

Remaking suburbia: unmaking unsustainability

TRANSITIONS IN PRACTICE
climate change and everyday life

Elizabeth Shove, ESRC climate change leadership fellowship



Sustainability

Unsustainability is arguably hard wired into suburbia and into suburban ways of life in the form of:

Severe under-crowding,

Extreme energy and water intensity and

A very high mobility burden.

Suburbia

Is suburbia a blip in the long term evolution of living arrangements, an enduring form or the ghetto of the future?

Systems in transition

Suburbia as a case with which to consider ideas about how large scale, systemic transitions in everyday life come into existence, how they are reproduced and how they are unmade.

Making, remaking, unmaking

‘Good planning means... a child playing in a safe and peaceful world, a love-making couple in a room where the scent of lilacs flows in through an open window, or the song of crickets from the garden down below’

(Mumford, 1949, 362).

Ideas circulate and mutate

Finland not the same as Australia, America, or the UK (ownership, public and private, ‘the garden’, relation to the urban, to transportation, multiple moments of development)

Common concepts

Nature and health; production (vegetables); **childhood** spent safely outdoors fresh air; privatised nuclear family; **work-home** separation; commuting, week-end, paternalistic planning.

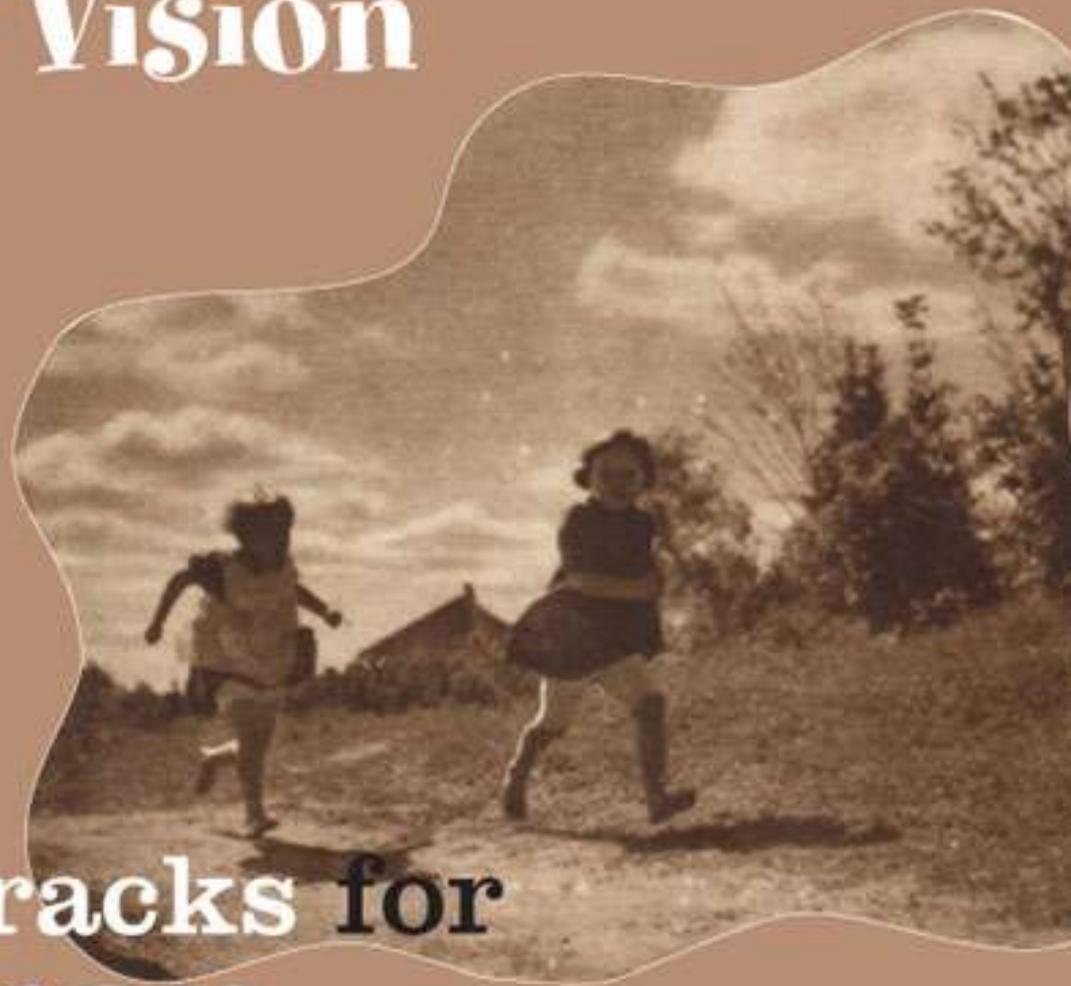
unlimited **energy**, no climate change, **slumless**, smokeless, free of delinquency; isolation, homogeneity, inconvenience, no soul

Making the ideological infrastructure

Family and childhood : playing outdoors



Heikki von Hertzen's Vision



Home or Barracks for
our **Children**

Making the material infrastructure

Hardwiring of everyday life

As an outcome of planning and policy; embodied visions of the good life



Welwyn garden city

Reproducing specific ways of life



1195

Youngs Rise

© 2009 Tele Atlas
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r 51°48'00.46" N 0°13'03.56" W elev 304 ft

Streaming ||||| 100%

Eye alt

Making the
rhythm of
suburban life

Week day and week
end

Home and work

Commuting

Sociality





<http://www.commercialmowers.info/images/history%20img/budding1830.jpg>



<http://www.blogcdn.com/www.diy-life.com/media/2007/10/car-wash.jpg>

Melodi T, SXC



Suburban time and competing practices; lawn-mowing, television viewing, car washing, driving children

Conceptualising suburbia as a system in transition?

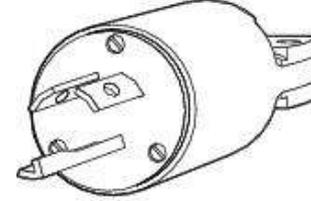
Theories of change that cope with

Co-evolution

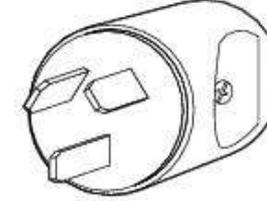
Recursive adaptation

Dynamic selection environments

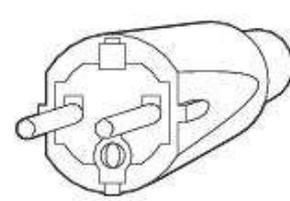
Examples: automobility, electrification, sail to steam



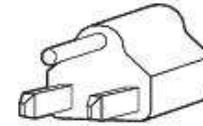
North American plug
L6-20 20A
(for 240V units)



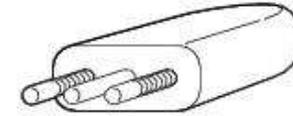
Australian plug
AS 3112 10A



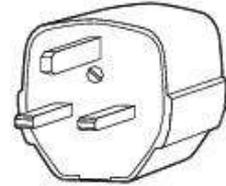
European plug
CEE 7/7 16A



North American plug
5-15 15A

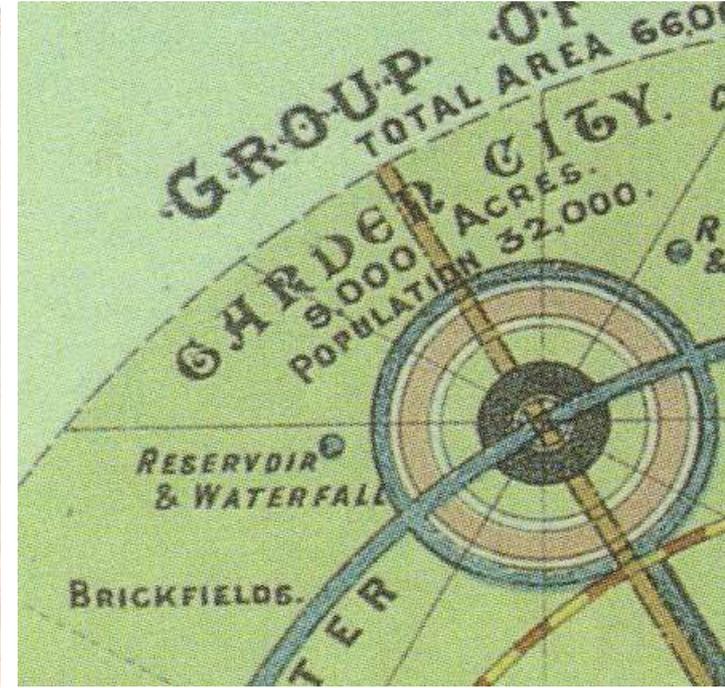


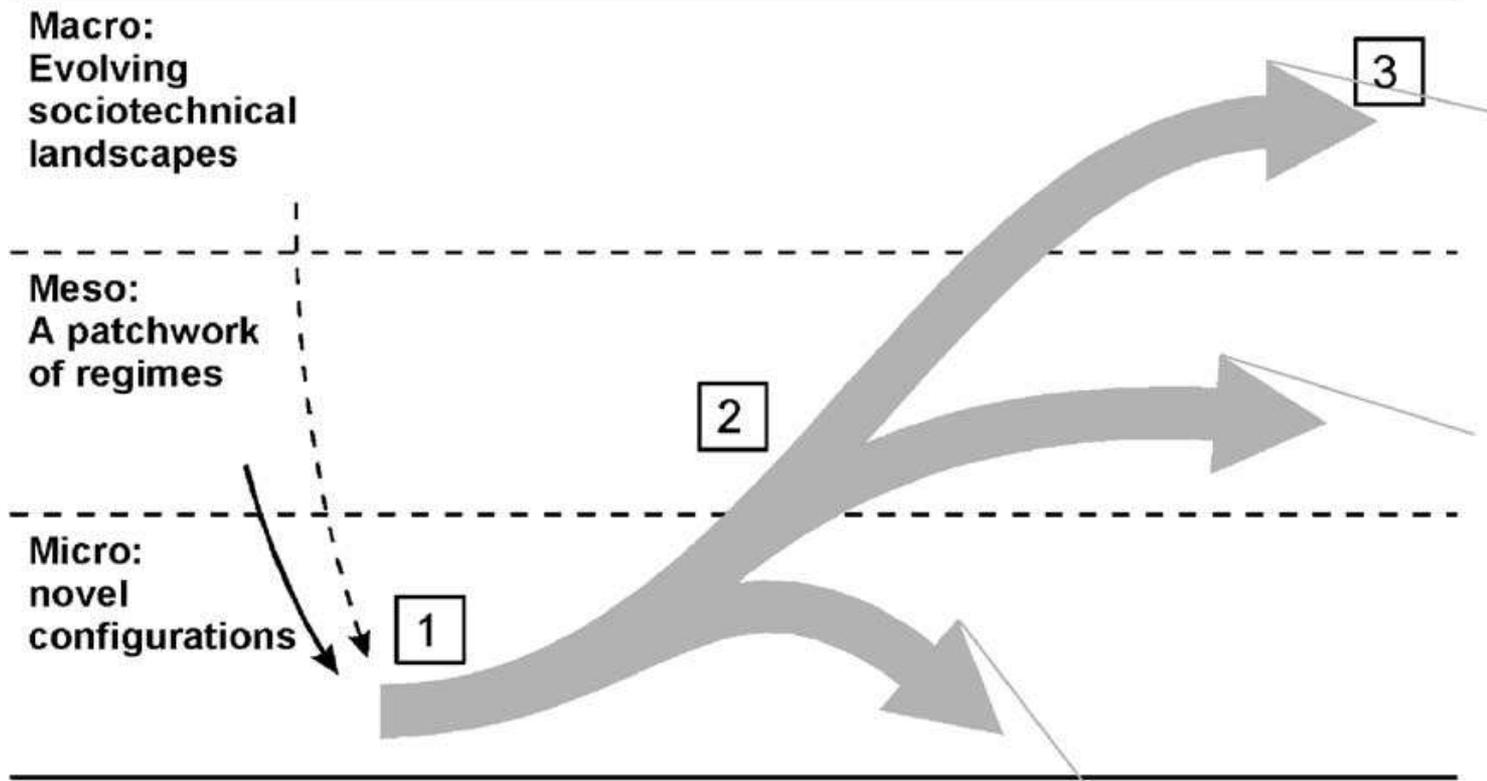
Italian plug
CEI 23-16/VII 10A



United Kingdom plug
BS 1363 13A

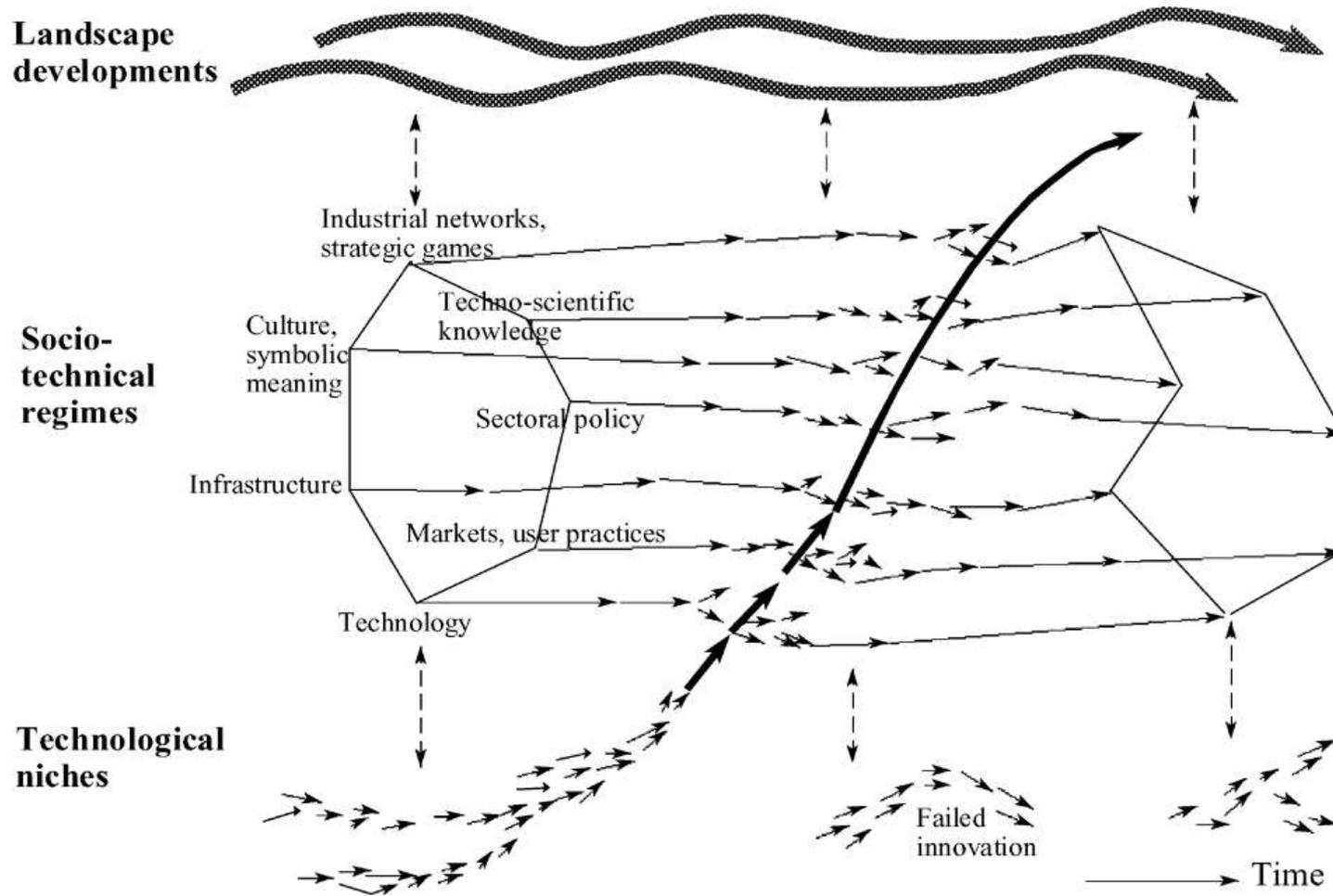
<https://www.cisco.com/en/US/i/000001-100000/65001-70000/66001-67000/66969.jpg>





- [1] Novelty, shaped by existing regime
- [2] Evolves, is taken up, may modify regime
- [3] Landscape is transformed

The dynamics of sociotechnical change (Rip and Kemp, 1996; Kemp et al., 2001).



A dynamic multi-level perspective on technological transitions (Geels 2002)

bidirectional arrows vertically; no direct link from landscape to niche; regime is a multidimensional configuration that changes shape, representation of how small movements are aggregated; different 'texture' at each 'level', includes time explicitly

Limitations when applied to suburbia

Suburban in relation to other forms, the urban and the rural

Suburban sustained by and sustains parallel regimes: automobility/railways; childhood, women and work.

Not so obvious 'closure' or dominance

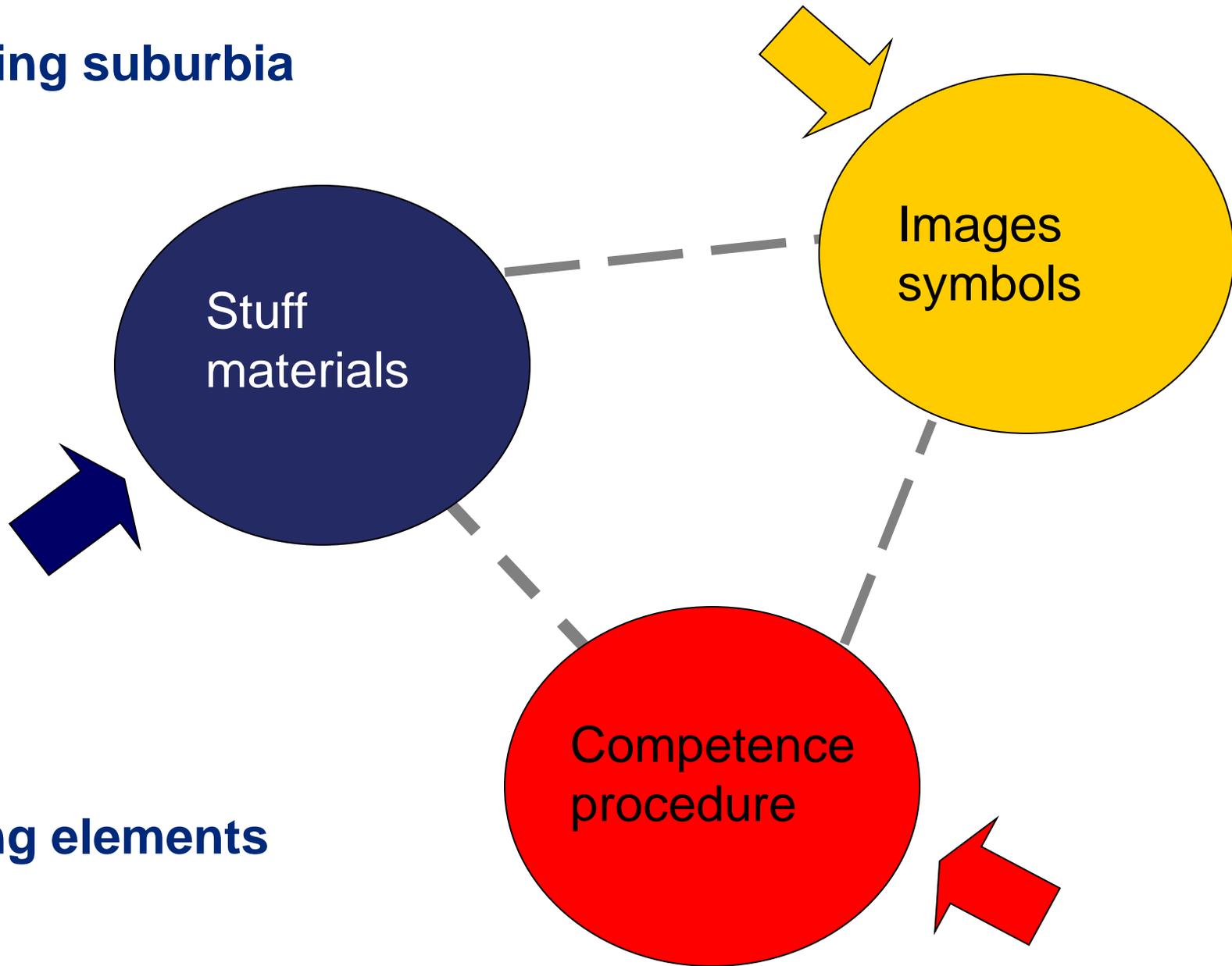


Generates new questions about the:

Work of reproduction and persistence (images, infrastructures, routines and practices)

Processes of unmaking and fossilisation: what falls by the wayside?

Remaking suburbia



Evolving elements

A billboard for Australand Eloura Place. The top left features a photograph of a smiling family: a woman, a man, and a baby. To the right of the photo, the text reads "New 3,4&5 Bedroom Homes" in black, followed by "NOW SELLING" in red. Below the photo, the slogan "Eloura... you'll love living here!" is written in a cursive font. At the bottom, a red banner contains the website "www.australand.com.au/eloura", the phone number "13 38 38", and the Australand logo and "Eloura Place" text.

Re-making the ideological infrastructure

Changing relation to competing interpretations of the good life

Re making childhood and nature

No community

Inconvenience

Unsustainable

Indoor isolation

New virtual networks

The good life
in full view

Parkside living
by Meletis Homes

Visit the Discovery Pavilion



Stunning 4 bedroom
homes on sale now



The new standard of living.

aurora
by McUrban

Remaking the infrastructure

Extensions

Living-dining-
kitchen

New spaces
'required'

Home office

More
bathrooms

Air
conditioning

Water
recycling

Re-wiring
more sockets



Contemporary trends

dishwashers displace washing machines, freezers take the place of larders, and the tumble dryer underlines the 'need' for a dedicated utility room.

Where possible, functions previously based in the kitchen are being moved out.

Extensions



Shrinking gardens; persistent fences

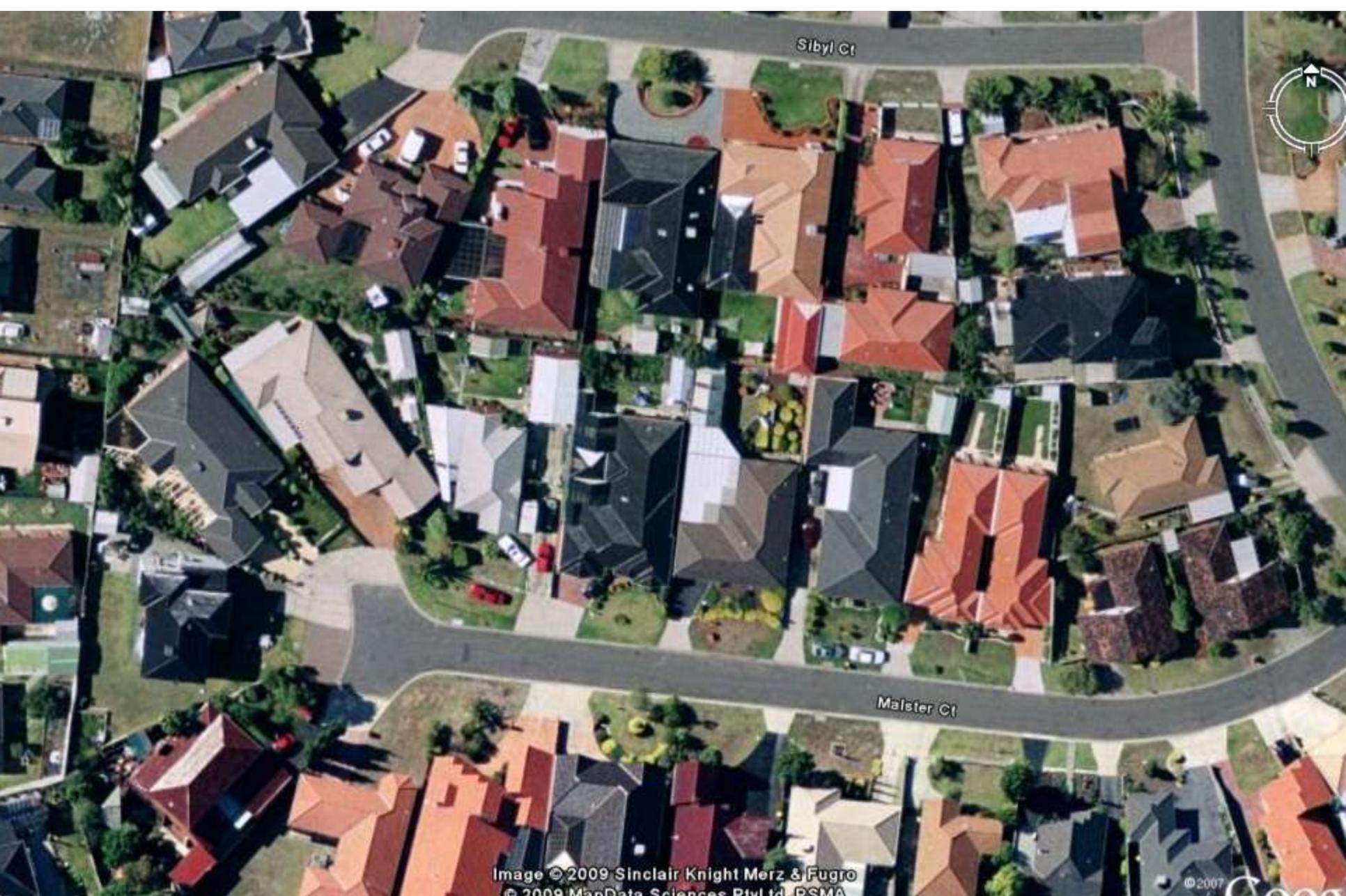


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Easy to clean panel
Dimensions Indoor Unit

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Approximate working capacity for a domestic room size of up to 35-47m² (depending on environment)
Easy to clean panel
Dimensions Indoor Unit
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Dimensions Outdoor Unit
80 x 30 x 69cm



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1120 EA

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City of WhiteSea www.whiteSea.nz.gov.au
ENERGY LA 



Remaking the
rhythms of
suburban life

Synchronisation
and coordination
required to eat
together

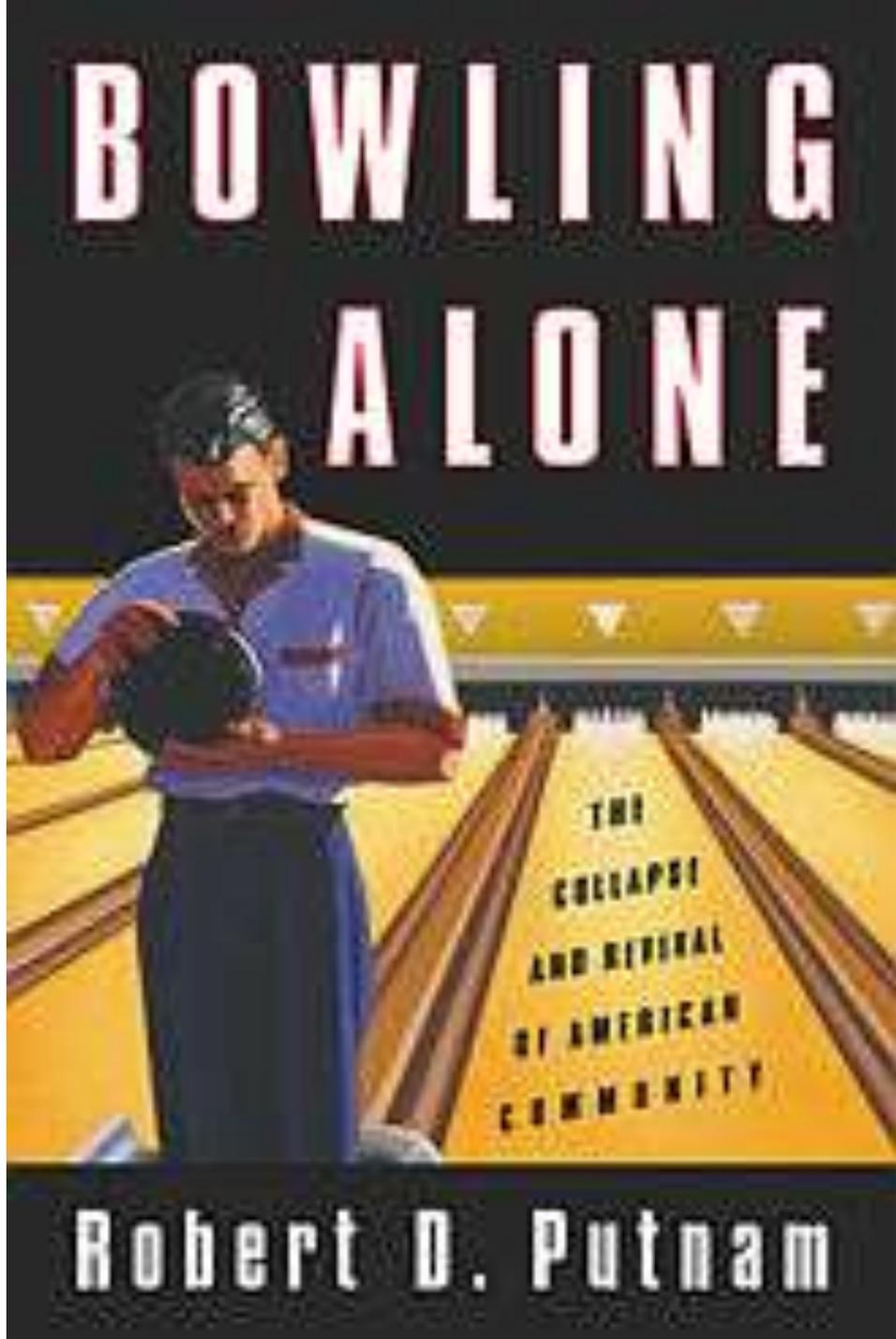
Longer and shorter
episodes

'costs' of do it
yourself organising





Remaking
routines



Remaking suburbia

24 hour society

Children travelling

Women working

Empty dormitory

New demands

comfort

space

efficiency



Landscape developments



Industrial networks,
strategic games

**Socio-
technical
regimes**

Culture,
symbolic
meaning

Techno-scientific
knowledge

Sectoral policy

Infrastructure

Markets, user practices

Technology

**Technological
niches**



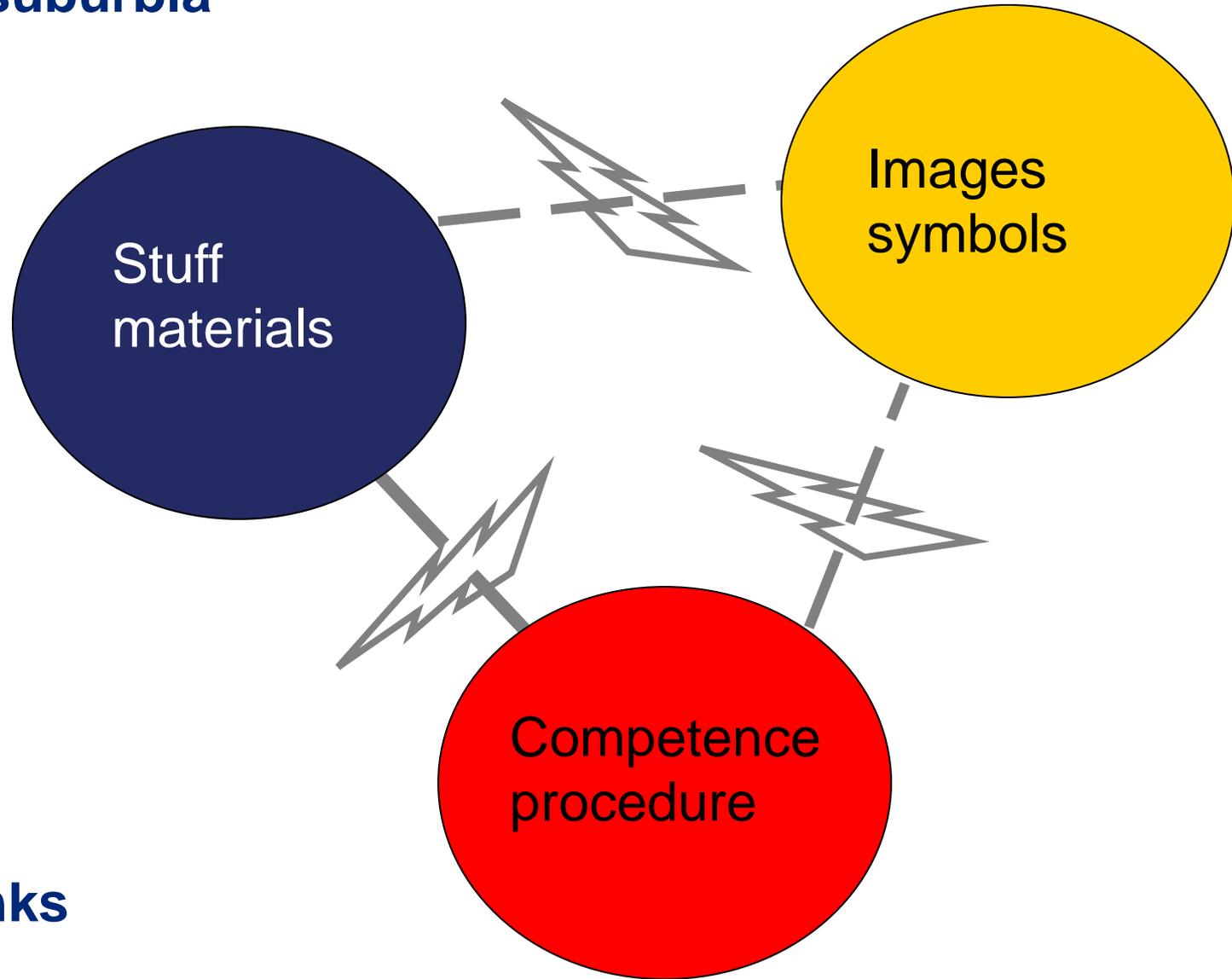
Failed
innovation

Time



Transformation
or fossilisation?

Unmaking suburbia



**a matter of
breaking links**

unmaking the ideology, retain
much of the form



remove the
fences



Expect multiple occupants



Unmaking the infrastructure,
retaining the ideology



Micro suburban infrastructure



Breaking links:
the infrastructure,
the image and the
way of life





Going, going



Landscape developments



Industrial networks,
strategic games

**Socio-
technical
regimes**

Culture,
symbolic
meaning

Techno-scientific
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Sectoral policy

Infrastructure

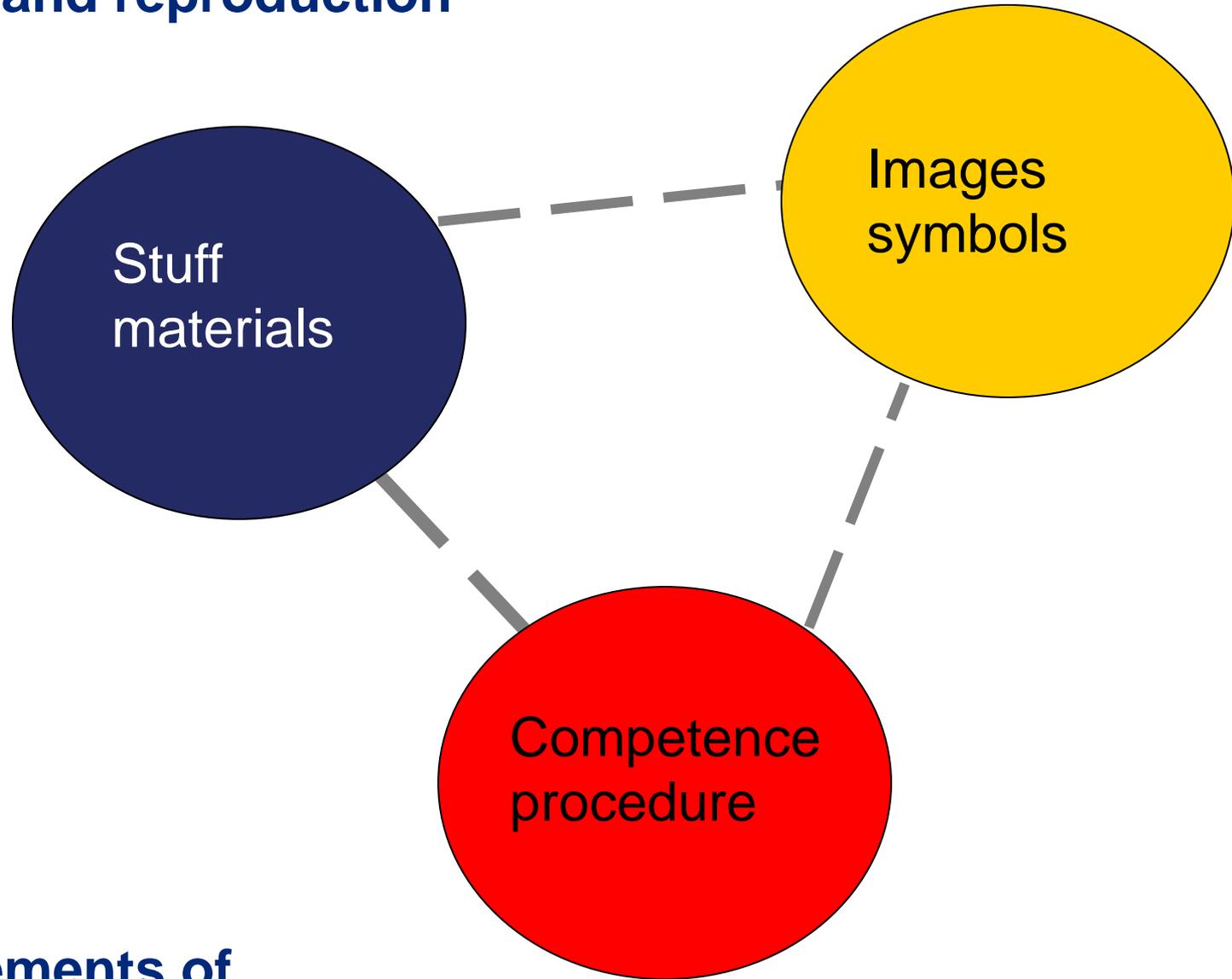
Markets, user practices

Technology

**Technological
niches**



Circulation and reproduction



Of the elements of
suburban life

Suburbia reproduces its own conditions
But is also part of a wider world

