



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**SYDNEY**



# 2016: The Year in Review

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# Background

The Urban Housing Lab @ Sydney is funded by the Henry Halloran Trust's incubator program, providing teaching relief, research support, postdoctoral and graduate research training opportunities, as well as resources for dissemination and engagement activities. The funding is also intended to leverage additional capacity in the form of additional research income and personnel.

This year the Urban Housing Lab has attracted several international visitors, held a number of public events, won new funding for research projects, completed numerous academic and policy publications, and sustained active media commentary and engagement.

This report provides an overview of the main changes, outputs and achievements of 2016.

# People

Our original core members of the Lab achieved some notable recognition this year:

- **Dr Jennifer Kent** was invited by the Premier's Council for Active Living and the Ministry of Health to deliver a series of workshops in regional NSW, focus on ways local planners can integrate health concerns into the preparation of their Community Strategy Plan. She led a working party within *The Healthy Planning Expert Working Group*, to develop recommendations for Healthy Planning Guidelines, commissioned by the Greater Sydney Commission.

Dr Kent is currently writing a book (with Prof Susan Thompson) on Healthy Built Environments in Australia (Routledge), due in March, 2017.

- **Dr Somwrita Sarkar** was promoted to Senior Lecturer this year and the opportunity provided by the Incubator, for intensive research supported by teaching relief, tangibly strengthened her application. Dr Sarkar was invited as an Academic Visitor to the Centre for Advanced Spatial Analytics (CASA) lab at UCL <http://www.bartlett.ucl.ac.uk/casa> in July 2016. This visit has resulted in ongoing collaborations with Prof. Mike Batty and his group in the urban and regional science domains. She was an invited speaker at the symposium on Cities as Complex Systems: Structure, Scaling and Economics at Hanover, Germany.

- **Nicole Gurrán** delivered a keynote address to the Australasian Housing Researchers' conference, Auckland, in February this year, and is delivering an externally sponsored lecture at University College London (UCL) Bartlett's planning school in December this year. She is also part of a new research project funded through UCL and headed by Prof. Nick Gallent, and has been appointed joint editor of a new Policy Press book series entitled "Cities, Urban Governance, and Planning" (with Prof. Pierre Filion, U. Waterloo and Prof. Nick Gallent, UCL).

Strengthening her own, and by extension the Lab's, connection with the policy and practice world, in July 2016 Nicole was appointed to the Sydney East Joint Regional Planning Panel.

**Dr Sophie Maalsen**, a new postdoctoral research Fellow, has joined the lab, significantly expanding our capacity. Her research, which is funded through to the end of 2018, focuses on Smart Homes and digital disruption in the home. Our research team has also grown to include **A/Prof Glen Searle**, a new honorary academic; and **Dr Stewart Lawler**, an expert in property development and affordable housing. In December 2016 two new research assistants also joined the UHL team: **Ms Zahra Nasreen** and **Dr Pranita Shrestha**.

In 2016, we hosted six esteemed professors from the US, the UK, and Hong Kong, each of whom are involved in existing or potential research collaborations, and who featured in our program of public events. These include:

- Professors John Landis (U.Penn);
- Professor Nick Gallent (UCL);
- Professor Glen Bramley (Heriot Watt);
- Professor Patricia Mokhtarian (Georgia Tech);
- Professor Sandra Rosenbloom (U.Texas at Austin); and
- Professor Rebecca Chiu (University of Hong Kong).

**A/Prof Kristian Ruming (MU)** also spent part of his research sabbatical within the Lab. We have also been able to draw on visiting international scholars including **Bethany Millar-Powell** (University of Paris, France); **Dorit Garfunkel** (Technion, Israel), and **Professor Alison Todes** (U. of the Witwatersrand, South Africa), who have added to the capacity of the Lab and provided depth to our comparative research agenda.

Our 2016 Practitioner in Residence, **Keiran Thomas**, has been outstanding and we hope his work (which included the creation of a Sydney metropolitan GIS lot level planning data base, for modeling the potential implications of different regulatory scenarios), will support future projects.

## Publications

Teaching relief provided for Nicole Gurran and Somwrita Sarkar has supported an extremely productive year of publications, which includes two books (one published, one in press), and 16 peer reviewed publications by core Lab members.

1. **Gilbert, C., Gurran, N. & Phibbs, P.** (2016) Targets for Affordable housing: Supporting Equitable and Sustainable Urban Growth. In Rebecca Leshinsky and Crystal Legacy (Eds.), *Instruments of Planning: Tensions and Challenges for More Equitable and Sustainable Cities*, pp. 80-91. New York: Routledge.
2. **Gurran, N., Bramley, G.** 2016 (in press), *Urban Planning and the Housing Market: International Perspectives for Policy and Practice*, Palgrave, London.
3. **Gurran, N., Gallent, N., Chiu, R.L.H.** 2016, *Politics, Planning and Housing Supply in Australia, England and Hong Kong*, Routledge, London. (ISBN: 9781138937147)
4. **Gurran, N., & Phibbs, P.** (forthcoming). When tourists move in: How should urban planners respond to Airbnb? *Journal of the American Planning Association*, forthcoming. (accepted 10/11/16)
5. **Gurran, N., & Phibbs, P.** (2016). 'Boulevard of Broken Dreams': Planning, Housing Supply and Affordability in Urban Australia. *Built Environment*, 42(1), 55-71
6. Harris, P., **Kent, J.L.**, Sainsbury, P. & Thow, A.M. (2016) Framing Health for Land-Use Planning Legislation: a qualitative descriptive content analysis, *Social Science and Medicine*, 148, 42-51.
7. **Kent, J.L.** (2016) 'Ontological security and private car use in Sydney, Australia', *Sociological Research Online*, 21(2), 3
8. **Kent, J.L. & Dowling, R.** (2016) "Over 1000 cars and no garage": how urban planning supports car(park) sharing, *Urban Policy and Research*, DOI: 10.1080/08111146.2015.1077806.
9. **Kent, J.L.** and Dowling, R. (2016) 'The Future of Paratransit and DRT: Introducing Cars On Demand' in Mulley, C. and Nelson, J 'Paratransit: Shaping The Flexible Transport Future', Emerald.

10. **Kent, J.L.** & Wheeler, A., (2016) What can Built Environment and Health Professionals Learn from Crime Prevention in Planning? Introducing “HPTED”, Urban Policy and Research, DOI: 10.1080/08111146.2015.1034852
11. Maginn, P.J., Goodman, R., **Gurran, N.**, & Ruming, K. (2016 forthcoming). What’s So Strategic about Australian Metropolitan Plans and Planning Reform? The Case of Melbourne, Perth and Sydney. In Louis Albrechts, Alessandro Balducci, & Jean Hillier (Eds.), *Situated Practices of Strategic Planning: An international perspective*. Oxon: Routledge.
12. Thompson, S, **Kent, J.L.** (2016) Healthy Planning: The Australian Landscape, Built Environment 42 (1), 90-106
13. **Sarkar, S.**, Phibbs, P., Simpson, R., Wasnik, S. (2016). The scaling of income distribution in Australia: Possible relationships between urban allometry, city size, and economic inequality. *Environment and Planning B: Planning and Design*, online (in press), 1-20.
14. **Sarkar, S.**, (2016), Urban Data Science: An introduction, Springer Encyclopedia of GIS, (accepted 11/10/16).
15. **Sarkar, S.**, Chawla, S., Robinson, P., Fortunato, S. (2016). Eigenvector dynamics under perturbation of modular networks. *Physical Review E*, 93(6), 1-7.
16. **Sarkar S.**, Chawla, S, Ahamad, S. et al, (2016), Effective urban structure inference from traffic flow dynamics, IEEE Transactions in Big Data (accepted 06/11/16).

We have also disseminated discussion papers and policy briefs which target policy makers, practitioners, and the wider community, as follows:

- **Gilbert, C. & Gurran, N.** (2016) *Australia’s housing system in international comparison*, Data Snapshot and Policy Brief, Urban Housing Lab, Sydney: University of Sydney.
- **Gurran, N.**, Milligan, V., Rowley, S., Randolph, B., Phibbs, P., Gibb, K., & **Gilbert, C.** (2016). *Increasing affordable housing supply: evidence-based principles and strategies for Australian policy and practice; AHURI discussion paper series* Melbourne: AHURI.
- **Gurran, N.** & Phibbs, P. (2016) *Planning, housing supply and affordability in Australia*, Research and Policy Brief, Urban Housing Lab, Sydney: University of Sydney.
- **Kent, J.L.** (2016) *Challenging private car use*, Research and Policy Brief, Urban Housing Lab, Sydney: University of Sydney.

Catherine Gilbert and Sophia Maalsen worked with the Future Cities Collaborative (US Studies Centre, University of Sydney) on two studies, and co-authored the following reports:

- **Gilbert, C.** and Rosen, R. (2016) Can you afford to live where you choose? Local approaches to making it affordable for people to live in their communities. Sydney: Future Cities Collaborative, United States Studies Centre at the University of Sydney <http://future-cities.com.au/projects/housing-affordability#communique>
- Burgoyne, S. **Maalsen, S.**, Tomitsch, M. and Haeusler, H. (2016) How smart are Australian cities? Local approaches to smart cities. Sydney: Future Cities Collaborative.

## Projects

Key research projects awarded new funding in 2016 include:

\*Australian Housing & Urban Research Institute (AHURI) (2016-2017) *Increasing affordable housing supply: evidence-based principles and strategies for Australian policy and practice* (Led by **N. Gurran**)

This project is a major research inquiry into the ways in which governments have used policy and planning levers to increase affordable housing supply, involving collaboration with UNSW, Curtin University, and Prof. Kenneth Gibb (U. Glasgow), as well as senior national and state policy makers and industry representatives.

Other major research projects involving Lab members include:

\*Australian Research Council (ARC) Discovery (2017-2019) *Sustainable coastal city development* (involving **G. Searle**)

\*Australian Research Council (ARC) Discovery (2017-2019) *The globalisation of the resource sectors(s) in Australian cities* (involving **G. Searle**)

\*University of Sydney Business School ECR Grant Scheme. “How does the built environment moderate the relationship between transport poverty and health? Evidence from Sydney, Australia.” (involving **J.L. Kent**)

Other research projects by core Lab researchers are focusing on digital disruption in the housing system. Lab funding has supported initial research on manifestations of the share economy in the housing market and implications for policy and planning, resulting in the first published academic study on Airbnb and urban planning (Gurran and Phibbs, above). Ongoing work is being undertaken in this field (Gurran and Sarkar).

## Events and policy engagement

We have held and participated in a series of events in 2016. A major focus in the first half of the year was our “Spotlight on Affordable Housing” series which involved almost all of the above international professors in a series of public events and meetings with policy makers.

### Public lectures, seminars and forums

Public lectures:

- 8 MARCH, 2016, 6 – 8 PM; Prof Nick Gallent, Prof Rebecca L.H. Chiu, Prof Nicole Gurran; *International Perspectives on the role of government and the planning system in supporting new residential development and the supply of affordable homes*
- 22 MARCH, 2016 2 – 4 PM; Prof. Glen Bramley and Wendy Hayhurst; *Planning for affordable housing: Evidence from the United Kingdom and implications for Australia.*
- 23 MARCH 6 – 8 PM; Prof. Glen Bramley; *Ideology, symbolism, nostalgia and political calculation: Making sense of an incoherent housing policy in England*
- 28 APRIL 6 – 8 PM; Prof. John Landis; *Building truly affordable housing: successful examples from the United States.*
- 25 OCTOBER, 2016, 6 – 8pm; Prof. Sandra Rosenbloom; *Women’s travel north and south: changing societal trends and the travel patterns and needs of women around the world.*

Seminars:

- 3 MARCH, 2016, 1 – 2 pm; Dorit Garfunkel; *High-rise housing, property law and urban governance.*

- 7 APRIL, 2016, 12.30 – 1.30pm; Prof. John Landis; *Gentrification in America: neighborhood scourge, equity opportunity, or something else?*
- 2 JUNE, 2016, 12.30 – 1.30 pm; Prof. Patricia Mokhtarian; *Do millennials drive less? A descriptive analysis of the travel attitudes and behaviour of California millennials.*
- 9 JUNE, 2016, 11.30 am – 12.30 pm; Liam Walsh and Keiran Thomas; *Housing diversity and Sydney's missing middle: insights from practice.*
- 29 JUNE, 2016, 12 – 1 pm; Sha Liu; *Chinese foreign investment in Australian housing: understanding the impacts of China's domestic housing policy changes on international investment demand.*
- 22 SEPTEMBER, 2016, 3 – 4 pm; Prof. Alison Todes; *Transforming South African cities: strategic spatial planning challenges in Johannesburg*

#### Forums:

In mid 2016 the Lab was instrumental in convening a new “Planning for Affordable Housing Forum”, along with the NSW Federation of Housing Associations. The goal of the Forum is to provide a ‘fourth space’ – beyond government, industry, or advocacy, where different interests can meet to discuss issues in confidence, informed by the existing research (which is the role of the ULab and other academic members), and potentially to generate or resource new research / policy ideas. Participants include representatives from NSW Treasury, Urban Growth NSW, the NSW Department of Planning; Northern Beaches Council, Shelter NSW, Housing NSW, the Federation of Housing Associations, the finance sector, and the Greater Sydney Commission.

## Radio broadcasts, interviews and opinion pieces

Wider engagement has also been achieved through radio interviews and podcasts, as well as opinion pieces.

Recent radio broadcasts and news interviews:

**Sarkar, S.**, Sydney Morning Herald interview, November 2016,  
<http://www.smh.com.au/business/the-economy/sydney-gets-richer-as-it-gets-bigger-but-theres-a-catch-20161116-gsqfiu.html>

**Gurran, N.**, FBI Radio Backchat, 29/10/16 Airbnb and the housing market  
<http://fbiradio.com/945fm/programs/backchat/2016-10-29/is-airbnb-raising-the-rent-in-sydney>

**Kent, J** Radio National September 2016, Food ‘deserts’  
<http://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/lifematters/urban-food-deserts/7825038>

**Gurran, N.**, Podcast, August 2016, Home Ownership – Fact or Fiction  
<http://sydney.edu.au/news/architecture/274.html?newsstoryid=15969>

Opinion pieces:

**Gilbert, C.** (2016) ‘Generation rent’: is it a problem, and what can we as planners do about it? *New Planner*, Issue 108 (September 2016), pp.14-15

**Gurran, N.** (2016) What is affordable housing and why do we need it? *Inner Sydney Voice*, Issue 129 (Winter 2016), pp.20-21



**Gurran, N.** & Phibbs, P. (2016) Housing policy is captive to property politics, so don't expect politicians to tackle affordability, The Conversation 10/03/2016  
<https://theconversation.com/housing-policy-is-captive-to-property-politics-so-dont-expect-politicians-to-tackle-affordability-55384>

**Gurran, N.** & Phibbs, P. (2016) How the Property Council is shaping the debate around negative gearing, taxes, The Conversation (opinion piece) 17/06/2016  
<https://theconversation.com/how-the-property-council-is-shaping-the-debate-around-negative-gearing-taxes-61006>

**Gurran, N., & Lawler, S.** (2016). Explainer: What is 'value capture' and what does it mean for cities? The Conversation (opinion piece) 22./06/2016  
<https://theconversation.com/explainer-what-is-value-capture-and-what-does-it-mean-for-cities-58776>

**Gurran, N.** (and others) (2016) Election 2016: what will a relected Coalition government mean for key policy areas? The Conversation (opinion piece) 10/07/2016  
<http://theconversation.com/election-2016-what-will-a-re-elected-coalition-government-mean-for-key-policy-areas-62170>

**Gurran, N.** & Phibbs, P. (2016) Planning for Affordable Housing Supply, New Planner, Issue 108 (September 2016), pp.8-9.

**Gurran, N.** (and others) (2016) Solutions beyond supply to the housing affordability problem. The Conversation (opinion piece) 24/10/2016 <http://theconversation.com/solutions-beyond-supply-to-the-housing-affordability-problem-67536>

**Wright, D.** (2016) Sacred cow no more: what proposed changes to negative gearing really mean, The Conversation, 16/02/2016 <http://theconversation.com/sacred-cow-no-more-what-proposed-changes-to-negative-gearing-really-mean-54737>