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RE-PLACING SPRAWL: MAPPING PLACE IN AN AMERICAN SUBURB

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RE-PLACING SPRAWL:
MAPPING PLACE IN AN AMERICAN SUBURB

THESIS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
of the degree of Master of Arts in the College of Arts and
Sciences at the University of Kentucky

By

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Lexington, Kentucky

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

RE-PLACING SPRAWL: MAPPING PLACE IN AN AMERICAN SUBURB

In the post-World War II era land development in the United States has largely been focused on the expansion away from urban centers and out into the surrounding suburbs. While the development of suburbs began with utopian ideals of spiritual wholeness, their actual manifestation on the American landscape has been subject to harsh critiques about their long-term economic and environmental feasibility, fostering of social alienation, and general placelessness. In this thesis I address the criticism of suburbs as placeless, asking “What are the particular practices of place-making in North American suburbs?” Examining interviews, cognitive map surveys, participant observation, archival materials, and geoweb activity through lenses of imageability and anticipatory action I seek to better understand how the residents of an Indianapolis suburb narrate, structure, and produce a sense of place in their own community. In doing so I argue that that suburbs force an understanding of place as both experiential and social that is beyond mere aesthetics.

KEYWORDS: Suburbs, Place, GIS, Geoweb, Urban Studies

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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.0: *Welcome to the Suburbs*

According to city planners, Chicago has run out of new names for its subdivisions. 'It was bound to happen sooner or later,' Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley said at a Monday press conference in front of City Hall. 'Oak Dale Springs, Whispering Pines, Stonewood Creek... We have used every tree, body of water, and living thing in the almanac. You don't have to drive all the way out to Kevin Acres to know we need a new naming system.' Daley announced that, beginning in 2004, all new housing developments in the Chicago area will be numbered with a positive integer. ("Chicago Out Of Names For Subdivisions" 2003)

This 'news' snippet from the satirical newspaper *The Onion* expresses the arbitrariness that one observes when surveying the neighborhoods that have come to typify the suburban residential landscape. The names of these neighborhoods are evocative of and conjure up a sense of place that does not necessarily reflect what one actually experiences. Arbor Springs, a subdivision in suburban Indianapolis where I grew up, contains no springs and, save for some of the properties at the perimeter of the development, is largely treeless. On a recent drive through the outskirts of my hometown of Brownsburg, Indiana a developer sign outside a large subdivision of modest homes advertised for the few remaining lots in "Historic Whittington Estates" (Figure 1).

Although the mid-1990s, when the oldest houses in the neighborhood were built, is in the past there is a dissonant sense when one beholds the hundreds of slight variations of the same design. The compulsion to describe the scene as historic would certainly feel forced or at least require a thesis-length justification. These sorts of ironic juxtapositions of place-name against what is observed in such a place is repeated in the myriad suburban developments across the United States. For those who characterize suburbs as placeless "nowheres" (Kunstler 1994), the rich imagery that is conjured up by these toponyms are

mere reproductions of a past for which there is no original (Baudrillard 1994). They conjure up nostalgia for something that never was. It is simple critique to posit that such areas are non-places because they are artificially represented through their names. But as I show throughout this project, place is not so simple.



Figure 1: Historic Whittington Estates (Personal photo)

1.1: A Suburban Sense of Place?

Certainly there is a superficiality verging on the absurd in these neighborhood names.

They are not at all connected to the places they are describing, for example, as in neighborhoods like SoHo in New York City or Maxwell Triangle in Lexington,

Kentucky. I bring up this short example of place-names in suburbia not to suggest a

further analysis of how these awkwardly named locales are indeed places, but instead as a springboard for further investigation of how, despite their frequently examined

superficial exterior, suburbs are places. The basis for this proposed project comes out of a

fairly broad question: *What are the particular practices of place-making in North American suburbs?*

Narratives of the suburban experience are often drawn out of a relationship with the urban. Some might even argue that suburbs are not discrete entities, but instead simply "footprints of the city" (Amin and Thrift 2002, 1). It is not my intention to suggest that suburbs would have developed without cities. However, I do want to explore the particularities of suburbs onto which residents who live in them seem to grasp. Suburbs are more than simple bedroom communities for urban workers. Whether through civic organizations, intramural sports programs, or local institutions like schools there is a sense of place in suburbs that is not fully connected to the urban core. As Garreau (1992) demonstrates, suburbs are increasingly the realm of social, economic, and political activities that are traditionally associated with central cities. As such, sense of place in suburbia should not be so quickly cast away simply because it is predicated on a land-use model that is likely unsustainable (Greene 2004). In this project, I want to examine suburbia by focusing on the suburbs themselves. In particular I am interested in the ways the experiences in their community contribute to a distinct connection to their individual suburb.

1.2: Outline of Thesis

In this thesis I attempt to identify a sense of place in suburbia that moves beyond critiques of suburbs based on aesthetics and on the feelings of outsiders. My research attempts to draw on the experiences of the people living in suburbia in order to understand how place operates in the suburbs. The rest of this project is presented as follows.

Chapter 2 provides a review of the relevant literature guiding this project. Namely it seeks to bring together discussions of place, suburbs in urban theory, and critiques of suburbia in order to foreground questions about placemaking in an American suburb. I also introduce Center Grove, an Indianapolis suburb where I carried out my primary research. Chapter 3 provides an outline of my research methods. In this project I engaged in mixed-methods research which synthesized data from surveys, interviews, Twitter data, participant observation, and wallowing (Harris 2001). Chapter 4 offers an examination of place in Center Grove through a framework of imageability, or the ability to structure one's perceptions and experiences of the environment. Here I draw on cognitive maps, interviews, and Twitter data to explore how residents, visitors, and passers-through produce a legible and unique image of Center Grove out of their own personal experiences. Chapter 5 explores recent debates in Center Grove over whether or not to incorporate as a town or remain unincorporated. These debates reveal much about the way residents of Center Grove see their community, particularly as something different from other surrounding communities. By framing the debate through Ben Anderson's anticipatory action I examine how residents' considerations of Center Grove in the future-tense have placemaking effects in the present. I then offer some concluding statements about place in Center Grove and suburbia at large in Chapter 6, arguing for an understanding of place that moves beyond mere aesthetics that is attendant to the possibility of meaningful experiences and social connections in the suburbs.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

2.0: Introduction

The primary goal of this project is to examine place in the context of contemporary sprawling suburbs of North America. I ask the question, how is place made and experienced in suburbia?

This question is motivated by critiques of suburbia that cast the suburbs as something less real than their rural and, especially, urban counterparts. The tagline for Richard Florida's influential Atlantic Cities blog is "place matters" (The Atlantic Monthly Group 2013). A daily reader will find him/herself inundated with posts praising cities, deriding suburbs, and suggesting how to make suburbs more like cities. The implication here is that more so than suburbs, cities are places. If place indeed matters, then suburbs should be more like cities.

As such, this project sits at the intersection of two sets of literature, each of which are examined below. First is the concept of place. Here I want to examine how place comes to be and the multiple overlapping ways it has been conceptualized. Second, I call on literature that seeks to understand suburbia and its relation to the urban. What are suburbs and how are they connected with understandings of the city? These two sets of literature come together through critiques of suburbia. As such, I will discuss critiques of place(lessness) in the suburbs. Finally, I introduce Center Grove, Indiana, my field site for this research emerging from these literatures.

2.1: Place

2.1.0: What is place?

Since Strabo implored geographers to describe the different "places" of the earth (Strabo and Sterrett 1917), place has been one of the main pillars of human geography. While Strabo's call certainly overlaps with the impulse of geographers today, it only suggests that place is something, but not what place *is*. Indeed, place is a term that, while used quite loosely and in a variety of contexts, has only in the last 50 years received critical attention.

At their simplest, places are "spaces which people have made meaningful" (Cresswell 2006, 7). John Agnew identifies three properties that contribute to the meaningfulness of locations and their resultant "placeness" (1987). First, places have a location. This may be described, for example, in terms of latitude and longitude or in a relational sense (ex. Woodland Park is between Downtown Lexington and Chevy Chase). Second, places have a locale, or material setting in which social relations can take place. The locale from which I am writing, the Chevy Chase neighborhood of Lexington, Kentucky consists of the intersection of roads, various store fronts, and a rhythmically stopping and starting flow of automobile, bicycle, and pedestrian traffic. This configuration of physical objects, whether static or in motion, sets the stage for the types of social interactions that result in memories and attachments that are grounded in a locale. Meaningful locations are constituted by a "sense of place." Almost as elusive as place itself, sense of place describes the "subjective feelings associated with a place" such that even when one is not located in a particular place, they can form an idea of what it is like to be there (Cresswell 2006, 7).

Agnew's three-part definition of place presents a helpful starting point, but also suggests that place is made of equal parts location, locale, and sense of place. Nonetheless, place has been conceptualized in multiple ways with particular emphasis given to one of Agnew's properties of place. Tim Cresswell offers a helpful typology of place that roughly mirrors Agnew's three properties of place. Cresswell moves place from an object to an epistemology, stating that "place is not just a thing in the world but a way of understanding the world" (2006, 11). His typology breaks place into three different, although not entirely distinct, perspectives of the world: descriptive, social constructionist, and phenomenological (2006, 51).

2.1.1: Descriptive Place

Descriptive notions of place emphasize location in Agnew's definition. A descriptive approach to place considers the question "how and why does one part of the earth differ from another?" (Wooldridge and East 1966) It is concerned with the collection of physical and cultural features within a given area. This type of inquiry speaks to the tradition in regional geography of chorology, or the study of areas.

An early example of this descriptive understanding of place can be found in the work French geographer Paul Vidal de la Blache whose concept of *genre de vie* (ways of living) took into account human-nature interactions as a way of distinguishing one area from another (Livingstone 1992, 267). *Genre de vie* gave way to culture in work by Wagner and Mikesell (1962) to understand place, mapping areas of relative uniformity and homogeneity among a spate of cultural features such as language, religion, technology, and economy, in order to reveal aerial differences. More recently Nicholas Entrikin (1991) has suggested a move away from broad geographic theories in favor of

closer examination of the particularities of the social and physical constitution of place in order to better understand its role in constituting both individual and group identities.

While the examples above draw on nearly an entire century of geographic thought on 'place', the common thread between them holds that places are unique from other places. A descriptive notion of place compels questions such as *What is here?* and *What is not here?* By describing the particularities of places we can understand how they in fact differ from others both near and far.

2.1.2: Social Constructionist Place

David Harvey perhaps most succinctly laid out the underlying question to social constructionist place stating, "The only interesting thing that can be asked is: by what social process(es) is place constructed?" (1996, 293–294) In a social constructionist sense, place, like in the descriptive approach, is concerned with uniqueness of whatever area is being examined. However, a place is not unique because of its properties, but instead the process that led such properties to be in the first place. This parallels roughly with Agnew's second property of place, locale, in that place is given meaning less by what is there and more by what conditions manifest themselves in space to make the place unique.

The social is the essential element in the constitution of places. Particularities of places, as in the descriptive approach are still of interest, but social constructionists seek to understand further how those particularities are constituted out of broader structural conditions like capitalism, patriarchy, post-colonialism, etc. The social constructionist approach is thus taken frequently by Marxist, feminist, and post-structuralist geographers. The physical properties of places are not ignored, but their contribution to a place's

'placeness' is less about their materiality and more about how they are implicated in the social processes that constitute place.

Harvey conceptualizes place as a byproduct of the tension between the fixity and mobility of capital. Differentiation, a key component of most any conception of place, is an economic tactic for drawing capital from one place to another. As such, places exist for the sole reason that they offer a better opportunity for the capital gains than some other place (1996, 296). However, Doreen Massey's "Global Sense of Place" offers a social constructionist conception of place that downplays the importance of capital. Instead, she writes that a given place cultivates specificity by "the fact that it is constructed out of particular constellations of social relations, meeting and weaving at a particular locus" (1991, 29). Places become as a variety of multi-scalar flows of peoples, capital, and power come together. However, because these flows are subject to change and exist across scales, we cannot speak of a single, bounded place as in the descriptive approaches above.

While Harvey and Massey stand as two major figures in the social constructionist theorization of place, they certainly do not stand alone. Others have developed more personal ideas of place that, while not shunning the global scale, certainly begin to delve into the internal and affective relation of individuals to particular locales. For Arturo Escobar, place is a fluid gathering of "things, thoughts, and memories in particular configurations" (2001, 143–145). Similar to Massey and Escobar, Lucy Lippard understands places as being dynamically constituted. However, she adds that the layers of prior "histories and memories" serve as sedimentary bedrock upon which social flows can come together (1997, 7).

Social constructionist notions of place are noteworthy because place is not constituted out of a set of things, but instead processes. While it may seem an overstatement that the only thing interesting about places is their process of becoming, this idea of place as a process is key to opening up lines of inquiry that go beyond *What is unique about this place?* to *How did this place come to be unique?*

2.1.3: Phenomenological Place

The acknowledgment by both Escobar and Lippard of human experience in production of places also speaks to Cresswell's third type of place: the phenomenological. Used largely by humanistic geographers, phenomenological place has less to do with particularities of place, as in the descriptive approach, or the processes whereby it comes to be, as in the social constructionist approach.

It follows an understanding of place “as a universal and transhistorical part of the human condition” (Cresswell 2006, 20). Place is not a byproduct of human action, but instead an outgrowth of being in and experiencing the world. In relation to Agnew’s definition of place, a phenomenological perspective emphasizes the property of sense of place. Through experience, one comes to know a place more and more intimately.

Perhaps the most representative insight on the phenomenological understanding of place comes from Yi-Fu Tuan. He writes about the experience of place in relationship to space. For Tuan space is not so much experienced as it is moved through. Places become legible when one pauses (1977, 6). In these pauses “topophilia,” the “affective bond between people and place,” is realized through experience (1974, 4).

Therefore, experience is at the center of place, according to Tuan. For him it is not enough to see objects or interactions in a given space:

To experience is to learn; it means acting on the given and creating out of the given. The given cannot be known in itself. What can be known is a reality that is a construct of experience, a creation of feeling and thought (1977, 9).

While a place can be experienced by and with many, the experience of place itself is fundamentally tied to the individual. Drawing on his own example, a blind man dropped in Greenwich Village and given sight for the first time would perhaps not have an immediate sense of place. Places cannot suggest their 'placeness' simply by being. For Tuan, it is through one's experience in a locale that one can begin to identify it as a place (1977, 17).

Edward Relph extends this idea of place beyond just experience, but also an essential part of being human. He writes, "To be human is to live in a world that is filled with significant places; to be human is to have to know *your* place" (1976, 3). It is a requirement of the conscious human as he/she exists in the world to assign and derive meaning as well as apply structure to those things he/she encounters. And as places are experienced by people, those places come to define those who experience them as well. Relph states that "[t]he essence of place lies in the largely unselfconscious intentionality that defines places as profound centers of human existence"(1976, 43). Experience translates a space littered with various objects into a place that has meaning by connecting those objects to the person.

A phenomenological understanding of place relies heavily on its connection with intimate human experiences of the world. Place, in this conceptualization, cannot be without humans and humans cannot be without place. Place is not a unique collection of objects or set of grand processes, but an essential part of one's relationship with their various surroundings.

2.2: Suburbs & the Urban

2.2.0: What are suburbs?

Similar to ‘place’ the term ‘suburb’ has become one that is taken for granted. Defining what a suburb is has become increasingly difficult as they have developed and taken various forms. However, at simplest, suburbs are typically understood in relationship to the urban. Merriam-Webster defines 'suburb' as: "an outlying part of a city or town; a smaller community adjacent to or within commuting distance of a city; the residential area on the outskirts of a city" (“Suburb” 2012).

There has been some work done to tackle this definition of suburbia and whether or not we should strive for one that is universal or instead continue with the fragmentary approach whereby particular understandings of suburbia are denoted by superlative prefixes (e.g. first-ring suburbs, sitcom suburbs, etc.) and neologisms (Forsyth 2012; Mikelbank 2004). Nonetheless, this work has been rather inconclusive on what the best way forward might be. As such, the term ‘suburb’ and its variants (e.g. suburbia, ‘burbs, etc.) remains defined in a multitude of ways.

Definitions of American suburbs frequently are at the intersection of the nation’s history and land-use practices. Some commentators have conflated suburbia with sprawl (Duany, Plater-Zyberk, and Speck 2001; Kunstler 1994). Baxandall and Ewen (2000) have pitched suburbia as the post-WWII relief of pent-up demand following a long tryst between the federal government and private builders over how housing should be built for the middle class and by whom. Through a series of interviews on Long Island's Levittown, they come to understand suburbia not as an aesthetic, but as a set of tensions of private vs. public responsibility, image/idea vs. reality, and the attainability of the American Dream. Jackson (1987) defines suburbs by their non-farm, residential function,

the middle/upper-middle class status of residents, separation of residence and work, and low density. Delores Hayden (2004) describes suburbia as "a landscape of imagination where Americans situate ambitions and private property, and longings for social harmony and spiritual uplift". This has not, however, manifested itself in one coherent 'suburbia,' but instead seven broad forms of suburbs that have appeared and persisted since 1820 (Hayden 2004, 4–5).

For Jon Teaford, there may be a variety of suburban forms, but they are all a result of a mindset that differs from that of the city. He understands the urban as imbued with an impulse towards regional and/or global commercial and cultural centrality. The suburbs have grown as a response to this outward looking attitude of the city. As Teaford states, "[Suburban] leaders were fashioning principalities, not empires" (2008, xii). The suburbs may have built up around and even throughout cities, but the inward looking mentality and the localization of governmental aims is what makes them a unique formation.

Still, others have side-stepped the term altogether and created neologisms such as "bourgeois utopias," "edge cities," "boomburbs," "privatopias," etc. to describe those places that are not quite city and not quite country (Fishman 1987; Garreau 1992; Lang and LeFurgy 2007; McKenzie 1996).

2.2.1: Suburbs in Urban Theory

What is persistent in the above conceptualizations of suburbs is the sense that they are both related to but not wholly a part of some sort of city: The suburb is indeed *sub* to the 'urb' (Teaford 2008, x). While thinking of the suburb as a thing tied to the city we can

begin to consider the suburb in terms of three schools of thought in urban theory: The Chicago School, the Los Angeles School, and the ontology of new urbanism.

In the Chicago School, sociologist Ernest Burgess conceptualized the city as an organism that expands radially from the central business district (CBD). The second ring contains business and manufacturing while the remaining rings contain various forms of worker housing. The outer most area is the land of commuters, what Burgess describes as suburbs and satellite cities.

What is also significant about this theory of the city as an organism is that the various rings of the city do not simply radiate from the CBD. Burgess writes that it is "the tendency of each inner zone to extend its area by the invasion of the next outer zone" (2010, 340). Applied more directly to the suburbs, these are areas that as the city grows are increasingly over-run by the working class. As such, the wealthier bourgeois commuters are pushed further away from the CBD. Nonetheless, the suburbs still maintain a commuter tie with city. In this conception, the suburb does not exist without the city.

The Los Angeles School marks a distinct departure from the Chicago School of urban theory. As Michael Dear writes "It is no longer the center that organizes the hinterland. It is the hinterland that determines what remains of the center" (2001, 3). If the Chicago School's concentric ring model of the city is highly organized then the Los Angeles School's form of 'postmodern urbanism' appears quite random.

Dear and Flusty (1998), however, remark that this de-centered form of urbanism is anything but random. Instead it is a result of the rapidity with which global capital can touch down and then lift off from a locale. Whereas rings of industry and residence

emanate from the CBD in the Chicago School model, the Los Angeles School presents urbanization as a "quasi-random field of opportunities" (1998, 66) where development in one area may not necessarily translate into development in those immediately surrounding it. Without a center, the suburb, in a literal sense, is a near impossibility. After all, if all locales in a given area have the potential for intense capital investment and disinvestment independent of surrounding locales then a relationship of subordination to a center is unlikely.

However we can see one potential idea of suburbia in Los Angeles School's postmodern urbanism with what Dear and Flusty term 'communities.' Communities, a word-mash of commodified communities, are essentially bourgeois neighborhoods:

They commonly consist of carefully manicured residential and commercial ecologies managed through privatopian self-administration, and maintained against internal and external outlaws by a repertoire of interdictory prohibitions. Increasingly, these prepackaged environments jockey with one another for clientele on the basis of recreational, cultural, security, and educational amenities (1998, 63).

While perhaps there is no center-periphery relationship in postmodern urbanism there is still the class-based segmentation that has frequently typified suburbia.

Although the Chicago and Los Angeles Schools of urban theory are arguably the most influential, Ash Amin and Nigel Thrift (2002) offer a third conception of the urban for consideration. They respond to what they see as rigidity in both traditional and contemporary urban theories' ability to adequately read the cities of today. Whether thinking about modernist (Chicago School) or postmodern (Los Angeles School) urbanism, they observe that many urban theories are overly general and rigid in how they conceptualize the events and processes that produce the city (2002, 8–9).

The city, for Amin and Thrift, is spatially unbounded, omnipresent, and constantly in a state of becoming. The city is composed of a set of potentialities that, instead of looking to the past for a strict model of development to follow, are active in the present, affected, morphed, destroyed, and reborn as other potentialities are enacted (2002, 4). "[S]omehow," they write, "the fragments do come together into an enduring picture..." (2002, 3). But simply because the city becomes legible does not mean it is a thing itself. As flows of people, information, commodities, and power come together they leave 'footprints' or 'traces' of presence.

While the coalescing ephemera of these footprints can begin to create a coherent image of the city, observed through rhythms of the everyday (2002, 16–21), there is an understanding that a change in the composition of the various social, economic, and power flows will result in a different image of the city. Indeed the evanescence of these urban footprints help "to discard the idea of the city as an ordered and segregated pattern of mobility" and instead a palimpsest upon which it is continually erased and rewritten (2002, 22–24).

What does this mean for the suburbs? If we cannot speak of the city as a thing, can a suburb still be one? For Amin and Thrift, the answer appears to be *No*, or at least, *Not anymore*. They begin with the pseudo-biblical premise that the "city is everywhere and in everything" (2002, 1). As networks of physical and cyber infrastructures open up more pathways into and between urban centers, the flows that coalesce downtown also scatter away towards other centers. Because these flows of the city are increasingly everywhere, so too is the city. The suburb is no longer 'sub' to the 'urb'. It is the 'urb', and the 'urb' is omnipresent.

2.3: Suburbia and its Discontents

Thus far I have considered conceptualizations of place and of suburbs, particularly with respect to theories of the urban. In what follows, I will examine the nexus of place and suburbs as manifest in critiques of suburbia which can take many forms. The auto-oriented nature of suburbia presents legitimate concerns about the impacts of carbon emissions and the massive swathes of asphalt and concrete that cover the United States (McHarg and History 1969; Meadows et al. 1972; Corporation et al. 1974; Hattam 2000). Economically speaking it is unclear whether sprawling suburban land-use practices are sustainable in a world with finite energy resources (Greene 2004). And as suburbs are increasingly becoming more diverse, questions of exclusion and segregation along race and class lines or divisions between tenured and new residents are just as relevant as ever (Blakely 1998; Davidoff and Gold 1970; McKenzie 1996).

However the critiques I want to focus on are those related to ideas of (in)authenticity and placelessness. These are particularly noteworthy critiques because they address qualities of both place as constructed and experienced. As such, first I will separately examine authenticity and placelessness and then see how they are operationalized in critiques of suburbs.

2.3.0: Placelessness

Placelessness is an idea developed by the phenomenological geographer Edward Relph. On one hand it can be thought of as the opposite of place. This is perhaps a disservice to the term given the above sampling of how place is conceptualized. Indeed, for Relph placelessness is something rather specific. Identity of place is not to be found in specific locations and locales. It is multi-scalar, reaching from regions or landscapes or cities or

homes. Relph writes that "To be inside a place is to belong to it and to identify with it, and the more profoundly inside you are the stronger is the identity with the place" (1976, 49). It is the experiences inside these places that makes them identifiable as somewhere distinct from somewhere else.

Placelessness is essentially the homogenization of places to the point where it is impossible to stand in one and differentiate it from another. Relph points to accessible and rapid practices of mobility and tourism as key drivers of an increased sense of placelessness. Mobility discourages rootedness in the home while the tourist industry has created facades of place for the experience of outsiders. As people are free to easily move about the country and world their ability to closely experience a place is mitigated. We often go to places instead of visit them. It is this emphasis on mobility over destination that Relph (1976) points to as the destruction of distinction. Everywhere becomes 'there' and 'there' becomes 'nowhere'.

Similar to placelessness, Augé (2008) develops the notion of non-place, where place is understood as relational, historical, and concerned with identity. Places are formed out of common practices among a group of people who come to identify with one another. On the other hand, non-places are formed out of an increasingly atomized society that is constantly on the move (2008, 63). Spaces of mobility have superseded the home or village as locales where people carry out their lives, socialize, and connect to a common history.

Non-places include the freeway, airport, or supermarket. They are experienced individually and very temporarily. The existence of places are only hinted at while "the movement of the fleeting images enables the observer to hypothesize the existence of a

past and glimpse the possibility of the future" (Augé 2008, 70–71). As such, places may be alluded to, for example, in road signs, billboards, and guidebooks, but they are experienced individually and only in passing.

2.3.1: Authenticity

Placelessness and non-place are referenced frequently in critiques of suburbia. This association of placelessness with suburbs often manifests itself in displeasure with their lack of authenticity. This association of place and authenticity can be traced back to Heidegger's (1971) notion of the *desien*, or dwelling. *Desien* is the essence of human existence in the world. Authenticity is then a sense of being properly rooted in a place. An inauthentic place is not a place at all, but a locale that is difficult to differentiate from another locale.

The search for authenticity in place is an attempt to find the link or recover links from the past to the present (Boyle 2004, 15). Looked at slightly differently, Charles Guignon writes that authenticity comes from first realizing one's true inner self and then presenting that self outwardly (2004, 6). So for a place to be authentic there needs to be not only a connection to the past, but some sort of visible acknowledgment that the past happened at all.

2.3.2: Critiquing Suburbia

Inauthenticity creeps to the surface of anti-suburban critiques whether the term authenticity is used or not. Duane et al. write "[L]ife seems less satisfying to most Americans, particularly in the ubiquitous middle-class suburbs, where a sprawling, repetitive, and forgettable landscape has supplanted the original promise of suburban life with a hollow imitation" (2001, xiii). Suburb-critic James Kunstler recalls in his

childhood the contrast in sense of authenticity of an old abandoned mansion against the unsatisfying uniformity of the suburban neighborhood in which he was living (1994, 12). And New Urbanists have touted the return of authenticity through designs that seek to recreate the aesthetic and form of the compact, small towns of yesteryear (Katz 1994).

That said the particular critiques I am concerned with contain a belief that it is the physical qualities of suburbia that make them "places not worth caring about" (Duany, Plater-Zyberk, and Speck 2001, x; Kunstler 2004). For Duany et al. (2001, 15) life can be better if planners would simply follow their six design rules (Table 1), all of which physically rearrange how our communities are put together. Kunstler announces with no hesitation that "if we can repair the physical fabric of our everyday world, many of the damaged and abandoned institutions of our civic life may follow into restoration" (1996, 20).

Table 1

<p>6 Rules for Countering Sprawl:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Defined center of commerce, culture, and governance2. Day-to-day needs are within 5 minutes walking distance3. Gridded street network4. Narrow streets, wide sidewalks5. Mixed-use zoning6. Special sites for special structures <p>(Duany et al 2001, 15)</p>
--

But is it simply the physical structures that determine our experience of the suburbs? It is a matter of personal opinion whether or not one finds small towns or urban neighborhoods more aesthetically pleasing than suburbs. And yet it seems that Kunstler and the New Urbanists work under the impression that for somewhere to be a place, it

must appear beautiful and it must feel authentic. These criticisms come from a more phenomenological perspective. There is an elusive essence to well-designed communities that we can come to know very intimately through experience.

As was addressed earlier, the notion of place can be understood in many ways. What of, for instance, the social constructionist approach to place? This is the question taken up by David Kolb (2008). He argues that criticisms levied against contemporary places are often founded on references to past constructions of place. Such criticisms overlook that “[p]laces today are different because our lives are different” (2008, 2). The speeding up of society through transportation and communication networks has introduced new complexities to place that may be overlooked through Heideggerian dwelling.

Central to Kolb's thoughts on sprawl is a rethinking of place in the suburban context. For Kolb, “patterns of activity...prescribe divisions within the space and govern what is expected or appropriate to do and not do in these locations” (2008, 8). Echoing Massey (1991) place is not constituted by the experience of things in a locale, but instead shaped by fluctuating flows of capital, commodities, media, and people. Authenticity and essence of place are unimportant terms because for Kolb place is a moving target that is constantly in a state of becoming (2008, 26). Kolb's understanding of place is a true shunning of phenomenological approaches based solely on experience. However it is by detaching hazy notions of authenticity from place that Kolb is able to try and understand the 'placeness' of otherwise banal suburban landscapes.

The above discussions reflect the multiple ways in which both place and suburbia can be understood and synthesized. Rediscovering the essence of place and countering

inauthentic forms of suburban sprawl are of significant import to critics of the suburbs. On the other hand, there is a sense, particularly expressed through Kolb, that looking for place in suburbs based on an ontology of essence misses out on the multifarious ways in which places are made. But does a search for place in suburbia have to resort to only phenomenological place or socially constructed place? Perhaps there is space to work at the boundaries of both understandings of place. Humans have experiences of the world that may be the result of a convergence of a certain set of flows, but also stick with them long after that particular arrangement has dissipated and been replaced. While it is tempting to favor socially constructionist understandings of place like Kolb, I want to conceive of a fluid sense of place that also accounts for experience and memory of those flows. It is this understanding of place that I use below in my search for place in an Indianapolis suburb.

2.4: Suburban Place

The research question posed for this project is *What are the processes of placemaking in suburbia?* Having examined critiques of suburbia at their intersection with conceptualizations of place, I want to take a moment to establish what I mean by suburban place. I understand place as a tension between experience and process. I recognize that place is an essential part of the human experience. Our experiences of the world allow us to make sense of the things in it. I also understand place as constituted out of over-arching processes of socialization, capital movement, communication, etc. Bringing these ideas together, I understand that places are not experienced as some final essence, but that the various larger processes that manifest in the world around us are still only meaningful because they are experienced by people.

This understanding of place -- as perhaps a post-phenomenological account that understands experiences of place are shot through with social constructions -- shapes my conceptualization of suburbs. As such, I understand suburbs largely within a framework of Amin and Thrift's new urbanism: that the suburbs do not exist as a discrete form of settlement or in specific spatial relation to the city. Instead, I understand suburbs as a particular configuration of the flows of capital, communication, labor, and power that increasingly constitute the city everywhere. That is, the city may be everywhere, but it is not the same everywhere. Amin and Thrift seek to ground their new urbanism "in an understanding of the structured and unstructured regularities of life" (2002, 26). The seeming chaos of the city is wrangled through institutionalized practices and bureaucracies, engineering of certainty and rhythm, and its connection to cities all over the world (2002, 26–27). In the case of suburbs, it is this last point that is slightly different. Amin and Thrift write that "the city needs theorization as a site of local-global connectivity, not a place of meaningful proximate links" (2002, 27). Although the line dividing a focus on the global connectivity and proximate connectivity is hazy, suburbs in my understanding are comprised of processes that are more local. This is not to say that suburbs do not have the potential or never are enrolled in global connections, but that practices of residence, mobility, work, play, and commerce are more often drawn in relation to a more global-looking city.

2.5: Center Grove, Indiana

It is with the above understandings of place and suburbs that I ground my study of Center Grove, Indiana (Figure 2). Center Grove is an unincorporated area south of Indianapolis situated in the northwest corner of Johnson County. Johnson County is one of eight counties surrounding Indianapolis and Marion County. Many of these counties, including

Johnson County, are home to sprawling, suburban, middle to upper-middle class communities (Figure 3), or what Chinni and Gimpel have characterized as 'monied burbs' (2010).

White River Township, which is historically synonymous with Center Grove, as recently as 50 years ago contained about 6,500 residents and was largely a rural amalgam of farms. The rush out of the city was just beginning (Bureau of the Census 2004). The area has since experienced fairly rapid residential development (Figure 4). Since 1990 the population has increased from 28,232 to 42,100 in 2010 (Bureau of the Census 2010). At \$81,501, White River Township has an average median household income significantly higher than the state's median of \$46,815 (Bureau of the Census 2011). This places Center Grove on the upper end of the upper-middle class by Indiana standards.

In response to encroaching annexation of land by the nearby towns of Greenwood and Bargersville, in late-2011 a citizen group called Citizens for Center Grove (C4CG hereafter) began the process of incorporating Center Grove as a municipal entity answerable to itself (rather than the county). While much of the rhetoric coming out of this group revolves around the benefits of local land, fiscal and tax control (Citizens for Center Grove 2011a), C4CG has also raised an existential question: "What is Center Grove?" (Citizens for Center Grove 2011b) Although further efforts to incorporate are on hold, the questions that C4CG has raised and posed to area residents are important when thinking about the possibility of a 'placeful' suburb.

Johnson County, Indiana

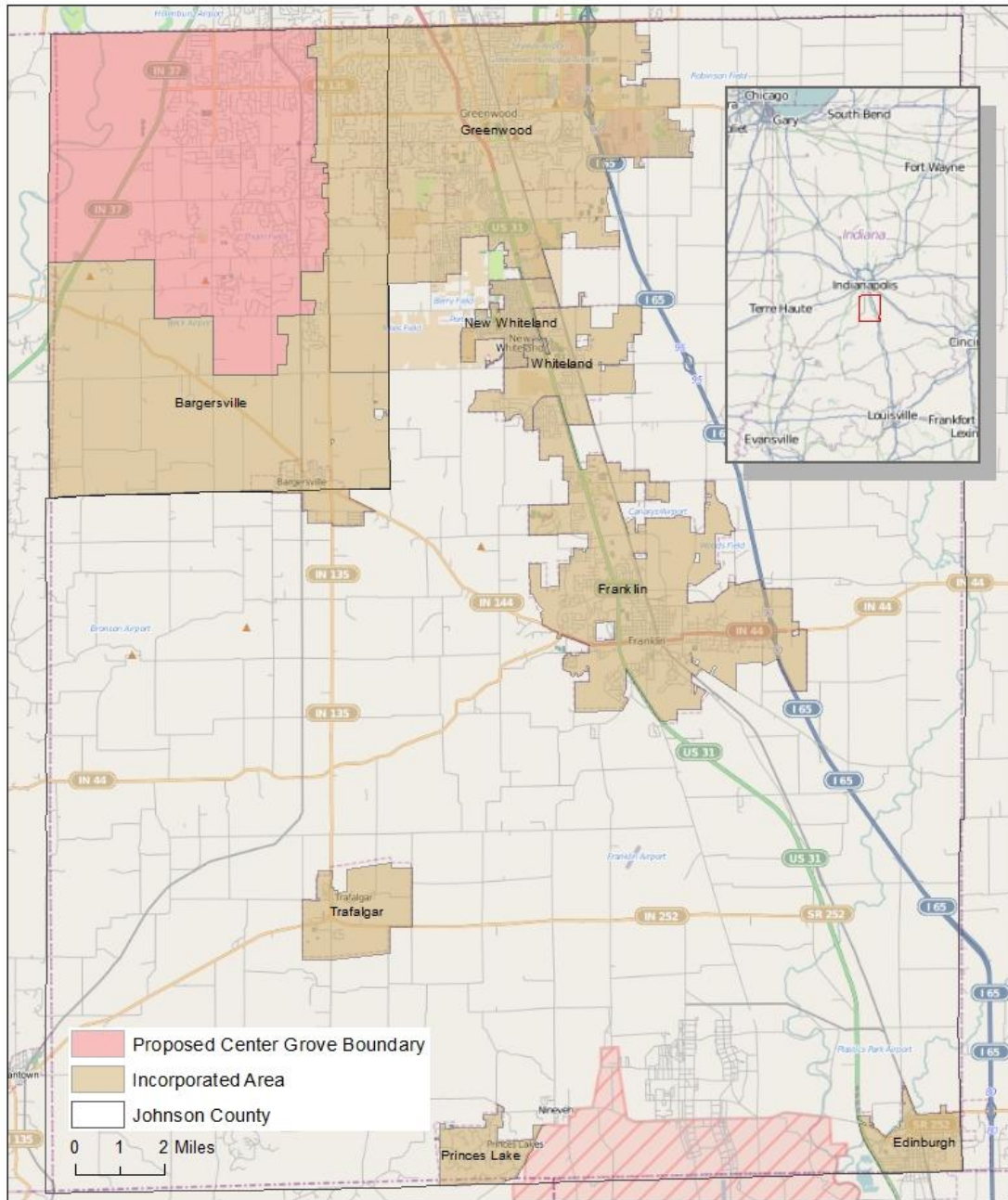


Figure 2: Johnson County, Indiana (OpenStreetMap Contributors 2012; Citizens for Center Grove 2013a)

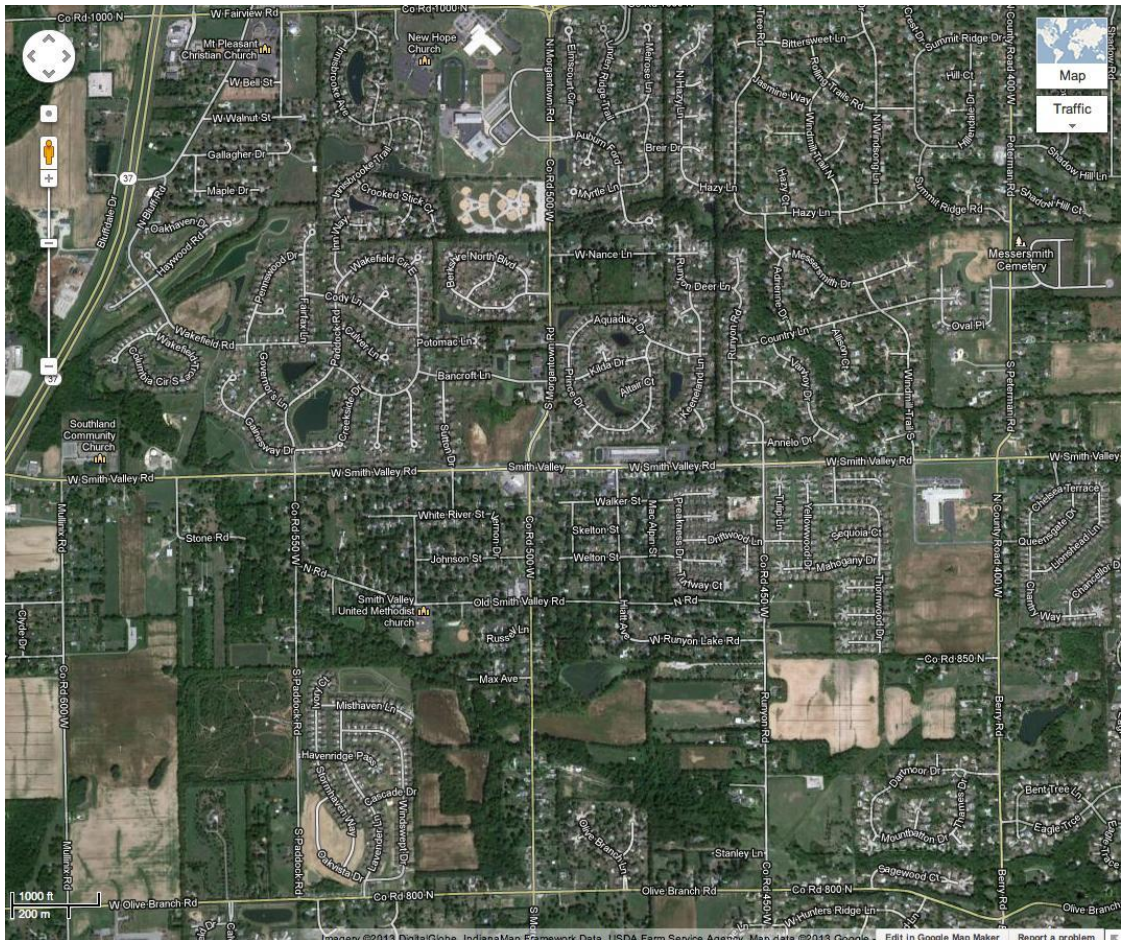


Figure 3: Aerial image of the Center Grove area (“Center Grove, Indiana” 2013)

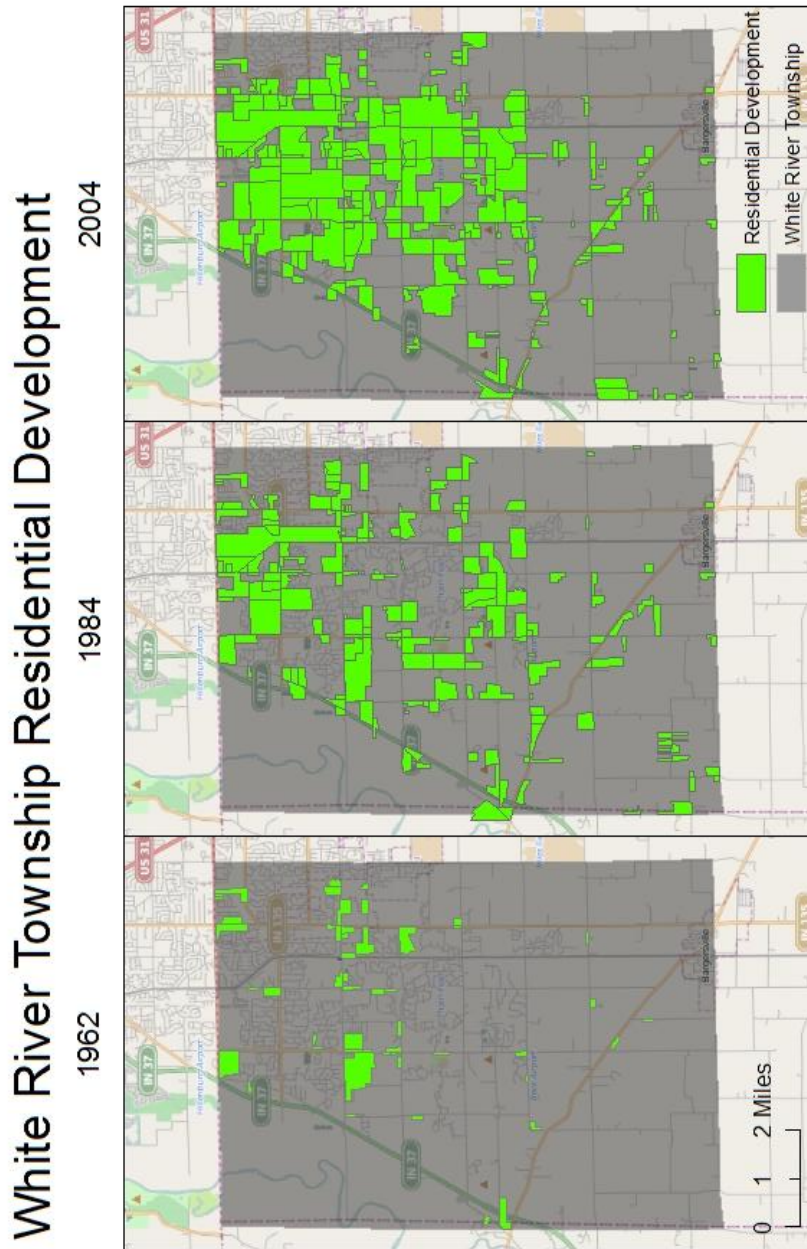


Figure 4: Residential development in White River Township, 1962 - 2004
 (OpenStreetMap Contributors 2012; “White River T. 13-14 N.-R3 E.” 1962; “White River” 1984; Athentic Incorporated 2004)

Chapter 3. Methods

3.0: Methodology

Data collection and analysis for this project was carried out using a qualitative mixed-methods approach. Mixed-methods research brings together multiple data types and forms of analysis to allow for a more nuanced query of the research question (Elwood 2010). Elwood and Cope identify three primary assumptions that characterize mixed-methods research (2009, 4–7):

1. All knowledge is situated and partial.
2. Epistemology does not dictate methodology.
3. Knowledge is inherently political.

Based on these three characteristics of knowledge that underpin mixed-methods research, I draw on multiple lines of inquiry and analysis, placing them in conversation with one another, to help address the silences and short-comings that each individual dataset might contain (Knigge and Cope 2006). By engaging research in this way, multiple-methods can serve as a means not to arrive at an absolutely true understanding of place in Center Grove, but at *how* place manifests in this Indianapolis suburb.

3.1: Data Collection Methods

3.1.0: Interview

The interview is a "communicative performance" that involves a creation of knowledge between the interviewer and the respondent (Crabtree and Miller 1999). Linda McDowell states that interviews "typically aim for depth and detailed understanding rather than breadth and coverage" (2010, 158). In order to gather examples of how suburban residents narrate place-making in their community, I conducted interviews with various residents or recent residents of the Center Grove area. A total of nine interviews were

carried out. Seven of the interviewees were male. Two of the interviewees were female. All were white adults.

Given my limited time to make contacts in the area my interview sample might be described as *stratified purposeful*. In stratified purposeful sampling, interviewees are identified according to their place in a categorical framing placed on the population (Kuzel 1999, 43). My goal was to find people who were for, against, and indifferent about the incorporation efforts. In practice, those for incorporation were more eager to talk. I interviewed five people who were supporters of incorporation, two people who were against, and two people who were generally ambivalent on the matter. Three of the interviewees were initially contacted through email as they were prominent members of the community. Two were leaders of the C4CG group managing the incorporation effort while the other was the principal of Center Grove High School. Three others were a result of an email sent out to the C4CG email list by one of its leaders. One interviewee agreed to an interview after completing my survey at the Center Grove public forum, another by way of a personal contact, and finally by way of a pick-up ultimate frisbee game, underscoring the ways in which interviews can be emergent.

These interviews were semi-structured around the following set of questions:

1. Who are you? (name, profession, where from?)
2. What is Center Grove? What makes Center Grove a community?
3. What is the nature of your relationship with Center Grove?
4. What sets Center Grove apart from surrounding towns like Greenwood or Bargersville? In other words, how does Center Grove distinguish itself from other places?
5. Do you think area residents identify with Center Grove? If yes, in what sorts of ways do you think residents come to identify with the Center Grove community? If no, why not?
6. What is your involvement in the current efforts to incorporate? Support? Against? Why?
7. Do you have any final things you would like to say or ask me?

Interviews lasted anywhere from 10 minutes to over an hour. Five interviews were carried out in person while the other four took place over the phone. All interviews were digitally recorded and then transcribed afterwards using transcription software.

3.1.1: Cognitive Map Surveys

Cognitive maps have traditionally been understood as "a process composed of a series of psychological transformations by which an individual acquires, stores, recalls, and decodes information about the relative locations and attributes of the phenomena in his everyday spatial environment" (Downs and Stea 1973, 7). The cognitive mapping method is underpinned by the notion that humans recall and make their way through the world using a metaphorical map that exists in their head (Kitchin 1994). The cognitive map is thus a means for simplifying, coding, and ordering the complexities of human-environment interactions (Walmsley, Saarinen, and MacCabe 1990).

Cognitive maps are a means for subjects to visualize their understandings and knowledges of a given place. Lynch (1960) famously used cognitive maps to better understand interviewees ability to structure, or image, their environment in 1950s Boston, Jersey City, and Los Angeles. More recently, cognitive maps have been used as a way for San Franciscans to discuss their perceptions of space and neighborhood in their city (Annechino and Chang 2011). Cognitive maps can be idiosyncratic, but also may share common features across the sample population. Lynch identifies several classes of objects that appear in most cognitive maps. These include paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks. Depending on the questions being asked, the interrelations between those objects are available for analysis (1960, 46–90)

I draw inspiration for the use of cognitive maps and GIS from the recent work of Chris Brennan-Horley and Chris Gibson (2009). In order to understand better where creative people in Darwin, Australia perceived the city's creative center to be, they collected cognitive maps, digitized them, and overlaid the results onto a map of the city. By bringing together all the cognitive maps into a GIS, they were able to examine where creative people in Darwin perceived the city's creative epicenter to be. This painted a contrasting picture to that of a local tourism board's own conclusions and marketing campaign about where creativity was actually centered.

Throughout June and July of 2012 I collected cognitive maps from current residents of the proposed Center Grove town (Figure 5). A few maps were also filled out by former or part-time residents, generally college students or recent graduates, of the area who had nonetheless lived in Center Grove for several years.

These informants were selected via a variety of sampling methods. My primary means for collecting cognitive maps came via a 'traveling salesman approach.' This method was derived from a sales technique of segmenting a region into smaller territories. By splitting Center Grove into 15 territories I was able to more systematically determine what areas I had sufficiently visited and which ones I had neglected. When I arrived in a territory I parked in an out-of-the-way location and proceeded to go door-to-door to ask if residents would volunteer to answer three questions via cognitive mapping. A small number of surveys were collected using convenience sampling whereby I asked people who happened to be passing by me if they would participate in a quick survey. Finally, I also used snowball sampling whereby I was able to find a small number of

This side up

- Where do you live? Draw an 'X' roughly indicating where you live.
Note: if your residence is not within the map area, please write the name of your city/town of residence in the margins.
- Where is Center Grove? Draw the boundaries of the area you consider to be Center Grove.
- Where is the center of Center Grove? Draw where you consider the center(s) of Center Grove to be.

Survey # _____

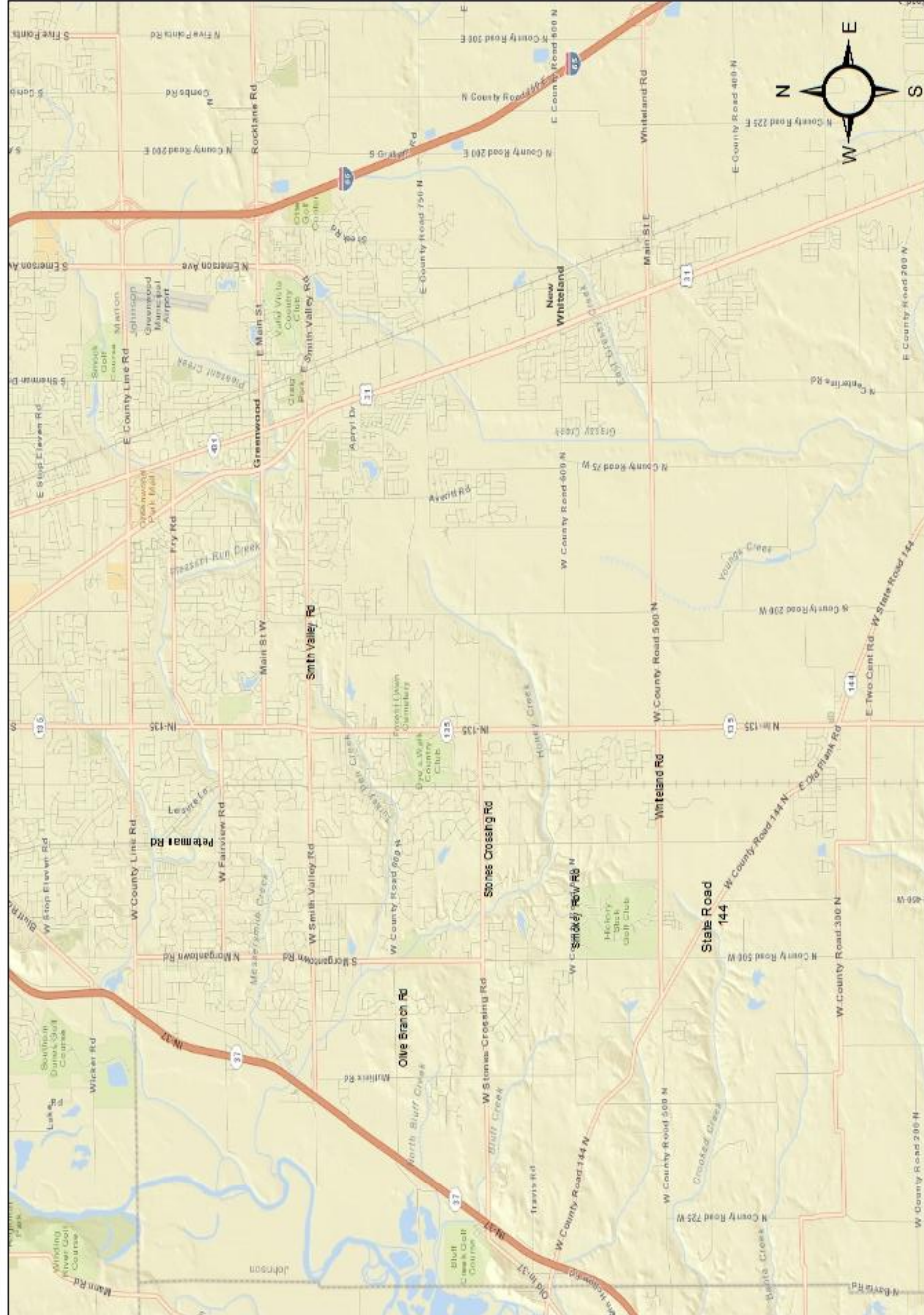


Figure 5: Cognitive Mapping Survey Blank (OpenStreetMap Contributors 2012)

informants who directed me to a few other possible participants. In all, 49 people participated in my survey and cognitive mapping exercise.

Participants were given a paper OpenStreetMap basemap of northern Johnson County and surrounding areas. Features on the map included major and intermediate roads, county boundaries, town names, rivers, railways and a few landmarks. Additional road names were added in for significant roads whose names did not show up at the particular zoom level of the map. A north arrow was also added.

The participants were given three questions to respond to on the map. Question 1 asked, *Where do you live?* This question was less for data collection purposes and more to help participants orient themselves within the map and help them be more confident about how they answered the other questions.

Question 2 and Question 3 were of primary interest to me and are discussed at greater length in this paper. For Question 2 participants were prompted, *Where is Center Grove? Draw the boundaries of what you consider to be Center Grove.* Question 3 asked, *Where is the center of Center Grove? Draw where you consider the center(s) of Center Grove to be.* After collecting all of the cognitive maps, I scanned and georeferenced them. I then digitized each response for Question 2 and Question 3 using ArcGIS.

3.1.2: Geoweb

Our lives and experiences are increasingly mediated through code (Kitchin and Dodge 2011) as are representations of places on the Internet (Zook and Graham 2007). In the web 2.0 era, users of Internet applications are increasingly also the producers. Services like Google Maps, Google Earth, OpenStreetMaps, Flickr, Twitter, Facebook, etc. rely on

significant amounts of user-generated data, much of which goes into representations of place online (Goodchild 2007; Crampton 2009).

The idea in leveraging the Geoweb is then to draw on representations of Center Grove as mediated by code. I take two approaches to this. One relies on Twitter and the other Facebook. Using the DOLLY Twitter database, I downloaded all of the geotagged tweets within the proposed boundaries of Center Grove up until February 1, 2013. With the first tweet being entered into the DOLLY database on June 21, 2012 the result was 17,722 tweets spanning nearly 7.5 months of activity.

To whittle the tweets down to just those in the proposed Center Grove area required some cleaning of the data. In the DOLLY database I ran the following query:

```
location.lat:[39.5 TO 39.7] AND location.lon:[-86.3 TO -86.1] AND  
created_at:[00000000000000 TO 1359694800000]
```

This query, read from left to right, returned all geotagged tweets in the area between 39.5°N and 39.7°N latitude and 86.1°W to 86.3°W longitude that were created from January 1, 1970 until midnight Eastern Standard Time on February 1, 2013. While the DOLLY database has barely been in existence a year, the UNIX origin timestamp was used as beginning of the range of times in order to ensure that all geotagged tweets in the Center Grove area were queried. The bounding box created by the latitude and longitude coordinates marked out an area that fit snugly around the proposed boundaries of Center Grove. This method was chosen over querying all tweets in Johnson County because the bounding box captured significantly fewer extraneous tweets resulting in quicker processing.

I downloaded the query results as a Comma Separated Values (CSV) file. Using ArcMap I uploaded the CSV of the tweets using the latitude and longitude fields to map them. I then selected all tweets within a shapefile of the proposed boundaries of Center Grove. From that selection I created a shapefile of all geotagged tweets in the Center Grove area. Because there is variable accuracy in Twitter's geolocation of tweets it was necessary to strip away all but those tweets with precise latitude and longitude locations. From the shapefile of tweets in the Center Grove area I selected only those points where the place_type field was denoted as "llp". Thus my twitter data was prepared for analysis in ArcMap.

Both C4CG and the anti-incorporationist No Town for Center Grove maintain public Facebook pages on which intense debates surrounding the merits and pitfalls of incorporation are discussed. Through these discussions commenters frequently take to creating textual representations of their understanding of what Center Grove is or is not. In order to tap into these discussions I downloaded each post and related comments from both Citizens for Center Grove and No Town for Center Grove's Facebook pages.

3.1.3: Further sourcing

While interviews, cognitive map surveys, and the geoweb comprise the majority of the means by which I bring together data for this project, some minor methods of data collection also took place.

Archival Research: In order to get a sense of how the Center Grove area has developed I visited the Johnson County Historical Museum in Franklin, Indiana. Here I obtained copies of plat maps for Johnson County which I scanned and georeferenced in ArcMap. I then digitized all the residential areas in White River Township for the years

1962, 1969, 1975, 1980, 1984, 1989, 1999, and 2004. While I tried to maintain a span of five years between each digitization, plat maps were not available each year in the past half century.

Participant Observation: On June 12, 2012, C4CG held a public forum at the Center Grove school administration building. I attended this meeting and engaged in participant observation noting the questions brought up by community members and their reactions to the information being presented by C4CG.

Wallowing: I engaged in what Cole Harris has called “wallowing” in the field (Harris 2001). While Harris discusses wallowing as a strategy for archival work, its purpose is to allow the researcher to familiarize him/herself with the subject in a somewhat random, unsystematic manner. As such, I spent time driving through various neighborhoods on non-determined routes. In this way I was able to gain some local knowledge of my own by experiencing Center Grove on the ground and in a way that many residents interact with one another: in an automobile.

3.2: Mixed-Methods

In this project I bring together qualitative data collected through interviews, cognitive mapping, survey, participant observation, the geoweb, historical records, and Facebook discussions and attempt to synthesize their partial account of identification with place in Center Grove. As such, when analyzing the imageability of Center Grove (see Chapter 4) by the residents no method can be expected to tell the whole story. Recognizing the partiality of all data I frame imageability in Center Grove as something that is revealed in speech, text, mapping, and tweeting. Furthermore, the data resulting from the methods described above are placed in dialog with one another both to give validity to general

conclusions about the nature of place identity in Center Grove, but also reveal particularities that might be hidden by only using a single method.

In exploring the imaginability of Center Grove (see Chapter 5) I seek to bring together the voices of those with whom I spoke, observed, and anonymously downloaded from Facebook. By coding their musings on Center Grove in terms of future looking, anxiety, and action I am able to bring multiple voices from multiple sources together and put them in conversation with one another such that they can illuminate notions of Center Grove that are grounded in the past, present, and, most importantly, several possible futures.

3.3: Limitations to Method

This mixed-methods approach is not without its limitations. First, it relies on making contact and connections within the community. Because I was an outsider, I came in with very few personal connections to vouch for me as a trustworthy person with whom to talk. Over time I was able to establish a rapport with some residents, such as one of the leaders of C4CG. After a while of communicating with him I was able to leverage that relationship to get more contacts for interviews.

But this did not necessarily help with the survey portion of my research. The dynamics of the Center Grove are such that there is not a lot of public space to approach people and many seemed very cautious about answering questions from a stranger. In order to present myself as a non-hostile figure, I made adjustments to my appearance. I had my hair trimmed back to a cleaner, closer cut. I also put together a uniform consisting of a University of Kentucky polo shirt, khaki golf shorts, and a little plastic clip on badge where I placed my school ID (Figure 6). I then decided instead of approaching people in public that I would try to meet them at their homes where, if home, they could choose not



Figure 6: Survey Uniform (Personal photo)

to answer the door, come to the door and decline taking my survey, or take my survey. Finally, I developed a short introduction if they did answer the door that was meant to immediately identify that I was not trying to sell anything, the purpose of my research, and brevity of the cognitive map survey. Although it is difficult to say how much this performance of a more professional self contributed to an increase in results, I was able to get significantly more people to take my survey with the combination of going directly to people's homes and presenting myself in a way that looked familiar enough to see in place.

This little story, while it ends in a positive revelation for my research was heavily dependent on trial and error and my ability to get a sense of what was usual or unusual in the community. Unfortunately the amount of time it took to generate an interpretation of

observations in the community and from failed attempts at approaching people for surveys was significant in relation to the short span of time for this project. The limitation of using methods that rely on talking or interacting with people was then that it was incumbent upon me to forge some level of trust with a community of which I was not a part.

Along the same lines, the combination of my outsider status, the summer season, and a community that, as will be discussed later, is centered around its school meant that the main meeting place was mostly a ghost town. Students and teachers were on summer break and there were no school events at which I could get a better sense of the ways people identify with their community. Because the rest of the area is almost entirely residential the opportunities to approach people in other venues such as parks, restaurants, bars, etc. was almost nil. As such the time period I had to do this type of research was not entirely ideal given the rhythms of the community, bringing to light interesting methodological questions about urban versus suburban qualitative mixed-methods research (which I am unable to fully address here).

Finally, the aim of this project was to better understand how place identity can be understood in a suburban setting. Nonetheless, the need to get access to people who are frequently suspicious of men lurking around neighborhoods in the summer meant that I was especially limited in who I could get to accept the interview or survey offer. Much of the data I was able to get is skewed towards those most concerned about the issue of incorporation. As such, any conclusions must carry a caveat that the sample of participants across all the various methods is not random, but quite frequently dominated by those most interested in the issue of incorporation.

Chapter 4. Imageability: Structuring the Suburban Environment

4.0: Introduction

4.0.0: The Argument

Suburbs have long been derided as aesthetically bland and homogeneous in design. This lack of uniqueness contributes to a sense of placelessness throughout suburbia. Although the Center Grove area exhibits many of the characteristics derided by urban analysts, its residents challenge this placelessness by creating and communicating a sense of a community through acts of imaging.

Imaging is an idea drawn from the work of Kevin Lynch. Lynch wrote that we all rely on some mental image of a given environment in our head that allows us to navigate through it. Such environments might include a city, town, or neighborhood. These images, however, do not come pre-loaded in our brains, but instead are fashioned out of an internal spatial structuring of the physical elements of the environment. In other words, imaging the environment is tied to being in and experiencing the environment (Lynch 1960, 2–8).

The ability for people to image an environment is not only contingent upon experience of the environment, but also the characteristics of it that make creating a distinct image possible. Thus, imageability, as Lynch calls it, is

that quality in a physical object which gives it a high probability of evoking a strong image in any given observer. It is the shape, color, or arrangement which facilitates the making of vividly identified, powerfully structured, highly useful mental images of the environment (1960, 9).

The residents rely on and bring together elements of imageability such as paths, edges, districts, nodes, landmarks to challenge the placelessness of their community in several ways. They enact a community center, which reinforces the core of a community that is

only informally existent. Residents also distinguish between qualities of belonging that help differentiate where the ‘inside’ of their community is and what is outside. Finally, they leave traces of their community through practices of the geoweb. Adopting imageability as a general framework for examining suburbia, I want to understand how local connections to place, beyond the traditional confines of the city, are perceived, narrated, and practiced by residents. I seek to better understand how residents of Center Grove draw on elements of imageability to identify with and make their community legible. Finally, I am interested in how residents of Center Grove move from a conscious recognition of their surroundings to the practice of their environment in everyday life.

4.0.1: Structure of Chapter

I will begin this chapter with a review of literature discussing Kevin Lynch’s concept of imageability and connecting it forward to understandings of space and place as experienced and actively constituted.

I then go on to discuss how residents of Center Grove call on elements of imageability to distinguish and identify with their community. I divide this into three parts. First, I look at how imageability is used to give centrality to Center Grove. Second, I examine how the elements of imageability are used to develop a sense of insidersness and outsidersness in the area. Finally, I explore how residents, visitors, and passers-through create an image of the Center Grove from records of being in the world.

4.1: Imageability + Practice

In his influential urban planning text *Image of the City*, Kevin Lynch writes that people carry a mental image of the urban environments that is developed through perceptual experiences of the city. He states that “we must consider not just the city as a thing in

itself, but the city being perceived by its inhabitants” (1960, 3). By structuring experiences and identifying elements of the urban environment, people are able to create their own mental image of the city. The construction of this image can come out of immediate sensations of the urban or come from memories. Either way, as the mental image of the city becomes clearer in one’s mind, it becomes central to the individual’s existence, structuring how he/she operates in the world around him/her.

As this mental image informs how he/she moves through the city, the connection between the image and the individual’s identity is made palpable. The image shapes who they are just as their own actions shape the city. This should not be taken to mean that environment is determinant of the mental image created by a person. Lynch writes that

The environment suggests distinctions and relations, and the observer – with great adaptability of his own purposes – selects, organizes, and endows with meaning what he sees (1960, 6).

For Lynch, the mental image is still heavily dependent on the experiences, preconceptions, and intentions of the individual creating the image.

And while a city full of individuals may have unique experiences of the urban environment, the inevitable overlap in experiences can result in an aggregated mental image shared across the city’s population. What consideration of the city as perceived by its residents reveals is a sense of place that is both experiential and socially constructed. It is experiential in that the sense of place is a result of being in the world, moving through, perceiving, and remembering it. It is socially constructed because identification with the city emerges out of the network of experiences shared by residents, workers, tourists, etc.

But the tools to create a mental image of the urban are not uniformly accessible across all cities. Because experience of the physical environment shapes the construction of a mental image of the city, variable qualities in the physical form of cities means that

some are easier to develop a mental image of than others. Lynch accounts for this variability in mental image production with his concept of imageability. It is conceivable that one could create a mental image of most any environment provided that they have some experience of it. Nonetheless, some environments are more imageable than others.

It is worth delving into the appropriateness of using imageability as a frame for Center Grove residents' connection to their suburban community. Some exception could be raised against this because Lynch uses imageability with respect to structuring experiences of the city.

First, while I acknowledge that Lynch is concerned with cities in his discussion of imageability, he does not state that it only applies to the realm of the urban. He writes more generally about imageability as an attribute of the environment whether urban, rural, or wild (1960, 3). It just so happens that *Image of the City* is written about cities, an urban sort of environment. Second, it seems Lynch would figure the sprawling suburb of Center Grove as a suitable, if not welcome, case study for exploring imageability. He writes that “we must learn to see the hidden forms in the vast sprawl of our cities” (1960, 12). While sprawl and suburbia are not always synonymous, both characterize Center Grove. As such, I understand imageability as an appropriate means for understanding place formation in Center Grove.

Lynch identifies five elements of imageability that are perceived in the physical environment and are used to constitute a legible image of the city. These are paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks (1960, 46–48). The presence and interconnectedness of these elements, according to Lynch, allow for more legible mental images of the environment.

Paths might be thought of as pedestrian or transportation “channels” that one might travel along as they move through the city. While sharing the linearity of paths, edges operate not as a passage through space, but instead provide a “break in continuity.” They are characterized by providing definition between two different areas. Shorelines, walls, fences, and easements are all examples of edges. Districts are two-dimensional areas of commonality characterized by an insider-outsider relationship. Districts rely on identifying characteristics perceived both by those within and without. Nodes are focuses of attention within the city. They are two-dimensional and can be entered into like a district, but are more concentrated around one or several one-dimensional features of the physical environment. Nodes frequently appear at the intersection of paths and serve as cores or centers for districts. Landmarks are similar to nodes in that they provide focus for attention. They are nevertheless differentiated from nodes in that they are one-dimensional. They may not be entered into. They are important for orienting the individual in the city. As such, they may not be in the city itself. Landmarks include large buildings, unique physical structures, signs, and landforms.

Evidence of reference to the various elements of imageability can come from multiple sources. Lynch relies primarily on mental maps to examine how individuals create an image of their city and where there is consensus in the image across a group. However, language is also an important constituent of imageability. As Lynch notes, “[T]he very naming and distinguishing of the environment vivifies it, and thereby adds to the depth and poetry of human experience” (1960, 127). The naming of places, social chatter, and stories comprise just a few of the possible sources hinting at the image individuals and groups hold of their surroundings.

Lynch's conception of the urban then exists at the intersection of the observer (person) and observed (environment). And because the image is constituted out of an ever changing cast of characters experiencing the city at times similarly and others differently, the image of the city is not experienced to a final state or essence. As in the new urbanism of Amin and Thrift where the city is always in a state of becoming, the image of the city and environment more generally is also always becoming. The environmental image is enrolled in what Mackenzie calls 'transduction' whereby objects are not things at all, but a *bricolage* of entering, exiting, and ongoing processes (Mackenzie 2003). That is, the image of the city is never complete, but instead is constituted at the experiential nexus of an ever-changing individual and an ever-changing environment. The organization of imageable elements is thus an act of producing new images of the environment while reappropriating and discarding bits, whether physical objects of digital ones, and pieces of old ones.

Lynch writes that creating an image of the environment is "a two-way process between the observer and the observed" (1960, 131). The physical environment shapes the image that one perceives, but the individual's own prior experiences, biases, and predispositions affect the ways in which that image is organized and interpreted. The image of the environment is not a thing, per se, but in the process of being made, recreated, and reformed. Lynch explains,

If it is desirable that an environment evoke rich, vivid images, it is also desirable that these images be communicable and adaptable to changing practical needs, and that there can develop new groupings, new meanings, new poetry. *The objective might be an imageable environment which is at the same time open-ended*" (1960, 139, emphasis added).

He hints at an image of the environment that is not finite, but that is incrementally adjusted as experiences accumulate, new actors pass through, and the physical environment changes.

The image of the environment appears through a process of transduction, as a form of ontogenesis. Ontogenetic processes are predicated on the idea that ontologically no object is secure, but instead always in a state of becoming. Objects are “a practice, a doing, an event, a becoming – a material and social reality forever (re)created in the moment” (Kitchin and Dodge 2011, 68). Mackenzie writes that “transduction is a kind of operation in which a particular domain undergoes a certain kind of ontogenetic modulation. Through this modulation in-formation occurs. That is, it involves a domain taking-on-form, sometimes repeatedly” (2003, 10). The domain of transduction is subject to the possibility of being altered, destroyed, or recreated through small, incremental acts relative to the domain.

The urban environment as constituted out of the organization of imageable elements is given the appearance of solidity through repetitive and citational practices. Drawing on DeCerteau, the urban becomes visible not simply through the construction of physical buildings, pathways, and intersections, but through the practiced activities taking place in such material settings. The physical elements of the environment alone are built with a certain expectation of how they will be used. The road is for travelling from Point A to Point B. The intersection is where travelers pass through and connect to other paths. The school is where children learn. DeCerteau writes that these elements are conceived as part of "strategies that seek to create places in conformity with abstract models" (1984,

29). That is, the elements are designed and imposed onto the landscape given a finite expectation of how they will be used.

However, when these elements are traversed and experienced throughout the course of the everyday, the expected activity is infiltrated via tactics. Tactics are those activities in a place that "are not identified or defined by it" (DeCerteau 1984, 29). They are the unexpected events and actions that betray the abstract models created to conceive the elements being used.

The elements then take on new meanings as they are enrolled in a hypothetically infinite number of tactics by any number of people. The road may be designed and used for travelling from Point A to Point B, but it also may be used as a space of celebration, patriotism, or candy plundering on the 4th of July. The intersection may still be used to divert travelers onto other paths, but it may become a space of mourning where the parents of a teenager find out their daughter has been killed by a drunk driver. The school is certainly attended by area children for learning, but it may be a space of community as the young ones socialize in the lunch room, parents volunteer for activities, and long graduated area residents attend basketball games.

For each element, as they are removed from the domain of the abstract model and deployed into the world, the tactical practices of people will introduce new uses, experiences, and expectations of those elements. The collective image of the urban environment is then something very different from the abstract model. The fragmented and overlapping experiences and readings of the environment results in an urban *decopage* that are constantly being sliced, diced, and rearranged (Lefebvre 1991, 97). And while there may be a core cast of characters whose repetition of practices give the

space an appearance of solidity or realization of its essence, it only takes one deviation from perceived standard practice for the experience of the space to change entirely.

Transduction in the urban environment connects to the realm of the digital. As part of normal parlance, cyberspace is frequently understood as something ontologically distinct from the material world occupied by flesh-and-blood humans. It has variously been conceptualized as the world of digital data (Gibson 1984) and as an alternative space unfettered by geographic limits of distance or Pauli's exclusion principle that no two objects can occupy the same space at the same time (Batty 1993).

However there has been increasing skepticism among geographers about the distinction between cyberspace and the space of the 'real world' (M. Graham 2013). Stephen Graham wrote in the late 1990s on how the cleaving of cyberspace from the material world clouded the important connections shared by society and information and communication technologies (1998). Recent developments in mobile technology and changes in the ways people interact with the web have highlighted the foggy nature of the distinction between the virtual and material world. Through the concept of DigiPlace, Matt Zook and Mark Graham (2007) have demonstrated how the world as presented through online mapping services like Google Maps and Google Earth shape and curate unique experiences of local environments. Kitchin and Dodge (2011) recognize that increasingly many of the activities we participate in and places we experience are mediated by and sometimes wholly dependent on code, software, and networked technology. Coded spaces and code/spaces of travel, consumption, and even the home frequently demonstrate how "software and the spatiality of everyday life become mutually constituted, that is, produced through one another" (2011, 16).

Location based services like Foursquare and Facebook Places rely on the transfer of experience on the ground to digital applications (Wilson 2012). In Sprint's and Apple's most recent iPhone 5 "I am unlimited" marketing campaign the two companies pitch the seamless and uncapped digital upload and sharing of the human experience as a human right (Sprint iPhone 5 "I am unlimited: Picture Perfect" commercial 2012). And perhaps in the most literal example of the convergence of the virtual and material, at the 2012 SXSW BBH Labs fitted homeless people with wireless routers so they could work as hotspots for the event (Carmody 2012). Each human hotspot wore a shirt with the text "I'M [FIRST NAME], A 4G HOTSPOT..." Their physical being and identity was thus intimately wedded to technology they wore and the access to the web it allowed.

What is clear, then, is that realm of cyberspace or the virtual world is not parallel to or intersecting the material world, but instead constituted by and constitutive of the material world. These coded objects and infrastructures have just as much of a role in developing an image of the environment because they are intimately entwined, present, and enrolled in creating the image, for some (and geographers have consistently reminded us of the differential implications of digital technologies in everyday life). As such, one must consider not just the experience of the environment in creating a mental image, but also through what means that experience is filtered. As coded technologies become increasingly ubiquitous, particularly in the United States, it is important to consider the role of code in contributing to the ever-changing image of the environment.

In this section I have explained Lynch's concept of imageability and sought to draw it into discussion with ideas of space as transduced and practiced. In the next section I apply imageability to Center Grove. In particular I examine how residents draw

on elements of imageability to give their community a legible center, boundaries between insider and outsider, and, with assistance of mobile technology, record the accrual of a collective lived experience of Center Grove.

4.2: Centers

Lynch writes that nodes are “the strategic foci into which the observer can enter, typically either junctions of paths, or concentrations of some characteristic” (1960, 72). Similarly, landmarks are one dimensional points in the environment that the observer uses as a focus for orientation. While both elements are distinct, in my examination of imageability in Center Grove, I bring these two elements together under the concept of centrality. I do this based on a Tuan’s parallel understanding of centers. Tuan states that there is a “prestige of the center” where the center is where people most strongly identify with their community (1977, 38). Similarly, in his own discussion of Lynch, Relph understands nodes as synonymous with centers. And because these centers are characterized by activity that is experienced and are a focus of attention by those moving into, out of, and through them, centers are also synonymous with place (Relph 1976, 21–22).

By examining how residents draw and narrate their practices of the central areas and locations in the area, a clearer image of how they see their community emerges. My use of centers to interpret cognitive maps and interviews is based on the idea that residents of Center Grove identify the center of their experience of their community. I look beyond just the individual sense of place in Center Grove to a collective, communal sense of place. In what follows I want to explore how Center Grove residents, through cognitive maps and interviews revealed the schools as the center of their community.

4.2.0: Centrality in Cognitive Maps

In this next section I will describe how I carried out the cognitive map surveys and processed the results. I will then go on to interpret those results.

As I carried out surveys of people from the Center Grove area, I asked them to draw upon a generic basemap what they considered to be the center of Center Grove. Respondents drew the center in a variety of ways. They drew them as areas, points, and as points within areas. The varying approaches to drawing the center revealed similar results indicating clear nodes of significance in the Center Grove area.

A total of 35 respondents indicated the center of Center Grove by drawing polygons (Figure 7). For those who drew the center of Center Grove as a polygon the strongest aggregate overlap of centers occurred in the area around Center Grove High School. One secondary node of overlap apparent near the intersection of Morgantown Road and Smith Valley Road where there is a small collection of businesses, including a gas station, a grocery, and a coffee shop. Still another secondary node of overlap is present at a railroad crossing on Smith Valley Road that is surrounded by a few local businesses including a child care center, an equipment repair shop, and geospatial solutions firm.

A total of 18 respondents indicated the center of Center Grove by drawing a point. In order to synthesize those who responded with a point with those who used a polygon, polygons were converted into points by finding their centroids. This produced 47 individual response points of centrality. Running the kernel density from ArcGIS's Spatial Analyst extension I generalized the propinquity of the individual point/centroid

Where is the Center of Center Grove? Sum Overlap of Polygon Responses

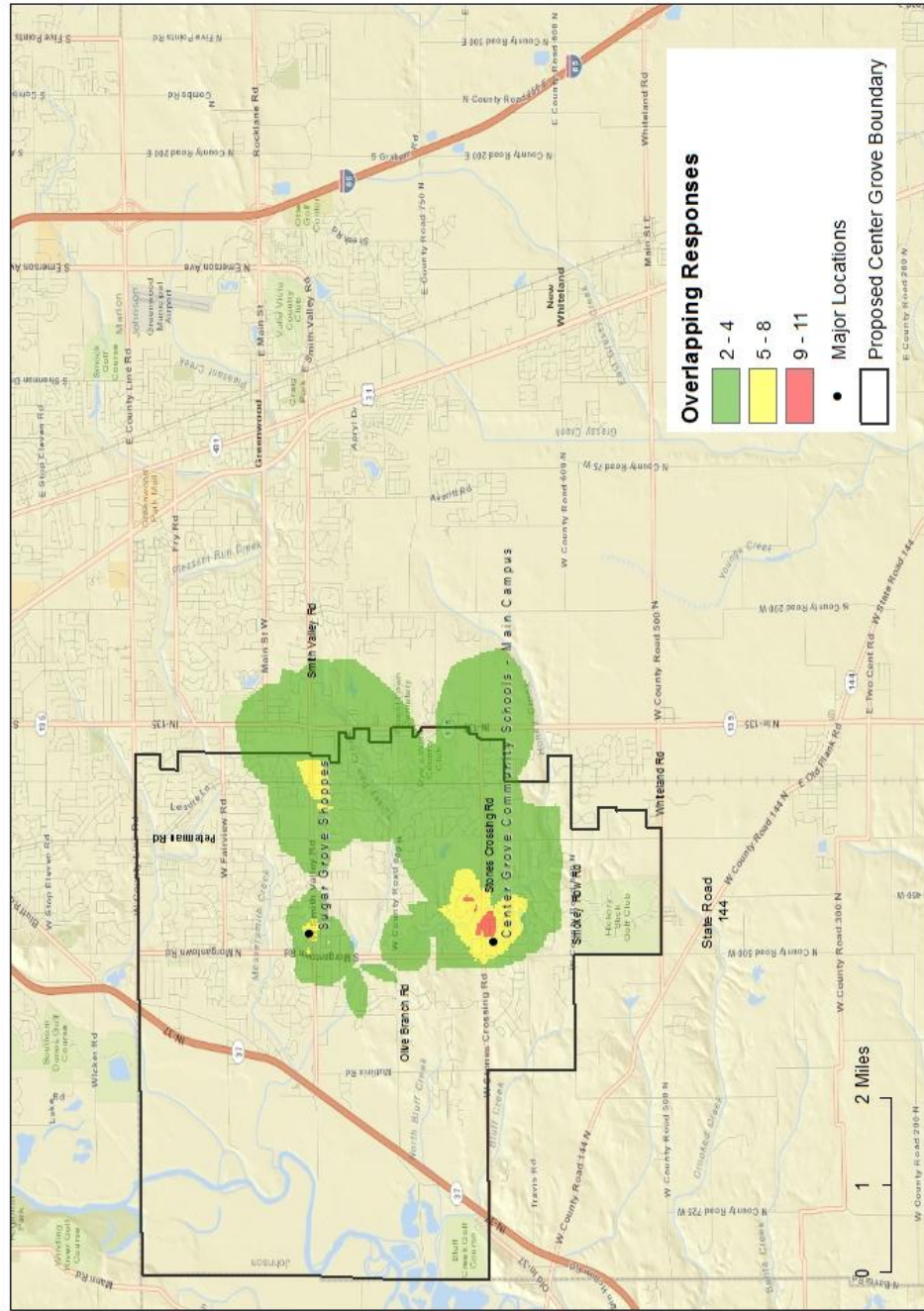


Figure 7: Map of sum overlap of survey respondents who answered the question “Where is the center of Center Grove?” with a polygon (OpenStreetMap Contributors 2012; Citizens for Center Grove 2013a)

responses (Figure 8). The result shows hotspots of centrality that residents indicated in their surveys. Similar to results from the polygon-only response, four hotspots were clustered around the main campus of Center Grove schools. Another cluster is situated just east of the intersection of Morgantown Road and Smith Valley Road where the small strip of shops and businesses is located.

The results of the mental mapping of centers in Center Grove was largely backed up by the way residents talk about their community. The main campus of the local school corporation clearly came across as the major anchor for the community. This was especially the case for younger residents or for those who have or had children matriculating through Center Grove schools.

The high school principal offered his perspective on the importance of the schools as center for the community, stating

the schools are the places where we gather and socialize. We come and watch school activities. That's where we go see our school programs. We go to a football game. We go to a basketball game. So it truly is the identifier for this community. And that's what makes this place unique, I would say, compared to most communities, is that we're not a town, but we are viewed in many respects as a town, as a community as a result of our schools ("CGHS Principal" 2012).

The principal may be in a privileged position as an administrator of the schools, but his observations describe the ways that the schools exist as an active focus for community activity.

And the continued practice of the schools by students, parents, and community members as an exceptional institution relative to other places is important in maintaining its status as the center of the community. As one resident explained,

I think it's a pride in the Center Grove school system. They have a wonderful school system. And top of the line academically and then they

Where is the Center of Center Grove?

Kernel Density of Point Centers and Polygon Centroid Responses

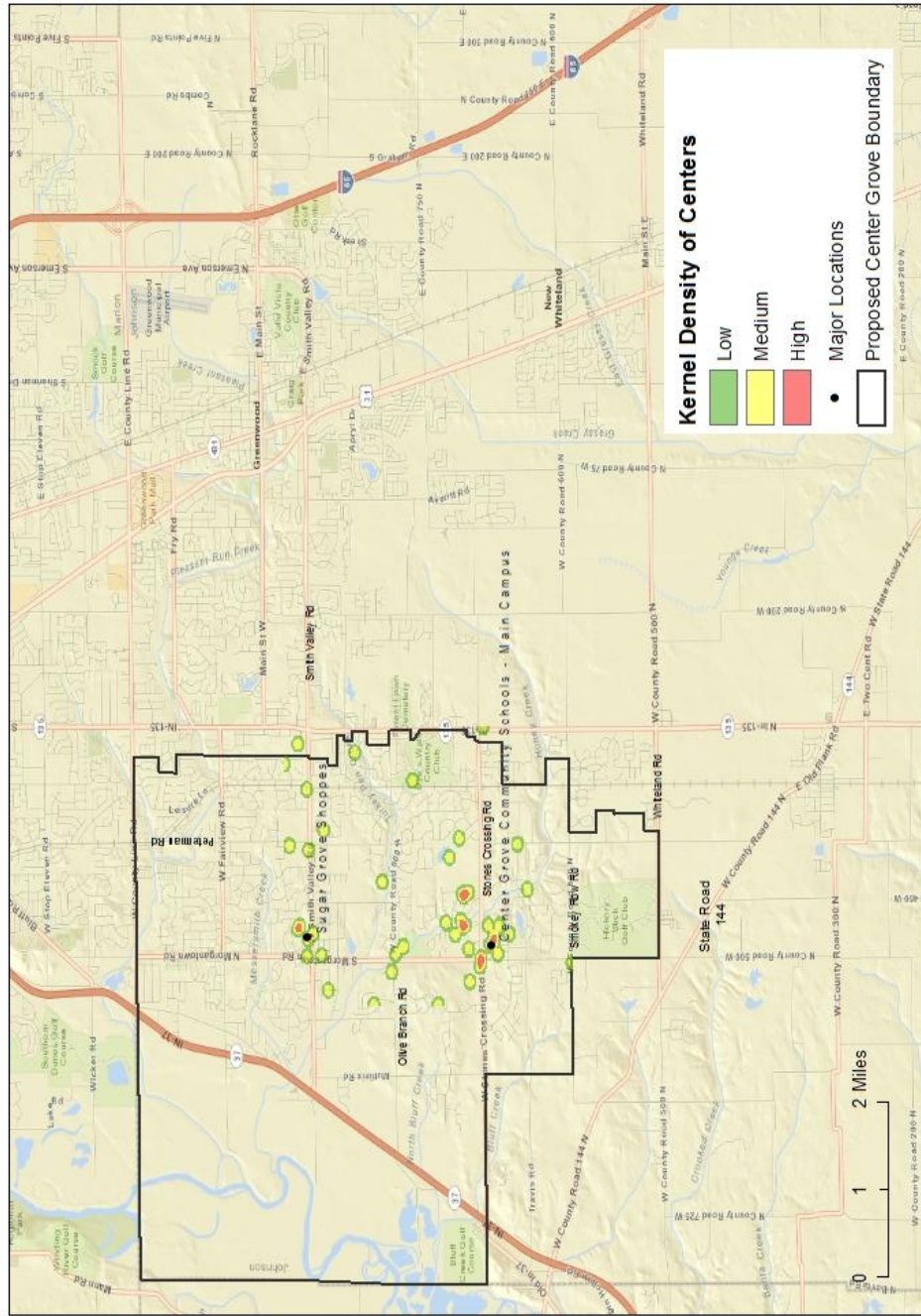


Figure 8: Map of kernel density of point centers and polygon centroid responses to the question “Where is the center of Center Grove?” (OpenStreetMap Contributors 2012; Citizens for Center Grove 2013a)

are very good in the sports, particularly football, baseball, basketball. It's got name recognition on the state level. So, I think people feel very proud of the Center Grove school system and there's a lot of name recognition with Center Grove ("Interviewee 1" 2012).

This connection to the schools stays with people even after they leave the area. For instance, one exasperated woman cited her status as a Center Grove alum as a justification for participating in the debate about the incorporation of the area stating "Heaven forbid Center Grove alumni care about their former home and take an interest in local politics" (Porter-Tilley 2012a). The schools loom particularly large both in the way residents map the center of Center Grove, but is also central to the way they experience and come to associate with their community.

There is some hesitation to identify any other focal points of the community. This is perhaps a weakness of the mental maps. They indicate an identification of the center away from the schools in a small commercial strip. While this showed up with a similar strength as the schools, the assessment of the centrality of this area by residents was more lukewarm.

References to the commercial area as a center were rather sheepish. While sitting in a coffee shop within the Sugar Grove Shoppes strip mall (Figure 9), one C4CG leader sarcastically remarked that "What you see around you is the 'downtown'" ("C4CG Leader 1" 2012). Because the area abuts an older neighborhood, it was frequently seen more as a place where downtown-like activities could take place if Center Grove were to incorporate, but in the present, its status as a downtown is more often bracketed by scare quotes.

Using mental maps it was clear that residents of Center Grove were able to identify two central nodes of their community. However, additional perspectives from

interviews with residents reveal that the centers are not created or felt equally. The school is almost universally understood to be the most prominent center because it is where people go, interact, and mingle (Figure 10). It is not a center by virtue of being a school, but instead because *it serves as a node where multiple varied everyday practices by community members converge*. The small commercial strip (Figure 11) seems to also be characterized as a place where multiple everyday practices converge, but perhaps to a lesser extent than at the school. Nonetheless, it is the school that is both identified on the map and practiced as a central anchor to the Center Grove community. This group identification of the schools as centers speaks very closely back to Lynch. For him, nodes and landmark serve as foci of attention and in a more phenomenological sense of place, foci of experience. The schools serve as that space within the community that is experienced the most and create the greatest sense of belonging across residents. Through the collection of individual perceptions of centrality in Center Grove, a core of belonging becomes more legible.



Figure 9: Sugar Grove Shoppes (Personal photo)



Figure 10: Center Grove High School at the intersection of Morgantown Road and Stones Crossing Road (Google Street View 2012)



Figure 11: Sugar Grove Shoppes from Smith Valley Road (“Sugar Grove Shoppes” 2012)

4.3: Insiders/Outsiders

Although the concept of centers allows us to gain an idea of where connection to place is at its most intense, in examining the potential municipality it is also useful to understand over what broader area that center *enacts* a center. In other words, what is the area that the center applies to? In examining the centrality of Center Grove, residents overwhelmingly cited the main campus of the school as the center of their experience of the area. While the schools anchor that connection to Center Grove, the question remains, where is Center Grove? Lynch's elements of imageability can help us understand how residents identify what is the inside and what is the outside of Center Grove. In particular edges and districts provide a helpful framework for indicating an area's distinction from another. Districts are two-dimensional areas "which the observer mentally enters 'inside of,' and which are recognizable as having some common, identifying character" (1960, 47). Edges exist as thresholds between inside and outside. That these elements denote inside from outside is important because connection to place, according to Relph (1976, 45), is closely connected with one being able to distinguish experience in different parts of the world as qualitatively different from elsewhere. By drawing on cognitive map surveys and interviews interpreted using a framework of districts and edges, I try to uncover where there is the greatest sense of inside Center Grove.

4.3.0: Insider/Outsider in Cognitive Maps

Survey respondents were asked to draw what they believed the boundaries of Center Grove to be. After the cognitive maps were digitized in ArcMap I converted each boundary into a raster file with each cell containing a value of 1. Using the Cell Statistics tool in ArcMap I calculated the overlap of the cognitive maps. Figure 12 shows the result

Where is Center Grove? Sum Overlap of Responses

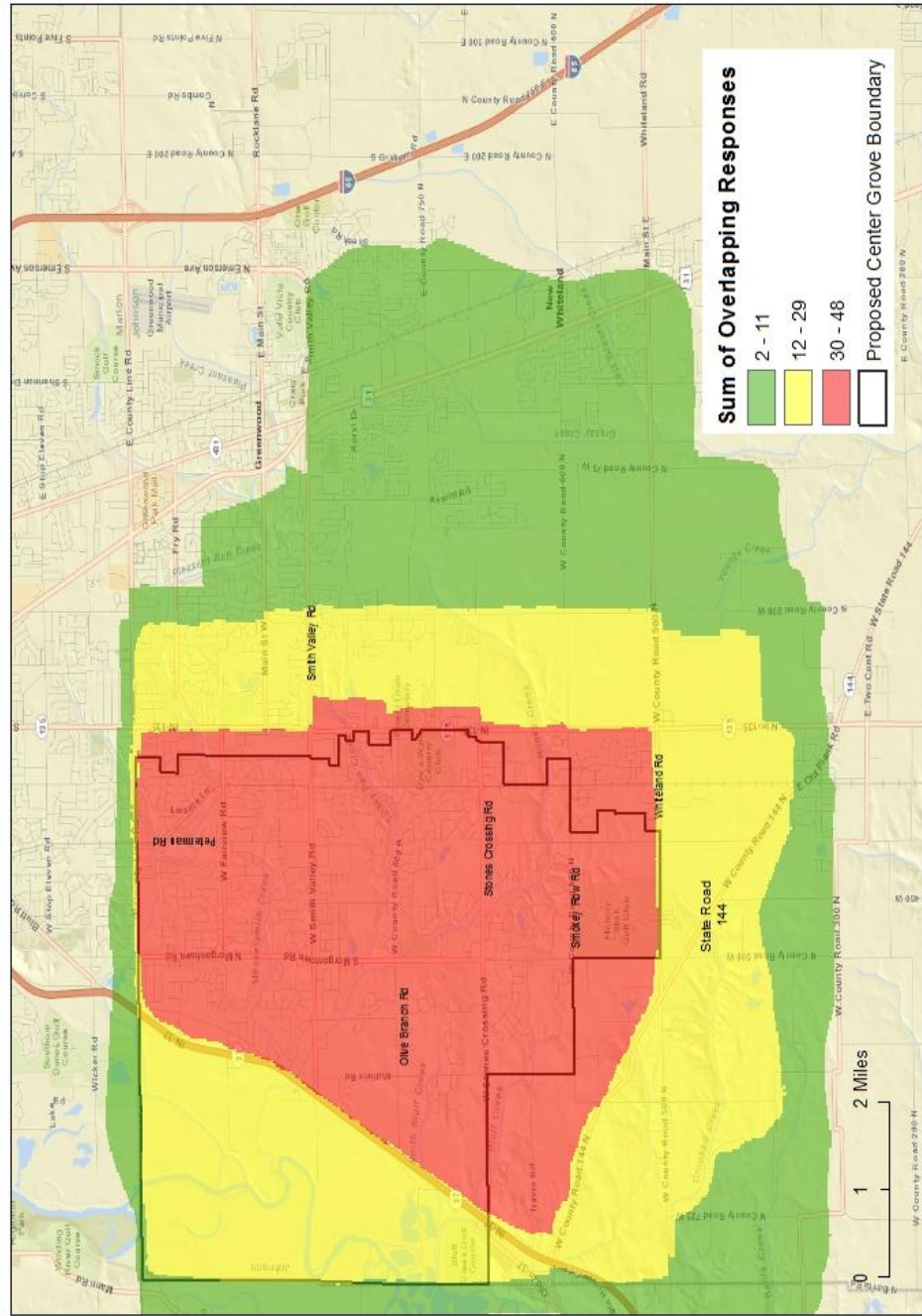


Figure 12: Sum overlap of responses to the question “Where is Center Grove?”
(OpenStreetMap Contributors 2012; Citizens for Center Grove 2013a)

of the calculation of the overlap of the respondents' boundaries of Center Grove. The data are divided into three classes using an equal interval classification scheme. Red indicates high overlap, yellow medium, and green minimal.

My request for respondents to draw the boundaries lends itself to creating a district at the individual level. But aggregating the responses revealed that there is large consensus about what constitutes the area that is considered Center Grove. Calculating the overlap of the 48 respondents who participated in the drawing revealed some collective understanding of Center Grove's extent that did not necessarily match up with either the conception of Center Grove as unincorporated White River Township or as a school district.

For Lynch, edges are pronounced features that distinguish inside from outside. What the aggregated mental maps demonstrate is that the distinction between being in Center Grove and outside of Center Grove, while not entirely fixed to significant roads, is generally shaped by recognition that the space between those edges is unquestionably situated within Center Grove.

What is perhaps most noteworthy is the way that edges, namely major roads, define the boundaries of the core area of agreement. In the west, State Road 37 runs right along the edge of the core district identified by residents. The southwest boundary runs diagonally along State Road 144 until it meets Whiteland Road. After that, the boundary runs in an east-west direction along Whiteland Road. The eastern border generally runs north-south along State Road 135. There is a small exception between Stones Crossing Road and Smith Valley Road where the area of agreement occupies a small strip on the east side of State Road 135. Nevertheless, there is a distinct edge along the eastern extent

of this strip that generally follows the extent of the heavy commercial development in that particular area. Finally, the northern extent is defined by County Line Road which also defines the border between Indianapolis/Marion County and Johnson County.

While residents were able to physically carve out the boundaries of their community, they also narrate the qualities inside Center Grove that distinguish it from the outside. Differentiating from the surrounding communities of Greenwood and Bargersville is one key way that residents establish what is Center Grove and what it is not.

In some ways this distinction is drawn from the perceived development characteristics of the community. In particular the high proportion of residential land use distinguishes it from Greenwood and Bargersville. As one resident stated, “[It’s] very, very residential in the Center Grove area. You think of homes not businesses” (“Interviewee 5” 2012). Additionally this differentiation is frequently explained through the positives about Center Grove:

I think that the school district is seen a little bit as a better school district than the Greenwood school district and so forth. So I think, I see it almost as for some people more of an affluent air to it to say that you live in Center Grove versus living in Greenwood (“Interviewee 6” 2012). The distinction between Center Grove and Bargersville is also often pitched in terms of lifestyle. On more than one occasion while I was interviewing residents, Bargersville was described as hick, hayseed, and home of backward ‘hill people’.

And because the Center Grove schools are a place where people from Greenwood, Bargersville, and unincorporated White River Township intermingle, these distinctions become reinforced. One person relayed his daughter’s experience at the high school where divisions occurred based on address and that the Carhartt farm clothing,

perceived as a symbol for living in more rural Bargersville, were banned because they were interpreted as a gang symbol.

Another alum noted that the distinction between Center Grove and others followed zip code boundaries. He reminisced about the play on words, 4-6-1-poor-2 as a way of distinguishing the less affluent area from which students came (“Interviewee 2” 2012). Interestingly, this distinction based on zip code indicates a rather different understanding of what area is the inside of Center Grove. The 46142 zip code runs across the northern third of the area residents identified on their mental maps as Center Grove. This is also where the oldest housing, rental property, and trailer parks are located.

Part of the difficulty of stating where the inside of Center Grove is comes from the lack of a Center Grove address. Most people have a Greenwood address while a few others have one that says Bargersville. Center Grove is often used in conversation to connote somewhere different from the places in the address line. It is a caveat to their address. One interviewee’s response to my question *Where are you from?* summed up the sentiment concisely, responding, “I’d lead with Greenwood and then I’d say, ‘Well, Center Grove’” (“Interviewee 2” 2012).

In examining understandings of ‘insiderness’ and ‘outsiderness,’ residents were not only able to demarcate a strong core of what might be considered the ‘inside’ of Center Grove, but were also able to narrate qualities of insiderness linked to class, education, and income. Identifying with Center Grove seems to be an act of differentiation from the surrounding communities that relies on a perceived similarity to those on the north side of Indianapolis. A C4CG leader mapped out a common

conversation he and others I interviewed indicated they had experienced (“C4CG Leader 1” 2012):

CG Resident: Well, I live in Greenwood.

North side resident: Ohhhh (mimicking sympathy).

CG Resident: But it’s in Center Grove! I’m really in Center Grove.

North side resident: Ohhh, OK! (Mimicking excitement).

Through their comparisons to places disconnected from Center Grove, residents narrated a place that once inside was distinctly different from those areas surrounding it. The common act of responses to a question like *Where do you live?* was frequently met with an initially very spatially literal answer and then caveated with an expression of a stronger personal association with Center Grove. As I chatted with survey respondents and interviewees alike, they noted that they would commonly use *Greenwood* or *the south side* to give a sense of where they lived relative to Indianapolis. However, by following up with a specification of Center Grove respondents and interviewees suggested that their part of Greenwood or the south side was distinct and separate from Greenwood or Indianapolis. Center Grove may not be an official place, but it is a place that many residents feel they belong to.

4.4: Sedimented Enunciation

A tweet’s primary purpose is to carry with it some sort of textual message. It may be a thought, expression of emotional state, a link to some website or image, or even an incomprehensible set of characters. But the sending of a tweet is very conscious. It is the expression of being in the world. That the content may be mindless drivel is of no matter. It is simply the very act of tweeting that captures a moment of existence. The image of the environment appears through *sedimented enunciations* of being in the world. In this case, those sedimented enunciations come in the form of geotagged tweets.

While not all tweets carry a geotag, those that do provide some referencing of that experience in the world. The inclusion of latitude and longitude coordinates brings those experiences that compelled a person to tweet into a Cartesian logic of what is mappable. It provides an absolute spatiality that is not always explicit or easily inferred within the tweet's text. Still, through these collected representations of being one can begin to see traces of the world that is lived. This can be done by examining the spatiality of one user's tweets. However, because I am interested in the collective experience of the environment by those in the Center Grove area and how they come to create an image thereof, I examine all the tweets of this proposed community. In examining the geotagged tweets of Center Grove I want to move from imageability as structuring of the environment in the mind to a structuring of the environment through action.

The concept of sedimented enunciations that I employ here is a synthesis of DeCerteau's enunciations of space and Lucy Lippard's layered understanding of place. While discussing walking in the city, DeCerteau sees walking as "a spatial acting-out of place" that is at once a realization of a possible occurrence over other possibilities and a grounding of action such that it is happening here, but not there (1984, 97-99). An individual walking on the sidewalk, for instance, practices the sidewalk as a space where walking is a realized possibility of what can be done there and forecloses the possibility of that individual walking in that very moment in the middle of the road. This act of walking on the strip of concrete along the road is understood by DeCerteau to be akin to calling it, or enunciating, the space as a 'sidewalk.'

In a similar sense, a geotagged tweet works as an enunciation of space. When one presses 'Tweet' after typing their message they are proclaiming that something that was

possible here happened and that possibility was only actualized by that tweeter at the recorded latitude and longitude.

But a single act of tweeting is a fleeting event and, as DeCerteau warns, is easily forgotten. Lucy Lippard provides a helpful means for thinking about the potential lasting effects of several individual tweets in a locale by bringing them all together. For Lippard (1997), place is not two-dimensional, but also has depth. Places are built out of what occurred in their past. She thinks of place in terms of layers, or sediment, of events and memories that give shape to present experiences in place.

Sedimented enunciations then are the collection of records of action over time. As the events that were speaking a place into being are broadcast, assigned a geotag, and stored in a database, they then provide an image of sedimented grains (points with lat-long coordinates) that shows patterns of life and existence. As such, we can move away from a place of things to a place that is given definition and structure through action and the record of experiencing being in them.

4.4.0: Enunciated Sediments in Center Grove

I applied this concept of sedimented enunciations to the Center Grove in order to see how the recording of being that might offer an alternative image of the area from those presented through traditional maps or narrations of place. In order to do this, I downloaded all geotagged tweets in the proposed Center Grove area from the DOLLY database from December 2011 up until 2/1/2013. There was a total 17,722 geotagged Tweets collected spread across 1065 Twitter accounts. The top tweet producer for the area produced 1993 tweets while 461 accounts only produced one tweet in the area.

In order to see where concentrations of tweets in the proposed Center Grove were being created, I ran a kernel density procedure on the twitter data using the Spatial Analyst extension in ArcGIS. The resulting map provides a glimpse of where tweets most commonly originate in Center Grove (Figure 13). There are several intense clusters that indicate high levels of tweeting in residential neighborhoods. Similar to the mental map expressions of the centrality, there are clusters at the main campus of Center Grove schools and around the small strip of shops just east of the intersection of Morgantown Road and Smith Valley Road

The clustering patterns suggest the centrality of Center Grove as both discretely located and practices of living in the area. In the mental mapping activity, participants were asked to identify what they perceive to be the center of Center Grove. But this required a conscious act of weighing locations and areas on the map that seemed to be suitable for the status of center.

What the kernel density map of tweets presents is a production of centers through everyday practice. That is, the tweets create an image of centers not as identified, but as lived. The places of intense, focused being-in-the-world have to be reinterpreted as not just landmarks or distinctly identifiable nodes. They are not just x-y coordinates, but are frequently a type of place. That there are many clusters in residential areas does not mean that the community experiences each one of those clusters the most, but instead suggests that residential life is central to being in Center Grove.

We can still identify those places of common experience, like the strip mall or the school through a comparison with the mental maps. That the schools and the small shopping area pop up in mental maps, interviews, and tweets serve to triangulate them as

Sedimented Enunciations of Center Grove

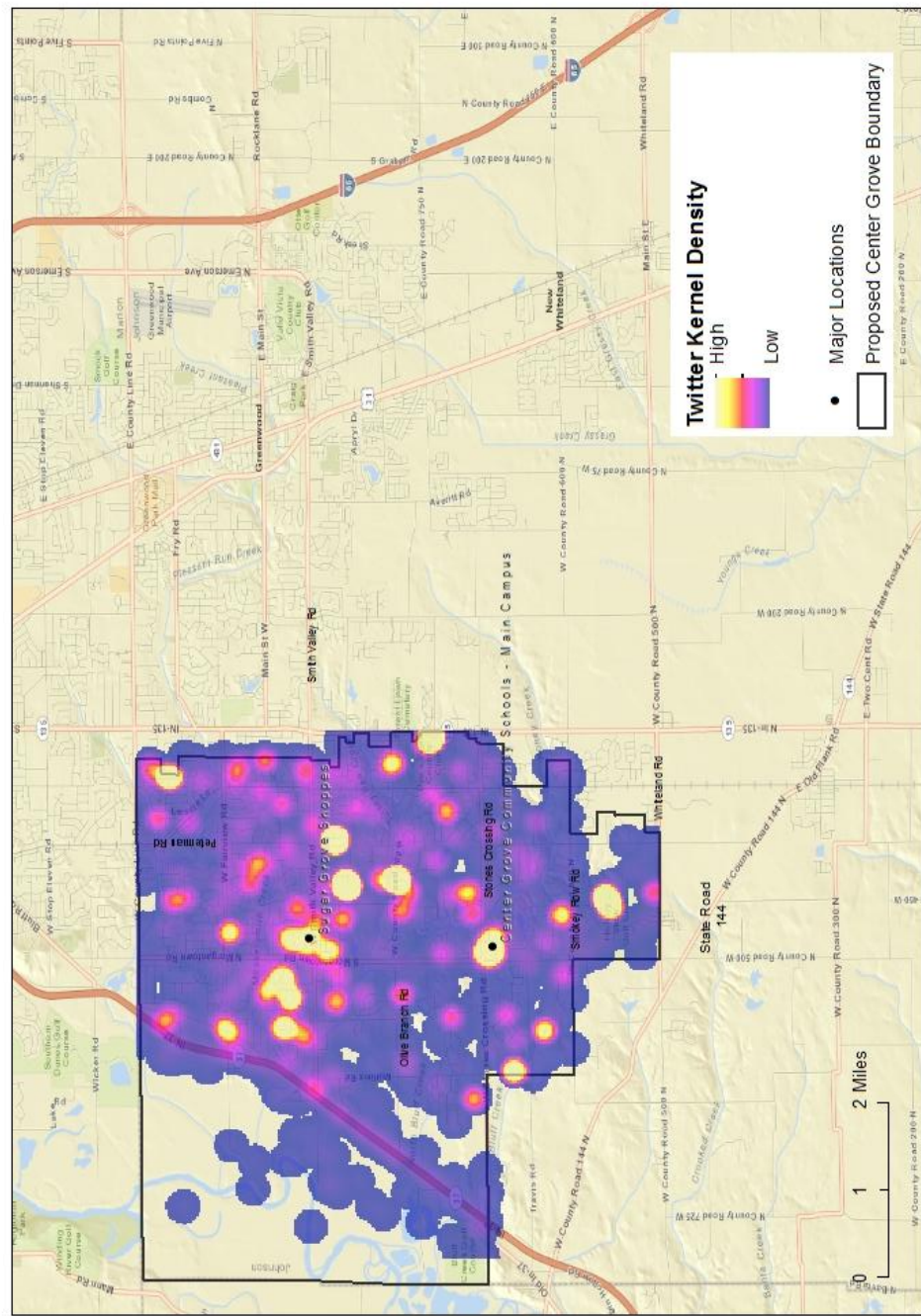


Figure 13: Kernel density of sedimented enunciations of tweets generated within the proposed Center Grove boundaries (OpenStreetMap Contributors 2012; Citizens for Center Grove 2013a; University of Kentucky New Mappings Collaboratory 2013)

centers in an absolute sense. What the kernel density map of tweets presents is an image of centrality in Center Grove that is both rooted in a fixed Cartesian sense, but also suggestive of a center that is based on a residential *genre de vie*.

The individual instantiations of Twitter updates serve as a record of individual practices. Taken together they present an enactment of some parts of the physical environment while leaving others blank. From the collection and display of individual geotagged tweets in Center Grove, one can see how the momentary recording of being can bring legibility to the community. By removing the context of the base map, the geotagged tweets are left to stand alone, but together (Figure 14). A stippled image of Center Grove emerges out of the geotagged tweets. The collection of several individual points offers a view of the area as it is experienced.

The elements that Lynch draws on for imageability emerge from the recorded experiences of the area. State Road 37 is apparent in the western portion of the map, the tweets follow the road as it stretches from southwest toward the north. While it certainly operates as a path for transportation, it marks a firm edge of experience, as sedimented enunciation. To the east, tweets are more prevalent while to the west they are sparse. Relative to the lines proposed for Center Grove's incorporation, State Road 37 offers an alternative western boundary of the community as it is experienced. The central nodes from the kernel density map are unsurprisingly prominent. Both the school and the small commercial strip are both clearly visible. The presence of these areas throughout multiple modes of inquiry continues to point to their centrality in the community, both as perceived and lived.

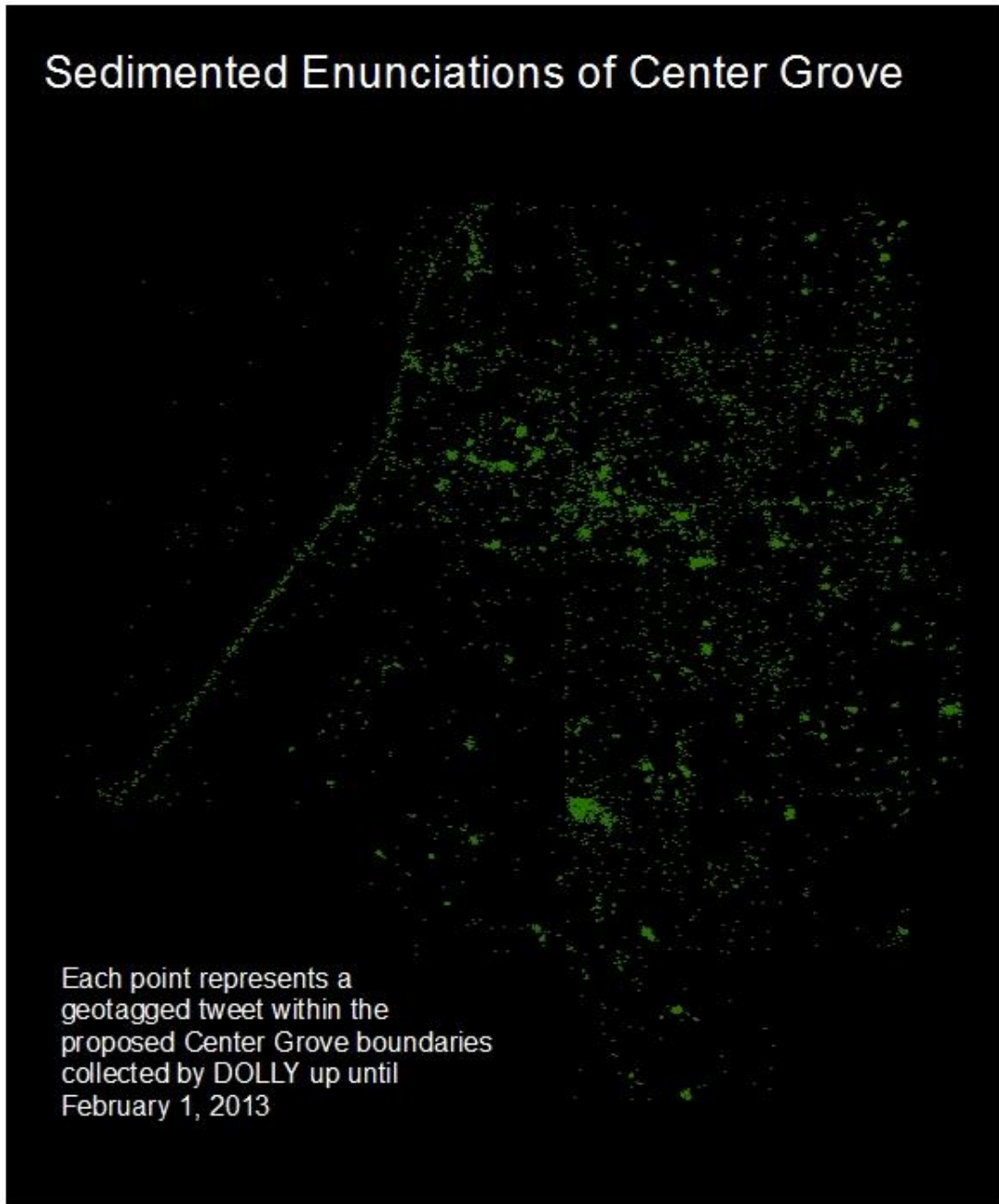


Figure 14: Collection of individual tweets within proposed Center Grove boundaries (Citizens for Center Grove 2013a; University of Kentucky New Mappings Collaboratory 2013)

What is perhaps more interesting than the central nodes is the legibility of paths leading to them. The bubbling up of north-south and east-west lines suggest paths that are physically on the ground. Morgantown Road bisects the area vertically, passing through or along the identified centers. Smith Valley Road can be seen leading from the eastern edge of the area before being lost in the twitter action around the small commercial strip. Similarly, to the south a line of points mirrors Stones Crossing Road before diminishing into the main campus center.

4.5: Conclusion

The collection of mental maps, interviews, and Twitter points carves out a more nuanced image of Center Grove than that represented in the map of the suggested boundaries offered by C4CG. The official map seeks to define a uniform area that is all Center Grove. The way it is perceived and experienced through everyday practice is, however, bumpy and holey. The mental maps hint at the way that residents perceive where their community is, both in extent and in focus. The interviews reveal the way residents define and enact the center and extent of Center Grove as it exists in their everyday lives. Twitter patterns serve as records of being, as sedimented enunciations of practice that reveal a unique image of an experienced Center Grove. Through the posting of geotagged tweets residents, visitors, and passers-through bring form and legibility to their experiences of their community.

In this chapter I have sought to relate suburban experiences of place to a metaphor of imageability. By applying ideas of centrality, insider/outsider, and sedimented enunciation to Center Grove I have shown that the residents of this suburb can create images of their community that are distinct from the ones that surround them. This ability

to distinguish their community from others suggests a sense of belonging to somewhere unique. It begins to reveal a suburban sense of place.

Chapter 5

Anticipating Center Grove: Imaginings and Performances of Place

5.0: Introduction

5.0.0: The Argument

In this chapter I want to examine how multiple visions of the future are used in the suburban community of Center Grove to produce a sense of place. Drawing on a three part framework of Ben Anderson's (2010) anticipatory action, I demonstrate how residents of the unincorporated area of White River Township call on the future to narrate senses of attachment, identity, and belonging to their community in the present. Further, by relying on these main components of anticipatory action -- understood as *styles*, *practices*, and *logics* -- I examine how the utilization of the future in debates over the incorporation of Center Grove produces multiple overlapping ideas of Center Grove in the present.

5.0.1: Two Sides, One Community



Figure 15: An incorporationist's "Center Grove YES!" sign (Citizens for Center Grove 2012e)



Figure 16: An anti-incorporationist's "No Town" sign (No Town For Center Grove 2012)

I've lost track of who thinks this is a good thing and who thinks this is a bad thing. (Response 2012b)

Where is Center Grove? What is Center Grove? Does Center Grove exist? Should Center Grove exist? These are questions that residents of unincorporated White River Township have faced in the year and half since C4CG began proposing the incorporation of the area in a town of Center Grove. Since that time, residents have largely been divided into two camps. On the one side are the incorporationists who want to protect the quality of life they enjoy as residents in their community (Figure 15). On the other side there are the anti-incorporationists who want to protect the quality of life they enjoy as residents in their community (Figure 16).

Initially it may seem somewhat baffling how those on either side of the incorporation debate could want the same result and yet be so diametrically opposed to one another. As the above poster stated on the C4CG's Facebook page, it is tricky to figure out exactly who thinks the idea of Center Grove is bad because in many respects

both sides want the same thing for one another: They want to enjoy low taxes and an environment that mixes rural charm with convenient access to urban amenities.

To understand why the debate involves two sides after the same ends requires an examination of the motivations for fighting for or against incorporation. By examining the debates over Center Grove through a frame of anticipatory action I explore the ways in which imaginings of the future of unincorporated White River Township come to shape arguments and actions taken by those for and against the formal creation of Center Grove. Further I want to consider how these imaginings of the future for the area construct senses of place in the present.

5.0.2: The Tense of Place

Place is frequently thought about in terms of the past and present. Our past experiences and interactions shape our connections to a particular place. We observe the current material, social, and capital *bricolage* that make Place A distinct from Place B. Our considerations of place frequently occur in the present and we have the benefit of records, memory, and hindsight to allow the past to shape those present considerations.

But what is a place without future? Doreen Massey writes about place as a weaving together of various flows of people, capital, power and interconnections across class, race, and spatial boundaries (Massey 1991). Place emerges as these flows come near to, are in contact with, are entangled and disentangled with/from one another. But the nature of flows is that they come from somewhere and have a trajectory, no matter how winding or circuitous, towards somewhere else. So while looking to the past and assessing the present are indeed important means for understanding places and how they

have emerged, to simply stop there would be to ignore the dynamism and fluidity of place.

As such, a place may not be fully and objectively knowable, but an understanding of place and places without consideration of the future means ignoring a key constituent of a sense of and attachment to place. What I want to explore in this chapter is how the future can be integrated into the ways place is conceptualized, connected to and constructed.

5.0.3: The Tense of Center Grove

In the previous chapter I examined the way that Center Grove derives its placeness through imaging. By identifying nodes, paths, and areas that could be identified as Center Grove, the residents created a picture of a place that, while not real in a legal sense, is nonetheless recognizable by residents as distinct from other places around it. But this process of imaging Center Grove heavily relies on experiences and interactions from the past and comparisons and contrasts situated in the present. The future seems of a little consideration.

Yet in talking, listening, and reading what area residents have to say about their home community, it is clear that their relationship to Center Grove is based not only in the past and present, but also in what is to come. As C4CG has worked towards incorporation over the past two years, allies, detractors, and observers of their cause have had to ask themselves, *What is Center Grove?*, *Where is Center Grove?*, *Who belongs to Center Grove?* But they also ask, and this is the subject I intend to address in this chapter, *What will Center Grove become?*

I draw on Ben Anderson's work on 'anticipatory action' as a way to connect considerations of Center Grove's future to present construction of the area as a place. In this chapter I consider how Center Grove becomes present through practices of imagination and performance and logics of precaution and preemption that depend on the possibility of a future that include some form of Center Grove. I argue that the imagining of Center Grove in the future serves to materialize it in particular ways in the present regardless of what side of the incorporation debate residents stand.

5.0.4: Chapter Structure

The rest of this chapter proceeds as follows. First I offer summary of the incorporation process in Indiana. I then take a closer look at Anderson's anticipatory action and how I intend to draw on it to frame my analysis of the Center Grove incorporation debate. After that I will draw on interviews, participant observation, web-based discussions, and literature produced by those engaged in the debate over the fate of unincorporated White River Township to examine how the multiple ways in which their community is anticipated. Finally, I will discuss how the anticipations of Center Grove in the future serve to develop a sense of place in the present.

5.1: *Incorporation in Indiana*

C4CG's primary goal is to incorporate the remaining unincorporated portion of White River Township into the town of Center Grove. Before delving deeper into the debates surrounding this goal, I want to take a moment to outline the incorporation process in Indiana.

The requirements for carrying out a successful incorporation in Indiana are set out in Title 36, Article 5, Chapter 1 of the Indiana Code (Office of Code Revision Indiana

Legislative Services Agency 2013). A proposal for incorporation must meet four basic criteria (2013, sec. 2). First, the incorporated area must be projected for some level commercial, industrial, residential, etc. development in the near future. Second, the area to be incorporated should not be a single contiguous and compact unit. Third, there must be enough developable land to allow for future growth. Finally, incorporation must be in the best interests of the citizens to be incorporated. A petition may be submitted with a minimum of 50 signatures from land owners in the to-be-incorporated area.

While these four requirements are fairly straightforward, there are several more bureaucratic measures that the petitioners must take in order to incorporate an area (2013, sec. 3). This includes a precise survey of the proposed boundaries, a count of residents and landowners, total property valuation, notice of proposed services to be provided and when, tax liability for services, and a name for the town. Areas within four miles of a city must ask for consent from those cities to incorporate (2013, sec. 7). In the case of Center Grove, this means asking Indianapolis and Greenwood for permission to carry out the incorporation process. Finally, residents must be given notice and access to a public hearing on the proposed incorporation 60 to 90 days prior to submitting the petition (2013, sec. 5). The petition then must be submitted and approved by the county executive. In Center Grove this means appealing to the three Johnson County Commissioners. A petition may be approved, returned for revision, or denied (2013, sec. 8–9). Upon approval, the previously unincorporated area effectively becomes a town.

For those against incorporation there are much greater hurdles than those faced by those petitioning for incorporation (2013, sec. 6). Their only recourse is a remonstrance whereby the signatures of 51% of property owners or a group of people holding 75% of

the assessed value of the area is presented to, in Johnson County, the county commissioners. The process described here is that undertaken by C4CG to incorporate Center Grove. As of publication, their petition has been returned for revision and the incorporation effort has largely been put on hold. What follows in the rest of this chapter revolves around discussions throughout 2011 and 2012 over the proposed incorporation of Center Grove.

5.2: Anticipatory Action: Anticipating the future

Time is frequently considered a linear construct. We use trite clichés like ‘time marches on’ and ‘the world keeps turning’ as a way characterizing the headstrong, forward-moving nature of time. The footprints leading to the present can be traced back through the series of events that led to ‘now’ and the future, while hazy, is realized with each step forward in time (Anderson and Adey 2012). Anticipatory action relies on an alternative conceptualization of time wherein the possibilities of the future inform the decisions of the present. Here, I examine how the future of Center Grove is operationalized within present debates about governance and its relationship with its residents. Using anticipatory action I argue that the future not only frames these debates, but actually constructs Center Grove as a unique spatial entity in the world.

Anticipatory action should not be seen as a crystal ball approach to the future. It is subject to the same uncertainty that bedevils linear chronology. However, anticipatory action is motivated by the sense of insecurity that such uncertainty entails, particularly with social arrangements of the present. Anderson writes “Uncertainty is both threat and promise: both that which must be secured against and that which must be enabled” (2010, 782). As such, imaginings of the future, while never sure to come to fruition, can be used to justify actions to protect and deter opponents of what Anderson calls ‘valued life’.

5.2.0: Properties of Anticipatory Action

Anderson argues that anticipatory action hinges on a relationship of three components: styles, practices, and logics. Styles refer to the way in which the future is related to and intervened upon. Anderson writes that styles consist of “[s]tatements about the future condition and limit how ‘the future’ can be intervened on” (2010, 778). Style in anticipatory action refers to the constraints placed on the infinite possibilities of the future in order to allow for a finite amount of possible courses of action in the present.

Anderson writes that practices “give content to specific futures, including acts of performing, calculating, and imagining” (2010, 779). Practice is part of a process of selecting futures from the infinite possibilities and narrating them as elevating them into the realm of a conceived plausibility. In other words, practices focus in on a select few futures.

Logics describe the way responses to possible futures are enacted in the present. Anderson writes that “[l]ogics involve action that aims to prevent, mitigate, adapt to, prepare for, or preempt specific futures” (2010, 779). As such logics are those actions taken in the present in response to possibilities of the future. What follows immediately below is a brief discussion of the specific forms of styles, practices, and logics present in the debate over Center Grove’s incorporation.

5.2.1: Style: Valued Life

Anticipatory action is not an equal opportunity endeavor. Anderson writes that

any type of anticipatory action will only provide relief...to a valued life, not necessarily to all life. Certain lives may have to be abandoned, damaged, or destroyed in order to protect, save, or care for life (2010, 780).

Anticipatory action requires those who are engaging in it to identify what social, economic, cultural, and/or lifestyle arrangements are to be protected and furthered through anticipatory action. In other words, a form of life must be favored over others in order to limit the possible futures anticipated. The one relied upon to narrow this anticipation is what Anderson calls the ‘valued life’. For instance, the valued life may be framed in the War on Terror as Western liberal democracy. By acting on a future when that valued life might be crumbling away, an opening in the present is made to deter the causes of an uncertain future (Massumi 2007; Anderson 2010)

While anticipatory action is frequently conceptualized relative to corporeally life-threatening concerns about global terror, climate change, and pandemics, the valued life being protected is less the physical life itself, but instead favored way of life.

Anticipatory action finds purchase in the ongoing debates in Center Grove over incorporation where, as I will discuss later, the valued lives on either side are quite similar, but the imagined futures affecting their present are different.

5.2.2: Practice: Imagining and Performance

Anderson presents imagining as one form of practice in anticipatory action. In this case, imagining as practice carries with it a meaning that goes beyond mere daydreaming or storytelling, although these might be called upon as ways of imagining. Imagining as a practice of anticipatory action is focused on an *as-if* proposition wherein a situation or set of hypothetically possible circumstances are regarded as real (Casey 1976). As hypothetical futures are given purchase in the realm of possibility, they are transmuted from an indeterminable future to the present as a basis for action (Anderson 2010). These ‘artifacts’ of the future undergo a process of interpretation in the present that “[lends]

some materiality to the potential future being represented” (Kinsley 2010, 2772). While Kinsley relates this to the computer technology industry, I argue later that the imagining of Center Grove in the future results in artifacts that shape the present debate over incorporation and the materiality of the proposed town itself.

Imagining, then, may be considered a sort of thought game. It is a practice of thinking about what could be in the future. But imaginings rarely leave the mind as anything other than speech or text. There may be a very straightforward relaying of the imaginings going on in one’s head, but such imaginings are not actually enacted. However, it is not outside the realm of practice in anticipatory action that one might act out these futures. Another form of practice that occurs in Center Grove is performance of the area as if incorporation had occurred.

Anderson notes that while imagining can make futures present and actionable, performance is a supplementary embodied act that rehearses the possible future to come. Futures are given a greater foothold in the present as interested parties stage, pretend, and act out what has been imagined (Anderson 2010; Kinsley 2012). Rather than simply being a recording of some ideas of what could be, performances might be considered enacted imaginings. Performance goes beyond simple imagining because the possible future is demonstrated or rehearsed in the present.

Looking to anticipatory action in Center Grove I focus on how residents of Center Grove incorporate imaginings and performances of the future to argue the stakes in both incorporating and remaining unincorporated.

5.2.3: Logic: Precaution and Preemption

I will draw on two logics of anticipatory action with respect to the debates surrounding Center Grove. These are precaution and prevention. Although these terms are quite similar, their differences are important to understanding the experiences of anticipatory action on either side of the debate. As was noted earlier, logics of anticipatory action involve the actual mitigation and handling of threats to the valued life.

One such logic is precaution. Massumi writes that precaution (or prevention) “assumes an ability to assess threats empirically and identify their causes. Once causes are identified, appropriate curative methods are sought to avoid their realization” (2007, sec. 5). In this case a threat is known to imminent and action is taken to mitigate that threat before it can no longer be thwarted (Ewald 2002).

Preemption, like precaution, is an act to thwart a threat. However, the key difference here is that preemption does not require that the threat be known imminent or emerging. Instead, preemption is an act of foreclosing futures where imagined threats might eventually emerge (Massumi 2007). Preemption is thus an act to deter the possible whether there is any evidence of the threat brewing or not.

5.2.4: Anticipatory Action, Suburbia, and Place

But how does this idea of anticipatory action fit in with suburbia and place? Amin and Thrift (2002) provide this connection through their ontology of new urbanism. For them, the city cannot be reduced to a scalar unit that characterizes independent areas of dense development. As communication and transportation networks become more interconnected, they argue that the city is increasingly everywhere (2002, 1). Thus, the divide between rural and urban or city and suburb is considered immaterial as flows of

people, ideas, culture, and capital circulate from one urban area to the next. The urban is conceived out of the multiple potentialities of these flows. The city as a place is experienced in the present is a fleeting moment of intersection where these flows come together (2002, 30). Amin and Thrift suggest that the nature of the city's being is intimately connected to an infinite slate of futures that it could become (2002, 27).

It is this notion of cities as possibility and in a constant process of becoming that links anticipatory action to place identity in suburbia. Anticipatory action is a means for limiting what the city can become. But to limit this ontogenetic process is a tacit acknowledgment that the only way to protect the present is to narrow the possible futures to come. In what follows, I examine how this narrowing of the possible is taken up in debates surrounding the incorporation of Center Grove.

5.3: Center Grove Style

Anderson writes that styles “[consist] of a series of statements through which ‘the future’ as an abstract category is related to” (2010, 778). One such style is manifest in identifying and relating a valued life. The debate surrounding Center Grove and its future begins with questions of the valued life. That is, what way of life is envisioned now that must be protected so that it persists into the future? In this section I identify and describe the characteristics of the valued life of both those supporting incorporation and those against. In particular I note both the differences and the similarities in the valued life being projected onto the area's future.

5.3.0: Incorporationist Valued Life

In order to identify the valued lives wrapped up in debates about Center Grove's incorporation status, it is useful to consider the reasons people come to live in the area.

People move to Center Grove for a select set of reasons. In large part, they come for the high quality schools. As the principal of Center Grove High School, Matt Shockley noted,

People come to Center Grove...because of its schools...I hear it every year. It's because of the reputation that its schools have, both academically, but also for the other activities and programs that we offer...[I]t's a calling card... ("CGHS Principal" 2012)

The high school ranks as one of the top 10 public high schools in Indiana (U.S. News & World Report 2013) and the success of its various athletic and fine arts extracurricular groups are both a point of pride and a major selling point for incoming residents. It is not unusual to pass neighborhood developments with small banners touting their location within the Center Grove School district.

But schools are not the only reason people move to the Center Grove area. After all, there are several high quality school districts in the Indianapolis area. Others have noted that the ease of access to urban areas, while still maintaining a fairly rural environment, was a key attraction to Center Grove. In western White River Township State Road 37 provides a direct southern route to academic, medical, and industrial jobs in and around Bloomington while also connecting directly into Interstate 465, the main loop around Indianapolis. While smaller than its western counterpart, State Road 135 provides direct access to downtown Indianapolis. Additionally, easy access to Interstate 65 heading towards Louisville adds to the area's attractiveness as a pivot point for work and travel.

At the same time that there is easy access to urban areas, the Center Grove area is still considered by many to have an appealing rural character to it. While increasing residential development has seen several large farms turned into subdivisions Center

Grove is still open to expansion onto rural properties. Between access to work and entertainment in nearby cities and a sense of the rural, Center Grove's ability to offer the best of both worlds makes it an attractive locale.

Perhaps most important to the debates over incorporation is the cost of living in the area. On one hand, several people I talked to indicated that the lower housing prices in unincorporated White River Township were a major draw for them. But an even bigger draw was that the taxes are low. In 2011, the property tax rate for unincorporated White River Township was 17-21% lower than those parts incorporated into Greenwood and about 31% lower than those parts incorporated into Bargersville (STATSIndiana 2011). Looking at similar outer ring upper middle class suburbs, the Center Grove area has indeed enjoyed property tax rates 10-48% lower (2011). Nonetheless, relative to comparable upper-middle class communities in the Indianapolis area, living in unincorporated White River Township is cheaper both in terms of housing and taxation.

Incorporation would not change residents' relationship to the school corporation. Children of White River Township, whether from the unincorporated area or from those incorporated into Greenwood and Bargersville, fall within the Center Grove Community School Corporation. Municipal governance and school governance would remain separate, as is the norm in Indiana. However, while the valued life of incorporationists frequently includes schools, the emphasis of the character in need of protection rests more heavily on quality of life, both in terms of environment and cost of living. More specifically, incorporation is understood as a means to maintaining the current conditions as much as possible.

As one C4CG leader explained, “When people say, ‘Well, we don’t want change,’ the only way you can do that is through incorporation” (“C4CG Leader 1” 2012).

Through a fundamental change to the way area residents relate and interface with local government, the lifestyle that has been a draw for so many to the area can be maintained.

5.3.1: Anti-Incorporationist Valued Life

Skeptics of incorporation have also made allusions to a valued life that they find worth protecting. While those against incorporation are less formally organized than supporters, they have managed to pull together a coalition of residents into a group called No Town for Center Grove. Their central message, which appears on their webpage, Facebook page, and the signs they have planted throughout the area is: “We’re proud of the community we’ve built with all of our neighbors in all corners of White River Township. Are You?” (No Town For Center Grove 2013) This tagline offers a glimpse into what it is that anti-incorporationists value for protection.

The first half of this tagline also implies a contentment with the quality of life in White River Township as it exists in the present. During a public information session in early June 2012, area residents filled the conference room of the Center Grove Schools Administration Building to hear C4CG’s proposal for incorporation. And while it was unclear what the overall proportions of those for, against, and unsure in the audience was, the Q&A session at the end of the presentation included questions from skeptics that spoke to this value of contentment with the present. One resident asked “What is incorporation going to give us that we don’t have now?” (Citizens for Center Grove 2012f) Others expressed this question as a more pointed cost-benefit analysis: “What are the benefits if we’re going to do this and increase my taxes considerably. I’m not seeing

how that benefits me as Joe Taxpayer, because right now I get fire protection, I get county sheriff protection, my streets get cleaned, I get trash” (“Interviewee 4” 2012).

Here we see some indication that detractors want to maintain a lifestyle that seems in line with their current tax liability.

The question many ask is *Do I see anything I want that I’m willing to pay more taxes for?* And the answer seems to be *No*. This is perhaps best illustrated by one long time resident’s internal dialog:

I wasn't that hot about doing the incorporation. And the more I thought about it and the more I looked around, I thought, ‘My God, we have everything that we want, everything that we need.’ I've got no complaints with the police...Fire district is very, very good. And as an asset the school corporation, for the most part, is a pretty good school corporation...So, everything considered I said, ‘Wait a minute. Why do I need another piece of government?’ Now I get that the roads are taken care of, police are here, the fire's here. What more else do I need? And the more I thought about it, I said, ‘No, I don't want it. We'll pass on the whole thing.’ So that was it in a nutshell (“Interviewee 3” 2012).

The low tax lifestyle that White River Township residents enjoy is certainly a major part of what anti-incorporationists are content with and deem worthy of maintaining. There are, however, other qualities of life that are important. In particular it seems that incorporation seems to be conflated with a loss of the rural community that has both attracted residents and compelled them to plant roots.

As a one resident posted to No Town for Center Grove’s Facebook page, “Lived here for 45 years. Moved here because it was country. Can we please keep it that way?” (“What can you do ...” 2012) But this is more than just a matter of a rural aesthetic. It also has to do with a sense of belonging to a community that is beyond the bounds of the proposed incorporation area. At the June public hearing, a former county commissioner explained that most of the county tax revenue and votes from unincorporated portions of

Johnson County comes from the Center Grove area. While this was meant to undermine arguments that Center Grove is underrepresented in county politics, it also brings up the importance of the relationship some people have with the township at large and Johnson County as a whole. “Where I used to live is now annexed to Bargersville, and in the Center Grove school district. If I still lived there, would I not be considered part of the community?” (Porter-Tilley 2012b) This commenter expresses a valuing of her sense of belonging beyond the proposed Center Grove boundaries.

This sense of concern about others expands from a community in White River Township to the county at large:

My other huge fear is that because White River Township provides the largest amount of tax revenue to the County of all of the other Townships combined, if they lose dollars from their budget because of incorporation and still have to provide services, won't they have to increase everyone's County Taxes to recover the loss of funds? ... We are citizens of Johnson County with an obligation to support the County as well as White River Township (“What are your reactions?” 2012).

As both commenters express, there is a sense of belonging that extends beyond Center Grove that matters to them and is worth protecting. The valued life includes the bond some residents feel with those beyond their immediate locale. There is concern about protecting the quality of life of those indirectly impacted by a change in the governance structure of the area.

Because of the less formal organization of those against incorporation, it is difficult to point to a coherent valued life that they seek to protect. There is some division between protecting individual quality of life and the desire to protect the quality of life of those beyond the Center Grove area. What is clear, however, is that across the variety of expressions of what incorporations skeptics want to protect, the overarching theme is maintaining the status quo.

5.3.2: Overlapping Valued Lives

What is intriguing, then, is that both sides are generally seeking the same ends. They want to capture the qualities of the Center Grove area that make it attractive now and maintain them. Supporters of incorporation are looking to protect the cache of quality schools, selectively urban and rural experience, and low cost living. Anti-incorporationists want to maintain the current tax to service ratio and the relationships at the local, township, and county level that have contributed to the creation of a community they are ‘proud of’. And while there are some differences in what both sides perceive as contributing to the quality of their community in the present, there is a key overlap in terms of the property tax burden. It is the protection of the low tax liability for the public services provided that are central to the practices of imagining that both sides engage in when discussing the prospect of incorporation.

Anticipatory action requires first something, a style, in the present that is worth protecting. The valued life, a way of living that is preferred over others, is one such style that Anderson suggests is taken up in beginning processes of anticipatory action. In the case of Center Grove, there are two major sides to the debates over incorporation. There are those, the incorporationists, who would like to see Center Grove become codified as a town and there others, the anti-incorporationists, who are content with the present unincorporated status of the area. Both, however, are extremely concerned with maintaining the sort of low tax, minimal government lifestyle that drew them to the area in the first place. To stop with identifying a valued life, it would be impossible to see how the two sides are separate. What is clear, however, is that this identification of a valued life establishes a common connection between the residents and Center Grove. It allows

them, no matter what side of the incorporation debate they sit on, to ground their valued life in a unique space separate from their already incorporated neighbors. Thus, in the identification of a value life we also see the forging of a place unique from others.

5.4: Center Grove Practices

5.4.0: Practice I: Imagining Center Grove

Having established the valued life that Center Grove area residents on either side of the incorporation debate would like to protect I now move to the practices of anticipatory action that take place which situate the fate of that valued life into a futuristic context. In this section I look at how both sides of the incorporation debate imagine the future as a means to argue for action to protect their valued life in the present. I will examine these practices of imaginings by each party separately.

Property taxes are central to the debates over the incorporation of Center Grove. It is the relative lowness of property taxes in the area that define the valued life to be protected by incorporation supporters and anti-incorporationists alike. Supporters, particularly C4CG, play off this mutual concern by imagining two different futures for the area. On one hand they present a dark potential future spawned by inaction. On the other hand they offer a lighter alternative that highlights the future benefits that will be enjoyed through incorporation.

This dark imagining of Center Grove begins with the assumption that incorporation does not take place and the residents' current relationship to local township and county government persists. This particular future presented by incorporationists is predicated on a perceived inevitability of annexation by neighboring municipalities, Greenwood and Bargersville.

Recently both places have annexed lands in White River Township, mostly along main travel corridors. In the eastern part of White River Township, Greenwood has annexed a strip of land on either side of State Road 135 which contains significant commercial development including a Target, Applebees, and Home Depot. Bargersville also annexed land in southern White River Township along State Road 144, a connector between State Road 37 in the west and both US 31 and the county seat, Franklin.

But it is not simply the fact that both municipalities have opted to absorb portions of White River Township that is threatening incorporationists' valued life. It is the way that they have gone about it. Namely, Greenwood and Bargersville have been strategic in annexing those parts of the township that have non-residential land uses while bypassing neighborhoods. Supporters of incorporation point to this as a predictor of future action. They imagine a future in which Bargersville and particularly Greenwood engage in further practices of selective annexation.

This anxiety about selective annexation is seated in a future for the area that has been planned by the state. The extension of Interstate 69 to connect Indianapolis to Evansville in southwestern Indiana is slated to incorporate State Road 37 in the western portion of White River Township. Based on the annexations by Bargersville and Greenwood around transportation corridors, C4CG has expressed some conjecture about how the two established municipalities will proceed as the highway is fitted into the area landscape:

It is not that we do not trust the County, Bargersville, or Greenwood to control the I-69 interchanges; we expect that they will act in the best interests of their constituents, which is not the same thing as acting in the best interest of the residents most affected by the decisions (Citizens for Center Grove 2012a).

While written in the tactful, non-confrontational style one might expect in the Midwest, C4CG constitutes an expectation that their neighbors will jump on the opportunity to take advantage of prime real estate along the future Interstate 69 if it is still available as construction creeps closer from southern Indiana.

Calling on this sense of inevitability that neighboring municipalities will selectively annex land for non-residential development, supporters present the specter of a no-win situation for those currently living in unincorporated White River Township. Some will be annexed into neighboring towns while others will be left stranded on unincorporated islands. The term ‘unincorporated island’ describes those unincorporated areas that are surrounded by land incorporated by nearby cities and towns. By not incorporating itself, the Center Grove area is projected by C4CG to be fractured into areas annexed into Greenwood and Bargersville and unincorporated islands of land that do not serve the interests of their neighbors.

C4CG has even created maps of the possible future spatial arrangements for White River Township starting from an assumption that incorporation does not occur (Figure 17; Figure 18). As Denis Wood has written, “[The real world] is presented to us on the platter of the map, presented, that is, made present, so that whatever invisible, unattainable, erasable past or future can become part of our living...now...here” (1992, 7). C4CG’s maps can then be taken as artifacts of the future which create a space of possibility for imagining, materialized in the present.



Figure 17: C4CG's vision of a future Unincorporated White River Township (Citizens for Center Grove 2012b)



Figure 18: C4CG's vision of Center Grove reduced to unincorporated islands (Citizens for Center Grove 2012c)

One supporter's amazement that there are people against incorporation draws on visions of an unrepresentative, relatively distanced government:

I am amazed at the people who are fighting the idea of incorporation who are steadfast in their belief that they're better off being unincorporated with absolutely no protection from being forced to be a part of Greenwood or Bargersville, or who think that being under-represented in all levels of county government is the way to go (Response 2012a).

Those in areas annexed by Bargersville and Greenwood become subject to the higher taxes and government that may not be after their best interests. Those left on the unincorporated islands will be on the hook for maintaining county services. According to supporters, this means 'islanders' will inevitably be asked to pay higher taxes. And because the projected practices of selective annexation will be to gobble up non-residential land, the tax burden will increasingly be placed on residents (Citizens for Center Grove 2012b).

But if the unincorporated future looks ominous, what would the future look like after incorporation? It is this imagining that incorporation supporters rely on to encourage action in the present. Property taxes under incorporation will be higher. Supporters do not omit that from their projected future where the town of Center Grove exists. However, they present this increase in taxes as an inevitability no matter what (in)action takes place in the present.

As was noted above, their narration of the future without incorporation does not consider maintenance or decrease in the current tax rate to be possible. In doing so, they are able to project a future under incorporation that includes several new benefits. A town of Center Grove, they envision, would see more local tax dollars recirculated within the community, open up access to new state revenue streams, and by halting annexations of

commercial and industrial properties, allow for a variety of local revenue streams (Citizens for Center Grove 2011a).

Having pointed to the bang-for-your-buck factor of living in the Center Grove area as part of the valued life, their presentation of a future with slightly higher taxes and greater local control over that revenue is not only consistent with the aim of protecting their valued life, but also enhances it. And consistent with the desire to keep the area similar to the present day, they envision a future after incorporation where residents have direct control over maintaining the suburban character that attracted people to lay down roots:

If you tell me you don't want anything to change, I'm going to ask you, 'So what are you going to do about it?' Are you going to hope it doesn't happen or are you going to take action so that you can have some input on whether change happens or not?' And if we become a town...conceptually they could [disapprove] anymore development. We could say we're not going to build anymore homes. We're going to leave everything that's agriculture agriculture. We're not interested in business coming in...conceptually ("C\$CG Leader 2" 2012).

Without incorporation, they foresee a future of selective annexations and even less say from unincorporated islands over how development will proceed than they have now.

There is no guarantee that their semi-rural/semi-urban environment will remain. Only by incorporating can residents of unincorporated White River Township take control of their locale's destiny (Citizens for Center Grove 2011a). This sense that some aspect of the character of the area can be protected is important because the future construction of

Interstate 69 means that some change cannot be avoided:

And with the interstate I-69...taking over highway 37, [we] will now have the opportunity for interchanges in our area and I want the zoning board to be very involved in the buildings. We don't want "Girls Girls Girls", peeps shows, at the interchanges. ("Interviewee 1" 2012).

Anti-incorporationists also imagine futures both with and without incorporation. Predictably, the futures they see are a bit different. Even though they value maintaining their current way of life like incorporationists, the line of thinking that some change now will stem major changes down the road is unconvincing. This is namely for two reasons. First, many skeptics of incorporation do not believe in the inevitability of annexation and the resulting rising taxes. Second, and perhaps most importantly, the present changes proposed by C4CG directly threaten two of the key intertwined components of anti-incorporationists' valued life: relationship to local government and tax-to-service value.

Wariness of changes predicted by incorporationists and a threat to their valued life come to frame their imaginings of possible futures for unincorporated White River Township. Because many detractors of incorporation do not accept the inevitability of changes upon which C4CG predicates their argument, their imaginings of a future where White River Township remains quite simple. Their quality of life will not change, particularly their relationship to local government and their property tax burden. In the wake of reports that funding for the Interstate 69 extension may not be certain, many still consider it plausible, but certainly not inevitable (Sabalow 2012).

This is evident in the contrast in how anti-incorporationists often talk about the role of the interstate in the area's future. They say "If I-69 is built..." while supporters more frequently use the more definite "When I-69 is built..." Similarly, the specter of annexation that C4CG creates is also not seen as inevitable. "They keep talking about 'Greenwood could' or 'Greenwood might...' or 'In the future, this could happen.' A lot of that talk...And I don't know that any of it has any validity to it" ("Interviewee 4" 2012).

The perceived lack of certainty about the changes that underpin supporters' arguments for incorporation leave the dour imaginings of an ever fractured unincorporated White River Township unconvincing. One skeptic expressed this fundamental doubt during a Facebook debate explaining, "Until this does or doesn't go down, no one is going to have all of the answers. It's all speculation... The area KNOWS what it's like with the county commissioners, and they know what Greenwood is like....I'm likely to go with what I know rather than treading new ground" (Response 2012c). Since change is no more certain than stasis, their future imagining can be understood simply in their expressions of contentment with the present. As an anti-incorporationist put it, "What more else do I need?" ("Interviewee 3" 2012)

But while detractors' imaginings of White River Township as unincorporated do not take change as inevitable, they must draw on this sense of inevitability when imagining a future with Center Grove as a town. This is because through incorporation, the fundamental characteristics of their valued life, their association with township and county government and comfortable property tax burdens would be altered. In particular this threat to anti-incorporationists' valued life is situated at the connection with property taxes and governance.

C4CG has proposed a municipal property tax to fund a very small town government. But since the imminence of annexation and unincorporated islanding coupled with tax increases remains a spurious claim for many anti-incorporationists, they see a future where there is a new layer of government set up only to really handle land use regulation previously done at the county level. Skeptics are concerned that they will pay higher taxes and in return simply receive the same service at a higher cost.

With another layer of government being added and a new taxing authority to set rates and collect money, anti-incorporationists are left imagining a future with higher taxes and nothing from their government to show for it.

Further, some anti-incorporationists imagine a future where under the town of Center Grove, the limited government and relatively low tax model are unable to persist. On one hand there is a sense that bringing the government from the county level to the local will result in governance by people who are also members of home owners associations (HOAs). While the aim is limited government, some skeptics see a town government that takes on the restrictive and intrusive governance as frequently associated with HOAs.

One Facebook poster expressed this very concern stating, “My worries are with another layer of bureaucratic rules to abide by, led by none other than my fellow [White River Township] residents who now prefer to live by HOA rules” (Edlin 2012). While C4CG representatives have indicated that the town would start with the same county regulations already in existence, this poster expresses the concerns of many that the willingness of many area residents to live under HOA rules is a predictor of what governance will look like after incorporation and it concerns these residents who particularly value some of the more rural aspects of living in the area. They imagine a future where their personal property rights are gradually diminished under HOA rule writ large. Noting the threat to this aspect of their value life, one Facebook poster expressed some fear: “I’m afraid that if [White River Township] becomes a town there will be a witch hunt” (Response 2012d).

Still others are worried about the idealistic picture of taxation presented by C4CG. At the June public forum, representatives of the group were pushed on more than one occasion about how the proposed taxing model accounted for unforeseen circumstances and expenses (Citizens for Center Grove 2012f). Just the mere suggestion that the tax model did not allow for the unforeseen opened up an opportunity for detractors to begin imagining situations where the promised minimal tax increase might balloon. Wouldn't the town be on the hook for road repair exacerbated by the increased truck traffic off of the coming Interstate 69 exits? The plan may be to lease space for public offices, but is it not possible that the town might have to build some buildings? Is it certain that the county sheriff would be able to continue handling policing of the area if the town were to contract that service out?

While supporters imagine a future after Center Grove becomes a town where everything has gone as planned, the anti-incorporationists have little trust for the very premises on which incorporation is based. As such they are able to imagine multiple futures where things go wrong and unforeseen circumstances disrupt the best laid plans.

Those of lesser or more restricted means also wonder if there is room in the town of Center Grove for them. One Facebook poster on the No Town for Center Grove group page wondered about the 19 households on fixed incomes in his own neighborhood. "What happens to their taxes if [White River Township] becomes a town[?]" (Response 2012e) An older detractor echoed this sentiment reasoning, "It's going to lead...OK, look at it this way...[My wife and I] are retired. So between pension, Social Security, and some investments...we're strictly on our own" ("Interviewee 3" 2012). The interviewee pointed to a vague future ("It's going to lead...") that while he does not paint a complete

picture, it is clear that in examining his and his wife's current financial situation, there is some uncertainty about their well-being in a future town of Center Grove.

In looking at how both sides imagine future possibilities for the area it is worth noting that while both incorporationists and anti-incorporationists are responding to threats to their valued life, the tenses of when and where those threats originate are somewhat different. By considering and suggesting incorporation, members of C4CG were the first to openly consider a future of incorporation and one without it. They reacted to their discontent with lack of local representation and gradual annexations by exploring what it would take to become a town. Concerned by what the high-tax, low representation future that seemed imminent, these incorporationists formed C4CG and began exploring how to create a town. These imaginings of the future became the basis for their campaign to prevent threats to their valued life. The identified valued life was then the basis for their imaginings of the future.

Those against incorporation, up until the question arose, had little reason to consider the future much. As has been noticed, their contentment with the current tax and governance arrangements meant that there was little need to actively imagine the future because whatever change might come to be had more to do with the decay of their own bodies as time marched forward. The valued life vis-à-vis their community was not in danger; just their corporeal life. But with the proposal for incorporation skeptics were forced to imagine the future with and without a town of Center Grove. But even this has differed from the way incorporationists' imaginings originated. While incorporationists produced imagined futures of the area based on their perception of threat to their present

valued life, anti-incorporationists' imaginings come in response not just to threats to their valued life, but also imaginings of the future by C4CG and their supporters.

What this demonstrates is that the connection between the style and performance is not linear and step-wise, but iterative and recursive. While C4CG has remained fairly consistent in the way they imagine futures with or without an incorporated Center Grove, anti-incorporationists go through a fluid process of examining the futures imagined by incorporationists, weighing its threat to their valued life, and imagining other futures based on the threat to their valued life. But because the anti-incorporationists are less unified and officially organized, they demonstrate in their Facebook discussions their willingness to reformulate futures based on those imagined by supporters and detractors of incorporation alike.

5.4.1: Practice II: Center Grove Performance

While imagining is a key practices of anticipatory action by both incorporationists and anti-incorporationists, I do want to briefly note another practice of anticipatory action that has primarily been engaged in by C4CG. Anderson describes performance in a context of anticipatory action as a demonstration of the future in the present. In the case of C4CG, in making the case for incorporation they have engaged in practices that demonstrate the existence of the town in the present.

C4CG in and of itself should not be considered a performance of Center Grove. After all, Indiana state law requires that incorporation must be initiated by citizens. As such, the group at its core is simply an organization to initiate and carry out that requirement. However, in trying to justify their efforts, the group has taken to performing

the town of Center Grove to demonstrate its viability and bring it into existence. They have performed Center Grove in two major ways.

First, by creating a magazine (Figure 19) called *Center Grove Community Newsletter* (2012) and accompanying website, AtCenterGrove.com, they have performed Center Grove as a community that people identify with.

Each issue is sent specifically to residents and businesses in the unincorporated portion of White River Township, thus conflating Center Grove with that area. The magazine contains a mix of articles on incorporation, profiles of area residents and businesses, and self-help articles written by area contributors.

The creation and distribution of the magazine to all households in the area on one hand marks out what area is considered Center Grove and on the other works as a performance that demonstrates Center Grove has the qualities of a true community. It allows supporters to point to other incorporated suburbs to the north of Indianapolis that have their own print and online magazines as a way of demonstrating the community's legitimacy.

Second, through a mock government webpage (Figure 20) they have begun to perform some of the functions of government (Citizens for Center Grove 2012d). The website, for all intents and purposes, offers the appearance of an existing Center Grove. The URL for the page, TownOfCenterGrove.com, is the first indication that the site is performing a pseudo-official role. Further, the text on the homepage, while still looking to the future, establishes a Center Grove of limited government under a non-traditional model contracting public services. In this way they establish what kind of government Center Grove will have.



Figure 19: Center Grove Community Newsletter (“Center Grove Community Newsletter” 2013)

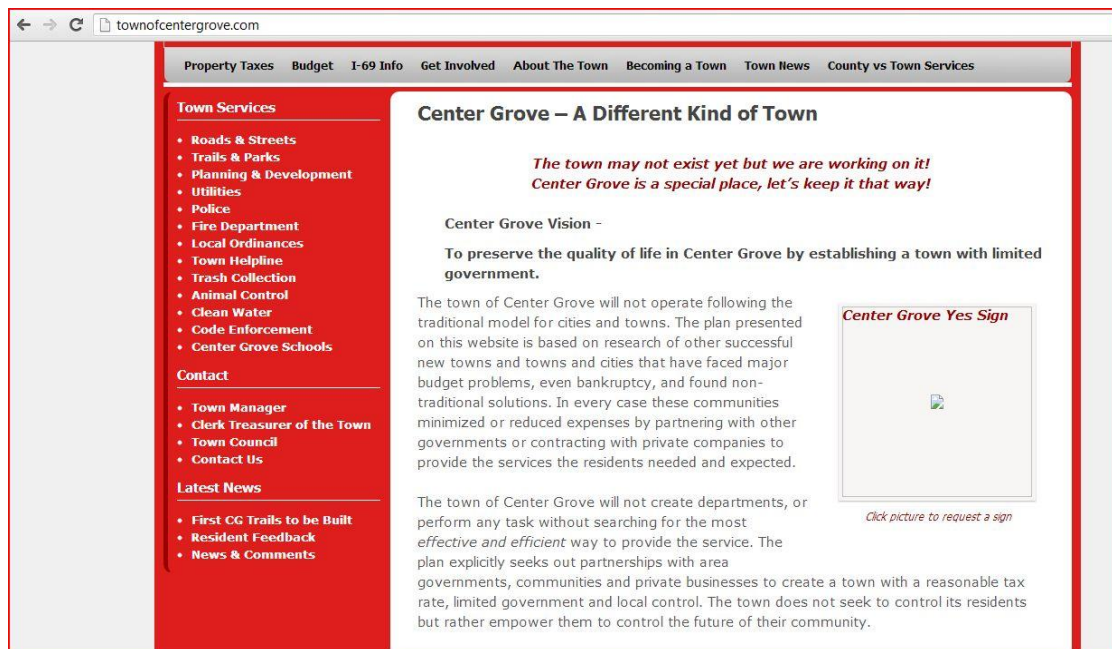


Figure 20: TownOfCenterGrove.com homepage (Citizens for Center Grove 2012d)

But it is perhaps their navigation pane that performs a future Center Grove most explicitly. The pane includes three major headings: Town Services, Contact, and Latest News. These first two headings are particularly noteworthy. Under Town Services are several links that suggest possible resources that the town government would provide. Subheadings include Roads & Streets, Planning & Development, Animal Control, Trash Collection, and Code Enforcement (Figure 21). They even include a link for a Town Helpline. Each one of these links currently goes to pages arguing why and how incorporation would be a better path for utilizing such services. Under the Contact heading are links to the Town Manager, Clerk Treasurer, and Town Council. Currently these links go to pages that include draft job descriptions, explanations of roles, and state laws requiring the positions.

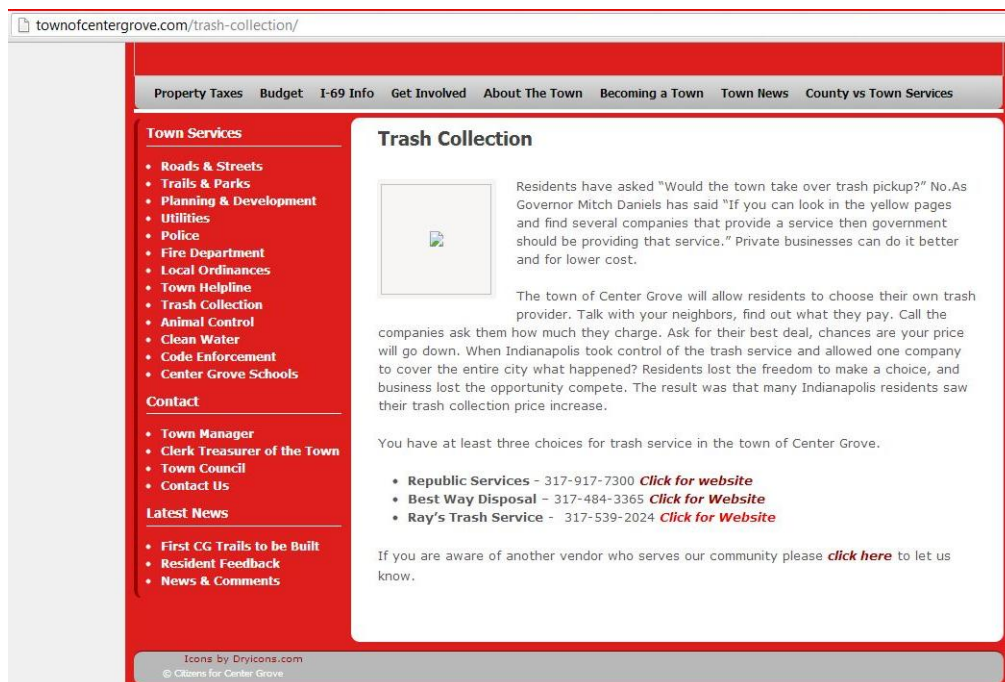


Figure 21: TownOfCenterGrove.com Trash Collection page (Citizens for Center Grove 2013b)

It may come as no surprise that some anti-incorporationists have had problems with this website. Although much of the content clearly points to the town as a proposition, the home page and the left navigation pane in particular give an initial appearance of legitimacy. One accesses the site with a URL that already suggests the town is established and sees links to services one would expect to have fulfilled by a local municipal government. The role of C4CG is buried at the bottom of the page in small lettering simply to establish copyright. Otherwise, the initial appearance is that the website is the homepage for the town of Center Grove. This performance of Center Grove demonstrates the services of a government that does not exist at present. Nonetheless, it suggests a possibility that it could be and that is enough to point to the “town” as something worth protecting.

5.5: Logic: Protecting Center Grove

5.5.0: Preemptive Incorporation

The logic of anticipatory action that supporters of incorporation, particularly those actively working with C4CG, take the imagined futures wherein their valued life is harmed and translate that into action in the present. I contend that their logic is one of preemption because unlike precaution, preemptive actions address threats that while imagined, have not yet even begun to emerge (Massumi 2007). The prospect of selective annexation and unincorporated islanding are certainly imaginable, but the group does not point to actually developing processes that indicate Greenwood’s or Bargersville’s designs to gobble up the remaining commercial and industrial land potential in unincorporated White River Township.

Supporters of incorporation have engaged in preemption quite simply through taking steps towards incorporation. Their imaginings of the future with and without the town of Center Grove result in artifacts and memories of how their valued life will be disrupted or destroyed in the future. These scary imaginings situated alongside those of a future where those threats are mitigated by the existence of a town are transmuted to the present where they are compelled to act. Because the imagining of Center Grove as incorporated presents a rosier future than non-incorporation, supporters can then justify actions taken by C4CG to incorporate. While it remains to be seen if incorporation will pass, the very act in the present to mitigate a threat to the valued life serves to keep that threat from ever being likelihood.

5.5.1: Precautions against Incorporation

While C4CG relies on a logic of preemption, anti-incorporationists engage in a slightly different logic of precaution. This is the case because the threat to their valued life is identifiable and emerging. That is, the incorporation effort being proposed by C4CG is not just a possibility among many, but one that is actively becoming likely. With each step C4CG takes towards incorporation, that threat becomes much more salient. Anti-incorporationists act based on the process unfolding in front of them (Massumi 2007). Their limited formal organization makes it difficult for them to mount a strong unified attack against the threat incorporation poses to their valued life. While they do not have a lot of legal recourse if incorporation were to be approved, the county commissioners who would approve incorporation proposal are elected officials.

As such, anti-incorporationists have drawn on the commissioners' accountability to the public as the platform for precautionary action against the ills of incorporation. As

has been already heavily addressed, the No Town for Center Grove Facebook page acts as a forum for residents to publicly raise their concerns about incorporation (Figure 22). While still informally organized, those against incorporation have also created a common yard sign that works as public display of displeasure with the prospect of incorporation. By putting the signs in their yards they communicate to the county commissioners that their constituents disapprove of the proposed incorporation.

Finally, they have held several petition drives throughout White River Township to get more skeptics of incorporation to formally signify their opposition. While the laws on incorporation do not allow for much in the way of a public remonstrance to block C4CG's efforts, anti-incorporationists' publicizing of their displeasure with the proposition serves as measures to reduce the sense of overwhelming support that elected officials who have some say in the matter might otherwise not perceive.



Figure 22: No Town for Center Grove Facebook page (No Town For Center Grove 2012)

5.6: Conclusion: Anticipating Place

So what does this process of anticipatory action have to do with place? As discussed in chapter 2, place can be conceptualized in multiple ways. One might think of place as a collection of similar peoples, flora, fauna, and buildings in space or the concentration of social, capital, and communication flows. It may simply be something that is revealed through experience. While place may be conceptualized in any number of ways, there is a persistent sense that places are somehow distinct from other places. The objects, the flows, or experiences that make a place are unique relative to other places.

Anticipatory action allows us to see the ‘placeness’ of those places like sprawling, cookie cutter suburbs that on the surface do not appear particularly unique. Anticipatory action perhaps most cleanly connects to the ways Tuan writes about place. First, Tuan distinguishes a more fleeting experience of space from the lingering dwelling in place. He writes that space is something that is moved through while place is recognized out of pauses in these movements through space (Tuan 1977, 6). Second, he writes that “Place is a special kind of object. It is a concretion of value, though not a valued thing that can be handled or carried about easily; *It is an object in which one can dwell*” (Tuan 1977, 12 emphasis added).

In anticipatory action one must also pause to consider the possibilities of the future and to take stock in what is worthy of protection. In essence, the two ideas of place as pause and a concretion of value fit nicely with anticipatory action in Center Grove, mirroring the process of pausing to identify a valued life, imagine and perform the future, and take preemptive and precautionary action to thwart unwanted futures. In doing so, anticipatory action requires some reflection on what one wants to protect, why, and how. One must consider their relationship to that which they seek to protect. Out of this

constant process of associating and identifying characteristics of that thing that should be protected, one creates an image of something that is distinct and worth protecting over something else.

In dealing with the issue of a suburbs' questions over incorporation, the residents' connection to the area is constantly being revisited. As they seek to identify the valued life that they want to protect, they have to consider what is special about where they live. What qualities make it worth protecting? In a practice like imagining, one has to project their expectations of what they value about their locale into the future. They have to wonder how it will be different. Given a certain set of conditions in the present, will the qualities of this area they are trying to protect be there in the future? And in logics of both preemption and precaution, one must consider how to act in the present to ensure that those qualities of the community that one identifies as worth protecting are still there in the present.

Out of this constant process of ensuring the safety of those qualities deemed most important emerges a sense of being rooted in and separate from other locales. They have to explore the particularities of their locale in order to imagine how changes to their relationship to that locale would threaten their valued life. The imaginings of the future present a space to practice multiple social, economic, and political arrangements to see if they are amenable to the qualities of their place in the present. As such the tacking back and forth of imagining a place in the future against its qualities in the present has the effect of producing a sense of place in the here and now.

Through anticipatory action the people of Center Grove do not construct pretty buildings, walkable downtowns, and all the other material qualities so often deemed

necessary for placemaking to occur. Anticipatory action is a means for the community to imagine itself as existing beyond the moment. It allows residents of the Center Grove to recognize the community as it is now, but also what it will be.

Chapter 6. Conclusion

6.0: Center Grove on Hold

On August 27, 2012, representatives of C4CG gathered in front of the Johnson County Commissioners to hear an update on action regarding their proposed plan for incorporating the remainder of White River Township into the town of Center Grove. Commissioner John Price read a statement that, based on evaluation by the county's legal team and GIS office, C4CG's petition to form the town of Center Grove contained inconsistencies and incompletions that required revision. The commissioners would not be voting on the Center Grove issue on that day. While this decision by the county commissioners was not a fatal blow to the campaign to incorporate Center Grove, it was a setback. Nonetheless, the incorporationists were presented with time-consuming revisions including an updated survey and verification that the signatures on their petition belonged to property owners within the proposed boundaries of Center Grove. With the possibility of turn-over in the make-up of the county commissioners through the upcoming November elections and the challenges of mobilizing a volunteer effort, the campaign for Center Grove's incorporation was essentially shut down for the remainder of the year. In the wake of this setback, C4CG's typical outlets for posting updates, their website and Facebook page, remained relatively quiet, leaving the future of the incorporation effort in question.

While efforts to incorporate are on hold, Center Grove continues to exist as the sprawling suburban community. The critiques of suburbs as inauthentic, placeless, bourgeois wastelands could very easily find fertile ground here. The critiques are not entirely unfair. Center Grove, incorporated or not, is not beautiful. That many of the

residents I spoke with expressed a sense of connection to similar upper-middle class Indianapolis suburbs like Carmel, Zionsville, or Fishers is unsurprising. On the ground, they all look fairly similar. Certainly other Indianapolis suburbs have more established downtown areas and have built their own histories as incorporated areas, but from the air and on the ground, these suburbs generally appear to be carbon copies of one another. A key component of place, no matter the conceptualization, is uniqueness. One place can be distinguished from another place. On the surface, Center Grove and all of the area suburbs of Indianapolis are fairly homogenous in appearance. And even as they become more diverse, they still remain the domain of upper-middle class white people. At first glance, the only meaningful distinction is that they contain a different set of latitude and longitude coordinates in space.

The aim of this project has been to unsettle critiques of suburbs as placeless. It was conceived as a challenge to go beyond the apparent sense of homogeneity across suburbs and examine how residents of such locales carve out a space that is not just another area of houses, stores, and roads, but an identifiably distinct place. In order to do this I drew on multiple sources of data from interviews, cognitive map surveys, Twitter, Facebook discussions, and wallowing in the Center Grove area outside Indianapolis. From this data I relied on Kevin Lynch's concept of imageability in the environment and Ben Anderson's anticipatory action to get a better sense of how the local experience of Center Grove constitutes Center Grove as, in spite of being a suburb, a unique place.

6.1: Images of the Suburb

Kevin Lynch wrote that "a workable image requires first the identification of an object, which implies its distinction from other things, its recognition as a separable entity" (1960, 8). In Center Grove I asked residents through cognitive map surveys and

interviews to see if they could form an image of their community based on the premise that Center Grove was something that might exist. Maps of centrality and insider/outsiderness revealed a sense that while Center Grove might be experienced or understood in multiple ways, the combined experiences of these residents reveals a large area of agreement. Residents overwhelmingly centered their identification of Center Grove on the schools in the cognitive maps. This was reinforced in interviews where the schools, despite politically being a non-factor in incorporation efforts, were narrated as the rallying center for the community. In examining patterns of tweets in the Center Grove area, a slightly different image emerged. These geotagged tweets were a collection of those created by residents, visitors, and passers-through. As enunciations of presence at a specific latitude and longitude, they provided a record of being in the world. Pulled from the DOLLY database and visualized in ArcMap, this collection of tweets represented an image of Center Grove as experienced by those tweeting. Drawing from DeCerteau, the tweets announced that the being of an individual at a given moment was happening at a location in Center Grove. As such, that individual was not existent elsewhere. In this way, the tweets distinguish Center Grove from other places because they result in an image of moments where several individual records of existence were realized at the expense of them being unrealized anywhere else.

6.2: Anticipating Action

While imageability provided a useful means for understanding how the people of Center Grove, when prompted, can distinguish their community from others it nonetheless was based on present assessments of past experiences. However, imageability is not particularly helpful in considering how the future might play into present considerations of place. Imageability relies on what was in the environment when it was experienced.

But debates over the incorporation of Center Grove suggested that the distinction between one place and another could also be impacted by expectations of the future in a place. By applying Ben Anderson's anticipatory action to my examination of the debates in Center Grove, it became clear that the future was thoroughly entwined in the ways that residents connected to their community. While both sides wanted the same outcome for Center Grove, their perception of what possible futures might arise under the circumstances of incorporation or remaining unincorporated. Through practices of imagining and performance, residents presented possible visions of what their community might become. In their present actions to incorporate or halt incorporation they worked to move towards a future for Center Grove that would maintain their desired low-cost lifestyle in their community. In anticipating the future of Center Grove, both sides gave Center Grove a place distinct from neighboring municipalities like Indianapolis, Greenwood, or Bargersville. For them, those places were not worth caring about. The northside suburbs that look so similar to Center Grove were hardly a consideration. In imagining a future for Center Grove residents singled out Center Grove as somewhere with the right set of relations to themselves that made it worth fighting for.

6.3: Lingering Questions

Length and time limitations of a Masters thesis mean that while many questions were raised in the process of researching and writing, they could not be fully addressed in this document. Even the aim of trying to develop a more entwined sense of an experiential and socially constructed sense of place is left somewhat inconclusive in here. Indeed, it would take the time and resources of the work done by Herbert Gans in Levittown to properly develop such a concept in a grounded way (1967). Shortcomings of the

preceding content aside, I would like to take a moment to highlight some of the lingering questions as this project comes to its conclusion.

First, this project only drew on a case study of a single suburb in Indianapolis. While Center Grove certainly is an expression of many of those characteristics of contemporary suburbia that are critiqued today, it would be disingenuous to suggest that its situation is representative of all suburbs. After all, I have argued that suburbs are very much places. Places are unique. Various suburbs, then, should be unique from one another. As such, I suggest this project would benefit by examining how experiences of place and placemaking compare and contrast across multiple suburbs in multiple regions of the United States.

Secondly, I have examined Center Grove with the aim of simply identifying some attachment to place by suburban residents. Nonetheless, this downplays the multiple experiences of place by different people. While suburbs have been characterized as homogeneous, their increasing diversity raises question about the varied experiences of and connections to place by broad range of residents. Moving beyond the majority population, how do abject populations connect with where they live? Where are spaces of danger and spaces of comfort?

Third, my use of the geoweb simply drew on all of the tweets collected in the Center Grove area as a proxy for records of being in the world. To push this further it would be prudent to consider the content of those tweets and the demographics of those power tweeters. Who is involved in suburban placemaking in the geoweb? What kinds of messages are these people producing to enunciate their community? How does the presentation of the community through the geoweb compare and contrast to presentations

through more traditional means like face-to-face communication, print news, and place-centered marketing campaigns?

Finally, this project has largely been in response to the way place is taken up in a context of urban planning and design. Rather than simply critique the way these largely pro-urbanist actors conceptualize place, it would be useful to see how one could engage more nuanced understandings of place with those involved in very deliberate forms of placemaking. I ask, “How can place as an incomplete process fit into contexts of urban planning and design?”

6.4: Place in the suburbs?

Place is a term filled with complex meaning that is taken for granted. Nonetheless, the term finds great purchase across many disciplines including literature, architecture, urban planning, and, of course, geography. We are asked to consider our sense of place in our homes, neighborhoods, cities, states, and country as if place is something we inherently know how to sense. As I have discussed here, America’s sprawling suburbs are often held up as prototypically devoid of place.

This project began with my own confusion in reading such critiques. I grew up in one of these ‘suburban wastelands’. While my own hometown has for instance traded its most historic buildings for strip malls, farmland for large subdivisions, and shifted development to areas around an interstate exit over its downtown I still feel a connection to Brownsburg. The vinyl-clad homes of friends, the picnic table at Jimmy John’s looking over a sea of asphalt, and the faux-lanterns that line the unwalkable four-lane arterial into Indianapolis are all nonetheless enrolled in my own experience of Brownsburg. Out of the experiences I had amidst the mass-produced, inauthentic, cookie-

cutter kitsch I have established a connection and sense of belonging to Brownsburg that I do not have with other similar suburbs to which I have been.

Drawing on my own dissonant experience in my suburban hometown I set out to understand how other people of the suburbs come to have experiences of place in seemingly conformist locales. My research in Center Grove uncovered that place is not surface-deep and is more than just a one way relationship where the environment establishes what can be experienced. Place in the suburbs may not be apparent in the McMansions, strip malls, and retention ponds, but it is in the experiences of those who live in them. I do not contend that the suburbs are beautiful. I do not contend that they are exciting. I do not contend that the suburbs bring out the best in humanity. What I do contend is that suburbs are places. They may not be beautiful, exciting, or natural, but they are still configuration of people experiencing their environment and one another.

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Publications

Danforth, Nicholas and **Ryan Cooper**. "Everyday Eating in the Eastern Mediterranean," *Food: An Atlas*, 2013.

Fisher, Alicia, John-Mark Hack, **Ryan Cooper**, and Benjamin Golder. "Food Labels: Branding Place of Origin," *Food: An Atlas*, 2013.

Guerrón-Montero, Carla and **Ryan Cooper**. "Rice, Beans & A Pot: Food as an Expression of Afro-Antillean Identity in Bocas del Toro, Panama," *Food: An Atlas*, 2013.

Cooper, Ryan. "Interview with Lord Roper." *EU@IU*, April 2010: 2

Cooper, Ryan and Nicole LaLonde. "Extreme Right Parties Look to Make Impact." *WEST Newsletter*, April 2010: 1,5-6

Cooper, Ryan. "Germany to Change Course in Afghanistan." *WEST Newsletter*, February 2010: 2,6

Honors and Awards

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