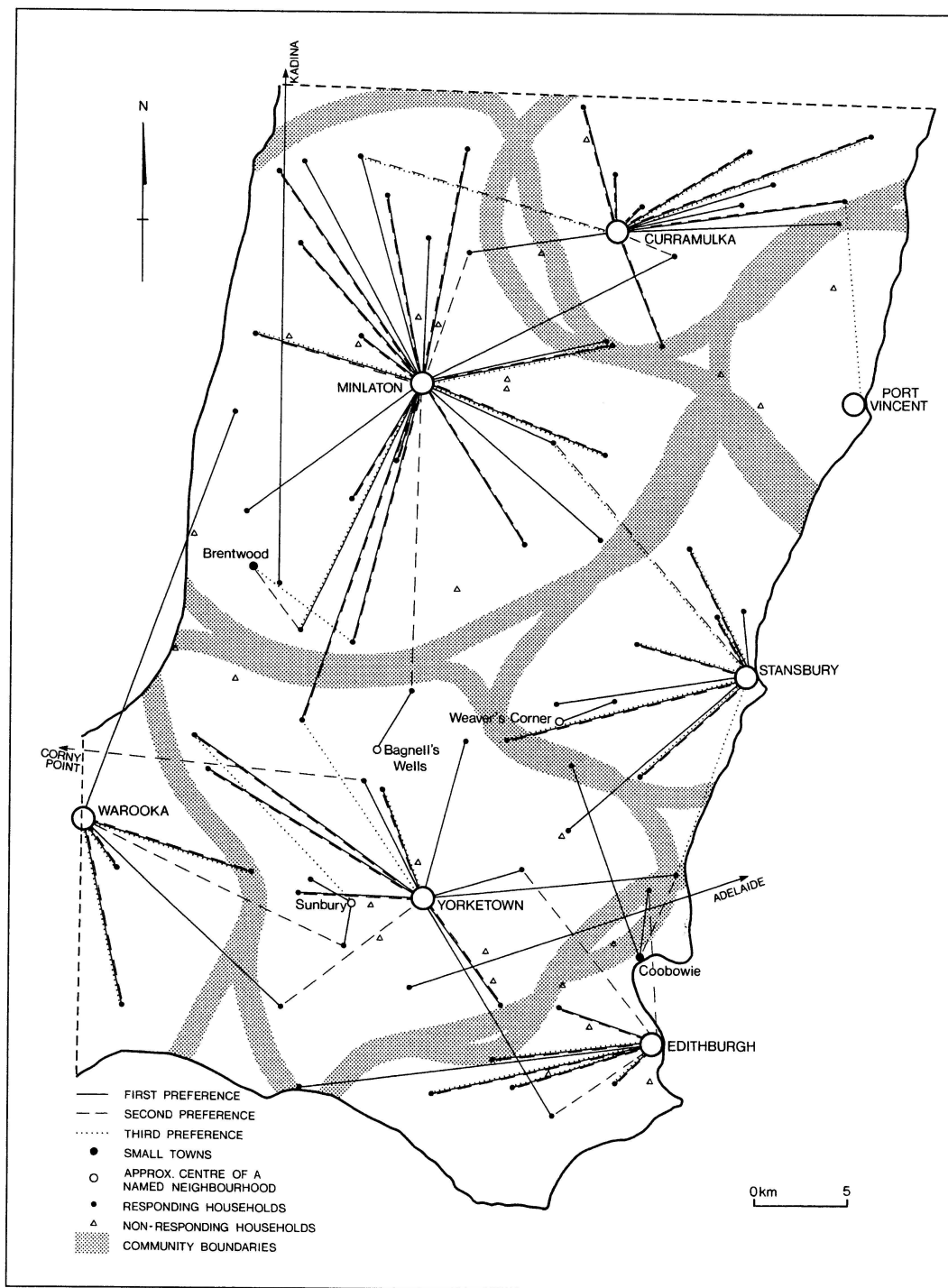
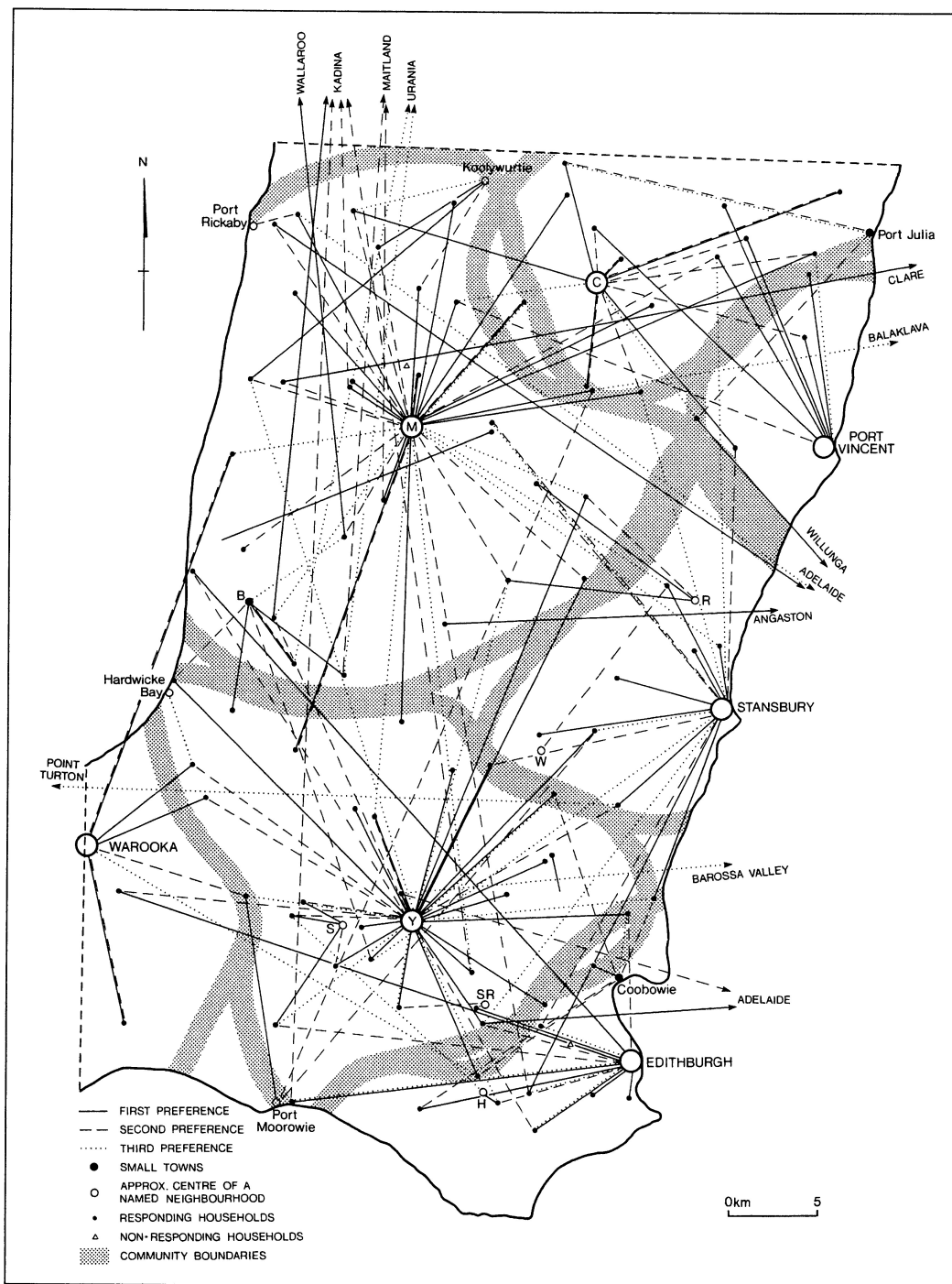


**Fig. 5.10 The spatial pattern of participation in the three most important social organisations as defined by respondent households: Southern Yorke Peninsula, 1984.**



Source: Smailes and Typuszak (1984, 17)

**Fig. 5.11 The spatial pattern of informal visiting with the three most important households exchanging visits with respondent householders: Southern Yorke Peninsula, 1984.**



Source: Smailes and Typuszak (1984, 19)

Note: For main centres, C = Curramulka; M = Minlaton; Y = Yorketown. For names of minor centres, see Figure 5.10

## A system overview

The analysis in this chapter so far has dealt with the results of detailed sample surveys based on household interviews, which of necessity can only cover small sections of the State at one time. To give a synoptic overview of the social organisation of space for the whole of the State's settled areas, I now turn to the results of the 1982/83 postal survey alluded to above. The 1200 responses to the postal survey, being spread over a very large area, can give only a general picture of the pattern of social allegiance, and no attempt is made to map linear boundaries of communities. However, the picture revealed by the postal survey is highly compatible with that shown earlier (Figure 5.8) for the perceived communities in the detailed study areas. Respondents were first asked to identify up to three towns or localities most important for their social activities,<sup>1</sup> allowing the pattern of linkages between different spatial levels of allegiance to be traced. This was followed by a question, akin to one asked in the detailed household surveys, identifying the respondent's "own" town as the focus of allegiance. In the postal questionnaire this took the form

"Which town or locality do you really consider as your own, that you belong to and feel at home in? ... (Note: this may not necessarily be in the district where you live at present.)"

A first overview of social identification is given by respondents' identification of their 'own town' (not mapped here to avoid repetition in a later chapter<sup>2</sup>). As expected, some respondents named distant centres related to former places of residence, but the dominant impression is one of the highly local nature of the primary focus of belonging, vast majority of the localities named being within the respondent's own Local Government Area. Within the area covered by the household interviews described earlier (Figures 5.1 and 5.2) the great majority of respondents named their 'own town' at the community level, but in some cases they named even smaller neighbourhood-level places - eg. Parilla and Sandalwood in the Murray Mallee. Overall the main picture revealed is the intense localism of people's primary sense of belonging, just about every 'bounded rural locality' or population cluster of 200 or more people recorded in the 1981 Census acting as a focus, and even smaller places being named by some respondents.

Confirmation of this dominant localism is provided by responses to a further question "please name the town or locality on which your local community centres<sup>3</sup>" (Figure 5.12). In most (but not all) cases the place named as community centre was the same as the one named as first-ranking importance for social activity. The pattern of declared belonging shows up some of the imperfections of the LGA boundaries in terms of mismatch to social allegiance - as for example in southern and eastern Eyre Peninsula. Some LGAs clearly contain two distinct communities of identification within their borders, the most striking example being the District Council of Tatiara in the Upper South-East, on the Victorian border.

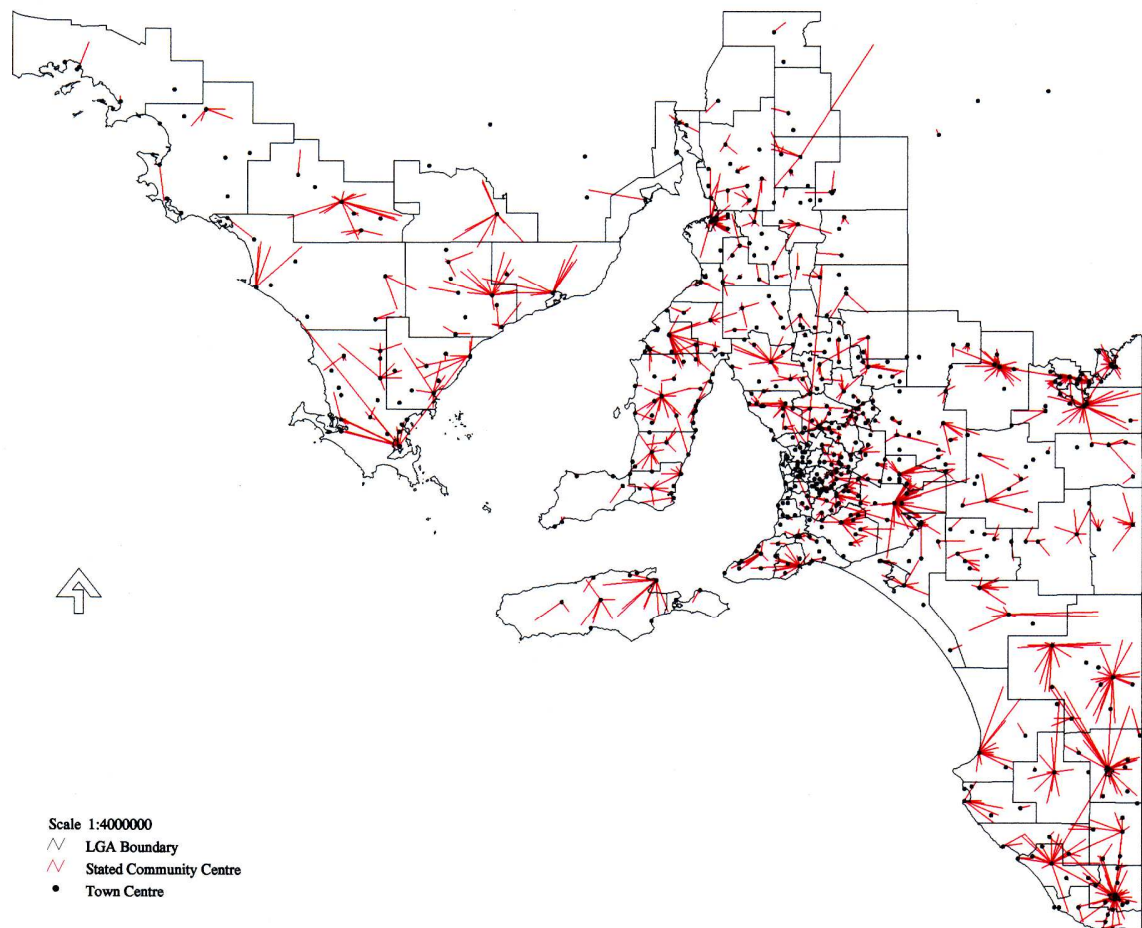
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<sup>1</sup>The exact form of this question was: "Please name the country towns or localities where you and your family now carry out most of your social, sporting, church and visiting activities. If there is more than one, put them in order of importance, with the most important first".

<sup>2</sup> As Chapter 7 deals with a comparison of the 1982/3 survey with a replication in 1992/3, to avoid repetition all aspects of the two surveys are not mapped separately.

<sup>3</sup>For explanatory notes and guidance given to respondents for this question see Appendix 3, top of p. 2.

**Fig. 5.12 South Australian rural household survey 1982/83: stated community centre**

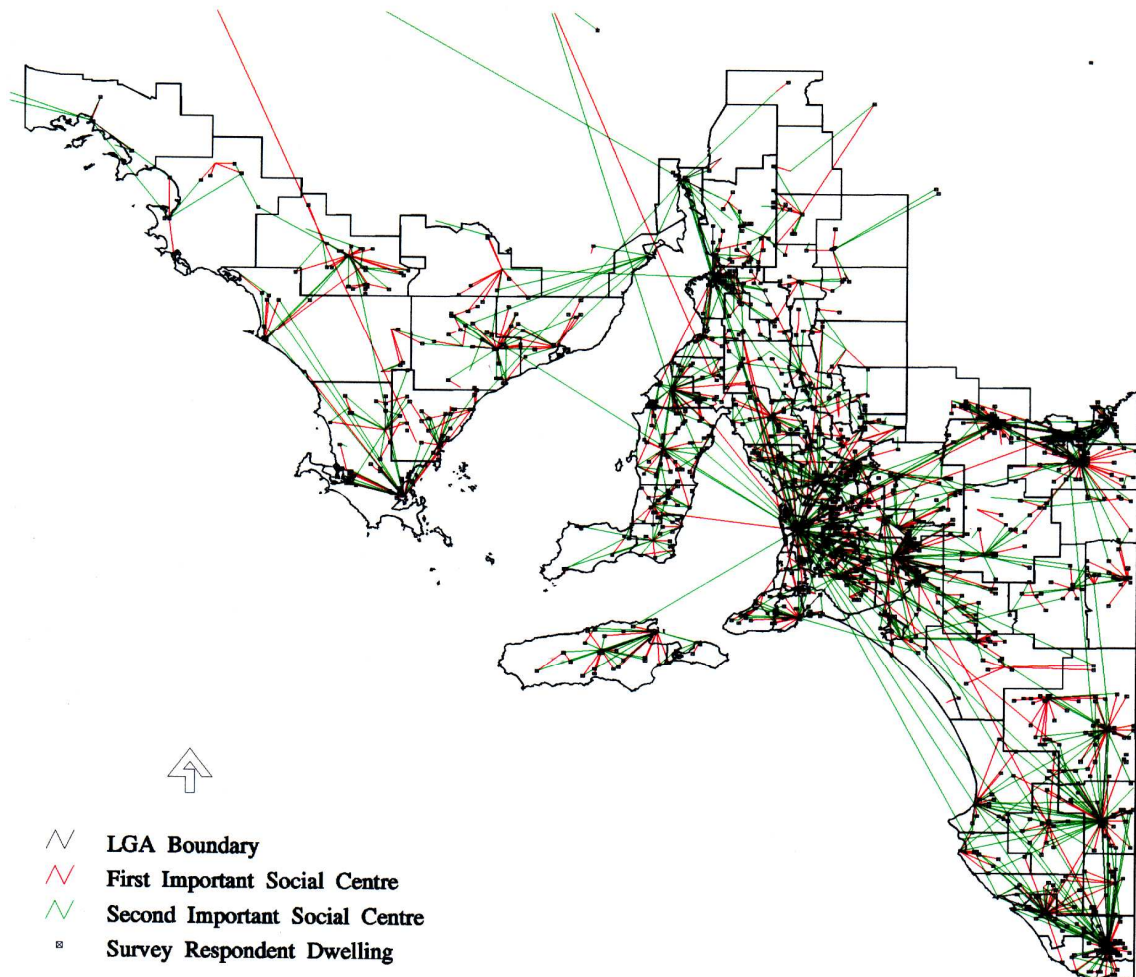


Source: author's postal survey, 1982-83

In Figure 5.13 we turn to a more inclusive, multi-level pattern of 1982/83 social activity, which of course is only rarely restricted to a single particular locality. The wording of the question used was given above (footnote 1). Only the towns listed as first and second in order of priority for social interaction are shown, to avoid excess complexity. It clearly adds a new dimension to the picture. Most of the connections to the town named as the first important social centre correspond to the pattern shown earlier on Figure 5.12, but there are some discrepancies. The second listed centres (shown in green), however, are the most interesting as in most cases respondents have named a somewhat larger and more distant place as ranking second in order of social importance. The map shows how at this level, many very small local communities and neighbourhoods are linked together socially by common interaction at a somewhat larger regional node. This can be seen clearly in Kangaroo Island, for example, where all the localities forming the primary social foci are linked to the community centre at Kingscote. Other cases of integration of a number of

neighbourhoods into a community are seen, for example, at Yorketown and Maitland on Yorke Peninsula, Karoonda in the Murray Mallee, or Loxton in the Riverland.

**Fig. 5.13 South Australian rural household survey 1982/83: socially most important and second most important towns.**



Source: author's postal survey, 1982-83

The social role of the larger country towns, overlaid on the pattern of local communities, also comes out well in Figure 5.13 at the level of second most important social centre, as in the cases of Port Pirie, Port Augusta and Whyalla. In the South-East, Naracoorte exercised a surprising degree of social influence in relation to the regional capital of Mount Gambier. Finally, at this level, Adelaide's social role clearly spreads over a substantial area. If the third most important town for social activities were to be added in a separate colour, Adelaide's State-wide role as a locus of social interaction would stand out even more sharply. The multiple-centre pattern of social activity observed in the maps of the first, second and third most important socially important towns shows that while most country people put highly local places at the top of the list in terms of importance to them, their participation in other, usually larger centres, ties the whole settled area of the State together as an integrated system, with Adelaide playing a significant though not dominant role. In several

cases, regional clusters of social interaction stand out, partly separated from the rest of the system by a thinning of the contact network around their periphery. The localised regional network in the South-East is the clearest case, but others may be seen in, for example, the Upper Murray or 'Riverland', Yorke Peninsula and Kangaroo Island.

### **Social hierarchy and trade centre hierarchy: links and disparities**

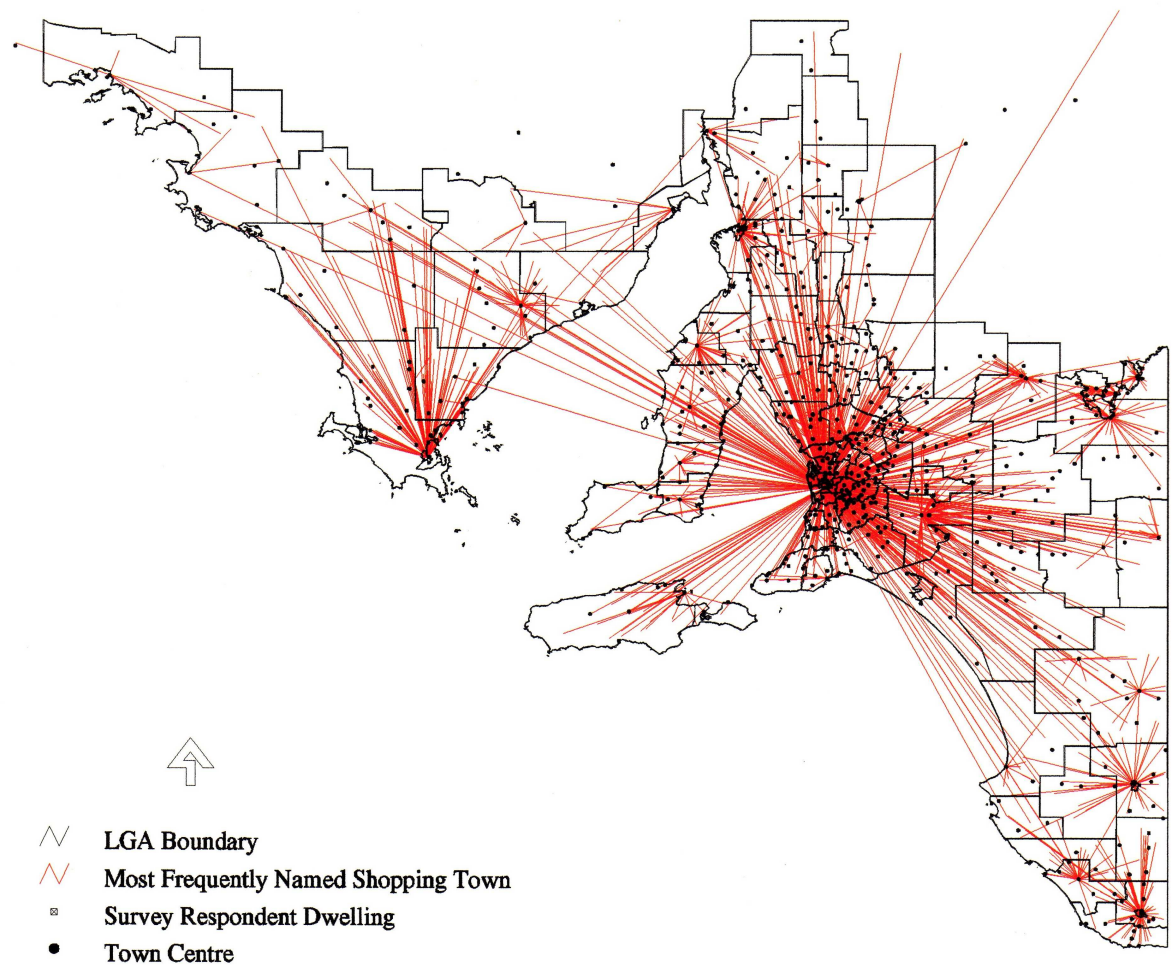
Turning to the fifth of the research questions listed at the head of this chapter, we now examine whether there is any connection between the hierarchy of place-belonging and social activity as described above, and the service centre hierarchy as it has been formed by economic interaction. The data were obtained from a section of the postal questionnaire in which respondents were asked where they obtained a series of twenty goods and services (Appendix 5.3). In central place theory terms, the items were middle-order goods for which some degree of competition might be expected between Adelaide and country towns capable of supplying most weekly and some irregularly purchased shopping and service needs. For each respondent, an algorithm identified the town named as normally supplying the first, second and third most numerous of the twenty selected goods and services. This was then expressed as a percentage of the total number of the twenty services which that household actually used. The absence of very low order items such as groceries or petrol from the list of services will naturally prevent the very smallest towns from qualifying, but the objective was to identify the more significant shopping and business trip destinations, to study the extent to which these appear to have influenced the social interaction patterns. There were very few respondents who obtained all twenty items from a single town, and in most cases three or more places were named.

Results showed that by the 1980s the economic patterns of shopping and business purchasing behaviour differed sharply from the localism that held sway in social activities. Adelaide's metropolitan primacy over the space economy was strongly exerted in the supply of goods and services, to a far greater degree than it dominated the social interaction patterns illustrated in Figures 5.12 and 5.13. The city (including its suburban centres) dominates Figure 5.14 to the extent that the service areas of country towns close to the city are obscured. This Figure therefore seeks only to show the first-ranking business and service centre. In order to show the 1982-83 pattern of goods and service provision among the country centres more clearly, Figure 5.15 omits links with Adelaide.

From Figure 5.14, it is clear that Adelaide was the most frequently named shopping town in substantial areas of the Murray Mallee, part of the upper South-East., Mid-North and Kangaroo Island. These are all areas of relatively low population density, or locations where there are too many very small and closely spaced centres, and none has been able to grow to a size providing a competitive suite of services. But despite Adelaide's leading role, in other parts of the state the most frequently named town still tended to be a local centre.

More generally, a comparison of the social patterns shown on Figure 5.13 and the economic patterns on Figures 5.14 and 5.15 shows that the degree of correspondence between the two sets of patterns in the early 1980s was strongly related to town size.

**Fig. 5.14 South Australian rural communities survey 1982/83: most frequently named shopping town**

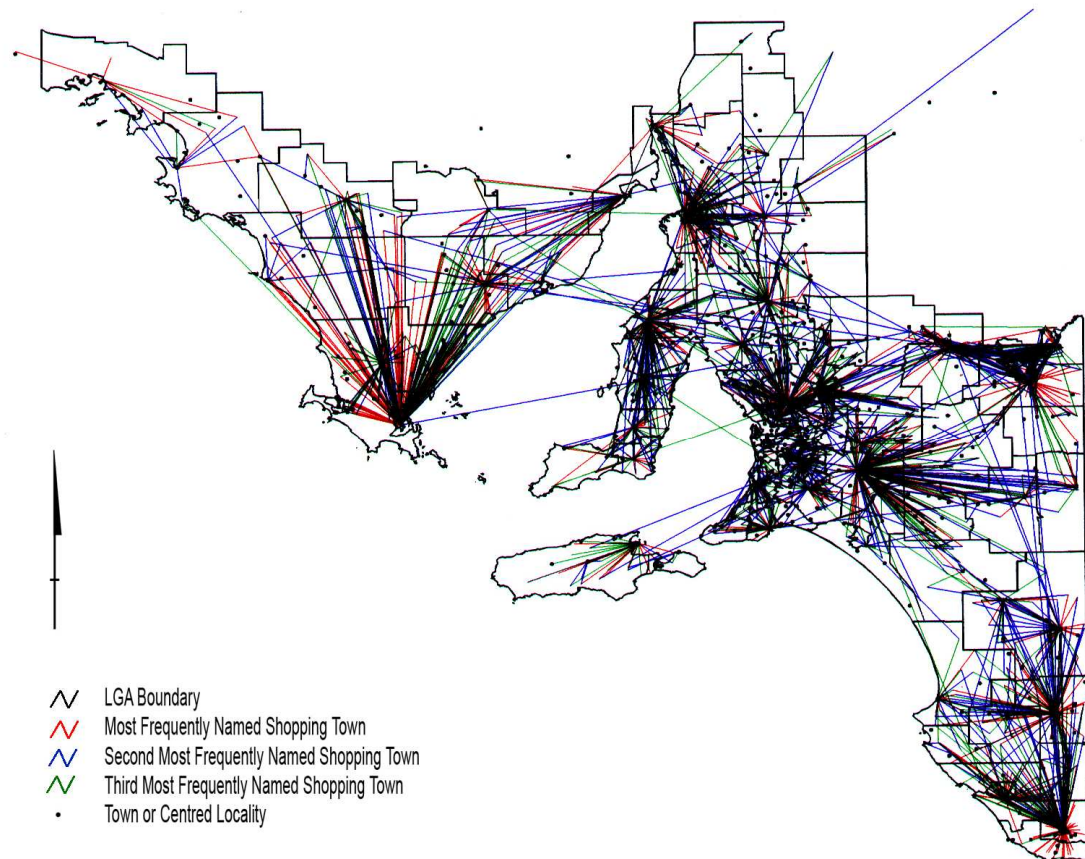


Source: Author's postal survey

For communities centred on towns of a certain minimum population size (and consequent suite of services available) there was a quite close spatial match between the social and shopping catchment patterns. This relatively close correspondence was most marked in medium-sized (by South Australian standards) country towns of about 800 to 2000 people. It appeared quite strongly in the South-East, parts of the Riverland, and to a lesser degree in northern Eyre Peninsula. The *smaller* towns with populations of about 200 to 500, which appeared as significant centres for local social activities - such as Coonalpyn or Karoonda in the Murray Mallee, Lock and Elliston on Eyre Peninsula, or Parndana on Kangaroo Island - disappeared from significance as shopping centres on Figure 5.15. On the other hand, the *larger* country towns that acted as regional centres had shopping and business catchment areas far bigger than the areas where they acted as the primary focus of local social activities. This applies particularly to the regional shopping roles of Port Lincoln and Port Pirie, and to a much lesser extent to Whyalla and Port Augusta, which are located outside of the main agricultural areas and serve mainly their own industry-based populations. Port Lincoln as a business centre dominated the small towns in its service area to a far

greater extent than Mount Gambier, the State's second most important service centre, dominated its substantially larger neighbouring towns.

**Fig. 5.15 South Australian rural communities survey 1982/83: first, second and third most frequently named shopping town (excludes Adelaide)**



Source: author's postal survey

Figure 5.15 shows the hierarchy of country trade centres without the obscuring effect of Adelaide linkages. While the most frequently named shopping centre (red lines) tends to favour respondents' local centres, adding the second and third choice places brings out the strong role of the major regional centres as higher-order central places. In all eight such higher order places stood out in 1982-83: from west to east, Port Lincoln, Whyalla, Port Pirie, Kadina, Gawler, Murray Bridge, Naracoorte and Mount Gambier.

To sum up on the relation between the social organisation of rural space and its economic organisation as expressed in shopping and business patterns, it is clear that the social patterns were much more restricted to the immediate local environs of the community centres. At this very local level, by the early 1980s the smallest communities certainly had retained some low-order economic functions such as general stores, service stations, post offices and the like which no doubt helped reinforce social allegiance. For the type of goods considered here, however, the geography of social interaction coincided spatially with that of the urban trade areas only in the case of the middle sized towns. For small towns, their social catchments



exceeded their economic catchments. For the larger regional centres on the other hand, the economic catchment, or trade area, greatly exceeded the area of primary social allegiance.

### Summary and conclusions

The present chapter has sought to reveal the *spatial expression*, or *outcome*, of placemaking processes in the rural South Australia of the early 1980s. It did not seek to investigate the detailed working of the placemaking processes themselves. What I have sought to establish is that the invisible geography of belonging can at least in part be brought to light by geographical analysis. We are now in a position to answer the first five of the seven research questions posed at the start of this chapter.

In a nutshell, to answer the above questions, the analysis has demonstrated that

1. The evidence is that place-specific social groups with a sense of collective belonging did exist in some form over the whole of South Australia's settled areas<sup>4</sup> the pattern in some places being more complex than in others.
2. They could certainly be bounded and mapped, at least approximately, revealing something of the invisible geography of belonging and the importance of localism in social interaction.
3. At the most local level the perceived boundaries between adjacent social groupings were often quite sharp lines, the localities tended to be mutually exclusive, place-specific social groups did not occupy the entire physical space, and there were large areas of non-belonging, particularly in areas of low population density and in the vicinity of substantially larger towns. At a broader scale of resolution the place-specific groups interlocked and overlapped to a greater extent, and occupied almost all the surveyed area. The bounded places identified existed as parts of a complex interlocking system in which (as might be expected) not all households located in a given territorial grouping felt any sense of belonging, while some groups had spatially overlapping memberships.
4. Territorial social groups existed at different spatial levels, the two most important of which correspond to the 'neighbourhood' and 'community' of traditional United States rural sociology. These terms have been adopted here despite their chequered history, in preference to the neutral terms *territorial addresses* and *centred territorial areas* that were initially applied. This is partly because of the familiarity and brevity of the terms, and partly because the South Australian spatial entities under discussion still closely fitted the traditional notions associated with them in the classical literature. At a higher level, communities tended to be bound together by social interaction into loose regional groupings, but with little evidence of social dominance by large regional centres. In the densely settled peri-urban zone, a layer between community and neighbourhood might exist as former small neighbourhoods expand due to the arrival of new ex-urban migrants; while elsewhere, small communities centred around declining towns are gradually reduced to neighbourhood status. 'Neighbourhood' level groupings were found

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<sup>4</sup>Patterns of social attachment in the inland pastoral zone have not been investigated in any detail in this study

throughout the more densely peopled zones of the Adelaide Hills, and in the early 1980s they were still surprisingly active through parts of the Murray Mallee. However, elsewhere in the Mallee and parts of Yorke Peninsula such groupings were largely absent, particularly in the more sparsely peopled areas and in the vicinity of larger towns. Where present, they did not necessarily nest neatly within Community level groupings, sometimes being divided between two or more communities.

5. The geography of the socially defined areas of group belonging was found to differ substantially from that of the economically defined shopping, business and trade areas centred on country towns. Even the smallest rural townships recognisable in the Census data acted as focal points for social groupings and showed up strongly among the places country people named as their most important centre for social purposes. Shopping and business patterns focused overwhelmingly on larger places, with a clearly recognisable, additional layer in the spatial hierarchy focussing on the major regional capitals. Thus for very small country centres, the social significance spread more widely than that of the few remaining economic functions, while for the major country towns the opposite was true: the economic trade area extended far more widely than the area of social belonging to the centre. In the case of intermediate sized places, the trade and social catchments came much closer to coinciding.

The above findings do not in any way negate the importance of non-territorial, nationwide, random or simply aspatial social links between individuals and households. Neither do they imply that local social systems are simple, distinct units into which social life is compartmentalised for the majority of social interaction. What they do show, however, is that - at least to the early 1980s - the need for the local had persisted as a pervasive, easily recognised and surely important mesh of territorial social groupings that formed a significant part of the social organisation of space. In the next chapter, I go on to deal with questions 6 and 7 listed earlier, particularly in connection with the impact of change in the decade of the rural crisis up to the early 1990s.