has also aimed to engage with other, broader research, planning and housing concerns. In the field of planning in complexity, Portugali (2011), without further elaboration, has pointed to the importance of exploring method as ways through the challenges of planning in complexity. Earlier in planning theory, Friedmann (1993) called for action in the public domain to be guided by concern for human flourishing. In housing research Easthope (2004) called for a more integrated approach that looks beyond the scale of individual households to regional and national scales. Hulse and Pawson (2010) have pointed to the need for an integrated rental sector that breaks down the distinctions between Australian social and private renters. While I do not attend to these four directions in a systemic way in the thesis, they remain in the background as loose guiding threads, more warp for the weft.

Thesis' contributions to knowledge

This thesis contributes knowledge to both methodological and rental housing system fields, knowledge generated through engagement with one overarching methodological question and two, open questions that nest within the larger question. The questions were designed to allow for any possible emergences within an action research field of uncertainty. The simplified, overarching, methodological question expresses as:

- How can we come to discover and make (some) sense of significant, system-scale, and potentially problematic, 'complex system' interdependencies, the impacts of these on actors, and so plan for improved outcomes at various scales and levels of such a system?

The subsequent core questions, one thoroughly process based and another related to rental attributes, emerged as 'organising'[2] questions - thoroughly weaving the 'case study' of the rental system with the methodological trial and inquiry.

- What knowledge and potential impact emerges from collaborative, participatory and researcher's sense-making for application to rental housing environments, policy and social and urban planning processes? And

- Beyond shelter, what socio-spatial, material, and conditional attributes of rental housing environments support and enable, (or challenge or impede as the case may be) the flourishing of persons who rent, their sense of home and their connectedness to wider communities?

It bears mentioning here that the focus on the private rental system did not emerge until half the data was collected. Such is the nature of exploratory, emergent process. Given the focus on exploring a methodological approach for planning and the fact that most of the data pertained to the PRS, it became clear that the private rental system would need to become the research focus, beginning with the participatory planning processes with data. By that stage, clear patterns in the PRS were already emerging – some surprisingly stark, others curious. Social/community housing sector housing tales however, remained in the 'whole system' dataset and some of these make random appearances, as exemplars of a positive pattern of what supports renters flourishing, in stark contrast to the majority of findings with regards to the PRS.

This thesis certainly draws on and adds to the earlier work of Australian and international housing researchers. Their important contributions and themes are explored in Part Two Chapter Three as part of the design of this research and will become clear soon enough. However, being fundamentally different in methodological approach, with some radical, subsidiaritarian aims of participatory planning and the disintermediation of narrative data, this research offers very different contributions to both housing and planning research, even while arriving at some not dissimilar conclusions in just published Australian housing research (Pawson et al., 2017) about the state(s) of security for Australian private renters.

Methodological and praxis contributions

The thesis contributes to the literature of planning praxis in complexity through:

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[2] 'Organising' in the sense of organising the design and development of tools and processes and some lenses to support understanding of the types of complexities in such a large social system. This is explored further in Chapter Four.

- Trialling the usefulness of a specific methodological approach – Sensemaker Suite™, the Cynefin Framework and associated participatory processes - as an assemblage of tools and processes applied to planning in large systems of social complexity.
- A conversation between action research, planning and transformative learning praxes with emergent potential for a transdisciplinary and transrational praxis in planning in and within complexity.

Case study contributions

The thesis also contributes new knowledge about the Australian private rental housing system, specifically:

- The impacts of the cultures of 'proprietariness' upon renters in the PRS and the challenges to Australian renters capacities for flourishing through a sense of security, home, connection and privacy.

Practical contributions

Furthermore, and perhaps most importantly for Australian renters, the thesis contributes:

- A range of practical, experimental interventions that address 'complex' issues extracted through the methodological trial - for application to sectors and cohorts within the broad social complexity of the PRS.
- A participatory, narrative based, methodological approach applicable to strategic planning and ongoing monitoring and evaluation and planning for government policymakers and regulators, and advocacy and community housing sectors.

These are the main contributions to knowledge. The myriad patterns and findings revealed in Part Three are also contributions. However, the methodological processes through which findings and complex issues are revealed, and what may be further trialled to address those complex problems, ultimately hold precedence in this thesis of many tales. Next, due to the somewhat unconventional methodological approach I explain the structure of this thesis.

Structure of this thesis – assemblage(s) and tales as loose warp and weft

My advisors in the field of planning have pointed out this is not a traditional thesis. This is true. As a methodological thesis - trialling the participatory/action research and narrative based Sensemaker™ approach *through* action research - it is not even a traditional action research thesis. I trust however, that the following explanations regarding the loose, structural warp and weft of the thesis – its' 'loose praxis' - and the narrative forms evident in much of the thesis, will serve readers well for their excursion through it.

Numerous threads and multiple assemblages of processes and systems are woven loosely as research narratives within this thesis.   Thus, the thesis tells a methodological tale *and* a tale of a broad rental system with majority private rental system, with smaller again assemblages of real estate and investor managed sectors - each with their own assemblages of practices and cultures. It is also a tale of two (and ultimately three) praxes being transcended and included – woven - into a wider assemblage of praxis and methods in planning in complexity.   The thesis also tells a tale of a researcher, also a renter, within the reflective processes of action research and planning. These autoethnographic threads connect researcher directly to research, in a loose and transparent open weave. All the aforementioned tales constitute the loose warp and weft of the wider research weave and are construed as assemblage in the simple sense - of something being composed of different elements and parts which in turn have multiple elements and parts.   For example, the methodological assemblage as one element of the research and thesis, has many different elements drawn from multiple knowledge realms, disciplines and fields.   These are assembled and nested within other elements. Beginning with action research and planning praxis, the assemblage also draws from fields of narrative and cognitive research, and from complexity sciences, among other things.

'Assemblage' is also expressed in the Deleuzian sense in the process of this research. Assemblage reflects systems under investigation and other elements as not ontologically stable or static, but shifting, changing; interdependent and emergent.   The notion of assemblage thus also offers a metaphor for the research, its' praxis and the writing of the thesis, as these unfolded.   In the weaving, the warp cannot easily be separated from the weft. It is helpful to bear this in mind in a methodological thesis where content (case study) is so thoroughly nested and woven within process. This highlights a subtle but important point of differentiation between the DeLandian view of assemblage requiring arbitrarily defined systems as assemblage in order to investigate them in social research and the more ambiguous Deleuzian conceptualisation.   The latter is more appropriate in action research, as we shall see.

Structure of the thesis as written

There are a number of other key points to make about the structure of the thesis in its written expression. Firstly, in most forms of action research, researchers are present and transparent. Hence, different forms of writing and voice reflect the fluid positionalities of the researcher in this research. Autoethnographic writing therefore makes an occasional appearance and takes different forms. For example, I begin in Part One by offering a loose narrative of my own engagement with concepts and threads that I weave anew in this particular piece of research. These threads emerged early by way of laying out the methodological assemblage and as a vehicle for my own sensemaking of

approaches for planning in complexity. At times, the autoethnographic writing is poetic and associative and 'autoethnographica' (presented in *italics)* emerge as reflections, and my own rental subjectivities. Elsewhere, reportage is used; for example in Part Three Chapter Five in the sensemaking of patterns and findings. Chapter Six however is more traditionally written; as a researcher bringing all data sources into analysis, by way of exploring Sensemaker™ and associated heuristic data methods as social science and planning research methods. Other chapters (Chapters Four and Seven) offer the narrative of the research processes unfolding, and where the research led in terms of outcomes and contributions.

Secondly, the narrative excursions through literatures across various fields and disciplines in Chapters One and Two (in Part One, Methodological Genealogies) and Chapter Three (in Part Two, Research Design) serve to map just some of the existing terrain of research approach and case study. These chapters also locate space (gaps) in the various literatures, both for the methodological assemblage that I have aimed to inhabit as a new researcher with this thesis and the case study problem - the experience of renting in Australia at micro/individual and macro/system scales. Given the breadth of knowledge fields being drawn upon these excursions cannot be exhaustive.

Thirdly, it should be noted that the literature pertaining to the case study in Chapter Three has a particular focus and purpose that differs from, and therefore departs from a usual literature review. As this is a strictly word limited, methodological thesis - with case study as the vehicle for exploring the methodological - the excursion through literatures in Chapter Three does two things. The excursion begins by situating the project and case study in its broad Australian context through multiscalar lenses - the macro and meso scales of housing and security for a large percentage of Australian residents – thus, also, providing some further rationale for the case study of renting in Australia. Then, at the micro scale of the individual and subjective, I explore other conceptual threads that further inform the design of the research, and specifically the collaborative design of a collection tool known as a signification framework. These excursions through literature therefore do not aim to be extensive systematic reviews that narrow to one key focus and sub-questions. This thesis instead offers methods for heuristic data, deemed useful and sufficient for participatory planning in the public domain of a social complexity. Significant and rich findings pertaining to the Australian rental system(s) emerge, however I suggest that this thesis does not read as, nor does it aim to be, traditional housing research in a social research vein. There is only so much that can be squeezed into 80 000 words and much has been excised already to remain faithful to maintaining the renters' narratives in full in exploring the methodological process. Therefore, the 'rental tales' are not intermediated by the researcher as they would be in social research methods.

After this Introduction, the thesis has four parts. The first two parts set out the scope and subsequent design of the methodological thesis.   Part One, Methodological Genealogies and Assemblage (Chapters One and Two) constructs the methodological assemblage(s) that responds to the overarching questions posed in the very first paragraph and underlying radical rationale of the thesis.   I explore the genealogies of the constituent elements of the assemblage across multiple literatures, often by way of my own encounters in praxis.   These encounters – across action research, planning theory and complexity literatures - ground and situate the methodological approach as transdisciplinary praxis, reprising the call that any action in the public domain should be in support of human flourishing.

Chapter One, 'Grounding in praxis: Disciplinary genealogies' defines action research through an exploration of radical and disciplinary ancestors and other contributions relevant to the scales and contexts within which the research takes place. I explore the notions of quality and rigour in the literature of action research and embark upon a small piece of emergent theory building of nested reflexivities and fluid positionalities in action research.   Reflexivity, communicative space and learning are then explored in conversation with planning theory by way of finding common ground and common ancestors.

Chapter Two moves the methodological discussion into the problem of complexity in planning and narrative as a way through to understanding complexity within a social system. The chapter serves three purposes. Firstly, to explore concepts and knowledge bases germane to the second piece of the methodological assemblage. Again, I model narrative as a method in 'making (some) sense of complexity', mapping some of my own and others encounters with complexity through a narrative of sorts. I delve into epistemological bifurcations, distillations and integrations of understandings of complexity to reflect on subjectivities and the nature of emergence in complexity. In bridging knowledge realms, I also clarify important inclusions, exclusions and contributions in a thesis that necessarily rests in my choices and preferences. The second purpose is to assemble and discuss from literature various elements I have discerned in the approach and software developed by Snowden and colleagues - narrative, sensemaking and cognitive science (heuristics and naturalistic decision-making). Thirdly, the chapter ties together methodological threads in the known literature pertaining to the use of Sensemaker™ to reveal the core methodological contribution to knowledge in the academic world.

Part Two, Research Design, provides context and further rationale for the case study as well as key concepts as generative themes in the context of the design, and describes how both the research

design process unfolded and morphed into one that takes the private rental system as the focus in terms of opportunities for planning change.

Chapter Three, as mentioned, explores literature for context and key conceptual threads for the design of core tools for the collection of narrative and other data, in collaboration with stakeholders. Through multiscalar lenses I survey the political economy of housing and lack of a coherent housing policy in Australia – the macro and meso scales of a housing 'system' - and the concepts of security, home and human flourishing that also, importantly, relate to micro scale subjectivities.

Chapter Four, Designing the plane while flying it, tells a research tale of methodological improvisation. I provide the narrative of an iterative action research design process that moves from initial plans to a focus on the broad rental system that included community/social housing and into collaboration with advocacy and other stakeholders. A conceptualisation of the methodological assemblage emerges, and the narrative of designing and testing of the 'Renters at Home' signification framework and the subsequent design of workshops relates the research turn towards a focus on the private rental system. Lastly, I summarise the cycles, processes and participants and provide a framework for analysis of the 'Renters at Home' data.

Part Three, Remaking spaces, making our places: Renters at home in urban housing processes, reprises the original title of the thesis. This brings both the content of the case study, including the research questions related to the case study, and the core tools and processes of the methodological assemblage together into the methodological frame of sensemaking as analysis.

Chapter Five, with a clear methodological (including action research) focus and purpose, responds to the first of the core organising questions of the research:

> *What knowledge and potential impact emerges from collaborative, participatory and researcher's sensemaking – for application to rental housing environments, policy and socio-urban planning processes?*

I partially model a real time inquiry session process utilising the software to generate more finely grained data relative to specific inquiries about the significant major patterns. Along the way, I offer insights gleaned from these patterns and dynamic inquiries. Hence, analysis of findings is found within the discussion of findings. Throughout the sections of Chapter Five and again at the end, I summarise the findings from sensemaking of the major, macro scale patterns of the 'system'.

Chapter Five also lays out the participatory processes, the first of which also extracts key findings and issues, and the second workshop geared to planning with issues mapped as 'complex' to the

Cynefin Framework. I diverge from the outcomes of the second workshop until Part Four Chapter Seven, where I explore those more fully in the context of wider praxis dilemmas of participant subjectivities and learning complexity.

Meanwhile, Chapter Six in Part Three picks up emergent threads (to mid-candidature), and complex issues identified through the first participatory process (WS1) but not taken up by participants as issues to plan for in the second workshop process (WS2). The deeper investigation of findings here draws further conclusions with regards to the second of the core organising questions of the research:

> *Beyond shelter, what socio-spatial, material, and conditional attributes of rental housing environments support and enable, (or challenge or impede as the case may be) the flourishing of persons who rent, their sense of home and security and their connectedness to wider communities?*

This chapter offers findings and analysis on what most challenges renters. As a research exercise exploring findings and methods, I bring together data generated through all the various processes of collection and extraction, for further analysis and reflection on the macro and meso scale cultures of the PRS. Here I offer a neologism for another emerging theorisation – 'proprietariness' - to account for the attitudes and behaviours and a concomitant sense of entitlement in the cultures of proprietary interests in the PRS.

Part Four, Emergent praxis, emergent futures, (Chapters Seven and Eight) picks up the interwoven threads of outcomes and praxis once again, and then draws final conclusions with regards to the case study inquiry into what *supports* renters' sense of home, their sense of security and their flourishing. I offer conclusions on the usefulness of narrative as an important methodological contribution, and way through, for researching and planning in complexity.

In Chapter Seven I return to the participatory workshops. I outline outcomes of WS2 that aim to disrupt and potentially transform the wider system culture of the PRS – the end game and main point of this planning research. I also reflect on the impacts of participant subjectivities' upon these planning processes and explore transformative learning praxis, as an emergent, potential response to the dilemma of subjectivities - those in the room in this process but also in planning praxis more generally.

Chapter Eight brings the thesis to conclusions, illustrating narrative method one more time as both useful in a reweaving of the warp and weft of planning in complexity as well as the conclusions with regards to what *supports* renters' flourishing. I then suggest future options; further

collaborative research and planning pertaining to and emerging from the data of this research but not included due to imposed constraints; and the usefulness of the Sensemaker™ assemblage as an approach for ongoing monitoring and evaluation, and planning within rental housing systems outside the academy. I end by pointing to the potential for planning to develop - beyond its' technical and communicative rationalities and orientations - towards the emancipatory knowledge interest and the possibility of a *transrational*, transdisciplinary planning praxis.

And so a tale of loose praxis, methodological assemblage and the social complexity of the Australian private rental system begins.

Part One. Methodological Genealogies and Assemblage(s)

Introduction

The overarching methodological question posed at the very beginning of this thesis asked:

How can we come to discover and make (some) sense of significant, system-scale, and potentially problematic, 'complex system' interdependencies, the impacts of these on actors, and so plan for improved outcomes at various scales and levels of such a system?

Posing this question points to the problem of an ostensibly methodological thesis. Hence, Part One constructs the methodological assemblage that responds to the 'how' of this question: through exploring and situating the genealogies of the constituent elements of that assemblage across multiple literatures.   The first explorations and encounters with action research and planning praxis in Chapter One also point to the underlying rationale of the thesis: that action in the public domain should be in support of human flourishing[3]. Yet posing the aforementioned methodological question also and necessarily points to a problem of complexity as it relates to planning.

The problem of complexity in planning reflects the nature of complexity itself: nonlinear, emergent, with many interrelationships that hold memory (Cilliers, 1998). To unravel and make sense of the complex weave of discrete knowledges and praxes pertaining to the methodological in this thesis I take my cue from Cilliers and one idea that is contemplated and revealed throughout this research: that narrative is a way through complexity.

Here, in Part One, narrative as a way through complexity is expressed and held through the interrelationships that hold memory within this researcher; my own histories and tacit knowledge in past fields of play. These nest within the new research contexts of case study, within multiple fields and praxes. In the background there is a lightly held question - about the potential to move beyond the commonly accepted rationalities in planning to include a more radical, phenomenological understanding of complexity, in the individual and in the social.

Therefore, to unravel such complex, multilayered, methodological and praxis realms I depart from the usual linear form of literature review. Instead, I embark on a narrative of sorts, often via my own encounters. I weave threads through, with/in, and between literatures to explore key

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[3] To paraphrase a number of eminent scholars across different disciplines whose work I acknowledge in due course.

interrelationships in concepts and pieces of the methodological assemblage(s). These excursions serve to position the methodological approach in the contexts of the multiple fields it resides within, and transcends and includes (Wilber, 1995) action research; participatory planning; complexity; and planning in social complexity. Part One thus situates the methodological approach with its nested assemblages as transdisciplinary praxis, irrespective of the particular social complexity of the Australian rental system.

In Chapter One I frame the project through the literatures of action research and planning revealing threads, concepts, and ancestors common to both. Through a 'loose' thematic narrative I re-encounter action research and explore quality and rigour in action research, illuminating reflexive praxis with an example of emergent theory. I also look again at two Habermasian theoretical constructs useful for this research: Knowledge Constitutive Interests (KCI) - embraced in action research but not taken up in the praxis of planning - and his much-debated Theory of Communicative Action (TCA). I then explore reflexivity, radical ancestors and praxis in planning.

In Chapter Two I explore my own and others encounters with complexity through lenses of knowledge cultures. Autoethnographic narrative fragments of experiential and intellectual learning and work practice over a period of twenty years situate, and also draw out, conceptual threads and considerations that eventually weave a 'loose' methodological assemblage. As we shall see, fragmented narrative and context, including a researcher's own, form means and ways *through* to understanding complexity. By the end of the thesis these all assume greater importance as findings.

By the end of Part One I have explored the key principles, concepts and structural elements of methodological praxis as they stacked up in the early to late/mid stage cycles of the research and made the case for the assemblage. Wilber's notion of 'transcend and include' (Wilber, 1995) provides a useful mnemonic and encapsulation of the overall process that I, as the weaver of this particular loose assemblage within specific and nested contexts, was engaged in. This however is not the end of the methodological story. In the final chapters of the thesis I consider the usefulness and extent of this methodological/praxis contribution in the contexts of the case study findings. Such are the circularities and emergent properties of action research.

Chapter One. Grounding in praxis: Disciplinary genealogies

Section One Re-encountering action research

Radical ancestors in action research

A story is always told in a context, from a context (Snowden, 2011)

I hark from a tradition of radical 'popular' adult education that has utilised forms of action research for the better part of a hundred years or more, though it is reasonable to suggest that humans have, since time immemorial, come together to share experiences, inquire, plan and reflect for collective action, and learned in a cyclical way. My early disciplinary ancestors included the radical activist educators of union and social movements who organised against power, the hosts and participants of learning circles in Scandinavia, the Highlander School where Rosa Parks learned her lessons of quiet resistance and the educators Miles Horton and Paulo Freire. Horton traced his own path from the Scandinavians of the late 19th century and brought with him to Highlander in the Appalachians in the U.S. in the 1930's the form and tradition of the learning circle. Like my other known ancestors both Horton and Freire had clear concerns for social change. Freire's critical pedagogy developed through praxis in South America and his critical 'problem posing' approach to education, along with generative themes emerging from participants (Freire, 1970), became part and parcel of my own praxis as a critical, transformative, adult educator.

These spiritual forebears still resonate and maintain relevance for this project because they facilitated processes whereby people shared stories and inquired together and from those processes emerged greater understanding and plans for action and change. So while the term 'action research' did not enter the general lexicon until the 1970s and in the mainstream research literature of education until 1986 via Carr and Kemmis (1986), action research, and more specifically participatory action research (PAR), is what my disciplinary ancestors were engaged in. Problem posing and generative themes in this research are woven into the research design and explored in Part Two.

Definitions of Action Research

There is no easy way to come to a precise definition of action research (AR) that would cover all bases especially given AR encompasses popular education forms and traditions (Newman, 1999) and has, since the mid-20th century, found its way into many and varied research disciplines and

work based practices (including psychology; education; development; business/management and engineering). Herr and Anderson speak of multiple traditions and a continuum of action research where the various intellectual traditions of AR are quite distinct from and generally at odds with the mainstream academic traditions in social sciences (2005a). This goes to perceived issues of legitimacy and quality/validity of action research as a transdisciplinary methodology that will be addressed later in this chapter.

Patton (2011) borrows from Bob Dick (2009, 2009, 2011, Zhao et al., 2012) well known as a chronicler and regular reviewer of the AR literature. Dick talks about a family of research methodologies that pursue action (change) and research (understanding) at the same time. He goes on to explain that in most of its forms action research pursues both action and research by using a cyclic and spiralled process that alternates between action and critical reflection. This more open definition allows for the wide differences in approach within the diverse traditions of action research and participatory action research (PAR). Figure 1.1 depicts the spiralled nature of action research with tangents.

Figure 1.1 The action research spiral (after McNiff)

15
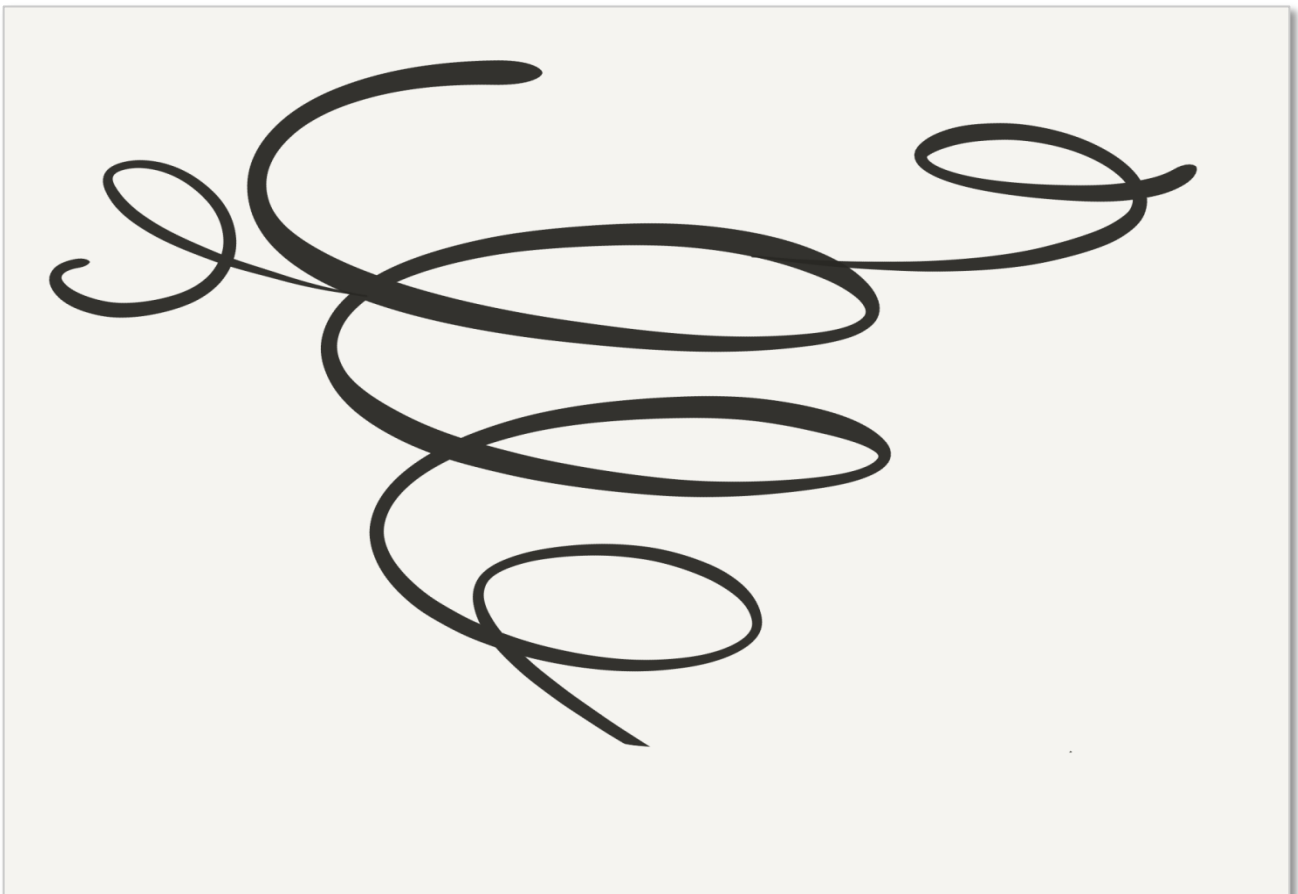
Another definition of action research resonates in me as a transformative/emancipatory educator and facilitator and speaks to the critical and radical roots of praxis:

> *Unlike conventional social science research its purpose is not primarily or solely to understand social arrangements but to effect desired change as a path to generating knowledge... the transformative orientation to knowledge creation in action researchers seeks to take knowledge creation beyond the gate-keeping of professional knowledge makers.' (Bradbury-Huang, 2010 p.93)*

Hence, issues of power and knowledge construction (after Habermas) form part of the field of PAR praxis, and part of the field of praxis here in this research. Power is an assumed problematic within the research system *and* the social system and therefore never far from view. The transformative orientation in this research begins with asking participants their knowledge and their take on their own stories from the field.

Action research praxis

The work of core theorists and practitioners that I drew on in my own, earlier development of praxis in social action and development contexts in Asia and Australia in the late 1990s found a correspondence with an intrinsic way of my 'being-in-the-world' (after Heidegger). Through the integral work of Ken Wilbur (1995) I had discovered Habermas' three Knowledge Constitutive Interests (KCI) of technical/instrumental, practical/communicative and emancipatory/ transformative, espoused in his Knowledge and Human Interests (1971), and his Theory of Communicative Action (1981). Both became motifs in the fabric of my own work, an organising framework for thinking about knowledge, its creation and validity, action on knowledge and reflection on action — an action research cycle, though not fully recognised or articulated as such at the time.

Stephen Kemmis, known to me as a scholar within adult education, had also embraced Habermas' and the three KCI in his theorising around practitioner based research (Carr and Kemmis, 1986) and participatory action research (PAR) (2011). It was the transformative possibilities of individual, community and social structures that I was drawn to, aided and abetted by the work of Jack Mezirow and his theoretical work on transformative learning (1978, 1981) - critical reflection on assumptions (CRA) and critical self-reflection on assumptions (CSRA) (1991, 1992). Mezirow's theory of transformative learning cast praxis into the realm of the dialogic, the experiential and the affective, in the individual and the social, 'the social process of construing and appropriating a new

or revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience as a guide to action' (Mezirow cited in Taylor, 1997 p.222).

Bradbury-Huang (2010), pre-eminent in the action research scholarly community studied under Habermas and talks of his three KCI as aims of action research, as do other renowned scholars who serve as disciplinary lights on the hill. This disciplinary thread she shares with Kemmis, both speaking to the critical, emancipatory aims and knowledge interest of participatory action research. Thus Habermas' Knowledge Constitutive Interests has relevance for research that aims to investigate perspectives that are steeped in their own situated knowledges (Genat, 2009) and particular contested interests within a rental system and a planning context.

Ancestors in Organisational Learning and Development

Both the practical/communicative and the emancipatory/ transformative knowledge interests are found in the aims of researcher and co-researchers within housing advocacy organisations. The excursion into action research within organisational domains explored here yields important threads and ancestors. This next, brief excursion also highlights the element of narrative within this research system and the rich complexities narrative and narrative methods can elicit.

A confession. Mea culpa. I admit coming into this research never having read the writings of Kurt Lewin and recalling only passing mentions of his name. Yet he is, til now, a lost ancestor, a primary colour in the fabric of action research, significant because of the other known ancestors and threads he and his work are now clearly woven in with.

Reading Bargal (2006) on Kurt Lewin has reified my own predisposition to the importance of narrative and given me pause to reflect that while there may be attempts and claims to objectivity in all kinds of research the researcher's own narrative is nevertheless present in some form, even if not acknowledged. Our narratives, our histories, our genealogies form and inform us, becoming an essential part of the contextual landscapes that all we humans find ourselves nested within. This of course includes our research landscapes and those of our participants.

Bargal writes of the personal and intellectual threads in Lewin's own life as having profound influence on his work. As a psychologist Lewin was the first to develop a theory of action research, a formalising of praxis that made it a respectable form of research in the social sciences (Bargal, 2006). As a Jew escaping from Nazi Germany Lewin had experienced significant discrimination, a biographical thread then woven with his psychological concern with how learning occurs and how we come to view and discriminate against minority groups. This research became the catalyst for the human/group dynamics movement of the late 1940's, his 'research in action' or 'co-operative

research' in intergroup relations and dynamics threads of the earlier concerns extant within the person and the work he did in the world. Lewin had his own concept for this: '*Einstellung,* the perceptual disposition people bring to a situation… that stresses the importance of self-knowing by people as they study themselves in action' (Bradbury et al., 2008 p.77). This concept highlights both the reflexivity of the current project as well as the hegemonies and habitus (after Bourdieu) we bring along for the ride and that can also be developed and/or deconstructed.

Lewin, it turns out, like his contemporary Myles Horton, shared a personal link with the progressive educator Dewey and the American Pragmatists and held a deep commitment to democracy and to dialogue — other threads of deep practice and praxis evident in the work of all three men and, as I too have now discovered, the work of radical ancestors in planning, as discussed soon in Section Two.

Another aspect of Lewin's background and works is germane to this research. Lewin realised that the issue of intergroup relations within action research requires a necessarily inter or transdisciplinary approach; a holistic, gestalt view (Bargal, 2006) or to my mind, a *complex* systems view. And it is there in complexity that various disciplinary threads and their ancestral spirits — collaborative learning (co learning), reflection, reflexivity, dialogue, narrative and action — began to converge and become thoroughly interwoven in the current research interest.

After his death Lewin's legacy evolved into research on work teams, management, organisational change and development, a work-based tradition Herr and Anderson (2005b) contend that was captured for over 40 years by a positivist, problem solving approach that manipulated isolated variables - an embrace of social engineering in the workplace especially in the U.S. Yet in the threads and lineages of action research Herr and Anderson also note that organisational development, particularly in more recent times, has been influenced by Scandinavian researchers who, also drawing on Habermas (after Wittgenstein), Vygotsky and postmodern theories of language and discourse, view organisational life as an 'internal public sphere' (Herr and Anderson, 2005b p.8). This is a space for the ongoing development of democratic ideals where dialogue is (once again) a central concept. Following on from Lewin who is quoted as saying 'there is nothing so practical as a good theory', in the article 'There is nothing so theoretical as good action research' (Friedman and Rogers, 2009 p.32) Argyris (1978, 1980) returned action research to its Lewinian roots - to theory building and testing and not simply problem solving — and refocussed on organisational learning, an early aim of the structural element of participation in this project. He too drew on the legacies of Dewey and Lewin and also incorporated Habermas' seminal 1979 theoretical work on communicative action and his notion of ideal speech acts. Yet it is his long-

time collaborator Donald Schön and his seminal work 'the Reflective Practitioner' (1983, 1987) who as Ford Professor of Education and Urban Studies at MIT in 1972 influenced a generation of educators and organisational leaders. I pause to consider the extent of the book's influence on planners.

Quality and rigour in action research

Peter Reason chooses not to enter positivistic or even qualitative frames of *validity* when writing about action research - not even using the V word. Rather he and others (Bradbury-Huang, 2010, Herr and Anderson, 2005e) have recast what constitutes good action research in terms of rigour and quality processes; criteria and the choices one makes in an action research process. Reason posits a conceptual frame of choice-points for quality (2006) and links this to a re-visioning of the very nature and purpose of social science — moving beyond description and interpretation;

> *...to forge a more direct link between intellectual knowledge and moment to moment personal and social action...so that inquiry contributes to the flourishing of human persons, their communities and the ecosystems of which they are part.*   *(Reason and Bradbury, 2001, p. 9)*

In reflecting upon this question of quality/validity in action research I discern the discussions and approaches in the literature around quality in action research as following a trajectory of increasing *development* that may also be conceptualised along Habermasian lines of knowledge interests and ideal communication. This too can be seen as an action learning/action research process within the action research scholar community; where one Knowledge Constitutive Interest (emancipatory, communicative, technical) 'transcends and includes' the less complex interest(s), and the developmental process that necessarily attends and further attunes to 'the flourishing of persons.' As we shall see, this conceptualisation might also be applied to planning.

It is clear that action research adherents have had to argue the case for its acceptance in universities and refuse categorisation and comparison by positivist and qualitative others as being not a case of comparing apples and oranges but 'apples and blue' (Bradbury-Huang (2010). Yet it has taken a while to get there, via a path well made by walking over generations. The following have been highlighted in the literature as constituting quality in action research. AR:

- Proceeds from a praxis of participation
- Is guided by practitioners' concerns for practicality
- Is inclusive of stakeholders ways of knowing
- Helps build capacity for ongoing change effort (Bradbury-Huang, 2010)

These points encapsulate and reflect early thinking in this research process, the methods of action research construed as *intrinsic* to the current endeavour.

Emergent theory building: Nested reflexivities and fluid positionalities

The notion of good action research being theoretical also relates to theorisations that may emerge from processes of reflection (and reflexivity). In the initial phases of the research active engagement with the action research literature in light of the proposed project elicited emergent theorisations germane both to the project and action research theory.

Action research scholars write and speak about a continuum of positionalities (Herr and Anderson, 2005c, Bradbury-Huang, 2010) dependent on where the action researcher is positioned (or positions herself) vis ã vis the inquiry and the other actors or participants in the inquiry. Insider (practitioner action research) and Outsider are the outer edges of the continuum with a myriad of other degrees of positionality in between. Yet, to my mind, critical and subtle positions have been left off their continuum. Positionalities may be better or more usefully construed as *fluid, nested* or even as *assemblage*, in the context of much research. This includes qualitative and positivistic research which refutes multiple positionalities and the subtle subjectivities of the researcher in favour of one: the researcher as observer with a monological gaze (Wilber, 1995).

A significant amount of action research and its accompanying literature falls into two discrete camps and settings — organisations and education — the latter being where much cited practitioner research has been generated. This explains the position of 'insider' as the first/outer edge of one end of the continuum. Bartunek and Louis (1996) cited in Herr and Anderson (2005c, 2005a) more usefully coined the term 'insider/outsider team research' which traverses the in between spaces and creates different possibilities within an inquiry.

In this research as researcher I was initially 'outsider' but also maintaining an investigation into my own practice as a new researcher. This brought the rest of me along for the ride, into recognising the autoethnographic as just one nested and fluid position within the enactment of action research (Heikkinen et al., 2007, 2012, McNiff, 2013) that also, subsequently, propelled me into other fields of play, inquiry and experience. As a reflexive inquirer into self and other, I acknowledge those parts of me, those histories and conundra of my own rental circumstance, that bear more than some relevance to the topic of inquiry.

Yet, while autoethnographic elements appear in this thesis and a fluidity of positionalities also emerges these are simply reflective and connective threads in a transparent, loose weave. I too am 'assemblage' in the Deleuzian sense - at times renter, reflective researcher, researcher and

rapporteur – elements not ontologically stable, but shifting, changing, interdependent and emergent. Thus, autoethnographic threads are best understood as such, rather than systematically methodological in praxis. In short, this is not an autoethnographic study in the social science sense but an action research process where transparency lends quality and rigour (Reason, 2006). I as researcher, also a renter, occasionally walk alongside others who share their rental tales. In later chapters, where findings emerge I am rapporteur, yet at other times reflect the whole through a tale of my own, to capture some essence of rental materialities, socio-spatialities and conditionalities sensed in the digital data.

These notions of *fluidity or nestedness* — a moving between, in amongst, and being situated and held within other positionalities — better reflect the praxis and the emergent, complex and nested nature of this investigation. Positionalities however are dependent upon and in correlation to 'a spectrum of participant engagement' (Bradbury-Huang, 2010), and thus subject to shifting in relation to other aspects of a research process.

There are action researchers and action researchers — the range of types dependent on the learning process or style of individuals. Naturally discursive and reflexive types (this researcher included) and those who have developed practices that support reflexive awareness (this researcher included) may notice attending to smaller cycles within cycles, along the lines of triple loop learning described and espoused by Torbert (2008) in his developmental action inquiry. The spirals of action learning and action research can go off on many tangents! And yet it is this critical self-reflection on assumptions (CSRA) (Mezirow, 1991), this 'intense self-reflection' or reflexivity which is one of the hallmark qualities of good practitioner/action research (Herr and Anderson, 2005e).

This focus on reflection and reflexivity in the literature may appear at odds with the practical doing-in-the-world that *action* research seems to be about and may seem to some particular types of learners and scholars who are more concrete or abstract as bordering on the self-indulgent. Yet it flows from a broader research quality of 'taking an attitude of inquiry' (Marshall, 2007). Bentz and Shapiro point out that research is always carried out by an individual with a life and a *lifeworld,* a personality in a social context and various personal and practical challenges (cited in Marshall (2007), all of which affect the research. This may be from the choice of a research question or topic through to the methodology and methods used and to the reporting of the project's outcome.

In unpacking this quality of inquiry within action research (and action researchers) Marshall and Reason (2007) further point to the capacities of the researcher to engage in self-reflection on the processes she both instigates and finds herself within:

> *...paying attention to framing; enabling participation to generate high quality knowing; working with multiple ways of knowing and engaging with and explicating research as an emergent process. (2007p. 374)*

Notions of nestedness and fluidity thus sit well with and are applicable to the qualities of reflection and reflexivity. In many ways and on many levels the nested reflexivities of researcher and research make for a research process laid bare, a transparency and accountability not often found elsewhere in research landscapes. In action research:

> *There is an acknowledgement that all knowledge claims are shaped by interest and so the autobiographical (reflexive) elements contextualise claims and create transparency...such reflexivity is as much a part of explaining any project as is the conventional articles array of methodological and literature review statements.*

> *(Bradbury-Huang, 2010p 96)*

Figure 1.2 Nested reflexivities and fluid positionalities
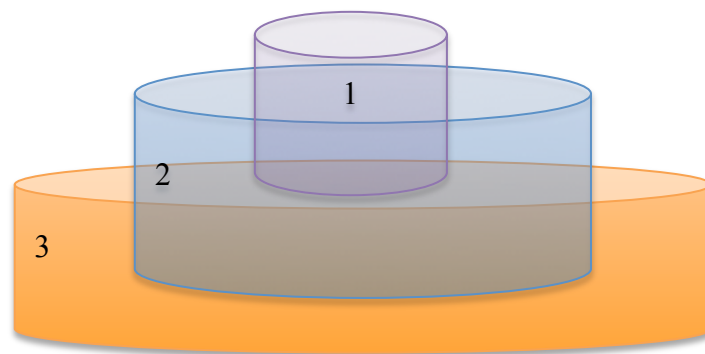
Thus the transparency of positionalities and reflexivities are quality research criteria that distinguish action research from other research methodologies. Figure 1.2 depicts these transparent nested and fluid spaces: positionalities and reflexivities as conceptualised early in the research process. The first cylinder is the researcher as autoethnographer and reflective practitioner/ 1st person, in relationship with/ to self and research process. The second is the researcher as collaborator/ 2nd

person, in communication and participation with others and the third position is researcher as change agent/ 3rd person, acting upon and within the system with others for transformation.

In coming from one place to another, from one tradition into another, we naturally seek out commonality and difference. My re-encounter with action research in light of the shift into the field of planning has reconnected me to radical roots and reified the reflexive nature of the praxis. Power however, has not been overtly explored, in large part because it remains so intrinsic to the endeavour of action research as critical praxis at all scales of a system. In participatory/action research and critical pedagogies of adult education such as Freirean popular education the inquiry into power begins first of all within the practitioner as reflective and reflexive praxis. I am reminded however that reflexive praxis around issues of power may not be so intrinsic to practitioners in other traditions or professions - including planning. Next, in Section Two, I explore relevant theory in planning through an action researcher's encounter.

Section Two Encountering theory in planning

Reflexivity, communicative space, and learning in participatory planning

I ponder how far reflexivity in planning has moved beyond theoretical debate. While reflexivity has long been pivotal in discussing and *enacting* praxis within action research and education and their literatures (Reason, 2006, Bradbury-Huang, 2010, Mezirow, 1991, Mezirow, 1998, Taylor, 1997, Kemmis, 2008) it is still far from being pivotal in the planning literature. This is despite Schön's early and important offerings (Schön, 1983, 1987). In arguing for a reflexive planning theory, Howe and Langdon (2002) alluded to the entrenchment of communicative planning theory yet a silence about reflexivity among planning researchers. In my seeking of common threads, from an action researcher's and educator's predisposition, such relative silence seems to point to a level of disjuncture of praxis within planning. This appears the case despite efforts towards reflexivity in the theoretical realm through Bourdieu's (1990) conceptualisation of reflexivity (Howe and Langdon, 2002), one that is also concerned with exploring one's predispositions, habits and practices.

Although planning theorists have not, for the most part, taken up Habermas' Knowledge Constitutive Interests[4] like their counterparts in action research his theory of communicative action provides an initial, theoretical connective thread between the disciplinary praxes. Habermas'

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[4] Given the almost total lack of mention of the 3KCI in planning literature this remains puzzling. It remains a significant point of departure between the two praxes although Innes and Booher, both also familiar with the action research literature, mention the 3KCI in very recent times. See INNES, J. E. & BOOHER, D. E. 2015. A turning point for planning theory? Overcoming dividing discourses. *Planning Theory,* 14**,** 195-213.

Theory of Communicative Action and his notion of the 'ideal speech act' has been criticised within the planning literature for being idealistic — utopian and naïve — (Hillier, 2003, Fischler, 2000) a stance that has spawned a long and contentious debate within planning. Arguing about an ideal however seems beside the point and the idealism is understandable while it remains in the realm of the theoretical. Such a critique, however, may point to how and why Habermas' theoretical work was taken up so enthusiastically by a band of action research scholars who have often been educators, activists and reflective practitioners of various kinds. I suspect this loose community of practitioners from across many fields of endeavour — in international, community and organisational development contexts — who, having reflected deeply on their own experiences and praxis, saw the possibilities. I suspect they understood the necessity to move theory into action; into 'communicative space' (Wicks and Reason, 2009) and into practices of reflection, dialogue and action and reflection on practice where it became (and becomes) praxis. Opening communicative space or the 'formation of communicative space' (Wicks and Reason, 2009) is thus a crucial *first* step in action research which speaks to and honours the relational, dialogic, participatory and reflexive aspects of action research as well as the necessity of these. The seeds of the emancipatory knowledge interest may be found within (and beyond) these aspects of communicative praxis.

In the planning literature however, the *debates* around rationality and power (Flyvbjerg, 1998), communicative planning and the Habermasian/Foucaultian divide (Fischler, 2000) have continued now for decades. Hollander (2011) discusses the '30 year debate' on communicative action and rationality pointing out that the key adherents (Forester, Innes, Healey and others) draw on a hybrid of the Frankfurt School and Critical Theory and the American Pragmatists — Habermas pre-eminent in the former, Dewey the latter — threads and ancestors also found in action research. Yet one of the more recent articulations in planning that blends theory and practice — collaborative rationality (Innes and Booher, 2010) — is still expressed as an ideal, never to be fully achieved (Hollander, 2011, Gaffikin and Morrissey, 2011). This may be the case. However, I sense Innes and Booher are suggesting something more than 'debate' in their dialogic offering and planning theorists within an intellectual tradition of adversarial debate may have missed a subtle point. I return to this in Chapter Two.

Hollander's work, building on that of Innes and Booher, speaks to the use of online technology in the service of public participation as a means of moving towards the ideal of implementing collaborative rationality (if such a thing can be implemented).

This construction edges toward the aims of this research albeit with very different technology.

In reviewing the participation in planning literature through a PAR lens, my own *einstellung,* I have pondered the likelihood of planning theorists most aligned with the aims of PAR theorists and practitioners (who base their praxis more thoroughly in learning) having not sufficiently engaged in the literature, praxes and reflexivities of learning — social, community, individual and professional.

I have also pondered whether a deeper and renewed conversation between popular education, transformative learning theories and planning may go some way to resolving the impasses brought forth by the 'argumentative turn' (Fischer and Forester, 1993) in planning. Forester, by his own admission, spent years of perplexity listening to accounts of participatory action research at Cornell (1999). He proposed a third, transformative, approach that paid some homage to both the reflective pragmatism of Argyris and Schön and Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed (1970), approaches and constructs first highlighted in the planning literature by Friedmann (1987). Yet Forester's 'transformative theory of social learning' in 'Beyond dialogue to transformative learning' in the seminal Deliberative Practitioner (1999), was proposed without recourse to the literatures of adult learning, experiential or transformative learning theory (Mezirow, 1981, 1991, 1997) . Forester's focus was on ritualised narrative processes for inclusivity rather than on shared reflexivities. In revisiting 'the argumentative turn' twenty years after the seminal book (Fischer and Forester, 1993, Fischer and Gottweis, 2012) Fischer the planner along with Mandell who is an educator (Fischer and Mandell, 2012) have only recently tapped into aspects of Mezirow's transformation theory and other key theorists in adult and social learning and realised the potential for applying transformative learning (TL) theory threads to policy and planning. Co-evolutions of praxes take time.

In this research I pursue both transformation and planning in an approach that, with some modern technological supports, opens up the potentialities for a true subsidiarity of participation in planning via narrative. The contexts however, while communicative and collaborative, are not entirely in the realm of the dialogic as pursued by collaborative rationality in planning to date.

A radical ancestor (or two) in planning

> *Action in the public domain should be justified as that which furthers human*
> *flourishing and diversity.*   *(Friedmann, 1993 p.484)*

In the planning literature many of the offerings around radical praxis, social learning and the good society such as Forester's have their genesis in the work of Friedmann (Friedmann, 1979, Friedmann, 2000) whose earlier academic work also focussed on 'development' in Venezuela, Chile and other countries in South America (Friedmann, 1973). His contemplations in 'The Good Society' (1979) clearly drew on radical, liberationist ancestors; Freire, Herbert Marcuse, Bookchin, Schumacher and Illich as well as rationalists (Habermas) and pragmatists (Dewey). They also drew

on narrative and poetic literati (Kafka, Plath) and social and other western philosophers with an eastern bent (Arendt, Laing, Teilhard de Chardin, Merton). These authors' works explored the self, community, society and the human potential for *flourishing*, a theme and construct germane to this inquiry.

Friedmann also subsequently explored the notion of social learning, tracing its development through the key, American pragmatists who followed on from Dewey; Lewin, Argyris and Schön - all three also action researchers. Holden (2008) too traces social learning from Dewey through organisational, communicative action and radical lens but neglects not only the offerings on learning from educators (as did Friedmann and Forester before her) but the interrogation of the notion of radical. This perhaps is another example of being caught in one's own *einstellung* as American planner, interested in the notion of social learning but yet not moving beyond into new, uncharted territory. Friedmann claimed in his discussion of theory as discourse that it is never easy to do theory inside a profession grounded in practice (1998). Yet theory building (and problem posing) from practice and reflecting on learning is the habitus of the educators and participatory/action researchers — an integral part of the process of social learning and learning through social action.

Despite his 'eureka moment' the early failure within planning of the 'knowledge and action' paradigm was acknowledged by Friedmann as due to the lack of accounting for power as a central concern (1998). I argue that while notable planning theorists have taken up the issue — from Forester and Friedmann onwards (Flyvbjerg, 1998, Beaumont and Loopmans, 2008, Hopkins, 2010, Silver et al., 2010) — power has remained intrinsic to participatory action research and critical education praxis *throughout* long traditions. Earlier I mentioned union and social movements as two examples. And so in the early phases and context of this research project a question emerged for contemplation: What (more) can planning theory and practice and planning education learn from radical popular education, action research and participatory action research and transformative learning theories? I come back to this in due course.

There is a thread in planning that began 50 years ago with the work of Davidoff (1965, Forester, 1989), albeit in decidedly United States contexts, about the role of the 'advocate planner'. This is another praxis concerned with empowerment of communities in the face of power (like action research) that also did not gain traction in mainstream planning and has remained relegated to social/community domains. Agnotti ruefully commented that 'advocacy will continue to come from outside the profession (of planning) even if everyone in the profession needs to read Davidoff's landmark essay to get a degree'(2007). The contemporary Australian equivalent of the

advocate planner may be the policy advocate in the NGO sector who researches issues pertaining to social and environmental justice and who campaigns, along with networks and constituents, for or against specific policy outcomes. In planning parlance, 'advocate planner' forms part of my history, my einstellung, acknowledged here for transparency's sake.

Gaffikin and Morrissey in 'Planning in divided cities: collaborative shaping of contested space' (2011) pick up an action research thread in their final considerations that reflects the aims and enactment of this research. To advance the process of integrated transformation to weave into planning in contested spaces they posit:

> *High quality participative interdisciplinary action research is vital to inform*
> *effective intervention…Research without action is observation. Action*
> *without research is blind faith.   (Gaffikin and Morrissey, 2011p. 277)*

With regards to planning and housing realms in recent and (ongoing) Australian contexts Whitzman too explores PAR in a collaborative project with key public sector and non-state actors in the state of Victoria — 'not the usual suspects when it comes to PAR' (2015 p.1). 'Transforming Housing' is a project geared to solving some of the impasses related to affordable housing in that state. In all my travels through participatory/action research Whitzman's is the only Australian story in housing contexts. Ziebarth (2009) tells an American *herstory* of housing heroines in a tradition of social action research. Inspired by Ziebarth's tale, I had momentary hopes of adding an Australian housing chapter to both the participatory, social action research and advocacy planning traditions. But this action research story, as it turns out, takes markedly different turns (as told in Chapter 4), further into action/planning research in complexity and contested spaces as reflexive praxis, and so has its own, other place, in the scheme of things.

Conclusion

Chapter One has delved into and uncovered certain praxis threads as elements and themes of a larger methodological assemblage. These constitute part of a 'loose', structural warp and weft of both the research praxis and its dissertation both in the process of enactment out in the world and the execution of the more interiorised methodological themes found within. Thus, action research and participation, the fluid positionalities and identities of a researcher, autoethnography, reflexivity, the Habermasian knowledge interests and narrative, all form the field; the home base in which the research resides in its own woven 'complexity' of praxis. It is clear there are planning theorists and practitioners who have continued in the tradition of Davidoff and Friedmann as torchbearers for justice and participation and, dare I say, love in planning (Porter et al., 2012). The

threads of their praxis and that of radical educators - largely discarded or not taken up by mainstream planning - are threads I aim to weave anew.

Next, Chapter Two takes another excursion to map some encounters with complexity — phenomenological and intellectual — in life and in literature as they relate to planning and this project. Chapter Two also explores some of the constituents of the smaller, core piece of the methodological assemblage, the approach (including software) developed by Snowden and others (itself an assemblage) for inquiring into social complexity.

Chapter Two.   Narrative as method in making (some) sense of complexity

Having laid the ground for this research in fields of praxis this chapter explores other encounters and genealogies in realms of complexity relevant for the current project. Given the constraints of space and the vast knowledge realms being woven in the ongoing development and application of 'complexity knowledge' this chapter cannot be exhaustive. Rather, the chapter's fulfils two aims. Firstly, a surveying of concepts and knowledge bases germane to the second piece of a methodological assemblage that emerges as a response to and for planning with/in complexity. Therefore, firstly in Section One I explore encounters[5] with complexity (De Roo and Silva, 2010), some of my own and those of some others, by way of engaging with relevant concepts in literature and an epistemological dilemma of praxis confronting complexity in planning. Secondly, Section Two aims to sketch the core of this assemblage, centred on the Sensemaker™ proprietary software (Bealing et al., 2012) and methods developed by Snowden and colleagues, outside the academy. This section surveys some of the constituent knowledge base and concepts I have discerned within Snowden's[6] approach.

Like Chapter One, genealogical reconstructions and reflective, reflexive and autoethnographic elements continue. These (at times) poetic and associative (Portugali, 2011) encounters act as scaffolding for the construction of this loose assemblage and thus support both my own sensemaking of complexity and of a method that 'approaches' complexity in planning.

> *Researcher reflection. Complex contexts not yet in hindsight*
>
> *November 2 2016*
>
> *Part of the challenge of this chapter is the sheer span of knowledge fields*
> *related to complexity and the pieces of the core assemblage. How to get*
> *across that (and that across) in a form that doesn't require a two-volume*
> *treatise on the problem and that doesn't dive down too many rabbit holes!*

---

[5] I borrow the notion of encounter with complexity from the edited volume 'A planners' encounter with complexity'.

[6] For the sake of ease I will generally refer to the approach as developed by Snowden, these days the Chief Scientific Officer of Cognitive Edge. I acknowledge in the text the specific persons he collaborated with in development of software, frameworks and processes over the years, as and when they first appear.

And so I go back to the core idea picked up from Kurtz and Snowden (2007, Snowden, 2002), one slowly becoming, but not yet fully, deeply, embedded in my own learning: Narrative as a way through complexity, a way of exploring and making sense of just some of the key concepts within literatures that bear relevance to the largely methodological story of this research. Sheer complexity is pulling on autoethnographic threads… memories of encounters with complexity are revealing themselves to consciousness…and so, let's see what emerges in a 'loose' interweaving from many and varied types of knowledge.

Section One   Mapping (my own and others) encounters with complexity

Organisational encounters

Complexity presents planners, policymakers and researchers alike with a wicked problem (Rittel and Webber, 1973, Sankaran et al., 2008). Yet, it is clear that lacking understandings of complexity is also part of the problem. This causal circularity (Portugali, 2011) is not lost on me. Nor was it lost on a director of planning in Melbourne, Australia who sought to overcome this circularity through learning and development of her staff (Wilkinson, 2012). Wilkinson tells the story, one relevant to this project too, of the challenges in instilling and embedding such knowing. It takes time and, as I come to conclude in Chapter Seven, it may also take experiential, transformative learning (Mezirow and Taylor, 2011) to support the cognitive shift and thus transform perspectives into new ways of being and enacting. Geyer and Rihani also point to learning as a key concept in complexity, as process rather than endpoint, and 'a fundamental element of conscious systems' (2010 p. 52).

Disruption

The Melbourne story reflects my own experience. As an organisational development consultant in a large government department our unit brought people such as Snowden and futurist Sohail Inayatullah (1998, 2008), their frameworks and processes of complex facilitation, into the policy, program and strategic planning mix. This was by way of developing senior and executive staff into complex ways of thinking (Van Wezemael, 2009, Innes and Booher, 2010). As a team of support facilitators to Snowden's offering (a three hour seminar followed by a day and half of workshopping under the expert, complex facilitation of his Australian colleague Vivienne Read), we sensed, over the two days, the confusion and disorienting dilemmas (Mezirow, 1978) in the room. Our role was to closely observe for and then disrupt entrained ways of thinking. Some of the

disorientation in participants was exhibited as challenging behaviours! And yet we also saw the penny drop in some senior staff experiencing their own 'eureka' moment.

This notion of disrupting entrainment is an element in other stories from the field and key to this project also. Forester (1999) tells a planning story that is also an action research tale (one that Innes and Booher also relate) about the re-framing of an old marketplace in Manhattan. The planners came to the scenario already entrained to the idea that their task was to do with the technicalities of improving the economics and so had firm ideas already in mind. Such was (and remains) the problem of an attitude of expertise. Yet not until the planners themselves had reframed their own perspective and approach were they able to see the social importance of the marketplace in the lives of the community; the relationships it supported through the myriad activities that went on there. The planners' shift was supported through taking another, ethnographic, approach and by paying attention to and honouring the phenomenology of local wisdom and local knowledge — grounded in experience. In the process the planners' thinking, the predispositions were disrupted sufficiently to the point where they understood 'the fact that the market sold food was incidental' (Forester, 1999 p. 120) and that a greater complexity was at play.

Innes and Booher, individually and as long-time collaborators both, have emerged as other genealogical threads in the complexity of this methodological tale. They too, like the popular educators and Forester, trace the influence of the great American Pragmatists. They understand deeply the challenges of shifting public sector professionals and other agents and actors into frameworks that 'they find difficult to grasp, let alone carry out' (Innes and Booher, 2010 Preface p.X). Innes with a sociological perspective, brought along into planning, and Booher from more political realms and a history in social justice movements, build on earlier thinking and theorising in the field of communicative rationality and pay homage to the progenitors: Forester, Healy and others. They offer a theory of collaborative rationality that also comes from long practice which encompasses diversity, interdependence and authentic dialogue – DIAD (2010 p.35). The first two aspects – diversity and interdependence - derive from complexity science and theory. Dialogue too emanates from a long genealogy, with ancestors as diverse as Habermas and physicist David Bohm. Bohm as physicist wrote of an implicate order as the underlying ontology of things (1980) before coming to explore dialogue (Bohm et al., 1996). It seems to me Habermas' theory of communicative action (1981, 1985) held within it not only the ideal of emancipatory knowledge and interests but beyond that a kind of implied order, not yet realised, but the path towards it opened up by and through the possibility of truly authentic dialogue.

DIAD theory considers planning amidst complexity in public policy realms yet the old conundrum of ideal conditions not being feasible until power is dealt with remains.

This research project began in circumstances where 'power outside the process' (Innes and Booher, 2010 p. 37) dominated the field and so dialogic approaches were always going to be problematic if not impossible. The question became one of how to even bring power to the table without understanding (and evidence of) the complexities of how it was being enacted in the system.

Moving beyond the problem of 'best practice'

Innes' own story (2010) is one of working to (re)integrate theory and practice to move beyond notions of 'best practice' into other ways of being and she too has acknowledged action research as methodological approach. In problematising the certainty of best practice Innes learned that policy frameworks are often based on false assumptions. Best practice and standards of best practice were a starting point for scholars and practitioners in the field of knowledge management (Burford and Ferguson, 2009) in their own encounters with complexity. There, Snowden's contribution from the field of knowledge management (KM) is acknowledged as introducing complexity into KM and developing a framework that challenges the bureaucratised notion of best practice.

These learnings all find correspondence with the methodological offering in this thesis, one I see as augmenting processes of collaborative rationality but which also has some clear points of differentiation. Where Innes and Booher write of coming to shared heuristics through dialogue, as we shall see shortly and again in Parts Two and Three, the creation of shared heuristics can occur in other, novel ways.

Reflecting on the collaboration story of Innes and Booher and shared interests in learning how to create effective change, I see their collaboration as a complex adaptive system coming to understand the nature of complexity.

This research and thesis too may be read in a similar vein.

Encountering epistemological bifurcations, distillations and integrations

A great deal of the problem in coming to understandings about complexity as it pertains to planning rests, it turns out, with what many have long discerned as the fracturing of knowledge. Schrag, Portugali and Wilber (Ramsey and Miller, 2003, Portugali, 2011, Wilber, 1995) in particular all extensively explore various and subsequent bifurcations of knowledge (and knowing) stemming from ancient times.

Portugali (2011), eminent as planning academic, lays out the bifurcation of the mathematical and natural science realms and knowledge in the humanistic realms to the present day and comes to the problem this poses for planning in complexity. He shares a little fact that I warm to; that humanities and social science translate from the Hebrew as sciences of the human spirit and I wonder where spirit may have been lost and found in the rise of the mathematical and more so the computational, particularly in spatial planning.

Schrag, the eminent philosopher discusses the separation of praxis into theory and practice widening with the rise of modernity (Schrag, 1986, Ramsey and Miller, 2003), the division between positivist science and hermeneutic humanities having become more pronounced with positivism now firmly ascendant, even hegemonic. An inscription was found on the entrance to Plato's Academy inscribed in Greek. 'Let no one enter who does not know geometry'. Found also in the frontispiece of Batty and Longley's book on 'Fractal Cities' (1994) that declaration reflects the mathematical and geometrical as a long established 'culture' in knowledge, and in spatial planning also. Friedmann railed a little when he wrote of moving towards a non-Euclidean planning (Friedmann, 1993) yet Batty's more recent offerings, however, while thoroughly grounded in mathematical modelling, also acknowledge the role of actors, networks and the flows of these. He builds bridges to the complexity of bottom up participatory planning (Batty, 2013), no longer aiming to be predictive, but revealing of patterns and trends ordinarily invisible to decision makers (Karvenon, 2014).

Batty and Longley introduced and applied Mandelbrot's concept and work of fractal geometry to urban morphology. However, I sense another possibility; an emerging, potential theorisation of 'fractals in social complexity' based in empiricism that may transcend and include the mathematical and the humanistic with the methods and tools of sensemaking in complexity utilised in this research. At this point of the thesis this is more poetic than empirical and I explore this further in Chapter Six and again in Part Four. The thread that weaves from poetics to empirics however began with a personal experience of bifurcation.

The atomistic splitting apart of knowledge into what C P Snow (1959) named 'the Two Cultures' occurred for me at age 15. Having failed advanced maths at high school, despite being able, most of the time, to arrive at the correct answers from then on I was relegated to the humanistic knowledge realms. Architecture as a geometric and artistic expression was quite lost to me (for a time) and for many years I sought some kind of framework and process for (re-) integrating and synthesising knowledge. This desire for 'integral' ways (Wilber, 1995) was but a fuzzy intention seeded over the year I turned 30 - the result of tripping around university campuses in academic

publishing roles talking up textbooks to academics across many different disciplines. The fuzziness eventually coalesced and sharpened over my 'sabbatical years' (1997-1999) into a clear intention related to facilitating learning that synthesised rather than further bifurcated knowledge.

Aided and abetted by a contemplative predisposition, the aforementioned polymaths' works of synthesis have informed my own. Portugali more recently and Wilber in the mid 1990s — have woven epic tales of complexity from many systems of knowledge and so are too complex to discuss in any real depth here other than to pick up a few germane threads. Others, like Cilliers, have distilled complexity into elegant, more manageable pieces.

Cilliers was both engineer and a philosopher of both politics and science. He helpfully distilled complexity theory into seven characteristics (Cilliers, 1998) and so I draw on these by way of establishing definitional ground for this exploratory conversation while also contemplating rental systems as a nested assemblage of social complexity. Figure 2.1 outlines these properties or characteristics and the elements of these that particularly resonate — a further distillation - I emphasise in italics.

Figure 2.1 Cilliers' seven characteristics of complexity

1. Complex systems consist of a large number of elements that in themselves can be simple.

2. The elements interact dynamically by exchanging energy or information. These interactions are rich. Even if specific elements only inter-act with a few others, the effects of these interactions are propagated throughout the system. *The interactions are nonlinear.*

3. There are many direct and indirect feedback loops.

4. Complex systems are open systems—they exchange energy or information with their environment—and operate at conditions far from equilibrium.

5. Complex systems have memory, not located at a specific place, but distributed throughout the system. Any complex system thus has a history, and the history is of cardinal importance to the behaviour of the system.

6. The *behaviour of the system is determined by the nature of the interactions,* not by what is contained within the components. *Since the interactions are rich, dynamic, fed back, and, above all, nonlinear, the behaviour of the system as a whole cannot be predicted from an inspection of its components. The notion of "emergence" is used to describe this aspect. The presence of emergent properties does not provide an argument against causality, only against deterministic forms of prediction.*

Cilliers' more philosophical work has moved into planning alongside organisational academics such as Stacey (1996a, 1996b) who was an early adopter of complexity theory and thinking into management and organisational realms. Both these thinkers on complexity as well as Portugali the planner polymath have informed Innes and Booher in their 'Planning with Complexity'. Cilliers' distillation however is very recent encounter for me. My second encounter with complexity, one that continues into the present day, began on a meditation cushion in southern Thailand in 1997. Sitting in a Buddhist monastery — the consequence of an earlier, epiphanic encounter with Mandelbrot's fractal geometry (my first complexity encounter) — I was taught the rudiments of what I now regard as a kind of 'complexity praxis'; with, in and of the aggregates of the human mind/body stream, praxis tested at ever deepening levels over lifetimes of experiential learning.

It was Koestler in the now classic 'The Ghost in the Machine' (1967) who coined the word 'holon' to describe something that was simultaneously a whole but also a part — of a greater whole — a whole/part. This conceptualisation in this research reflects 'assemblage'. This, and other, germane genealogical threads in the fabric of my understandings of complexity arrived via Wilber in 1997 who, in his opus 'Sex, Ecology and Spirituality' mapped out a vast developmental schema of correspondences and orienting generalisations of the interiors and exteriors of the individual and the social (Wilber, 1995 see frontispiece). Thus it spans human history, most knowledge realms and human consciousness. Orienting generalisations form part of his method — a means of abstraction sufficient to allow for shared understandings and agreement to emerge, if one is prepared to put aside one's own positions on things long enough to hear out the argument. This notion of abstraction sufficient for shared meanings finds an associative congruence in Snowden's approach.

Wilber's his epic, rigorous work[7] integrated and synthesised emerging shifts in natural and physical sciences towards what we now call complexity. Bertalanffy's general systems theory, synthesised with holism emerges as twenty tenets on the ontology of holons. This synthesis provides the basis for a 'grand narrative' if ever there was one yet although not in the postmodern sense of the term. This is evolutionary complexity, first discussed in the work of another polymath, Jantsch, who also wrote on micro and macro co-evolution. These particular concepts evolve into Wilber's eleventh and twelfth tenets: 'the micro is in relational exchange with the macro, at all levels of its depth, and evolution has directionality, with increasing complexity' (Wilber, 1995 p. 66).

These and other tenets seeped into my contemplations over many years and now emerge once again, albeit translated into a new and very different context along with more contemporaneous frames such as 'assemblage' — discussed shortly.

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[7] The footnotes alone are 248 pages

Like another key thinker in this research tale[8], Wilber eschewed academia and he too, like Habermas and Bohm whose work he also draws on to make the academic argument, pointed to an implicate order of things. His compelling schema thus pointed to farther reaches of human development, those not yet mapped or understood by science though extensively mapped in other systems of knowledge in various schools of Buddhism[9]. This, as we shall see in a moment, is not unlike the story of the jellyfish who was asked to describe the history of the development (emergence) of species (Quinn, 1992). Goldstein, in his discussion on emergence as a concept in complexity science, takes a little umbrage which he suggests 'tends to come with considerable metaphysical freight' (2000 p. 6). I agree. However, I prefer to lean into uncertainty and unknowing rather than dismiss things out of hand. In Quinn's story, Jellyfish describes the aeons of eruptions, the cooling of the atmosphere and the amoebic beginnings of life in the oceans emerging from the chemical swirl. But he stops short — at the arrival of jellyfish as the pinnacle of development. Without an experiential point of reference or deeper knowledge base Jellyfish could not know things developed further. The jellyfish had only so much contextual, experiential, phenomenological, knowledge. And as we all know, Jellyfish called it too soon.

Goldstein picks up the notion of 'emergence' as one that, alongside complexity, has made it into popular parlance. He discusses eight conceptual snares (2000) related to 'emergence' as a property of complexity and three of these - ontology, provisionality and subjectivity — are particularly germane to this research. Subjectivity in particular looms large; beyond the micro scale of my autoethnographic inclusions and individual renters' experiences into the wider scales of the collective and social also. Goldstein's argument comes to resonate in an important way and I speak more to this next.

Reflecting on subjectivities and emergence in complexity

The reframing of emphasis in this thesis towards the methodological in November 2015 (almost 2.5 years into the process — the narrative thread of which I unravel in Chapter 4) and a chance meeting with a visiting scholar from Utrecht around the same time led me, at that late stage, into the literature of complexity in planning. Read Portugali he said.

Reading that literature from the other end of the research fieldwork, having already worked with Snowden's tools and methods, developed my capacity to discern how and where Snowden's work,

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[8] I refer to Snowden whose work I discuss in Section Two.
[9] Buddhist texts across major branches - Theravada, Mahayana and Vajrayana - map cognitive processes and the fruits (attainments) of meditational 'experience' based on early teachings from the Pali Canon - beyond western schools of psychology and into 'nondual' realms. Nonduality is common to both eastern and western mystical traditions.

despite being developed outside the academy, aligned with complexity and cognitive science through narrative and sensemaking. There was also a sense a plugging in to what I already understood about complexity, albeit through a contemplative life embedded in Buddhist praxis and finding a more appropriate academic 'home' for the work I was doing. That claim to knowledge of complexity in the conversation about my thesis and its genesis certainly raised an eyebrow of the visiting academic.

That response signalled to me that a contemplative's view of the fractal and interdependent nature of things is not something those in the academy are likely ready to accept, despite compelling argument. Some things may be seen as poetic or just an intellectual understanding until reified by experience, but there's the rub. Such experiential knowledge is subjective until such time it is validated by a community of inquiry. Peers and superiors who have trained in and mastered contemplative sciences of the human spirit validate contemplative experience. Wilber makes the point in 'The marriage of sense and soul' (1998) that most people without knowledge of higher mathematics accept the deliberations and validations of a peer group of mathematicians about something mathematical.

Pausing for a moment I contemplate Siddhartha Gautama as the first known action researcher, first phenomenologist, and first complexity theorist and pedagogue, over 2550 years ago. In the complexity of the human being and a being's expression in the world subjectivities run deep, as can the knowing of them.

Goldstein, and others too no doubt, would likely disapprove the aforementioned subjective, metaphysical leakage into theorising about complexity. However he also speaks to the apparent conundrum of subjective bias in studying emergence as an inherent (ontological) mechanism of complexity. Goldstein concludes that this issue demands:

> '... a conscientiousness and similar community of practice. Starting with
> subjectivity doesn't entail us necessarily ending up there...subjective bias
> does not ring the death knell for emergence any more than it does for any
> other attempts to find patterns in our environments' (Goldstein, 2000 p. 13)

These notions of bias, the subjective and the ontological have relevance for praxis, the methodological assemblage and the core methods and processes within, as well as the findings and outcomes that emerge from them and I look at these in the reflections on findings in Part Four.

In the meantime, it is worth noting that in this project one community of peers are renters who use their own subjective experiences of renting to draw out system patterns of experience in rental

housing environments. The renters as a cohort, as a result of their lived experience, embody a collective knowing that can (and does) therefore validate (and in this case triangulate) the experiences (narratives) and contexts of others in the cohort. In this project, the participants are involved in making sense of the complexity in which they reside. And Snowden's assemblage, albeit nested within a significant component of the autoethnographic and reflexive in this thesis, moves the knowledge generated beyond these subjectivities into wider significance for planning praxis. The subsidiaritarian processes where participants construct and make sense of the knowledge base go a fair way in circumventing issues of power and knowledge in planning.

Bridging praxes: Inclusions, exclusions and contributions

A question that has lain dormant for much of the research is 'where is this research situated in the greater scheme and schemes of things?' Unlike usual research processes, action researchers (in the early and even later cycles of the research) can only intuit what the final contribution may be. The field is fuzzy (de Roo and Porter, 2012), the questions related to both methods and case loosely woven to allow for possibilities. This is one reason, for example, why obvious notions of power in the system are left until the data, in no uncertain terms, depicts those relationships. In exploratory, action research it is not for the researcher to pre-empt, nor even, necessarily, to analyse because action (change) is the point of the exercise, not holding to a particular view through a particular lens.

The fuzziness prompts another question. Where are arbitrary boundaries in a word limited thesis that prima facie is about specific methods, within a greater methodological assemblage, applied within a loosely bounded system of social complexity – and one that has also brought autoethnography along for the ride?

Two clear boundaries come into view and I have chosen, for the most part, not to step over into the vast sociological or cultural fields beyond, except to acknowledge and then put aside a particular contribution without delving too far back into its genealogy.

De Landa's work on assemblage theory and its relationship to social complexity (De Landa, 2006) also reveals threads of holism and system theory. Drawn and reconstructed from Deleuze's theory of assemblages I find De Landa's offering has substantial correspondence with the theory of evolutionary complexity constructed so comprehensively by Wilber. Deleuze's theory was:

> '...a theory that was meant to apply to a wide variety of wholes constructed
>
> from heterogeneous parts. Entities ranging from atoms and molecules,

biological organisms to ecosystems may be usefully treated as assemblages and therefore as entities that are the product of historical processes'

(De Landa, 2006 p. 3)

Like Jantsch and Wilber before him and Portugali also, De Landa explores both the individual and the social as systems of complexity, the interiorities and exteriorities of holarchies as hierarchical holism and like Portugali he offers his contribution as a means of bringing complexity into research. De Landa's small and important offering however is a different, more sociologically applied take on researching social complexity. It has been described however as being 'contra phenomenological' and espousing a view of social reality as 'mind-independent' (Acselrad and Bezerra, 2010 p. 88). Such positions seem radically at odds with my own. De Landa however makes the point upfront, that to say the reality of a social entity is conception-independent simply asserts that 'the theories, models and classifications we use to study them may be objectively wrong, that is, that they fail to capture the real history and internal dynamics of those entities' (2006 p. 1). This points to the arbitrariness of 'objectivity' being subjective!

Portugali, contrary to an atomistic view of the separation of human sciences, also lays out a view of both complexity and social theory as being theories that are essentially systemic and also holistic (Portugali, 2011). However, I am still left pondering when and where the Habermasian emancipatory/transformative knowledge interests might emerge from the 'orienting generalisations' of the technical/instrumental and practical/communicative interests in planning theory and practice. And so I leave Delanda and Deleuze and many others aside; to refocus on the literature of complexity in planning while enjoying the use of the word 'assemblage' to describe the loose and fluid entities of the system(s), as part of wider systems, that this research reveals. This goes to the housing system(s), the methodological and disciplinary system(s), as well as my positionalities within these.

Clearly, complexity in (with, and) [10] planning is complex. As Jean Hillier noted, if things were simple, word would have gotten round (2012). Complexity in/and planning is also still a relatively new turn, its proponents and theorists only quite recently embarking upon deep theoretical work. In 'Systems, Assemblages and Simulations', De Roo, Hillier and Van Wezemael suggest 'most issues that matter in (spatial) planning as not being easily defined, of there being increasing ambiguity as complexities of society and urban life grow, and control, seen by some as mere illusion' (2012 p. 2).

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[10] Van Wezemael (2009 p 91) and Portugali (2011) speak to the problem of wording when discussing complexity in contexts of planning. Is it 'in, with, within, and'?

Collectively these 'complexity planners' have considered a spectrum of categories of system for consideration — simplicity, complexity and chaos (de Roo et al., 2012). Snowden (2011) similarly talks of three types of system: ordered, chaotic and complex adaptive, the latter two being unordered systems. Hillier (2012) drew on and added to an early schema of Snowden and Stanbridge (2004) and overlaid Baroque and Romantic lenses (Kwa, 2002) in her contemplation on views of complexity. However, as we shall see, the collaborations of Snowden and others continue to evolve. At this stage I am considering that Snowden's collaborative methodological assemblage transcends and includes these Romantic (computational) and Baroque (narrative/poststructural) conceptualisations of complexity. Van Wezemael (2009) too picks up that philosophical lens for thinking about complexity, suggesting that such understandings will assist housing researchers in situating their research. Perhaps. However, a more useful direction for this research relates to Snowden's concurrent development of that earlier landscape (picked up by Hillier), and the Cynefin Framework, in collaboration with others since 2002 (Cynefin is discussed in the next section). Planning and planning theory too takes forks in the road, leaving potential deeper considerations along the byway. And so I leave the Romantic and Baroque aside also.

In the meantime I pick up a small point that I see as having significant correspondence with this work of research and thesis and speaks to the way the work unfolds in the writing of it. De Roo, Hillier and Van Wezemael contemplate:

> *...ways to consider the interaction between planning and complexity sciences. Not analysis/synthesis but an association-creativity mechanism...our ability to combine various attributes (objects, events, meanings, interactions, stories) into something meaningful... a creative process shared with and understood by others. (2012 p. 11)*

Finally, Portugali's central thesis in his painstaking laying out of the rationale for a complexity theory of cities (CTC) (2011) is that complexity theory has the potential to bridge the epistemological gap between the two cultures of hard science and soft humanities. He ultimately concluded that the challenge in that potential for planning - in (with, and) complexity - whether in socio-spatial urban or other realms - may fall to means that in some way transcend that fracturing and specialisation of knowledge cultures. Such means he suggests lie in the methodological and evidential and so he is pointing towards method as a way forward, without detailing specifics of what those might look like. The next section, substantively, begins to outline some specifics that to my mind go some way to transcending the fracturing and bifurcations of the Two Cultures that Snow and subsequently, Portugali, have written so eloquently about.

Approaching social complexity with narrative

Narrative, as a method in planning in 'multiplicity' has been utilised by some types of planners over the years (Sandercock and Attili, 2010, Sandercock, 2003, Chiles, 2005).   Hillier has suggested narrative *could* be useful for planning in complexity (2012) with a spatial orientation. And yet beyond the practitioner stories (Forester, 1999, Laws and Forester, 2015) that reflect on case studies (and this thesis may well be categorised as that also), novel narrative methods for planning in and for complexity, at least in terms of published research literature, have not much moved beyond such suggestions.   Precision, analysis — finite numbers — so prized in spatial planning, seem at odds with the ambiguities thrown up by complex contexts and so the methodological conundrum remains, at least in mainstream planning.   Yet attending to and building in ambiguity and 'fuzziness' that interacts with naturalistic narrative, forms part of an approach in development by Snowden and his collaborators over the period 2002 to the present and used by a community of practice globally since 2005.

Here I take another excursion to situate and explore the specific assemblage of Snowden's methodological approach as one that overcomes some of the issues in planning in large-scale systems of social complexity to render such systems more responsive and adaptive.   As a way in and by way of explanation, I begin with a brief tale, or anecdote of my own.

> *Autoethnographica. Sept 2013 (a few months into the research)*
>
> *Many years ago at the end and beginning of millennia I found myself, as a facilitator of alternative development education in Asia, face to face with communities in Thailand who had claimed what seemed to me to be odd spaces to build their small homes in central Bangkok. They had chosen to construct informal housing, one over a large and smelly city drainage ditch next to the river and another under a busy freeway ramp. Listening to them through an interpreter I learned…. and understood that their reclamations overcame commuting - for up to 6 hours a day to and from poorly paid work in the big city - and so gave them a substantially better quality of life. They had wonderfully claimed their right to the city. Many folks had mod cons such as TVs, refrigerators and the ubiquitous fan, all drawing unregulated energy through helter-skelter wiring from electrical poles nearby. The residents seemed very proud of their homes. And our program participants from ethnic minority regions in Myanmar were amazed at the sight of 'poor'*

people taking control over their own lives, and affording such luxuries!

I include this 2013 autoethnographic 'micro-narrative' for several reasons. It is a narrative fragment and thread that connects me to past experiences and reflections, back to the earlier mentioned disciplinary threads and ancestors. It is a thread that initially wove (and still weaves) me anew as doctoral researcher into new socio-urban planning and housing spaces I have aimed to explore — with renters, communities and organisations — in the complex spaces of this research. Thus it grounds and situates me as researcher and the research approach itself in narrative space and offers further context, aligning also with 'validation principles of action research and narrative inquiry' (Heikkinen et al., 2012).

It also opens a door onto several other spaces in this research. These include some specifics of the narrative based methodological approach since I, as narrator, have also just made my own meaning about the tale *and* its contexts. This distintermediation of meaning making, at least at the level and scale of a single contributor's narrative is intrinsic to this second, core, element of the methodological assemblage (the first element being principles of participatory/action research). This is narrative based research, but not in the usual hermeneutic, interpretative way and sense of it. Context is germane as is the notion of sensemaking to this approach. And sensemaking too has genealogy.

Sensemaking

> *Sensemaking is not just a matter of connecting the dots. Sensemaking determines what counts as a dot. (Klein, 2008 p. 127)*

Dervin's 'sense-making methodology' in development for over thirty years has been credited for the shift from system centred to user centred research in information science (Naumer et al., 2008). This shift has correspondence with the aims of this research as well as my own predispositions, for Dervin's sense-making (sic) speaks to power as core concept and communication praxis. Her approach assumes people 'perpetually move between states of certainty and uncertainty focussing on both, as well as order, complexity and chaos (2008 p. 2). While her work of 'sense-making' is centred on the individual, and narrative and its use, 'sensemaking' (sic) of organisations and other complex social systems has two prominent approaches that centre on sensemaking as a group process. One was developed by social psychologist Karl Weick (Weick, 1995) and his colleagues. The other, which draws on Dervin's work, has been developed by David Snowden (Browning and Boudès, 2005). It is core processes and software (Sensemaker™) developed by Snowden and

colleagues out of IBM and subsequently Cognitive Edge that I incorporate and apply into rental housing contexts in this research, framing the systems within systems as social complexity.

Snowden was and is, by some accounts, also a radical (Taylor, 2009). Marxist, Catholic and a graduate of both philosophy and management he became a resident thinker in knowledge management within IBM where he began developing frameworks and processes in relation to organisational complexity and uncertainty. He named the research centre Cynefin, (ka/niv/en), a Welsh word chosen by a Welsh man that signifies the multiple factors in our environment and our experience that influence us in ways we can never (fully) understand (Snowden and Boone, 2007). Cynefin is habitat or one's environment, a place of comfort (Snowden cited in Browning and Boudès (2005). Cynefin thus alludes to a sense of place and perhaps also to the narratives (including Snowden's own) that construct and reify habitus[11] (Hillier and Rooksby, 2005), whether over generations or in a moment. Since 2002 there have been significant collaborations; theoretical, experimental and experiential transdisciplinary work that has drawn together research and understandings from complexity science, complex adaptive systems, cognitive science, natural sciences, anthropology (Niles, 2010), narrative research and narrative patterns (Czarniawaska-Joerges, 1998) as well as evolutionary psychology and decision-making (Klein, 1998, Lipshitz et al., 2001). Snowden's collaborations have also introduced complexity science into knowledge management and strategic/scenario planning and management (Snowden and Boone, 2007) through the Cynefin Framework (Kurtz and Snowden, 2003).

The Cynefin Framework in Figure 2.2 describes five ontological domains: simple/obvious[12]; complicated, complex, chaotic and disorder as well as corresponding orders of response. Best practice (as discussed earlier), in this framework is seen as diametrically opposed to the response requirements in complex domains and situations. These ontologies become clearer when rental system issues are mapped to them, as part of the participatory planning processes detailed in Chapters Five and Seven and also in the analysis of Chapter Six where the subculture of inspections emerges from the data.

The Cynefin Framework (Kurtz and Snowden, 2003) supports the sensemaking of data already collected or extracted. The ultimate purpose of the framework however is supporting decision-making on *what to do,* as well as the most appropriate way to go about it. Co-researchers working with the extracted and clustered issues thus first pose the question for each issue they address: What is this… ontologically speaking?

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[11] After Bourdieu.

[12] In the latest iteration of the Cynefin Framework 'simple' has been replaced by 'obvious'.

Figure 2.2 The five ontological domains of the Cynefin Framework with corresponding orders of response
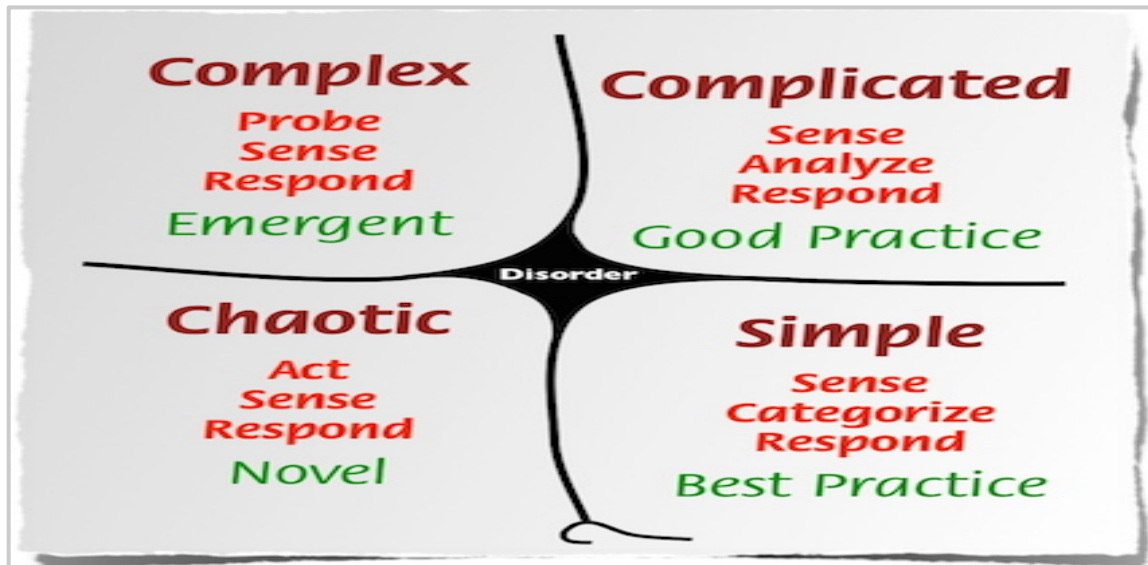
If an issue or problem is ontologically simple there are obvious and linear causal relationships. Complicated things also have causal relationships, albeit with many more parts to the problem and these are already known and understood. These therefore require levels of expert analysis and input. Complex issues however, have so many inter-relationships that cause and effect cannot be established - although correlations may well be found between factors being investigated and lend weight to decision-making with regards to an identified, complex concern.

Once the ontological domain of an issue is clarified the framework also indicates the type of action required and the ontology of the appropriate response. Thus Cynefin is a framework for decision-making applicable to many types of planning, including planning in research. In this research, from the outset, Cynefin clarified that a research problem of the rental system itself resided in the *complex* domain. Working, planning and researching with issues in the complex domain requires a different order of response to those that predominantly belong in the simple and complicated (ordered) domains. Therefore, at the level of the research problem, action research — as emergent methodological process— was the most appropriate, methodological first order of response. This research therefore acts as an exploratory *probe* into the system of renting, to *sense* what is occurring in the system and then take appropriate *emergent* action and responses to address issues — in subsequent cycles.

In addition to this framework developed for decision-making and strategic planning (which is generally used in participatory processes for collaborative analysis of data and action planning beyond that) the work of Snowden and his collaborators over the years has resulted in the

development of a set of narrative based methods and the Sensemaker™ software (Bealing et al., 2012). As an online platform, Sensemaker™ has capacity for capturing micro-narrative data en masse. It ties together the experiences told and contributors' self-indexing to descriptors of those experiences and attributes of the field/system under investigation.

The experiences are not stories in the usual sense of having a beginning, middle and ending (Sandercock, 2003). Briefly, since I talk in more detail in Chapter Four, the process begins by capturing micro-narratives or narrative fragments (Snowden, 2008) as naturalistic responses to a naturalistic context. The narrator is asked to tag and index her own response to ambiguous factors. Thus the process aims to overcome or at least minimise levels and types of cognitive bias (Tversky and Kahneman, 1975, Kahneman, 2012) and the entrainments that can occur through researcher interpretation of the raw data.

This research method therefore has significant points of differentiation from qualitative social research with narrative methods. Those types of research most often capture relatively small data sets. They are dependent upon researchers filtering and mediating the elements of story into data, indexed and then interpreted. Even prior to interpretive processes a researcher will likely have constructed a specific problem with specific questions to be answered thereby infusing the project with a level of researcher bias (most often unacknowledged even if known) and entrainment (most likely unknown). Where much social science research tends towards the hermeneutic Snowden's complexity science based approach, grounded in action research, expressly does not venture into hermeneutics.

The process therefore, does not involve interpreting the narratives or the aggregated patterns that emerge.

Niles' anthropological work (2010) 'Homo Narrans', originally published in 1999, illustrates our storytelling or narrative nature. Stories and other types of narratives including micro-narratives and anecdotes can be regarded as filters through which we take in data and make sense of our worlds. As explored earlier participatory action research (PAR) has long revolved around people's stories and anecdotes (micro-narratives) and Kurtz acknowledges her (and Snowden's) early iteration of 'narrative participative inquiry' as being inspired by PAR (2010). Snowden's work on organisational storytelling (2014) and sensemaking (2011) builds on this earlier iteration and he acknowledges the immense contribution of Kurtz with regards to the use of narrative in this approach (Snowden, 2002, Kurtz and Snowden, 2007).

Other processes align with radical (emancipatory), participatory and subsidiaritarian aims in planning although these aims in this research are expressly mine. Participatory processes utilised in the approach also act as another level of disintermediation and disruption in the research 'system'. The communities of 'practice' those with the lived experiential knowledge of the system — extract, theme and categorise narrative data to develop the main dataset of issues and concerns, *the shared heuristics* and when feasible, participate in collaborative analysis of emergent patterns. This research therefore facilitates processes that draw on the distributed cognition of participants. These and other processes in this research project are discussed at greater length in Chapter Four.

Cognitive science: Heuristics and bias and naturalistic decision-making

In a recent housing strategy discussion paper (Queensland Government, 2016), the Australian Bureau of Statistics census data utilised emphasised a drop in single person households across the nation. Yet what was not reflected in those bare statistics is the likely rise of single persons in share households as a result of individuals no longer being able to afford or access appropriate single person housing. The story of what is occurring on the ground, in the system, was lost and missing from the strategy deliberations. The default, even for savvy policy makers, is a type of heuristic and associated bias that Kahneman (2012) describes as WYSIATI — what you see is all there is. This is problematic for policymaking and implementation because of the likelihood of setting up false assumptions. This is particularly problematic if lived experience and finely grained data is not sufficiently drawn upon to bridge the epistemological gaps. The heuristics of statistics are one thing, yet what Innes' early work showed was the need to develop shared heuristics about what the issues were in the first place, before policy work can properly progress.

In this research process 'heuristic' has two, interrelated uses of the word. Kahneman, now eminent scholar and Nobel prize winner who, with his long time friend and collaborator Tversky wrote the book on heuristics and biases (1974) offers a technical definition of heuristic. 'A simple procedure that helps find adequate, though often imperfect, answers to difficult questions…the word comes from the same root as *eureka'* (Kahneman, 2012 p.98). In this sense of the word the methods that this research utilises are heuristic methods. The second use of the word relates to the data those methods and tools elicit and extract. In this research these too are called heuristics. Visual patterns of aggregated data (the first glance heuristic) and extracted and constructed heuristics of issues and archetypes form the data collection and data for a wider process of naturalistic decision-making. These 'patterns' (heuristics) that the methodological approach generates (discussed at length in Part Three) are, in a very important sense, a way of instilling cognitive ease into a planning and research process that nevertheless also aims to disrupt entrained ways of seeing. As we shall see, while

narrative based visual patterns disrupt the complexity of the data process they also allow for many different cohorts to participate in making sense of such data.

Both Sensemaker™, and the Cynefin Framework with its ontological domains have been utilised to support strategic planning and decision-making in widely diverse settings[13]. Snowden cites the work of psychology researcher Gary Klein and his work on naturalistic decision-making as instrumental in his own work, and the two have collaborated over the years. One such collaboration piloted their respective cognitive techniques for the 'collection and connection of the right dots' in contexts of military planning and intelligence assessment tasks (Snowden et al., 2011). Complexity, and the need to deal with it, exists in many different realms.

Klein's work on naturalistic decision-making (NDM) centres on how people make decisions in situations of uncertainty, with dynamic, changing conditions, time pressures, and constraints of organisational factors, including varying levels of experience. NDM is a relatively new field of psychology that has it adherents and its critics - including Kahneman (2012). Klein's original work studied the decision-making of fireground commanders. He found that in cognitively complex and ambiguous situations there is no substitute for experience; 'Uncertainty isn't always reduced by gathering more and more information' (Zsambok and Klein, 2014 p. 127). Klein, like many, references Kahneman and Tversky's work on heuristics and biases in judgement and decision-making but also departs from it. Kahneman shares the story in 'Thinking, Fast and Slow' of how he and Klein, from different intellectual tribes, eventually shared what Kahneman called his 'most satisfying and productive adversarial collaboration' (2012 p.234, Kahneman and Klein, 2009) where they agreed on most substantive issues. The differences that remained were understood as emotional and belonging to their individual predispositions - what Lewin would call *einstullung*. Despite their differences, they too had a common ancestor in Herbert Simons whose ideas also inform Klein's model of intuition-based decision-making as one of pattern recognition (Kahneman, 2012). This work is picked up in Snowden's approach as 'first glance' pattern recognition.

Tying up loose threads: the methodological gaps in literature

Narrative and participatory sensemaking in the literature of planning
The narrative basis for this Sensemaker™ approach is very different to the use of storytelling or kinds of narrative in planning that have been advocated by notable planning theorists over twenty years or more (Forester, 1989, Innes and Booher, 2010). Much like most action research, especially in education and other profession based research, narrative in planning often falls into the category

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[13] A very recent example of the use of the framework shared via an online network related to the ontologies of policing protest.

of practitioner stories and profiles. Forester however reflected on ritualised aspects of PAR storytelling, deliberate and deliberative processes, while others (Chiles, 2005, Hollander, 2011) have utilised local narratives in re-visioning/planning processes in small, situated contexts. In such examples the conundrum of scale that infiltrates both micro planning and micro PAR contexts and small-scale qualitative research remains.

Sensemaker™ as an architecture (version 1 dates to 2005) overcomes that scalar conundrum and in recent literatures, including planning literature[14] only two contributions to research that utilise Sensemaker™ in some shape or form have emerged. The first one, a doctoral thesis by Raford (2011), compared three different online platforms geared specifically to scenario planning. He collaborated with Snowden and Shultz in adapting Sensemaker™ specifically for scenario planning (Sensemaker Suite Scenario™) and then applied it to the global problem of the future of public services. He framed the notion of large participatory futures as social mobilisation (Davidoff, 1965) and the participants he mobilised as a community of practice in his research were senior policy professionals. He applied the two other online platforms to climate change scenario planning and all three platforms were trialled with contributors from across the globe.

The second Sensemaker™ contribution by Lynam and Fletcher (2015) used the standard version of Sensemaker™ to capture mini-narratives from climate scientists at conferences in Australia and New Zealand. This study however was not related to planning. Neither aforementioned study used the participatory processes I describe in Chapter Four, nor do they frame or acknowledge their research as action research. It is clear to me however that Raford spent considerable time interviewing members of a community of practice for key themes. Lynam and Fletcher took a strongly statistical track in their analysis of patterns and focussed on the limitations of the statistical capabilities of Sensemaker™ in their summation.

Complexity in action research

Rogers and a team of colleagues from both inside and outside the academy research transition in complex socio-ecological systems. They research with, and write about, perspectives of complexity thinking in action research that encompasses social and transformative learning, 'lived' as well as intellectual complexity and frameworks for 'unlearning reductionist habits' (Rogers et al., 2013 accessed Aug 2016). They posit that 'real or full understanding, including that of complexity, can only come from an internalised intersection of understanding (intellectual) and practicing (lived)'

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[14] I have used a very broad brush here in relation to the term 'planning'. This covers urban, spatial, social, environmental, development and policy planning.

(2013 p. 1). This research, its process and thesis—including the researcher's authoethnography—ultimately reify their position.

Given the inter/transdisciplinary nature of their work (and that of many who work in, with and across complexity) I am not surprised it took more than three years to find a paper that most closely reflects this research, despite the very different case study context and the fact they did not utilise narrative or Sensemaker™. It is comforting to know that the habitus of my research and work histories, the methodological praxis threads and change oriented aims I have assembled in this research and the manner(s) in which the research has been enacted has found some correspondence with a team effort elsewhere. Further genealogical digging discovers one of the team works with narrative and digging further still reveals her knowledge and practice with Snowden's methods.

Where action research is often portrayed as simple cycles of plan-act-reflect this P/AR process has been quite complex. Tina Cook talks about AR as messy and the researcher as agent provocateur in the system, theorising the potential for change through being (and announcing) in the system (2009). This description resonates with me although I prefer the term catalyst to that of provocateur. Provocation, in my experience, tends to reify dualities and harden positions and so makes it more challenging to find transformative ways through.

Lastly, Australian based action researchers explored an organisational form of action research 'Soft Systems Methodology (SSM) (Sankaran et al., 2008, Checkland and Scholes, 1999) to consider issues pertaining to Rittel and Webber's conceptualisation of wicked problems. These researchers (too) discovered challenges in terms of timeframes for coming to understand both the wicked problem (caring for the elderly) and the methods for understanding it.

Concluding thoughts and (methodological) contributions to knowledge.

The messiness of action research that Cook writes about to my mind aligns with the notion of fuzzy that the planners talk about (de Roo and Porter, 2012). Thus it asks something substantial of the researcher, and reader also: To bear with the fuzziness, uncertainty and ambiguity, the circularities, and the poetic and associative divergences - wherever the process (or thesis) takes them - and in doing so, be prepared to challenge their own assumptions about what it is they are engaged with.

In terms of the methodological contribution in knowledge that this thesis addresses no peer-reviewed study has investigated a large social system using the standard Sensemaker™ *and* the associated participatory processes. This highlights one significant contribution to knowledge that this thesis is making: The trial application of a methodological approach, within a wider assemblage based in the praxis of action research, for investigating a social complexity, in this case a specific

housing system. The other contributions reside in the act of weaving; threads of a loose, transdisciplinary praxis and assemblage geared to participatory planning in complexity that emerge from the process.

And with that I turn to the research design and process of the case study that this methodological assemblage has been used to investigate: the Australian rental system, and more specifically — as the data emerged — the private rental system with its two main subsystems based on management by the real estate sector and self-managing private landlords.

Part Two: Research Design: Relevant literatures and collaborative processes

Introduction

In Part Two, the excursions through relevant literatures continue although now the focus shifts from exploring the literature of the methodological realms to the particular problem the methodological approach is used to investigate. Part Two therefore reports on the design and enactment of participatory planning tools and processes used to firstly explore the experience of being a renter in all systems of Australian renting and secondly, to begin planning change in a more defined system of social complexity: the private rental system. Two organising questions (one process question, one content question) pertaining to the case study of the rental system evolved in the first cycle of the research. As such, these questions form part of the research design process in collaboration with key stakeholders:

- What knowledge and potential impact emerges from collaborative and participatory sense-making for application to rental housing environments, policy and social and urban planning processes?

And

- Beyond shelter, what socio-spatial, material, and conditional attributes of rental housing environments support and enable, (or challenge or impede as the case may be) the flourishing of persons who rent, their sense of home and their connectedness to wider communities?

In Chapter Three, Section One, by way of literature review, I utilise multiscalar lenses to situate the project within its broad Australian contexts (macro and meso scales); the political economy of renting in Australia; core definitions of secure housing and recent tenurial debates in rental housing. Then, in Section Two I explore key themes from housing and other literature and related theory that pertain to the individual and subjective (micro scale) within the research; the conceptual threads of home, ontological security and human flourishing that emerged as the basis for both the research problem of being a renter in Australia and the development of tools and processes to address it. The literature explored here therefore most usefully provides deep context for the *generative themes* (Freire, 1970) that emerged firstly through the participatory and collaborative practice of taking soundings from stakeholders, including housing advocacy practitioners, in the very early stages of

the research. These themes are germane to the research design, and specifically the signification framework (anecdote collection tool), hence their inclusion in this part of the thesis. These excursions though literature (depicted in Figure 4.3) are therefore a snapshot of the complex contexts of the research at that time and are best read in those contexts rather than as an exhaustive literature review in a narrowly defined field in unchanging political landscapes.

As action research this proceeds very differently to social research. The excursions thus also provide a vehicle for a reflective approach where potential findings are posed, via theoretical assumptions and intuitions, yet not specifically designed for. For that is not the point. Instead, this research sets out to take a time-lapse photo of a broad rental system (a social complexity) with fuzzy boundaries and then ask questions of what emerges for the purposes of planning change.

The surveys across various fields and disciplines in Chapters One, Two and Three thus serve to map just some points in the existing terrain of nested complexities and locate space (gaps) in the various literatures both for the case study problem (the experience of renting in Australia at micro/individual and macro/system scales) and the methodological assemblage that I have aimed to inhabit as a new researcher with this thesis.

In Chapter Four, I describe how the research process unfolded and morphed from broad research encapsulating community and private rental systems into one that takes the private rental system as its main focus in terms of opportunities for action/outcomes. I lay out the research design through a narrative of the ongoing design process that occurred through loose collaborations and as a result of necessarily re-designing core elements of the research up to the participatory processes. The four sections of Chapter Four therefore tell a research tale of methodological improvisation (Rowan, 2004, Laws and Forester, 2015) in response to the wider system and political contexts and complexities elucidated in the rationale for the research in the Introduction. Ultimately, in this reflexive action research process, other methodological improvisations emerge in response to findings and reflections on process outcomes. These however are not discussed until much later in the thesis.

Chapter Four also outlines an analysis framework, used in participatory processes to some extent, but also used by the researcher for additional sensemaking and analysis - the approach to reporting and discussing findings through three modes/scales of analysis.

What emerged from those processes will be discussed at length in Part Three.

Chapter Three. Multiscalar contexts and emerging conceptual threads

Section One Macro and meso scalar contexts of the 'Renters at home' case study

Macro scale: Unintended consequences of policy?

Australia it seems is a country without a coherent housing policy (Tomlinson, 2012) or at least policy that considers the complexities of the problem of affordability of housing and the need to address it in multi-scalar, cross jurisdictional and policy dimensions. One clear indication of this is the reluctance to take up recommendations from the 2010 Henry Tax Review related to the:

> *....tax-induced distortions that affect private investment in home-ownership and rental housing and that increase housing prices. The recommendations...would address the inequality resulting from housing related subsidies for those already housed considerably exceeding housing subsidies for those needing housing. (Tomlinson p.1)*

This macro level policy failure, along with an historical lack of planning and policy shifts from supply side to demand side for housing subsidy (Dodson, 2012) within an era of neoliberalism (Dodson, 2006) and security (Dunn, 2013, Steele and Gleeson, 2011) has had unintended consequences for a growing proportion of people living in Australia. Benefits, including the potential for greater levels of correlated securities, have been flowing to homeowners and investors to the compounding of disadvantage of other cohorts. First home buyers and more particularly those who are considered unviable in terms of home loan financing (Gilmour and Milligan, 2012) are therefore not afforded opportunities within a housing system as it is currently financialised or within current legal systems related to tenure. This impacts a significant and growing proportion of renters, many of whom are becoming long term and even lifelong renters (Wulff, 1997, Wulff and Maher, 1998, Stone et al., 2013). Another unintended consequence of the lack of coherent policy is the nexus of long term and lifelong renters retiring into a pension system with levels of income support that assume home ownership (Morris, 2009a, Morris, 2009b, Morris, 2009c).

Macro and meso scales: Renters at home in Australia

Saunders' insight that 'the meaning of home reflects the society around it' (Saunders, 1989, Dupuis and Thorns, 1998) can also be seen as a reflexivity of and within the macro socio-spatial field that plays out in the recent comparative literature on renters and renting.   Hulse and Milligan (2014)

have noted that if rental housing was understood primarily as a place to live and make a home then policies and practices that derive from this belief would be evident. In contrast, if the sector is understood primarily as asset and investment,

> '*and a means for storing wealth and increasing wealth for owners/investors (then) the institutional arrangements will reflect these assumptions; the dominant perspective will shape the institutional settings and security of occupancy.*

> *(Hulse and Milligan 2014, p 8)*

In Australia relevant tax settings and grants appear based in decades old assumptions that either no longer apply or have now been shown to be inadequate to the early intentions (such as negative gearing geared to increasing investment in new housing). The settings and cultural political economy can be seen as privileging the rights of investors over the rights of others to be homed — hence contributing to burgeoning inequalities within a complex problem.

Hulse and Pawson (2010) explore in some depth the differences in policies in the Private Rental Sector (PRS) in both the UK and Australia particularly as they pertain to lower income households. Governments in both countries have moved towards the PRS playing 'an enhanced role in accommodating lower income households' (Hulse and Pawson, 2010 p. 399). In Australia this role is nested within marked shifts in policy in social/community and affordable housing. While highly regulated schemes such as the National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS) and National Regulatory System for Community Housing (NRSCH) at the national level and RentConnect at state levels have been developed and implemented over the past several years[15] there are few indications that there is a comparable regulating of the PRS underway in state jurisdictions. Yet private rental is where the vast majority of renters reside in Australia (Choice et al., 2017).

Recent Queensland based research (Short et al., 2013) focused on forced exits from private rentals with tenants deemed to require some level of social service support to sustain a tenancy and prevent homelessness. Yet in Queensland there appeared to be a substantial disconnect between stated aims of moving tenants (or prospective tenants on waiting lists) from social/public and social/community sector housing, both of which are heavily regulated at macro scales and well managed at meso scales, into a PRS which couples light regulation and limited management capabilities with substantially diminished advocacy capacity for tenants, until very recently[16]. The latter diminishment of capacity was a phenomenon activated by a conservative state government through

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[15] One of the first actions of the incoming conservative Abbott government in 2013 was the cancellation of NRAS.

[16] Tenants Advocacy services in Queensland were only re-funded late in 2015.

the complete defunding of advocacy services and one of the catalysts for this research. There is still little in the literature that explores the complex interdependencies of these issues.

Short and her colleagues (2013) utilised Participatory Rapid Appraisal methods (PRA) in Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) research that speaks to Hulse and Pawson's (and my own) concern that policy objectives to house lower-income tenants in the PRS does indeed require attention to institutional settings as well as ongoing attention and response to the issue of supply, given the levels of interdependency. Undersupply of adequate, affordable housing remains the primary concern for researchers, advocates, community housing organisations and tenants. However, there is early conjecture and some indication in this project that undersupply may also act as a driver for malpractice within systems of private rental that disregard the needs of tenants while privileging and benefitting the investor and agent. A phenomenon along these lines is something the mass capture of micro-narrative data may bring to light.

Many debates and discussions in the housing literature over four decades have been centred on the legal and conceptual webs of tenure (Hulse and Milligan, 2014). Varying degrees of secure housing is often discussed in terms of *de jure* tenure, which according to Hulse and Milligan derives from a property rights perspective (that of the owner to acquire, use and dispose of property) that has conflated security for renters with security of tenure. This need not be so. In examining the concept of 'security of tenure' (Hulse et al., 2011) and the distinctions between *de jure* and *de facto* security (that acquired over time through occupation) and *perceptual security* of tenure (security as *seen and experienced* by occupiers) these researchers have broadened the conceptualisation of security for renters to include '*secure occupancy*' defined as:

> *The nature of occupancy by households of residential dwellings and the extent to which households can make a home and stay there for reasonable periods of time if they wish to do so, provided they meet their tenancy obligations (Hulse et al in Easthope, 2014 p.2)*

Such a framework aims to move the research agenda forward, by moving beyond the politico-legal to include other interactional factors - types of legislation, market forces, policy settings and cultural norms (Hulse and Milligan, 2014). By tapping into tenants experiences (as key actors at the micro scale) through mass narrative data capture this research participates in this broadening of the agenda and aims to provide a significant dataset of system patterns that may also reveal some of the new norms experienced by Australian renters.

Much housing research and theory appears to hold underlying and privileging assumptions pertaining to the 'norm' of ownership and a concomitant embeddedness (within a community, a neighbourhood and private dwellings) that ownership and secure tenure affords. This is particularly so in Australia with its substantial levels of home ownership. One underlying assumption, evidenced in part by the lack of Australian research investigating the notion of 'renters at home', [17] is that renters forgo 'home' until such time as they own a dwelling. Renters, as a discrete cohort of dwellers and households, and as a substantial demographic, constitute some 30 per cent of Australian households. At the time of embarking upon the research in 2013, 34 per cent of people in Queensland rented, according to the Tenants Union of Queensland. During the timeframe of this research and by the time the Queensland Government embarked upon its Housing Strategy in 2016, this figure has risen to 35.4 per cent (Queensland Government, 2016). Thus renters signify a growing demographic and a largely missing piece from the body of research pertaining to 'home' – a different and subtle kind of 'home-lessness' not yet (fully) accounted for.

In other, earlier research Dupuis and Thorns (1998) found that the key advantages for owners and two key 'meanings of home' for owners related to material autonomy; the autonomy to adapt or change the home to suit and the financial benefits accruing to property owners. This perception of a capital base supporting the sense of security is also found in subsequent investigations (Saunders and Williams 1988, 1989, Somerville and Knowles 1991, Somerville 1998, Dupuis and Thorns 1998, Hiscock et al 2001, Elliot and Wadley 2012).

For Australian renters, however, material autonomy and a sense of security appear sadly lacking, particularly in the PRS. Easthope's offering, 'Making a Rental Property Home', was sparked by the anecdotes (micro-narratives) of housing workers and advocates. They related the unwillingness of some private rental tenants to pursue maintenance issues for fear of reprisals through rent increases or termination (2014), narratives and patterns of which may be revealed in this research. There is little research into renters' *subjective* experience of home and belonging in Australian contexts—including renters capacity to 'be at home in' a space and a place and all that may follow from a sense of belonging in broader socio-spatial definitions of community. One exception is Mee (2009) who has written on a very small study investigating social housing tenants' sense of place and spaces of caring in Newcastle, NSW. These renters, however, ostensibly, had tenure; a state of perceptual security changing for social housing tenants in a number of states.

Hulse and Pawson (2010) point to the need for a more integrated rental sector that would break down the distinctions between the social and now community housing and the private rental sectors.

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[17] Notwithstanding Hazel Easthope's excellent 2014 offering, 'Making a rental property home'

This is a more radically transformative approach than current policy supports and a position this participatory action research may also support with the data arising from mass capture of micro-narratives.

Section Two Emerging micro-scalar threads

In the data collection and meaning making in this methodological approach it is participants/narrators who primarily assign layers of meaning to their own micro narratives and who may also choose to subsequently engage in other sensemaking processes where the data is themed and analysed collaboratively. It is not appropriate, therefore, to pre-empt or entrain what may emerge out of participatory process. That said, several core concepts have emerged that pertain to the micro/individual scale of the research and which may be drawn on in my own researcher sensemaking. This section of the chapter therefore surveys and explores these conceptual threads and serves to position the research within various literatures. Conceptualisations of space, place, habitus, the praxis of the subjective and reflexive, autonomy and rights as well as home, ontological security, and human flourishing all have relevance to this inquiry.   The latter group of three concepts, however, having arisen from both the exploratory conversations with participant organisations and through research literature have emerged as more germane to the inquiry at this juncture and so I explore these here, acknowledging the interdependencies with the other concepts.

Home

Mallett's critical review of literature 'Understanding Home' (2004) raises the question (the act of which in the Freirean popular education tradition of 'problem posing' is sufficient for the time being) that speaks to the myriad intricacies and interdependencies of a complex concept explored by researchers. Is home; place(s), space(s), feeling(s), practices and/or an active state of being in the world?

Researcher's autoethnographica – April 2014 – pre confirmation of candidacy

The Moves

I am coming clean to admit this section on 'home' is presenting a challenge to write as it feels rather close to home. It is actually the last piece I have tackled for this confirmation paper and, given the difficulty, it may help to be transparent and acknowledge (to some extent) the extent of the researcher in this research. I have moved (or been moved) thirty-one times in my life, to various dwelling places, here defined as an address to which mail was sent. Eight of these moves were with my family of origin. A few of these were the fortune of being a child of a Australian government

meteorologist - sent to exotic far flung places in far simpler times where, as quite young children (under the age of eleven) we had the run of the place in small town tropical paradisos - Madang and Lae - in what was then colonial Papua New Guinea. A few more of these familial moves came as a result of a proposed transfer to Melbourne, deemed too far away from paradise. And so, my father resigned from 'the Met' and we began (what was for us kids) a holiday lifestyle in a caravan in the Florida Car'o'tel at Miami on the Gold Coast. This experience of liminality (Bevan, 2011), of time, space and place, has remained familiar in my life as a long term renter (Wulff and Maher, 1998), albeit without the holiday camp atmosphere and the beach 200 metres away.

The Moves have left imprints. The myriad dwellings are snapshots - of time in place and place in time - signposts to historico-cultural memory (Rogers, 2013) of that song there, this event here and that conversation where. In more recent times ten of the moves have been as a renter in Brisbane over the past twelve years, although I am pleased to report I have lived in my current abode for four years now (I'll let you do the maths) - part of the informal rental system and in place based community - secure enough in my rental occupancy for the first time in my life to invest time and money in establishing a garden.

This piece of *autoethnographica,* like Mallett's question, illustrates the issues and concepts found in the literature. 'Home' and the 'concept of home' (Moore, 2000) have become multi-dimensional, multilayered notions theorised across multiple disciplines over the past thirty years. In the housing literature theorising about 'home' is often co-located with 'place'; home as a significant type of place (Easthope, 2004). Within the literatures of environmental psychology and architectural, cultural and housing theory home is also explored with 'belonging' (hooks, 2014, Dovey, 2010, Mee, 2009, 2007, Gurney, 1997) Yet place is the starting point. In the literature of place geographer Tuan Yi-Fu coined *'topophilia'* which according to Duncan and Duncan (cited in Easthope, 2004, p. 130) 'describes the affective bond between people and place', a response to place that is also 'a practice that can actively produce places for people'.

Related notions of path being made by walking (from Buddhist practice) and walking desire lines (architectural and planning practice) express this symbiosis and I was fascinated to learn that Yi-Fu Tuan's landmark work came about in part from time spent in the Australian desert reflecting on environmental attitudes (Yuan, 1974 p. ix).

I pause to ponder whether he learned about songlines.

Easthope (2004) raises the question about how home places and identity become tied together and in research on home that walks a somewhat phenomenological path and that may yet delve in the subjectivities of identity Bachelard's Poetics of Space (Bachelard and Jolas, 1994) may prove a key text. Other contemplations and studies have been grounded in Heidegger's concept of 'dwelling' (Casey, 2001, King, 2008) and the Bourdieuian concept of 'habitus' (Easthope, 2004, Hillier and Rooksby, 2005, Dovey, 2010). The explorations of these with space, identity and subjectivities (Jacobs and Malpas, 2013, Gilroy, 2005, Livingston et al., 2010, Cooper Marcus, 1995) have contributed significant research germane to the current inquiry.

Dovey's explanation of habitus resonates.

> *The habitus is a set of embodied dispositions towards everyday social practice: divisions of space and time, of objects and actions, of gender and status. The habitus comprises forms of 'habit' and of 'habitat'; it constructs both the sense of place and the sense of one's place in the social hierarchy. But the habitus is taken for granted, its ideological effects lie in what Bourdieu calls it 'complicitous silence'. (2010, p. 267)*

The notion of subjectivities is an important one in this research. For a reflexive researcher with an architectural bent Cooper Marcus' 'House as Mirror of the Self' (1995) provided ample material for contemplation but the cases explored were the subjectivities of dwellers who for the most part owned their dwelling. So while Easthope pointed to the literature of place that sees 'home' as a particularly significant type of place and moved towards a definition of 'a place called home' it is not until quite recently that the notion of making a rental property home has been investigated in Australian contexts (Easthope, 2014). Easthope's recent study is comparative and investigates the conditions of private rental in Germany and Australia.

The dearth of research on 'home' from Australian renters' perspectives may well be indicative of the proposition that renters' generally do not experience 'home' as homeowners experience home, especially renters in the private system. It may be that the very notion of home may be problematic (and may be becoming even more so) for people who rent in Australia. This is a core underlying intuition.

Ontological security

Following on from the earlier discussion of tenure there is another 'security' - ontological security – with significant interdependency with notions of secure occupancy in housing.

Hiscock (2001), following Giddens, suggests ontological security comprises the confidence, continuity and trust in the world needed to lead happy and fulfilled lives. She and Little (2004)

independently trace the term to R.D Laing in 1965 and subsequently to Giddens who in 1991 described it as:

> *"The confidence that most human beings have in the continuation of their self- identity and in the constancy of their social and material environments. Basic to a feeling of ontological security is a sense of the reliability of persons and things." (Giddens cited in Hiscock et al., 2001, p.50)*

This definition has been the starting point for many sociological discussions since then with 'constancy in their social and material environments' quite naturally leading to research in the housing space investigating the extent to which such constancies are experienced and the shifting contexts of the realities they may be nested within.

The concept of ontological security within the literature signals a significant gap in the literature pertaining to the ontological security of renters. While nebulous and difficult to operationalise in terms of (social) research (Saunders and Williams 1989), the concept, has nevertheless been used since the late 1980's to more recent times to explore the benefits to one's sense of being that home, and more specifically home ownership, is deemed to offer and provide (Saunders and Williams 1988, 1989, Somerville and Knowles 1991, Somerville 1998, Dupuis and Thorns 1998, Hiscock et al 2001, Elliot and Wadley 2012).

Related to ontological security, perceptual security refers to the subjective experience or perception of occupiers (whether renters or owners) and this of course can be the perceived threat of losing a home base *or* the perceived security of maintaining one. Coupled with the concept of secure occupancy people may *feel* secure in their occupation even though they do not have legal rights that are enforceable (my italics) (Hulse et al., 2011). This psycho-social dimension of perception contributes and enables a sense of safety and privacy and control over one's environment, (Hulse and Milligan, 2014) or not as the case may be.

Pawson and Munro (Pawson et al., 2013, Hulse and Milligan, 2014) investigated the issue of perceptual security in the social housing system and found that whilst tenants may have enjoyed de jure security (something that is under threat in the UK and Australia) they still left tenancies for complex and inter-related reasons, such as escaping antisocial behaviours. This suggests the importance of autonomy and control over one's living circumstances (Hulse and Milligan, 2014) and that autonomy may also be primary in considerations of both ontological and perceptual security.

Hiscock and Kearns (Kearns et al., 2000, Hiscock et al., 2001), after Giddens (1991) and Somerville's (1997) concepts of privacy, identity and familiarity, utilised the phenomena of haven, autonomy and status in their studies of ontological security of both owners and renters. While there have been debates around the virtues of these varying conceptualisations two key findings of Saunders and Williams (1989) still resound years later. They found that while home ownership does create the basis for a stronger sense of ontological security, (council) tenants in that early 1986 study on the meaning of home were twice as more likely than owners to mention their neighbourhoods as vital to their sense of belonging. From the perspective of this research that aims to investigate variance between the differing rental systems in Australia this is a phenomenon the collaborative process may attune to.

The finding that levels of what might be termed material autonomy also supported and enabled a sense of ontological security for owners raises questions about the securities and autonomies of increasing numbers of renters in Australia. Given the socio-economic and financialised contexts of Australia in 2014, where the likelihood of ownership (and the sense of ontological security and autonomy it may afford) remains extinguished for many (and significantly diminished for many others), what changes can be made at multiple scales of the system to better support the security needs of all households?

More than a decade has passed since Seelig's (2001) thesis on the political economy of renting in Brisbane (my current and original hometown) and the work by Minnery and colleagues (2003) on tenure security for private renters in Queensland. Hulse and Milligan summarise the finding in the latter study that perceptual security for renters was:

> '...expressed as multiple meanings of security of tenure: length of lease terms, future
> rental costs and choice over how long they could stay in the dwelling and certainty that
> the dwelling and location were appropriate for them……a feeling of control over their
> tenancy (Hulse et al., 2011, p. 5)

It is likely these kinds of issues will once again be revealed, the statistics perhaps less important that what the participant/narrators themselves reveal about renting's impacts on their other capacities, including their capacity to flourish as human beings.

Human Flourishing

As discussed in the excursion through methodological genealogies, human flourishing is a concept that has resonated in educators, action researchers and planning theorists alike, despite the diffuseness of the concept, intimated rather than succinctly defined in those literatures. Peter

Reason and Hillary Bradbury (2001) speak of it as essential to the aims of action research, providing another point of rationale for a methodology that coheres with underlying emancipatory aims of this research, while Friedmann (1993) has alluded to similar aims in the field of planning.

Educational philosopher De Ruyter (2004) grounds his contemplations on human flourishing and education in the Greek *eudaimonia,* translated as human flourishing rather than 'happiness' as does Nussbaum, a scholar of classical Greek philosophy including Aristotelian ethics (1992) .   Other descriptors include 'thriving' and 'well-being' both of which to my mind constitute a kind of wellness dependent upon the ministrations of others. Beyond philosophical excursions, Nussbaum's universal functional capabilities (1995) are often utilised as a starting point for more in depth discussions of human flourishing across many different contemporary literatures. Her work has resonance with another key contemporary, economist and philosopher Amartya Sen and the two have worked together. Nussbaum and Sen share a deep interest in international development and justice and the notion of freedom and their work together on capabilities approaches has found traction in contemporary fields of development and ethics (Rougeau, 2011). Crocker speaks to their proposal of a 'development ethic' (1992), the notion that all development *(whether this be international, national or at smaller scales – my italics)* should be understood as the expansion of basic human capabilities and functionings. This is, fundamentally, a multi-scalar, person-centred approach.

In the housing literature Peter King (2003a, 2003b) speaks to the notion of housing as fundamental to 'human flourishing'.   King, and diverse others who write on community, security and human flourishing (Little, 2004, Gilroy, 2005, 2008) utilise Nussbaum's list of universal functional capabilities posited as necessary for human flourishing. Briefly stated in King these are: life, bodily health and integrity, senses, imagination and thought, emotions, practical reason, *affiliation, other species, play* and *control over one's environment (*my italics*)* (2003, p.56). Nussbaum's normative proposition (not dissimilar to that of Friedmann) is that 'social arrangements should be evaluated primarily according to the extent of freedom people have to promote or achieve functionings they value' (Nussbaum cited in Gilroy, 2008, p.141).

The latter functional capability – control over one's environment - brings the issue of insecure tenure or occupancy and concomitant lack of autonomy back into focus as concerns that assail not only freedom rights to housing but the right to develop functional capabilities that flow from housing. And while King's conceptualisation of human flourishing (following Nussbaum) is based in a libertarianism that lauds individual responsibility, he nevertheless makes the case for housing as a freedom right.

"Seeing housing as a freedom right has the potential of freeing housing discourse of much of its tenure-bound nature. Access and use of housing is put alongside any consideration of ownership and thus there is no longer any qualitative distinction between owning and renting" (King, 2003 p.670)

Gilroy (2005, 2008), in utilising Nussbaum's capabilities in housing and planning research, also grounds her discussion in peoples' experiences and their identification of quality of life criteria to better understand the *places* that support human flourishing, although her work takes 'lessons from later life' – and thus focuses on the lives of older people. Gilroy's concerns are specific to the needs of older people and she locates these micro concerns in wider macro and meso scales of planning for liveability, social cohesion and sustainability.

The criteria for an enriched later life revealed in Gilroy's research – community participation, home, neighbourhood, mobility, health, income and social networks – may not be all that different for the flourishing of renters or owners or indeed any cohort, although the scales, degrees and specific interdependencies will change and differ. For example, mobility for renters may relate to having to move more often than they would like and the impacts of moving on disposable income and community-based networks whereas for older people it relates primarily to how best to get around and the impacts of poor health in doing so.

The diffuseness of some of the key concepts explored in the literature support their use in a methodological approach that depends upon levels of abstraction and ambiguity in the design of the primary instrument for the mass capture of data. This construction of ambiguity, as we shall see in the next chapter, is not simple or straightforward. The complexity of the task relates to a requirement to unlearn: to notice and disrupt our own propensities for entrained ways of thinking when it comes to approaching planning in complexity, to learn anew, to transcend and include. Thus the narrative of the design process within an innovative methodological approach, in this case is relevant and instructional and is related next, in Chapter Four.

This chapter, by way of literature review, has provided context for the research case study, highlighting the research's concern with what may support or challenge renters' sense of home, security and their capacities for flourishing. The chapter has explored these and other concepts – place, belonging, autonomy, connection, privacy - as generative themes that provide the broad scaffolding for the development of the signification framework. Such frameworks, interfacing with narratives, are designed with sufficient ambiguity to allow for contributors to provide their own meaning. This therefore disrupts and circumvents the usual narrative research task of interpretation.

There is a substantive point to make about this disruption. This goes to the purpose of this research and indeed the original purpose of the tools and processes trialled here, vis à vis social research. All methods have their limitations and all research takes place within certain constraints. That discussion however I leave until the conclusion of Part Four.

Chapter Four. Designing the plane while flying it

The whimsical title of this chapter is a phrase coined by action researchers Herr and Anderson (2005d) that harks back to the excursions in Chapter One and re-iterates that this project is one of action research in planning.   Here, in Chapter Four I tell the tale of designing, and (re)designing, the project while in the pilot seat. The chapter has four sections. In Section One I describe how the research topic and process unfolded and morphed; from research initially geared to investigating integral sustainability in a particular local social housing context to a project that takes the private rental system as the main case study and focus *in terms of opportunities for outcomes in action research.*

Section Two briefly recaps a conceptualisation of the methodological assemblage laid out in Part One up to and including the core participatory processes[18]. Next I lay out the collaborative design and development and the rationales for elements of the bespoke 'Renters at Home' signification framework and reflect on the complex, interdependent nature of the attributes within that framework. Sensemaker Suite™, as the software that holds the micro-narratives and their self-signification within its architecture for various types of inquiry, is introduced; as a key component of the design of the wider research methodological assemblage, and the signification framework. In Section Three of the chapter, and also with regards to collaborative design and participatory processes, I outline the design of two participatory processes, firstly one that extracted system issues and archetypes from a primary dataset of micro-narratives and secondly a follow-up workshop that utilised that participatory system data and the Cynefin framework for action planning.   Section Four briefly picks up a narrative thread of issues and research choice points emerging from the participatory/action research processes before outlining the design and rationale of an overall analysis framework.

Finally, Chapter Four concludes with two diagrams that serve to summarise and conceptualise the main cycles of the action research process and the key activities and participants in those processes. There, I also summarise the specifics of where the various participants came into the project.

Section One (Re)Designing the plane while flying it

Out of the mists of sleep at 5 am one morning arose a question: What would integral sustainability look like applied to social housing?

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[18] As we shall see, the outcomes of the second process lead on to issues of learning complexity in planning praxis and therefore another cycle of methodological improvisation evolves from workshop outcomes and reflections. The result is an expanded conceptualisation of the methodological assemblage.

This was the beginning: Interdependent contexts in a dream, coalescing into a question, with the question waking me up. Many elements and varied contexts were part of the mix that morning. Earlier work histories in policy advocacy and community and development education around social and ecological issues, and more recently, public sector learning and organisational development roles were all there. With greater time and distance and on reflection I also sensed deeper, subjective concerns in the interdependencies within the question; how sustainable (in terms of my affording it over a period of time) would my own (rental) housing be, given imminent redundancy from government and the substantial, concomitant cuts to all the government and community services sectors I had long been employed within? Also undergoing change and transition at that time was housing policy related to tenancies and tenure in social and community housing sectors in Queensland, Australia. Given my role in a department of housing I was well aware of the seismic shifts occurring through a change of government (a landslide win to a right wing/conservative coalition) and the 'machinery of government' changes this landslide was bringing about.

The question persisted. As I was soon to be a free agent I went about investigating where best to base myself to do research along these lines. I took soundings from colleagues in housing, from former academic advisors and an emeritus professor of management who I had trained under in organisational development work. He informed me methodological theses were often well regarded. This was helpful, since I had a novel methodological approach in mind.

The initial impetus and original, potential topic centred on a particular case study of what was then mooted as the Logan Renewal Initiative (LRI). This large scale renewal project of social housing in Queensland's second largest municipality was to be the flagship and model of how government might divest itself of public housing responsibilities and hand it over to the burgeoning, and highly regulated, community housing sector. It was to be the largest scale project of its type in Australia and so was generating significant interest in policy and research circles. Yet significant, early doubts about the viability of that project (given federal industrial and workplace law and existing labour costs) expressed in earlier private conversations between government colleagues continued to ring true. Beginning the doctoral research in July 2013 and after preliminary reading, and informal soundings taken with new research colleagues in the Urban Research Program associated with Logan, I made a final decision to walk away from the LRI, several months into the research process.

What persisted and remained however was the potential of a methodological approach I had trained in as an organisational development consultant where narratives of experience were captured en

masse with Sensemaker ™ software. This approach provided heuristics – patterns as evidence - of what was occurring in a complex social system. As an approach to monitoring and evaluating cultures and development processes in human systems (whether organisational or other systems and scales) Sensemaker™ and the participatory processes developed around it had captured my imagination. I saw this as potentially overcoming old methodological conundra; of depth versus span, qualitative versus quantitative, and of valuing exploratory, experiential, narrative and participatory action research forms of research over the monological gaze (Wilber, 1995) of positivism.

* * *

"Hmmm, an action research methodology for an urban research PhD? I wouldn't recommend it! It sounds to me like you have a methodology in search of a case study." (Early advice and commentary from a university research methodologist)

As already expressed I came to the research with long work/life experience. I was already in my early 50s and participatory and action research approaches geared to change in the world were my methodological habitus. And so I stood by the research choices I was making whilst also recognising that action research was not particularly common or commonly well understood within academia, except perhaps as practitioner based research in fields such as education. Planning literature, as I was soon to discover, talked about reflective practice (Schön, 1983) and the 'reflexive turn' (Howe and Langdon, 2002) yet there was little evidence to suggest that self-reflection as part of reflexivity was as integral to planning praxis as it was to my own.   This was a space I aimed to step into, and claim.

As action research the design process, including the thesis writing reflecting an autoethnographic element, progressed in loose cycles of planning, acting and reflecting. This process, encapsulated by Herr and Anderson's whimsical yet apt notion of 'designing the plane while flying it' (Herr and Anderson, 2005d) also reflected a certain circularity of my mental processes. While well-*schooled* in logico-linear ways I had happily undergone processes of de-schooling and unlearning (Freire, 1970, Illich, 1983) while living in other cultures where circularity is more the norm.

The *experience* of renting was emerging as the primary focus; to be understood through the capturing of rental experiences as offered by renters, whatever their tenurial positions. A new topic was also emerging. By the time ethics approval was granted the topic was being expressed as "Remaking spaces, making our places: Renters at home in urban housing processes'. This was broad enough to encapsulate any twists and turns the process might bring (or so I believed at the time). The original supervisors were happy and thought I was onto something important and valuable. This was reified in all our thinking with the January 2014 publication by Hazel Easthope of 'Making a rental property home – a comparative study of rental conditions in Australia and Germany.'

During that first six months the reviews of literature had covered the (initial) methodological inquiry- action research, participatory planning, narrative methods, sensemaking - including the relevant theoretical debates and conceptual frames used in these bodies of knowledge. The research reading of literatures also engaged with the philosophical, delving into housing and planning theory and numerous multidimensional, transdisciplinary 'threads': space, place, home, being, becoming, belonging, habitus, ontological security, complexity, subjectivities and reflexivities.

A very early paper for the September 2013 Australian Housing Theory Symposium drew on the engagement with the aforementioned literatures outlining my own emergent theory building of 'nested and fluid positionalities and reflexivities'. That short paper 'Spaces of Housing Research' explored the reflexive and communicative spaces a researcher inhabits in a participatory action research process. That paper seeded the ongoing use of autoethnographic writing, the various forms of which became integral to both the research writing and the wider research process.

One supervisor asked me to diagram my research thinking five months into the process, the multiple threads emerging as the hand drawn diagram depicted in Figure 4.1.

The cyclical nature of action research and the need to allow an ostensibly exploratory research process the necessary space to take its own course seemed at odds with the usual process of extensive content based literature review and indeed the whole, usual research process. Robust discussion with another, more senior supervisor advising me on what constitutes the usual research process elicited another diagram from me (whiteboard markers at 2 paces!) — in response to his own diagrammatic effort.

Figure 4.1 Loose, interweaving threads of the research conceptualised
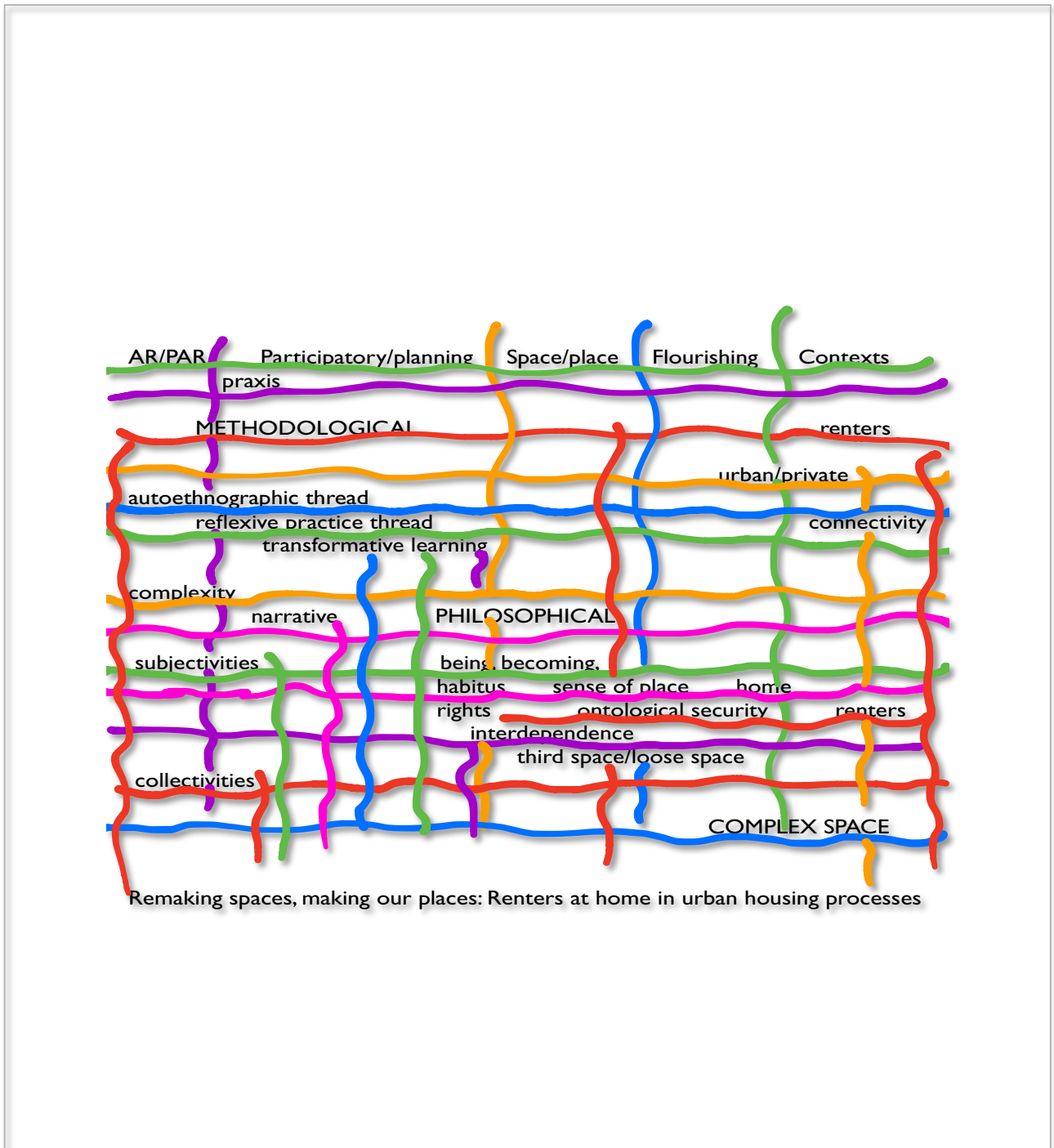
This exercise congealed my own conceptualisation of what *this* research process looked like - how as action research this research process was being enacted. Here, in Figure 4.2 a complex system of interdependent, action research processes related to both topic (content problem/knowledge literatures) and methodological action and engagement were conceptualised as occurring in parallel, in cyclical process, each informing, filtering and acting upon the other.

I recall pausing to reflect that much research could be construed as action research, if only there was greater reflexivity and transparency about the process.

Figure 4.2 Early conceptualisation of the Action Research process

THE ACTION RESEARCH PROCESS.
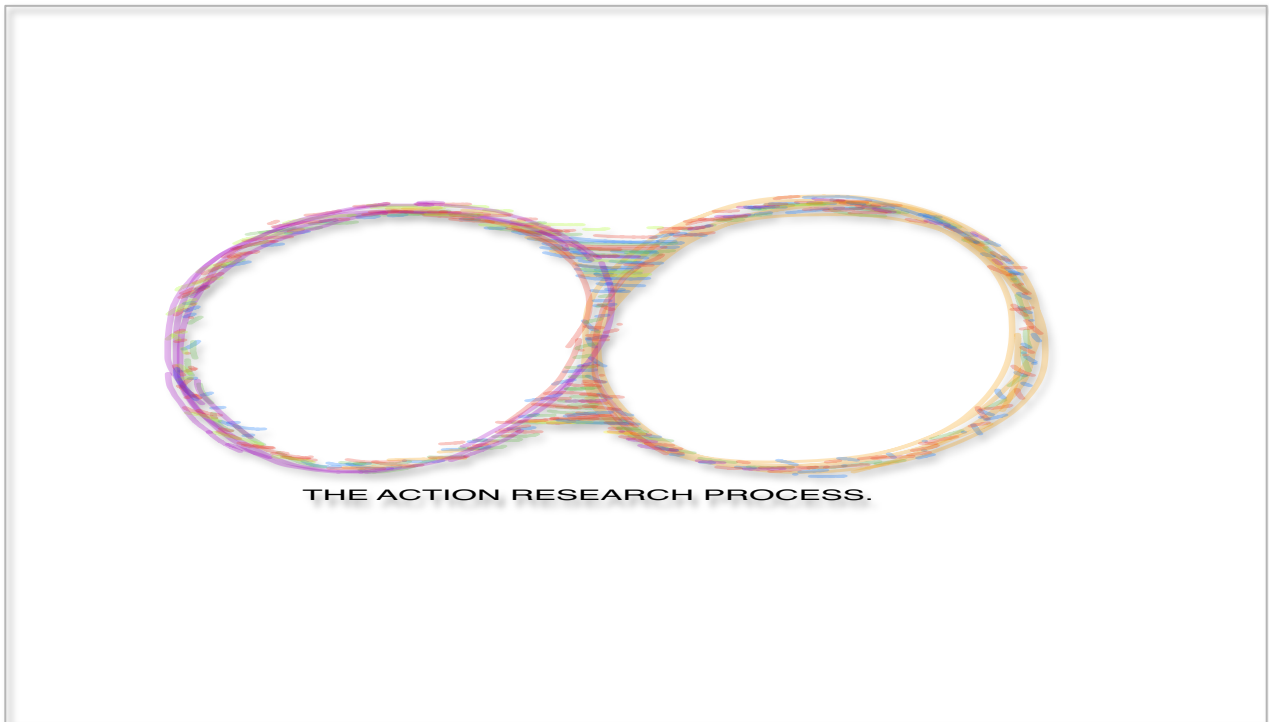
Engagement

In maintaining coherence with 'a praxis of participation', the opening of 'communicative space' and the value I placed on experiential knowledge from the field, the first and second cycles, constituting the phase to confirmation, also involved taking soundings in informal background conversations. These occurred with people involved in the housing and homelessness sectors, in social service and advocacy organisations, as well as with individual, grassroots, tenant advocates. I aimed to understand core issues first and foremost as they saw them and to ascertain what was likely to be feasible for the project. An implicit aim remained supporting advocacy.

Applying for and receiving human ethics clearance within the first five months subsequently facilitated formal stakeholder engagement, their participation in the scoping of the project and in the design of the collection tool (as discussed in Section Two of this chapter). This phase of research design thus engaged with CEOs and directors of strategy and community engagement in community housing organisations and key advocacy leaders and stakeholders from a number of state and national organisations aligned with tenants' and housing policy issues as well as public sector agencies and tenancy authorities.

Due to the extensive engagement and the capacity for online collection of data, the topic and project now encapsulated potential for investigating differences between sectors and state based systems within a greater Australian rental system. It would not be til sometime further down the track that I realised the depth of the original thinking regarding the concepts of 'integral sustainability' and 'sustain-abilities' as first conceptualised for the initial project and the applicability of these for renters in the private rental system.

The following Figure 4.3 depicts the multiple literatures and concepts explored to confirmation and how these were conceptualised as feeding into the research process and the broad, exploratory questions. The acronym PaNSAR reflected the participatory, narrative based sensemaking and action research process although this was the first and last time I used the term.

Figure 4.3 The literature base and concept map for the project prior to confirmation
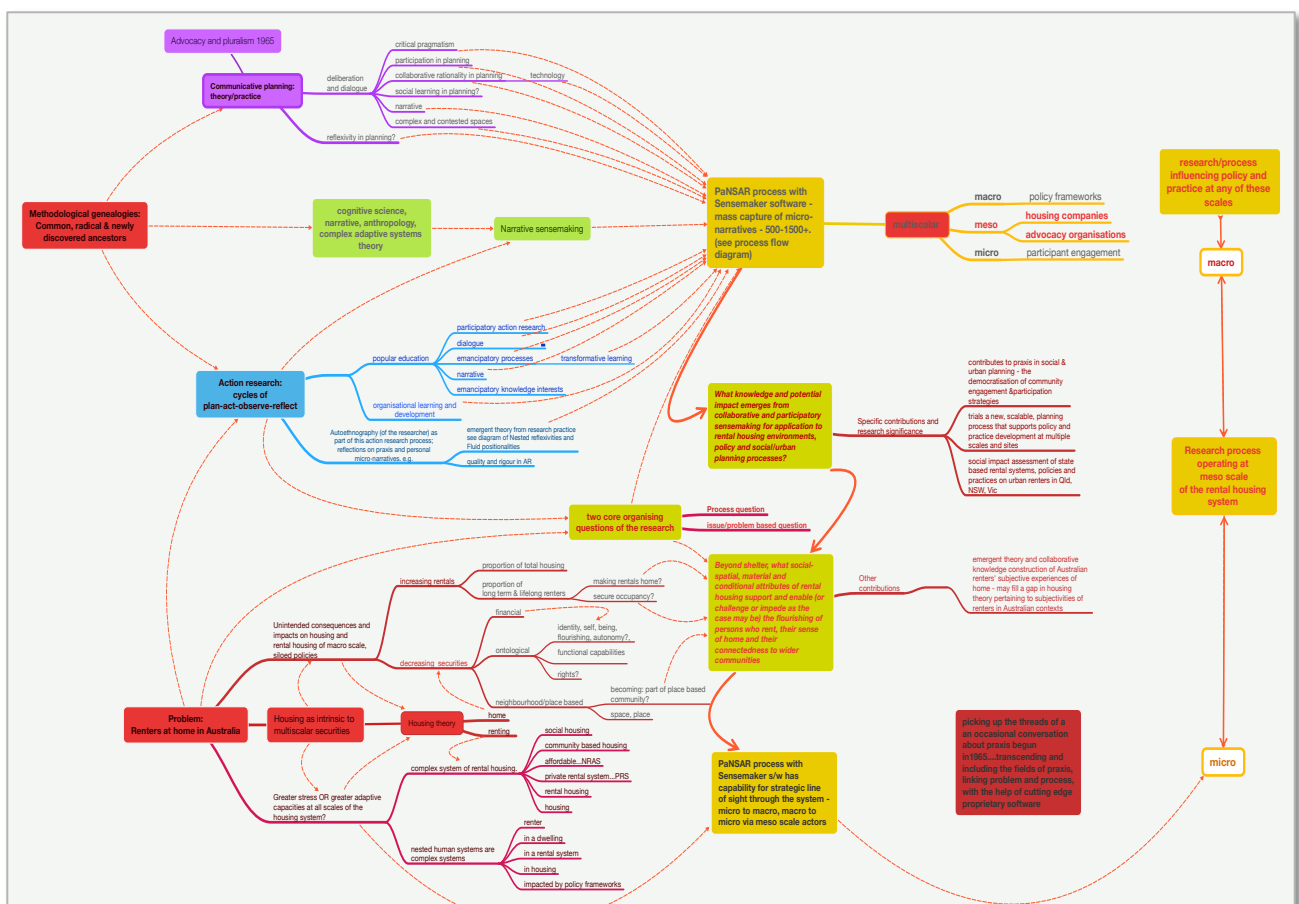
Feasibility

The necessity of ethics clearance so early in the process also served to focus the research design on methodological feasibility, specifically issues related to:

- Engaging and developing a core collaborative action research group drawn from participating stakeholder organisations and interested others.
- Mass micro-narrative capture (what kind(s) of organisations had both the capacity and the interest to support data collection via URL/online participation and other organisational processes?)
- Participative and collaborative activities – workshops for second stage data extraction and capture, sensemaking and data analysis. (Which organisations would grasp the opportunity for organisational development implicit in the very early/original research aims?)

The desire for a substantial data set that offered capacity for a comparative study of private and social/community rental experience thus underpinned the initial consultations across community and advocacy sectors. Public housing sector interest was more variable and problematic. Key people in two states were keen. Yet recognising the difficulties in establishing and maintaining relationships with key actors in multiple states, in a sector renowned for its lack of agility, eventually eliminated public housing (as part of the broader social housing sector) from the mix.

I was more confident and successful in initiating collaborations within the burgeoning community housing sector across the three key Australian states of Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria. Yet in the final reckoning these hoped for collaborations, despite keen interest at strategic levels with directors who could see the potential for data useful for their organisational decision-making, did not eventuate. Nor did useful numbers of micro-narratives (for system comparisons) eventuate through community housing organisations.

Ultimately this data collection concern was due to three inter-related issues. Firstly, organisation based data collection, via the Sensemaker™ IOS/ipad app or any computer with internet access, needed to be operationalised and communicated through community housing staff to generate interest in and for the project amongst residents and housing workers. Secondly, despite senior, strategic level interest and CDO assignment this 'ask' was beyond the work capacities of communications and community development staff with little spare time to engage on a project not regarded by management or by them as core business, despite early enthusiasm. The capacity for Community Housing Providers (CHPs) to establish and maintain strategic lines of sight from strategy to operational staff and residents was not yet developed. Paradoxically this was an organisational and sector development issue I had hoped the research process would support in positive ways in a sector that was relatively new, particularly with regards to a national regulatory framework. Thirdly, the communications of invitations to participate via organisational websites were found to be almost completely ineffective. Direct mailing by post was already precluded,

given the number of posted letters necessary, my own understandings of usual letterboxing response rates and less than $4000 in the total research budget.

The non-existent collection outcomes related to website announcements (or other requested communications) was an important research learning supported by a capacity to track incoming narratives in real time on an ipad through another app: Sensemaker Explorer for IOS. Having this capacity prompted a decision to embark on staged rollouts as a way of evaluating methods and levels of organisational support. Thus all organisationally based collection outcomes from the engagement processes were tracked: tenant and housing advocacy organisations and community sector housing providers in the three key states, and eventually so too were the private sector industry based member organisation communications.   It became clear that other mechanisms through additional organisations would eventually be needed to catalyse more, anonymous renters' contributions of rental tales. A 'campaign' through social media advertising at the behest of a supportive national advocacy organisation eventually got the collection of data to a useful level. Rental tale contributors in this process were self-selecting and the tales came in from almost every state and territory in the country except Tasmania and the Northern Territory. Such is the viral nature of social media. This wide net cast for contributor self-selection was not a concern (at that stage), in large part due to the software's capacity to filter data and manage complex correlative inquiries. I explore this capacity and the data actually collected in more detail in Chapter Five and summarise the participant engagement processes at the end of this chapter.

Initial sites and scales of praxis

In the initial phase some measure of the potential and hoped for significance of this research approach rested with the sheer number of micro-narratives that Sensemaker ™ V 2.5 software has capacity to support. The software developed by Snowden and his colleagues at Cognitive Edge in 2010 (www.cognitive-edge.com) offers the potential for the capture of tens of thousands of micro-narratives. Therefore, the limits on number of micro-narratives ostensibly relate to project scoping - timelines and resourcing - rather than software capability. A minimum number of between 200 - 300 self-signified micro-narratives is usually needed for the software to generate potentially meaningful patterns in a system or statistics on complex correlations. I discovered, however, the data potential can also depend on the specific patterns that emerge from participant self-signification in their responses to filters and questions.

Irrespective of minimum amounts of data, Sensemaker ™ on its own is geared to collecting big data for sensemaking and modelling. For example, according to Cognitive Edge staff (explaining the method in a training exercise (in March 2012) a very large transnational company facilitated the

capture of over 90 000 organisational micro-narratives related to employee perceptions and engagement and this was achieved in the space of two weeks. Such is strategic leadership in well-developed corporate systems. Another Kenyan based, NGO project, 'Global Giving', captured 1400 narratives over a 12 month pilot timeframe in 2009 with significant on ground human resources but with limited technical resources that necessitated hand written, face to face capture and manual inputting. This project has subsequently captured over 57 000 micro-narratives with 1000 people on ground over a period of three years (https://www.globalgiving.org/stories/) highlighting the real time evaluative capacity of the approach. I explored the possibility of on ground resources through negotiations with co-ordinators of postgraduate social science programs where students might take up the role of face to face capture with residents without access to the necessary technology. This ultimately failed due to the requirement that such students work beside me as primary investigator. This was completely negated the point of the exercise!

However, given the level of interest, feedback and input from partner organisations and networks I had a sound level of confidence that 500 to 1500 micro-narratives would be captured. This projection turned out to be wildly optimistic - with only 233 'rental tales' eventually captured, mostly over a ten-month period. I had initially closed off the data set at 226 tales but to my surprise another four tales arrived about a year later. Facebook had regenerated a 'memory' of the advocacy organisation campaign, and generated these extra tales.

Identified risks and challenges

Prior to confirmation the original research design was geared to three key capital cities in Australia: Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne. A key part of the plan was to conduct two different, interrelated participatory workshops in each city with self-nominated renters and housing, policy and advocacy staff from stakeholder organisations. The main risks and challenges in the research as postulated for the confirmation milestone largely related to the participative aspects of the action research process. The following potential risks were identified and ameliorated as much as possible through the initial design process. In retrospect, these seem almost prescient.

- A key organisation drops out impacting the spread of narratives captured online across the whole rental system in that state and necessitating effort to find another willing organisational participant.
- More face to face (workshop) data capture of micro-narratives is needed for particular cohorts impacting timeframes and necessitating extra interstate travel and/or accommodation.

- The Collaborative Action Research group (CAR group) membership is not stable, timeframes slip because of multiparty scheduling challenges and it becomes more of a reference group rather than properly collaborative.
- Insufficient numbers of micro-narratives collected across the three cities/sites for useful comparable state and rental sector based analyses. The data collection could be extended, as long as 200-300 micro-narratives are captured. The plan is for capture via URL within designated short timeframes aligned to organisational needs and processes (e.g. the research project information is sent as part of an organisational communication such as an annual survey).

In the end, all of these identified risks came to pass, as did a few unidentified challenges.

The other challenges impacting the research related to fluidities and discontinuities in the Australian university system. The first two advisors both left within the first 6-9 months for an interstate university 2000 kilometres away. Given vagaries in the system and my reluctance to either work alone from home without the collegiality of an urban research cohort or relocate to Melbourne, their departure signalled the discontinuation of their advisory roles. Within the next few months the principal advisor in the next advisory team put in place had also moved - to another, local university - and so this time I followed, only to discover different research funding implementation rules meant a significant cut to the expected research budget. This required yet another re-scoping and, given the emerging dataset, a decision was made to narrow the focus of the participatory processes still to come to the private rental system - while still allowing for the ad hoc collection and utilisation of other sector tales. Consequently there was a shift away from active engagement with community housing providers in multiple states and new and renewed engagement with other stakeholders; real estate industry bodies and national housing advocacy interests in organisations with capacity to support the project through more targeted communications. The interstate workshops were dropped for lack of funds and another advisor did not come on board until October 2015, post the mid candidature milestone. By that time, all planned for data collection was ostensibly complete, except for the one, emergent design, action/planning workshop with policy and advocacy professionals that was eventually held in March 2016.

Yet, despite all the challenges and changes in emphasis, and in proposed sites of collaboration outlined above the designed structure of the methodological assemblage remained intact (as depicted in Figure 4.4) The principles and structural underpinnings of action research remained, although some of these elements – the collaborations in particular were not as structured or even ongoing, as first planned. As laid out in the Introduction, praxis became loose and adaptive through

necessity, and more reflexive and reflective, as a result. I pondered the concept of researcher and the research project as nested complex adaptive systems.

Section Two Methodological assemblage

This section revisits the conceptualisation of the methodological assemblage with particular emphasis on the specific tools and methods associated with the work of Snowden and his collaborators. I discuss the design, collaborative development and rationales of the particular tools and processes; the signification framework and the complex, fractal nature of the attributes within the framework; and the subsequent participatory processes that extracted and worked with primary and secondary data.

Conceptualising a methodological assemblage

Theories, understandings and approaches from critical adult education, participatory/action research, complexity science, cognitive sciences, naturalistic decision-making, narrative research and planning all find a place in the methodological approach assembled for this project. Some of these elements were part of my own habitus, epistemological and methodological ways of approaching, acting in and making sense of the world. Other elements - more specific understandings on cognition and naturalistic decision-making and the development of specific instruments - needed more integrative learning on my part. Still other elements, being mathematical, statistical and computational, were (and will remain) mostly beyond my skill set, save for the interface capacities of the software.

More specifically, as depicted in Figure 4.4, the assemblage is conceptualised with principles of participatory action research underpinning the methodological design. These principles have been explored in depth in Chapter One. Resting upon those structural elements in the complex space of a housing system is the architecture of Sensemaker ™ software, based in work that encompasses complexity understandings, cognitive science and narrative, as outlined in Chapter Two. The next, key element in the assemblage is the signification framework supported within Sensemaker™, drawing on the case study themes explored in Chapter Three. This assemblage evolved as the research progressed.

Figure 4.4 The methodological assemblage (to November 2015) conceptualised
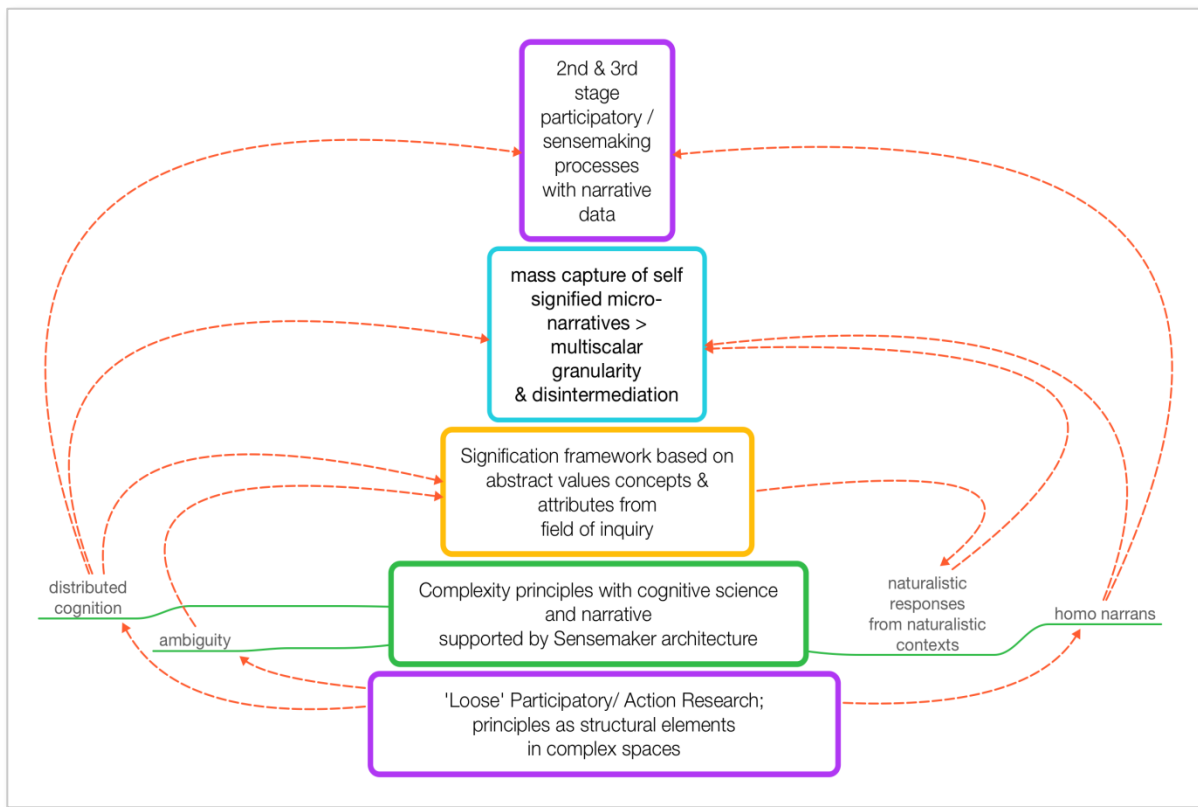
Sensemaker Suite ™ and signification frameworks

A signification framework, through which anonymous participants' rental tales are directly uploaded online into the architecture of Sensemaker™, is the key research instrument in this thesis. Signification frameworks are bespoke, designed to and for specific projects while adhering to particular design principles and parameters. They are designed to elicit, in the first instance, naturalistic responses about experience from naturalistic contexts (prompts or catalysing question). The naturalistic micro-narrative responses about experience are not necessarily stories in the sense of having a usual narrative structure with a beginning, middle and ending. They are mostly brief, often simply fragments. These can be a sentence, an anecdote, even a photo or recorded audio, as little or as much as a person chooses to contribute. Indeed, attention is paid to framing the initial catalysing context in such a way as to elicit fragments rather than traditionally structured stories and there is a level of ambiguity or openness in a catalysing scenario question.

Ambiguity allows for potentially tens of thousands of narrators to contribute their own naturalistic responses. *Constructing* ambiguity, however, is one of the most challenging aspects of the

signification design process. It requires collaborators and researchers alike to cognitively shift - away from long held and entrained understandings of qualitative research generally and instruments more specifically – to move away from specifics and into a space where ambiguity is the aim. The purpose of building in levels of ambiguity *within* abstraction into a signification framework is fourfold. Firstly it provides narrators with the opportunity to respond from *their* specific experience and knowledge base. Secondly, and subsequently, it supports narrators to signify (index) the experience they have shared within fields of multiple values, factors and attributes that constitute the system under investigation. The process of self-signification disrupts what Kahneman (2012) terms System 1 (fast) thinking and requires participants to pause; to engage System Two (slow) thinking, and consider where amongst the factors their experience resides. Thirdly, therefore, participant/narrator self- signification is geared to overcome levels of entrainment common in participant responses in questionnaires and levels and types of cognitive bias on the part of researchers (Tversky and Kahneman, 1974, 1975, Kahneman, 2012) in their interpretation of data they have set out to confirm or disconfirm in hypothesis based research. Fourthly, the self-signification into a visual field using Sensemaker ™ aggregates and depicts all narrators' significations as visual patterns of the system relative to the questions and factors of the framework. These visual patterns provide the basis for initial sensemaking of the patterns emerging from the system.

The architecture of the software also provides for different types of visualised data and statistical data relative to the values, factors or attributes depicted. For example: A signifier placed in a triad of factors pertaining to a filter question offers three statistical data points. Multiple filter questions across a signification framework provides for complex inquiries and potentially complex correlations with statistical data. These attributes of the software become apparent in Part Three where the findings are discussed.

More to the point here is that the software and methods offer a range of processes tailored to the needs and preferences of stakeholder organisations involved, in this case tailored to the sensemaking preferences and skill base of the researcher(s) and community sector collaborators. Working with quantitative methods is of great interest to certain planner researchers, especially those interested in complexity and planning but quantitative analysis was never going to be a significant part of this project because of the chosen focus on participatory processes and the development of shared heuristics.

I aimed for participatory, disintermediated and subsidiaritarian processes of sensemaking and analysis as part of action research for emergent outcomes. As it turned out, the process became one where I as researcher also engaged in significant solo sensemaking which included exploring the

statistical capabilities of the software. The easy interface of the software and its architecture allowed me, with virtually no statistical and computational skillset, to explore complex correlations of factors in the system. These key findings are discussed in Chapter Six but first, and next, I discuss the collaborative development of the project's signification framework.

Development and rationale of the Renters at Home signification framework

Designing a signification framework requires collaborators and researchers alike to cognitively shift. The principles and methods were now quite familiar to me. Through participation in previous training with Cognitive Edge, work on a community project and specific, further training in the development of parameters of 'signification design' I had been learning the craft of signification frameworks over a period of time. Generative themes for the research and framework had emerged from literature reviews and collaborative inquiry with advocacy stakeholders.

With the mentoring support of external colleagues familiar with the signification framework design process (rather than the university supervisory teams), this instrument drew on previous collaborative experience with a group of people in Brisbane. This earlier collaboration comprised a renowned action research scholar and retired academic, consultants (myself included), a former public service executive and a diverse group of consumers, among others. This group supported and developed a pro bono community-based research project—Portraits in Blue— http://www.portraitsinblue.com/. That project, along with earlier design laboratories with practitioners over a three-year period and some additional training in signification parameters, provided me with the necessary exposure to the knowledge base behind Sensemaker. That period also provided time for sufficient experiential knowledge to shift my researcher's mindset; away from entrained and standardised ways of thinking about research survey design and into a cognitive space of becoming more attuned and familiar with methods designed with social complexity (Snowden, 2005) in mind.

The design thinking of the signification framework therefore began early and remained an iterative process from only a few months into the research process. Renters and key staff from housing organisations/associations and advocacy organisations who were interested and engaged in the research process in this early stage were invited to further participate in a collaborative group.

The primary starting point for developing the signifiers of any framework using this approach are the abstract values, concepts or words associated with the fields and inquiry (as discussed in Chapter Three). Thematic threads and concepts had emerged and the commitment to the development process on the part of individuals in organisations and interested individuals ensured that a breadth of experience and understandings at multiple scales in the system would be captured.

Experiential, practitioner knowledge was thus utilised alongside the abstract concepts drawn from the academic literature.

For the collaborators however this remained an unfamiliar methodological approach. Levels of explanation were therefore needed and these, along with a preliminary draft as a learning tool, became the starting point for the development of the collaboration.

After the second collaborative development group meeting and email communications the group got to a seventh draft and iteration. I subsequently took further advice through a mentoring discussion with an external practitioner colleague. This clarified for me that the framework was not yet coherent, or ambiguous enough. More input and redrafting was required. The key issue was that the collaborative development process had moved from abstracts to specifics and had therefore lost necessary ambiguity. The final days of development therefore became a solitary process of adding and subtracting, disassembling and reassembling factors and attributes and categories, and exploring the interrelationships and interdependencies of these.

Ensuring and maintaining levels of ambiguity in the triads and dyads and disrupting the tendency to specificity, the framework factors that evolved from the collaborative process and early literature review eventually coalesced around three broad and core attributes of rental housing; materiality, socio-spatiality and conditionality. These loosely (largely) corresponded to three core concerns of security, belonging and autonomy. All six were sufficiently ambiguous. The following deconstruction into these attributes shows the core concerns aligned with the overarching attributes that evolved through literatures and collaborations. The following pertains to Figure 4.5 which depicts the triads and the interdependencies (complexity) within.

- Materiality – Security: A roof overhead, security, financial security, terms of lease, attitudes/behaviour of landlords or management, standard/design of dwelling, level of safety/security of building, privacy, feeling at home

- Socio-spatiality – Belonging: Home base, social relationships, local people, neighbours, attitude of landlords/agents, privacy, feeling at home (connection to place/ neighbourhood)

- Conditionality – Autonomy: Flexibility, self-fulfilment, terms of lease, rental conditions, inspections, autonomy, and privacy.

Figure 4.5 Complex interdependencies within the Renters at Home signification framework triads
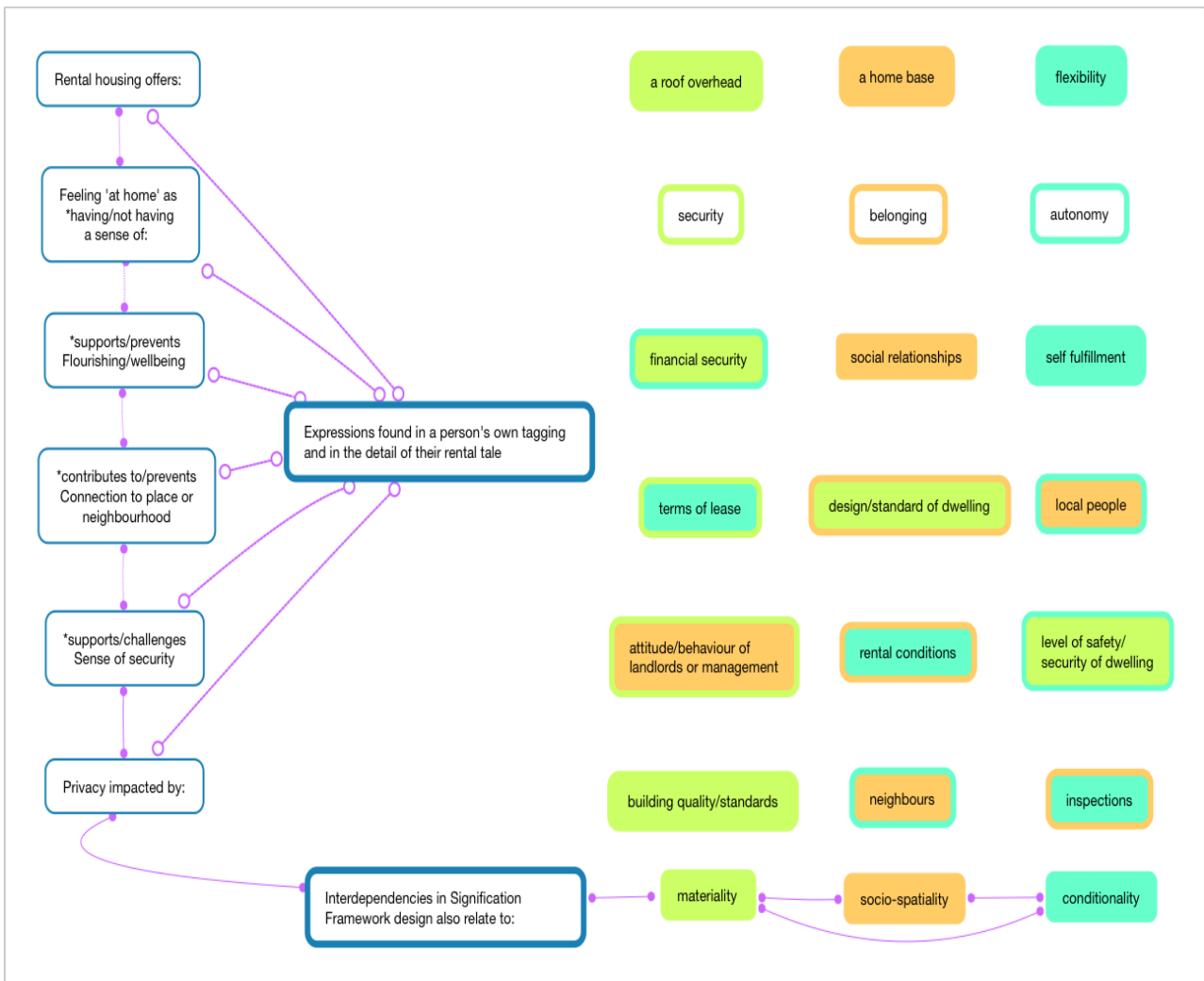
The coloured borders around attributes (factors) in Figure 4.5 indicate primary and secondary interdependencies. I discuss the triads again later. The dyads were substantially less complex to develop, even with the collaborative discussions about what best constituted a point of balance— the ideal state— between the polarities, as depicted next in Figure 4.6.

Figure 4.6 The dyads in the signification framework

Renting in my experience is:

Managed for investor/agent outcomes

Changes by renters to rental property are/were:

Strictly controlled, can't even hang a painting

Ideal state/ golden mean

Rental conditions and regulations/ legislation balance care for all landlords' investments and all persons right to a home base free of interference

All non structural changes are permitted, subject to a return to the state of the property upon leasing

Geared to the needs of renters to feel at home

Fully allowable- can adapt to renters needs and wants

Researcher reflection: August 2014: On the process of constructing ambiguity in the signification framework.

Experience is fractal.

The seeds and shape of things at the micro level of experience are often also found in the meso and macro scales of things.   Here, in this research, what is found in the narratives, subjectivities and local knowledge of a renter (and as a starting point also in the reflexivity and autoethnography of this researcher and renter) is found in the wider local knowledge of people in the advocacy and tenancy advice and support sector – the meso scale. Seeds and the shape of things here are also found in the literature; the research of others in the broad fields of inquiry, over scales construed as macro and temporal.   And so while there appears a type of 'looseness' and ambiguity in the development of the signification framework, within this action research process there has also appeared an inherent fractal structure – and with it a level of methodological coherence - in the framework and the cyclical processes utilised to develop it.   There is also a poetic sense of the nonlinear. Abstracted tendrils, sonic and spiralled that come

back together in the end – more like an Indian raga or improvisation in jazz – and so in the final iteration of the Renters at Home Signification Framework the seeds of multiple, singular signifiers (factors) are seen (at least by me) as reflecting a fractal complexity – interdependent with, and therefore often found in, other signifiers.

The collaborative process was not without its contestations and challenges and this was in part due to the necessary abstractions within the tool and an early clear decision within the CAR group to ensure safety and anonymity for contributors and participants by not adding in specific organisation names as another option for filtering the data. As this was a PhD and not a formal collaboration geared to specific organisational interests this trade-off ultimately meant that the engagement and contributions of community housing residents were substantially less than first envisaged, despite endeavouring to meet some of the preferences of community housing organisations engaged in various aspects of the research design phase.

Catalysing responses

A signification framework's scenario question (see the [Renters at Home Collector Tool](#)) aims to catalyse a 'naturalistic response' from renters about an experience of renting. For example: Your widowed aunt is looking for moderate cost rentals in your area – what one experience would you share with her? Or: A friend or colleague has just transferred to your city and asks about the rental scene – what will you tell them?

The catalysing question or scenario here was perhaps one of the most difficult questions to arrive at in the signification framework development process. The problem was one of providing sufficient, meaningful, natural context (or contexts) from which a naturalistic narrative might emerge. The original intent of capturing experiences from across the whole rental spectrum – private, community, National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS), and public rental residents – aimed for a deep slice of a whole population of renters in the context of Australian demographics. The challenge of having too many scenarios to choose from and potentially only one or none that diverse cohorts of renters might identify with ultimately highlighted the need for one, general, overarching scenario that anyone residing and renting in Australia could relate to. The eventual scenario/question is below:

You meet up with some people you like and trust at a local gathering. They are in the middle of sharing "rental tales"— experiences of renting in Australia. A good friend turns to you and asks, "So, what's your rental significant rental tale"?

In the process of designing this question the collaborative group process moved away from specifics to the more abstract and ambiguous. There were discussions around the word 'significant.' This was ultimately agreed to because of the lack of specificity of other context. The context is one of trust, however the setting could be a barbeque, a picnic, a rally, the dog park. It is left up to the contributors, to further contextualise this for themselves out of a more generalised initial context.

The use of 'rental tale' as a designation was ultimately a decision by me. 'Tale', as opposed to 'story', was chosen because of particular connotations of both terms, as well as the necessity to keep the terminology simple and most easily understood by a large range of people. Story is something that could well be lengthy (and time consuming). Story is also more constructed or structured. Tale was considered more useful a term as it has connotations of the cautionary and the anecdotal, short, yet revealing of a generalised truth. 'Tale' also suggested something being told, and listened to - something renters in Australian culture were not necessarily encouraged to do. Hence, we implied an open invitation to listen to a person's anonymous rental tale – whatever it may have been.

Contributors also had the option of submitting narratives in other forms other than written text. Audio or photo options (the latter two forms available through the ipad app version) were also possible although very few people took up these options.

The preceding explanation of the signification framework development details this project's particular expression of the novel approach to catalysing narrative data (in Section One) and the development of key signifying factors for the triad section of the instrument (Section Three). The remainder of the Renters at Home Collector Tool was designed to encourage the contributor to consider the experience they have shared in the contexts of particular values and factors. It asked them (where applicable) to further signify (tag) their experience through another four sections and to index the renter in the tale (most likely themselves) to demographic and rental history questions.

The six sections of the Collection Tool are:

1. A section for the contribution of a rental tale, with title/ three words as additional, free text
2. Questions offering controlled layers of meaning (and filters for inquiries)
3. Triads
4. Dyads
5. Demographics and rental histories, tenancy information
6. Free text

The first section of the Collector Tool, in addition to space for the contributed tale, also provided space for free text in the form of a title and three key words. These options were included as they often offer other layers of meaning not necessarily found in the narratives themselves and are useful in collaborative/participatory sensemaking in workshops without the need for technology.

The second section of the Collector Tool is a set of multiple choice questions that contextualise a contributor's micro-narrative and add controlled layers of meaning to the narrative which can then be used as filters for data queries. In the Renters at Home signification framework we asked questions related to:

1. A person's intent in telling the tale. To: criticise, defend, complain, encourage, inform, get things off my chest, influence, or inspire.
2. What their tale was primarily about. The treatment of renters, neighbours, wellbeing issues, real estate agent practices, their capacity to thrive, community ties, issues of security.
3. What the tale was also about (related to socio-spatiality). Private dwelling, building complex, neighbourhood, shared space, other.
4. Their emotional intensity/ affect in telling it. Five options ranging from strongly positive to strongly negative.
5. The commonality of the experience shared. Only once, occasionally, often, rarely, don't know.
6. Their relationship to the tale. their tale as a renter, a housing professional, as a renter and housing professional or, a tale they know/heard about.
7. The temporality of the experience shared. More than 5 years, more than 1 year, now, ongoing.

The third section of the Collector Tool is the set of triads and here I provide rationale for their development. The triads outlined previously in the collaborative development discussion are the main graphic signification device used in this signification framework. Triads operate with the understanding that if all factors in a question were equally applicable in the renter's signification of her tale then the contributor would place her tale in the middle of three factors, which would be statistically correlated at 33.333 % to each apex.

The Triad section consists of ten questions beginning with a single triad: Rental housing offers. This triad aimed to elicit a broad positioning of how renters felt about their rental housing generally, in the context of their tale. It picks up conceptual frames and underlying assumptions from various perspectives and these are expressed as – flexibility, a roof overhead, a home base.

Following this are four sets of mirrored pairs of values: Negative and positive expressions of the subjectivities of; 'feeling 'at home'/ not feeling 'at home'; supports/prevents a sense of wellbeing (flourishing); contributes to /prevents a sense of connection to place/neighbourhood; and supports/challenges a sense of security.

'Feeling at home/not feeling as home' as the overarching abstracted concern asks contributors to place themselves and their tale within three core conceptual factors - Belonging, Autonomy and Security – sub factors of which are further expressed in the various remaining triads.

The final, single triad is concerned with the factors that impact on privacy, considered key to a sense of autonomy but related also to ontological security, human flourishing and the concept of 'home'. Thus the triad section is bookended by two questions that are conceptualised as overarching; one with abstract values, the other with specified factors (Inspections, Building quality and standards, Neighbours) known anecdotally to impact privacy.

The fourth section of the Collector Tool is the set of two Dyads – designed as polar, but not necessarily opposite, conceptualisations where participants consider where their tale and circumstances may fit along a sliding scale between the two polarities. In the context of this research where the field has often been framed in terms of two opposing sets of interests that often collide in the policy field and in practice, the polarities are construed as those of the investors/agents who have an actual pecuniary interest and those of the renters/tenants who have assumed ontological interests in feeling 'at home' in the housing space they pay for.

A virtual 'ideal state' in the middle of the two polarities remains unseen and unknown to the participant engaged with the questions. Here the ideal states were arrived at through the collaborative process. An 'ideal state' relates to the Aristotelian concept of the golden mean and so reflects a point of balance in the system, one where seemingly opposing sets of interests or positions are potentially overcome. In this process the ideal states were not published in the instrument, nor were they even alluded to. These remained known only to the researcher and the co-developers of the instrument and are geared to discussion and the potential for action planning around such points of balance.

In the two dyads (Q 18 and Q 19) participants were simply asked: *Thinking again about the tale you shared and the circumstances of that time choose the position on the scale that best reflects your experience….*

Question 18. *Renting in my experience is:*

Managed for investor/agent outcomes o o o o o o o o o o o Geared to the needs of renters to feel at home

The ideal state, the point of balance (based on the Aristotelian golden mean) in this polarity is expressed as:

> *'Rental practices, conditions and regulations/legislation balance care for investments and all persons' rights to create a secure home base free of interference'.*

The second dyad (Q 19) was designed to provide for a finer granularity than the first dyad and is directed related to the materiality and conditionality of a rental property and the ability of a tenant to materially adapt, to 'makeover' a rental place and make the rental property home.

Question 19. *Changes by renters to rental property are/were:*

Strictly controlled; can't even hang a painting ooooooooooooo Fully allowable; can adapt to renters needs and wants

The ideal state, the balance of interests, pertaining to Question 19 was expressed as:

> *'All non-structural changes are permitted, subject to a return to the state of the property upon leasing'.*

The fifth section of the Collector Tool contains questions to elicit basic demographic information and questions pertaining to housing, property management, rental conditions and personal rental histories.   Again, these were developed collaboratively across the advocacy sectors in both Queensland and New South Wales. This accessing of 'distributed cognition' proved invaluable in ascertaining what had been missed in the Tool and what would be useful to track, in part because there was currently no means to do so. It allowed for additions to the Tool that were not part of the experience or knowledge base of one state, Queensland. For example, we added in two questions about number of rental moves – over one's 'rental lifetime' and over the period of the previous five years. These allow for queries that no other database in Australia can currently interrogate relative to other factors and values. No-one, apparently, is tracking this. Another, discrete response in the 'type of household' question was added. In addition to the possible responses of 'single person' and 'single family households' and 'shared singles household' is the category response of 'shared families household' as well as 'other' and 'not sure' (which allows for people sharing someone else's story to respond). Until I met with NSW advocacy bodies the category of 'shared families household' remained unknown to me, not found in recent Australian research literature yet found in the aggregated experience, expertise and knowledge base of people on the ground.

The final, sixth section of the Collection tool simply offers the option for respondents to add free text in response to three items:

- Three things about renting that are working for you;
- Three things you would like changed; and
- Lastly, is anything else you would like to add?

The addition of free text sections simply provides for data that may be pertinent to the respondent but which has not emerged from the rental tale. 'Wordles' of the 'three things' (down to the level of the most prominent 60 words) are depicted at the end of Chapter Five. Similarly, the request for a 'headline' or title of the tale and three key words about the tale also provides extra data for sensemaking, albeit outside the software. The main point of designing such an instrument however relates to its utilisation for queries within the software.

Testing the Renters at Home Collection Tool

Researcher Reflection September 2014

A trip to Sydney and testing the instrument with the group from a housing provider was a hiccup the project needed to have. It became clear that as a paper version at least the collection tool presented as daunting - even before people had begun to read it. There was clear evidence of people NOT actually reading the introduction and the basic instructions and feeling unsure for some reason.

A couple of vignettes to explain: One person during the tea break found me in the ladies room - saying she was glad to have caught me, that she didn't know what to write. I asked her what was the most significant thing about her tenancy at the moment and the response was that she was not allowed to hang pictures of her children and grandchildren up on the wall – and that this made her feel sad, even a bit depressed.

I ponder the issue of folks not feeling empowered to speak until given some level of permission and also ponder the issue of a formalised space (of people, including housing workers and a researcher, around the same table) potentially eliciting more formal stories and entire rental histories rather than the brief anecdotal examples. Here the layers of meaning for the participant were initially told to me outside the formalised space. This question of the formality or informality of space - and the more

natural activities and conversations that go on in informal spaces where people feel free to express themselves without fear or favour – sits with me as an important learning.

This also brings up issues of power relations - between researcher and researched, between tenants and housing workers (representatives of the landlord or perceived as the landlord) and tenants and landlords. Interesting to see what the tales will reveal. This reifies, to my mind, the benefit of the online environment and absolute anonymity.

Earlier, someone had told me a tale before others had arrived, the kind that tellers regale others with for the cringe and shock value (the cockroach infested greasetrap in the all too frequently flooding boarding house bedsit tale) yet this tale did not make it into the written capture from that same group. That tale however was from a long time ago and the tenant had apparently found significant support through numerous agencies to end up happily housed and engaged in community life a dozen or so years down the track. In so many ways it is fair to say that person had flourished, despite chronic injuries and health issues.

In my mind I call him the Poster Boy; for the benefits of long term housing in community contexts.

Other issues and feedback arising from the solo testing of the paper instrument with my urban research cohort: The language needs to be changed, made more informal. I have been wrestling with the prompting question/scenario language for months now - Narrative, story, anecdote, example and experience - as the NOUN - have not worked for various reasons.

Story has a beginning, middle and end.

'Example' in the tested iteration elicited the question 'Example of what?'

'Experience' as a word may have brought out experience over a period of time, a rental history rather than brief descriptive tales of a specific issue. That aim remains front and centre.

Utilising the signification framework: Designing queries in Sensemaker™

The various sections with types of self-signifying questions, along with usual demographic questions and others pertaining to rental histories in Australia provided capability for a myriad of

inquiries into patterns in the system through the complex array of factors, attributes and filters. Size of dataset does play a role and the following example was predicated on a larger set than that which was eventually captured. Yet, it illustrates the capabilities of the signification framework that was designed and the software that powers it.

For example, with the Renters at Home framework we (as a group of collaborators) could design a query around the filter of negative/challenged security for middle aged women in share or single person households, living in rental housing in Brisbane, the state capital of Queensland, Australia, renting through real estate agents and then add in the number of times moved in the last 5 years. We might then contrast that same cohort with private landlord or community housing property management and begin to make sense of what may or may not be occurring in the system from those contrasts. We might then also look at the usual lease periods or we might go instead to the positive security filter to discover what is it more particularly in those narratives, relative to property management, that supports and creates a sense of security in people who rent. So, there is capacity within this approach and its technology for some quite finely grained inquiries. Such inquiries and patterns in a large scale, long-term project can be tracked in real time and longitudinally.

In my original ideal research scenario, I aimed for potentially thousands of narratives across all states to provide a substantial data set that would provide for those sorts of queries in ongoing use by housing researchers, tenancy authorities and advocates. The data collection process however, in the real world context of a resource constrained PhD study, and the likely gatekeeping of the private real estate sector, has allowed for proof of concept for the core methodological approach in research and planning, rather than the kind of data and finely grained queries (with statistical relevance) that several thousands of self-signified micro-narratives would have provided.

Section Three Participatory processes

Participatory processes: Design of workshops and the turn towards the PRS

Beyond the collaborative efforts in designing the signification framework and the hoped for collaborative sensemaking with organisations, two types of interdependent, participatory workshops were always in the mix; one for extracting issues and archetypes; the other for developing plans pertaining to issues that reside in what Snowden has termed the complex domain.

Figure 4.7 illustrates the two process pathways and their interrelationship as well as the cognitive disruption points in the processes – disruption of researcher entrainments being key.

Figure 4.7 Two interconnected, participatory pathways
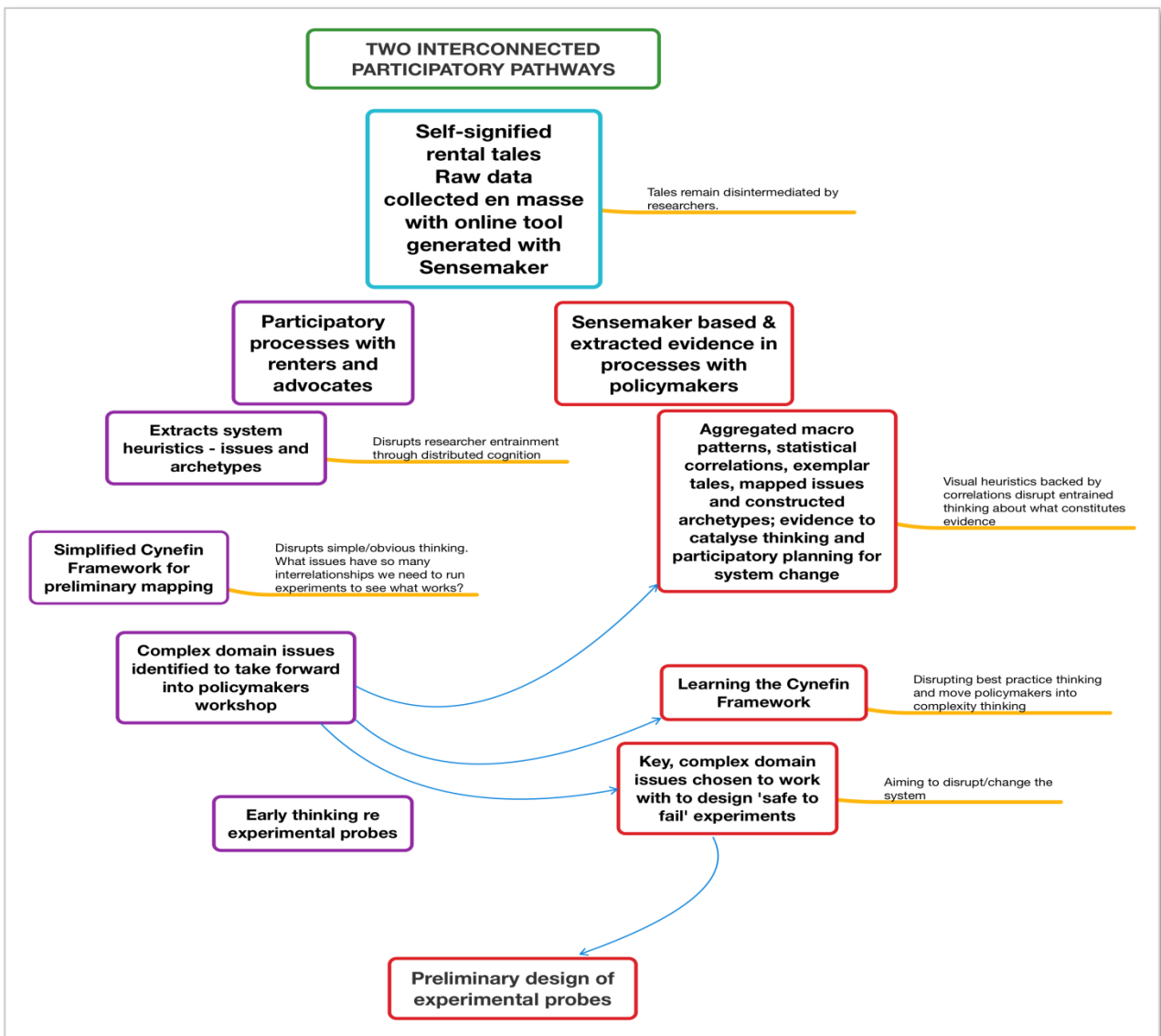
The overarching aim of the first type of workshop was to facilitate participatory process where collected tales of the system are utilised as the basis for participant extraction of issues and the construction of system archetypes.

Considerations included:

- The likely small number of participants in workshop— at the time of finalisation of the process and the material, the number of expected participants was tracking around 20 people
- A limit to the amount of data a group that size can realistically manage before a level of cognitive overload occurs.
- The possible necessity of more narrowly delineating the system being investigated.

These considerations applied to the logistics of the workshop process effectively amounted to a re-focussing of the project towards the PRS. The reasoning process to get there however was not straightforward.

At that point in the research (May 2015), I had just over a 140 rental tales, from across all rental sectors, the result of self-selecting contributions from anonymous renters scattered across the whole country. Much of this data had come about as a result of the research project being promoted through an article in by hyper-local newspaper media and subsequently being picked up by national broadcaster ABC Radio. A series of radio interviews and newspaper reports (one in the premier weekend edition of The Sydney Morning Herald), over a three month period had generated the bulk of the tales yet 140 was too many for this relatively small group of renters. A re-focussing was required.

I pondered whether to simply keep to the original plan of a focus on particular cities. This workshop was to take place in Brisbane and it was shaping up to be the only workshop of its type. Eighteen per cent of Brisbane tales however (of the 50 Brisbane tales collected at that stage) were also marked 'not for publication', despite the complete anonymity of no identifying information collected (of renters or of others) at all. The decision to maintain the urban/cities focus led the development of a set of inclusions and exclusions.

Inclusions were:

- Key state capital cities of Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne
- Other capital cities
- Other cities (where named in the tales)
- Tales with permission for others to view

Exclusions to bring the number of tales to a viable number for the workshop included:

- Share housing tales (that related mainly/mostly to internal housemate issues)
- Community Housing Provider (CHP) tales
- Small town/rural tales
- Boarding houses
- Long tales - more than 1.5 screens (2.5 minutes + need to read)

This left 83 private rental sector tales for the workshop.

The exclusions were justifiable on a number of counts beyond the rationale regarding workshop numbers. Boarding houses across the country operate under different regulations to the other

sectors and there were just a few tales related to boarding houses. The majority of the community housing provider tales were from one large NSW based organisation and therefore not representative of the sector. The rural tales exclusion was arbitrary - to maintain coherence with the original notion of urban housing. The very long, urban/city tales were excluded simply due to the timeframes of a workshop process over six hours but with so much rich description in these I did ponder whether to extract fragments. I decided to maintain integrity with the notion of disintermediation within the methodological approach whereby tales are not deconstructed by researchers but remain intact, as exemplars of what is occurring in the system.

Workshop One (WS1) Process/Design for extracting heuristics – issues and archetypes May 26 2015

The process is outlined below (as it occurred) although the specific findings and outcomes of the workshop will be explored in more detail in Chapter Five.

Three facilitators with varying levels of experience with complex facilitation methods (myself included) ran a fluid facilitation process adapted from a method developed by Snowden (http://cognitive-edge.com/resources/basic-methods/). The tales, along with basic demographic information, the titles and the three descriptive words also supplied by narrators, were arrayed in a large workshop space along with conceptual and media materials related to the field of inquiry (renting) to provide additional research context. The nineteen participants included renters, a rental housing manager, tenancy advocates, government and advocacy policy officers, and another researcher interested in the process but who was a long time home owner.

The design purpose of this workshop was fourfold. Firstly, as the second phase of a participatory/action research and planning process (the first phase being the online capture of micro-narratives with Sensemaker™) the workshop was utilised to triangulate issues in the rental tale data. To do this participants scanned the data on the walls, noting down all the issues that resonated with them as renters. This process of triangulating data also fulfilled the second purpose - that of extracting a themed dataset of rental system issues and concerns. These issues heuristics, clustered and themed by participants would subsequently be mapped to the Cynefin framework initially developed by Snowden and Kurtz (2003) as a basis for further planning – the third purpose. The fourth and final purpose of the workshop was to 'extract' rental system archetypes as another form of heuristic system pattern.

Snowden's process of archetypes extraction (discussed again in Chapters 5 and 7) draws on patterns derived and emerging from narrative and Snowden's heuristic method extracts archetypes as culturally influenced patterns. These human constructed exemplars of patterns of culture and

behaviour emerged through a secondary scanning by participants of the primary data. This second scan yielded an initial 'extraction' of characters, clustered similarly and named. Characters at this point of the process are ostensibly one dimensional and stereotypical. To counter the tendency for participants to resort to stereotyping, they were directed to assign equal numbers of positive and negative attributes to these characters (how their best friend and worst enemy would describe them).

These attributes were then disembodied and deconstructed from the original clusters of characters and randomised as yet another layer of filtering in the archetype extraction and construction process. From several hundred positive and negative human attributes and traits that had emerged from the participants, small groups then collaborated on developing new, multidimensional, fully human archetypes, beyond the stereotypes that had first emerged in the earlier part of the process. From the newly assigned attributes, participants then constructed fresh narratives about the emerging archetypal personae, situating them within their individual, cultural and system contexts. Finally, the participant groups briefed cartoonists whose role was to animate these culturally constructed archetypes. Fifteen archetypes in the system of rental housing emerged from this process; a range of tenants, agents, landlords and advocates. As archetypes, they were immediately recognisable by those familiar with the private rental system in Australia and the cultures within that system.

For the first workshop it was also planned to map the extracted issues to a simplified version of the Cynefin Framework (this ontological framework of domains for decision-making will be discussed further in Part Three). No detail was provided about the framework other than the following process instructions and simplified categories:

- Cluster very alike issues together (no more than 5)
- Give these a heading (making sure issues can be understood by the 'hexies'[19] underneath)
- Assign these named clusters to one of the following three categories.

1. Things that can be simply managed by making rules (simple/obvious domain)
2. Things that need experts to determine ways forward (complicated domain)
3. Things with so many interrelated elements we need experiments devised to see what works. (complex domain)

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[19] 'Hexies' refers to the hexagonal sticky notes used in these workshops – the shape facilitating connective ideas and processes.

We ran out of time to run the full process with all participants to map the extracted issues to these categories. So, it was left to a smaller group of keen younger people to cluster the issues and begin mapping. The following emerged to carry forward in some shape or form.

Complex issues extractedfor the second workshop.

1. Bond gouging

2. Own rules (of real estate agents and landlords)

3. Inspections

4. Short term leases

5. Lack of security

6. Power imbalances in owners market

This brief list extracted from a mass of narrative data and clustered into major issues and then mapped to a simplified Cynefin Framework constitute the core problems for renters in the PRS. That these reflect the tacit knowledge of advocacy organisations proves the effectiveness and the usefulness of the core methodological approach this research has trialled.

These read simply as individual issues. Missing, however, is a sense of the complex interdependencies between all six issues. Treating each individually through the incrementalism of the policy/advocacy system has its own challenges that are well understood by anyone at the coalface. Planning in Snowden's methodological approach comes at the complexity in a very different way, starting with the understanding that these issues have many interrelationships. Diffusion, another type of constructing ambiguity, supports the process. Next I discuss the design mechanics of WS2. The refined issues taken forward, the findings and outcomes however are found in Chapter Five.

Workshop Two (WS2) Planning with issues in the complex domain. March 18 2016

The design of the second participatory process saw a level of departure from the usual and recommended methodological practice with this approach where the 'system' may be one organisation and therefore more discrete and bounded. In WS1 we had a cohort of renters, albeit from both private and community sectors. Here, in WS2 the 'system' comprised different sectors and organisations and policy/advocacy in housing was the common ground[20]. Capturing sufficient numbers of key policy and advocacy oriented participants in just one state for a full day workshop

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[20] This brought in a complexity of issues and factors discussed at length in Chapter 5 and again in Part 4.

was not feasible. Adding to this conundrum was the lack of continuity. While the same organisations were represented, the majority of participants were staff new to the process.

Rather than a workshop that mapped all the issues from the previous workshop into the Cynefin Framework (as was the original thinking) to then devise experiments (interventions) for the complex domain issues, the short timeframe necessitated a decision to take a selection of the complex domain issues already identified into this second workshop.

The opportunity to properly or more fully embed the Cynefin framework into policy and advocacy thinking, as was the original aim, was an opportunity missed. Only eight participants turned up on the day. This necessitated me stepping into the process as participant, to make up the numbers for three small groups of three.

The process for the workshop was adapted from Cognitive Edge open source methods by an external facilitator, Vivienne Read from Complexability, with substantial experience in these complex facilitation methods. Once again, a level of fluidity was needed to bring the process to some outcomes. The outcomes are discussed in Chapter Five and Chapter Seven and the process is outlined below.

WS2 Design

The aim of this workshop was to design interventions or probes (safe to fail experiments) that might begin to deal with some of the complex issues emerging from the system. This workshop therefore focussed on utilising system level data for the sensemaking and action planning processes rather than the narratives. Arrayed along the walls for this workshop process were:

- Triadic whole system patterns generated from Sensemaker™ related to the questions of home, security and privacy.
- Also arrayed were the two dyadic patterns, a number of archetypes, exemplar tales and key concepts from the field of research.
- These data of most significant patterns pertained to the complex issues brought forward

The first part of the workshop entailed the participants becoming familiar with the data on the walls. There was discussion amongst the participants before being sorted into three groups. Next was a presentation of the Cynefin framework and how it operates as a basis for decision support. Complex issues that had emerged from the previous workshop were then considered by the small groups with each group choosing one or two complex issues to work with for the next part of the process; intervention design.

Intervention Design for Complex issues

The following six-stage workshop design process for interventions reflects adapted workshop materials and instructions[21] handed out to participants.

Designing Probes

Designing probes (interventions or 'safe to fail' experiments) is about managing the 'ordered' elements of a complex issue: such as the risk management of finances and perceptions. The process of designing probes begins with transformation statements which aim to outline; what problem you are trying to solve; and/or what would be different as a result of intervening in the system. There may be more than one statement per theme needed, to cover all of the attributes of that theme.

1.   **What causes the current situation to be as it is?**

Be specific. List all the tangible, visible components of the issue under consideration – these may have positive or negative influences. Examples of these are rules, procedures, processes, roles, geography…the things that can have something DONE about them.

Do not include things like attitudes or beliefs.

This list outlines the 'ordered' parts of a complex issue – the things that can be managed/changed/influenced.

Which of these could be changed?

Who could do the changes?

Which will we change?

Cost benefit analysis?

Any comments?

2.   **List all the experiments that could make an impact**

For each of the changes that have been identified for probes list experiments that could make an impact:

Have as many options as you can think of.

Do not judge or assess – other than whether they are within your influence to undertake.

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[21] These materials were adapted from Cognitive Edge methods by Complexability P/L

Each of the optional probes should be able to be assessed within an elapsed time of three months as to whether they are worth pursuing.

Note: There __must__ be multiple experiments happening at the same time – if you only have one answer/one intervention then you are operating in the complicated domain not complex space.

3. For the suggested probes/experiments

How /what do you measure and monitor?

Which behaviours are weakened/strengthened by the initiative you are suggesting (more stories like this/less like this (if you have a Sensemaker™ database to refer to)

How will you monitor and who/what will be the basis of evaluation?

4. How do you make it safe to fail?

What marketing/communication strategy would you use?

What is the risk management approach? – How controlled should the experiment be or how much diversity? In respect of this there is a trade off between resilience and control; the less control over an experiment, the greater the opportunity for new insights and novel approaches to emerge.

What elements in the environment do you need to take into account? (E.g. political contexts, impending elections, accreditation, new management)

If it had to be closed down what would be the exit strategy?

5. Moving the intervention from complex to complicated (or explore to exploit)

If a probe works well, how would you migrate the probe from an experiment to being embedded in 'the way we do things around here' (Which experts need to agree? How is it documented? What training is needed etcetera, to move this into a project plan for implementation embedding in the system).

Reflection

The workshop as it played out was problematic in numerous ways. Few potentially feasible experiments emerged, at least in terms of being 'safe to fail' in terms of timeframe or financial investment. Other problems related to challenges in coming to operate from complexity thinking, and the subjectivities and entrainments of the participants. I reflect on these issues again, at length, in Chapter Five and again in Chapter Seven where I contemplate further the problem of 'learning

complexity' and the standard (entrained) kinds of thinking that emerged[22]. There, in approaching the issues arising from this planning process, the potential of another praxis lens - transformative learning - also emerges. This ultimately marks a significant turn and final choice-point in the research – a turn towards the potential for a 'transrational' planning praxis— and I return to this in the closing chapters. But before I come to that, other choice-points and conundra emerged along the way and these I explore next.

The rich data emerging from rental tales and the participatory processes and my contemplations on process issues brought a longstanding conundrum to a head. Yet, there would be reverberations further down the line in terms of coming to conclusions and the type of conclusions I could draw.

What was this thesis becoming? What was it to be?

This fourth and final section picks up the narrative thread of potential action research choices emerging from both the participatory research processes and the reflective action researcher process and outlines a multi-scalar, multi-modal analysis framework that transcends the original methodological intent of solely utilising Sensemaker™ and associated methods. The constraints of a relatively small data set and a predilection for maintaining the essence of action research as emergent – reflection, reflexivity and change in the world – saw some options included and others set aside.

By mid-candidature September 2015, most of the research processes were complete, except for the 'planning in complexity/emergent design' workshop. Numerous threads had emerged, any of which could be taken up as potentially significant, further contribution to knowledge, should I choose to take up one thread. As expressed in Figure 4.8 the choices before me were rich and varied and included:

- Exploring the phenomena of young female property managers as expressions of gender and power in rental housing and real estate contexts. (The Archetype of Becky. See Chapter 6)
- The notion and theorisation of 'loose praxis' as a contribution to reflexive planning praxis in complexity
- The notion and theorisation of 'proprietariness' and its role in challenging renters' sense of home and security
- The intersections of renters and owners.
- Theorising home as not based in place— a thread that would see me wandering into the fields and 'farther reaches' of human development.

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[22] There was one notable and transformational exception but this would require substantial private investment. I discuss this is Chapter Five.

Figure 4.8 Emerging threads as choice-points in the research process
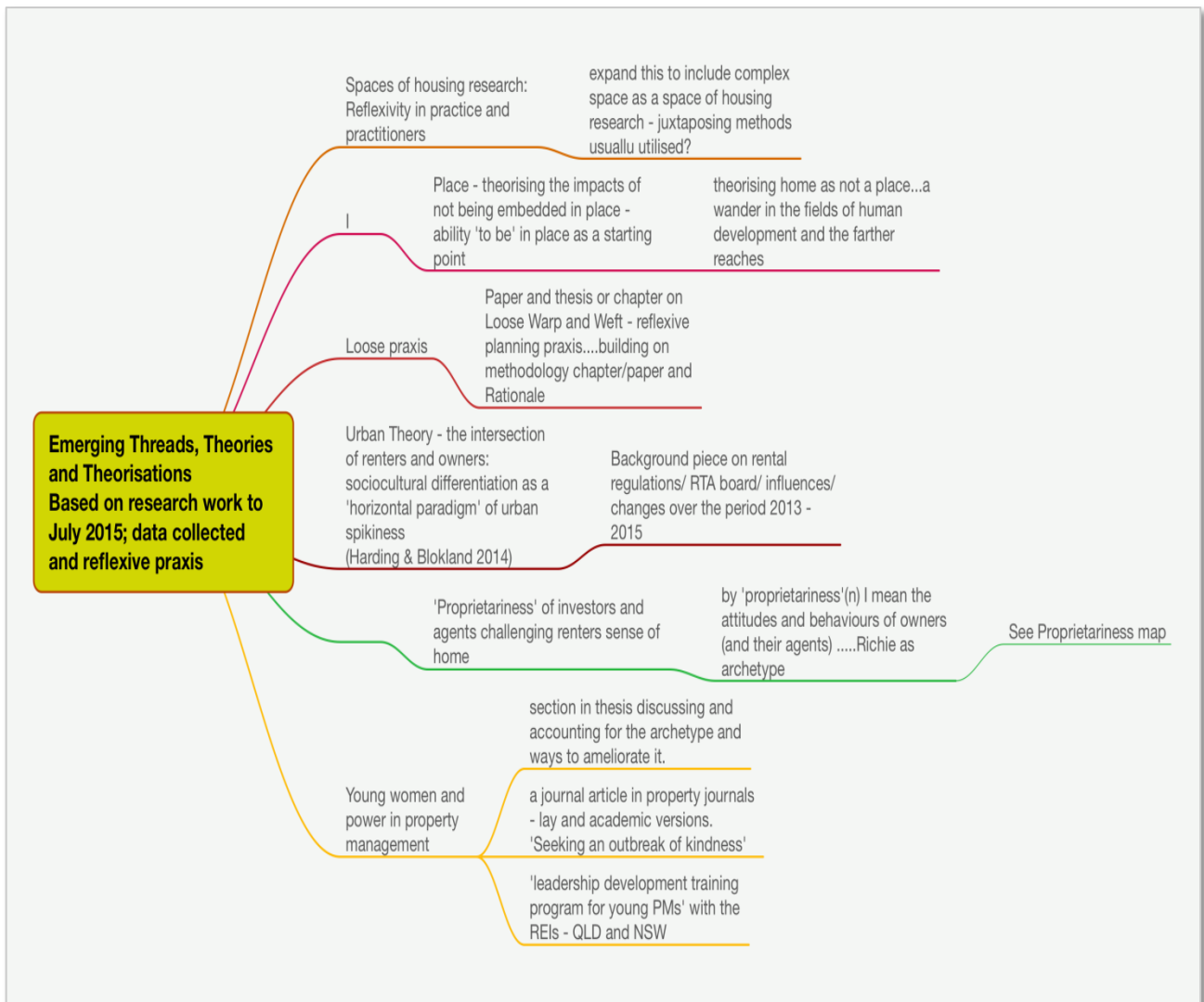
The methodological conundrum of depth versus span had arisen again with the question of whether or not I was prepared to narrow the focus of the research to any particular one of these, and forgo the action research and planning aims of catalysing change in the system. The other possibility that arose soon after mid candidature was a deeper investigation into the use of heuristics in policy planning, a methodological thread in the current research context dependent upon further and deeper engagement with policy makers. This option and the phenomena of Becky were deemed too time consuming in terms of additional fieldwork, participation and administration and so, by default, all options that entailed reflective and reflexive threads from ongoing researcher sensemaking and analysis were given space to develop within the thesis.

Span had won out. And I wondered at what cost to depth.

Two or so months further along the new supervisor promoted the notion of this thesis being a methodological thesis, with the rental housing system as 'the case study'. Previously I conceptualised the research as methodological process and the rental system being explored as working in tandem. Instead the thesis and title was reframed. 'Loose Praxis: Methodological assemblage in the social complexity of the Australian private rental system' had emerged, with another level of cognitive shift and coming to grips with a whole new field —- complexity — and sub literature of complexity in planning occurring in its own good time, sometime later. The cognitive shift towards a methodological thesis also slowly reframed my understanding of what this thesis could, and could not be. In light of the methodological exploration and the planning oriented aims this could not be case study-based in the vein of social research, with a requisite depth of case study data analysis. This was now, well and truly, a methodological thesis nested in fields of praxis and complexity.

Summary of processes and participants

Figure 4.9 depicts in a more structured form what I have identified as the six broad cycles of this action research project. Each cycle of planning, acting (implementing) observing and reflecting builds upon the previous cycle.

Starting at the left side within the diagram the various actors in the cycles are outlined, the collaborative and or individual work feeding into the next cycle on the right. The reality of course is rarely so neatly structured. This is even more so when the multiple reflexivities of the process are considered: the researcher (also a renter) within an action research process, trialling a methodological approach developed for social complexity, within the social complexity of rental system, within wider planning praxis.

I have often contemplated the words of advice from the kindly research methodologist and also the purpose of 'mess' in action research (Cook, 2009) in this type of process. I conclude it is not for the faint of heart.

Figure 4.9 Actors in key activities in the broad cycles of the Renters at Home PAR project
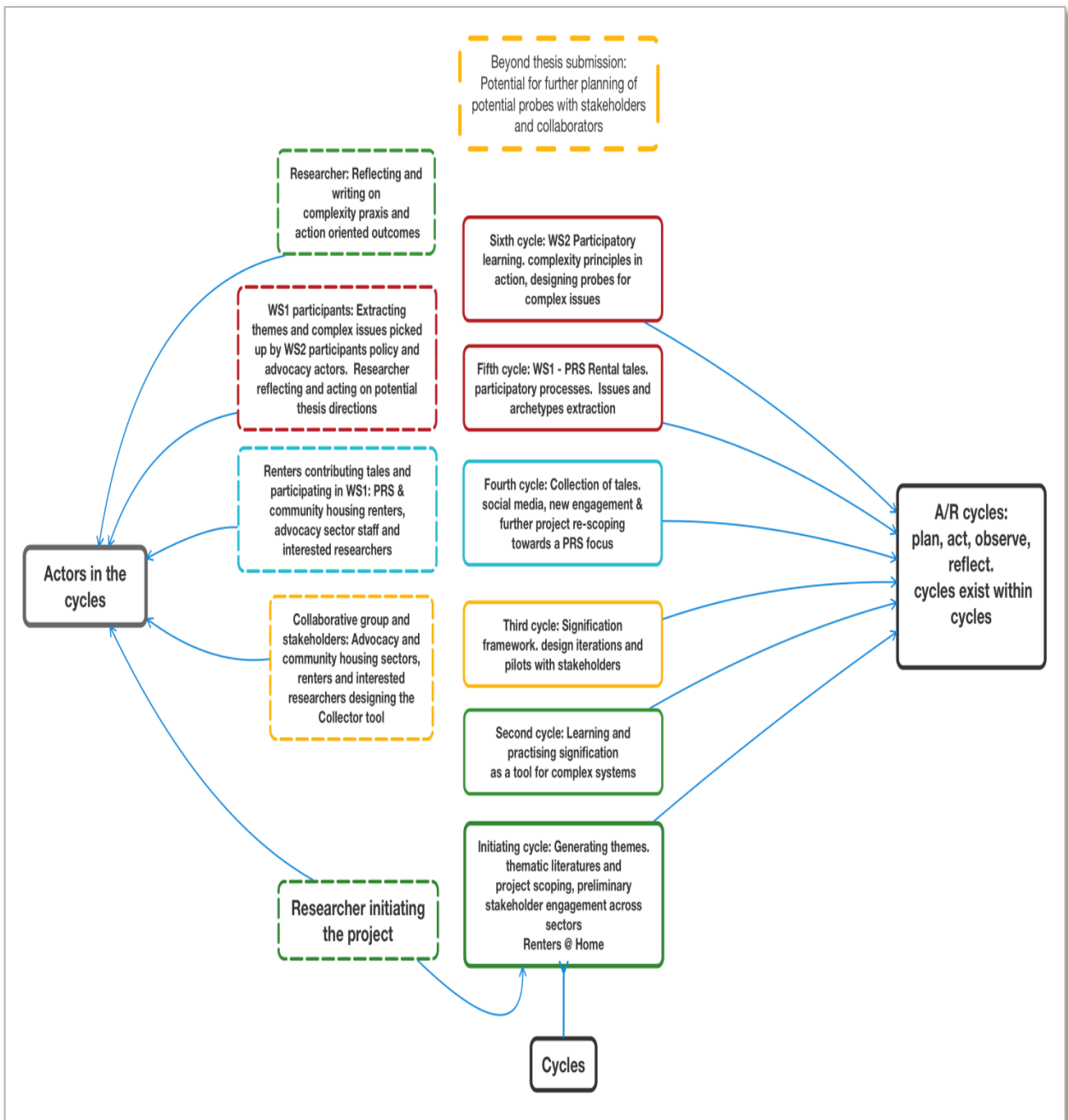
Designing a sensemaking framework for the 'Renters at Home' data

Where sensemaking was planned to occur through the agency of the project collaborators who would lead the inquiry (what did *they* want to know), the original participatory and collaborative analysis process, now largely in tatters as a result of challenges already outlined earlier in this chapter, required a re-design. Given the built-in capacities for hundreds of different inquiries through Sensemaker™ (the outcome of the signification framework design) the sensemaking of the dataset would now be mostly down to me (except for the WS1 participatory workshop process). The

dataset of tales was sufficient in its size and capacity to show clear patterns emerging from the system but still small enough for the researcher to engage with all the narratives and so move beyond using the tales simply as occasional exemplars of pattern. Remaining true to the methodological process of sensemaking within an action research process utilising heuristic data (rather than in depth analysis such as required by social research) and the tools available in the software I devised the following framework to lay out the data, findings and sensemaking of the case study.

1. Sensemaking of contributor data additional to their rental tale. (For example: Rental histories, personal demographics)
2. Macro/whole system patterns generated through Sensemaker - The 'first glance' big picture heuristics of the system scale patterns and smaller patterns within. These are the patterns of the triadic and dyadic filters/questions.
3. Meso/participant sensemaking - Extracted secondary/meta data and subsequent experiments. These emerged from the participatory processes: WS1 and WS2
4. Micro/researcher only sensemaking - Drawing on all of the above for further analysis and to make sense of the complexities found in the system. (System here is very broad and extends beyond rental system data to include praxis.)

Concluding thoughts

The nature of action research provided a capacity for improvisation and responsiveness throughout the twists and turns and conundra thrown up by this highly exploratory process. However, in the writing up phase another conundrum emerged, the result of adhering to the methodological trial of Sensemaker™ and processes in light of the research aims of the trial as planning process. Despite so many fragments of rich data pertaining to the state of being a renter in Australia, to go down certain pathways or make certain claims beyond what had been extracted in participatory or preliminary sensemaking processes I would have to go outside these methods and tools - to use other tools in a reconstruction of the data set towards the more usual types of social research evidence. This however was not the project and that would likely be another PhD. These disorienting ontological dilemmas remained until the final stages of writing at which point I let go and simply, let it be – for others to ponder.

Next, in Part Three, I dive into the rich field of data so generously contributed by renters across Australia – to follow the methods with the sensemaking framework outlined above to begin addressing the two, core organising questions of the case study.

Part Three: Remaking spaces, making our places: Renters at home in urban housing processes

Autoethnographica – Remaking space, making my place

With each new move comes a frenzy of remaking home - packing, unpacking, organising and re-placing… things and furniture in (new) space. One small assemblage of precious objects has come to signify home… a painting of forest waratah, woven silk Laotian textile, Burmese reclining Buddha, a fine, early Australian ceramic vase, and a 19th century timber marquetry box…these at least have their more permanent place in the scheme of things - arranged atop antique red cedar drawers.

Introduction

Part Three reprises the original title of the thesis to bring both the content of the case study, including the research questions related to the case study, and the core tools and processes of the methodological assemblage together into the methodological frame of sensemaking as analysis.

Part Three however also conforms primarily to the purpose of trialling Sensemaker™ as planning method and planning research method, rather than an in-depth analysis of findings about the rental system and the PRS in particular[23]. This is for four, interrelated reasons. Firstly, the capacity for extracting increasingly finer granularities of data through dynamic inquiries with Sensemaker ™ for in depth analysis along many and varied tracks is substantial, especially given the demographic and other, contributor specific, data collected.[24] Secondly, sensemaking as a research process creates extensive reporting which includes disintermediated exemplar tales. Thirdly, there must be delimiters in an 80 000 word-limited thesis. Therefore the laying out the rental system findings underscores a reflexive question about the balance of span and depth, especially given the sheer amount of data generated through dynamic Sensemaker™ inquiries. Fourthly, the laying out of

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[23] I do however follow threads emerging from the research sensemaking up to mid candidature (including two complex domain issues not subsequently taken up by WS2 participants in planning). See Chapter Six.

[24] The collaborative group designed the signification framework in such a way that the dataset could be used to investigate very specific lines of inquiry for years to come! For example: A large section based on the share-housing data has been excised from the thesis.

findings maintains a line of sight with the aims and definition of action research; reaching understanding in support of change and this underlying aim therefore provides another limiting factor with regards to the data reported on in this thesis.

Chapter Five therefore responds, with a clear methodological (including action research) focus and purpose, to the first of the core organising questions of the research:

> *What knowledge and potential impact emerges from collaborative, participatory and researcher's sensemaking – for application to rental housing environments, policy and socio-urban planning processes?*

In Sections One and Two of Chapter Five I partially model a real time inquiry session process utilising the software to generate progressively more finely grained data relative to specific inquiries about the significant major patterns. Along the way I offer insights gleaned from these patterns and inquiries. Therefore the analysis of findings is found within the discussion of findings.

These first two sections also therefore offer a sense of the basics of the software capability, the narrative approach, and how it is used for making sense of complexity. These sections follow lines of inquiry as questions and curiosity arose. Consequently and subsequently I also arrive at some deeper sensemaking where other known contexts offer and add to insights.

Beginning the real time sensemaking process with the raw statistics and with Sensemaker™ Explorer, Section One of Chapter Five unpacks a story of who are the renters in this research based on the information offered by the contributors. Out of the demographic, rental life history, housing and tenancy scenario data and their additional signification of their tales a deeper sense of the renters and the system itself emerges.

Section Two looks at the full system (all sectors) 'first glance' heuristics of visual patterns in the triads and dyads - the main signification forms in the process. Here, key primary patterns generated (including the absence of patterns) are discussed.

Section Three is where case study and methods, tools and first participatory processes come together as planning process and where the main participatory findings are also revealed as preliminary contributions to knowledge: for both the methodological assemblage and the case study of the rental system. The consequential outcomes of the action research, however are not revealed until later, when issues arising from the second workshop are more fully considered.

In Chapter Six I pick up emergent threads (to mid-candidature) and the complex issues identified through the first participatory process (WS1) but not taken up by participants as issues to plan

interventions for in the second workshop (WS2).   As a research exercise exploring findings and methods I bring together data generated through all the various processes of collection and extraction for further analysis and reflection on the macro and meso scale cultures of the PRS. The purpose here also relates to the subsequent evaluation (in Chapter Eight) of the Sensemaker™ tools in terms of their usefulness for more usual research processes - while keeping one eye on the wider purpose of action research and the interdependencies of issues and outcomes within wider considerations of praxis.

Chapter Five. Sensemaking for planning in the PRS

Sections One and Two, and half of Section Three of this chapter (corresponding to WS1) respond to *the first part* of the following question, one of two core, organising questions of the research.

What knowledge and potential impact emerges from collaborative, participatory and researcher's sensemaking — for application to rental housing environments, policy and socio-urban planning processes?

Section One   A research story of the renters and their rental tales

Who are the renters in this research? What are their rental histories? What do they think and feel about the state of renting in Australia and their place within the coexisting systems of renting? This section provides an overview of the cohort(s) of people who self- selected to participate by sharing a significant rental tale and additional information. A full breakdown of information provided by these contributors in the multiple choice sections of the Collector Tool is found in tables at the beginning of each subsection of Section One. Yet these on their own do not tell much of a tale. Thus this overview also ventures into narrative, one constructed through real time queries using Sensemaker™ with these raw statistics as the starting point for dynamic queries. The separate tables also appear at the beginning of each small subsection. Dynamic queries simply offer the capacity to lay other questions in combination over an initial set of filters as seen in Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1 Employing dynamic queries in Sensemaker™ based on Q18 Renting is, in my experience…
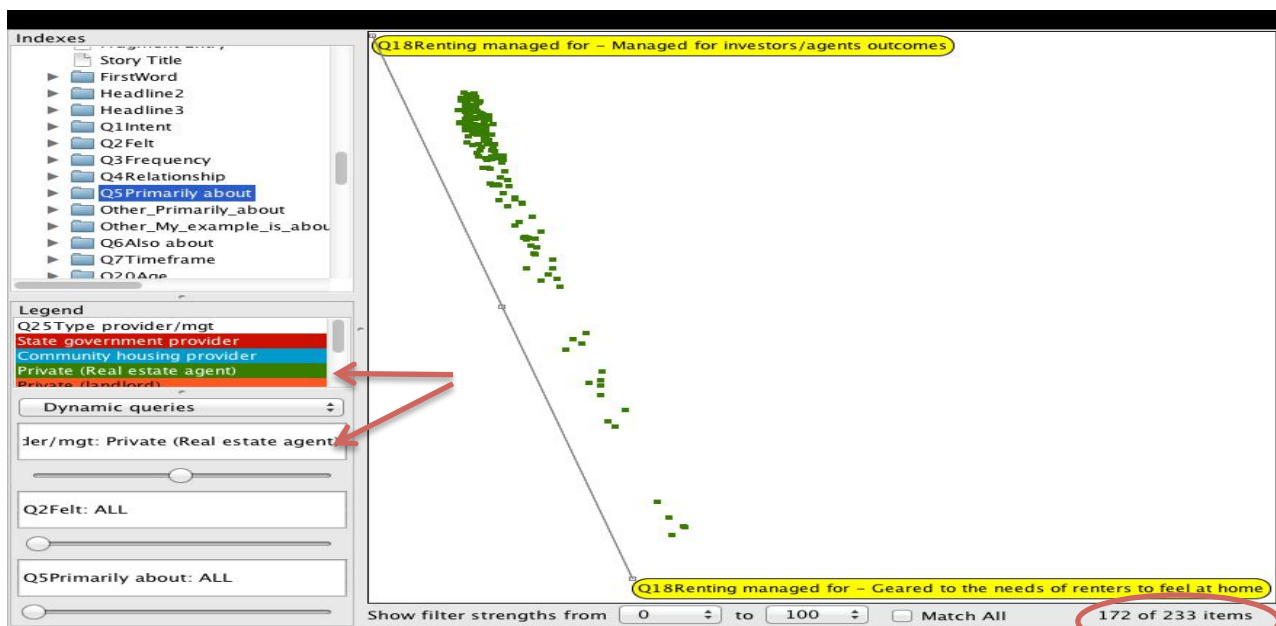
The red circle(s) indicates a change in in number of tales with any dynamic query.

The rationale for the triadic and dyadic filter questions was outlined in the previous chapter. Given that there is no, single, filter question that all 233 contributors indexed to I have used the most indexed question - Q18 with 229 responses – as the basis for the dynamic queries and sensemaking.

An example of a dynamic query set up is shown in Figure 5.1 This data has been filtered to show just the Real Estate Agency tales; 172 of 233 tales. Note that the dyad/polarity depicted is sloped merely to fit the information onto this page. The particular pattern in Figure 5.1 sparked a further query about the contributors' affect while telling their tale and so I inserted Q2 Felt into the query section (discussed later in the section). Filtering in this way provides me with the visual and numerical data to discuss the aggregated demographic and other statistics drawn from the dataset.

This Section One narrative overview emerged over a day and so is also an example of sensemaking in real time process. Each of the subsections therefore has its own tangents with different lines of inquiry explored through a sense of curiosity in the moment. I utilise the full system dataset for Q18 (n=229) as the baseline from which the lines of dynamic inquiry ensue, ultimately following particular threads that lead the inquiry deeper into the private rental systems. The section then begins with demographics, followed secondly with the contributors' rental lives, thirdly with the renters' housing scenarios, fourthly their tenancy scenarios, and lastly, with the additional signification. The latter provides other layers of meaning and which also point to particular lines of inquiry. Where a dynamic query has been used I put the relevant question numbers in text or in brackets. Given the collaboration to develop the Collector Tool I utilise the plural 'we'.

There is a point to be made about the sample of contributors to this research that relates to levels of validity in terms of acceptable social research data sets. With self-selecting contributors constituting a relatively small dataset of 233 this is not a probability dataset. However two pieces of information from government agencies in Queensland and New South Wales give credence to the assertion that this dataset may be construed as a sample representative of a purposive sample: Renters. This potentially lends a higher level of validity in terms of generalisability and transferability than what either action research or usually small qualitative datasets would ordinarily confer upon findings. However I make no grand claims beyond the correspondences I outline and instead offer a more poetic view of this dataset as a fractal of a much greater whole. As we shall see (in Chapter 6) there are remarkable correspondences of patterns across the major Australian states.

The breakdown of tales into management type percentages closely reflects the government data. In my dataset 12 per cent of tales have privately managing landlords and 82.4 per cent of tales are

managed by real estate agencies. Over 6.4 per cent of tales are social/community housing tales and this higher percentage relative to the Queensland state based figure of 1.1 per cent likely reflects the significant effort put into collecting community housing provider tales in the early phases of the research. With the Community Housing Provider tales that I collected face to face in the pilot excised, the online social/community sector tales captured reduce to 1.2 per cent of the total collected, in line with the Queensland figure shown in Table 5.1. It is therefore reasonable to infer that without intervention the loose five per cent would mostly redistribute into the PRS/real estate sector percentages.

Table 5.1 Bonds held by the Residential Tenancies Authority per management type, Queensland and Brisbane November 2015. (Source: RTA Qld)

	Queensland		Brisbane LGA	
Managing party	**Total**	**Percentage**	**Total**	**Percentage**
Agent	486406	89.19%	135156	88.64%
Owner/Private Lessor	55646	10.20%	16007	10.50%
Other	1384	0.25%	528	0.35%
Rooming Accommodation Provider/Owner	830	0.15%	473	0.31%
Community Housing Organisation	619	0.11%	126	0.08%
Moveable Dwelling Lessor/Manager	295	0.05%	96	0.06%
Rooming Accommodation Agent/Manager	185	0.03%	98	0.06%
Grand Total	545365	100.00%	152484	100.00%

Table 5.2 Bonds held by the NSW government per management type NSW and Sydney November 2015 (Source: Office of Fair Trading NSW)

	NSW		Sydney LGA	
Managing Party	**Total**	**Percentage**	**Total**	**Percentage**
Agent	681210	87.44%	393459	88.35%
Landlord	97847	12.56%	51907	11.65%
Grand Total	779057	100.00%	445366	100.00%

Before proceeding to a research story about the data set renters it is useful to understand that every category and subcategory of data mentioned here has potential as a dynamic inquiry through Sensemaker™ to access patterns *in complex relationship to* all other filters (system factors) and data categories. And with that nod to complexity I outline the basic demographic data captured.

Demographics

Table 5.3 Demographics

Q20 Age		Q21 Identity			Q32 City		Q32 State		Q32 Total
18-25	21	Female	174		Adelaide	3	SA	2	5
25-35	68	Male	53		Brisbane	58	QLD	35	83
35-50	88	prefer not to say	6		Melbourne	30	VIC	13	43
50-65	50				Other	1	Other	8	9
65+	6				Perth	7	WA	1	8
					Sydney	44	NSW	32	74

Q34 Life Situation		Q33 Income	
employed full time	94	$15000 to $25000	38
employed part time	37	$25000 to $35000	31
family responsibilities	14	$35000 to $45000	21
not sure	5	$45000 to $60000	31
Other	41	$60000 to $80000	25
retired	11	$80000 to $100000	23
student	29	less than $15000	17
volunteer	1	more than $100000	22
		not sure	23

The demography questions we asked encompassed age, identity, city/state, life situation and income levels. It is useful to note that some of the questions we asked people to respond to do not necessarily follow usual demographic forms. In part this was to help contributors consider and respond from their own life situation. In terms of identity, of the 233 people who contributed a rental tale the vast majority were women – 75 per cent – although two per cent preferred not to say. Only nine per cent were young adults aged 18-25 (under 18 years were excluded as a cohort from the research for ethical reasons) and 29 per cent were aged 25-35. The majority – 60 per cent - were people in their productive working years aged between 35 and 65.

Contributors' life situations, as indicated by them, ranged from paid work - 54 per cent, with 40 per cent of the renters working full time – to students (29 per cent) and retirees (11 per cent) and those with family responsibilities. Intriguingly 17.5 per cent responded with 'Other' when asked to nominate their 'life situation'. A dynamic query with Income (Q33) and subsequent calculations showed that 68 per cent of these 'other' renters were on very low to low income levels of between less than \$15 000 per annum and \$45 000 per annum. 'Other' here therefore encapsulates people who may be under employed, looking for employment or who may not have capacity for participation in paid work and therefore on income support of some kind. The Australian average earnings for all persons in November 2014 (the beginning of the collection period) was around \$58 700 per annum (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2015) An income of \$45 000 or less per annum is therefore considered to be in the low to very low, income brackets. Thirteen per cent of contributors had low to average income levels (up to \$60 000), 21 per cent had average to high income (\$60 000 to \$80 000) and a further nine per cent earned over \$100 000 per annum. These higher income renters (n=22) were scattered across the country and despite their incomes (which suggest more choice and autonomy) none felt positive about their rental experience (Q2) and most also indicated that in their experience renting was managed for investor and agents outcomes (Q18).

Reflecting the media strategy to enlist participation and the targeting of the east coast state capital cities 57 per cent of contributors were based in the cities of Brisbane (25 per cent), Sydney (19 per cent) and Melbourne (13 per cent) although around three per cent also came from the west coast city of Perth despite the invitation to participate making mention of the focus on the eastern cities. Such is the reach of social media and the desire to inform someone about what is going on in the rental market.

Rental life.

Table 5.4 Rental Life

Q23 Type provider/management		Q28 Moves in 5 years		Q24 Total years renter		Q27 Lifetime moves	
Community housing provider	12	0	36	10-15 years	33	0	6
Other	13	1 to 2	97	1-2 years	19	1 to 2	32
Private (landlord)	29	3 to 5	80	15-20 years	34	3 to 5	49
Private (Real estate agent)	174	5 to 10	15	20-30 years	43	5 to 10	62
State government provider	3	more than 10	2	3-5 years	31	more than 10	39
		not sure	3	5-10 years	55	more than 20	22
				more than 30 years	13	more than 30	13
				not sure	3	not sure	9

Contrary to a commonly accepted narrative that most renters in Australia are young people who have yet to get into the property market 62 per cent of contributors to this research were aged over 35, with a large percentage of these (59 per cent) still of working age. Another common narrative is that only a small percentage of renters are categorised as long term renters – people who have rented for ten years of more. In this research 53 per cent would be considered long-term renters, and 39 per cent have rented for more than 15 years and 23 per cent for more than 20 years. Being a renter for so long in many other countries would not necessarily be the catalyst for numerous moves but in Australia the story is different. This is explored in more depth later in this chapter and again in Chapter Six but suffice to say of all the 123 long-term renters (>10 years) only seven have moved two or less times in their rental life (Q27Lifetime moves). Stability is not a feature of Australian rental life. Not one long-term renter who participated enjoys a sense of permanency with zero moves. Instead 48 of these long-term renters have moved one or two times in the past five years and another 40 of them have had to move three to five times in the past five years. This includes three people who have rented for over 30 years. The long-term experiences of such renters are instructive and these will also be further explored later. Overall, 58 per cent of renters have moved more than five times in their rental lifetimes and 41 per cent of renters have moved between three and ten times in the past five years. Rental churn is a feature of rental life in Australia, except perhaps for the 15 per cent of contributors who have found a measure of stability. I query what type of provider and management they have.

Of the small cohort of 35 people who have had such stability, at least over the past five or so years, 22 of their tenancies are managed by real estate agencies, seven are with private, self-managed landlords, another four are with community housing providers and two are with state providers in

public housing. The non-REA providers constitute 37 per cent of the cohort and private landlords as a subset make up 20 per cent. This contrasts to the 13 per cent of private landlord tales overall in this dataset.   The REA managed tenancies in this query constitute 63 per cent. This is 12 per cent less than the overall REA managed percentage of 75 per cent of tales.   Something in the way these stable rental tenancies are managed point to better circumstances and conditions for renters. At this point however I simply pose a question for further consideration later on.

An emerging question for later consideration: What do these private property managers and landlords offer or provide that others, especially REAs, do not in terms of people's experience of renting?

Housing scenarios

Table 5.5 Housing scenarios

Q21 Usual Household		Q22 Dwelling Type	
Not sure	2	apartment	16
Other	18	boarding house	2
Share house families	18	duplex/villa	7
Share house singles	42	flat/unit	53
Single family household	107	house	129
Single person household	44	Other	9
		room only	1
		studio	3
		townhouse	13

We asked contributors to tell us about their usual household. One hundred and seven of them (46 per cent) live as part of a single family household with a further eight per cent living as 'share house families'. Whether this relates to multiple families sharing the one house or extended family or multiple generations sharing together is not clear and the tales themselves do not provide detail about that. Nineteen per cent live as singles in a single household and 18 per cent are house sharing with other singles. The majority of these renters, 55 per cent, are living in a single dwelling, 8.5 per cent are in semi detached dwellings of duplexes or townhouses and another 30 per cent live in complexes of apartments (n=16), units or in a flat (n=53) where there is shared or common space. Another seven per cent indicated 'other'— a mix of hostels, couples, multiple household types over time. The tenancy scenarios however are more complex.

Tenancy scenarios

Table 5.6 Tenancy scenarios

Q30 Length lease now		Q31 Length lease usual		Q29 Time in Tenancy	
12 months	96	12 months	136	1-2 years	46
24 months	4	24 months or longer	10	6-12 months	41
6 months	25	6 months	55	less than 6 months	35
no written agreement	15	less than 6 months	3	more than 2 years	68
not sure	4	not sure	15	more than 5 years	31
Other	25	Other	13	not sure	10
periodic lease (continuation)	63				

We asked contributors about their tenancies with the understanding that a broad, open catalysing question asking 'what's your significant rental tale?' would elicit a broad range of responses. Hence we asked about their current lease/arrangement, their usual lease/arrangement and also the amount of time in the current tenancy (if applicable). In terms of the current lease arrangement less than two per cent of renters had a lease for 24 months. Another 41 per cent were on a 12- month lease and a further 11 per cent were on six-month leases. Fifty-four per cent were therefore on 'fixed term' arrangements with 44 per cent on something that, on the face of it, offered them less protection. Yet fixed terms are seen by some renters as problematic for all sorts of reasons and informal arrangements where there is no written agreement such as with friends or family can and do offer the very security of tenure or stability that many long-term renters crave. In a social complexity things are never clear-cut. A number of the informal 'other' arrangements however offered no security at all. These types of scenarios tend to operate in the black market, in intersectional spaces of a system where large numbers of operators can remain outside of systems that largely (self) regulate. This contrasts with the highly regulated social housing systems that constitute the smallest sectors in the country by a considerable margin.

Twenty-seven per cent of current leases had 'rolled over' from being fixed into periodic leases, a continuation of the tenancy without re-signing a lease. Yet here also, where some advocacy positions insist on stronger adherence to fixed terms the reality for many renters in this cohort in this research (24 per cent) indicate that their current experience supports their need to feel at home or at least have more autonomy and control over their housing circumstances.

That continuations of leases may support greater stability may be borne out in the numbers of renters in this research who have been in their current tenancy for more than two years. Ninety-nine renters indicated this. Given that four contributors indicated current leases of 24 months (and so

therefore not yet in place for two years) and 63 indicated continuation, more than 63 per cent of those in place for more than two years were on a periodic/continuation. These figures are not definitive but highly indicative of how the lapsing into an unfixed arrangement does not necessarily impact longer-term stability. Of those 63 on continuation 67 per cent were with REAs, 17 per cent had private landlords and 13 per cent were in social/community or co-operative housing.

A pattern is emerging. And it points to supportive conditions found in informalities rather than in stricter formalised leasing arrangements. I explore this at greater length in Chapter Eight where the case study findings and the methodological findings are drawn together in a narrative that explores the complexities of '*what supports*' renters in the Australian rental market. In the meantime however, it is useful to understand more about the renters in relationship to their own tales and here, also, is where another level of usefulness of this approach and the software that generates its capacities comes to the fore. I turn now to the additional self-signification we asked contributors to consider.

Additional signification

Table 5.7 Added self-signification

Q1 Intent		Q2 Affect		Q3 How common		Q4 Relationship to tale	
Complain	21	Negative -	88	Don't know	29	Housing prof heard from renter	2
Contribute	72	Neutral	42	Happens occasionally	51	Renter & housing professional	9
Criticise	17	Positive +	32	Happens often	109	Relating tale you know	6
Defend	1	Strongly -	51	Happens rarely	8	Renter (my experience)	214
Encourage	4	Strongly +	19	Happened once	34		
Get off chest	31						
Influence	15						
Inform	60						
Inspire	11						

The capacity Sensemaker™ as an interface offers in terms of making (some) sense of a social complexity also relates to the additional signification contributors offer post their contribution of a tale. The added layers of signification outlined are about the contributor's intent in sharing the tale, their affect, the commonality or frequency of the event, the contributor's relationship to their tale, what their tale is primarily about and the socio-spatiality of the tale. Indexing to these questions, contributors in the first instance make (more) sense of their tale for the researchers who subsequently, through dynamic queries in the software interface, can then inquire more deeply into a phenomenon, an aggregation or pattern, an intuition or a set of numbers. Dynamic queries mean

that the patterns (and corresponding numbers of tales) change as another question is added into the mix. This capacity has enabled me to make sense of and cross check the aforementioned raw numbers and come to greater clarity and refinement in thinking about them in the wider contexts of the macro patterns and a level of familiarity with the tales themselves.

With regards to commonality of the experience only three per cent of tales were about things that happen rarely in those renters experience. Forty-seven per cent of renters told us that the issue, event, conditions or circumstances they related happens often whereas 22 per cent indicated it happens occasionally. Twelve per cent did not know how common their particular experience is and whether this response related to a global perspective or a individual perspective is not known without investigating these particular tales.

With regards to what tales are primarily about 46 per cent of contributors told us that their tale was primarily about the treatment of renters. Another 18 per cent told us their tale was primarily about real estate agent practices. Given that these two types of tales often go hand in hand (it is REAs behaviours that renters often note in their experience) I was interested to know what positive behaviours renters may have reported. Yet going into a dynamic query with regards to affect (Q2) I found only one of these was a positive tale. Substantial numbers of renters have therefore related negative and strongly negative tales. The next largest grouping of what the tales were primarily about was 'capacity to thrive/flourish' with 31 tales or 13 per cent. Looking at the pattern of these tales with regards to the polarity/dyadic Q18 it is clear that renters' tales related to their capacities to flourish lie across and at both ends of the spectrum of their thriving being supported and curtailed. Yet the tales that indicate renting conditions geared to thriving and flourishing are part of a group of tales that appear again and again whenever a positive indicator or filter is employed or found in certain patterns of dynamic queries: inspire, positive affect, geared to renters needs to feel at home.

Levels of affect can tell us whether or not the issue or incident offered in a tale still has an emotional 'charge' and hence a level and type of impact. The range given is from strongly positive, positive, through to negative and strongly negative and includes neutral. Overall 59 per cent of renters felt negative or strongly negative in the telling of their experience. Of those who felt strongly negative (n=51) 45 (88 per cent) were managed by REAs and only three (5 per cent) were managed by PLLs. Sixty- eight contributors who felt negative when telling their tales (n=87), were managed by REAs. Only seven were managed by PLLs. Of all private landlord tales contributed (n=29) the total of ten negatively inclined (negative and strongly negative) constituted 34 per cent of PLL tales. Of the REA tales however, 65 per cent (113 tales out of 174) were inclined towards negative or strongly negative affect. Based on these queries and figures it is clear that real estate

agency managed tenancies negatively impact renters, significantly more so than private landlords managing their own properties. Understanding why this is so may support positive change in the system.

Forty-two contributors (18 per cent) felt neutral when sharing their tale. In pondering why this might be so I applied a query related to timeframes (Q7) to these tales thinking that time passed may have ameliorated the affect. However, only eight responses related to 'more than five years ago' whereas 23 tales were about things that are 'ongoing' or 'happening now'.

The positive and strongly positive affect tales (n=48) counted for 21 per cent of all tales. It is interesting to note that based on a distinct cluster pattern in Q18, 26 per cent of these 48 also strongly indicated that renting in their experience was managed for proprietary outcomes. I draw no conclusions about that. However the majority of all positively inclined contributors indicated in the same query based in Q18 that, in their tale of rental experience, renting was geared to the needs of renters to feel at home. This pattern is important and later, in Chapter Six, I investigate more thoroughly the tales that provide pointers to the conditions that challenge or support those needs and reflect on the culture(s) within the system that impedes renters' potential for human flourishing.

Any of the dynamic query questions, used singularly or in combination with other queries, offers pathways for additional sensemaking and to finer granularity of data. A person's intent in relating the tale also provides another type of signification that, along with affect, speaks to the significance of the tale for the contributor. The largest groupings of intent relate to simply wanting to contribute (31 per cent) or inform (26 per cent). Thirteen per cent of renters however contributed to 'get it off my chest'. This suggests that the experience has burdened them to some extent. Nine per cent intended to complain, another seven per cent to criticise. These suggest negative experiences. Five per cent aimed to inspire which suggests positive experiences. This latter reckoning is borne out with a glance at the pattern of tales indexed more strongly towards the 'geared to renters needs to feel at home' polarity in Q18 and the listing of the relevant tales. There is indeed a smattering of positive exemplar tales. These are instructive and the conditionalities, materialities and socio-spatialities supportive of human flourishing in rental are considered more closely in Chapter Eight.

Finally, it is important to note that in an online collection process that completely preserved anonymity[25] for contributors and their tales 13 per cent of contributors ticked the 'not for publication' box.

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[25] Save for the 15 or so collected on paper in the trial phase.

Not for publication

Table 5.8 Not for publication/ provider

Not for Publication (NFP)		Q25 Type provider/Management NFP		Q32 City NFP		Q32 State NFP		Total
Not for Publication	30	Community housing provider	4	Adelaide	0	SA	0	0
		Other	3	Brisbane	9	QLD	5	14
		Private (landlord)	1	Melbourne	1	VIC	0	1
		Private (Real estate agent)	21	Other	0	Other	3	3
		State government provider	1	Perth	1	WA	1	2
				Sydney	6	NSW	4	10

This section and session of sensemaking based in the raw statistics of contributors' additional self-signification, rental histories, housing and tenancy scenarios and demographics has opened up the complexities and interdependencies of the system and begun pointing towards certain key findings as well as types of tales that act as exemplars. The approach however has other methods and tools to employ in making further sense of this system of social complexity. Hence, next, I look at the major triadic and dyadic filter questions and the aggregated patterns that pertain to the key themes decided upon at the outset - home, wellbeing, connection, security and privacy— in relation to understanding both the system and methodology.

Explanatory notes on the sensemaking process of major patterns

Before coming to the data and findings based in the aggregated signification of tales - the patterns pertaining to the major themes - it is salient to remember that in this data collection process, in addition to the information discussed in Section One, participants share a significant rental tale of their choosing. They subsequently index (signify) that tale of experience to questions (filters) comprising two or three factors or attributes of a theme. These are expressed as dyads and triads.

The number of tales indexed in each diagram differs, dependent upon the relevance for the contributor. This is noted, on the diagram itself, within the figure caption and in Table 5.9.

Table 5.9 Number of respondents per triadic and dyadic, filter questions

Number of respondents per filter question		
Number of tales – total 233	*Count*	*Percentage*
Q8. Rental housing offers	223	95.71
Q9. Feeling at home related to	221	94.85
Q10. Not feeling at home related to	218	93.56
Q11. Support Wellbeing	142	60.94
Q12. Hinder Wellbeing	184	78.97
Q13. Contribute to connection to place/neighbourhood	187	80.26
Q14. Prevent connection to place/neighbourhood	187	80.26
Q15. Factors hindering Security	213	91.42
Q16. Factors supporting Security	170	72.96
Q17. Privacy	200	85.84
Q18. Dyad: Renting in my experience	229	98.28
Q19. Dyad: Changes by renters to rental property	224	96.14

As this methodological thesis explores rental experience generally, and then the PRS more specifically, including community and social tales offers a wider range of potentially instructive exemplars from what I am calling the full rental system as to how renters may want to be treated. Therefore, to begin with, in Section Two, I include the tales from non-PRS sectors in using

Sensemaker for findings and big picture sensemaking. This includes community sector tales (n=12), a few from public/state sectors (n=3) and 'other' (n=13)[26].

Before too long however I take up a few lines of inquiry using the dynamic query mode into finer scales of granularity to explore the process of sensemaking and to arrive at some brief early analyses. I also follow up on an intuition here and there and where these are borne out I offer the correlation coefficients.

There are two platforms for sensemaking of the pattern data; the full Sensemaker Suite ™ or an IOS based app - Explorer. I have used the latter for sensemaking of the full system triads and dyads in Section Two – for portability and simplicity as patterns can be easily grabbed with percentages and list of tales in selection displayed there and then. Where percentages are offered as a representation of a pattern within a larger system pattern, I round these up or down. After all, this approach aims to operationalise the usefulness of heuristics for sensemaking in collaboration, rather than employ precision. The statistical architecture provides for that.

In keeping with the narrative approach I headline each subsection with a title that aims to encapsulate the primary system pattern, sensemaking and findings of a particular filter or theme.

Finally, it is salient to remember that the tales act as exemplars of the pattern under consideration. They appear as headline/title where that encapsulates the essence of the pattern I am discussing. Generally however the tales appear in their entirety, verbatim, except for where punctuation may have been minimally added for the sake of clarity. Typing and spelling errors remain intact.

In Chapter Six I follow up the key major patterns into major lines of inquiry. It is there I focus the research lens on the PRS and the two property management sectors/systems within that – Real Estate Agencies (REA) and Private Landlords (PLL).

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[26] 'Other' relates to tales with a mix of Real Estate Agents (REAs) and Private Landlords (PLLs) over a longer rental history yet REAs also predominate in this small subset of management type.

Section Two   Major Patterns in Triads and Dyads

Renting offers…
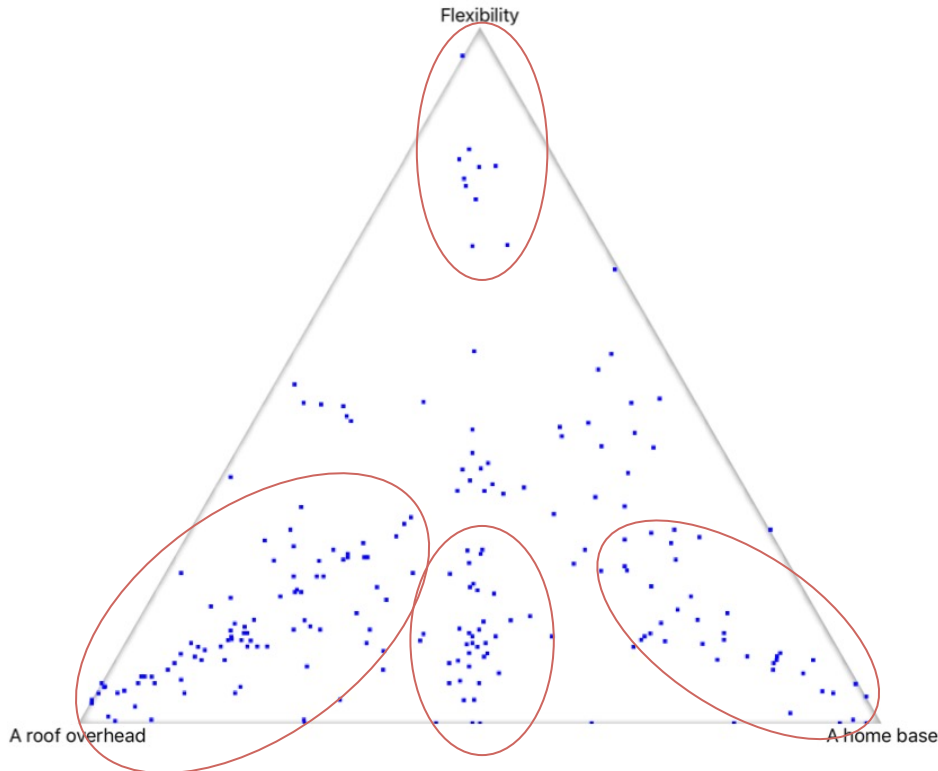
Figure 5.2 Q8 Renting offers…   223 tales from a possible 233.

A home or just a roof? Either way, it's a case of diminishing flexibility

Question 8 simply prompted contributors to place their tale among three factors pertaining to abstract factors about what renting offers: Flexibility; a home base; a roof overhead.

In this system the absence of patterns can be as significant as the presence of strong patterns and this also includes the pattern of the number of tales indexed to a question. What is there, and what is not, forms part of the story. In this first, single triad 223 from 233 contributors placed their tale among the attributes (factors) of 'flexibility', 'a home base' and 'a roof overhead'. With more than 75 per cent of tales indexed to the bottom third of the triad it is clear that flexibility does not feature in these renters' overall experiences of renting. Less than five per cent of tales appear in the flexibility apex. What does appear more strongly is a sense that renting simply offers basic shelter – a roof overhead – but that this is in tension with the notion of a home base. The statistical correlations reify the initial sensemaking.

Q8Renting offers - A roof overhead

        -0.756 Q8Renting offers - A home base (NP)[27]

        -0.406 Q8Renting offers - Flexibility (NP)

Around 41 per cent of the tales form a pattern close to 'a roof overhead' whereas around 21 per cent form a looser pattern (over a similar amount of triadic area) near ' a home base'.

Given the small pattern close to the 'flexibility' apex a quick scan of the tales suggest renters who see flexibility as something they choose or chose. This to my mind also suggests a type of, and /or a desire for, autonomy. A positive correlation supports the initial sensing.

Q8Renting offers - Flexibility

        0.210 Q9Feeling home - Autonomy (NP)

The densest, most prominent pattern of around 41 per cent per cent of contributions indexed resides around 'a roof overhead'. The vast majority of tales here (based on a review of titles and recall of the timbre of many of these tales) reflect the sense that renting in Australia, for a large percentage of people, merely offers basic shelter and that rental life is one of continual movement and flux. Two tales in this pattern, one entitled 'Continual flow' and another 'The art of living flexibly' both speak to the levels of movement as well as levels of personal flexibility and resilience needed as renters in Australia. Others speak to the impacts on their mental and physical health, the result of numerous moves and expense incurred in moving house.

The remaining two patterns at first glance bear closer relationship to the notion of rental housing as home. Both patterns tales – those in between the apices of 'home base' and 'roof overhead' of around 17.5 per cent and others in the smaller pattern of around 15 per cent near the apex of 'home base' demonstrate a level of conflict renters experience around the idea of home, within themselves and in relationship to the system. And yet here also are found tales of gratitude for the opportunity for basic shelter provided by the kindness of strangers, and the sense of home (and relief) that merely having a roof over one's heads and decent treatment offers. Renters it seems have learned to be grateful for the small mercies of landlords who do a good turn.

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[27] (NP) indicates that a non-parametric Spearman ranked correlation test was.

Starting a new life

I moved in my unit as a single parent with 2 young children with no renting history permanent job or bills to show a good payment record but the landlady had such trust in me that she agreed for me to occupy the unit. I managed to get a bond loan organised within a few days and they have been really helpful from the moment we had moved in making a really hard transition into a new life a more bearable one making us feel welcome and secure. We have never been late to pay the rent and she told us recently we are one of the best tenants she has. (Female 25-35, QLD, renting 1-2 yrs, REA & PLL, about rental agent practices, happens rarely, strongly positive)

A question about whether or not housing, as basic to life and flourishing, should depend on the kindness of individual landlords often privately managing their own property remains open.

Dynamic queries

As explored initially in Section One the software has been designed for real time dynamic queries that offer progressively finer granularity of data. In this instance the question of timeframe was laid over the field of 223 tales of this triad. Timeframes for 177 tales was indexed as between 1-5 years (56), happening now (46), or ongoing (75). The remaining 46 tales occurred more than five years ago. This dynamic query thus provides a sense of what may have been occurring over time and what is occurring in the system in the timeframe of the research. When the dynamic inquiry patterns related to timeframes emerge one system story of 'Renting offers:' also emerges - one of diminishing flexibility for the research renters overall.
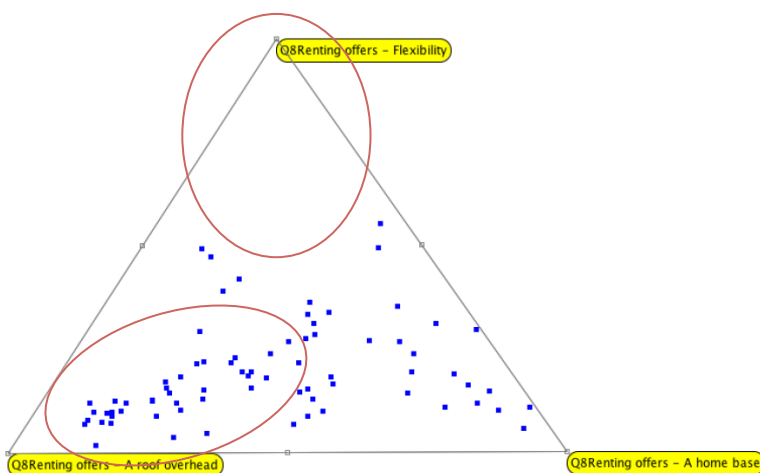
Figure 5.3 Diminishing flexibility.

75 tales indexed as timeframe/ongoing

Of the 11 tales corresponding to flexibility only two directly spoke to the attribute, and both also offered comparative caveats relating to past issues, and circumstances different to their main tale.

The dynamic queries into timeframes relative to the main, single triad theme of 'Renting offers/offered' show there has long been a pattern of renters experiencing renting as (just) a roof overhead. With timeframes extending from more than five years ago to happening now/ongoing, where once upon a time there was some choice and flexibility the 'ongoing' pattern suggests now there is (virtually) none as seen in Figure 5.5.

Mobility

I've had to move many times interstate or within cities because of finances changing family needs changing jobs. Owning property restricted my options renting has meant less pain in selecting property to suit my needs at the time. Of course until recent years the factor in favour of renters has been a buyers market - reasonable costs and plenty of choice. (Male, over 65, Sydney, CHP)

This tale emerged from the flexibility pattern in the full Q8 triad. It speaks to the shift in the private system over a period of time. From a system that may have had plenty of choice and reasonable costs for renters in the past, affordability and choice are now difficult commodities to come by, in the major cities at least. In a long neoliberalised, market driven system (of jobs and housing) the tale also speaks to the mobility of renters but as we shall see the long-term trends towards mobility do not necessarily translate to being upwardly mobile.

This tale, and its signification also speak to some of the issues that some contributors may have wrestled with in the design of the signification framework and/or the wider contexts that each tale resides within. That contributor (currently living in community housing) chose to tell a significant tale from his past as a long time private renter. Yet his current circumstances are known to be very different – stable, still affordable, in a decent quality of housing with a provider that also offers opportunities to participate in and with a community of people. Time and time again community housing sector tales emerge as outliers and/or positive exemplars in the sensemaking processes even though they are a very small subset of 12 in the whole dataset.

The set of patterns around flexibility and lack thereof investigated here also tap into a wider discourse of libertarian views of housing choice as espoused by King (2000, 2003) picked up by industry advocacy and which find correspondence in policy documents and settings (Queensland Government, 2016). Clearly, flexibility remains important for a very small percentage of renters

but this may also be a case of diminishing returns, where the lack of choice in rental housing, particularly affordable rental housing, has become reified in Australia as a roof overhead - markedly more so than other attributes.

I cannot claim that the renters who responded to the research, like most creatures, seek 'home' although it seems a fair enough assertion. 'Home' remains a relative term and one that cannot be definitive across any group as heterogeneous as 'renters'. 'Home' relates to the subjectivities of persons and what is a feeling of home for one (or a case of not feeling at home as the case may be for another) depends on many things including individuals' capacities and life circumstances. Yet this first broad sweep of patterns in a rental housing system comprised of different sectors, and the discussion thus far lays out in the broadest of heuristics the inklings of the patterns yet to emerge at finer levels of granularity in the system. In Chapter Six I take a track down into the private rental system proper and explore some of the patterns that have emerged in relation to that dual sector system. But next I look at the pair of triads that relate to 'Home'; feeling at home and not feeling at home and the core attributes of belonging, autonomy and security.

Feeling 'at home'
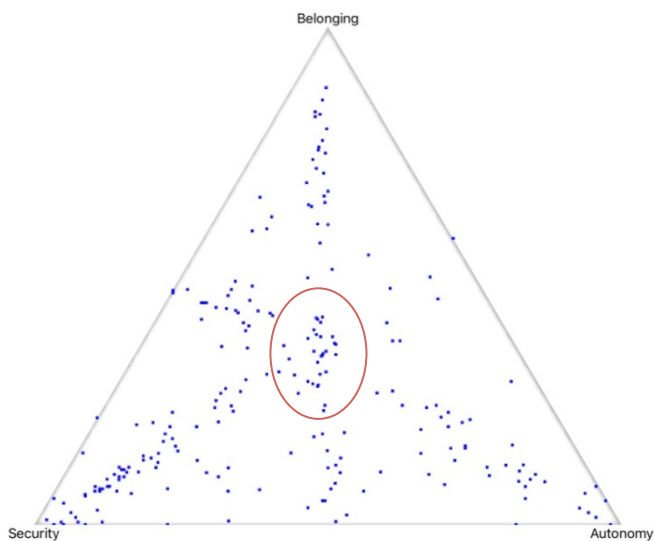
Figure 5.4 Q9 Feeling at home in rental housing

221 tales
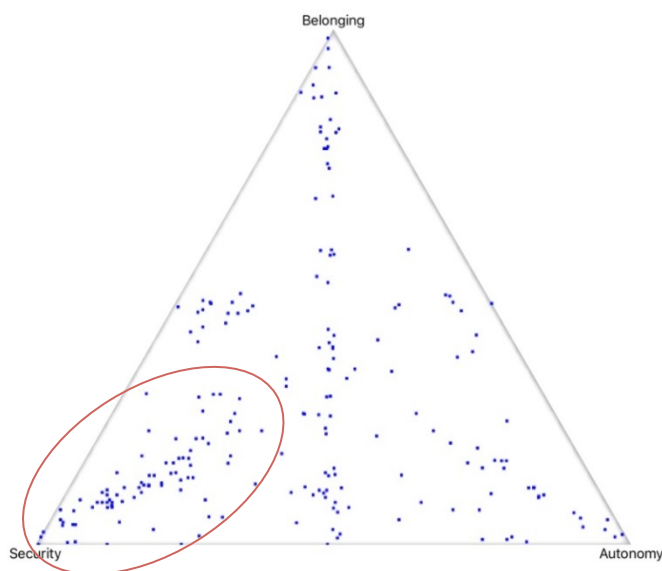
Figure 5.5 Q10 Not feeling at home in rental housing

 218 tales

Feeling 'at home' begins with a sense of security

Figure 5.4 depicts the triad patterns in Q9: Feeling 'at home' in rental housing relates to a having a sense of: belonging, autonomy, security. 221 contributors indexed this triad. It reflects a wide distribution of tales in its field with a clear, strong pattern emerging in the apex of each attribute as well as in the centre. A centre pattern in any triad denotes tales from contributors who have placed their tale more or less equally between all three attributes of the filter questions. In this triad the centre pattern contains approximately 15.75 per cent of tales. This percentage thus reflects the

number of contributors for whom all three factors are largely, equally important. The following tale taken from this pattern relates to all three factors/attribute of the filter/theme.

My rental happiness

I currently rent from a family member via an informal arrangement. We have lived there for over six years. I love where we live - the area the house the neighbours. I feel safe and secure. We have our cat here which means a lot to me. Key words offered: safety, contentment, home, stability, community, happiness. (Female 35-50, NSW, 5-10 years renting, about community ties, happens rarely, strongly positive)

Simple things like a number of years in one property representing stability, a pet, and connection to people and place may seem like nothing much to write home about until and unless the context of the Australian rental is better understood. This aforementioned level of stability is not the usual state of affairs in the broader Australian rental system. This began to be apparent in Section One and becomes more so, through this and later chapters.

Other minor patterns are evident also – in between Autonomy and Security (8.5%) and also Security and Belonging (12.75%) but with no pattern to speak of in between Belonging and Autonomy.

Figure 5.5 depicts the patterns in Q10 the negative expression of the theme. Not feeling 'at home' in rental housing relates to not having a sense of belonging, autonomy and security.

Although seeming similar in pattern and while the number of respondents in both triads is more similar still - 221 versus 218 tales - a subtle shift in the density of patterns in the positive and negative expressions suggests something is going on. Across the two triads the juxtaposed first glance/first grab of pattern percentages are as follows in Table 5.10:

Table 5.10 Differences in response patterns

Patterns related to attributes. Having/not having a sense of:	Feeling at home 221 tales	Not feeling at home 218 tales
Belonging	12.75%	10%
Autonomy	16%	15%
Security	31%	37%
Centre	15.75%	11.5%
Belonging/autonomy	<1.5%	3.5%

Autonomy/security	8.5%	11%
Security/Belonging	11%	8%

In the second triad 'Not feeling at home' there is a stronger pattern at 'security' - 37 per cent compared to 31 per cent in 'Feeling at home'. There is also a decrease in the centre pattern density here to 11.5 per cent (see Table 5.10). The slight drops in percentages, here and in other patterns, signal a subtle shift to the more pressing concern of security as likely being more paramount in renters not being able to feel 'at home'. The following tale from that centre pattern of Q10, 'Not feeling at home' offers wide contexts and a personal perspective.

Uncomfortable living

I live in a house that is really badly insulated and freezing in winter and hot in summer. The only built in appliances it has is a really old inefficient air conditioner and a wall bar heater neither of which I turn on because they are far too expensive to run. I would love the landlord to put in either some draught proofing and even a split system that would be cheaper to run but they wont even replace leaky washers on taps so I very much doubt they would put any money into improving the comfort of the home. I would fund it myself, or even look at installing solar if I had a longer security of lease otherwise I may just improve their investment and get kicked out after a year. I have been lucky with previous landlords that have been more 'socially minded' and willing to invest in these products to make it more comfortable for us as tenants but this time I guess we have lucked out with landlords that are only interested in making money. (Male 25-35, Melbourne, about treatment of renters, happens often, negative)

This concern with regards to security, in its many subtle manifestations, has begun seeping through the first glance whole system patterns and has thus been found in tales too numerous (and many too lengthy) to share here. And while researcher and reader alike may already be sensing the system, picking up threads of tales to weave together a piece, the renters own signifying of their tales and a group of renters making sense of the tales will tell us a tale soon enough, and in no uncertain terms.

Wellbeing (Flourishing)
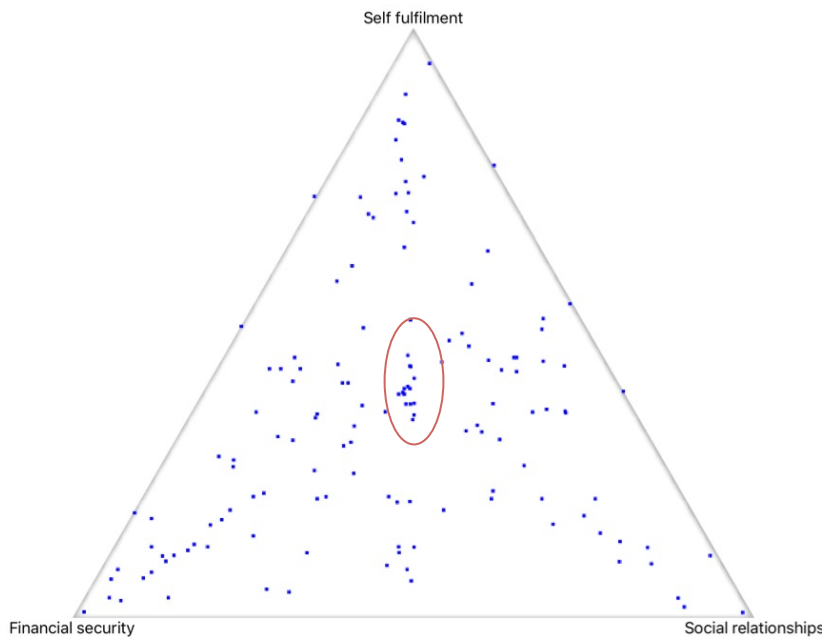
Figure 5.6 Q11

Wellbeing helped or supported

142 tales
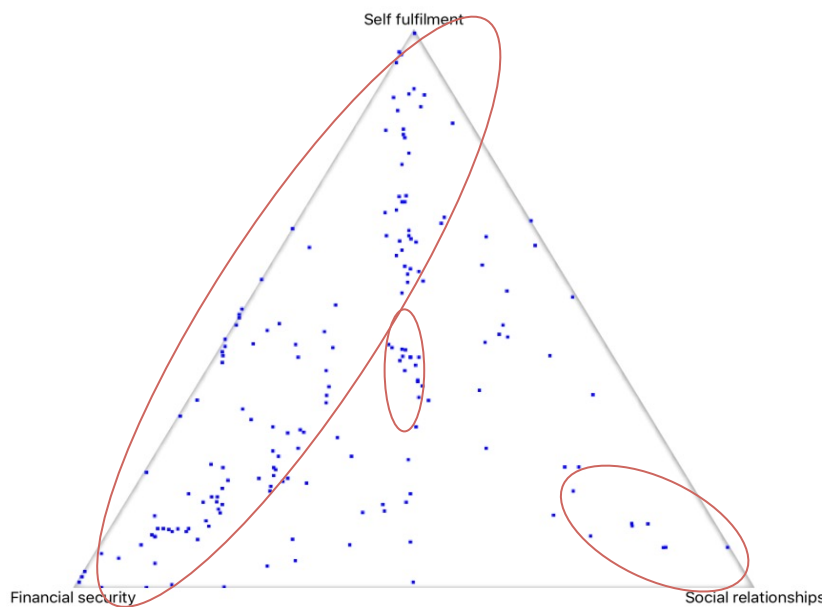
Figure 5.7 Q12

Wellbeing hindered or prevented

184 tales

Wellbeing is complex but not at all well supported by being a renter.

Figure 5.6 and Figure 5.7 depict the triadic patterns related to Q 11 and Q 12: To what extent did the following factors related to renters' wellbeing support/help or hinder/prevent wellbeing.   Forty –two more contributors indexed to Q 12, 'Wellbeing prevented/hindered, compared to Q 11, helped or supported wellbeing. This is significant. However, even the small number of tales - six per cent - in the area of social relationships are instructive, with exemplars of issues for renters in the system that find correspondence with issues of renters being treated as 'second class' extracted in later participatory processes (as discussed in Chapter 6). The following tale is a case in point.

Power game of owner- occupiers

Moving into a new property recently and within weeks receiving email from the real estate informing me that the owner-occupier next door (via the Executive Committee) has complained about my leaving my child's mini-scooter outside the door of my flat hence breaking a by-law about obstructing common property. Said scooter was creating no obstruction whatsoever but being a good neighbour I comply with request to 'cease this practice'. Also informed that I've breached… by-law about dumping rubbish on common property which I know to be completely untrue. Also reported that my children are too 'boisterous'. It is interesting that owner-occupiers in the block engage in similar practice leave large pot plants all over the block in common walkways and also have children that are far more boisterous than mine (as children tend to be). Interesting that only I as a renter am complained about. Also interesting that nobody speaks to me first - they go straight to the real estate and make a complaint because they can. Welcome to the 'hood! (Female aged 25-35, renting 10 -15 years, NSW, REA, about treatment of renters, happens often, strongly negative)

The overarching story of system impacts on wellbeing however can be sensed in the three patterns along the axis from self-fulfilment to financial security in Q12 (wellbeing hindered) in relation to the patterns in Q11 (wellbeing supported) and so it is useful to compare the two triads. Three patterns in Q12 (wellbeing hindered) – financial security, financial security/self-fulfilment and self-fulfilment individually are significant. Together these represent approximately 74 % of responses in the triad, not including the centre pattern of another 9.5 per cent – tales that have a statistical relationship to the factors in the order of 33 per cent. In contrast the same axis areas where patterns coalesce in Q11 have approximately 46 per cent of the tales, with another 11 per cent in the centre pattern. Table 5.11 shows the breakdowns of patterns across the two triads.

Table 5.11 First glance patterns and shifts in pattern responses between Q11 and Q 12

Patterns relating to factors/attributes: Helping/preventing Wellbeing	Q 11. Extent of factors of wellbeing being helped or supported	Q12 Extent of factors of wellbeing hindered or prevented
Self-fulfilment	12.7	22.75
Social relationships	8.5	6.00
Financial Security	19	34.75

Fin/Sec and self-fulfilment	10.5	16.75
Centre patterns – all three factors	11	9.5

The tales in the patterns here were often very lengthy and the often did not well reflect the attribute they were most closely tagged to. Snowden has remarked that headlines can sometimes be just as instructive as full narratives. This is the case in the following. The point about headlines and other free text relates to the level of complexity – the convoluted relationships between issues and concerns in the tales themselves. And there is always more to the story. The following tale is from the centre pattern in Q11; Wellbeing supported. Interestingly, the tale is also found in the centre pattern of Q12 Wellbeing hindered.

While this may seem contradictory, the tale (in this case) describes the dichotomies briefly and simply.

> *Inner West Renter*
>
> *It is very expensive to rent in Sydney. I haven't been able to rent alone have always split the cost in half. I live in the inner west of Sydney in a small apartment with no dining area. This suits me at present as it is one of the cheaper apartments in Annandale. I'm willing to share apartments and live in a smaller older dwelling to save some money and eventually buy my own place one day*
>
> *(female, aged 25-35, renting 3-5 years, Sydney, REA, happens often, neutral. Additional text: can live inner city, expensive, share, flexibility)*

The next tale is found in Q12, Wellbeing hindered / financial security/self-fulfilment pattern

> *Why renting sucks even when it makes sense*
>
> *I'm currently renting having fallen out of home ownership following a divorce. I'm in a lovely house in a beautiful street in a safe inclusive and central neighbourhood. In many ways I love living where I do and it is much cheaper to rent than to buy into this neighbourhood. However renting is frustrating. We have been able to negotiate to keep our pets - a cat and a small dog but there is much we can't do. We can't buy a kitchen cabinet from IKEA to make up for the lack of linen cupboard because all ikea furniture has to be bolted to the walls and we can't bolt things to the walls. We can't put our pictures where we want them. We can't change the paint*

colours nor update the dated curtains - and we can't control whether we will be needing a new home come October (just before the end of Uni semester and exams). Not knowing whether we will have a home in 6 months (even if we are good tenants who pay the rent and maintain the property) is really unsettling. (female, aged 35-50, renting 10-15 years, Perth, REA. Issues of security, happens often, neutral. Additional text: common to all renters, lack of control, insecurity)

Sense of connection
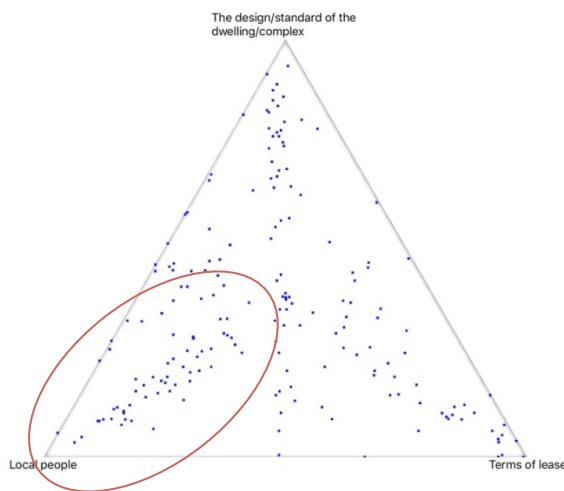
Figure 5.8 Q13

Contribute connection to place/neighbourhood
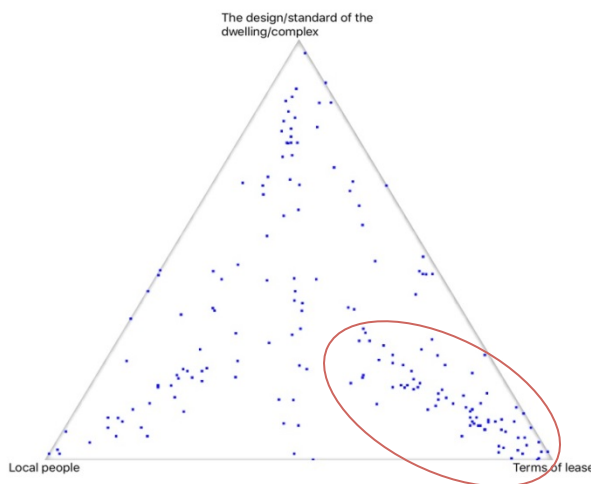
187 tales

Figure 5.9 Q14.

Prevent connection to place/neighbourhood

187 tales

Connections to place and people take time and terms of lease prevent connection.

Q 13 and 14 asked to what extent did the following factors – the design/standard of dwelling, terms of lease, local people - contribute (Q13) or prevent (Q14) a sense of connection to the place or neighbourhood? The overall patterns in this pair of triads about the extent of factors that contribute to or prevent a sense of connection to place and neighbourhood together tell a subtle tale of how

connections to place and the people of a neighbourhood take time but that usual terms of lease prevent this. Both questions have 187 indexers though this does not mean the same contributors responded to both questions. This is unlikely, although obviously a large proportion of people did respond to both questions.

Looking at both triads together I am drawn to three patterns of difference between the two expressions of the theme of 'Connection'. Firstly, the most significant pattern – the pattern in the apex of 'Terms of Lease' in the negative expression (Figure 5.9), 'Prevents Connection' (40.5 per cent) — compares to a corresponding apex pattern of 16.5 per cent in the other triad (Figure 5.8). Both are worth investigating.

In the former, one very brief tale sums up many other tales in the pattern and speaks to wider system issues.

> *....not again*
>
> *Owner wants to sell, gotta move. They're all about the short term profits.*
>
> *(Male 25-35, renting 3-5 years Melbourne, REA, about treatment of renters, happens often, strongly negative. Additional free text for extra context: speculator, negative gearing, profit)*

The latter pattern, in the positive triad has the following tale, a polar opposite to the one above.

> *Why long term rental has changed my life*
>
> *I am a member of the ……... Rental Housing Cooperative which provides long term affordable housing for people on low to moderate incomes. Being a cooperative it's a member managed and run organisation - in a sense we are both tenants and landlords. We must pay our rent on time and look after our homes. Equally we need ensure rent is collected on time and our houses maintained. 36 of our properties are owned by the Victorian State Government and 2 are owned by us. We'd like to be able to purchase more but we're only a small organisation so the going is slow. The best bit about being in the cooperative is knowing I don't have to fear eviction. My house is extremely well maintained and I am able to make it into a 'home'.   I can choose the paint colours when my home is being upgraded and can keep pets. My kids can stay at the same school and I can build community connection in my local area. I am also lucky to part of an amazing team in*

the coop. I am a member of the board and have been able to learn new skills such as governing and decision making which have helped me with gaining job opportunities. My biggest regret is that we don't have more homes so more people can enjoy the benefits of long term tenure. It has changed my life and I know it would change others. (Female 35-50, Melbourne, renting 20-30 years, Co-op/CHP, about capacity to thrive/flourish, happens rarely, strongly positive)

Secondly, another significant pattern (around 29.5 per cent) in 'Contributes Connection' relates to the factor of 'Local people'. This compares with 18.25 per cent in the same apex in the other triad.

In the former, the following tale, from a long-term private renter, speaks to mutual respect developed over time. This particular tale also reflects some of what emerged in Section One and touches on the core question of what conditions support renters' sense of home, security connection and capacity for flourishing.

Renting Direct not via a real estate agent

Been renting the same place for 11 out of the last 12 years. It's direct through the landlord we met him when we were literally checking out the house across the street. Because we're not through a real estate agent there is a direct connection mutual trust and respect between us and I don't feel fobbed off when I call because something's broken. I feel motivated to look after and protect the house and he knows he can count on me to do so and leaves me alone for years at a time. I also pay less rent - without someone in the middle taking a fee. Boring story but that's my story. (Male 35-50, Melbourne, renting 10-15 years, PLL, about treatment of renters, happens rarely, strongly positive)

In stark contrast to being left alone for years at a time there are four tales in the corresponding negative pattern that mention landlords who live next door to a property they rent out interfering in some way. Unsurprisingly two of the tales are not for publication.

Thirdly, a pattern in between 'Local people' and 'Design/standards' (15 per cent) in Q13 'Contributes connection' compares to an absence of pattern in the corresponding area of the other triad Q14 Prevents connection.

I rent my home

I have been housed by a community housing association for around 10 years and it's been the one safe and reliable thing in my life that has allowed me to both hide away from the world and meet it with bravery and an open face. It may be the very thing that has saved me at times. It's not a forever deal it will end at some point but it's not going to be quickly pulled out from under me either. I love my house and I have overflowing respect and admiration for the people who run the housing association. They battle the odds, governmental policy, size, to successfully keep focus on the purpose of the association: tenant outcomes are at the forefront of their work. I know I am so lucky to be in this rental situation and I help out wherever I can. (Female 25-35, SA, renting 10-15 years, CHP, about capacity to flourish, strongly positive)

The correlations generated via Sensemaker™ related to the above pair of triads are as follows:

Q13Contribute connection – Design/Standard of B/E (B/E = built environment)

    0.188 Q14Prevent connection - Local people (NP)

    -0.325 Q13Contribute connection - Local people (NP)

The positive correlation here is curious and initially did not seem to make sense. The design and standard of the built environment, when increased (improved?), appears to prevent a sense of connection to place and neighbourhood relative to the factor of local people. Graphing the factors - positive and negative – brought out the following tale. The positive correlation figure at 0.188 makes more sense. The tale also speaks to intersectional issues that I discuss in Chapter Six.

Landlord Greed

I had to paid thousands of dollars to get the house maintained, cleaned including fixing things that the landlord had claimed I had damaged. Because he renovated this old place, his view of the house was not what the pictures portrayed. I then had to pay additional money for small wear and tear marks on a kitchen bench that already had damage. The real estate didn't do anything because they were enlisted to sell the house as well. If they upset the client, then they would have lost the opportunity to sell the property.

I spend close to $3000 in enlisting professionals and purchasing materials for the house only to have them tell me I needed to pay more. Landlord tried to claim repairs of the carpet when I actually got a professional carpet cleaner who reported that they're claim was based on stains that were 20 years old as it was the original carpet.

Before I moved in, the house was not looked after and they were unable to get a buyer. But because I looked after the property over and above the original state, there was interest in the property. When I moved in, they didn't get professional cleaners to prepare the place and I find it ridiculous that the real estate stress (to the point of bullying) that you get professional cleaners for everything. It is ridiculous how you're treated for being a great tenant. (Female, 35-50 Sydney, REA, renting 10-15 years, about the treatment of renters, happens often, strongly negative)

A brief, reflective research note to take forward: While this research does not investigate renters' attitudes and behaviours as tenants a theme is emerging from the tales. The renters who talk of being treated well are full of gratitude and do their best to look out for the landlord's interests also.

Sense of security
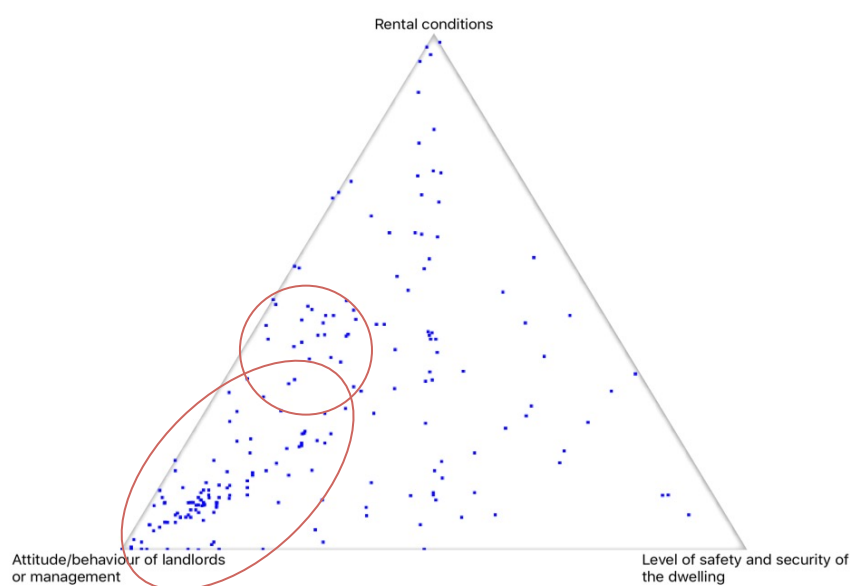
Figure 5.10 Q15 Factors challenging a sense of security

213 tales
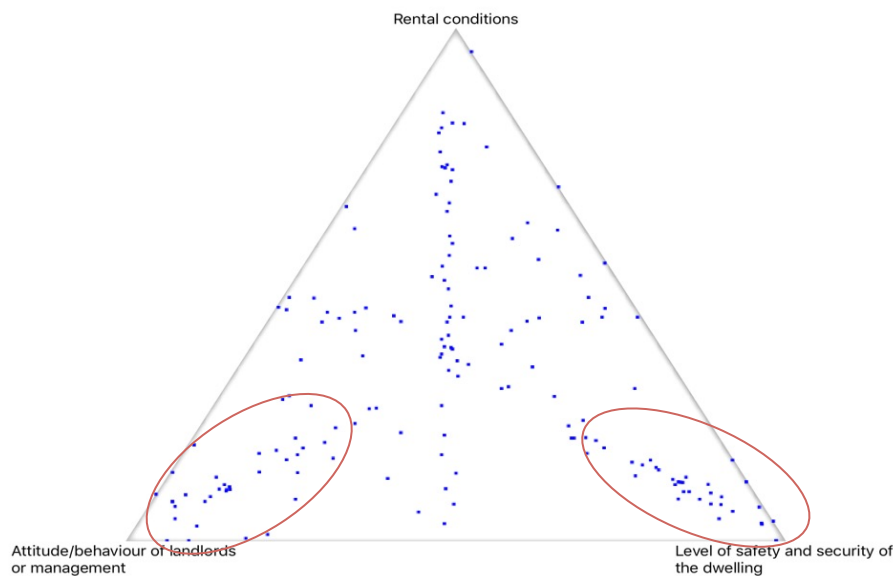
Figure 5.11 Q16 Factors supporting a sense of security

170 tales

A secure dwelling means little when management is the dominant threat to security

The triad questions for Q15 and Q16 asked: Q15. To what extent did the following factors challenge or prevent a sense of security as a renter? Q16. To what extent did the follow factors support or enable a sense of security as a renter?

The three factors or attributes of a sense of security at the apices are: rental conditions; level of safety and security of the dwelling; attitudes/behaviour of landlords or management.

Q15 (Figure 5.10) had 213 indexers (with 20 people ticking not applicable) and Q16 had 170 indexers (with 63 ticking not applicable).   While we cannot know why people chose not to index to either of these questions the difference in numbers indexing to each triad is significant. Forty-three more contributors indexed to Q15; 18.5 per cent of the dataset. The issue of their sense of security being challenged or prevented was far more germane to significantly more renters in the research system than the sense of security being enabled or supported.   With the instruction including the phrase 'and the circumstances of that time', the tales themselves range widely - and the relationship to the filter attributes/factors is not always immediately obvious.

The major visual pattern within Q15 is among the most pronounced in all 12 spatial form questions and so is covered in more depth in Section Three, and again in Chapter Six, in further discussions on key findings related to the case study.   Also pronounced however, are the 'first glance' differences between these two 'security' triads and so it is worthwhile juxtaposing the two and examining the differences in more detail.   Where Q16 (Figure 5.11) 'support security' depicts a more usual spread of indexation patterns, including a pattern at the 'security of dwelling' apex of

around 24 per cent, Q15 'challenge security' reveals no pattern at the same apex at all. This is surprising, as well as being a useful example of how context shapes both design of a framework and the eventual responses. These responses run counter to the intuition of the collaborative group who thought security in the built environment would be crucial. Other prominent differences between the two triads are the centre patterns with the number in 'supporting security' more than 11 per cent higher than challenging security.

Table 5.12 'First glance' patterns in 'Sense of Security' Triads

Patterns related to factors/attributes: Challenging/supporting a sense of security	Q15 Factors challenging/ preventing a sense of security	Q16 Factors enabling/ supporting a sense of security
Rental conditions (RC)	9.9%	10.6%
Safety/Security of dwelling (SSD)	1.4% (no pattern)	24.0%
Attitude/Behaviour of Management (ABM)	55.0%	24.7%
Centre	5.2%	16.5%
Rental conditions/Security of Dwelling	4.7%	9.4%
Security of Dwelling/ A/Behaviour of Management	6.1%	5.8%
A/Behaviour of Management/Rental conditions	17.8%	10.6%

The correlation values within Q15 Challenge security triad formalise the visual pattern recognition.

Q15Challenge security - Rental conditions

      -0.797 Q15Challenge security – Attitude/Behaviour of Management (NP)

Q15Challenge security - Dwelling safety

      -0.538 Q15Challenge security – Attitude/Behaviour of Management (NP)

The following two tales are found in the centre patterns of each 'Sense of security' patterns: exemplars of all three factors in their positive and negative expressions.

Support security/ Centre pattern

Home for now

I've only rented one house in Australia. Before that I lived at home with my parents then I rented overseas before returning to Australia a few years ago. When I returned I knew I couldn't happily continue living under my parents' roof (although they would have been delighted to have me and would never have charged me rent!) so I needed to find a place to rent. I am a PhD student on a low income and single so buying a house was not an option - plus I'm highly ambivalent about buying into the mortgage trap anyway. So rental it was. And is. I quickly found a two-bedroom place. The second bedroom was important to me for the extra space and so that I can have friends to stay whenever I want. I'm lucky in that I've been able to remain in the same place for four years without any increase in rent and my landlords renew my lease for two-year periods so I feel relatively secure. I like living on my own for the first time the sense of freedom and independence that this gives me. It's not completely ideal in that I share a wall with a neighbour who is a noise control freak and I share a back yard with three other units (including the neighbour I don't get along with!) so that space doesn't feel like mine at all and isn't somewhere I can relax, spend time or invite friends into. I do have a bit of garden at the front and I grow some herbs and veggies in it but again I'm aware that this isn't fully mine and there's not point in investing in it long-term. Almost everything is in pots in anticipation of eventually having to move so I do have a definite sense of impermanence. And I do slightly resent the quarterly agent inspections in which someone comes into my home to judge whether I am looking after it well enough. It's not a huge deal but home-owners don't have that indignity. Overall I do wish that in Australia we had long-term leases like in some European countries so that I could truly feel settled and at home and feel like I have more control over how I maintain decorate and treat my place. That said the place I am in now is more home than anywhere else. (Female 25-35, SA, REA, 5-10 years, issues of security, positive)

Challenge security/Centre pattern

The evil of landlords is surpassed only by that of rental agents

Only one? I couldn't choose. My rental tales include: in the past 5 years I've had to move 4 times because landlords throw me out every 6-18 months (because they're selling their properties to make a quick buck). In two of these properties the landlords did NO repairs at all because the suburb I lived in was increasing in value so rapidly his property was increasing in value regardless of the state of the unit. When I called one day to tell him that after a serious rainstorm I had a river of water running down the middle of my house through the lounge room and out the front door he laughed. That was his only response.

Additional free text*: This is a poorly-worded study. It doesn't get at some of the fundamentals of the experience of renting in Sydney at least - the ways that renters are treated as scum by rental agents, the ways the laws protect landlords and discriminate against renters, the ways the negative gearing taxation policies keep people from becoming owners unless they inherit money, the ways animal owners and parents are discriminated against. You should reconceptualise the ways that renting has an effect on people in different stages of life. (Female, 35-50, Sydney, REA, 5-10 years, about treatment of renters, happens often, strongly negative)*

Despite the additional free text response commenting on the design of the study the tale submitted and the indexing speak directly to the heart of complexities of the system, her concerns and those of many in the private rental system. These are further revealed in Section Three in the outcomes of the first participatory process (WS1).

Of the 213 indexers to Q15, 'challenged security' 163 were private renters in property managed by Real Estate Agents (REAs). This is out of a total of 174 REA renters who contributed to the study. Another 24 (out of a total of 29) were private renters with Private Landlords (PLLs) managing their own property. Renters managed by real estate agents are disproportionately more challenged in their sense of security than renters with private landlords.

Forty-three out of 213 tales were from 5 years ago or more (based on the middle of the collection period; May 2015), 54 were from more than one year ago and 115 indexed their tale as either

happening now (47) or ongoing (68). These smaller cluster patterns of the 'timeframe' of challenged security (not shown here) show similar patterns to the larger nationwide pattern. Australian renters' sense of security has been challenged by management behaviour and rental conditions for quite some time.

Privacy
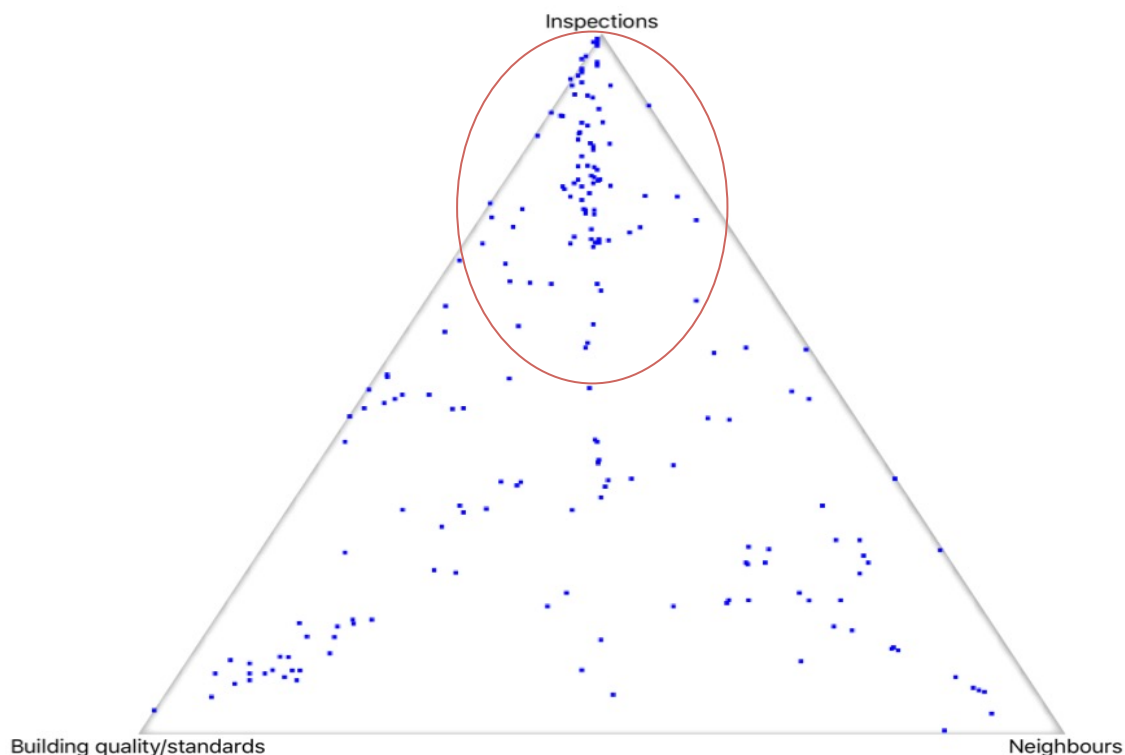
Figure 5.12 Q17 Factors impacting privacy. 200 tales

     Inspections clearly impact privacy and so what is their actual purpose?

Question 17 asks: To what extent do the following factors impact your/the renter's privacy? The factors offered were: Inspections; neighbours; building quality/standards. The pattern in this last, single triad immediately illustrates the most significant problem with regards to privacy from the renters' perspective. Almost half of the indexers in Figure 5.12 (49 per cent of tales n=98) have placed their experience into the apex of 'inspections'. The other factors - neighbours and building standards – each constitute 13.5 per cent of the pattern while the next pattern between building standards and inspections is around 10.5 per cent. The centre pattern where all factors are relevant makes up six per cent whereas the two remaining areas barely constitute patterns at all at 4.5 per cent and three per cent respectively. As one of the most significant, and stark, patterns to emerge from the primary and secondary data collection 'inspections' and some of the complex

interdependencies with inspections are discussed at greater length in the subsequent sections and Chapter Six also. The following exemplar illustrates some of the complex interdependencies of the issue.

Photos during inspections

Real estate agents insist on taking photos of the interior of the property. They always suggest it is for my benefit so they can show any problems to the landlord but it is just an invasion of my privacy. It is bad enough that I have to allow inspections (I hate being judged by a snot-nosed twenty year old) but when they start taking photos of all my personal belongings I get very irritated. As mentioned it feels like an invasion of my privacy and I am also concerned that I have no control over where the photos might turn up. In the past I have refused permission for them to take photos except where there is a problem with the house. The agents always greet this with some degree of hostility, which worries me that they might be prejudiced to me for future rentals.   (Male 50-65, QLD, REA, 20-30 years, rental agent practices, happens often, strongly negative)

The next tale comes from the left of the centre pattern of Figure 5.12 Inspections as an exemplar of all three factors – inspections, neighbours and building quality/standards - having similar levels of significance for the contributor.   In this case the placement is inclined towards 'building quality/standards'.

Ongoing Plumbing Issues

I don't dislike renting but I do dislike the lack of control I have over our plumbing issues. From failed hot water systems to dripping taps from cheap fittings that regularly need replacement and the biggest problem of them all - a toilet that doesn't flush number 2s (the replacement cistern was too small for the pan). It's a nightmare of dealing with body corporates, real estate agents and tradespeople who just don't care because it's not them that end up having cold showers and filling buckets of water to flush the toilet. (Female 25-35, Brisbane, REA, renting 10-15 years, treatment of renters, happens often, negative)

Researcher Reflection - Triadic pairs – benefits and costs of utilisation.

The usefulness of paired triads is threefold yet also debatable and so I recollect the rationale for going with these as opposed to having fewer, single triads. In the first instance pairs require indexers to consider their tale and circumstances relative to a broad theme a second time; to potentially move past or through their thoughts about the first of the pair presented to them and hence respond from a different, more nuanced stance. Secondly, the differences and similarities in pairs, once indexed and with patterns having emerged, can provide a wider, comparative snapshot of the system and thus give the sensemakers pause for thought also, especially where there is an absence of pattern in areas of the triads and where the patterns may be quite diffuse. Thirdly and consequently, if the data set is relatively small like this one, pairs can move the sensemaking into the narratives themselves rather than the aggregations.

On the other hand however, there may be a cost or deficit in the data in pairs in a research context and they may be confusing for the respondents, at least if there are too many pairs to consider and index to. The triads appeared separately, on individual pages and so I cannot discount the possibility of some confusion although none of the trial participants mentioned this. There does appear to be a tendency for some indexers to respond /index from a more global perspective (their experience of renting more generally or over a longer period of time and with various management arrangements) rather than about the specifics of their own tale, which may be about one incident. In either case this cannot be verified. The self- signification provides the added layers of meaning and researchers honour the process. The global/macro aggregation (pattern) and interpretation of pattern is the process here. The narratives serve to illustrate the pattern and if renters have responded along the lines of other circumstantial context also, then based in their experience, that is the data we deal with, even though it may seem at odds. The aggregations - as heuristics - are fit for the purpose of providing broad patterns for initial sensemaking. That key patterns are triangulated and reified through other participatory methods further supports the proposition that for ultimate utilisation - designing change in the system – especially where statistical correlations are also deemed very significant, the aggregations are indeed substantive evidence.

The challenges I perceive with this signification framework and dataset relate to three things. Firstly the instruction 'and the circumstances of that time' does broaden the contexts of any tale – contexts that readers of the tale cannot know unless these are given. And given that this research aimed to investigate very large housing systems but yielded a much smaller data set than expected that level of diffuseness is more challenging. I have resisted the occasional temptation to interpret, or recode the tales with other methods, instead trusting my own capacities for sensemaking of the tales as data set and subsets to draw out macro or underlying systemic and cultural implications.

This is not precision. Rather, this is insight and therefore somewhat dependent on the capabilities of the sensemaker(s).

Secondly, however, in using this approach in contexts of academic research and potential for policy/advocacy planning I aimed to allow for disconfirming evidence. Given that any triad or dyad requires neutral abstracted factors – these are not either/or scenarios – the use of pairs can offer a sense of potential dualities as well as nuanced complexity. Thirdly some of the challenges relate to an early decision to remain with the approach's participatory and narrative sensemaking aspects rather than a strong focus on statistical or computational findings within or outside of Sensemaker™. These choices relate to my own skillsets (or lack thereof) and interests.

There are two other major (primary) aggregated patterns left to explore before I move into composite patterns and particular lines of inquiry that have emerged through the sensemaking thus far. The two remaining patterns are both dyadic, rather than triadic in form.

Dyads are designed as opposing but not necessarily opposite conceptualisations where participants consider where their tale and circumstances may fit in the space between the polarities. Dyads utilise the notion of an ideal state, a point of balance in the system. This is drawn from the Aristotelian concept of the golden mean. In the two dyads (Q18 and Q19) participants were asked to '*choose the position on the scale that best reflects your experience.*'

 Renting in my experience is:

Q18. Renting in my experience is:

Managed for investor/agent outcomes o o o o o o o o o o o o Geared to the needs of renters to feel at home

The ideal state, the point of balance in this polarity (not shared with contributors but useful for planning) expresses as: *Rental practices, conditions and regulations/legislation, balance care for investments and all persons' rights to create a secure home base free of interference.*
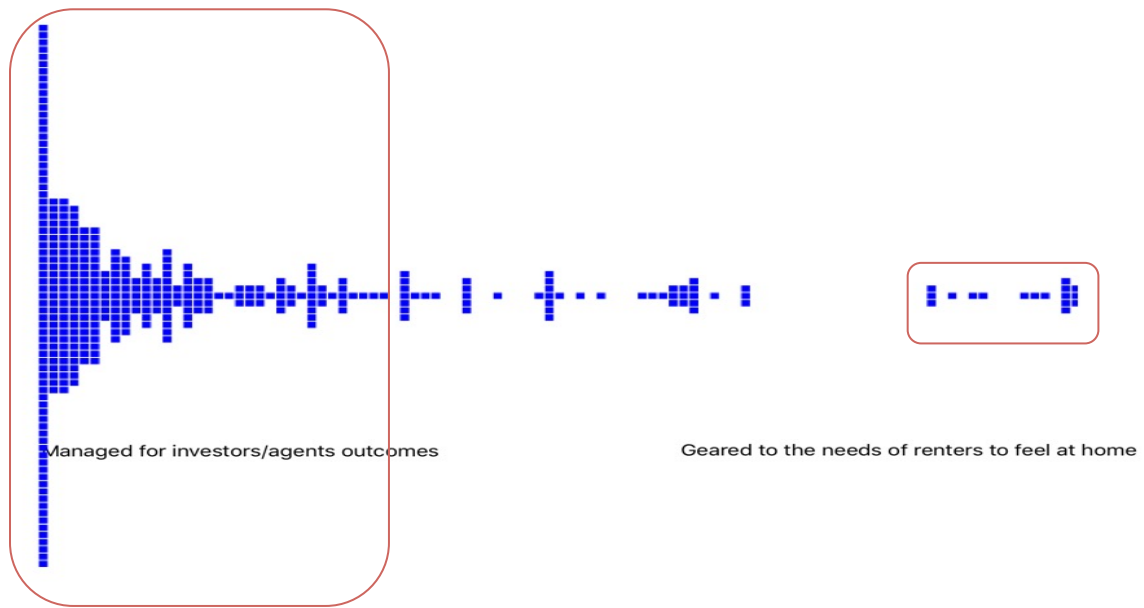
Figure 5.13 Q18 Dyad Renting in my experience is… (Total responses 229)

> *There is no balance of power in a system such as this.*

The pattern of renters' experiences across a representative dataset is glaring. The cluster of nine tales in the centre pattern of the dyad (the supposed point of balance and ideal state) contains four tales belonging to first time private renters in Australia, two community housing tales (and another, long ago private tale, from another current community housing resident).   Of the two remaining private tales only one appears to come close to the 'ideal state' developed as a point of balance. The contributor of the tale *'My garden investment'* has *friends as landlords, stability and a sense of community* but still mentions *renters being treated as second class* (additional free text). She also mentions *landlords' sense of entitlement and the balance of power being with landlords.*

> *My garden investment*
>
> *My landlords agreed to take out an old, ramshackle asbestos shed. I had whinged a bit to them as friends about the ugliness of the place crappy falling down shed and concrete that took up most of the backyard. Another friend had asked me what amount I would be prepared 'to pay' extra for more amenity/beauty all of which was sadly lacking and which was making me quite depressed. I reckoned on an extra $20 per week and so I decided to 'invest' the equivalent of 2 years worth into designing/landscaping the back garden for all to share and enjoy the fruits of my labour - vegies and beauty- with a wonderful borrowed landscape of trees and sky in addition to the tropical ramshackle zen of the garden space. (Female 50-65, Brisbane,*

> *PLL, renting 20-30 years, about capacity to thrive/flourish, happens rarely*
>
> *strongly positive)*

The dearth of tales as exemplars of the ideal state and the extent of the pattern speaks volumes of the state of private rental in Australia.

The second dyad (Q19), related to Q18, was designed to provide finer granularity. Q19 therefore relates more directly to the materialities and conditionalities of rental properties – the ability of a tenant to materially adapt or 'makeover' a rental place and make the rental property home (Easthope, 2014).

Changes by renters to rental property are/were:

Q19. Changes by renters to rental property are/were:

Strictly controlled; can't even hang a painting ooooooooooooo Fully allowable; can adapt to renters needs and wants

The ideal state, the balance of interests, pertaining to Q19 expresses as:

> *All non-structural changes are permitted, subject to a return to the state of the property upon leasing.*
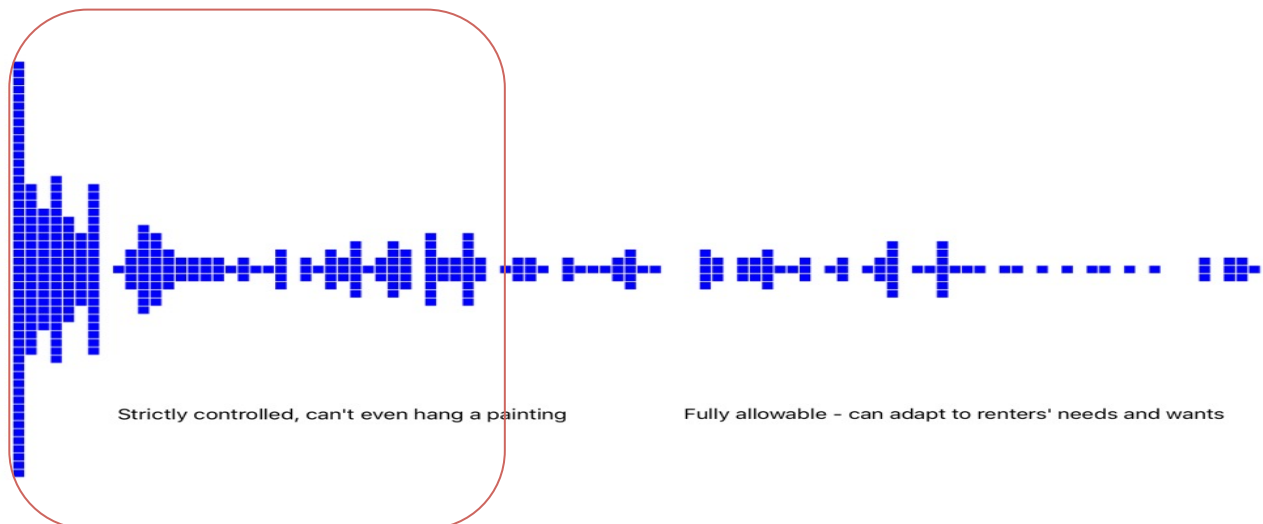
Figure 5.14   Q19 Changes by renters to rental property are/were…(Total responses 224)

Good news is limited when it comes to renters making a place even a little bit like home

The following tale was found among the very large number of tales clustered around Managed for investor/management outcomes in Q18 and also speaks to the materialities of Q19.

Renting gives you no control

I once rented a small place to myself. It was great to have my own 'house'
but it was one of the worst places I ever rented - cold damp drafty. I lived
there for a couple of years so it can't have been that bad. What annoyed me
is that it could have been good and I'd happily have improved it but it wasn't
mine to do anything with. (Male 35-50, Brisbane, PLL, renting 3-5 years,
about capacity to thrive/flourish, happens often, negative)

Wanting to better understand the granularities in these patterns I changed the data format and added in type of management. The resulting histograms of the full rental system are depicted in Figure 5.17. Beyond the stark and substantial patterns what becomes apparent is the mix of type of management tales at the opposite polarity (geared towards renters wants and needs) in each of the questions. For example arrayed at the left end of the histogram of Q18 (the inverse of Figure 5.15) closer inspection and a quick peruse of the 13 tales informs me that five are Real Estate Agents (REA) tales, another five are Private Landlord (PLL) (this number includes the pink dot and purple bands which both relate to the positive actions of a PLL). There are also three community housing tales. Looking for a private rental system tale that directly exemplifies the polarity descriptor/filter I note the small number of usual tales. 'Starting a new life' and 'The perfect landlord?' (also already utilised as exemplars) both tell of 'good' private landlords. One landlord takes a chance on someone without rental history who needed housing for her and her children. The other landlord offers a PhD student a break by offering a long-term fixed rent below the market rate. The gratitude expressed in both tales is palpable.

Yet such tales in the spectrum between centre point and polarity, let alone the full data set are rare. The patterns overall in the dyads suggest the private rental system is far out of kilter. The histograms in Figure 5.17 are different views of the system depicting types of management with median lines as the statistical point of balance. The system has settled far towards one polarity, and so as a consequence, far away from renters needs to feel at home in rentals which include being able to material adapt a place.

The ratio of tales in these sections of both histograms support the view that good news stories in the Australian rental system disproportionately come from community housing and 'good' private landlords. Furthermore the median lines on the histograms offer a graphic illustration of a very skewed system that puts paid, in no uncertain terms, to the myth of egalitarianism and the 'fair go' that Australian culture has long celebrated.

One tale from the centre cluster in Q19 about materialities offers another rare tale of choice and a good (relaxed), current landlord yet also speaks to the issue of small material changes for the making of home in the context of long experience as a renter (15 -20 years) and also having been a home owner. Despite being in the centre pattern this tale too is a long way from an ideal state where renters are permitted to make non-structural changes to premises subject to a return to the state of the property upon leasing.

Back in rental, because it's where we want to be

It's not really a question of one 'rental tale' - it is more of a long-term narrative. At the moment I'm happy to rent but there was a time when it really really frustrated me. That was before I bought a house - which I lived in with my young family for four years before selling and moving back to the city to rent again. Now I know what it means to be a home-owner. I know that I can do it. Or that I could. But before that time I always looked at home-ownership as this special thing that would somehow change things forever. As it happens it did do that but not in the way that I expected. What it did was reveal to me just how simple it is to modify and restore parts of a home and reinforce just how silly it is for tenants to feel like they can't put in a few picture hooks or use blu-tak on the walls or plant a few bushes in the garden...We're in a really nice place now and the landlord is pretty relaxed and happy to have us for the long-term. Well so we think. You never know when that will change. But we've decided to stop worrying about saving up for another deposit and just concentrate on giving our kids the best of these next couple of years. We've got them in music classes and send them on school excursions. We've travelled overseas with them. We live close to good schools with easy access to our workplaces so that we can spend more time with them. We're looking after our health and making sure we eat well. We have a nice car. We can pay all our bills on time. If we were as fixated on buying a house as we used to be we'd be sacrificing some of those things in order to save money. But we're not. We've made a choice to be where we want to be and that means renting. It's been kind of liberating actually. But I do wonder how we could have made this choice without having already been down the home-ownership path...(Male 35-50, Sydney, REA, 15-20 years, about capacity to thrive/flourish, positive)
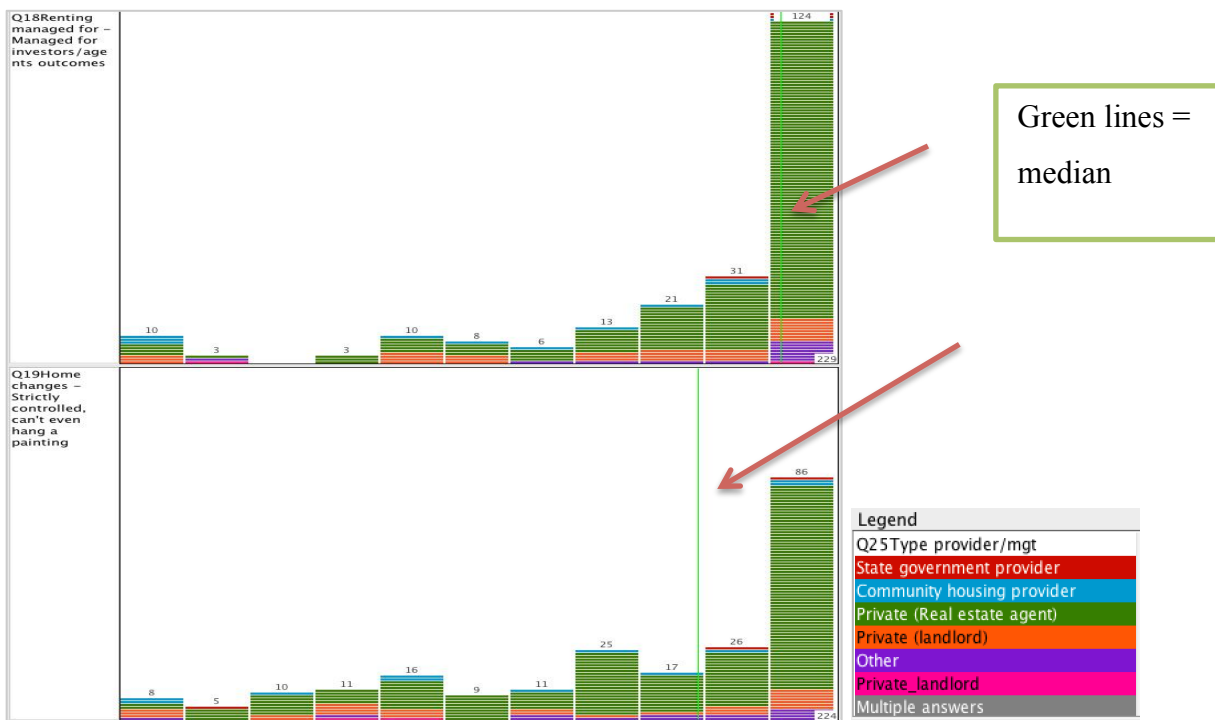
Figure 5.15 Histograms of the two dyads with medians and type of management.

Summary

The purpose of the method in a collaborative, real time process is to facilitate the development of *shared* heuristics as the common ground for further planning and decision-making. The sensemaking process I have outlined in this section, therefore, would usually be a participatory process. As explained, this was not feasible given numerous constraints. Instead, the sensemaking is my own and has in the main only dealt with high level findings; the 'first glance' visual patterns that offer heuristics of the system captured.

The headlines[28] provided shortly are heuristic in that they offer a quick, sufficient synopsis of the system as indicated by the aggregated data of rental experience as well as the impacts of that system. Having gone through this process of sensemaking a collaborative effort would likely have brought other nuances and lines of inquiry to bear. The urge towards greater clarity and deeper analysis vis à vis bodies of literature that some researchers reading this may feel however, remains contrary to the main game here: Taking shared heuristics forward into planning interventions. That said it is clear that patterns of culture related to what challenges and supports renters' sense of

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[28] The use of headline as synopsis is drawn from the method where narrators are asked to title their tales. Kahneman also uses this heuristic device utilised in offering summaries within his most recent offering on heuristics and other types of cognition.

home, security, connection, and their wellbeing and privacy have emerged. These patterns of culture (as yet undefined) are also extracted as issues and archetypes in participatory processes. In this study, all methods and data eventually form the basis for designing interventions for change in the PRS via the two interconnected process pathways explored in Figure 4.7. These processes and findings are explored next.

Summary of headlines

Q8   *A home or just a roof? Either way, it's a case of diminishing flexibility.*

Q9 and 10   *Feeling 'at home' begins with a sense of security.*

Q11 and 12   *Wellbeing is complex but it not at all well supported by being a renter.*

Q13 and 14   *Connections to place and people take time and terms of lease prevent this.*

Q15 and 16   *A secure dwelling means little when management is the dominant threat to security.*

Q17   *Inspections clearly impact privacy and so what is their actual purpose?*

Q18   *There is no balance of power in a system such as this.*

Q19   *Good news is limited when it comes to renters making a place even a little bit like home.*

Wordles from contributors' free text

These two 'wordles' were created by taking the 60 most used words in two 'free text' options: The changes renters wanted in the rental system, and three words that describe their tale.

Changes renters want

Renters three words about their tale

Section Three Coming together with the key findings: Planning with shared heuristics

Workshop One (WS1) Extracting system heuristics and mapping to the Cynefin framework

I flagged in the introduction to Part Three that this section of the thesis was perhaps the most important in terms of potential for action in the world. Subsequently, in Chapter Four I described the participatory processes that extracted system issues and archetypes as heuristics from 83 tales in Workshop One (WS1). Here then is where the research gaze became focussed on the private rental system with the emergence of the issues and most of the archetypes from rental participants' engagement with private rental sector tales.

I outline those heuristics in this section after a brief recap of the processes (and query some of them in reflections in Chapter 7).

Workshop participants scanned the tales fixed onto walls and noted down what resonated with them. Over 170 issues were extracted by individuals and then collaboratively formed into clusters for a smaller, more manageable set of issues. Subsequently a secondary scan extracted characters and human characteristics from which archetypes of the system were constructed through a number of processes.

Findings

The following list of 33 clusters constitutes the major findings emerging from the first part of this participatory process.

A cluster was named to reflect the issues extracted by the workshop participants that remained underneath the heading. Where slight differences in issues were found, the similar issues are listed after the cluster name in parentheses.

> *Issues clusters formed by participants*
> Renters and renting seen as temporary
> People need security to make the best contribution to society
> Positives and negatives in the various types of rental housing system
> Tenants treated as the enemy
> Tenants treated as second class
> Home ownership is socially desired and valued, home ownership valued more than renters
> Social and cultural bias against renters - second class citizens, stigmatised by the propertied
> Tenants moved on (rental churn)
> Power imbalances- unequal power relationship, abuse of power, power trips, power used
> inappropriately by landlords/agents

Power imbalances - structural

Private rental for benefit of owners, never the tenants, the law (practices) favours the lessor

Need to balance tenants needs for home with investors needs

Rent auctions

Contradiction between home and investment - landlords complain that tenants don't take care, but not allowed to make property home, paying to look after someone else's place but can't make it home

Lack of respect towards renters

Risk of homelessness often present - present/future poverty risks especially for women

Agents' own rules (agents have their own rules, change the rules to suit themselves)

Fairness in the current PRS is questioned

Landlords' intrusions to privacy - Inspections. Too many and often taking illegal liberties

Landlords ignoring requests - tenants have no way of knowing if this is habitual behaviour

Agents ignore powerless tenants

Landlords cutting corners

Psychological distress of tenants, the objective stressor scale: moving house is up there with death and divorce re stress levels

Landlords' sense of entitlement and privilege - making decisions that impact tenants without any consultation, landlords can just change their minds - tenants at their mercy

Threats and abuse

Contradiction between shoddy repairs not professionally done v/v expectation of professional cleaning

Bond gouging (bond stealing)

Lack of choice or options in renting

Agents work strategically for benefit of client/property owner

Standards of rentals decreasing but rents going up

Poor built environment – e.g. Thin walls

Student housing boom impacting housing stock for others

Reflection on findings

The most noticeable thing about the list of clusters/issues is that almost all relate to *cultures* of the private rental system.   Building standards and other materialities of renting are mentioned yet these mentions too form part of the wider complexity associated with culture. The participants in WS1 were not provided the visual patterns, just the rental tales.   Their deliberations reflect and triangulate the data found in the major patterns in Sensemaker™ with attitudes and behaviours on

the part of management and property owners constituting the most significant problems that renters encounter and are subject(ed) to. The majority of these issues are mapped as belonging in the complex domain as they have multiple interdependencies. Eight of these are taken up in Workshop Two (WS2) or subsequent discussion and analysis (Chapter 6). Next, however, I turn to the outcomes of the other processes of WS1.

Archetypes

Following on from Chapter Four where I earlier discussed archetypes in this approach, the archetypes extracted, constructed and brought to life with narrative emerged from the second part of the participatory process of WS1. Fifteen archetypes in total were constructed, a mix of all rental sectors and actors that were brought into the process that day – consciously or not. Some of the archetypes are discussed in Chapter Six, and still others in Chapter Seven in a reflective analysis on issues with the methods and processes but for now I lay out some of the archetypes pertaining to the private rental system of real estate and private landlord management. Others (Kevin, Prue, Ritchie and Becky) are introduced and discussed in Chapter Six. All the archetypes are found in Appendix A.

We asked participants to construct archetypes (beyond stereotypes) with a contextual narrative and as a mix of positive and negative characteristics. The ensuing descriptions are as written by participants.

Dodgy Dan - property owner focussed on profit and banking

A wealthy property owner who will do anything he can to get the best out of his investment. Money is the be all and end all. Ethics are not his strong point. Though he likes to think highly of himself he can take on too much so he can come across as angry and a pain in the neck. He is frugal to the point of being dodgy. - would do his own maintenance or get a shoddy repair job done by a mate. He does the least possible with the least amount of staff and is pretty damned incompetent as a landlord - blames others when return on investment is low or things don't go his way. He complains a lot and is generally cranky. He wears dark sunnies (sunglasses). He is seen as vindictive, uncaring and angry. He is also seen as strong, a viking warrior.

Alison tenant

Alison is highly principled executive, (holding) a signature handbag and glass of wine – a well-dressed executive type -36 years of age, an intelligent and capable woman with a profession she is good at. A woman with a strong sense of control - for Alison it is all about the principle of the matter. She will not suffer fools. She has a strong sense of responsibility and for her children. She is highly strung, needs to be heard and so is sometimes seen as demanding. She can also occasionally act demandingly and be seen as aggressive even though she has a loving heart and good intentions.

Fretful Freda

A public servant /private landlady so she has good regular income - fretful about what? Her investments, the type of tenants - she has challenges she can't control and so get gets stressed. She is neat and tidy, patient and careful but with lots of vulnerabilities. She is anxious, nosey and shortsighted. She is in her mid forties - and self manages her properties. She is a responsible and compassionate landlady who really wants to do the right thing while being careful with her finances. She works part time as a government officer in human services. She is very hands on in her landlady role but has difficulty managing boundaries. This leads to her being a bit of a worrywort - to the point of being highly stressed and sometimes appearing to her tenants as being pedantic and neurotic. Her compassion and inability to set boundaries for herself sometimes make her vulnerable to being taken advantage of by other people, including sometimes her tenants.

Bruce - the 'pushover' landlord
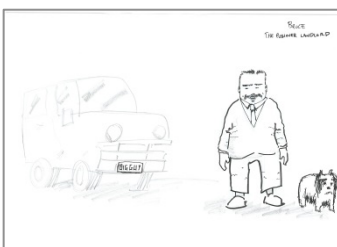
Bruce is bossy, weighs 150 kg - unshaven, friendly demeanor to strangers but not so nice once you get to know him - runs the local footy team - bad property manager - a pushover and crabby cause he can never get ahead, drives a land rover, fosters dogs, has a Pekinese dog that follows him everywhere, ill-fitting suit, community minded, untrustworthy, bad business person, stingy and incompetent.

Other system archetypes (renters and advocates) were drawn (as depicted in Appendix A) but were handed back to facilitators without narrative descriptors. I revisit these in Chapter Seven when discussing the usefulness of the methods in the rental system.

Mapping to a simplified Cynefin framework

The Cynefin Framework, supports decision-making and action planning. In understanding that different issues or states are either ordered (obvious/simple or complicated) or unordered (complex or chaotic) or even disordered actors and decision-makers in a system can better respond and respond more appropriately to presenting situations. With a range of issues, culture based phenomena and system archetypes extracted and reconstructed the final activity of the day was to attempt an initial mapping of these to a simplified Cynefin Framework and to generate ideas for safe to fail experiments. By this stage of the day however the majority of the older renter participants had lost energy for more cognitive work and we decided not to run a proper process of mapping to the Cynefin framework. We instead asked those still engaged with the process to discern:

a) What issues are simple cause and effect, obvious to most people.

b) What issues require experts to fully understand the problem.

c) What issues have so many interrelationships that we'd need to run small experiments to see what worked.

As discussed previously complex issues were refined and taken forward into WS2, discussed next.

Workshop Two (WS2) Planning with issues in the complex domain

The second workshop, with policy and advocacy professionals, took place nine months after the first workshop and was designed for the second part of the process question:

> What knowledge and potential impact emerges from collaborative, participatory and researcher's sensemaking – *for application to rental housing environments, policy and socio-urban planning processes?*

The earlier research processes of collaborative design, narrative collection and participatory processes in WS1 had been geared towards this second workshop process. The practical, research aim of WS2 was the design of experimental probes - 'safe to fail' experiments with potential to induce change in the system and thus begin to shift the cultures expressed within some of the issues

mapped as complex. The WS2 participants were provided all the various types of heuristic data pertaining to the complex issues presented. Data included the most significant of the aggregated macro system patterns (Challenged security and Privacy triads and the two dyads) and a few exemplar tales from those patterns, as well as contextual information and corresponding constructed, system archetypes. The exemplar narratives and rental system archetypes that reflect patterns of behaviour (Ballard, 2015) grounded the heuristics of the macro system patterns in the micro scale: renters' experiences.

Three mixed[29] groups of three people each chose one or two complex issues to address and framed change statements to work towards in designing experiments[30].

1. The contradiction between 'home' and investment'. Change statement: That tenants have a sense of home and owners can protect their investment.

2. 'Rental churn' (the fact that renters in Australia are forced to move often in a turbo-charged investment property market with significant capital gains) and 'power imbalances'. Change statement: To improve security and stability for renters.

3. 'Cultural bias' and 'the lack of respect towards renters'. Change statement: To normalise renters' rights to make a rental property 'home'.

Intervention design in this approach has certain characteristics related to complexity. Firstly there should be multiple experiments designed and run at once. Multiple options are needed because with so many interrelationships and interdependencies in a complex issue mean there can be no certainty as to what might work until trialled and evaluated. Certainty about something being the one solution suggests either a lack of understanding of the 'complex' nature of an issue or that the issue more properly belongs in the 'complicated domain' of the Cynefin framework. Herein lies a significant conundrum of much policy planning in complexity.

The multiplicity of interventions also requires that these be small, relatively inexpensive and relatively easily shut down if not found to be useful in inducing change – safe to fail. Such experiments should also be able to be run and evaluated within in a short timeframe and three months is recommended. These criteria put long processes of policy development out of bounds in terms of practicality yet policy was part of the system here. These methodological constraints would prove problematic.

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[29] We mixed the policy makers with the advocates and I stepped into a group to make up numbers at the last minute.
[30] Remaining issues were taken up as a separate research line of inquiry. This is Chapter Six.

The half-day timeframe of the workshop was also problematic. Only two of the potential probes that emerged properly mapped out in terms of cost/benefit analysis, resources, timeframes, evaluation and exit strategies were truly 'safe to fail'. Others were not. One of these had potential to be system disruptive and therefore potentially transformative but it would need substantial private sector resourcing which may or may not be 'safe to fail'.

With no further project collaboration with research participants feasible, the only other outcomes that day consisted of the handwritten brainstorming notes of the three workshop groups and reflections on the process. These pointed to participant subjectivities and predispositions – layers of complexity - impacting the process and outcomes in ways that were not yet well understood and brought up questions about rationality in these types of planning contexts.

Subsequently I presented the research by way of a conversation with members of the Action Learning and Action Research Association (ALARA), a rare opportunity to explore some of the WS2 issues with more learned and practised action researchers. That conversation provided much needed collaborative input, catalysing another review of the process and outcomes, and another cycle of inquiry.

Hence from the dilemmas of the second workshop emerged two different pathways. I diverge from the outcomes of WS2 as one pathway and come back to these in Chapter Seven, to explore them more fully in the context of wider praxis dilemmas of participant subjectivities and learning complexity. There, another, transformative, layer of praxis also emerges as part of the experimental mix. The reason for this divergence pertains to further analysis through the other pathway, and what may be enacted as a result. This pathway draws on two complex domain issues not taken up by WS2 participants and several other lines of inquiry that had emerged from my own sensemaking of all narratives prior to WS2. These are explored next, in Chapter Six, through deeper inquiry with all the available data, tools and methods of the Sensemaker™ assemblage to hand.

Chapter Six. Cultures within the private rental system

Chapter Six picks up two complex issues that WS1 participants wanted taken forward into planning, issues that groups in WS2 did not choose to consider: Gaming of the system by REAs and management abiding their 'own rules'. Earlier, in Chapter Four, I alluded to findings arising from sensemaking and the rich, potential lines of inquiry and investigation that had emerged. Here then, in Chapter Six, I bring all the types of data and main findings from Chapter Five[31] together into further analysis and a complex weave of these issues. The deeper investigation of findings here in Chapter Six thus draws closer to conclusions with regards to the second, core organising question of the research:

> *Beyond shelter, what socio-spatial, material, and conditional attributes of*
> *rental housing environments support and enable, (or challenge or impede as*
> *the case may be) the flourishing of persons who rent, their sense of home*
> *and security and their connectedness to wider communities?*

I conceptualise an overarching heuristic to illuminate the predominant macro and meso scale culture and practices that operate across and between the two main management sectors - the real estate and private, self-managed property investor sectors of the PRS. I explore the most relevant archetypes from WS1 as patterns of behaviour with substantial correspondences with other heuristic data. Together these begin to express a macro narrative of the overarching culture in the Australian rental system. I offer a neologism as part of the conceptualisation of this culture and subsequently explore some of the contexts and spaces within which it operates, as well as a key practice and issue that typifies it: Inspections.

Section One 'Proprietariness' and intersectional space in the PRS

Being able to immerse myself in the 230 odd tales as they trickled in over the timeframe of the research[32] was the unexpected benefit of a much smaller than expected data set. I was struck, time and time again, by a sense of the 'proprietariness' of landlords, exhibited as particular behaviours, patterns and issues – threads within the narrative detail of the tales. And yet, 'proprietariness' as a term did not exist. This was curious and surprising.

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[31] The findings and outcomes of WS2 are discussed in Chapter Seven.
[32] In a large dataset it would be highly unlikely that all contributions would be read.

Another, small theorisation was emerging and with it a new cycle of contemplation and more sensemaking of Sensemaker™ data; to ascertain if this notion held up to deeper scrutiny and what other impacts it may be having. Here I further investigate and reflect on the phenomenon, explore what it looks like and how and where it operates in the private rental system.

Defining 'proprietariness'

Drawing on language found both in the tales and the extracted issues I provisionally define 'proprietariness' as:

> *...perceptions, behaviours and actions based in proprietary interests and a*
> *sense of entitlement that support those interests; proprietary privilege.*

The neologism, while emerging from contemplations and sensemaking in this research, nevertheless has wider application to any system where proprietary interests – proprietary privilege - dominate. 'Intersectional space' as a conceptualisation arose out of the contemplations on proprietariness in the PRS, a space where the system, and the individual renter, is often gamed and is open to being gamed. This propensity is due to a lack of utility of governance over spaces and time that are liminal and interstitial as well as a cultural, proprietary sense of entitlement. 'Proprietariness' and 'intersectional space' are thus symbiotic: They are found within and between cultural and governance systems, where notions of investment and ownership both encapsulate and drive intersectional tensions.

In this research they are found in complex relationship to renters' sense of home and security in Australia's private rental system. Yet, as we shall see, 'proprietariness' also at times disadvantages the private landlord whose property management resides with agents but whose interests may not be primary when it comes to the proprietary interests of real estate agents. And while legislation in some parts of Australia has been strengthened to ensure that REAs are duty bound to consider property owners interests no such consideration by REAs or property owners is required in the interests of the largest cohort in this triadic system: the renters.

Heuristics of 'proprietariness' in the PRS

Having described processes within the methodological approach (in Chapter Four) to arrive at system heuristics (findings) in Chapter Five, I now turn to specific heuristics and later, exemplar tales as correspondences that point to and describe the system wide cultural phenomena I call 'proprietariness'. Firstly, however I briefly recap the visual heuristics of Q15 and Q18 and sensemaking with the software.

Question 15 (as shown in Figure 5.12) offered three purposefully ambiguous factors that may challenge renters' sense of security: rental conditions; attitude and behaviour of landlords and agents (management); and safety/security of the building/dwelling.

As explored in Chapter Five something is challenging renters' sense of security but it is not the built environment. In Figure 5.15 Q18, contributors were asked to place their experience as a dot on a continuum: In your experience, renting in Australia is: Managed for investor/agents outcome……Geared to the needs of renters to feel at home. The ideal state in this dyadic question, given Australian contexts, was expressed as a state where 'rental practices and conditions, regulations and legislation *balance* care for landlords' investments and all persons' rights to create a secure home base free of interference'. The pattern of dots (placed by tale contributors) arranged on and around the polarity of 'managed for investor and agent outcomes clearly depicts a distinct lack of balance in the Australian system, reflecting the power differential in the system, based on the reported experiences (and perceptions) of renters. Such stark patterns are obvious (to those not filtering strongly through their own subjectivities) and when used alongside the participatory heuristics of issues and archetypes, these visual aggregations also point to other, more specific, complex inquiries with potential correlations, offering deeper insights into the system as a whole and refined granularity.

In the public realm the private rental sector is often framed in terms of only two sets of interests that often collide in public policy and policy advocacy debates – those of renters and landlords. In practice, however, there are three key sets of interests; those of investors and those of agents who both have pecuniary and proprietary interests and those of the renters/tenants, who have assumed ontological interests in feeling 'at home' in the housing space they pay for.

'Proprietariness' therefore also alludes to a type of contrariness in socio-cultural systems built upon proprietary interests that nevertheless require a steady stream of persons subject to those interests to maintain the system. This would not be news to anyone interrogating power yet it seems odd that it bears no imprimatur at the micro scale of such a system.

The following piece in italics outlines some of the heuristics based in the rental tales and extracted as issues by workshop participants. Written up and woven, these offer a sense of rental life and of how small scale proprietary interests impact renters' lives.   Landlords' and agents' sense of entitlement, their privilege and power, their 'proprietariness' manifests as the following behaviours, attitudes and practices. Additional and clarifying comments appear in parentheses and are also drawn from either primary or secondary data:

There are very common invasions on renters' rights, home/space and privacy. These are often illegal (and even the legal incursions are regarded as highly problematic by renters with three monthly inspections regimes now standard in the state of Queensland). Renters often mention being treated as second-class, with a lack of respect or basic regard for them or their needs. Requests to landlords and agents, for essential repairs, for fair consideration, are simply often ignored. Management decisions have small and substantial impacts on renters' life and work situations but are made without consultation. Landlords and agents can simply change their minds (shortening verbally agreed lease lengths and other conditions) with renters at their mercy. Retaliatory evictions can and do occur for the smallest of slights, difficult to prove and sapping of time and energies. Renters have little or no power to negotiate simple things such as inspection times around busy family and work lives. Tenants are moved on, and often treated as inconsequential. Landlords and agents operate by their own rules (rather than the regulations). Ambit claims of damage versus fair wear and tear and whether a place is 'bond cleaned' regularly 'gouge' or steal bond monies at the end of tenancies (yet then often fail to provide clean, safe, secure dwellings for future renters). Within tenancies renters feel required to pander to and tolerate agents and landlords 'own rules' and refrain from raising issues or concerns regarding behaviours lest they be evicted or threatened with eviction (overtly or covertly) for minor things.

Contextual interdependencies

The issues outlined above are all problematic for renters. Yet there is little effective recourse, despite processes in place. By effective, I mean processes that do not add significant time, energy or financial burdens on renters. A constrained rental property market with historically low vacancy rates and lack of affordability amplifies the issues, as does constraints on tenancy advocacy as seen in Queensland. Such conditions allow threats and abuse to continue, as renters are very reluctant to assert their rights in disputes. This has tipped the balance in favour of the proprietary interests. Renters also have no way of knowing if any of the aforementioned is habitual behaviour on the part of agents and property owners, yet renters' transgressions – breaches - are recorded on private databases that tenants can only access on a 'reasonable fee' basis. The latter is heralded as a recent improvement in the Queensland system. Thus it is well understood by renters and advocates that individual agents and the real estate industry work strategically for the benefit of their own interests as well as for their clients the property owners. Many applications of 'proprietariness' and 'own

rules' occur within, but also in between, tenancies – in what will later be examined as 'intersectional space' in a PRS. In the mean time a number of system archetypes reveal and exemplify these phenomena.

Archetypes of Proprietariness

Of the 15 archetypes of the rental system extracted and constructed in participatory process, eight closely corresponded to 'proprietariness' and the intersectional tensions in the system that renters experience as part of proprietariness. Other archetypes were of tenants and advocates – reflections of system tales and the life experience of workshop participants. The descriptions of the archetypes were collaboratively developed by participant groups of three to four people with drawings by cartoonists to participant instructions. Two 'proprietary' archetypes are described below with occasional comments in parentheses clarifying contexts particular to Australia. Later another two are described in a section on the subculture of 'inspections', although 'Prue' too fits into the subculture of inspections. The remaining archetypes are categorised in Appendix A.

Kevin, the solo private investor landlord

Kevin has his own dog and is very geared to his own investments - a tad narcissistic and aspirational but also has a sense of entitlement. He is trying to get a return on investment and is seen as a smart investor, helpful and diligent with his investing but is also seen as mean and heartless, shortsighted - a bloodsucker. He watches The Block (a TV home renovation show) and keeps an eye on the calendar and has a white board where he calculates rent vis à vis repairs. He is diligent about both. Kevin dresses like an office worker - pen in pocket, checked shirt, white running shoes in his briefcase. He subscribes to Investor magazine and is depicted with $$$ signs floating about. He sees himself as Kevin who is 'here to help' (a poster in the cartoon depicts a cultural reference to a slogan of a past Australian prime minister). Kevin is a bit of a lonely man - with a long nose, bug eyes and thick glasses.

Prue, the real estate agent
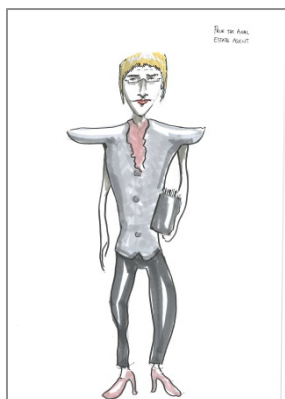
 Prue is described as diligent, customer focussed, efficient, fastidious, entrepreneurial and well educated (she trained as a lawyer but couldn't handle the legal profession) but she is also regarded as anal retentive, manipulative, patronising, discriminatory and a bully. She is money conscious and has zero tolerance towards 'bad tenants' and so avoids renting to tenants she has prejudice about (she considers them risky); she manipulates and cheats tenants out of their bond but landlords – her customers and clients - love her (as she always pays them on time). Prue is thin and rich; she drives a BMW and always wears immaculate makeup and lots of gold jewellery. She is a 'power dresser' - wears a well co-ordinated outfit of suit jacket and slim trousers. She carries a briefcase with lots of papers and wears glasses on her nose for close inspection of things.

Statistical correspondences

The dataset consisted of 233 tales. Thirteen per cent of the anonymous contributors indicated their tale was not for publication reflecting concerns (in some of these tales) of insecurity and retaliatory eviction for small infringements or, as Tale 2 later describes, for 'sticking to the lease agreement'.

Figure 6.1 reveals data drawn from a dynamic query in Sensemaker ™ of Question 15 'Challenge security' and the number of moves in the past five years (roughly 2010-2015). 213 renters indexed their tale to Q15 relative to differentiated factors of security: (1) safety and security of the building/dwelling; 2) rental conditions; and 3) the attitude/behaviours of landlords and agents. Of these 213 people, 40.8 per cent had experienced between three to ten moves over a five-year period and 82.6 per cent had experienced between one to ten or more moves over a five-year period. Large numbers of Australian renters it seems, are already neoliberal nomads (Bone, 2014).

Even those who had not moved in five years (15.0 per cent) still chose to place their tale into the triadic space indicating that the question regarding security being challenged or impeded was relevant for their particular tale. Their sense of security was challenged, if not their actual occupancy. The threat is present for the vast majority, if not all, renters.

Figure 6.1 Percentages of renters with challenged security and the number of moves in five years (full system)
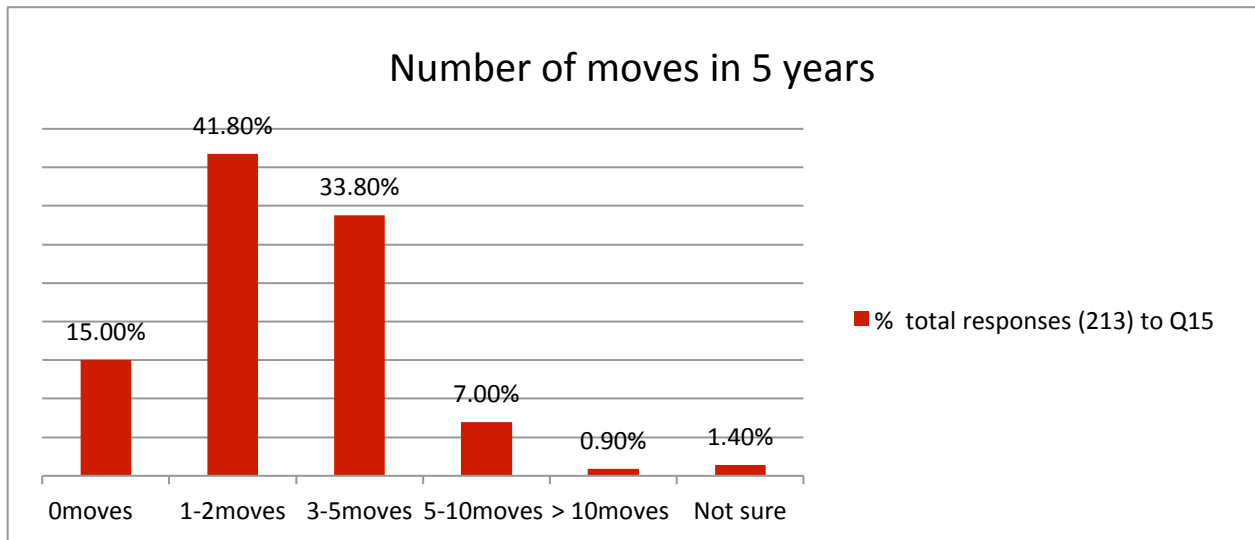
A further query into the two most prominent factors of Question 15 'challenged security' (rental conditions (RC) and attitude and behaviours of landlords and management (AB/M) with potential correlations with 'total years as a renter' through the data analysis tools of Sensemaker™ yielded the negative correlations in Figure 6.2.

Figure 6.2 Correlations of Q15 Challenge/rental conditions, attitudes/behaviour of management with 'Total years a renter.'

| | -0.67 | -0.65 | -0.8 | -0.75 | -0.85 | -0.84 | -0.92 |
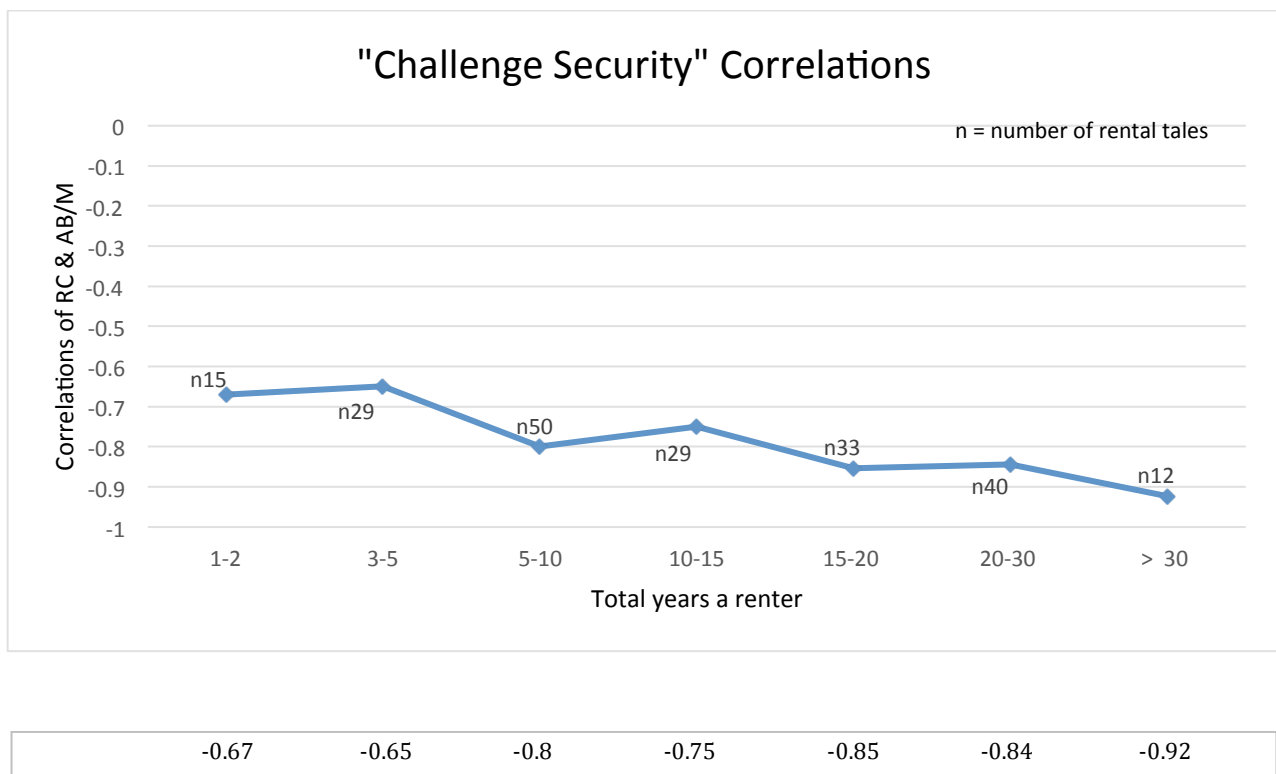
One further query then explored 'Challenge security' factors (Q 15) of 'attitudes and behaviours of management' and 'rental conditions' with 'type of management', and inquired more specifically into 'real estate agents' (REA) and 'private landlords' (PL).

Starting with the full system triad of 'challenge security' (n=213) I broke down the full system pattern into the major constituent private sectors captured in this study[33]. These smaller sets are juxtaposed with the full system of n=213 as shown in Figure 6.3: Private landlords (PLL), real estate property management (REA) and 'other' (tales that describe a mix of REA and PLL management over time and also renting from family).

Figure 6.3 Challenge security factor correlations: Rental conditions (X axis) and Attitude/Behaviour of Management (Y axis)

| Full system: - 0.79 | PLL Aust/total: -0.80 | REA Aust/total: -0.77 | Other private:-0.68 |
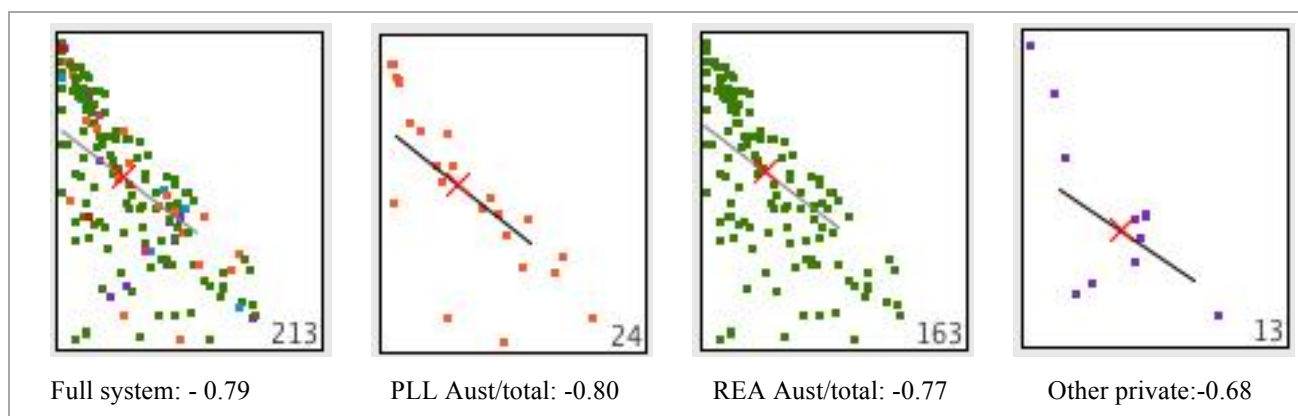
The following Australia wide negative correlations emerged:

Real Estate Agents/163 tales/-0.77   Private landlords/24 tales/ -0.80

A tale of two cities, two states and the real estate sector

In seeking to understand the impacts of the larger of the two sectors in the PRS I used a dynamic query into 'challenged security' adding in Q25 Type of management and Q32 City/State. This provided me with correlations depicted in Figure 6.4 below).

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[33] The community sector correlation coefficient (not depicted) is an initially surprising - 0.95. On a macro scale this likely represents challenges to these renters sense of security as a result of very significant, recent changes in that sector. Over the period of the data collection community housing providers were brought into four tiers of the National Regulatory System for Community Housing (NRSCH). Thus they were in a change process of becoming highly regulated and integrated, in some cases, with state based public housing systems. Changes in tenure arrangements where tenure is now less secure have occurred as a result. With statistics, it helps to know what is occurring on the ground.

What emerged in the visual depictions in Figure 6.3 (above), were loose, fractal patterns within the wider system. This suggests a macro-cultural phenomenon in the three most populous Australia cities and states. A question arose. Why the variance in Brisbane REA sector, compared to the other Queensland based figures and the Sydney/NSW figures which were homogenous?

Figure 6.4 Challenge security correlations by City/State. Rental conditions (X axis) x Attitude/behaviour of real estate property management (REAs) (Y axis)

| Brisbane - 0.68 | QLD - 0.80 | Sydney - 0.85 | NSW - 0.85 | Melbourne – 0.66 |
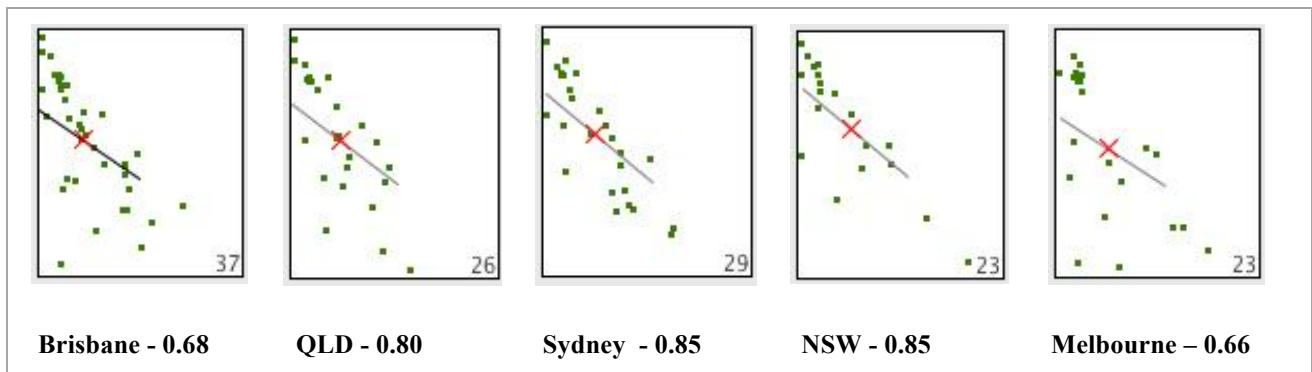
This scenario question requires context to make more sense of this numerical and patterned based data. The bulk of the data collection occurred when wider political issues in Queensland had been adversely impacting tenancy advisory services. With the arrival of a conservative, neoliberal state government in March 2012 tenancy services were completely defunded at both the state and then federal government levels by July 2013.

Traditionally these services were funded at state level from interest income on bonds paid by tenants and held by government. The resultant, macro scale 'bond gouging' by the state was eased briefly by emergency funding for six months from the Labor federal government (liberal/social democrat in other parlance) but where previously the advisory services supported around 50 000 inquiries per annum they were now reduced in response capacity to around 1000 per annum and almost completely dependent on volunteers. (Tenants Queensland presentation at the University of Queensland Oct 2015).

Brisbane, geographically, is far removed from most of the very large state. It is likely that only Brisbane remained in focus for capital city based volunteer services and that regional services for tenants ostensibly became non-existent. This in turn may have supported higher levels of disregard from private landlord property management both in Brisbane and across the state. Without the restraint that community legal services such as tenants' advisory services provide property owners across the state and REA management in other cities were unencumbered and freed to do as they pleased, without constraints. Another, additional or alternative explanation may be related to the

highly visible downturn across the city of Brisbane at that time. Over the period of June 2012 to June 2014 over 17 000 mostly permanent public servants, the vast majority in Brisbane, lost their jobs and therefore their capacities to purchase, invest or maintain loans. This may have had flow on effects in the real estate sectors in the city. Continuation of tenancies in properties, as a continuing benefit for owners and REA property managers, may have supported a level of slightly increased security for tenants also.

Elsewhere, the Sydney and NSW correlations reflect the turbo charged property investment market in that city and state and the concomitant 'no grounds' evictions practices whereby renters are often moved on so that investors can take advantage of substantial capital gains in selling a property. Eviction of tenants appears to be an automatic consequence of investment purchase, probably for purposes of maximising rent increases. This results in substantial rental churn and substantial levels of insecurity. With no provision to maintain or continue existing tenancies under conditions of sale the Sydney figures and tales bear out the sense of disregard for renters needs that many report in this research.

Other full system 'challenge/prevent security' correlations

Given the very strong patterns within four of most responded to filter questions (Triads Q15 Challenge/prevent security (n=213) and Q17 Privacy (n=200) and dyads Q18 Renting is managed for/geared to (n=229) and Q19 Changes to rental property (n=224) as outlined in Chapter Five) it was not surprising that significant correlation emerged. The following correlation coefficients were generated.

Q15Challenge security - Rental conditions

   -0.797 Q15Challenge security – Attitude/Behaviour of Management (NP)

   -0.202 Q18Renting managed for - Managed for investors/agents outcomes (NP)

Q15Challenge security – Attitude/Behaviour of Management (NP)

   0.217 Q17Impact privacy – Inspections

Q15Challenge security - Dwelling safety

   -0.538 Q15Challenge security - Attitude /Behaviour of Management (NP)

   -0.224 Q17Impact privacy - Inspections (NP)

   -0.143 Q18Renting managed for - Managed for investors/agents outcomes (NP)

These bear out the proposition that the culture of proprietariness in Australia has pervaded rental life with one notable exception discovered in the interdependencies and discussed later. The first two factors of Q 15 (rental conditions and Attitudes/Behaviours of Management) have already been explored at length and so the discussion begins with the security factor of Dwelling Safety followed by Home changes/Strictly controlled. This is where the curious exception is found.

In these figures, attitudes and behaviours of management clearly also have a deleterious effect on dwelling safety and security and the regular inspections do not change this. This supports the proposition and the narrative based evidence that dwellings are not being inspected most often with regards to needed and requested maintenance of the built environment but for other purposes. Hence inspections as a condition of renting impact privacy but largely fail to support the physical safety and security of renters in their rental dwellings. As one free text comment expresses: Repairs are optional. This begs a critical question. What, exactly is the purpose of inspections? There is however an archetypal exception and 'Ritchie' makes an appearance shortly, albeit with his own set of issues for renters.

In the following set of correlations around Home changes (Q19) it is clear that the more properties are managed for investors and agents outcomes, then the less renters express feeling materially at home in them. The exception is the factor of renters' financial security with regards to wellbeing.

Q19Home changes - Strictly controlled, can't even hang a painting

0.535 Q18 Renting managed for - Managed for investors/agents outcomes (NP)

0.145 Q17 Impact privacy - Inspections (NP)

-0.249 Q12 Hinder wellbeing - Financial security (NP)

The aforementioned negative correlation of Q19 (homes changes strictly controlled) and Q12 (financial security/hindered) of -0.249 is curious to begin with. To make some sense of it requires
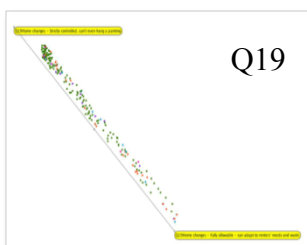
keeping in mind the system pattern and wider contexts of Question 19: the other polarity (fully adaptable to renters needs and wants) and the ideal state of 'non-structural changes allowed subject to a return to the state upon leasing.' The correlation in the context of the heuristics of proprietariness and the specifics of numerous narratives suggests complex interrelationships between the idea of wanting to make changes, to make 'home', albeit at personal financial cost.

The tale 'My garden investment' (on p.152), submitted as both written tale and photo (left), is found in the centre of the pattern of Q19 (see thumbnail image above) and the financial security apex of Q12 – hindered wellbeing. This counter intuitive placement however exemplifies the curious negative correlation – a trade-off between investing in someone else's property for the increased amenity and sense of home. The other independent factors that facilitate this trade off, however, are a sense of security and connection to community through relationship and a level of stability and certainty, in this case with amenable private landlords. The long-term renter in this case offers wider context in further free text: 'I am really fortunate in the scheme of things and wish others had more say in their rental lives'. In that broader context the contributor also mentions (other?) landlords sense of entitlement and the balance of power residing with landlords – her long experience as an Australian renter providing additional validity to this instance of phenomenological evidence.

The statistical correlations and the picture I have sketched around them lend further credence to the various heuristics. All together, these constitute significant evidence for proprietariness as a longstanding cultural feature of the Australian PRS negatively impacting on the lives of renters. It appears that no matter how long people have been renters they have been subjected to ongoing challenges to their sense of security and sense of home. Furthermore it is abundantly clear that renters in Australia regard management as the greatest source of challenge to security in their rental lives – although in a very small percentage of cases renters see management as a source of support.

Tales of proprietariness

The following tales narrate correspondences within the 'rental conditions and/or attitudes and behaviours' patterns as factors of challenged security pattern (Figure 5.12) and in the 'managed for investors and agents outcomes' polarity/pattern (Figure 5.4). These tales bring to life issues previously outlined and ground the concept of proprietariness - the sense of entitlement, power and privilege of proprietary interests - that renters are subject to, and feel subjected to, in their rental experience. These tales also point to interdependencies, exemplified in the corresponding archetypes of Prue and Kevin, which require intervention, though not necessarily legislative intervention, in a system strongly perceived by the large majority of respondents as wildly out of balance.

Evicted for sticking to the lease agreement

My wife was just two weeks out from giving birth. The landlord knew this.
The toilet blocked up on a public holiday and our efforts to call the real

estate agent were met with voicemail. My wife needed to use the toilet regularly -- she was very large and uncomfortable and her body didn't have the normal capacity it would otherwise have to wait! Under our rental agreement we had the right to call specified tradesmen after hours for emergency repairs. We did so with the recommended plumber and his bill was around $400 to come out on the public holiday and clear the blockage in the premises' pipes. After the weekend the landlord was so incensed that we had not waited until a normal weekday to have the toilet fixed (thus saving her $200 or so) that she issued us with a no cause eviction notice. Of course there was no specific link mentioned between the toilet and the eviction notice but given this landlord's history of hot-headed explosions to the real estate agent it was easy to join the dots. Under Australian tenancy laws we had no recourse. Although we were given 60 days' notice to vacate we had to find a new house to stay in urgently because we knew moving house with our first young baby while managing breast-feeding and sleep deprivation would be extremely difficult. We were stunned by how other real estate agents and landlords wanted to help us given our situation (and even our current agent was extremely apologetic about the situation; but his hands were tied as he represented the owner's interest.) We ended up being entirely moved house within eight days -- but it cost us about $5000 in fees for a pack and unpack movers' service to get it done in the timeframe plus other 'hang the expense' expenses to get the house cleaned and back into perfect condition to pass the move-out inspection. We were stunned by the vindictive nature of this landlord and it is a great example of how tenants in Australia literally are treated as second-class citizens. We're not at all 'victim mentality' people and we both understand how the free market operates. However, this case really illustrates that renters need more protection under tenancy laws - the power relationship is extremely unbalanced in favour of the landlord.

(Male 35-50, VIC, REA/PLL, renting 10-15 years, Lifetime moves 5-10, 3-5 moves in 5 years, happens occasionally, about treatment of renters, strongly negative)

Cleanliness double standards

It seems like real estate agencies are in the business of stealing the rental bond deposits when moving out. We have moved out of several places and unless you use the cleaning agents suggested by the agents the house never seems to be clean enough. We leave most houses cleaner than when we moved in yet agencies seem to always try to get you surrender a portion our bond when leaving because the place isn't clean enough. It's downright ridiculous how nit-picky they are when you move out. We recently moved into a house where we are paying $760 per week and the state of cleanliness was shocking. When we raised it with the agent they said it had been bond cleaned and the owner was satisfied with the job. Two of the showerheads had to be replaced on the first day we moved in because they were disgustingly dirty. I would have liked to see the owner or the agent take a shower in one of these cubicles and see how they felt about the cleanliness!

(Male 50-65, Brisbane, Private housing managed by real estate agent, 10-15 years, Lifetime moves 5-10, 1-2 moves in 5 years, happens often, about real estate agent practices, negative)

The latter tale points to the space between tenancies where the gaming occurs. From other tales in the data set that complain of bond gouging and bond stealing we know that:

- Australian renters almost invariably pay a bond (usually four weeks rent)
- Renters move into places that have not been thoroughly 'bond' cleaned and therefore we can infer that
- Bond is taken for failure to bond clean and that this bond is not necessarily used for bond cleaning for the benefit of the next tenants.
- Various methods and aspects of bond 'gouging' (or stealing) by proprietary interests disregard renters needs (including the need to move into a clean property) in favour of the proprietary interest.

Bond 'gouging' as expressed in the aforementioned tale emerged as an issue from multiple perspectives, most of which came to light in the extraction of issues. Yet in between the issues as expressed in the tales and elicited in the first workshop there lays a space not seen, except in hindsight, by those with access to narrative data and capacity to sense the space and decide which dots are important to join.

Section Two Intersectional space

Within the sensemaking on proprietariness another, interrelated, conceptualisation emerged pertaining to an intersectional, ungoverned, space where the system is open to gaming. A gaming proprietor optimises benefits to themselves minus the costs of playing the system in scenarios outside the governance structures of a system. Thus, 'intersectional space' in the PRS is where the system and individual renters are often gamed due to a lack of effective governance over space and time that is liminal. And there, in these unacknowledged transactions and intersections some of the tensions and impacts of proprietariness and the associated gaming are most keenly felt in a space not previously named or understood in the rental housing literature.

Here too other actors (fourth actors) - unregistered, unlicensed, unacknowledged and ungoverned – who operate outside the governance structures of the system, often in support of proprietary interests. However, intersectional space is also where other actors (such as action researchers, advocates and policymakers) can act upon the system. Hence it is construed as a neutral space, and a field of potentiality for adaptive responses. Figure 6.5 depicts this space.

Figure 6.5 Intersectional space in the PRS.
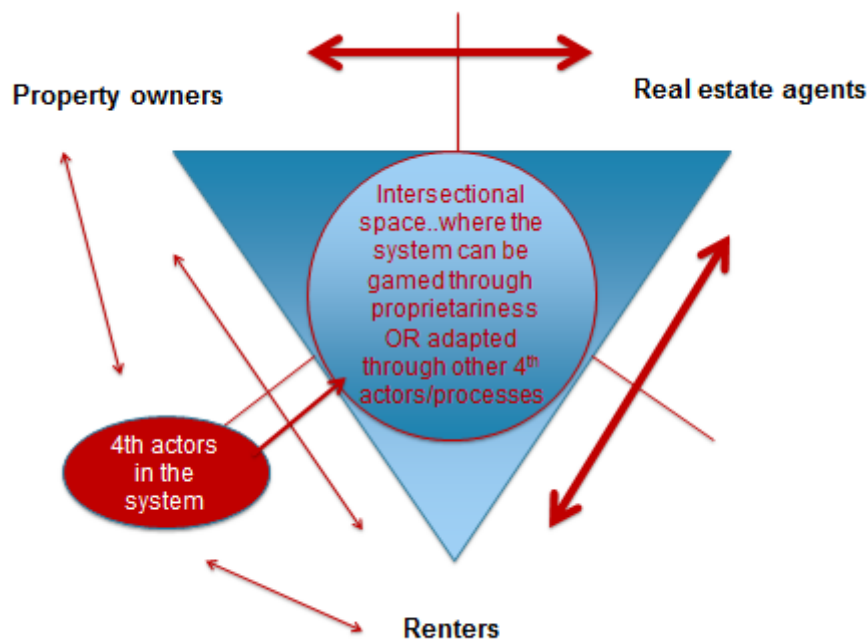
Power in the PRS

In the Australian system of renting, unlike situations in other countries with high levels of institutional and organisational investment and management (Easthope, 2014, Hoekstra, 2009), there are millions of individual transactional relationships at micro levels of the system. These are

increasing. With the vast majority of all rentals in Australia managed by private, small-scale proprietary interests with those interests at heart (rather than the social outcomes of housing as a social good of some other nations), a predilection for proprietary interests may seem obvious. These interests are symbiotic yet, at times, non-aligned because power, relative to the proprietary interest, can be (and often is) used for the benefit of one particular proprietary interest to the exclusion of the other. The system as constituted offers the space and the opportunity for the use and misuse of power relative to the number of proprietary interests and the number of transactions.

Playing by 'own rules' in intersectional space

Gaming behaviours such as 'bond gouging' by proprietary interests occur in intersectional space. Renters express indignation and resignation at such scenarios in their tales, yet the time, energy and money required to contest such practices in civil and administrative tribunals means only rarely do renters contest[34]. Proprietors of agencies and property owners can and do therefore play by their own rules because of their relative power in a fully subscribed market where the operational difficulties and cost factors for renters of physically moving house also play in the proprietors favour.. REAs whose business is property management and who constitute upwards of 85 per cent of private housing management, are attuned to the opportunities that the intersectional space between tenancies affords. The cost/benefit analysis of gaming – weighing the risks of being reported and relatively minor penalty vis à vis likely financial gain - stacks up. And so such practices can become, and likely have become, part of the business model for unscrupulous management, especially in a real estate industry that is self-regulated with voluntary membership and that is highly resistant to further regulation.

Proprietariness is enacted in numerous ways; by one who owns the thing and acts in one's interest in it (a self-managing landlord) and through others aligned with, subservient to and acting in support of their own interest and the primary interest (real estate agents and 4th actors). As the tale, *Evicted for sticking to the lease agreement* illustrates, some REAs may find themselves morally caught in intersectional space and/or they may actively operate in intersectional space for their own benefit, potentially against the interests of both clients and renters. The archetype of Prue and the culture she represents is thus complicit; embedded in a property management business model that serves two sets of interests, often to the detriment of the third key actors in the system: the renters.

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[34] One male contributor with considerable determination took REAs in Queensland to the tribunal six times in 14 years, winning every time.

The proprietary subculture of inspections

> *I want a home. I felt way more at home couch surfing between rentals. I hate renting. I want more control over who can enter.*

> *(Additional free text from the contributor of the tale 'Not my home', 25-35, QLD, REA, 1-2 lifetime moves, 5-10 years, about treatment of renters, happens often, strongly negative)*

Autoethnographica (November 2015): On Conditionalities

When did inspections become part of the game?

How fortunate I am not to have to undergo regular inspections by strangers who are property managers of some kind. It occurred to me only yesterday that in all the years I have rented (30 + years) and in all the places I have been a rental resident I have NEVER had to endure The Inspection that so many renters now attest as causing them some grief, small or substantial, on some level or another.

I count 14 houses where I rented over the years 1983 – 2015 (minus 10 years where I lived in family homes) but none had the dreaded, regular, official inspection by an agent or property manager. I now realise this may have been due to mostly having private landlords. Yes, I have spotted an agent from time to time, sorting something out at their office. Or, when supervising a major repair such as a roof replacement for overseas owners where despite warnings to be aware of the possum that lived in the cavity the roofers managed to entomb said possum. It subsequently died somewhere above the kitchen ceiling - surmised by the permeating odour of death that lasted many weeks while the body fully decomposed.

So, when and why did the phenomena of 'inspections' begin to take shape and become so problematic?

Talking with a policy type at a wedding I learned that the most recent legislation in Queensland (in the recent conservative era Mar 2012 – Jan 2015) brought into focus the contractual relationship between REAs and the property owners. The upshot has been quarterly inspections becoming part and parcel of the marketing and management practice for the benefit of both

proprietary interests but with little if anything substantive backing up the relational rationale. The Brisbane tale 'What is happening in the Brisbane rental market?' ponders this also and I wonder whether the impacts and impositions on renters were even considered. Or were these impacts simply left aside in a political culture where government ministers talked about tenants who trash the joint, tenants advocacy services were defunded and the board of a relevant authority was stacked with proprietary interests, relative to the total non- representation of people who actually rented or understood the condition of being a renter? In Sweden and elsewhere the union of tenants negotiates the annual rent increases. In Queensland during the conservative era renters or their union did not even get a seat at the table.

Cultural change for ill or good takes its cue from leadership.

Post script. Checking again to sense the current state of that Board and as November 2016 things are now very different. Thank goodness for the winds of change, however slight the breeze.

Heuristics of inspections

The statistical data already discussed with regards to proprietariness supports another set of heuristics - visual patterns, queries, issues and archetypes which speak more specifically to the impacts of the proprietary culture on renters' sense of home; the heuristics of inspections. Archetype heuristics that closely correspond to a factor or attribute are often found in tales clustered and adjacent to that factor of concern. In this case the archetypes of Becky and Ritchie can be found in the pattern of inspections as a factor of privacy.

Becky - young female property manager

Busily going about her day - on the phone, striding, smoking, young pert, high heels pencil skirt - aspirational, good handbag, well dressed - in it for the money. Becky is 23 years old and has been a property manager for 2 years. She lives out of home and is a tenant herself. She is not passionate about her work and only does it to pay the bills. Her priorities are having friends and having fun. She is seen as a good mate. She uses her position in a way that isn't reflective of the subtleties needed for the role. If she had friends renting from her she would give them an easier time than other tenants. She doesn't give the job much thought - only knowing the bare minimum of tenancy

law. She hasn't had much training and she works a lot for a small amount of money. She doesn't care for the tenants or the homeowners much and all her actions come from wanting to look good and keep her job. Tenants find her difficult as she will always make herself look good as the one who holds power, rather than care about the tenants. She is seen as a passive aggressive, inflexible, inept, reactive person with a short- term view of things. She manages a huge caseload just trying to make a living and is herself is a retail rent payer.

'Becky' appeared in my own sensemaking of tales some months before she was extracted from the tales in participatory process. Her appearance that day, the last archetype to emerge, validated the method and process in my mind despite other curious archetypes without a narrated context also emerging. These, as discussed later in Chapter Seven, would require more context and information to make sense of them. Becky, the young, female property manager, however, made a regular appearance in the tales collected prior to and after the first workshop.

The following tales are found as correspondences with the archetypes within both the pattern of 'inspections' as a factor in privacy concerns (Figure 5.14) and the 'managed for investors and agents outcomes' pattern (Figure 5.4). The tales elucidate the types of rental agent and landlord practices enacted by the likes of Becky and others that cause substantial disquiet for renters, their senses of ontological security, home and their right to privacy and quiet enjoyment of a property.

> *I may not have a home tomorrow*
>
> *"This is from a client's perspective: I have lived for years in a great home had a great real estate agent and everything had been running smoothly. I now have a new real estate agent - she calls me all the time texts and emails she is rude and speaks down to me. When I have inspections she tells me off for having dishes in the sink or spider webs in a corner that I can't reach. I look after my house it is clean and tidy and I have caused no damage what so ever. Yet the new real estate agent tells me she has to come back to re-inspect and expects the issues to be fixed. She tells me if they aren't she will evict me and no-one will ever rent to me again. Every 3 months I am so scared that I feel sick at the thought of her coming into my home and I'm always worrying about what she will think of my house and if I will be evicted. My house no longer feels like a home I feel invaded and insecure. I don't want to be homeless." (Female, 35-50, Adelaide, REA, ongoing issue, tale about 'treatment of renters', happens often, strongly negative.)*

This tale was contributed by a housing professional and relates client's experience and while we do not know the outcome for the client in this instance other renters' tales illustrate a greater clarity and knowledge of where they stand and their rights, notwithstanding their willingness or otherwise to assert those rights with landlords or associated persons. The following rental tale expresses, in a lighter tone and with some humour, a level of imposition that renters in this research often face from private landlords and their associates, who may be well meaning but who nevertheless disregard renters rights to privacy with the landlords' sense of entitlement.

Don't open the curtains!!

Took a lease on a nice rental property a while ago through L J Hooker and later found out the local owner of the rental property was in the Air Force so was away a lot. Unbeknownst to me he had nominated his father to keep an eye on the property in his absence. As any good renter knows you should be given an Entry Notice if anyone is wishing to come to the property whilst you are renting e.g. a tradie, rental inspection, maintenance, etc. The owner's father a foreign man did not speak great English and did not obey these rules, dropping in unannounced at a moment's notice to do little jobs around the house. One morning I got out of bed naked flung open the bedroom curtains and there he was, painting the window frames outside my bedroom!! Nice!! On other occasions he would be knocking at the door at 7am while I was still asleep, somewhere on the property hammering or out in the back yard weeding when I got out of bed! It was pointless trying to tell him he shouldn't he on my property as he regarded it as his property and was not going to obey the rules! I didn't bother reporting him which in hindsight I should have but I was certainly very careful in future to be properly clothed at all times when opening my curtains!!

(Female 50-65, QLD, REA/PLL, Lifetime moves > than 10, 20-30 years renting, about 'treatment of renters' happens occasionally, strongly positive)

The archetype of Ritchie (next) reflects the imposition.

Ritchie the landlord who does his own repairs

 Mr Fixit himself - Ritchie owns the flat next door and rents it out. He rocks up whenever he wants but it's to do repairs and maintenance that need doing. He is a self-taught handyman with a toolkit. He performs these repairs regardless of what the tenants think. When they complain (about inconvenience) he tells them they should be grateful and appreciate he is a conscientious landlord, unlike all those other landlords. He is a nice guy. He is retired but used to work in government and his best mates see him as flexible, confident, resourceful and artistic and rather entrepreneurial. Others see him as unscrupulous, a rule breaker, disrespectful, selfish and a bit delusional.

Of the concerns that emerged, initially through the collaborative processes of instrument design for the rental tale collection, in the tales themselves and then through the subsequent participatory workshop, privacy and the factors and issues that impact it have loomed large. Becky and Ritchie (and Prue also) as cultural archetypes reflect the importance and scale of the issue of inspections and point to behaviours and interdependencies that require some kind of intervention to inject more balance and fairness into the system and potentially shift the patterns of imposition revealed in this research. But where regular inspections are marketed to property owners by agents as the way they ensure properties are maintained the subtext is one of ensuring tenants are not doing damage rather than ensuring the upkeep and integrity of the built environment for the amenity of those who live in the dwelling.

Autoethnographica (November 2015): On Materialities

On polished timber floors

Contemplating materialities again in the small hours I step onto cool timber floorboards avoiding the one that creaks so not to wake others in the household. I recall the dozens of floors I have lived with in rental housing over the years. I would have felt more at home in many an old Queenslander house if only we renters had been allowed to live with and experience the beautiful timber floorboards that we knew lurked underneath. Instead, because various owners planned to sell the house someday, and therefore wanted the floorboards to be in pristine condition for the distant future sale, we suffered the ignominy and the aesthetic crime of appalling flooring. In one house the multiple types and layers of degrading linoleum (7 different patterns in the one house, 3 patterns in just

one 4x5 metre living area) – was testament to the changing styles that appeared across 80 or more years as well as to the disregard for long term renters' comforts and wishes. Another old house I lived in on the south-side - owned by a society that supported persons with a particular debilitating disease – thankfully had bare floorboards in the living room. But the bedrooms had stained and disintegrating carpet where all kinds of tiny living things were in their element and so were flourishing in the old fibres. I didn't realise the impact on my own health - and the extent of the organisational contradiction - until I had moved out and into yet another old place, this one with beautiful polished boards (albeit on quite a slope in the kitchen due to some kind of structural subsidence). Here I began to breathe easy for the first time in 18 months. A polished timber floor, I learned, supports all kinds of flourishing.

It is easier to dance 'the five rhythms' on polished timber floors.

It is far easier also to clean them quietly, without a noisy vacuum cleaner. There's enough noise living on busy roads underneath flight paths. And so, floorboards became one of my key criteria for a life in rental housing never mind sloping this way and that and the large gaps where wind and cold often howl through.

Except that old boards and the steps that lead to them do split and disintegrate over time too. I have fretted over whether I might fall through floors or rotting steps one day like the father whose baby died after they crashed through old decking, already reported as dangerous, in a city north of here some years back. Awful…but at least the cautionary tale of the legal case expressed to the landlord at the time resulted not long after in a new set of steps - a couple of years after first raising the issue and losing one housemate because of the lack of repairs for basic amenity and the daily danger of the dodgy front steps.

Complex interdependencies: Mapping inspections heuristics to the Cynefin framework.

When the complex heuristics of inspections mapped ontologically the usefulness of the Cynefin Framework (see Figure 6.6) becomes apparent. The framework, to recap, consists of five

ontological domains: Simple/Obvious[35]; Complicated; Complex; Chaos; and Disorder. The various issues around inspections subsequently become more properly understood as tied to particular orders of response with regard to the socio-spatial, conditional and material aspects of rental life and the management of rental properties.

Sensemaking and mapping the all inspections issues ontologically, with due regard for fairness and balance also, thus brings into question current, embedded practices. Currently, in Australia the regimes for (legal) tenancy related inspections (in addition to inspections for sale scenarios) range from every three months (Queensland, South Australia) to six months (NSW and elsewhere). Yet, there is no evidence-based rationale for these practices of quarterly or bi-annual inspections.

Figure 6.6. The Cynefin Framework with five ontological domains and orders of response

In light of the Cynefin framework 'inspections' regimes have been construed, and enacted, as a 'simple' instrumentality. Yet in the sensemaking of renters' lived experience the complexities and interdependencies of inspections subsequently belie this 'simple' 'best practice'[36]. Different aspects of the same broad issue actually require different orders of response, residing as they do in differentiated ontological domains. Mapping issues related to inspections to the Cynefin Framework reveal 'emergent' and 'good practice' responses to the issues that may go some way in ameliorating the unearthed problems for renters, and support practice improvement and development at meso/organisational and macro/system levels also.

'Frequency of inspections' would be mapped to the 'complicated' domain of the Cynefin Framework and require expertise to determine appropriate, 'good practice' responses. 'Good practice' related to inspections would first entail a critical reappraisal of the rationale for inspections - panels of experts and researchers and stakeholders' representatives who would need to bring evidence to bear upon deliberations. Basing such determinations in evidence, rather than simply the marketing of property management practice by the REA sector to private landlords, would likely evolve different outcomes and develop the practices within the system. 'Good practice' around inspections might then be seen as contingent on other factors such as length of occupancy and previous 'qualification' of renters with references (including those from outside the real estate database system) rather than an arbitrary quarterly practice with no evidence base. Revisiting the rationale with evidence would likely improve practice in other, interdependent aspects of property

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[35] The Cynefin Framework was slightly adapted in the timeframe of the research. The Simple domain is these days expressed as Obvious
[36] The critical question may be 'best for whom?'

management. For example: An inspection (at a mutually agreed time) at the end of the first three months would identify issues from all parties to the tenancy agreement - issues not picked up in very brief assessments of people by property managers or of dwelling environments by renters. A change in the balance of focus of inspections would potentially allow for essential repairs and levels of maintenance by leaseholders and management relative to other factors to be more equitably negotiated. It takes time to understand the quirks of a dwelling place and renters' reports of lived experience in a place may circumvent repair issues becoming more problematic or costly. There may be no further need for subsequent quarterly inspections if renters have been well 'qualified' prior to and during the initial three month period of tenancy and so the frequency may extend to annually or to the end of the tenancy. This approach would free up the time of property managers also, while beginning to shift the culture around inspections.

Other 'good practice responses' related to inspections might include formulations of what constitutes 'fair wear and tear' with guidelines and examples relative to the material standards of properties – the life span of certain materials used in flooring, on walls, kitchen benches and lighting fixtures. Material aspects of inspections thus also belong in the 'complicated' domain where certain expertise is called for - from materials specialists, surveys of previous tribunal judgements and other system heuristics.

The power plays, poor behaviours, disrespect and other, inspection related concerns renters narrate however belong in the 'complex' ontological domain and not therefore well managed by usual regulatory processes or responses *in the first instance*. Here, instead, 'emergent' responses are called for; small 'safe to fail' experiments or probes to sense and evaluate impact before potentially integrating such responses into the system. Experiments relevant to the issues of inspections and the archetypes of Becky and Prue emerged from WS2. One of these, a small pilot of a training program in support of behavioural and attitudinal change for specific cohorts in the real estate sector, as part of their ongoing professional development, is mooted for trial after thesis submission. Another was a government agency You Tube information channel. The potential of adult education responses applied to planning change in the PRS is explored more fully in Chapter Seven where I pick up methodological and praxis threads once more.

Case study contributions to knowledge

In drawing closer to some conclusions about what challenges (and supports) renters in their sense of home and security, wellbeing, connection and privacy I have explored in some depth predominating patterns of cultures and practices in the PRS as well as offered a reframed, ontological view of things as a way forward through impasses of positions held by stakeholders in the system.

The findings laid out and discussed in Part Three tell their own significant tale of Australian renters who keenly sense their subjugated role and lot in a system where for the vast majority of them short-term rental leases and significant rental churn due to investment property sales and resale has become the norm. If these findings can be considered as reflecting (though not strictly representative) of rental life in Australia then the vast majority of private renters in Australia have already become what Bone has termed neoliberal nomads (2014).

The data detailing the number of rental moves in Australia over a five year period, in contrast to rental housing systems elsewhere— where anywhere from three years to indefinite occupancy is accepted and supported (Scanlon, 2011, Choice et al., 2017) — reflects a housing system and the nested private rental sectors within, substantially skewed towards investor and agent outcomes rather than the social good of stable housing for individuals and families. It is clear that from where renters stand the private rental system reflects a culture of storing and increasing wealth for owners/investors and is indeed primarily understood, and managed, as asset and investment (Hulse and Milligan, 2014). Therefore the opportunity to make a rental property or a local neighbourhood into a stable, home, place where renters have a sense of security is now rare. The nature of the system, the proprietariness of individual investors and agents, challenges renters in their flourishing. The fact that the 15 per cent of renters who have been relatively stable over a five year period still feel the weight of challenged ontological insecurity, based in the knowing that they too may be given notice to move on at any time, adds to the rarity of private rental housing in this country that is supportive of human flourishing beyond basic shelter. Instead, Australian renters reckon on paying for the privilege of being required to look after (and pay off) someone else's investment, (eventual) home and proprietary interests without allowance to make that place 'home'.

In delving more deeply into the data and following a track that opened up via features in the software I have been struck again by the 'fractal' nature of the system. The fractals now express beyond the poetic, through the lens of proprietarian culture and in the correlations found in the key PRS sectors in the major states across the nation. That there are correspondences of representativeness based on data from Residential Tenancies Authority in Queensland and The Department of Fair Trading in New South Wales only lends more weight to the findings, and the heuristics and methods from which they emerged.

The findings I have discussed in Part Three and the impacts of this 'proprietarian' culture constitute and frame the major contributions to knowledge with regards to the case study of the PRS. The questions about what to do about the issues and impacts the case study has revealed, at various scales of the system, remain. Next I pick up the loose threads pertaining to outcomes and issues

from the participatory processes I left hanging in Chapter Five. These threads too are intertwined but require unravelling and reweaving. Such is complexity. The first of these threads relates to noted subjectivities and predispositions of participants and how these played out in process. Contemplating these in terms of process outcomes and wider, action/planning praxis saw one more cycle of action research emerge, one I acknowledge takes me into my earlier disciplinary field of transformative learning, my own *einstellung*, to ultimately posit the potential of a *transrational* participatory planning praxis that transcends and includes multiple praxes.

Part Four: Emergent praxis, emergent futures in the PRS and in planning

Introduction

Part Four explores the final cycle of the research engagement with planning and reflection on the participatory planning in the PRS before coming to final conclusions, and emergent futures, with regards to both the rental system and methodological assemblage. Chapter Seven first picks up the thread of the second, participatory planning workshop to further explore what emerged in terms of potential experiments in the PRS on the day, and subsequently as a result of reflection on process. These experiments constitute the major outcomes of the research, the end point of the overarching objective of the process – potential action in transforming the PRS. These 'emergent futures' also consider the impacts of micro scale subjectivities on the planning processes. Chapter Seven therefore provides additional responses and findings with regards to the first, process based, question of the rental housing case study. This, more specifically, relates to 'researcher's sensemaking' – expressed in the full question:

> *What knowledge and potential impact emerges from collaborative, participatory and researcher's sensemaking – for application to rental housing environments, policy and socio-urban planning processes?*

Chapter Eight engages with the usefulness of narrative as method in complexity by responding to and drawing conclusions about the other, content based, case study question. Narrative again provides the way through the complexity of findings to illustrate the socio-spatialities, materialities and conditionalities of a rental life in the Australian system – this time responding to what *supports* renters in their flourishing, the positive aspect of the question.

Subsequently I reflect on the methodological assemblage in the wider sphere of planning in complexity, drawing conclusions with regards to the use of Sensemaker™ before finally outlining potential future research and planning scenarios and key recommendations for action that have emerged from the research.

Chapter Seven. Disrupting and transforming subjectivities in the cultures of social complexity

The micro is in relational exchange with the macro (Wilber, 1995)

At the end of Chapter Five in the section on Workshop Two (WS2), dilemmas pertaining to subjectivities and outcomes arising from the process were alluded to, but left until now. Here I take a second pathway[37] opened up through community of practice and solo reflections on the WS2 process and the earlier WS1 process. I contemplate subjectivities' impacts upon planning processes in the context of this research and outline the outcomes of WS2[38] that aim to disrupt such subjectivities, those in the room that day (the micro scale) but also in the wider system culture of the PRS (the macro scale). The subjectivities evident in other processes are also explored, in relation to the validity of the methods and the archetypes process in particular.

In seeking to find some potential transformation of these interior complexities, I explore forms of 'transformative learning' and re-envision some of the experiments to include processes that better support perspective transformation and which also includes learning of complexity.

Subjectivities, dualities and issues arising in and from WS2

In the framing of the WS2 workshop aims, and explanations of method, three very brief anecdotes were told to illustrate the method and point to the data regarding the culture(s) that renters' experience. The first anecdote came from a professor (who researches housing), renting briefly while renovations were being done, and told of the disregarding attitude and behaviour she experienced towards her as renter. The second was from a well to do friend from Melbourne – also renting for a short while until she decided where to buy in Brisbane. She too had told of the difference in treatment received as a renter compared to when she turned into a potential buyer. The third was from a brief encounter with a former colleague I had recently met on the bus who, when expressing disappointment about having to leave the rental home she had created, was told by an agent, 'it's not your home, you're a renter'.

One of the WS2 participants suggested that the problem lay within renters who brought their own insecurities into the mix. This is as likely as any other actors in any planning scenario bringing their histories and views – their cynefin – the habitual selves not fully seen and acknowledged -

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[37] The first pathway having just been explored in Chapter Six
[38] Here I also include my additional propositions as outcomes of WS2

along for the ride, although to problematise insecurities as belonging to only one group in a system fails to recognise one's own subjectivities.

This, it seems to me, is a major dilemma for participatory processes in planning with actors in any complex and contested social system. Lines, views, positions have long been drawn: Renter/tenant; landlord/investor; agent; advocate; policymaker; researcher. Actors remain captive to positions and caught in dualisms (tenant/landlord) as well as many assumptions contained therein, in a planning process or policy review taking place. Thus rental property owning policy officers and legislators are not likely to be neutral and may well have their own interests in play. This, in all probability, occurs without understanding or acknowledging what they, as actors, may be bringing into the planning space. The dualisms and positionalities in the culture of the social complexity thus become further compounded by processes and practices, reified and further solidified in the culture and the processes. And so it goes.

Within the three and a half hours of the WS2 process, the participants had half an hour to explore and interrogate heuristic and other data pertaining to the eight extracted and mapped complex issues and to come to a decision as to which issue (s) they wanted to subsequently work with. However, it was soon apparent to facilitators that some participants, in their engagement with the data, were likely viewing it from particular subjectivities. One observation had noted a senior policymaker expressing views dismissive of obvious (and already peer reviewed) data. Also noted was a view expressed that since investors' properties needed protection from some renters it was simply unfortunate that this was to the detriment of all renters.

This view too is fraught, and caught in duality. If the imbalances in the system as described in this research were inverted (and policy changed to reflect it) then the statement of the opposite view would be something akin to: renters are in need of protection from some landlords' behaviours (profiteering and evicting without cause, no repairs, et cetera) and it is simply unfortunate that policy and compliance governing this is to the detriment of all landlords.

Hence, in the workshop, despite explanations of methodology and obvious, 'first glance' heuristic data, key individuals did not seem prepared to acknowledge the data before their eyes. Something else was going on.

As a subtle response facilitators began a sensing process of surreptitious discovery about participants' own housing and investing. In WS2, it turned out, there were policymakers who were also property investors and/or homeowners but not renters, and advocates who were renters or homeowners but not investors. Added to this were participants' particular professional predispositions.

As part of the task of planning to transform complex issues, we imposed criteria constraints related to the idea that experiments (probes or interventions) should be 'safe to fail'. There should be multiple experiments in response to the issues chosen because as complex issues there could be no certainty as to what would work. The experiments should be able to be run within three months and evaluated against the aims of the transformation statement. And, resourcing should be such that failure (and loss of investment) was not a concern.

One group, all with legal and/or policy backgrounds displayed their legalistic and legislative mindsets, and wildly different stances between youthful advocacy and senior policy views, in the ways they approached the design task to overcome the contradiction between home and investment. Their transformation statement was: *That tenants have a sense of home and owners can protect their investment.* No single idea was fully developed to all criteria.

Others with educational backgrounds or work focus brought these entrainments and biases into the process. The second group explored cultural bias and the lack of respect of renters and aimed to: *Normalise renters' rights to make a rental home*. The experiments that emerged from this group fit the criteria of 'safe to fail' and remain potentially useful, incremental additions. However these were not particularly innovative. Training of property managers, oversight of the real estate industry and infomercials were the main offerings. As a participant in this group I noted my positional shifts and the entrainments in my own thinking at the time.

The third group tackled rental churn and power imbalances to: *Improve renters' security and stability*. Their brainstorming notes show eight to ten ideas, yet these then coalesce into one significant experiment that would need to be private sector driven with significant venture capital. This would also need substantially longer timeframes to develop, implement and evaluate, so this too was not 'safe to fail'.

The criteria of 'safe to fail' applied to a large, somewhat regulated socio-economic system, seemed problematic, particularly in relation to timeframes. Nevertheless, some of the single ideas that emerged would likely have potential - if resourced, trialled and evaluated across longer timeframes. Next, I explore the ideas, and the more fully planned interventions that emerged that day and begin to also explore other approaches as layers upon the initial ideas.

Disruptive ideas and potential interventions

Some ideas for interventions that emerged turn current practice and culture on its head. These aim to transform perspectives within a dominant investment culture and the dualisms that find expression in the PRS. An example of this is investment property owners regarding themselves,

and being regarded by the real estate industry as the 'homeowners'. These perspectives run deep, including in some people in the workshop that day who also conflated investors with homeowners while planning to circumvent that very perspective.[39]

This begs an important question for planning and policy in contested systems about how effective certain types of processes or interventions might be in transcending dualities or transforming perspectives. Information does equate to education and education does not equate to transformation, particularly when it comes to shifting problematic cultures. Therefore, I soon briefly discuss reframing - stemming from the work of George Lakoff - and explore an existing field of praxis pertaining to 'perspective transformation' from the literature of adult education. Firstly, however, I outline the most useful thinking that emerged from WS2, beginning with a raft of ideas for experiments pertaining to transforming the investment culture. These include[40]:

- Educational processes that target investors and investing: to support shifting mindsets regarding investment in property from 'personal' investment to 'financial' investment and property investment as 'small business with risk.'
- Expanding the concept of 'client' to include renters.
- A registry of rental properties.
- Property owner inductions into their rights *and* responsibilities - with the bond holding agency potentially being the point of capture.
- Shifting the parameters from needing permission for homemaking (i.e. non structural changes such as painting walls, artwork, gardens, pets) to simply advising of changes made. This moves towards the balance point of non-structural changes allowed subject to a return to state upon leasing).
- Oversight of RE industry training, moving beyond basic compliance into professional development.

Other educational interventions, which were more fully designed and 'safe to fail', also focus on shifting attitudes and behaviours in the real estate industry:

- Re-training and/or improve training of property managers who interface with renters and owners.
- Communication skills for property managers.

Other ideas for interventions aligned to changes in industry and private landlord practices:

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[39] The performative contradiction was found in the group's handwritten notes.
[40] My discussion integrates ideas from across all three groups again displaying the fractal nature of complex issues where the seeds and solutions of one are found expressed in another.

- You Tube Infomercials.
- Rental Reality TV Show.

Further ideas and interventions from across the three groups respond to problems associated with a self-regulated and lightly regulated industry compared to the extensive levels of regulation in the community housing sector. Some of these interventions are designed to empower renters in their decision-making while ameliorating, through market mechanisms and oversight, some of the unsettling, proprietary behaviours on the part of real estate agents:

- 'Secret shopper' renters (Auditing of real estate agents).
- App based ratings for Realtors and comparison tools such as sales and rental histories of properties.
- Dispute tallies, registered disputes and successful mediations available online (the latter, de-identified, would act as exemplars).

Other thinking that day recognised that the level of formality in the current system where relationships of owner and renter intermediated by REAs brings its own problems, as do current formal dispute processes. One, more fully designed experiment that is not 'safe to fail' nevertheless offered pathways to market/system disruption aimed at changing the system from the ground up. This app-based intervention points to allowing for and supporting variation; in material and conditional attributes of private rental housing through the potentially stabilising effects of direct relationship between renters and property owners. Direct relationship is a key, identified supportive, socio-spatial factor in the system, and a key finding in this research. The intervention encapsulates several of the aforementioned ideas: qualifying renters, properties, and owners also, via comparison tools, a registry of properties (of sorts) and utilising the market to disrupt the current system.

The central, disruptive, and potentially transformative idea of the intervention splits tenancy management from property management, therefore circumventing one set of proprietary interests that interfere with renters' stability and capacity to make 'home'. The aim is to support matching of renters' needs regarding leasing conditions and homemaking desires to property owners' declared intentions. Hence, a family, transferred interstate for three years, find a property owner happy to offer a three year lease and allow them to establish a vegetable patch and paint children's bedrooms. Other renters may need short, one, two or three month arrangements while they finalise renovations or transition to new circumstances. This subsidiarity is geared to alleviating stress and uncertainty for renters while providing some much needed competition into the system. While there will always be property owners who prefer to employ real estate agents this kind of disruptive intervention might also have the effect of improving practice in the real estate industry. In this intervention, the

role of the real estate industry shifts towards physical property management and potentially the further qualifying of renters.

Staying within the constraints of the approach however, several of the single brainstorm ideas, could be developed as 'safe to fail' probes. The key here is multiple experiments in a system (a city or a state) in a short timeframe.

A raft of small 'safe to fail' ideas for experiments I propose for further development would be:

- Free, educational intervention targeting investors (run weekly or fortnightly for three months with reframing perspectives processes included as well as investment advice).
- Infomercials
- You Tube Reality TV about rental life
- Property management leadership program. Run monthly for three months, each cohort evaluated for change in perspectives towards renters and practice change a month after training.
- Implementing through a government agency 'secret shopper' renter auditing of estate agency dealings on a whole range of issues. Randomly selected agencies, randomly selected renters, for a representative dataset[41].

The question as to how effective certain types of processes or interventions might be in transcending dualities or transforming perspectives still remains. Hence, I turn next to fields of praxis where perspective transformation dwells more at home than in planning praxis and where the Habermasian emancipatory knowledge interest also more comfortably resides as part of praxis.

Disrupting and transforming subjectivities

In the post workshop reflective process with the action research community of practice we pondered what could have been done (perhaps given more time) to shift into more appropriate and creative responses. Afterwards I also further contemplated the subjectivities in both the WS2 participants and in other system actors in light of what sort of interventions might shift and soften the systemic dualisms that had become apparent.

Both organisational learning and development and transformative learning praxis bring the tacit understanding that issues, whether they relate to system culture, individuals perceptual dispositions or frames, first need to be revealed before they may be dealt with. What assumptions (and other subjectivities) may have been operating and impinging on the WS2 process, and on policy and longer term housing strategy and regulatory frameworks more generally we cannot know with any

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[41] This option might use the Sensemaker™ approach.

certainty. We also cannot know whether most people in the room that day sufficiently grasped the differences between the complicated and complex domains of the Cynefin Framework although it seems apparent that some did not. Learning complexity so that complexity as a frame might become embedded in policy, advocacy and planning can be problematic, as I explored earlier in Chapter Two.

More useful now are questions.

- Firstly, what kind of processes might be enacted to bring assumptions and subjectivities to light and potentially transform them – at least in individuals?
- Secondly, what kinds of processes might also be enacted to support complexity learning for planning?

These questions take us into individual and social learning, where the potential for transformation exists.

Perspective transformation in the context of the PRS

A number of the experimental interventions emerging from the workshop aimed to shift some of the cultural frames within the system; the privileging of investors over the needs for 'home'; the conflation of 'home' with ownership of an *investment* property rather than home with renting, and for those actually dwelling in a place. These subjective and cultural complexities intersect with the lack of respect towards people who rent. Furthermore, the significant intermediation of relationship between persons renting and persons owning, at micro and larger system scales, perpetuates and reifies perceptions of renters as 'second class'. Macro and meso cultures and frames are therefore always in relational exchange with the micro - in the individuals who constitute the system and who hold the perceptions and perspectives. Cultural change therefore begins with individuals. I firstly propose an additional overlay on the educationally based interventions. These may be further supported by strategically integrating reframing (Lakoff, 2004) into experiments running concurrently. This involves paying attention to and shifting language usage; from homeowner to property investor; from tenant to renter[42]; from landlord to property owner/investor. Designing specific processes to begin challenging assumptions and mindsets however is perhaps most closely aligned to the field of transformative learning.

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[42] The use of 'renter' as the primary descriptor in this thesis reflects a reframing of 'tenant', which over a very long history has implied subservience. Home as designation is used by Australian advocacy but generally not evident in policy and certainly not in the real estate sector in relation to renting.

Transformative Learning

Transformative learning (TL) as theory and subsequently as praxis within adult education has evolved over more than 40 years, from roots in Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed (1970) and an early theorisation that explored 'perspective transformation' within the life-worlds of individual learners (Mezirow, 1978). The genealogy of the former is found in a definition of the latter. Mezirow defined his own theory of transformative learning as 'the social process of construing and appropriating a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience as a guide to action' (Mezirow, 1994 p.222, Taylor, 1997).

Within thirty years of Mezirow's first offering Dirkx (1998) had posited transformative learning (TL) as an evolving integration of various threads – a complex weave of transformative adult learning theories. Included in Dirkx' weaving are; conscientisation and problem posing for social change (Freire, 1970); perspective transformation and critical reflection (Mezirow, 1978, 1997, 1998), development and the role of mentorship (Daloz, 1986); and transformative education (Boyd and Myers, 1988). Although not embraced by many scholars at the time (Illeris, 2009), the latter took greater account of the role of affect within the individual. This, and Boyd's work on the usefulness of the imaginal in rational processes has been picked up again more recently (Illeris, 2014). While all four threads contain implicit developmental perspectives, leading on from Freire's seminal work there remained a concern for exterior/outer 'change in the world'. The other three threads remained focussed on interior change, within the human person and my own praxis has long integrated all four threads.

Mezirow's offerings however have sparked substantial, rigorous and continuous engagement among that community of scholars since inception. A review of the literature building on those theoretical debates had occurred by 1997 and regularly since then (Taylor, 1997, 2007, Taylor and Cranton, 2012). His contribution is now recognised as one of the most influential of all learning theories, along with Howard Gardner's theory of multiple identities (Illeris, 2009, 2014). The disciplinary debates and evolutions have contemporaneously remained focussed on transformation within the individual, albeit with the occasional 'mutinous thoughts' erupting from those with a more socially critical focus (Newman, 2012).

Planners too have discussed social learning and transformation over the decades (Friedmann, 1987, Forester, 1999, Holden, 2008). However, as mentioned, this has occurred almost entirely without any reference to the literatures on adult and transformative learning - until very recently. More specifically, Fischer and Mandell (2012) picked up on Mezirow's broad taxonomy of critical reflection as ways forward, in particular the rationalist processes of Critical Reflections on Assumptions (CRA) and then Critical Self Reflection on Assumptions (CSRA). In the process of

transforming perspectives Mezirow discerned a disruption he named 'the disorienting dilemma' (Mezirow, 1978) — what he eventually included in his conceptualisation of the 'meaning schemes' of learners (Mezirow, 1997).

Transformative learning for planning in social complexity

I designed the following CSRA questions based in the full gamut of transformative learning theories subsequently to WS2 as a facilitated exercise of self-reflection or as participatory inquiry into rental concerns. The design responds to the earlier question of what kind of process might have been enacted to potentially transform participant assumptions and subjectivities.

- Where am 'I' (and my own interests) in this policy arena? (Am I a landlord/property investor, a renter, a homeowner, or a mix of these? How much do I identify with these roles?)

- What are my views on people who rent? What are my thoughts about people who own and invest in property?

- What are my other, multiple identities (and related concerns)? Policymaker, parent, carer, breadwinner, advocate, employee, manager.

- How might my own identities and the positions I take flowing from those identities influence the way I think about the problems…and the potential ways to effect change in the system?

- What else might support change in the short term…rather than the long timeframes of government strategy and policy processes?

- What is needed to move beyond these acknowledged (and unacknowledged) positions?

- How do I get caught in my personal and professional entrained ways of being and thinking? How do these impact solutions?

As already discussed, despite the one big picture idea (albeit with no actual organisational backing) with potential to be disruptive at a macro system level, only two planned out experiments and one idea from WS2, all educationally based, seemed immediately viable as 'safe to fail probes' in terms of timeframes, resourcing and organisational decision making. These probes however were still somewhat 'in the box' and not particularly innovative nor, from a transformative educator's perspective, likely to be particularly transformative.

Since WS2 two viable probes that emerged have benefitted from redesign through a lens of transformative learning praxis. The brainstorming notes of the WS2 group, whose major planned out, probe had at least shown promise, if not current feasibility, were also brought into the re-design mix - reflecting once again the loose, improvisational nature of this action research.

The first educational experiment related to a 'You Tube' channel of information (originally infomercials) for landlords. The transformative lens blends this with the 'Rental Reality TV' and turns this into 'Playback'; improvisational narrative based theatre filmed and embedded into a government agency You Tube channel and website. 'Playback Theatre' too has roots in Freirean transformative praxis (Rowan, 2004, Cohen-Cruz and Schutzman, 2002) and narratives from other perspectives and positionalities, not just renters' could be used. Following the general methodological approach these would be exemplar tales – of what to do, what not to do.

The second, educationally oriented probe that arose from WS2 related specifically to property managers is now in the planning stages. Within this experiment, a leadership in property management training program geared towards ameliorating the problematic archetypal behaviours of Prue and Becky, are two processes adapted from the work of Joanna Macy (Macy and Brown, 1998). These specific processes are also planned for trial in a third experiment – a public 'conversation' event (albeit not deliberative or dialogic per se) - with participants from all key stakeholder groups; from ground level actors to meso scale actors also[43]. In both these contexts the aims remain the same: disrupting and transforming some of the cultural dualisms and subjectivities so clearly revealed through this research, and also instilling a deeper sense of the interrelationships within the system. This goes to learning complexity and interdependence through embodied, experiential means. I turn next to the contributions of Joanna Macy.

The transformational praxis of Joanna Macy

Macy's academic work integrated general systems theory with the Buddhist doctrine of *paticca-samuppāda* - dependent co-arising – or what she reframed as radical relativity - where change and choice, person and community are understood as mutually causative, in interdependent reality (1976, 1979, 1991). Such understandings of interdependence (complexity) however also arise from deep and embodied engagement with praxis - within oneself and within learning community.

The locus of Macy's work therefore shifted from academia into facilitating understandings of interdependence in the wider world; work initially catalysed in response to the ecological disaster of Chernobyl. Her work has spread into environmental education and environmental psychology and back into the transformative learning field.

The first process 'Widening Circles'[44], (Macy and Brown, 1998, Macy and Brown, 2014) has been adapted to the research context of the Australian private rental system.

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[43] This is being planned for after thesis submission.
[44] The title comes from the poem of the same name by Rainer Maria Rilke. Macy is also well known as a Rilke translator.

I live my life in widening circles that reach out across the world...

Process Description

Participants sit in groups of four – the aim here is for diversity in the small groups. Participants are each asked to mentally choose a particular challenging issue or situation they know about in the PRS that is of concern to them. It is best not to choose too personal a situation. Each person describes the issue from four perspectives, in turn:

- Firstly, from their own experience and point of view, including their feelings about the issue. (The first positionality may relate to being a renter, landlord, real estate agent, advocate, policymaker, housing worker, investor, et cetera)
- Secondly, from the perspective of a person whose views are very different and even adversarial, in the situation, participants step into this new role, introduce themselves and speak as this new person, using the pronoun "I". (The aim here is to allow that person to be complex and multi-dimensional – not stereotypical)
- Thirdly, from the viewpoint of a nonhuman being that is involved in or affected by that particular situation – e.g. an animal, insect, plant/garden. (For example, in the context of the Australian PRS this might be a companion animal given up or euthanaesed as a result of their human companion not being able to find a rental that will accept pets. This is a common problem.)
- Lastly, in the voice of a future human whose life will be directly affected by the choices now made, in relation to this situation.

In this kind of process facilitative skill with timing is key, as is debriefing and group reflection.

This and other Macy inspired learning processes, as well as that of the Playback theatre experiment, reflect substantial correspondence with the aforementioned transformative/adult learning theories:

1. Storytelling of personal concern connected to Freirean conscientisation and social change.
2. The imaginal practices of Boyd and Myers - putting oneself in the shoes of others.
3. Gardner's learning theory of multiple identities expressed here through 'widening' identities in role/play.
4. Mezirow's critical reflection in a social context to support and embed perspective transformation.

A second Macy/Brown process embodies complexity – quite literally.

'The Systems Game' requires sixteen or more people and is designed to experience the interdependencies of a complex adaptive system.   The instructions are simple.

All participants stand in a large space. Each person silently chooses two others with the aim of remaining equidistant with the chosen two. The 'system' begins to move with all the parts shifting and attempting to maintain system equilibrium. This continues for between five and ten minutes and at some point at the facilitator's discretion, she signals to one participant in the group (who has been set up to respond to the signal) who collapses to the floor soon after the signal. This disrupts the system. Debriefing occurs to elicit personal learning within the social learning space to support the embedding of embodied understanding.

Over many years, I have experienced first hand these processes' usefulness in softening positions in participants - from different tiers of community, business and government - much to own their surprise. Whether or not any of the transformative learning processes outlined would catalyse any change in attitudes, behaviours and understandings within actors in the PRS of course remains to be seen. Such probes and processes would, like other 'safe to fail' probes, need evaluating, and then there is always the problem of scaling up such interventions if applied in and across a very large system. At that point, dealing with the complex concern becomes a 'complicated' management issue based on expert knowledge, evidence and good practice.

Such transformative learning processes whisper the possibility of small emancipations from subjectivities that impact others in wider systems. Through critical self-reflexivity and imaginal play that touches the heart and actively calls to acknowledge one's own and others human complexity there exists the potential to move beyond what is commonly understood as rationality. This includes other rationalities and knowledge interests too long discounted or dismissed in planning as idealistic. Jellyfish (as recounted in Chapter Two) called it too soon and in Chapter Eight I come back to this developmental potential in planning praxis.

Subjectivities play out in all methodological and planning systems. In acknowledging subjectivities the question then becomes how these are managed, and accounted for. In the WS2 planning process, the participants in their multiple identities represented wider system cohorts within the PRS. Beyond the subjectivities of renters' tales, investors' perspectives and subjectivities too were also brought to bear on the planning process – with potentially useful outcomes in terms of investor training. Having pointed to some potential through emancipatory praxis and staying with the subjective for a while longer, next I embark upon a methodological review, winding back through the other participatory methods and tools associated with Sensemaker™.

Subjectivities in WS1 processes

A research process that works with peoples' micro narratives and experiences of a rental system and subsequently draws on renters and advocates tacit knowledge of a system was always going to be dealing with peoples' subjectivities. Here I approach a query that relates to the validity of the archetypes extraction process, a query regarding subjectivities and bias that emerged out of the process of WS1. This pertains to the wider, methodological question of how we can come to discover and make (some) sense of interdependencies as well as problematic impacts experienced by people in a system – in this case through the extraction and construction of system archetypes.

Archetypes method

In Chapter Five and in Chapter Six I shared PRS archetypes of landlords, agents and tenants. In the first workshop, a number of archetypes had emerged as named cartoons but with no constructed narratives attached to them (see Appendix A). A couple of these archetypes were obvious as their roles were named as advocates however there was no clarity as to who and what the others may be. One comment in the workshop from an older man pointed to what appeared to be some discrepancy or disconfirming evidence about the method. The discrepancy discussed next ultimately validates the method, however his comment provided pause for thought and more investigation.

One key criterion for participants in this process is that they be from within the system under investigation. This particular participant had commented that the tales he had read that day did not fit with his experience. Further inquiry discovered that his experience of renting was in two sectors not represented in the private rental system tales arrayed on the walls: boarding houses and a community housing organisation. This explained the appearance of the archetype of 'Finnegan', who turned out to be a boarding house manager. Other archetypes unaccounted for – Helga and Maude – turned out to be archetypes of community housing tenants, constructed by community housing participants.

The discrepancy therefore, lay not in the method but in the implementation of it. In the final days before WS1 I had made a decision to focus in on the PRS rather than the wider rental system. The participants however (organised before the change in focus) came from private and community rental housing, as well as advocacy sectors – all of which were subsequently reflected in the final extraction of archetypes. While inadvertent, this discrepancy provided evidence and surety - a triangulation within the process itself - that verified that the archetype extraction process has rigour and reflects the 'system' in the room. The learning relates to the importance of ensuring that there is substantial correspondence between the micro system of people in the room and the macro

system of narratives on the wall that have been contributed from the specific system under investigation.

As discussed earlier, the archetypes were extracted and constructed by participants without any reference to the macro, aggregated data of visual patterns. Nevertheless, the process triangulated that substantive aggregated data - with the triangulation translating into archetypes with the nosiness of inspectors writ (and drawn) large or long upon cartooned faces. These archetypes reflected subjectivities in the room but also reflected the evidence of a substantial number of renters who indicated inspections as impacting their privacy in substantial ways. A number of the archetypes in this process aptly read as cultural aggregates, personifying ways to do, or more to the point here, not do things.

Thus archetypes and other findings about inspections, composed from varying data sources, methods and tools constitute some of the most significant contributions of the research. Furthermore, when considered through the Cynefin Framework, as outlined in Chapter Six, these findings offer policymakers Australia wide the evidence base for a thorough rethink about the purpose and impacts of inspections in a culture thoroughly driven by proprietary interests.

Issues extraction

The issues extracted reflect issues well known by advocates and were drawn from raw narratives in participatory process also without reference to the aggregated data. By tapping the expertise of experience, that of renters but also of a few advocates (who hold a kind of meta, system knowledge and expertise about the rental system by virtue of their dealings with many renters in contested spaces), the process tapped and utilised the subjective at micro and meso scales. The validity checking in this circumstance was anecdotal and reflexive, within the system and the process but also outside the participatory process. Keeping a watching brief on media, some of the issues brought forth by advocacy organisations in recent policy review processes reflect those extracted in the WS1 process. Thus, this process of extracting issues from narratives is useful for advocacy: with one important caveat. This research process specifically aimed to capture *any* kind of renters' rental tale. We carefully and purposefully avoided specifying type of tale to ensure a better capture of the whole system, not just negative experiences. That the issues that emerged in the participatory process generally reflected the major visual heuristics further, and simply, validates the participatory data and the process.

The usefulness of making some sense of complexity - and more specifically, extracting and mapping complex issues – is that it can move us to respond in more innovative ways, beyond the entrenched positions and usual ways of approaching an issue. This seeing and approaching issues

as interdependent and therefore 'complex' goes beyond the incrementalism of policy and advocacy that can often become caught in the dualities of either/or and which sees issues as single, individual battlefronts. Complexity is never so simple.

In approaching the complexities of the PRS as cultural frames, we move towards breaking down and rearranging some of those frames: from homeowner/landlord to property/investor, and renters as those who also dwell at home alongside those able to purchase and dwell in a home they own. This then moves towards a practical expression of King's notion of housing as a freedom right (King, 2008, 2003) where *dwelling* is not differentiated between rental or property that one owns. Home becomes the place where we dwell and where *de facto* tenure (Hulse et al., 2011), by virtue of such *dwelling,* assumes greater importance in the culture.

Next, in Chapter Eight, by way of final conclusions for both case study and narrative methods in complexity I share one more narrative that exemplifies that state of dwelling and being a renter before once again, with the research case study process behind me, situating and contemplating the wider methodological assemblage in fields of planning in complexity.

Chapter Eight. Reweaving the warp and weft of planning in social complexity

Every tale in this research is a thread that weaves the complexity of a greater whole. In the loose praxis of methodological assemblage in wider contexts of social complexity and planning praxis Chapter Eight brings together numerous threads of the research to finally weave a tale of conclusions. Firstly, I share one more narrative about the PRS to then reflect on both the PRS and on the usefulness of narrative as method and approach to researching complexity. Secondly, I then draw wider conclusions about the usefulness of the whole methodological assemblage including in terms of where this loose praxis fits into the greater praxis scheme of things – in planning, in complexity and elsewhere. Finally, I imagine a planning praxis in complexity that reaches beyond the technical and communicative rationalities towards the Habermasian emancipatory knowledge interest: into being and becoming *transrational,* transdisciplinary praxis.

Narrative as a way through complexity in planning

Beyond the exemplar tales and autoethnographica shared throughout the thesis there are loose threads still to be picked up and woven into the narrative fabric of the PRS. This is particularly so with regards to what supports private renters in the system as currently constituted. But with this comes a research dilemma with its own level of complexity. The tales in the data set that spoke to supportive conditionalities, materialities and spatialities are relatively few, and almost invariably community housing or co-operative housing tales. These are instructive exemplars, but not of the PRS. Coming to write a complex distillation of the research data of what renters experience, need and want in order to flourish, feel at home, connected, and a sense of security thus presented another challenge. And so, once again I turn to reflective, autoethnographic writing to share one more narrative that speaks further to what supports and challenges renters' capacities for flourishing in the Australian PRS, as currently constituted and as found in this research. Remaining true to the methods, this final, longer narrative[45] therefore acts as exemplar and summary of many key findings arising from the sensemaking in Chapter Five and further analysis of Chapter Six.   It distils many of the interrelated socio-spatial, conditional and material attributes of rental culture and practice with an emphasis however on the attributes of current *supportive* rental environments. More than enough has been said about the challenges in renters' own tales.

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[45] Relative to most of the micro-narratives contributed by renters.

Narrative therefore, is utilised to respond, finally, to the second core organising question of the case study - providing a loose and complex weave of interrelationships of security, connection, flourishing and a sense of home with no need to interpret or mediate.

The second question asked:

> Beyond shelter, what socio-spatial, material, and conditional attributes of rental housing environments support and enable, (or challenge or impede as the case may be) the flourishing of persons who rent, their sense of home and security and their connectedness to wider communities?

Authoethnographica (November 2016): Lucky

I am pondering yet again the levels of correspondence between my own experiences as a very long-term renter and those of many other renters who have shared their experiences for this research - as well as pondering points of divergence. The correspondences run the full gamut across and within the attributions of rental cultures – the dodgy, unsafe dwellings, the share house dramas, short leases, the moves as a result of all these, the lack of stability, or ability to keep a proper garden and no pets allowed. When some food harvests take to two or more years, renters don't often get to reap what they sow. I too have experienced the subtleties and 'blatantcies' (no such word apparently!) of a 'proprietarianism' (no such word either) that disregards the material living environments of folks who pay rent on a place. And beige. Beige everywhere…except for the tiny, entirely bright yellow cube of a bedroom I endured for six months in the mid 1980s – to this day that yellow makes me dizzy.

Yet while the majority of Australian renters have been subjected to the impacts of proprietariness in the contexts of turbo charged property investment (Atkinson and Jacobs, 2009, Atkinson, 2015) over the past decade or more, my own rental circumstances since then (February 2008 to be more precise) changed significantly for the better. Then a chance meeting with a friend resulted in being offered the flat underneath their family home a stone's throw from the city, something that could potentially be long term if not permanent. And so my rental life trajectory reads very differently to that of the large majority of renters who responded, despite ongoing challenges of finding stable, age appropriate, long-term housemates. I am of the 15 per cent who haven't had to move at all in five years.

Since 2008 I have at least been out of the churn, out of the rat race, out of the machinations of the real estate industry, with their inspections practices (with no evidence base) that are very often so at odds with the interests and privacy of renters. Yes, I have faced some challenges. The beloved granny flat with affordable rent was slated for resumption for a tunnel one month after moving in. But in that place and the two others since, I have connected with kids, their animals and wider community. I have developed friendships with neighbours and locals; by virtue of being allowed to remain in place over time, and arrangements with friends that have all had a fair degree of informality. And with well-functioning informality, it comes down to relationships.

The most recent move and arrangement is even more informal, paradoxically affording me the deepest sense of 'home' and ontological security I have experienced in 30 plus years of rental life in Australia, in part because I don't have to share it with a stranger – just yet. Before moving in I painted a wall or two a deep dark purple - a moody backdrop for a few pieces of modern art affixed to the wall. I never thought for a moment to seek permission because I know this property owner carries a different sort of sensibility about such things. I simply just informed said friend about my intentions and the fact that a dog was coming with me. And so, already, I feel invested in this place by virtue of the energy and funds put into making it home, safe in the knowledge that I can in all probability be here as long as I can pay the reasonable rent. The bathroom, needing urgent and significant repair, is being renovated with my distant old age, and my moody design preferences in mind, albeit with neutral coloured tiles offsetting more purple wall. I am filled with gratitude for a friendly property investor who has offered me a place and a space I can make into my own (non-structural changes only), like the two sets of long term tenants before me.

I pause to ponder the imputed loss to GDP of 30% of Australians households not being allowed to take up the national past-time of basic home DIY. I never realised how exciting it could be choosing tiles and buying and applying paint!

These days I am also enjoying simple moments of joy and the very ordinary happiness of having a dog - the first animal companion of my entire rental life. Lucky is small, bright eyed and spritely, an old Tenterfield terrier of 16 years. He too was displaced; a rental refugee separated from his usual family by a formal rental system that simply and routinely disallows pets as the default position. Knowing of the despair of renters who have had to relinquish animal family I feel very lucky in having private landlords of

recent times who simply accept that animals are a part of normal life, no matter that you live in their property.

Having moved to the new place quite recently I have been amazed at how quickly I have begun to make connections to others in the neighbourhood out walking with Lucky. I suspect the other people I meet with dogs while walking further afield in the suburb are homeowners. I half suspect they think I am a homeowner too, because I have a dog. This is a kind of entrée, so I don't let on I'm a renter. I am, simply, a local resident.

The short, quiet street where I now live is home to homeowners, except for this house made into two flats. But the folks around here also know, based on the length of past rental occupancies, that the people residing in these flats are highly likely to be long-term residents. There is a sense the street's residents are therefore perhaps more willing to invest time in developing neighbourly relations. I am not just a short-term renter, here one day, gone the next – or at least six to twelve months later.

When I think about the number of moves most renters have over 5 years I wonder how on earth other renters, caught in investor and real estate driven rent seeking and capital gain, manage and cope with the huge process of first seeking, finding and securing a new place, then packing, bond cleaning, moving, unpacking…every six to twelve months…in a very tight rental market. A friend mentioned feeling emotionally, physically and psychologically crippled by three moves in 12 months. (I was physically crippled by one move, the crippling exacerbated by the disconfirming evidence that not all tenants, even those with great conditions and no bond outlay, bond clean after vacating.) For most renters there is also the ignominy of being subjected to invasions of privacy and judgements from 23 year olds on their housekeeping. Welcome to the churn and grind, and the liminality (Bevan, 2011) of rental life .

The phenomenon of rental moving costs and the costs of lost productivity due to the rental churn of people who rent bears economic investigation.

I feel deeply for other renters who do not have the good fortune of a decent, privately managing, investor landlord who takes the very long-term view and rental income and who understands the desire, even need, to create home as mirror of the self (Cooper Marcus, 1995).

With the new landlord, me being a renter hardly comes into it and he is happy for me to sublet as needs and short term contracts in other cities may take me in future. The sense

of ontological security, home and place - My place – is strong, palpable even, and so is
the sense that here I can put down roots and flourish. Especially when I have more time
and funds to attend to the now overgrown garden - the gift of previous long term tenants
- sort out the weed patch in my one private courtyard, and simply be.

Given the rise in private landlordism in advanced economies including Australia (Arundel, 2017, Hulse and Yates, 2017), and the inequities and imbalances revealed in this research, the conditions that support renters to flourish *as renters* are hard to come by. This aligns somewhat with other very recent research that interprets the rise of long term rental in terms of a paradox for renters where some have choice and others experience constraint (Pawson et al., 2017). Irrespective of income and amenity based choice of where to rent for some middle to higher income renters, the findings in the 'Renters at Home' research tell different tales of rental housing. Being out of the rental churn is a negative expression of what supports renters in their flourishing. Therefore, significantly, conditions for 'home' appear more dependent upon having and building good relationships directly with the property owner, and a degree of informality, than income. Income, unless renters buy into the housing market, does not protect people from churn.

The aforementioned autoethnographic tale of finding security of occupancy (Hulse and Milligan, 2014), connection, home and wellbeing in the PRS speaks to the possibilities within a subsidiaritarian disruption of system, as espoused in the private sector app based experiment. That disruption of the system, as you may recall, aimed to support relationship building between renter and property owner and match renters' needs to property owner's intentions. As I write however, other actors and another level of complexity is about to enter the system and its' intersectional space. Rentberry the US rent bidding app, has announced its Australian launch within a few months 'because investors here will love it' (Robb, 2017), and Rentwolf, another app that cuts out REAs launches also. While these may very likely disrupt the business model of the real estate sector there are no indications that Australian renters will be better off (in any way) despite Rentberry's claim to the contrary of some five per cent less in rent. That claim reflects a distinctly, and very different, US context. Experiments in breaking the frames of landlord/tenant and transforming cultural mindsets therefore assume much greater importance. As a comedian pointed out, six months before I embarked on the research, property investing is like parenting, no one needs a qualification to do it, and the transactional analysis puts tenants in the role of the child with the parent saying 'you're not allowed to hang a poster of your favourite band on the wall or dig in the garden' (Berne, 1968, Green, 2013). Perhaps it *is* time for transformative educational interventions for investors.

A few of the relatively small band of planning academics who have taken up complexity theory in regards to planning have also pointed to the methodological in considering how we may come to

research and understand complexity in planning - beyond the theoretical. Portugali did not specify methods in his oeuvre Complexity, Cognition and the City (2011) although Hillier, in setting out Baroque Complexity (2012), does mention narrative approaches as pathways of complexity theory that draw on the psychoanalytic *and therefore, subjective (my italics).* Yet, again, no methods are delineated. Narrated *experience*, as well the methods through which subjective narrative has operated - as recounting, signifying and evidencing of social complexity - in this research, is in a very real sense its own causal circularity (Portugali, 2011), and entirely valid nonetheless. To claim otherwise is figment. As well as a way forward, narrative – the rental tales and the autoethnographic – has proven to be a way *through* complexity that has supported the development of new, research based understandings of a rental system, a methodological approach, my own 'encounter with complexity' (De Roo and Silva, 2010) and my own rental life. This latter development reflects the more psychological pathways discussed by Hillier and offered some challenges to me as researcher. Ultimately, the autoethnographic voice offered transparency about those challenges and that is a keystone of good action research (Bradbury-Huang, 2010).

Now, at the other end of the trial, I would also argue that this use of narrative, first suggested by Kurtz in her collaboration with Snowden (Kurtz and Snowden, 2007), self-signified to order parameters (Haken, 1999), and thus not further interpreted, is transformative for participatory planning praxis and planning research praxis. Narrative, as fragment, anecdote or tale, along with self-signification, provides the loose structure within which complexity resides, waiting for sensemaking through tools and participatory processes for the purpose of planning change.

The use of personal experience as narrative fragments within computational architecture, and the order parameters of a signification framework transcend and include the 'Two Cultures' of the mathematical/quantitative and the social/qualitative to such a degree that is likely eminently useful in other socio-urban planning endeavours. This was the point of the research – as trial, as experiment – for the purposes of understanding (researching) the usefulness of the core methodological approach based in narrative, and plan change (action) in urban contestations. The bridging of the knowledge cultures through these tools and methods disrupts inherent complexity sufficiently to make more (and easier) sense of the complexity and the impacts at different scales. In this case, the tools and methods have offered more than sufficient evidence of the cultures within the PRS to warrant planning change within the system, albeit through experiments that move beyond the incrementalism of policy planning into other fields of opportunity and programming. Policy, often, is too blunt an instrument. The core methodological approach therefore, like the heuristics data generated, is more than sufficient for other applications in planning and research where social complexity is inherent, in systems large enough to capture mass data. That is a caveat.

The small data set captured here shaped the research decisions. A large data set (upwards of 30 000) would shape such research differently, and other aspects of the software's computational and modelling capabilities would come to the fore. This type of project, more fully implemented, takes resourcing and commitment and is also perhaps better implemented where power is not so present to attend the gate, or at least where powerful vested interests can be sidelined long enough to evaluate interventions over longer timeframes.

Methodological assemblage in wider schemes: planning praxis in complexity

There is no doubt that Sensemaker™ and the use of signification frameworks within that technical architectural capability add substantially to capabilities for planning and researching social complexity in large open systems. The problems that arose in this case related to research contexts and resourcing but also, crucially, issues of power within the social complexity of the PRS. In this research, these played out in the gatekeeping of the real estate industry and the very limited resource capacities of advocacy stakeholders that prevented the capture of a larger data set. Renters dwell as hidden households, with very few avenues of access for large scale capture for constructing randomised and representative data sets. Yet, despite the multiple setbacks, and my own proclivities for narrative as qualitative data over the quantitative and statistical, Sensemaker™ in this research has been demonstrated as providing many options for research inquiry, even for the quantitatively challenged. Despite a (relatively) small data set of 233 tales, using Sensemaker™ and the signification framework facilitated particular lines of inquiry based in aggregated narratives, such as those followed in Chapter Six. This approach, disintermediated by other methods and tools, quite naturally finds a home within the family of action research methodologies. More traditional, social scientists may find the levels of ambiguity and uncertainty – the emergent nature - of this research approach challenging. That narrative in this approach remains disintermediated by researchers disrupts and challenges a methodological orthodoxy in social science.

In terms of the core methodological approach applied to the rental system as social complexity, little more than the heuristics, exemplar tales and action plans for experiments are needed to demonstrate the validity and usefulness of these tools and processes in planning. This, after all, is not social research investigating detailed, finite questions about the rental system, despite significant and quite surprising new findings for Australian rental housing research emerging.

Whether or not the contributions to knowledge and deeper understandings about the PRS arising from the project, and the sensemaking and planning processes policymakers and advocates participated in, will be impactful cannot be fully known or claimed at this point. Small, subtle changes are evident on the website of a regulatory authority – where language has been changed on

the renters information page to better reflect the idea that inspections are not about renters' housekeeping, that this is someone's home. I note however that this information is rather misplaced on the renters' page; it belongs in documentation targeting the lessors' and agents, wherein the attitudes and behaviours need to shift. There are, however, significant findings and lessons to share and facilitate with both policy and advocacy actors beyond this research process in terms of using these the methods and tools in building their capacities in the work they do and the evidence base for it. To this end Sensemaker™, self- signification, the Cynefin Framework and the participatory processes trialled together support the planning of disruptions and transformations of the private rental system, which here also includes the entrained practices and stances in policy, advocacy and on the ground real estate practices.

I have proposed the core assemblage of Sensemaker™ tools and associated processes as useful on their own, for planning and research in many fields. However, given the capability for developing shared heuristics, I also propose the usefulness of the assemblage in augmenting other collaborative planning practice such as that developed by Innes and Booher (2010). The alignment and necessary grounding in participatory action research of their work and this approach suggests a useful ongoing conversation.

However, here, now, in the wider scheme of planning praxis the usefulness of action research as the foundation praxis in this process must be acknowledged. In 'looking again' (Husserl cited in Brew (1998) and pondering how this emergent research praxis has supported this planning in complexity, the research process has also fostered a greater appreciation in me for action research as a transdisciplinary methodology for planning with/in complexity. AR is also now better understood through the domains of the Cynefin Framework as an emergent response to complexity itself. Planning in social complexity obviously requires something more than the merely complicated and procedural.

In complex planning realms, action research as emergent praxis, not least in its genealogies of critical theorists, pragmatists and the focus on change, has substantial correspondence with planning praxis but also has its own subtleties that may yet move planning praxis further forward. A notable planner some time ago dismissed action research as simple, while paradoxically proposing something that from an action researcher's perspective looks remarkably like action research (Flyvbjerg, 2004)! This dismissal may have been the result of a lack of deep engagement with action research *praxis.* Other planners like Innes and Booher (2010), Forester (1999, 2013, Laws and Forester, 2015) and Whitzman (2015) in acknowledging P/AR practice as embedded in their own work have moved beyond the keystone texts of Argyris and Schön. What we think we know can be limited by our long entrained frames at times and sometimes the outsider to a culture can

have naïve clarity; their vision not clouded by the dust of familiarity with well-established orthodoxy. Here I refer to cultures of planning which include the myth of a rationality that excludes that which is fundamentally human - our subjectivity. Flyvbjerg proposed letting go of rationality, as it is understood in planning theory and practice. Thus his phronetic planning research (Flyvbjerg, 2004), despite his dismissal of AR, has significant correspondence with the aims and genealogies of a critical AR as I have come to understand it.

Having found many intellectual threads, cross-stitched and layered over different disciplines, and within action research as a scholarly methodological field (and assemblage) in its own right, I have gained a clearer sense of where I have come from and ultimately where I have headed. In an unapologetically process driven PhD I have begun a process of remaking space, and making my own place as a transdisciplinary urban researcher, albeit one who acknowledges she may yet find it challenging to place herself somewhere inside the academy beyond the process. Que sera sera, whatever will be will be.

The full, wider, methodological assemblage of planning praxis in this research, which includes participatory action research, heals and integrates some of the bifurcations of theory and practice, quantitative and qualitative methods, and various conceptualisations of method for and in complexity (Van Wezemael, 2009), and adds something new. Out of this thesis, a more defined methodological approach with another field of praxis – transformative learning - added to the assemblage has begun to emerge. It is an approach that pays homage to more, if not all, of the disciplinary ancestors in action research and planning, complexity, and transformative adult learning.

 Like Hillier's Baroque offering and, I suspect, anyone's work that grapples with complexity long enough to write about it, this thesis - even without the autoethnographic narratives - is inextricably connected to my lifeworld, ideologies, reading choices and preferences (Hillier, 2012). Our subjectivities, our narratives, are always present, whether intentionally revealed or not. And for that it is pointless to apologise.

Emerging futures: Further research, planning and monitoring and evaluation in housing complexity

This research, in terms of data, findings and methodological approach, has opened up a wealth of potential and possibilities; for further Australian housing research and for applications to strategic planning in housing sectors and organisations.

Firstly, with regards to housing research, numerous potential lines of deeper inquiry emerged through the sensemaking of narrative data but did not make it into the thesis due to the word limit. Two significant lines of inquiry and interest excised from the thesis remain for further research development, collaboration and planning interventions are:

- Further inquiry into the phenomenon of young (female) property managers in real estate and the archetype of Becky - the nexus of gender, power and place in real estate and rental housing and the impacts of these on actors in the system.
- The micro-complexities and contestations of share housing.

Secondly, the core methodological assemblage offers significant potential for the development of Australian rental housing policy as well as discrete sector and organisational development as:

- An approach to iterative monitoring and evaluation (M&E) that transcends the highly regulated compliance regimes in the Community Housing Provider sector. Sensemaker™ and associated planning methods could support individual organisations in their ongoing practice improvement and provide state and national industry bodies meaningful data for advocacy and strategic planning.
- Likewise, government regulatory bodies and authorities could utilise this approach as real time M&E of the whole rental system - with narrative data collection and simplified self-signification for all key actor cohorts— renters, property owners and real estate agencies.
- Different signification frameworks would need to be developed for each system (CHP or PRS) and cohorts and the process would best be integrated into annual strategic planning cycles.

The differences in regulatory impost in the two key Australian rental housing sectors, social and private, are indeed stark and oddly contradictory given where the vast majority of renters reside. The contestations of vested private interests in the PRS have long prevented and circumvented greater regulation and oversight of that industry. However, the findings of this research provide a compelling case, not necessarily for greater government regulation (that is too much to expect given the power of those vested interests) but for substantially greater and improved oversight of the complexities of systems that impact the lives of so many and some pressure on the industry to better self-regulate and improve both their education practices and interface with renters.

This research has demonstrated that this approach provides the transformative means for such oversight; where individual voices can be heard en masse, where system patterns and salient issues

emerge through big data[46] *and* participatory sensemaking, where the complexities of data and decision-making can be disrupted and where planning and designing interventions for change also becomes more highly participative. This applies to planning in any field or sector where end users experience of a system should be taken into serious consideration.

Concluding thoughts

Reflecting on the micro scale complexities of the planning and design of *this* action research concerned with rental housing one final question emerges: What might have been done differently in the Renters at Home research?

Feedback from a key stakeholder supporting the online narrative collection suggested that the signification framework, which asked people to think about where their tale fit into a visual scheme of factors, may have been too time consuming for some people. We can never know with any certainty. With hindsight however, the adage 'less is more' may well be apt and in any new project, I would aim for fewer questions. In this case the core framework, with its dualistic pairs of triads around the four key concerns (a sense of home, sense of security, wellbeing and connection) and the other dyadic questions, may have been better approached with more singular questions rather than paired questions reflecting positive and negative experiences. Yet, the ability to come to the essence of a thing - employing just a few acupuncture points in tapping the complexity of meridians in a contested human system - is no simple task. Such naturalistic decision-making following Klein (2015), is dependent upon deep, wide and long experience beyond that gained through just one case study in one research project. This too is praxis.

P/AR and planning praxis, in their enactment are dependent on conditions. *All* things, all phenomena, are dependent upon conditions. This is the learning and teaching of a person who lived two and half millennia ago and generations of others since. I have quipped that the Buddha was the first action researcher, first phenomenologist and first complexity theorist and throughout this research I have long pondered a deeper investigation of Buddhist 'dependent arising' vis à vis planning theory and complexity. The concept of a *transrational* planning praxis that embeds this understanding and also leans into the third Habermasian knowledge constitutive interest of the emancipatory and transformative now must be left for another time for these threads weave an imagined planning praxis (Sandercock, 2004), another assemblage. The Habermasian thread embraced in praxis by critical action researchers and transformative adult educators but left aside by almost all planning practitioner theorists[47], shines light on potential. There, all rationalities,

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[46] As discussed earlier, there is potential for very substantial datasets through Sensemaker™

[47] That I have come across, Innes and Booher is the one exception found thus far (2015), see references.

including the subjective and the imaginal, are transcended and included in a *developing* rationality of the heart/mind in the service of human flourishing. That potential for the transrational, like all human potential, is worth developing; through tiny insurgencies and micro emancipations of an entrained view tightly held, and through planning (and research) interventions that aim to shift cultures in planning itself as well as in wider social complexities.

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Appendix A: Rental System Archetypes

The following cartoons depict archetypes of the Australian private rental system and one community housing tenant. Some archetypes have not been previously discussed and six archetypes emerged from the WS1 participartory process without accompanying text or useful descriptors. I followed up with participants to ascertain what category of system archetype these may belong to.

Two advocates

Janice Terrier (no accompanying text)

Lucy (no accompanying text)

Three PRS renters/tenants archetypes

Only three tenant archetypes emerged, representing the wide range of people who rent and two of these, Andy and Helga, had no accompanying text.

Andy, the low-income/unemployed tenant (no accompanying text)

Helga the bikie (no accompanying text)

Alison, the high principled renter

A high principled, executive, signature handbag, glass of wine – well-dressed executive type, 36 years of age, an intelligent and capable woman with a profession she is good at. A woman with a strong sense of control - for Alison, it is all about the principle of the matter. She will not suffer fools. She has a strong sense of responsibility for her children. She is highly strung, needs to be heard and so is sometimes seen as demanding. She can occasionally act demandingly and be seen as aggressive even though she has a loving heart and good intentions.
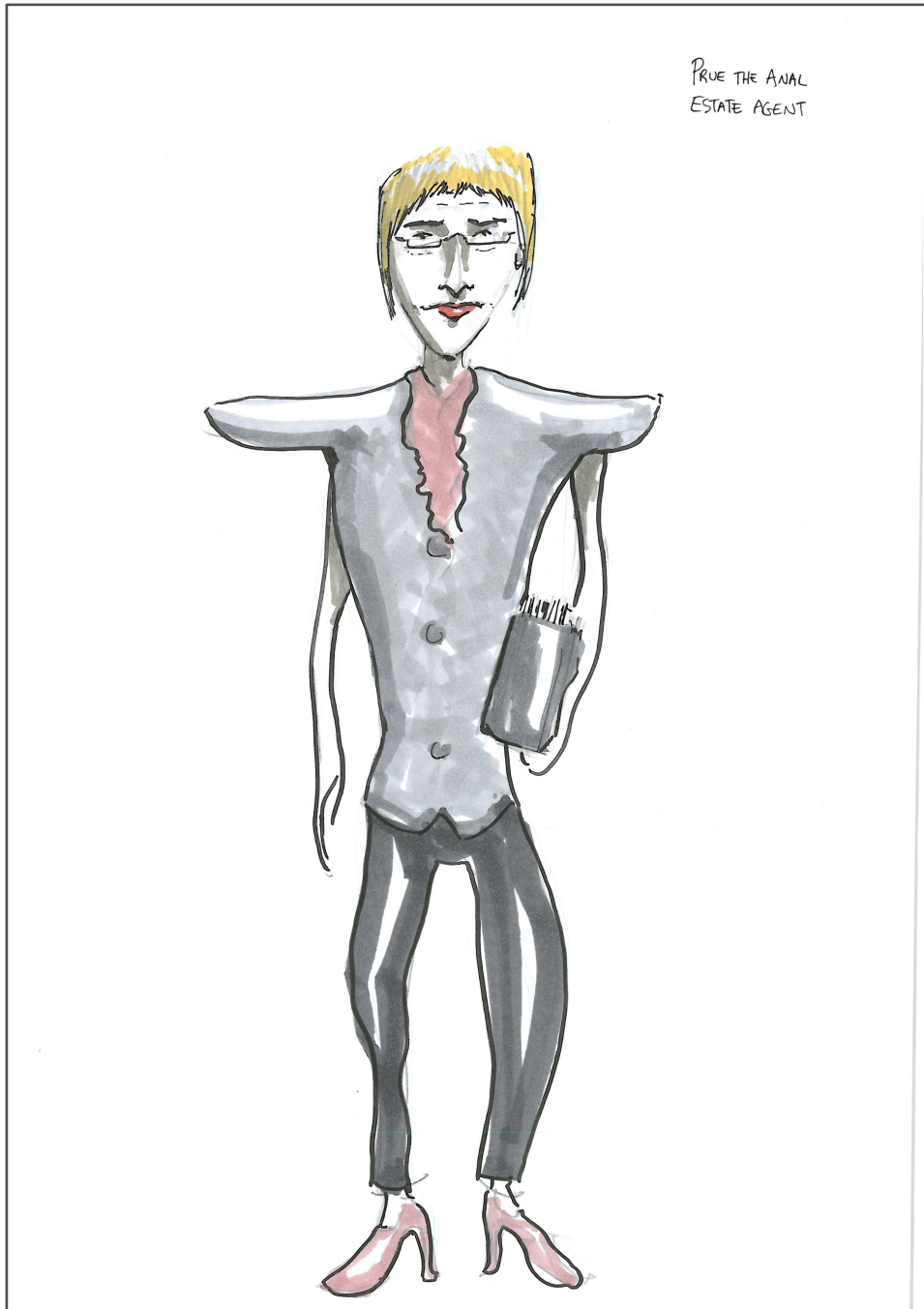
One non PRS, community housing archetype

Maude the Muddler (tenant – community housing tenant, no accompanying text)

MAUDE
the
Muddler
(Tenant)

26-05-15

Two PRS Real Estate Agents

Prue, the anal estate agent

Prue is a real estate agent - wears a suit - power dresser - massive shoulder pads co-ordinated outfit - scarf and shoes, briefcase with lots of papers, glasses for close inspection, neat, crisp dresser - jacket and slim trousers, red lipstick, fashionable haircut.

She is anal retentive, manipulative, patronising, discriminatory and a bully, also diligent, customer focussed, efficient, fastidious, entrepreneurial, well educated (trained as a lawyer but couldn't handle legal profession) - money conscious, has zero tolerance towards 'bad tenants' and avoids renting to tenants she has prejudice about (risky); manipulates and cheats tenants out of their bond, landlords love her (as she always pays them on time) thin, drives a BMW, immaculate makeup and lots of gold jewellery. She is rich.

Becky, Property Manager

Busily going about her day - on the phone, striding, smoking, young pert, high heels pencil skirt - aspirational, carries a good handbag, well dressed - in it for the money. Becky is 23 years old who has been a property manager for 2 years. She lives out of home and is a tenant herself. She is not passionate about her work and only does it pay the bills. Her priorities are having friends and having fun. She is seen as a good mate. She uses her position in a way that isn't reflective of the subtleties needed for the role. If she had friends renting from her she would give them an easier time than other tenants. She doesn't give the job much thought - only knowing the bare minimum of tenancy law. She hasn't had much training and she works a lot for a small amount of money. She doesn't care for the tenants or the home owners much and all her actions come from wanting to look good and keep her job. Tenants find her difficult as she will always make herself look good as the one who holds power, rather than care about the tenants. She is seen as a passive aggressive, inflexible, inept, reactive person with a short term view of things. She manages a huge case load just trying to make a living. She herself is a retail rent payer.

Six property investor/private landlords

Bob the Builder
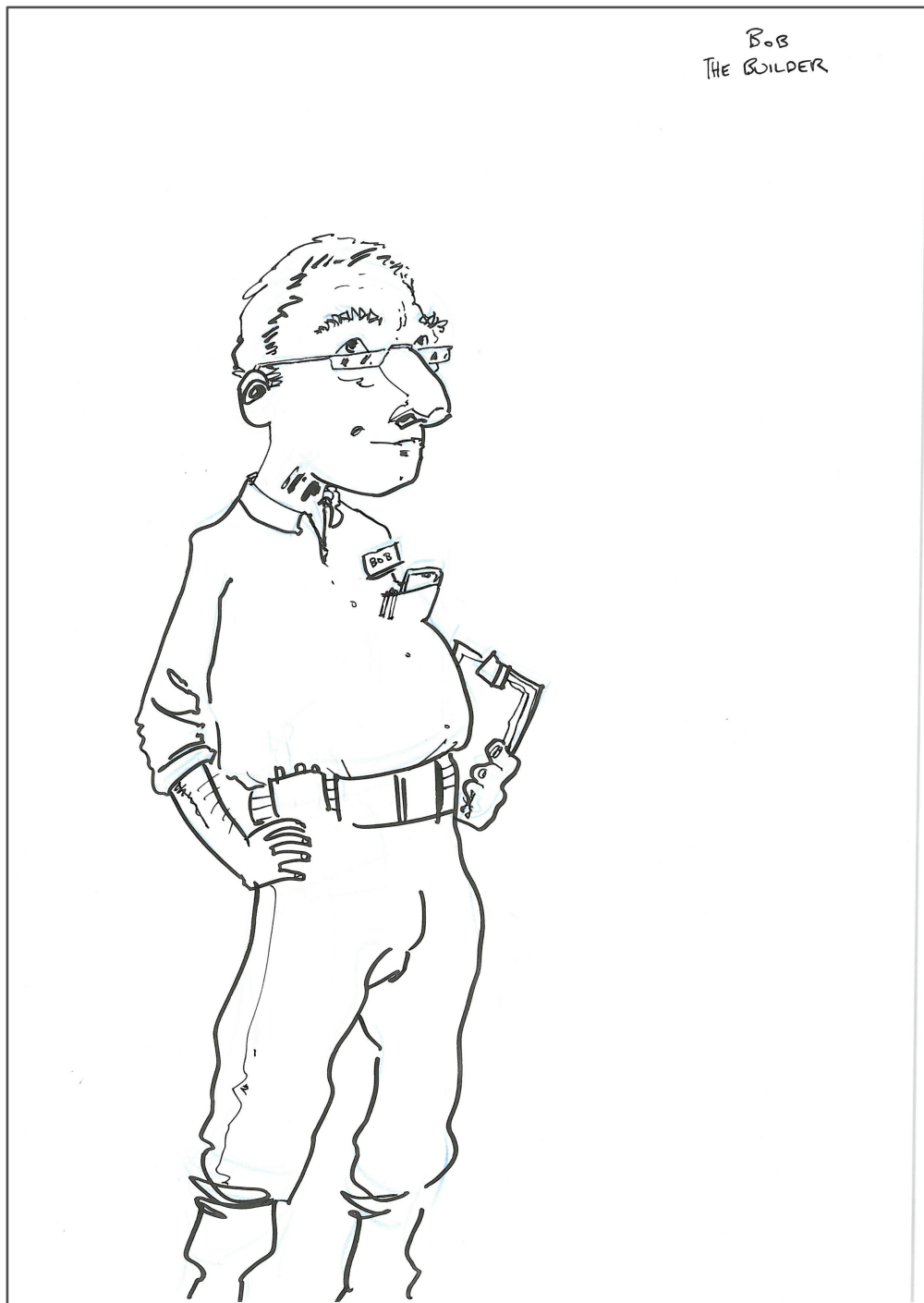
Bob builds houses and apartments to rent. He has a clipboard, his sleeves are rolled up, pants tucked into his socks - so as not to ruin trousers on building sites - a 'can do' kind of fellow.

He's a good bloke but never happy! Works all the time - busy busy busy - "if you want something done ask a busy person" reckons Bob.

He gets lonely though and sometimes he's pretty greedy with what he charges people. If people question that then boy, can he play the big fat victim.....even though he is all heart though. He works hard for the money and is financially responsible, he has too much work and not enough staff. He is also tight and selfish - a greedy bastard.

Fretful Freda

A public servant/private landlady so she has good regular income - fretful about what? Her investments, the type of tenants… she has challenges she can't control and so get gets stressed. She is neat and tidy, patient and careful but with lots of vulnerabilities. She is anxious, nosey and short-sighted. She is in her mid-forties - and self manages her properties. She is a responsible and compassionate landlady who really wants to do the right thing while being careful with her finances. She works part time as a government officer in human services. She is very hands on in her landlady role bu has difficulty managing boundaries. This leads to her being a bit of a worry wort - to the point of being highly stressed and sometimes appearing to her tenants as being pedantic and neurotic. Her compassion and inability to set boundaries for herself sometimes make her vulnerable to being taken advantage of by other people, including sometimes her tenants.

Bruce, the pushover landlord

Bruce is bossy, weighs 150 kg - unshaven, has a friendly demeanour to strangers but is not so nice once you get to know him. He runs the local footy team.. A bad property manager, a pushover and crabby because he can never get ahead. He drives a Land Rover, fosters dogs and has a Pekinese dog that follows him everywhere. He wears an ill-fitting suit, is community minded, but untrustworthy, a bad business person, stingy and incompetent.

*Dodgy Dan the property owner focussed on profit and banking*
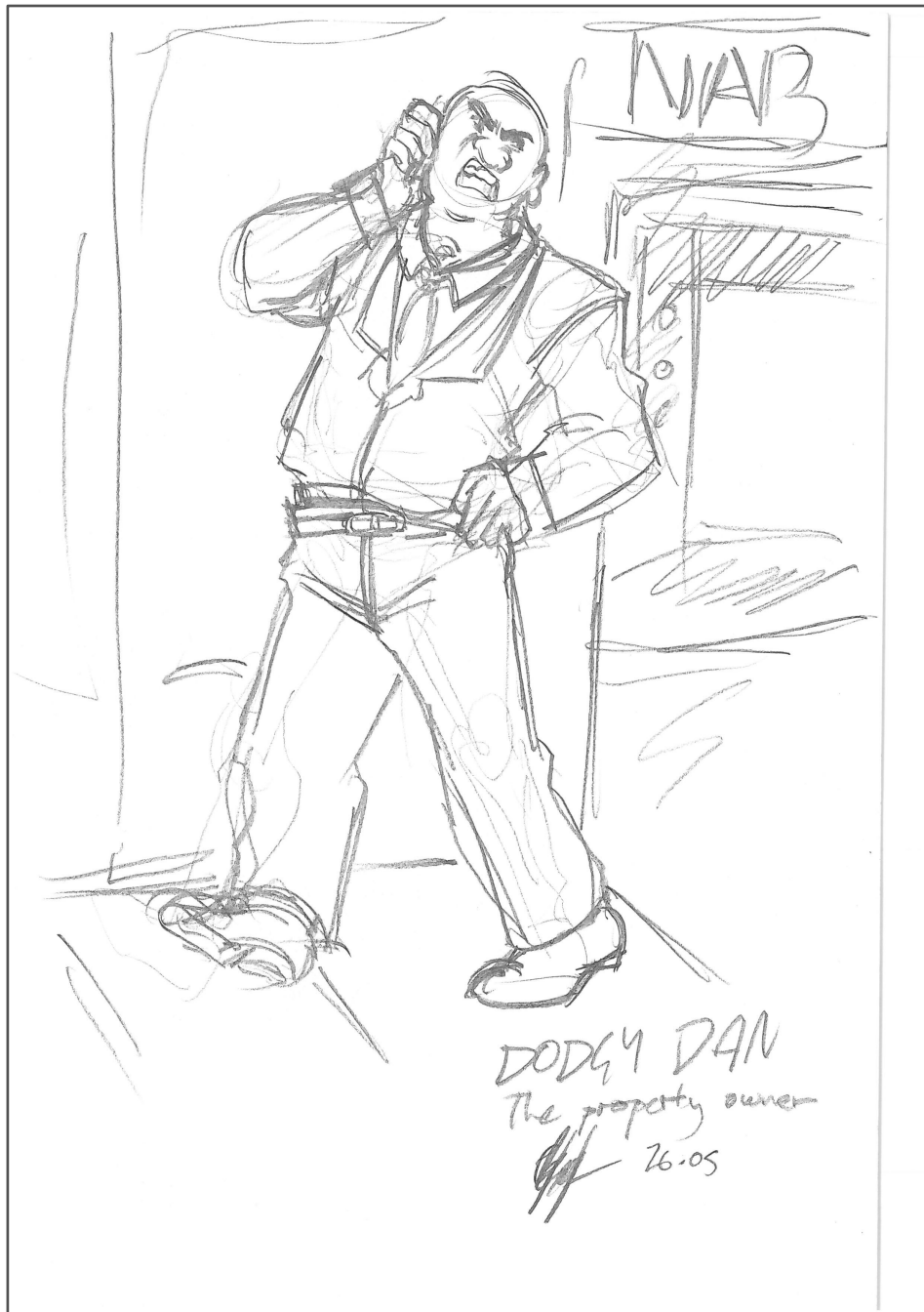
A wealthy property owner who will do anything he can to get the best out of his investment. Money is the be all and end all. Ethics are not his strong point. Though he likes to think highly of himself he can take on too much so he can come across as angry and a pain in the neck.

He is frugal to the point of being dodgy. - would do his own maintenance or get a shoddy repair job done by a mate. He does the least possible with the least amount of staff and is pretty damned incompetent as a landlord - blames others when return on investment is low or things don't go his way. He complains a lot and is generally cranky. He wears dark sunnies. He is seen as vindictive, uncaring and angry. He is also seen as strong, a Viking warrior

NB: Note the double entendre in the cartoon depiction that may or may not have been intentional. NAB stands for National Australia Bank, but also means a verb pertaining to arrest or being caught for doing the wrong thing.

Kevin, solo investor private landlord
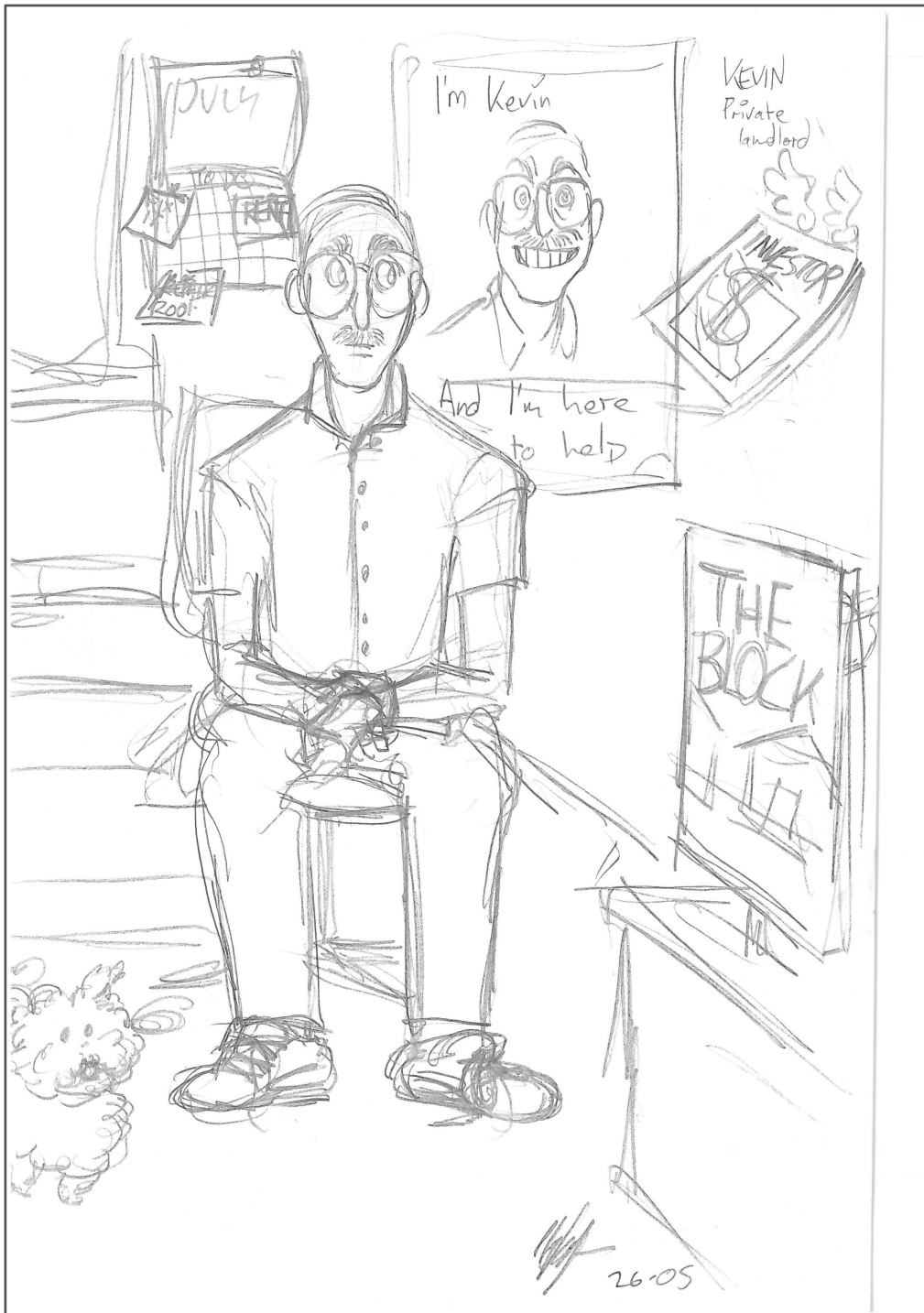
Kevin has his own dog.....geared to his own investments - a tad narcissistic, aspirational but has a sense of entitlement. He is trying to get a return on investment and is seen as a smart investor, helpful and diligent with his investing but is also seen as mean and heartless, short-sighted and with a sense of entitlement - a blood sucker. He watches the block and keeps an eye on the calendar and has a white board where he calculates rent vis à vis repairs. He is diligent about both. He dresses like an office worker - pen in pocket, checked shirt, white running shoes in his briefcase. He subscribes to Investor magazine - depicted with $$$ signs floating about. He sees himself as a Kevin who is 'here to help'* (poster). Bit of a lonely man - with a long nose, bug eyes and thick glasses.
 *NB this is a cultural reference to a former Australian Prime Minister named Keven who used this phrase as a catch cry.

Ritchie the landlord

'Mr Fixit' himself - Ritchie owns the flat next door and rents it out. He rocks up whenever he wants but it's to do repairs and maintenance that need doing. He is a self-taught handyman with a toolkit. He performs these repairs regardless of what the tenants think. When they complain (about inconvenience) he tells them they should be grateful and appreciate he is a conscientious landlord, unlike all those other landlords. He is a nice guy. He is retired but used to work in government and his best mates see him as flexible, confident, resourceful and artistic and rather entrepreneurial. Others see him as unscrupulous, a rule breaker, disrespectful, selfish and a bit delusional.

One on site manager

Finnegan (Boarding House manager – no accompanying text)

Finnegan

26.05

The appearance of Finnegan was at first curious, a boarding house archetype in a 'system' of rental tales where no boarding house tales were arrayed. As discussed in Chapter Seven, the subjectivities of two male participants with lived experience of such housing were reflected in the archetypes constructed from the workshop system of tales and participants' own knowledge of private rental.