Urban disadvantage in Australia
Evolution, anatomy and policy responses

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How should we understand neighbourhood disadvantage in Australia?

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Spatial disadvantage
What was the research about?

- To identify the scale and form of Spatial disadvantage in Australian cities (Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane).
- To identify the roles played by housing market processes and related government policy or programs in creating, accentuating, or mitigating disadvantage (‘causes’).
- To identify the implications for residents of living in an area of concentrated disadvantage (‘consequences’).
Conceptualising spatial disadvantage

Housing type
Quality of housing stock
Purchase affordability
Rental affordability
Housing density
Gatekeeper risk assessment
Rent Assistance
Housing availability

Concentrations of Poverty

Disadvantage of Resource Access

Housing tenure, type & cost by location
- Labour market
- Education
- Health care
- Retailing
- Transport

Neighbourhood Effect

Public housing allocations

Disadvantage of Social Dysfunction

Sense of hopelessness
Concentration of unemployed youth
Concentration of high problem families

Population turnover

Crime
Domestic violence
Drugs
Educational participation
Employment participation
Compared to US and UK, Australia appears different:

- Australian spatial disadvantage is not as **wide** i.e. fewer people living in disadvantaged areas.
- Spatial disadvantage is not as **deep**.
- Spatial disadvantage is not as **permanent**.
- Spatial disadvantage historically has been more about **concentrations of poverty** than of ‘resource access’ or ‘social dysfunction’.
- But is changing and today it is as much as about **resource access** than poverty concentration.
Why Australia is different
The explanation (non housing factors)

- Level and stage of economic development.
- Spatial concentration of economic development (single industry vs. multi industry cities).
- Lack of race and ethnicity issues.
- Public policy
  - Non competitive Federalism.
  - Level and form of income support (pensions, minimum income).
  - Post war planning.
Why Australia is different
The explanation (housing factors)

- Working class home ownership (64% inner Melbourne housing 1961)
- Broad spatial affordability (historically)
- Smaller and different role of rental housing
- Role and form of public housing
  → Dwelling type
  → Dwelling location
  → Eligibility and allocations policy
Disadvantage of resource access 2014

Restructuring of housing markets causing;
Relocation of low-cost private rental to outer areas.

**Problem is** not so much concentrations of poverty per se as disadvantage of access to public transport, labour markets, educational opportunities, health care.
## Spatial policy interventions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of intervention</th>
<th>Specific programs</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strategic federalism</strong></td>
<td>Income support</td>
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<tr>
<td>Focus is on fair and</td>
<td>Physical infrastructure</td>
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<tr>
<td>efficient spatial</td>
<td>Social Infrastructure</td>
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<tr>
<td>collection and</td>
<td>Social housing and housing assistance</td>
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<td>distribution of national revenue and collection</td>
<td>Health, education and labour market programs</td>
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<td><strong>Place management</strong></td>
<td>Community building</td>
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<tr>
<td>Focus is on locality of</td>
<td>Developing and using networks</td>
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<tr>
<td>disadvantage</td>
<td>Estate renewal</td>
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<td>Capacity building</td>
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<td><strong>Case management</strong></td>
<td>Support packages</td>
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<tr>
<td>Focus is on individuals/</td>
<td>Service coordination</td>
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<td>households in areas of</td>
<td>Mutual obligation</td>
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<td>disadvantage</td>
<td>Supporting self determination</td>
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Conclusions

- Australia’s disadvantage is different. We therefore must be careful about policy transfer from other countries.
- Policy Interventions are dependent on what form of disadvantage we are talking about and what we believe are the key causal factors.
- Housing has a key role to play in creating, or mitigating disadvantage, in terms of concentrations of poverty and that of disadvantage of resource access.
- Historically Australian housing markets have been more of a positive than negative in the making of disadvantaged areas.
- But Metropolitan Australia now has a growing problem of resource access disadvantage which in time could become one of disadvantage of social problems.