



## The Corner Store: A Metaphor for Evolving Communities

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# + My Street



## + Exponential Change

- **‘The exponential evolving nature of communities’ -the way in which modern suburbs change through swift building re-development and ‘gentrification’ - may pose a threat to pre-existing communal structures.**



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SCHOOL  
Redfern  
Waterloo

# + Background

- **Redfern-Waterloo has been associated with that of a comparatively poor and crime infested suburb.**
- **Public housing estates built in the 1960's resulted in a relatively high concentration of economically disadvantaged persons.**
- **Currently, Redfern-Waterloo has 4140 public housing properties (12,638 private dwellings were listed in the 2011 National Census). This has now mixed with those in private housing redevelopments- to reduce the concentration of low social economic groups. This includes a small number of indigenous people (867) in comparison to a much larger number in the 1960's (12,000 indigenous persons). I am not sure where the 11,000 indigenous disappeared- probably in the outer suburbs !**
- **Nearly one decade ago in 2004, six months before we moved into our film school, racial tensions sparked here when a 17-year-old Aboriginal boy was impaled on a fence while giving chase to police on his bicycle.**

## + Background- The Riots and Redevelopment.

- **Rioting followed with the streets ablaze with flames, shops were looted, cars destroyed and residents' windows smashed.**
- **In response government was driven to rebuild the area, as if in doing so they hoped to erase the memory of this violence.**
- **Re-development and new building works mushroomed throughout sparse spaces that had once laid doormat.**
- **Those members of the community that instigated or fuelled the change wanted to see it grow faster. Others who built up the pre-existing community links or who had simply witnessed the sameness of their community were largely suspicious of any such transformation.**

# + Redfern Riots 2004



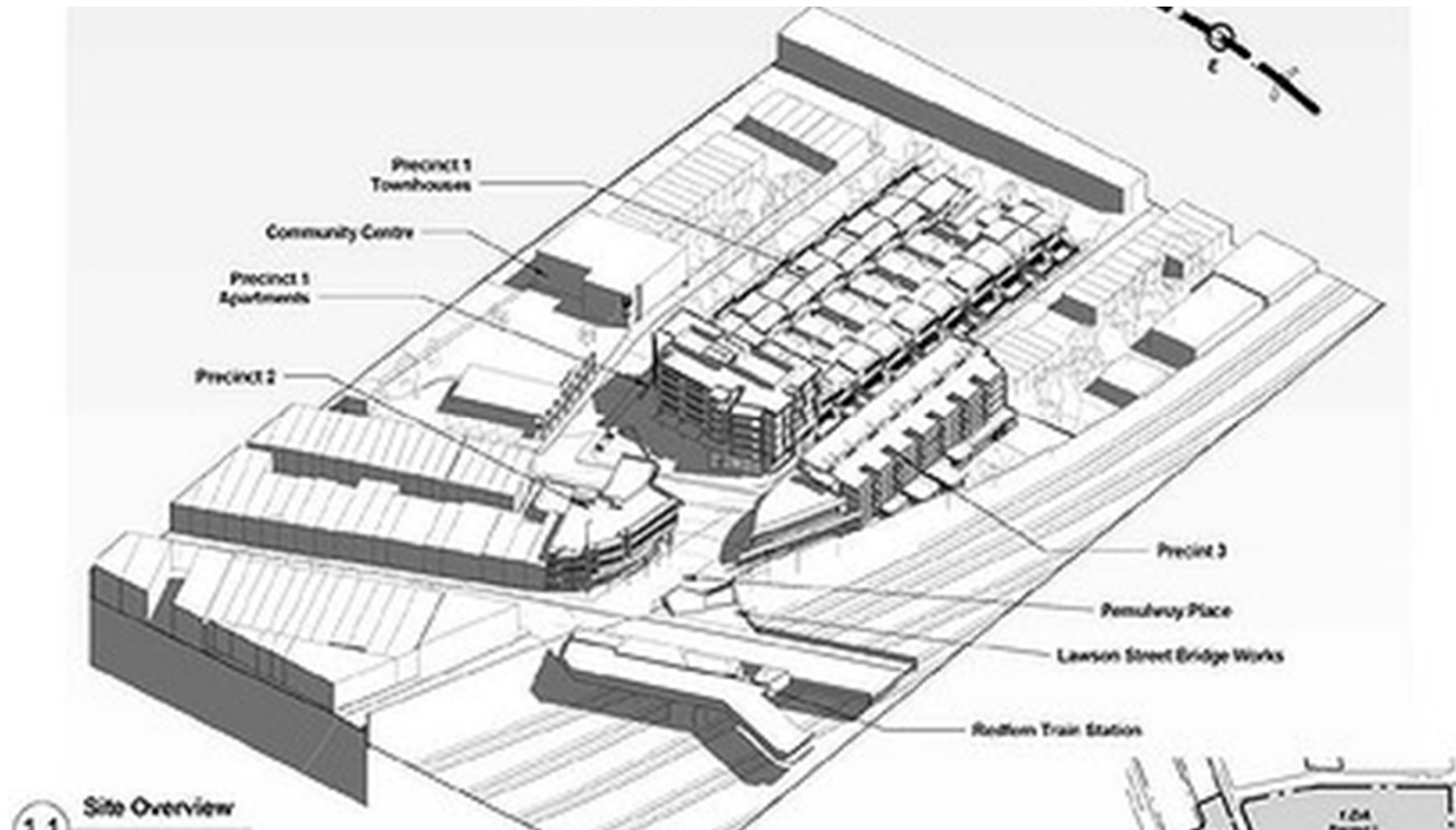


# + A Worn Torn Street





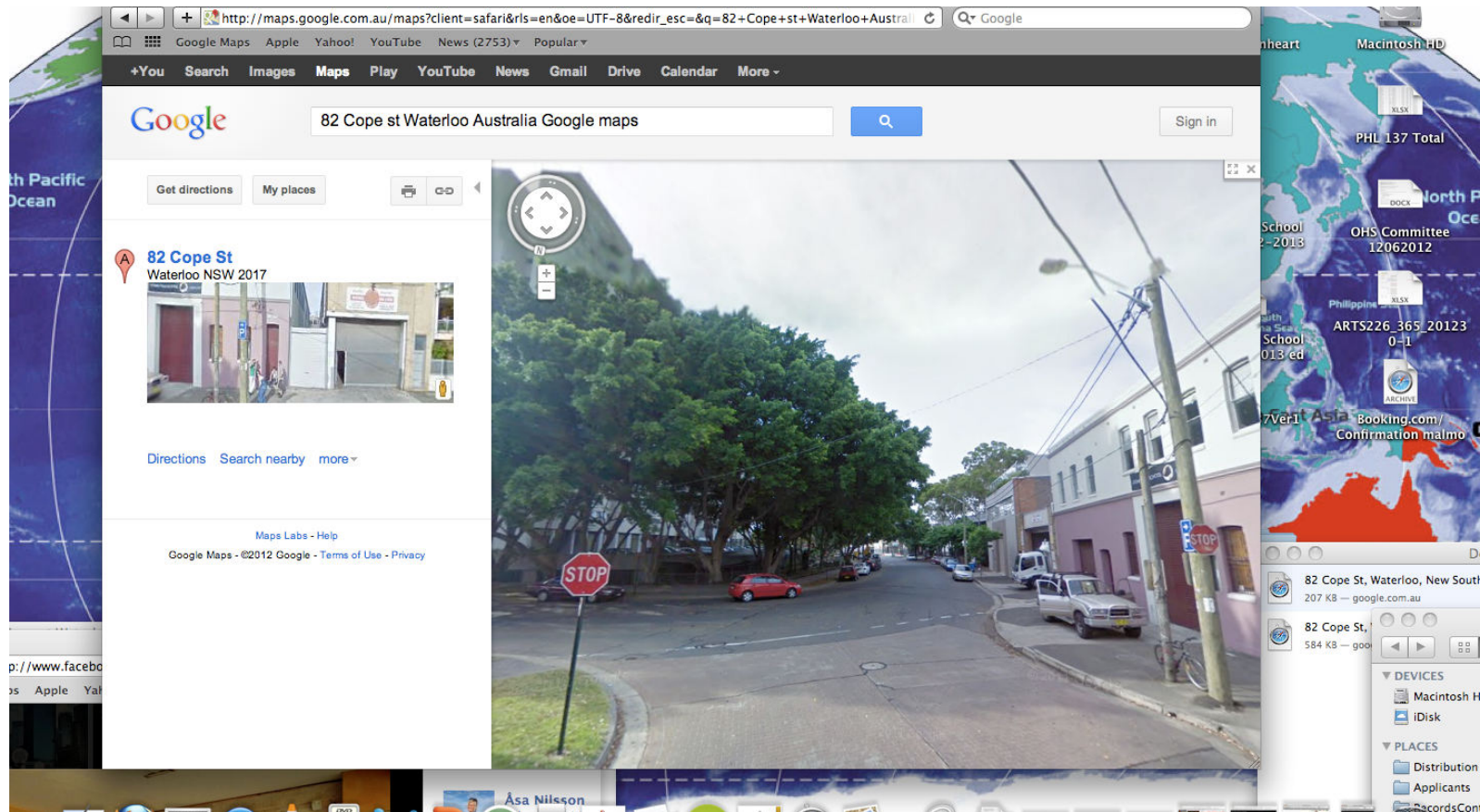
# + Redfern Redevelopment Plans



## + Background- Genrification.

- **The building development has generated a new migration of young families, working professionals, 'hipsters', students and 'self pronounced creatives' into the area.**
- **This movement has seeped into the existing community tapestry to form a rich eclectic pattern. The change that permeates the suburb can bring tensions between these groups within it.**
- **While new boutique stores and apartment blocks continue to rise up in this suburb, a few stores, particularly a local corner shop still remains the same.**

# + Cope Street



# + The Corner Store- On a quiet day!





# + The goods sold in the corner store



+ One of the brothers who own the corner shop.





# + An Asian Food and Vegetable shop



+ Gary the Mechanic has been here  
25 years.



+ Harry the Barber – 42 years in business – now 82 years of age!





- + A Tattoo Parlor has been here for 7 years now- Where Harry Tattooed his deceased wife on his arm.



# + Regent street- a busy thorough fare



- + The local Vietnamese Bakery next to a new Wine bar.





# + A mix of local Indigenous Residents.



# + Indigenous Support Organizations



# + A Local Housing Commission Tower





# + The Towers 1970's housing constructions.



# + The Metaphor of the Corner Store

- **The 'corner store' forms part of a social space where people meet and derive an ownership of their community. Many people, who have nowhere else to go, congregate outside the corner store and banter about life's social dramas. This is their corner- their community!**
- **Other residents, who are more socially mobile, also visit the store- it is a nexus between different social groups who meet there.**
- **a space, where (two groups) the economically disadvantaged and upwardly mobile members of society co-exist- what a community should be.**

# + The Metaphor of the Corner Store

- **The local corner store is a ‘metaphor’ for how ‘the exponential evolving nature of communities’ need not disregard one community with respect to another. Rather, that a community, like the local corner store, will be defined by and thrive through diversity.**
- **This space brings together these two groups in a routine setting which demonstrates that, the very identity of the community itself is constituted by their co-existence.**
- **It stands in opposition to the threat of gentrification and the homogenising effect that it brings in contrast to the current diversity.**



# + The Biological Beings that live here

- **What makes a community important –are human, flesh and blood, biological beings who are made all the more significant through their notable difference to other biological beings; each in unison constituting the dynamic society in which they live.**
- **All parties need to recognise that the identity of a community is constantly evolving.**
- **Change, even though it may not be evident, along with a diverse mix of people, is crucial in forming a rich community.**
- **As community leaders we need to cater for this change by assisting our members while connecting and engaging with those not directly in our sphere or charter.**

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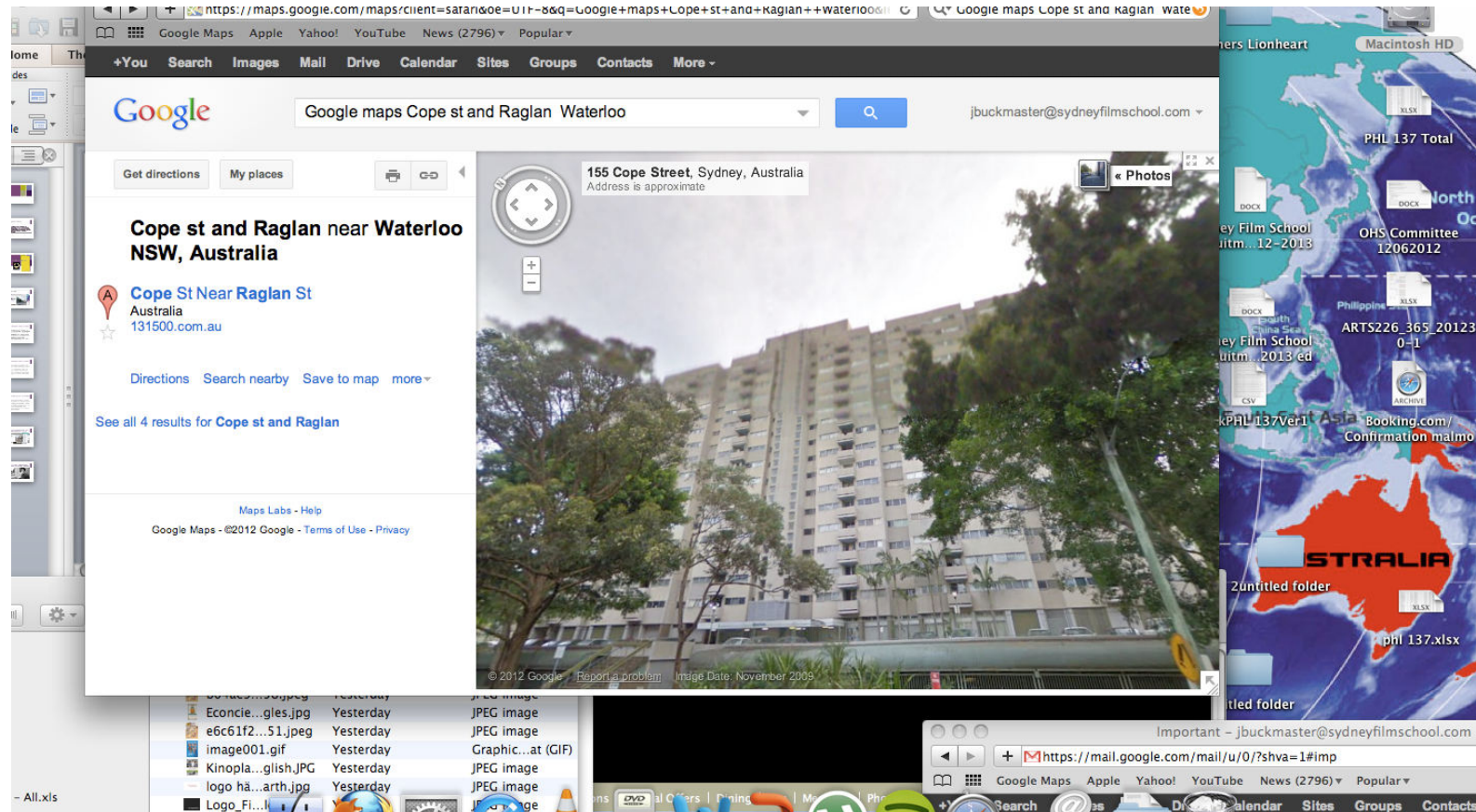


+ The students at my school learn from this diversity: they empathize





# + Those that Live in the Towers





+ What made this diversity a known fact-where we learned to emphasize.

- **One night a falling man from these towers emphasized a possible clash in these two cultures –**
- **The man was not a statistic to my students. He was flesh and blood – someone who they might have met at the corner store.**
- **Gentrification and homogeneity threatens this sense of empathy and community.**
- **Will this happen here in my street?**

## + Future Plans-

- **On a cursory examination of the likelihood of the disintegration of the current diversity, it is useful to look at current housing plans for the area.**
- **A recent submission on housing in Waterloo - Redfern suggested the following residential density:**
  - **Private Dwellings**                      **3500**
  - **Government Housing**                      **2800**
  - **Affordable Housing**                      **700**

# + Affordable city housing

- **The Commonwealth's National Rental Affordability Scheme, which was launched in 2008, aims to increase private investment in affordable housing by providing an annual tax incentive or grant for new properties rented at 80% of the market rent" (Family and Community Housing New South Wales).**
- **These 700 Affordable Housing dwellings will displace current housing commission residents who will need to be relocated.**
- **Thus, future plans for housing still incorporate policies that would encourage diversity- but also threatens to displace some of the current diversity. Is this policy a necessary compromise?**

# + Communities- where we live in our community – how we can respond

- **An important point to note again is that the cultural diversity within Waterloo Redfern has not necessarily been planned.**
- **For many reasons, diverse ethnic groups have formed in the suburb- Catholics, Russian speakers and Mandarin speakers as well as traditional Australians.**
- **What happens between these groups is dynamic and part of the exciting aspects of communities- not necessarily planned - and that's what makes it interesting!**
- **As community leaderships, regardless of whether urban planning has occurred, we have an important role to play in catering for and taking advantage of how communities evolved organically.**



# + How things evolve organically and how we can respond:

- **Communities evolve their own innate support systems- sometimes they can do so effectively without government or non for profit organizations.**
- **This is witnessed in the corner store gatherings I write about in Australia and the United States of America.**
- **We can learn from what communities do organically and spontaneously.**
- **How to engage all members and not just those of immediate concern to us. But also others who might lie outside our sphere. A community is made important through difference – how those different to us may still connect with us- this is what defines a society!**

# + Thank You

- **I would like to take questions on how we can cater for change and diverseness, as well as learning from those community activities that naturally evolve!**

