Urban Research Program

A society divided: a multilevel approach for understanding socio-economic opportunity and vulnerability
Chief Investigator: Associate Professor Scott Baum

Brief Description:
Despite a strong economy since the early 1990s uneven socioeconomic outcomes remain characteristic of Australian society. The costs to individuals, communities and society itself of these uneven outcomes are significant. Crucially, policy needs to understand the multi-dimensional nature of the drivers of these uneven outcomes so as to ameliorate the negative cost. This project provides an understanding into the multidimensional and multilevel nature of socioeconomic opportunity and vulnerability in Australian society. The project has national social and policy significance, is empirically and methodologically innovative and draws on increasing international interest in understanding the ways in which people and place interact to influence individual level outcomes. The outcomes will be significant across a wide range of policy domains, including labour market, education, health, human services, housing and community development as each can benefit from a better understanding of how given people and place contexts impact on socio-economic outcomes.

The project is being conducted in collaboration with University of Newcastle colleague Professor William Mitchell, and has already resulted in a number of publications being accepted and submitted for journals:

Effective Use of Community Indicators for Improved Community Well-Being: Development of Community Indicators Queensland (CIQ)
Chief Investigators: Associate Professor Geoff Woolcock, Professor Brendan Gleeson, Professor Ross Homel, Associate Professor Scott Baum

Brief Description:
The project is tracking Australian progress in relation to prevailing international and local community indicator projects. The proposal focuses on the first of a series of stages intended to lead to the establishment of a database and web interface, provisionally titled Community Indicators Queensland (CIQ), to support the development and use of local community wellbeing indicators as a basis for informed, engaged and integrated community planning, policy making and research.

Child-Friendly by Design Project
Chief Investigators: Associate Professor Geoff Woolcock, Professor Brendan Gleeson, C Bosman, P. Walsh

Brief Description:
With funding support from Health Cities Illawarra, through Communities for Children (Shellharbour), The ‘Child Friendly by Design’ project aims to:

a) Create community, organisation and business awareness about the concept and approach to creating a child friendly city.

(more overleaf)

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b) Develop indicators which can be used to assess how child friendly a place is.

c) Develop indicators which can be used to assess how child friendly a place is.

d) Use child friendly design principles to create two site designs in the 2527 and 2529 areas.

e) Create a resource kit which supports planners, developers, community and other decision makers to consider and apply child friendly design principals to planning and development processes.

f) Develop an action plan and encourage ongoing commitment by businesses, council and developers to pursuing child friendly design in Shellharbour LGA.

Benchmarking the Public Domain
Chief Investigators:
Associate Professor Geoff Woolcock,
Professor Brendan Gleeson, G. Forbe

Brief Description:
The project is assisting the Asia-Pacific Place Leaders Association (PLA) who are collaborators in this initiative, to define the qualities that will most support the creation of public domains that engender a strong sense of place in users. It is also helping the PLA to articulate its meaning of ‘sense of place’ and develop indicators to measure successful public domains. By identifying benchmarks for successful public domain, it will enable PLA members in their responsibilities as place-makers and promises to provide a useful tool for other urban place managers.

Development of a National Research Agenda for the Australian Red Cross
Chief Investigator:
Associate Professor Geoff Woolcock

Brief description:
The Australian Red Cross has undertaken a substantial review of its operations and has committed to developing a national strategic research agenda. It is looking to establish a research and policy framework which reflects the organisation’s core business and which connects research and policy outputs to practice. They have committed to partnering with Griffith University to help scaffold the organisation’s efforts to build internal research skills and to access electronic resources. In particular, the Red Cross seeks to build an integrated research capacity involving key staff in divisions, the research and information service, and external research partnerships with universities etc. to research, monitor and analyse social vulnerability.

Strategic Framework for Creating Liveable New Communities
Chief Investigators:
Associate Professor Geoff Woolcock,
M.Frere, J.Wiseman, C. Whitzman,
M.Kelaher, T.Eltham

Brief Description:
A Griffith University / University of Melbourne consortium in collaboration with Growth Areas Authority, Victorian Government undertook and completed the Creating Liveable New Communities Project June 2007 - November 2007 for the Growth Areas Authority (GAA). The consortium created a body of knowledge that identified the key elements needed to create liveable sustainable new communities. This was used to inform the development of a strategic framework and practical tools to enable the GAA and partner organisations to create new communities in Melbourne’s growth areas. This included new communities in greenfield locations as well as locations where development represents an extension of an existing community that may require revitalisation.