

Department of Geography and Planning Research

Research Statement

Staff from the Department of Geography and Planning conduct innovative theoretical and policy relevant research on the social, ecological and institutional dimensions of change at multiple scales, addressing some of the major environmental and developmental challenges confronting our world. Our research centres on understanding the complex relationships between human and environmental systems. Empirically our research concentrates on the cities and regions of Australia and the Asia-Pacific Region and is often undertaken in productive partnerships with a diverse set of contributors. We are dedicated to producing research outputs that inform policy and practice in order to contribute to a more sustainable, just and resilient world in the face of complex and often surprising changes.

Research Strengths

The Department of Geography and Planning has research strengths in four core areas:

Urban Governance, Planning, Housing Studies and Home

Planning and urban governance have implications for the social and economic performance of cities and nations. Our research centres on unpacking the ways cities are managed and experienced by policy makers, the private sector and the urban public. In particular, the Department has research strengths in planning system regulations and reform, metropolitan and strategic planning, social housing delivery and management, community participation and resistance to planning and development, urban regeneration and renewal, local government urban management, urban global policy transfer, sustainable urbanism, social impact assessment, and experiences and perceptions of home.

Staff: Robyn Dowling, Sara Fuller, Donna Houston, Richie Howitt, Kristian Ruming, Greg Walkerden, Alison Ziller.

Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation

Environmental change and responses to change have social, cultural and political implications that are highly uneven across space, time and society. As one of the most significant challenges facing the world today, climate change has implications for other global challenges such as poverty and global inequality, urbanisation, human security, food security and biodiversity. Social challenges associated with climate change are particularly apparent in terms of social-ecological resilience, food, energy and transport systems, international aid, and decision making on mitigation and adaptation. Staff from the Department currently engage in research on a range of climate-related issues including: urban and rural climate adaptation and policy, vulnerability assessment, low carbon transitions, climate justice and activism, Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation (REDD+), alternative food pathways, climate and environmental history, floods, drought and climate finance.

Staff: Robyn Dowling, Sara Fuller, Donna Houston, Andrew McGregor, Jessica McLean, Fiona Miller, Emily O’Gorman, Greg Walkerden.

Environmental Humanities, Environmental Management and Political Ecology

The human dimensions of environmental change highlight the complexity of life in the Anthropocene, where the boundaries between society and environment are problematized and where there is increasing recognition of the 'more-than-human' worlds we inhabit. Our environmental humanities, environmental management and political ecology research themes focus on new approaches to understanding human-environment relations on a dynamic planet. Our research focuses on connections across social and environmental systems and boundaries. Staff draw on a range of cross-cultural, interdisciplinary, historical and philosophical approaches that bridge theory and practice and which support just and resilient ways of living with and managing environments. Current research includes: environmental governance, phenomenology and environment, human-wildlife conflicts and co-operations, politics in agricultural landscapes and hydrological systems, watershed management, environmental management practice, Indigenous environmental knowledge and management, and political ecologies of food, waste and waste.

Staff: Donna Houston, Andrew McGregor, Jessica McLean, Fiona Miller, Emily O'Gorman, Sandie Suchet-Pearson, Greg Walkerden.

Indigenous Geographies and Critical Development Studies of Australia and the Asia-Pacific

Issues of justice are at the heart of work within the Department on Indigenous geographies and critical development studies. In challenging the dominance of western knowledges and colonising processes, our research engages post-development and Indigenous geographies to rethink rights, responsibilities and co-existence. Through innovative approaches, including close collaborations with NGOs, communities, families and place, our research focuses on the interface of Indigenous and local communities, institutional frameworks, governance, sustainability and justice. Our staff, working in Australia, South East Asia, Northeast Asia and New Zealand, are active researchers in Indigenous self-determination and empowerment, Indigenous research methodologies and ethics, water cultures, native title, critical development studies, geographies of aid, social vulnerability, adaptation and community participation.

Staff: Sara Fuller, Richie Howitt, Andrew McGregor, Jessica McLean, Fiona Miller, Sandie Suchet-Pearson.

Members of staff have conducted research for local councils, state government agencies, non-government organisations, international aid agencies, community organisations and private consultancies. The Department has strong research collaborations with universities across the Asia-Pacific, including Kyoto University and University of Malaysia Sabah.

In the 2012 Excellence in Research Australia (ERA) Macquarie University was ranked as being at "world standard" for both Human Geography and Planning. The Department of Geography and Planning has an excellent success rate in securing funding from the Australian Research Council (ARC), with five Discovery projects and one Linkage projects awarded to staff over the past five years. The Department also plays a central role in the Macquarie-Ryde Futures Partnership, with Professor Richie Howitt, the Partnership Director, located in the Department.

We welcome enquiries about our research and potential research collaborations and partnerships. Potential higher degree research students (PhD and Master of Research) and postdoctoral research fellows are encouraged to contact the Department of Geography and Planning about research opportunities.