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The Housing and Community Research Unit is located in the School of Sociology at the University of Tasmania. It receives core funding from Housing Tasmania and the University along with other funding through AHURI and the Australian Research Council (ARC). The unit began in 2002 as a collaborative research venture between Housing Tasmania and UTAS as a means of developing capacity to carry out research on housing and related community research which would both support the policy environment within which Housing Tasmania operates as well as producing academically rigorous work of an international standing.

A range of outputs by the Unit aim to ensure continued academic, community and policy-relevance and include traditional peer reviewed journal articles, work for the housing policy press, seminars held for Housing Tasmania policymaker and practitioners as well as reports for AHURI, among others.

The current director of the unit, Dr Rowland Atkinson, joined UTAS in July 2005 after working as a research fellow and then lecturer in the Department of Urban Studies at the University of Glasgow. His research has crossed a number of thematic areas but most strongly in that of gentrification and neighbourhood change, urban regeneration and housing renewal, social networks and mix, social deprivation and exclusion. Since then the Unit has continued to produce research which engages in national and state-wide debates about housing affordability and public housing management, latterly in the form of AHURI research on sustaining tenancies for those exhibiting ‘demanding behaviour’ and in continued work on the national AHURI Collaborative Research Venture on affordable housing.

As well as organising a series of public seminars on housing and urban research issues, the Unit regularly publishes working papers on its website, these cover a range of contemporary housing, urban and more theoretically oriented work. The Unit also works with a range of local non-government and community organisations via participation on management boards. The Unit continues to ‘punch above its weight’. The Unit consists of three core staff as well as several others sociology staff and a part-time researcher involved in housing research issues. We also have five postgraduate students. Last year the Unit managed to attract funding for two AHURI research projects (Demanding Behaviour and Child support and housing outcomes).

A recent ARC discovery grant for the first Australian study on master-planned and gated communities is supplemented by a range of ‘unfunded’ research that includes an examination of the community impacts of second homes in regional Tasmania as well as UTAS funded research on the housing and community impacts of creative city strategies, again a national first in its scope and scale, covering all of the state capitals on the Eastern Australian seaboard.

Our report gives an account of the various research and related activities of the Unit over the last eighteen months as well as identifying areas for future research and collaboration.

Dr Rowland Atkinson, Director, Housing and Community Research Unit.
The Unit has been very active over the past year with two large projects for AHURI and significant involvement in other AHURI national research ventures. AHURI continues to be our main funder but this last year has seen the Unit with grant success from the Australian Research Council with the first national project to look at gated communities in Australia, work that is likely to be influential in key debates about Australia’s cities.

The Unit is also occupied with a range of small-scale innovative projects, including pioneering work on female housing investors by the Unit’s AHURI post-doctoral research fellow Michelle Gabriel as well as research on video gamers and their views of real and simulated cities. Overall the Unit provides a significant base for housing and community research, both for the State and nationally.

**Child Support and Housing Outcomes (Funder: AHURI)**

**Kristin Natalier, Maggie Walter, Maryann Wulff, Margaret Reynolds, Janeen Baxter and Belinda Hewitt**

The Child Support and Housing Outcomes study asks the overarching question: How does the payment and receipt of child support, along with the receipt of government income and housing assistance, affect the housing outcomes of ‘parenting apart’ households? The research explores the experiences of both parents, examining the situation in relation to both resident and non-resident parents. Within this frame the project will assess the contributions of Child Support, government income support and housing assistance to the housing outcomes (tenure, dwelling type, stability, affordability and residential location) of separated families.

The project has two distinct phases. The first is an empirical analysis using data from Household Income and Labour Market Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey Wave 4. The HILDA survey is a nationally representative panel study of nearly 18,000 adults. Initial analysis establishes that of the 4132 respondents with a child under the age of 18 years, around 28 per cent are a ‘parent apart’; a mother or father of a dependent child and who does not reside in the same household as the other parent. This term includes those living alone with or without their children as well as those who share care and/or have repartnered. Sixty five per cent of this sample is female and 45 per cent male, but 86 per cent of resident parents apart are mothers while a similar proportion of those living apart from their resident children are fathers. Other initial results find that the housing tenure of the majority of ‘parents apart’, both mothers and fathers, is private rental (a significantly higher rate than non-separated parents), but the public tenancy of resident parent-apart is around double that of the non-resident parents.

In the second phase semi-structured, in-depth interviews will be conducted with 15 separated fathers and 15 separated mothers in each of Brisbane, Melbourne and Tasmania (in Hobart and rural areas) providing a total sample of 90 parents apart. The interview will focus on the themes of processes, outcomes and attitudes and the findings will provide insight into the challenges and opportunities facing parents apart in different jurisdictions. These are due to begin in early February 2007 with the final report of the complete project due in June 2007. The positioning paper for this project was completed in August 2006. Keep checking the AHURI website for details (www.ahuri.edu.au).
2. CURRENT PROJECTS

Demanding Behaviour: Sustaining Anti-Social and Problematic Households
(Funder: AHURI)

Rowland Atkinson and Daphne Habibis

This AHURI project takes a ‘sustaining’ approach to the question of how to tackle behaviour by public housing tenants which may be problematic. While concerns about anti-social behaviour have risen up the political agenda, along with calls for tougher action for statutory law-enforcement and housing agencies, this project seeks ways of minimising harm for tenants whose behaviour may be problematic but is neither criminal nor directly harmful to neighbours. In other words, this project fits within a grey area of housing management where behaviour may have complex psychological or personal roots and where tough approaches will neither be effective or appropriate. The project was set-up in a way which acknowledged that the use of eviction can lead to significant harm to households with children and the difficulties that frontline staff and housing policymakers may have in generating strategic approaches.

The project had two key phases which involved an international literature review and report followed by fieldwork in four of the States/Territories. In the first phase a systematic review was conducted of all the international research which has looked at the issues and policy options generated by the need to approach difficult and demanding tenant behaviour. The report from this phase of the work will be available from AHURI shortly and gives a strongly practice-oriented and plain language approach which gives clear detail of risk factors, effective approaches and principles for good practice for mainstream and indigenous tenancies.

The second phase of the research was again concerned with the prospect of supporting public housing agencies who find these issues difficult to tackle. A series of case studies with projects who have demonstrated effective practice and from interviews with key housing personnel in three states (Tasmania, South Australia and New South Wales) and the Northern Territory was carried out. Instead of reporting on simply what these projects and providers are doing the results of this phase of the study have been written up as a plain language and simple guide that is brief enough to be effective and comprehensive enough to cover the range of issues on such matters as multi-agency working and case management. The final report is also structured in a way that reflects the specific needs of policymakers, frontline staff as well as a specific section devoted to the cultural and housing needs of indigenous tenants. This report is under review currently by AHURI and will be available shortly.

Creative cities
(Funder: University of Tasmania)

Rowland Atkinson and Hazel Easthope
(University of New South Wales)

Writers like Richard Florida have popularised the idea that local economic development in a primarily service and knowledge-based economy means that attracting those creative groups and classes in these sectors is essential to future economic success. This project draws on these ideas and uses fieldwork in Hobart, Brisbane, Melbourne, Adelaide and Sydney and interviews with community representatives, key NGO staff and urban governance officials to investigate the degree to which strategic attempts have been made to generate a creative economy and to attract creative groups. This study also explores the potential conflict between this agenda, welfare provision, housing affordability and other related issues as the potential for competition for resources is heated-up by pursuing higher income and creative groups. Research is still in progress with a report due by mid year.
8. Current Projects

Master planned and gated communities in Australia
(Funder: Australian Research Council)

Rowland Atkinson, Pauline McGuirk (Newcastle University) and Robyn Dowling (Macquarie University)

This is an Australian Research Council research project has just started, it is concerned with the newer kinds of neighbourhood being developed privately but which may have wider implications for social life in Australian cities, public spaces for social cohesion more widely. Given a tendency to provide larger private estates which may include their own community services and for gated communities and blocks the possibility for greater privatism and social withdrawal by more affluent households is becoming a stronger possibility. This study will take place in and around the newer estates of Sydney and will employ a household survey in each of 6 case study sites as well as interviews with property developers, the staff of management boards and other relevant personnel. The project will run for two years.

21st Century Housing Careers and Australia’s Housing Future
(Funder: AHURI)

Michelle Gabriel (UTAS) and AHURI colleagues

The focus for this National Research Venture is on the nature and direction of housing careers into the 21st Century and the implications of these changing patterns of housing consumption for housing policy in Australia. The research seeks to answer the overarching question: How are housing careers changing in Australia and what are the implications of change for government-provided housing assistance and housing policy?

Housing careers are an important component in the explicit and implicit development of housing policy in Australia within all tiers of government. They also underpin the decisions of builders, developers, rental investors and home purchasers. The housing career is a model of progression through different housing tenures, with each move being associated with a different stage of the individual and family life course. Typically private renting was associated with leaving the parental home and a move into home ownership associated with partnering and family formation.

Changes within the broad parameters of Australian housing careers will have substantial flow on effects for the demand for government services and the development – and delivery – of housing policies. The implications will extend beyond housing policy per se, shaping income support policies, health provision, the disability area and labour force participation.

Second homes and community impacts in Australia
(Funder: HACRU)

Rowland Atkinson, Felicity Picken and Bruce Tranter

This ongoing research is looking at the changing prevalence and local impacts of second and holiday homeownership in Tasmania, particularly along its east coast. The international research on second homes suggests that problems of affordability, land cost increases and local service pressures are often present in areas where levels of second homeownership increase significantly. However, Tasmania’s distinctive context, including the historical ownership of ‘shacks’ by many Tasmanian households, mean that these research findings are not necessarily portable to the State’s local context. Continuing research consisting of interviews with local planners, councillors and data collection on local ratepayers and a survey will take place in 2007.
2. CURRENT PROJECTS

Young Women and Housing Investment
(Funder: University of Tasmania)

Michelle Gabriel

The purpose of the project is to map recent changes in young women’s housing careers. In the context of a rise in young women investing in the Australian property market, the project aims:

• to examine young women’s attitudes towards housing investment, and in particular how housing investment is factored into young women’s plans for their financial future, and;
• to examine young women’s experiences of housing investment, and in particular to identify any factors that limit or enhance young women’s capacity to access housing investment advice and housing finance.

The project will also provide insight into the problems and possibilities women face in entering the housing market outside the traditional route of marriage.

Housing Affordability for Lower-Income Australians (AHURI)

Michelle Gabriel (UTAS) and AHURI colleagues

This National Research Venture will focus specifically on outcomes and solutions for households in need of assistance because of affordability problems. The focus of the research will be on income-constrained households in broad categories that identify those potentially at risk of affordability problems either now or in the future. These groups include:

• economically disadvantaged households,
• newly formed households,
• restructuring households and
• older households with changing needs.

Neighbourhood Management and Policing in Japan and the UK
(Funder: Japan Society for the Promotion of Science)

Rowland Atkinson and Yoshihiro Fujitsuka
(Kochi University)

Concerns with how to effectively control disorder in neighbourhoods have become part of a wider process of regeneration. The key rationale for this research was to look at the ways that neighbourhoods are controlled and managed in the Japanese urban context with the possibility that lessons might be learned for other policy contexts. The main research question was which institutions and key local actors are involved in determining how neighbourhoods are run in Japan. A key aspect of the research was a general interest in the particular role of community-based policing in Japan through neighbourhood-based police boxes, or Koban, as a means of controlling anti-social behaviour. Fieldwork
consisted of observational work in Koban boxes, data collection on the incidence and types of crime and disorder in both neighbourhoods, interviews with more than 40 key actors including duty police officers, city officials, local residents, resident association committee members, housing managers, community police controllers, teachers and other relevant personnel and participant observation with resident foot patrols in both neighbourhoods. The research uncovered the significant institutional ‘thickness’ of neighbourhood organisations in the Japanese neighbourhoods analysed. The existence of neighbourhood councils (chonai), police/resident groups and resident patrols create a strong sense that there are groups responsible for all matters of the neighbourhood that might be linked to crime and disorder. The general orderliness of neighbourhoods and the apparent level of social cohesion between residents suggest that these cultural aspects of neighbourhood life are extremely important in understanding not just responses to disorder but also low levels of disorder in the first place. The idea that neighbourhood institutional arrangements might be ‘policy transferred’ to countries like the UK therefore appear to be naïve but there remains reason to believe that a greater level of public engagement in issues of public disorder and social distress might yield more significant control and public confidence. This connects with other research that has generally found that the public require a more significant public and community-based police presence – even if this does not directly lead to lower crime rates.
The Unit now has five research students working on housing, urban and community-related topics. Further opportunities for postgraduate study within the Unit are welcomed and we encourage applications from potential students interested in our research agenda. Our next key objective in this area is to promote research students from, or working on, indigenous housing and community topic areas.

**Sustainable Housing for Equity and Energy Efficiency: Housing and sustainability in Tasmania**

**Phillipa Watson**

Policy for the construction of new housing has advanced sustainability processes, contributing to greenhouse gas emission abatement and environmental impact reduction; meanwhile, most residential landscapes are dominated by existing housing that does not meet new standards for sustainable outcomes. Yet affordably and efficiently retrofitting such housing is crucial if greenhouse gas emissions and environmental and societal impacts are to be reduced and it will require both individual change and institutional leadership. The aim of this work is to establish the range of individual and institutional responses that will be necessary in Tasmania for householders and policy makers in state and local government to advance widespread and effective retrofitting projects for sustainable housing.

**Portraying the Great Australian Dream: The motivations for owner-occupation**

**Daniel Goss**

The study aims to develop a comprehensive account of the content and paint a picture of the modern “Great Australian Dream” through developing a coherent understanding of the motivations of potential first home buyers, and the constraints which they face in attempting to realise the dream of owner occupation. Describe the multiple dimensions of the “Great Australian Dream”, and the multiple paths through which people might realise that dream. Identify the strategies people put in place to achieve the dream of homeownership, and distinguish whether these paths differ, dependant on a person’s particular ‘dream’ of homeownership.
Property rights and relations.  
A study of the ‘housing problems’ of low-income private rental tenants in Tasmania

Trish Laddrak

This work looks at private rental tenants’ and landlords’ experiences of tenancy situations and the relations and interactions they have with each other; identify how inequality ‘created’ through the ownership versus the lack of ownership of housing is perceived, experienced and reacted to by tenants and landlords. It uses qualitative methods to explore a conceptual framework that focuses on the relationships between collective activity, conventions-practices and resources as they are played out in the relations and interactions between tenants and landlords. By looking at what actually happens within tenancies the research seeks to fill a gap in our understanding of private rental housing relations in the Australian context.

Older-women’s reflections on their housing histories

Jan Forbes

Jan Forbes aim is to explore how older women perceive their housing histories and to use this information to inform contemporary housing policy. She is using autobiographical research methods to encourage interviewees to reflect on their past and present housing.

Communication strategies in the context of urban regeneration

Ellie Francis-Brophy

Ellie Francis Brophy is examining how government organisations engage in housing and urban regeneration projects and how, in particular, they use marketing and consultative mechanisms to engender support from tenants. Like Jan’s thesis, Ellie is hoping her research will provide a useful commentary on current housing policy and to advance some ways for agencies to provide a more responsive service.
The Unit has seen two recent successful completions. Hazel Easthope’s PhD work looked at Return migration to Tasmania. She has recently started work as a researcher at the City Futures Research Centre at the University of New South Wales and is continuing work with Rowland Atkinson on creative city strategies and their community impacts (see the piece by Hazel in this section about her doctoral work). Work on Public housing and citizenship was recently completed by Jed Donoghue who works at Red Shield Housing in Hobart. Jed’s work looked at traditional models of citizenship and how these could be applied to housing tenure. Jed is also a Research Associate with the Unit and is continuing work with Bruce Tranter (also a Unit researcher) on bushranger mythology in Australia.

**Return migration to Tasmania**  
– An overview

Hazel Easthope completed her doctoral studies at the University of Tasmania at the end of 2006. Her thesis, entitled *Going Home: The Return Migrations of Young Tasmanians*, examines the experiences of a group of young adults (18-38 year old) who grew up in Tasmania, left the state and subsequently returned. The thesis speaks to discussions surrounding the emigration of young adults and concerns about ‘brain drain’ occurring in many regions in Australia as well as internationally. The choice of Tasmania as a case study for this research was apt as concerns surrounding the out-migration of young people from the state have influenced the State’s social, economic and political life since the early 1900s. Her focus on return migration enabled a shift away from discourses that bemoan the negative effects of the emigration of young adults, instead recognising that migration can also bring benefits to both young migrants themselves and to the places they move between.

The theoretical arguments of the thesis grew from a frustration with the inadequacy of migration research that attempts to answer the question of why people migrate by searching for lists of causal factors understood to influence migration decisions. Instead, she argues that in order to understand why people migrate, it is important to look beyond such lists and attempt to provide a more complex and nuanced account of the migration process by asking how people negotiate, experience and understand their migrations. She discusses the utility of the concepts of ‘mobility’ and ‘place’ for exploring the complexities of people’s negotiations, experiences and understandings of migration and finds that people’s experiences of migration are intricately tied to their negotiations and understandings of places. Through a complex analysis of constructions of mobility, place and belonging, the research reveals that young Tasmanians retain deep emotional and social connections to Tasmania at all stages of the migration process. These connections are influenced by constructions of Tasmania as a place that is understood simultaneously as ‘bounded and insular’ and as ‘networked’. The thesis concludes by pointing to the implications of both mobility and place construction for the politics and economies of the places migrants move between, as well as for the practical considerations and identity constructions of the migrants themselves, and reasserts the importance of these concepts for studies of migration.
A series of occasional working papers has been produced by the Unit as web-based publications since 2005. The aim of the series is to get early coverage of work in progress, stimulate discussion and to make results widely available. As and when papers are published in journals we have replaced the paper with a link and reference to the journal article. The papers run a broad range of topics, from housing policy analysis to video gaming and cities. The papers can be found at:

http://www.utas.edu.au/sociology/HACRU/occasional_papers.htm

**HACRU working papers series**

**2005**

**HACRU paper 1:**
Neighbourhoods and the Impacts of Social Mix: Crime, Tenure Diversification and Assisted Mobility, Rowland Atkinson

**HACRU paper 2:**
Opportunities and Constraints in State Housing Policy: The Example of Tasmania’s ‘Affordable Housing Strategy’, Michelle Gabriel and Keith Jacobs

**HACRU paper 3:**
An Evaluation of the Utility of ‘Exit Strategies’ for Housing Regeneration Programmes, Keith Jacobs

**2006**

**HACRU paper 4:**
The ‘Post-Social’ Turn: Challenges for Housing Research, Michelle Gabriel and Keith Jacobs

**HACRU paper 5:**
The Aural Ecology of the City: Sound, noise and exclusion in the city, Rowland Atkinson

**HACRU paper 6:**
Community Capacity Building - A Practical Guide, Rowland Atkinson and Paul Willis

**HACRU paper 7:**
The Social Forces and Politics of Housing Research in Australia and the UK: Reflections from the Within the Academy, Rowland Atkinson and Keith Jacobs
4. PUBLICATIONS

2007

HACRU paper 8:
Simulated urbanism and its effects on the negotiation of hyperreal cities, Rowland Atkinson and Paul Willis

HACRU paper 9:
Unique Isolation VS Networks of Opportunity: Return migration by young people to Tasmania

HACRU paper 10:
Second homes in Tasmania: The growth of holiday homeownership and its community impacts, Rowland Atkinson, Felicity Picken and Bruce Tranter

Articles and reports

The Unit has been very active in publishing in recent years. Here we present a selection of key policy-related reports and academic papers in journals. This work reflects the broad range of interests and expertise of members of the Unit in a number of fields held together by the common thread of housing, urban and community affairs.

The forthcoming year looks set to be a busy time for publishing as well with an edited book, various articles and other papers scheduled for publication.

Please check our website for details (http://www.utas.edu.au/sociology/HACRU)


Beer, A., Slatter, M., Baulderstone, M. & Habibis, D. 2006 Evictions and Housing Management: Toward more Effective Strategies - Final Report, AHURI, Melbourne


4. PUBLICATIONS


Isolation: Disconnection, solitude and seclusion in a connected world, 14-16 December, 2006

This conference was intended as a stepping-stone and space for dialogue around a wide range of topics linked by the common theme of isolation, its changing role and impact on contemporary life. In an era of increased connectivity, modes of governance articulated across distant boundaries and the growth of real-time information flows and capital, it may seem odd to have organised such a meeting but these processes have a profound relevance in today’s society. The paradox of connectivity has been a growing sense of isolation and deprivation for those social groups and spaces bypassed by these changes. Papers presented at this international conference spanned a huge range of subjects including polar exploration, extreme tourism, internet use and e-working, network exclusion and access to hard-to-reach research participants. More than seventy delegates were in attendance from across the world. Keynote presentations were delivered by Professor Eric Clark (Isolating Connections, Connecting Isolation) and Professor Adrian Franklin (On Loneliness). Delegates were also given a music CD compilation specially commissioned for the event (http://www.room40.org/releases-onisolation.shtml) with work from electronic artists around the globe. An excursion was also undertaken by boat to the historic penal settlement at Port Arthur to further generate a sense of disconnection! A selection of papers from this meeting will appear in a forthcoming edition of Geografiska Annaler: Human Geography.

Symposium on Housing and Urban Theory, 14-15 February, 2007

This meeting was organised to further debate on the role of theory in housing and urban research. Fifteen papers were presented over two days and a selection of these will be produced as a special forthcoming issue of Housing, Theory and Society. Philip O’Neill, recent founding Chair of the new Urban Research Centre at the University of Western Sydney, presented a keynote which critically considered the continuing influence of Jim Kemeny on housing and urban studies.
5. HACRU SEMINARS AND EVENTS

FUTURE EVENTS

The following events are planned for the coming year. Full details can be found here: http://www.utas.edu.au/sociology/HACRU/news.htm

• ASBOs and Australia - Anti-social behaviour, housing and the law
  Judy Nixon and Caroline Hunter (Sheffield Hallam University) and Michelle Slatter (Flinders University), 31st August.

• Home/Neighbourhood/City/+, Key speaker Professor Tim Butler, King’s College London. December, 13-14 December.

• Urban ‘45’ – 45 Ideas for urban Australia, led by UTAS and colleagues at RMIT, May.

PAST EVENTS

Over the last eighteen months the Unit has organised a series of seminars:

• Anti-Social Behaviour and Housing Management
  Rowland Atkinson, Hal Pawson (Heriot Watt University, Edinburgh) and Daphne Habibis

• Second Homes
  Chris Paris, Ulster University

• The political economy of public housing reform
  Christian Nygaard, RMIT

• Social mix and Public Housing
  Kathy Arthurson (Swinburne University) and Kathy Arthurson (Newcastle University)
The Unit is planning a number of new projects. Key among is the new Hobart Urban Profile (HUP). These projects spearhead our aim to produce locally and internationally relevant work that helps us to engage with community partners. The Profile is a significant project now getting underway which will involve a series of thematic components including housing, health, education, neighbourhoods, employment and other key areas. The aim will be to produce a document that looks at profiling, measuring key changes and producing critical analysis around future public policy initiatives in these areas. This project is intended to generate debate about visions for Hobart’s future (a city which was recently pronounced to have some of the least affordable housing globally) its planning and economy as well as deepening the parameters of debate about housing, affordability and change in the city.

The Visual Index of Poverty is a photographic project, now underway, which will use pictures of public and private amenity in neighbourhoods and organised according to an index of deprivation. This work will culminate in an exhibition early next year where the large format prints will be displayed – our aim is to give visual impact and a feel for the impacts this has on people’s quality of life.

We are also in discussion with AHURI/RMIT to spotlight an event called the Urban 45, this will promote three practical ideas in each of 15 key urban and housing policy domains which seeks to kick-start, in the run-up to federal elections, an urban policy agenda that integrates work across housing, health, indigenous affairs, education and other key areas. This will be a high-level and exciting event.

More news as it comes on this and related projects.
To find out more do visit us at: http://www.utas.edu.au/sociology/HACRU