

# 2010 Housing and Theory Symposium

## changing landscapes: housing, history and climate change

### abstracts

**Thursday 18 February:** *session 1 disasters, home and insecurities*

**Authors:** Lise Saugeres and Kathleen Hulse  
Institute for Social Research  
Swinburne University of Technology  
LSaugeres@groupwise.swin.edu.au  
KHulse@groupwise.swin.edu.au

**Paper Title:** Precarious living: linking housing and other insecurities

**Abstract:** Drawing on literature on ontological security and meaning of home, and qualitative research with low-income renters, this paper offers a conceptual and empirical exploration of the ways in which housing insecurities interact with insecurities in other aspects of people's lives to constitute what we call 'precarious living'. In the changing social and economic climate, an increasing number of people have found themselves living in more uncertain conditions. Existing literature has talked about 'precarious employment' to refer to the deregulation of labour markets and the increased casualisation of labour. Housing uncertainty has been discussed mostly in terms of risks and insecurity of tenure. We propose a conceptual approach to risk and uncertainty that seeks to disentangle the complex web of insecurities in the lives of low income renters. We argue here that 'precarious living' is a process which is the result of a number of interacting and reinforcing insecurities relating to housing and other areas of people's lives. Our research shows that dimensions of housing insecurity interact with other insecurities in people's lives such as insecurity of the self, insecurities in family life and health, and financial and employment insecurities.

**Authors:** Stewart Williams and Keith Jacobs

Stewart Williams  
School of Geography and Environmental Studies  
University of Tasmania  
Stewart.Williams@utas.edu.au

Keith Jacobs  
School of Sociology  
University of Tasmania  
Keith.Jacobs@utas.edu.au

**Paper Title:** Disasters, housing and actuarialism: the securitisation of risk

**Abstract:** Concerns relating to the occurrence of disasters and their impacts on housing are becoming ever more topical in light of events such as Hurricane Katrina, the Indian Ocean tsunami and the global financial crisis. The threats posed by terrorism add yet another dimension to the realities of living in a risk society. However, the connections between housing and the management of environmental and technological disasters have received rather limited attention to date - and usually then only through the prism of economic modeling and insurance risk assessment. Often missing in our readings of the current literature are the more extensive discussions of the sociological theory and the contributions it might afford for enhancing our understanding and hence capacity to manage such events.

To address this gap, we advance a sociological lens to explore the linkages between housing and disaster management. We begin by discussing the work of Foucault, Giddens and Beck and their claim that the deployment of 'risk', 'actuarialism' and 'security' is constitutive of the particular calculative rationales and practices that underpin modern technologies of governance. In the main part of the paper we consider Beck's claim that in relation to the threats posed by reflexive modernisation, a catastrophic risk society would test the limits of rational knowledge and so prove uninsurable. What we find interesting - since contrary to Beck's claim - is the manner in which risk and uncertainty are increasingly conjoined in planning for possible environmental and technological disasters through the production of

knowledges and behaviours that are tied to insurance and securitisation. We therefore explore the implications of this fusion of risk and uncertainty in terms of such discursive and material practices and especially their intersections with housing. In the conclusion, we assess the potential of a housing research agenda that incorporates sociological notions of 'risk', 'actuarialism' and 'security'.

**Author:** Hans Pieters

Johannes Pieters, Flinders Institute for Housing, Urban and Regional Research  
Flinders University  
hans.pieters@flinders.edu.au

**Paper Title:** (Re)defining home –the case of rebuilding Marysville, Victoria

**Abstract:** What home means reflects cultural, commodity and biographical factors (Gurney and Means 1993) and dimensions such as security, hearth, continuity and family must find expression within the dynamics of globalization and the challenges of climate change. Dovey (2005) has suggested that while home is best understood as paradox he has also suggested that there are processes, properties and conditions which have eroded the traditional sense of home and has paralyzed its reemergence (Dovey 1985). For Dovey these involve rationalism and technology, commoditization, bureaucracy, scale and speed, the erosion of communal space and professionalism. Using Dovey's framework as a point of departure and drawing on the post modern geographical understanding of the modern home as proposed by Putnam (1993) and Kaika's (2004) notion of irreconcilable tensions in constructing the autonomy of the modern home this paper discusses the reconstruction of the town of Marysville in Victoria following the devastating bushfires of 2008 and foregrounds the processes in play which determine how home is being defined. With reference to ABS data, transcripts from the Royal Commission into the bushfires, newspaper reports and policy documents regarding the rebuilding of Marysville the paper focuses on a discourse within the reconstruction process – who will be rebuilding and who will never return – in order to explore what home must become to resolve a tension at the interface of sustainability and suburbia.

## ***session 2 theory and policy***

**Author:** Wendy Steele

Urban Research Program  
Griffith University  
w.steel@griffith.edu.au

**Paper Title:** 'A mansion or no house' revisited

**Abstract:** TBS

**Author:** Julie Lawson

OTB Research Institute for Housing, Urban and Mobility Studies  
Delft University of Technology  
j.m.lawson@tudelft.nl

**Paper Title:** What's in a structure? The changing role of social relations in housing studies

**Abstract:** Housing studies is a broad field, which has ploughed the disciplines of political economy, radical geography and sociology since the 1970s, making use of structural theories, concepts and methods. These studies have embroidered notions of human agency engaged in different aspects of housing provision, consumption and exchange, with the concepts of class, gender and power embedded in historically contingent social and economic structures. Researchers have argued that housing is not only subject to commodification, but vulnerable to shifting circuits of capital, changing modes of social regulation and crises prone regimes of capital accumulation. These structurally inspired studies aim to explain why different modes of provision have been generated and highlight processes which exacerbate social inequality

and promote uneven development. Some researchers, informed by causal explanations even propose an agenda for change.

This paper reviews their contribution since the 1970s, when widely read authors such as Castells and Harvey, directed our attention towards the relative power of human agency in structures influencing the production, consumption and exchange of housing, providing a critique of more benign policy orientated research. It reviews the influence of developments in locality studies, state theory, comparative historical analysis and urban sociology and the use of frameworks such as structures of housing provision (Ball) and regulation theory. Critical Realist ontology, implicit in structural accounts now explicitly inspires research on homelessness and the causality of property relations, circuits of savings and investment and different modes of consumption and their crises prone, cumulative role in shaping mode of housing provision. Castells and Harvey continue to inspire housing researchers, informing analysis of the US mortgage market crises, highlighting switching circuits of capital, redlining and racial inequality.

This paper evaluates the contribution of this rich body of research and its important role in the development of explanatory theories and policy critique.

**Author:** Stephen Naylor and Andrea Schurmann  
Faculty of Law, Business and Creative Arts  
James Cook University  
Stephen.Naylor@jcu.edu.au  
[andrea.schurmann@jcu.edu.au](mailto:andrea.schurmann@jcu.edu.au)

**Paper Title:** Domestic housing in North Queensland: *legoland* or a new form of 'light frame prefabrication' ala the Broad and Brown '*Newstead Home*'?;

**Abstract:** Since World War 2 domestic architecture in North Queensland has shifted from light-framed timber houses with broad pitched roofs perched on timber posts to the dominance of new cement block and slab construction on concrete foundations. The domestic building industry is now structured around builders and building material companies working on development projects, capitalizing on economies of scale and making token alterations to generic pre-packaged designs. The drift from master builders to sub contractors using new trade products designed for quick and simple fit-outs has yielded a domestic housing style more akin to 'Legoland'.

The challenge for domestic architecture is to reflect upon the rapid development over the past 30 years in the housing market and to recognize the impact of an alien architecture that now dominates the suburbs. These cement buildings with dark 'Colorbond' truss roofs, almost devoid of eaves; defy the context and micro-climate of the tropics, where poor initial design is compensated with a bank of split system air-conditioners. The building code for North Queensland virtually ignores the benign climate that is characterised by higher all-year-round temperatures with minor seasonal variation when determining energy ratings.

North Queensland domestic housing now mirrors the domestic architecture of many southern cities and creates a homogenized building style which has become the norm throughout suburban Australia. A return to a light frame prefabrication made with contemporary materials and flexible modular design could pose a solution for a housing industry that has become disconnected with its notions of place. A recent symposium held in Townsville in 2009, brought together a cross disciplinary cohort to consider "What killed the Queenslanders." This paper will report on the discussions from this forum where a new style of building was posed, one that grew from the concepts behind the Broad and Brown's *Newstead Home* (1926).

**Author:** Deborah Warr and Belinda Robson  
Population Health  
Melbourne University  
djwarr@unimelb.edu.au  
[brobson@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:brobson@unimelb.edu.au)

**Paper Title:** Urban frontiers: experiencing place on the urban fringe

**Abstract:** The suburbs on Melbourne's peri-urban fringe are undergoing profound transformations. They are expanding and providing homes for growing numbers of people, as well as developing great diversity in their own composition. In this paper we draw on qualitative data gathered from two contrasting suburbs on the fringe of Melbourne's northern suburbs: Craigieburn and Roxburgh Park. Although they are adjoining suburbs, they are developing in very different ways and offer useful contrasts that challenge assumptions of the homogeneity of communities living on the urban fringe. Craigieburn, originally settled in the 1960s and 1970s, saw its population grow from 5,000 in 1981 to over 20,000 in 2006. This growth has brought with it a range of issues related to social infrastructure and community cohesion. Roxburgh Park was developed by the Urban Land Authority in 1993 as a master planned community and grew from 3,122 in 1996 to 18,860 in 2006. Since then, the neighbourhood has been transforming from a predominately Australian-born population to one that now is shared by many cultures. Combining historical and sociological approaches, we trace the development of the two suburbs to the present time and, combined with interview data gathered from families living in the two suburbs, we explore resident's aspirations and experiences of community, the challenges that are encountered in achieving their ideals and the implications for broader goals of social inclusion in diverse cities.

**Author:** Ilan Vize  
City Futures  
UNSW  
i.vize@unsw.edu.au

**Paper Title:** Need, mix and choice: allocation of housing and supports for people with intellectual disabilities in Victoria

**Abstract:** Allocation of housing and support services for people with intellectual disabilities is based on three major sets of criteria: an assessment of the applicants' needs; considerations of social mix; and, the applicants' own choices. This paper examines the philosophical and institutional rationales underlying each of these notions and the tensions arising when seeking to achieve a balance between them. The paper is based on a review of related studies in the UK, US and Australia, in housing for people with intellectual disabilities and social housing in general. It also presents original empirical work carried out as part of a doctoral research project in Victoria, illustrating some of the importance of achieving a balance between needs, mix and choice.

## **Friday 19 February**

**Author:** Jago Dodson  
Urban Research Program  
Griffith University  
j.dodson@griffith.edu.au

**Paper Title:** [political economy and the systems of housing provision] TBC

**Abstract:** TBS

**Author:** Fiona Allon  
School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry  
The University of Sydney  
fiona.allon@usyd.edu.au

**Paper Title:** Housing, home and risk

**Abstract:** TBS

### ***session 5 sustainable housing practice and theory***

**Authors:** Cecily Maller and Ralph Horne  
Centre for Design  
RMIT University  
ralph.horne@rmit.edu.au  
[cecily.maller@rmit.edu.au](mailto:cecily.maller@rmit.edu.au)

**Paper Title:** Households, home improvements & sustainability: theoretical and policy reflections

**Abstract:** Concerns about green-house gas emissions and climate change have brought the environmental performance of housing firmly into the spotlight. Both government and non-government organisations actively encourage households to take responsibility for environmental issues through campaigns, educational programmes and regulation. Recent efforts call on householders to modify their home for improved performance in relation to energy and water use. This paper presents an overview of several small but related research projects exploring home improvements, householder practices and their attempts to improve the environmental performance of housing. Beginning with a theoretical approach akin to behaviour change, which places environmental responsibility clearly on the shoulders of individuals, several alternative theoretical approaches, including practice theory, were successionaly operationalised through three rounds of data collection and analysis. As the work progressed, our theoretical approach was continually revised, with the final destination a considerable departure from where the work began. The paper discusses what kinds of theory can usefully inform research on households, housing and sustainability, and in combination with the presentation of findings, reflects on the implications for policy making.

**Authors:** Ralph Horne and Cecily Maller and Tony Dalton  
Design & Social Context  
RMIT University  
tony.dalton@rmit.edu.au

**Paper Title:** Between house and home: the practices and narratives of green renovators in Melbourne, Australia

**Abstract:** Undertaking home renovation is often complex and traumatic, but remains nonetheless a ubiquitous phenomenon amongst homeowners. Home renovators who wish to reduce the environmental impact of their home encounter further layers of complexity. Increasingly, opportunities to improve a dwelling's environmental performance are perceived to present themselves in the course of major home renovation projects, giving rise to what we argue is a new actor group: 'green renovators'. This paper reports on findings from a study of self-identified green renovators in Melbourne. During extended interviews and walk-through tours of their dwellings, homeowners discussed their ideas and concerns about energy and water use; their planned, current or recent renovations; and their daily practices and routines. We address the question: 'how do household practices and concepts of home shape and become shaped by the material home-making activity of green renovations?' Focusing on the temporal, spatial and skills implications of renovations, and the wider systems involved, we use the practice lens as a means to reveal the relationships between concerns, routines, home improvements and environmental implications. We then draw a distinction between house and home and conclude with ideas for new policy directions.

**Authors:** Caryl Bosman and Paul Burton  
Urban Research Program  
Griffith University  
c.bosman@griffith.edu.au  
p.burton@griffith.edu.au

**Paper Title:** Gold Coast geritopias: changing residential landscapes and risk

**Abstract:** TBS