

## **Casting light to the shadows of informal planning networks: how downstream stakeholders seek and protect salience in neighbourhood planning enclaves**

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Established neighbourhoods carry a history of commercial, government and community interests that are put at stake in neighbourhood planning initiatives. In an effort to reduce uncertainty and protect community interests, local government planning agencies often define a boundary for any given neighbourhood planning project to ensure that only the voices within the boundary (and by extension, local residential and business community) are considered in any subsequent planning decisions. While these approaches are often considered inclusive in nature, as they champion the voice of local community, this inclusion comes at the cost of excluding stakeholders that sit downstream of many of the consequential changes to the physical, social and economic environment. While these downstream stakeholders hold no legitimate inclusion into localised neighbourhood planning initiatives, the potential consequences may drive downstream stakeholders to proactively seek the inclusion of their interests in an otherwise exclusive planning regime (as per Stratford & Wells, 2009). Why downstream stakeholders seek inclusion is not a mystery, particularly in contexts where inclusion is not a central tenet of the planning initiative (Innes, 1996), but how (and with what impact) is largely underexplored beyond the generalist term of “lobbying”.

The case of neighbourhood planning used in this discussion, the Racecourse Precinct Neighbourhood Plan, is an exemplar of multilayered interests, linking themes of population and commerce decentralisation (as per Gordon & Richardson, 1996), transportation (Williamson, Imbroscio & Alperovitz, 2005) and the strategic actions of stakeholders in planning (extending from Alexander & Faludi, 1996). Further

problematizing the case is the proximity of the city's airport, with the Racecourse Precinct set to be impacted by aircraft noise within the next decade due to the development of a new runway. The new runway poses physical limitations to future development prospects in the area due to subsequent revisions in controlled airspace and requirements for safe operating distances between aircraft and buildings. However, as the airport was not within the original boundaries set for the planning initiative, the airport operator had no legitimate voice in the neighbourhood planning process, and thus became a downstream stakeholder of the planning initiative.

A mix of interview and document analysis from the neighbourhood planning initiative spanning 2010-2013 was synthesised to identify, map and explore the relationships between community, business and government stakeholders. Data included planning and engagement documentation that formed part of the broader neighbourhood planning initiative, along with publicly available information for potential development projects in the area, including the proposed partial redevelopment of the Brisbane Racing Club (a focal point for recreation and commerce in the neighbourhood). Thematic coding of the available documents enabled formal (espoused) interests to be identified for each stakeholder, with key informant interviews used to triangulate the results of the thematic analysis, and identify informal pathways available for stakeholders to reassert their interests to decision makers for the neighbourhood plan (consistent with Peräkylä, 2005). Social Network Analysis (SNA), a common research tool for studying relationships in decision making contexts (Oliver & Ebers, 1998), was used to map the stakeholders' relationships to the different decision-making fora, and to each other. This mapping of stakeholders enabled a more thorough unpacking of relations and interactions between stakeholders that contributed to guiding and/or influencing planning decisions (as per Wellman, 1988). Given that the final neighbourhood plan has been finalised, the analysis (conducted early in the neighbourhood planning process) shows whose voices were heard most, with the resulting documentation allowing clear identification to whether those voices had an impact on the outcomes of the plan.

The results demonstrate how downstream stakeholders, such as the airport operator, interact with formal and informal planning spaces in order to advocate their

interests into an otherwise (practically) inaccessible planning domain. It is important to note that this somewhat insurgent behaviour (see Beard, 2003) by the airport operator appears to be an emergent response to what Blanton (2004) and Kasarda (2006) see as an entrenched tension between airports and their immediate surrounds. While previous literature has looked upon corporate entities as a likely threat to community interests in planning (see Miraftab, 2009), here we see the commercial stewardship of transport infrastructure (the airport) leading to the increased transparency and protection of (some) public interests in the neighbourhood planning process.

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