

OVERVIEW

Contemporary global processes of social, cultural, economic, political and environmental change continue to drive the complex transformation of urban and regional geographies and their environments in Australia and internationally. These transformations produce critical challenges for governance and for the prospects of creating just and sustainable urban, rural and regional communities, economies and environments.

CURS' research focuses on geographical analysis of the factors driving urban and regional transformations, their outcomes and the challenges they present.

Through basic, applied and community-engaged research, conducted at multiple-scales, our research investigates the processes, dynamics and challenges of change and development, focusing on the key research areas of:

1. City lives, city politics, city natures
2. Sustaining urban and regional communities and environments
3. Critical development studies

CURS' methodological expertise focuses on qualitative research methodologies, including in-depth interviewing, focus groups and participatory action as well as expertise in questionnaire surveys and socio-spatial data analysis.

CURS also provides a focus for human geography postgraduate research and training in urban and regional issues.

The research environment is enriched by active research relationships and links with researchers across Australia and internationally including to the Universities of Western Sydney, Macquarie, Melbourne, QUT, Griffith, Monash, Wollongong, Auckland (NZ), Simon Fraser (Canada) and Alaska (USA).

The Centre organises academic seminars, conferences and staff/post-graduate reading groups in urban and regional studies, further building a rich research environment for postgraduate training.

RESEARCH TOPICS

- Geographies of urban governance
- Urban renewal
- Geographies of neighbourhood & home
- Experimental and ethical economies and ABCD
- Cultural and political dimensions of environment
- Urban natures, technologies, society
- Resource geographies and contestation
- Participatory action research
- Community climate change adaptation
- Globalisation and social movements
- Geographies and identities of borderlands.

RESEARCH SUPPORT

CURS has enjoyed strong research support from the Australian Research Council and the National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility and built strong funded research collaborations with a range of external partners from diverse sectors including State Government and the not-for-profit sector.

EXTERNAL COLLABORATORS

CURS delivers independent research and consultancy services to government, industry and community groups. Our researchers also connect their work to contemporary issues in policy and practice through strong collaborative relationships with State and Local Government, private, non-government and community organisations including:

- NSW Dept of Premier and Cabinet
- NSW Dept of Housing
- Sinclair Knight Metz
- Fig Tree Community Garden
- Farmer-Scientist Partnership for Development (MASIPAG)
- Bawaka Cultural Experiences and the Gay'wu Women's Program
- Biliru
- Urban Research Centre, University of Western Sydney
- Centre for Research on Social Inclusion (Macquarie University)
- Centre for Appropriate Technology



EXAMPLES OF CURRENT PROJECTS

Our current research projects include:

Urban Carbon Governance

Effective responses to climate change hinge on governing carbon, especially in our cities. This project will provide, for the first time, a baseline map and analysis of the actors, roles, relationships, and networks that govern carbon in Australia's cities.

Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) and the Diverse Economies Framework (DEF)

This project investigates links between the ABCD approach and an economic development approach (DEF) that builds community and economic futures through discursive reframing. The project connects NGOs including the Family Action Centre and Unlad Kabayan Migrant Services Foundation Inc. (The Philippines), and international academic researchers.

Performing nature in the Australian City

This project focuses on urban park and grassland spaces as sites of active negotiation and encounter between diverse humans and nonhuman others, and traces the contested politics of human-nature relations in Australian postcolonial urban settings.

Enabling inter-agency data sharing for spatial analysis of social vulnerability

This project has resolved the difficulties constraining government agency data-sharing. As a result, it has developed enriched indicators to identify socially vulnerable communities and guide supportive government service provision in the Hunter.

Drought and the future of rural communities

This NCCARF-funded project examines the impact of drought on farming communities in regional Victoria. It considers the barriers to adaptation and offers insights into how government policy might be reframed to think of drought areas in terms other than 'crisis-ridden'.

Housing, home and neighbourhood

This project explores diverse dimensions of the role of housing in daily life, including the role of housing type, tenure and neighbourhood in the experience of home; diverse home-making practices (e.g. gardening, caring for household members and neighbours); and the role of government public housing provision.

Closing the gap: Principles for effective Indigenous/Non-Indigenous communication and collaboration.

The need to 'close the gap' on Indigenous disadvantage is one of Australia's most intractable policy problems. Changing this situation will demand effective and informed cross-cultural communication. This collaborative research with the Yolngu community aims to develop a replicable model of 'two-ways' learning that can inform the development of effective cross-cultural collaborations in academic, industry and policy settings.

GROUP MEMBERS

A/Prof Jenny Cameron
Dr Paul Hodge
Dr Lesley Instone
Prof Steve Garlick
Dr Kathy Mee
Prof Pauline M^cGuirk
Dr Meg Sherval
Dr Sarah Wright

CONTACT

Director
Professor Pauline M^cGuirk

Discipline of Geography & Environmental Studies
School of Environmental and Life Sciences
University of Newcastle
Callaghan NSW 2308 Australia

Phone: +61 2 4921 5097

Email: Pauline.Mcguirk@newcastle.edu.au

Websites:

<http://www.newcastle.edu.au/research-centre/urban-and-regional-studies/>

<http://www.newcastle.edu.au/faculty/science-it/>