

# Virtual Special Issue

## Neighbourhood Based Problems, Neighbourhood Effects and Social Mix in Urban Renewal Policies: An Australian Perspective



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#### Introductory Excerpt

The relationship between spatial location, place and disadvantage is of major interest to contemporary academics and policy makers. One of the key questions of inquiry, as reflected in the so called 'neighbourhood effects' thesis, that is dominant in US debates about problem neighbourhoods, is: does residing in neighbourhoods with concentrations of people experiencing similar high levels of disadvantage detrimentally impact on their life chances and aspirations and exacerbate problems? For policy makers grappling with concentrations of tenants on social housing estates experiencing issues of poverty, unemployment and behavioural issues the answer to this question often appears as a resounding yes. In practice policy responses have mainly involved implementing estate renewal projects. The most recent projects embrace 'whole of government' approaches to addressing 'social exclusion', arguing that the complexity and interconnected nature of estate residents' problems require solutions that are much broader than changes to physical infrastructure and housing carried out independently of other social concerns. Projects encompass initiatives to: coordinate service provision at the local level; provide employment opportunities for residents; empower local communities; and diversify housing tenure and social mix within the regeneration area to create more heterogeneous estates and break up concentrations of disadvantaged residents (Arthurson 2012, forthcoming). Changes to social mix are achieved through reordering the mix of housing dwellings in terms of quality, size and tenure type, involving demolition of obsolete housing, building new housing for sale on the private market to attract home buyers into the areas and permanently relocating some social housing tenants to other neighbourhoods.

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