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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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**The Connected Cities Lab is a centre of excellence designed
to address the challenges that city leadership faces, and the
information it needs, in an interconnected and increasingly
urbanised planet.**

**The University of Melbourne's School of Design (MSD) is the
graduate school of the Faculty of Architecture, Building and
Planning. The Faculty actively seeks to extend linkages between
education, research and practice in the built environment, and
aims to inspire learning through interdisciplinary reflection,
and its integration of research teaching and practice around the
implications of all forms of urbanisation.**

ANNUAL REPORT 2019

——

CONTENTS

CONNECTED
CITIES –
– LAB

**Melbourne
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of Melbourne

——

Annual
Report 2019

THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

CONNECTED
CITIES –
– LAB

**Melbourne
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The University
of Melbourne

01
Annual
Report 2019

FROM THE DIRECTOR: A (FIRST) YEAR OF INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENTS

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On the sidelines of a recent major conference on cities, a well-known colleague who held a senior leadership role in an international organisation asked me about the Connected Cities Lab: "how many years has it been running?". 12 months. Just under 360 days at the time. As we turn past the one-year mark from its official start in late November 2018, I cannot but look to that comment, and several others along the way in the last months, as a distinct compliment. From its original inception in early 2018 on the generous tables of the Office of the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research) and the Office of the Dean of the Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning (ABP), the Lab has already come a long way. We were set up to be 'international' in our ethos, and I believe we have done just that.

2019, as the first year of operations of the Lab, saw the growth of an eclectic team that is global in its personal history and scholarly orientation. We have welcomed to Melbourne colleagues hailing from the US, Korea, Spain, via the UK, France, Kenya, but also locals from our own Melbourne neighbourhood whose work has been internationally minded and engaged from the get-go.

We have all, yours truly included, been finding our feet in ABP, on campus and for several in Australia too. Yet this also applies globally as we ventured, with a mixture of excitement, bravado and willingness to 'go abroad', into the halls of UN agencies, major charities or city networks. We found ourselves in the bustling confusion of mayoral congresses, karaoke bars of developing country capitals, urban farming gardens of Midwest America or in front of teleconferences at rather unsociable Australian times. Collaboration, amidst all of that, has been a pivotal feature of our approach to 'applied' urban research.

2019 has seen us figuring out, and indeed debating, ways to leverage this collaborative spirit: learning and listening to other cities has been key for us. Debates and convenings in Singapore,

London, Toronto and more drove how we present ourselves to the world as a centre focused on the leadership of cities. Respecting and engaging, and in fact taking the cue from, those hubs of urban research and innovation 'off the map', with visits in the likes of Cuba, Freetown or Cape Town to name but a few, has been a must. We take 'global' in a cosmopolitan sense, not simply as the place of those who can afford to be international.

Our Lab journey started from wrapping up a major Nature commission on the role of urban research and researchers in the future of cities, and a Science commentary advocating for science to better inform city leadership. It expanded into a busy program of activities spanning disiplines, from planning to development, international relations, and geography. We will do our best to do these, and more, justice as they come together in an applied style of scholarship that puts urban challenges first. Fittingly, we wrap up 2019 with one more Nature piece again trying to push the envelope of what we mean by "urban studies" whilst engaging a (quite literally) overshadowed theme like that of managing cities at night-time.

Throughout the year we have begun rolling out ways in which the Lab can both function as a gateway for international collaboration and a space for experimentation. Major international efforts like the KNOW program on urban equality, the Innovate 4 Cities project on actionable urban research, or the Botnar framework of "evidence to action" for urban health sat alongside curiosity-driven pilots on the role of city diplomacy, the influence of city rankings, or the ways 'scaling up' is seen in resilience, to name a few.

I think the Lab has in that been taking sizeable hops, more than proverbial baby steps, in its newborn phase. As perhaps best represented by the eclectic mix of styles chosen for the first annual retreat's pizza-making competition, or indeed the list of projects above, the Lab has fast become a busy community, representing different ways to understand and practice urban research.

As the year progressed, we welcomed more senior but equally internationally dynamic additions, with a new enterprise senior fellow taking us into the heart of the 'cities with nature' and science-policy debates, a tireless visiting fellow shepherding us through international development funding challenges, and our first regionally-navigated ABP faculty fellow too. Proudly, this has not just enhanced our capacity to speak with authority and experiment collegially across major international fora like COP25 and the UN Asia-Pacific Urban Forum, but also our gender, cultural and ethnic diversity - something we will not compromise on anytime soon.

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CITIES –
– LAB

**Melbourne
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The University
of Melbourne

02
Annual
Report 2019

2019 has also seen us testing routes we had not even planned in those early 2018 days: for an initially research-only body, we dipped our toes into research-driven education, teaching three MSD studios, mentoring a cohort of extraordinary fellows working on global governance, debating capacity building needs on the ground in Sierra Leone but also with major UN agencies, and whetting our appetites for more capacity building in the years to come.

At the same time, 2019 has been a year that has, in my view, proven we can drive internationally minded urban research from one of the southernmost cities on the planet. The Lab has tested, and then swiftly consolidated, a quite unique engagement with philanthropy working with and for the likes of Bosch Foundations, Lord Mayor's Charitable Foundation, Open Society Foundation, and Fondation Botnar. It has also tightened links with multilateral agencies and city networks, principally UN-Habitat and WHO, but also working with UCLG, CityNet, Eurocities and C40 Cities.

We have done this, I believe, not forgetting our academic roots. We will continuously remind ourselves of this need – and an inspiring end-of-year exchange with the African Centre for Cities has done just that. The lures of lucrative consultancy and never-ending start up modes are ever present for centres whose place is to animate discussions in international fora. 2019, thus far, proved to me that we want to remain not just active and collaborative, but do so in a scholarly way, advocating that the best city leadership is one that takes decisions and speaks on the basis of sound evidence, and that our goal is not to be the 'best' centre for urban research, but rather a critical friend and a proactive, as much as internationally-networked, collaborators scholars and practitioners can count on when it comes to working towards a more equitable future of our urbanised planet.

With this busy and exciting path behind us, I see us as a Lab taking stock of lessons learnt on the road, planning ahead for the changes that global agendas and future shifts are prompting in cities, ready and excited to join overseas, domestic and indeed neighbourhood colleagues in setting an internationally-inspired debate on urban development, broadening global atlas of the imagination of those who speak of, for and to cities.

I look forward to a 2020 full of more learning on the road and in Melbourne and offering more of a sound evidence-based voice to inform city leadership whether from mayors, UN agencies, charities or community.

Prof Michele Acuto

Director, Connected Cities Lab.

Above: Michele and the Lab team on their annual planning retreat where they made pizzas for lunch
Below: (L-R) Michele Acuto, Raymon Kaur, Stephanie Butcher, Jana Perkovic, Cathy Oke, Darcy Gunning and Thomas Jacobs.

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CITIES —
— LAB

Melbourne
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The University
of Melbourne

03

Annual
Report 2019

2019 BY THE NUMBERS

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3	PhD students
5	International visiting scholars
15?	research projects
17	researchers
17	international events
20	peer-reviewed research publications
29	media appearances
36	publications
38	formalised partnerships
42	collaborative partners
11,630	Twitter followers
over 1.4	million leveraged research funding

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CITIES —
— LAB

**Melbourne
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The University
of Melbourne

04
Annual
Report 2019

ABOUT US

——

MISSION: A LABORATORY FOR A MORE GLOBALLY INFORMED CITY LEADERSHIP

The Connected Cities Lab was established by the University of Melbourne in late 2018 as a centre with core expertise in **urban governance and urban development**, hosted by the Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning.

The Lab is designed to address the challenges city leadership faces, and the information it needs, in an interconnected and increasingly urbanised planet. We work with key stakeholders that influence urban governance at the local, national and international scales to provide evidence, build capacity, and offer advice on the dynamics shaping the leadership of cities. We strive to be a reliable and innovative source of applied urban research producing both policy material, practice-oriented education and scholarly reviews.

The key mission of the Lab is **to drive a more globally informed city leadership**. For us this means opening up a 'global' imaginary in urban scholarship and urban practice, especially when it comes to policymaking, seeking to inspire urban development through a wide variety of experiences and cities from across the globe. The Lab strives for rebalancing geographical, cultural and economic biases in this global urban viewpoint. The Lab's approach is centred on the recognition that such an 'international' approach is contingent on recognising the wealth of urban knowledge, experiences and value(s) available today. We take the international as a space to create, building on the experience of University College London, partnerships "with equivalence" and learn from cities and urban dwellers that often fall 'off the map'.

We aim to be a clear voice, collaborator and (when needed) an advocate for a better evidence-based approach to urban governance and do so promoting explicitly the value of thinking about urban challenges internationally beyond established boundaries. From this perspective, the Lab takes the 'international', as it pertains to cities, as both a focus and a mission. Whilst recognising the unique role of mayors and municipal officers, the Lab is not uniquely targeted to local government: we recognise that city leadership comes from a variety of other stakeholders, and we take broad view of urban governance that appreciates and works directly with multilateral organisations, private sector and community groups.

Ours is a value-driven agenda. We take cue from major global south experiences like UCT's African Centre for Cities in being, as they say at ACC, "critical and propositional". We aim to use our research to speak back, to, and with urban development stakeholders (e.g. mayors, multilateral agencies, companies) but do so with sound and scholarly-tested evidence.

APPROACH: A SPACE FOR INNOVATIVE URBAN RESEARCH

The Lab strives not just to produce data, but also study how urban knowledge shapes the way we govern cities. In that, a prime focus of our work, empirical as much as advisory or educational, is to **investigate the knowledge ecosystems underpinning urban governance at all levels**, from how information drives municipal policy, to how research is (or not) translated between evidence producers and users at also the national and international scale. This also implies avoided long-sighted biases: part of the laboratory ethos is that we take a continuously reflexive approach on our own position and practice in urban governance. As represented by some of our flagship projects, the Lab couples a core focus on urban governance with studying and experimenting with the ways in which information flows to drive city leadership across the world.

This implies the necessity for the Lab to work with and mobilise different registers of evidence. We take 'urban studies' to be an open and collegial home for all those whose primary interest lies on the way cities, and urban processes, are shaping our societies. Ahead of any single disciplinary excellence, we put a collective premium on the value of collaboration, whilst supporting our team members to be strong academic voices in their own respective fields.

We want to ensure that sound knowledge about the politics of cities is available to practitioners in spite of the necessary academic pace but are not dismissive of this latter or indeed not privileging faster and more quantitative methods to slower and more qualitative experiences. The Lab explicitly practices **an 'action research' agenda** but applied with international, cosmopolitan, ethics. We propose to offer at least partial solutions to today's most pressing societal problems in cities by shaping and improving their urban governance through networking, directly or empirically, city leaders the world over. We believe independent research can be in service of pressing questions and that theoretical development can go alongside a meaningful contribution to improving life in our cities.

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OUR TEAM

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At the heart of an experimental and internationally oriented Laboratory are a tangible group of urban researchers. The Lab has been set up explicitly to embody this in a collaborative and interdisciplinary fashion and in its first year of operation it has grown from a plan sketched on an A4 to a busy team of fourteen inhabiting the halls of the Melbourne School of Design. Our goal is to maintain our team structure: simple and intelligible to the outsider, manageable internally via frequent interaction, and above all recognise innovative and impactful urban scholarship can come from all career levels and disciplinary backgrounds.

As of January 2020, the Lab's team is led by a director, Prof Michele Acuto, and a Lab Coordinator, Kate Murray, and accounts for five Research Fellows, two lecturers, two senior fellows, three PhD scholars and three research assistants. With five of those positions funded directly by the University of Melbourne, and four new team members welcomed at the end of the year to take up various grant-funded projects, the Lab's staff list is a sound representation of the internationally collaborative nature of our work and the importance of mixing styles of urban research.

Lab management and faculty

- Prof Michele Acuto, Professor of Global Urban Politics

- Kate Murray, Lab Coordinator

- Jennifer Dam Project Officer for the Fondation Botnar collaboration

- Dr Ihnji Jon, Lecturer in International Urban Politics

- Dr Iderlina Mateo-Babiano. Senior Lecturer in Urban Planning

Lab Research Fellows

- Dr Stephanie Butcher, Postdoctoral Research Fellow in International Urban Politics

- Dr Pablo Fuentenebro, Postdoctoral Research Fellow in International Urban Politics

- Dr Anna Kosovac, Postdoctoral Research Fellow in International Urban Politics

- Dr Geoff Browne, Research Fellow in International Urban Development

- Dr Alexei Trundle, Research Fellow in Sustainable Urban Development

The Lab supports both directly funded doctoral scholars, through DVCR scholarships, and associated doctoral researchers supervised directly by the Lab team. This has seen the Lab's first cohort to kick off doctoral research with a focus on three exciting areas of inquiry: the role of, and dynamics underpinning, cities as 'actors' in shaping international migration; the (global) market-based drivers of housing innovation; and the international political economy of extra-state urban spaces like special economic zones.

Whilst we are set to welcome more doctoral researchers in 2021, the year also concluded with exciting news about funding granted to support a dual degree PhD scholarship focused on global city infrastructures, jointly held between the Lab and the University of Manchester's Urban Institute, as part of the Melbourne-Manchester-Toronto collaboration. This adds yet a further link in the formalised connections the Lab is weaving with global centres of urban research.

Even in our early days of work, our PhDs have been an engaged and proactive cohort as Lab members, taking up not just complex research programs but also lending keen hands to a number of new projects. For instance driving the engagement with the Cities of Cape Town and Bristol for our comparative imaginations program, taking charge of a large international survey of city diplomacy in collaboration with the Chicago Council on Global affairs, representing the Lab at CityNet's annual summit, or delivering the MSD 'night studio' along with Arup.

Lab Doctoral Researchers

- Daniel Pejic, (also Research Assistant in Comparative Urbanism)

- Jana Perkovic, (also 'Studio N' instructor)

- Darcy Gunning, (also Research Assistant in City Diplomacy)

2019 has also seen the appointment of two very international professional researchers, Dr Cathy Oke and Joyati Das, as respectively Enterprise Senior Fellow focused on 'informed cities' and Visiting Senior Fellow for our Fondation Botnar partnership. Cathy and Joyati have brought with them an energetic international network of collaborations, projects and indeed senior leadership fundamental in shaping how we act as a centre not just in Melbourne but on the road in major multilateral fora.

Lab Senior Fellows

- Dr Cathy Oke, Melbourne Enterprise Senior Fellow

- Joayti Das, Senior Visiting Fellow

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Melbourne
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The University
of Melbourne

06

Annual
Report 2019

Of course, along with core faculty and fellows of the Lab, seven project research assistants have been a valiant cohort, often taking on international efforts like supporting Botnar's evidence to action philanthropic framework, connecting the research agendas of some of the largest city networks working on energy and climate, or scoping the value of over thirty international cases of urban observatories for UN-Habitat, to name but a few. We strive to engage research assistants as equal members of our Lab and, with gratitude for this and more work, hope that this Lab role can help as a springboard for further international engagement.

Lab Research Assistants and teaching staff

- Jessie Briggs supporting the 'comparative imaginations' project

- Karan Chhibber supporting the 'urban observatories' project

- Raymon Kaur supporting the 'comparative imaginations' project

- Thomas Jacobs supporting the Fondation Botnar and SDGs projects

- Simona Castricum as Studio N instructor

- Loren Adams as Studio N instructor

- Paris Hadfield supporting the 'resilience strategies' project

- Ariana Dickey supporting the LMCF 'urban exchange' project

Finally, the work of a Lab would not be complete without external collaborators. In 2019 the Lab has already developed tight working relationships with international partners, as with colleagues from University College London as part of the KNOW program, but also at the Global Covenant of Mayors in the Innovate 4 Cities initiative. This is just a small bite of a much wider network we represent below in this report. In this spirit, the Lab launched a search and awarded five visiting fellowships for international guests, from both a practice and a current PhD researcher background, who will join Lab activities in 2020.

Overall, 2019 has been a time for growth, experimentation and collaboration for the Lab. Looking toward more consolidation in 2020, we hope to maintain the same effective and collegial sprit.

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L-R: Thomas Jacobs, Ariana Dickey, Michele Acuto, Kate Murray and Pablo Fuentenebro Alonso tackling the SDGs

Professor Ananya Roy visiting Connected Cities Lab
L-R: Karan Chhibber, Raymon Kaus, Cathy Oke, Inderlina Mateo-Babiano, Pablo Fuentenebro Alonso, Ananya Roy, Michele Acuto, Ihnji Jon, Daniel Pejic, Stephanie Butcher, Jana Perkovic and Darcy Gunning

CONNECTED CITIES — — LAB

**Melbourne
School of Design**
The University
of Melbourne

07
Annual
Report 2019

OUR MELBOURNE ENTERPRISE SENIOR FELLOW

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Dr Cathy Oke with UN Undersecretary General Maimunah Mohd Sharif

In June 2019 the Lab, with further support from the Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning, appointed **Dr Cathy Oke** to the role of Melbourne Enterprise Senior Fellow, with a special focus on the overlap between research and city leadership.

Cathy has embraced the international ethos of the Lab and shown leadership in strengthening the Lab's work in environmentally-oriented research of clear international outreach. This was embodied by hosting the "Cities With Nature" public forum at Melbourne Town Hall, on the sidelines of a policy and practice paper writing workshop with Professor Thomas Elmqvist, from the Stockholm Resilience Centre and colleagues from University of Melbourne, RMIT, Swinburne University, Resilient Melbourne, The Nature Conservancy and City of Melbourne.

Building on Cathy's leadership of the Innovate4Cities project, a major part of the year was her participation in the United Nations UNFCCC COP25 summit on climate change in Madrid, Spain, in capacity as research and innovation advisor to the Global Covenant of Mayors, with high level roles as speaker along with major international figures in urban and climate policy like UN Undersecretary General Maimunah Mohd Sharif and Patrick Child, European Commission Deputy Director General for Research and Innovation.

Cathy has represented both the Lab and the University of Melbourne at the inaugural meeting of the Global Urban Institute Network at University of Toronto, building on the nascent Melbourne-Manchester-Toronto partnership and leading toward further collaborations in 2020. Cathy has interpreted her role proactively in driving the development of the Lab and initiated development of an "Indigenous Informed Cities" strategy for the Connected Cities Lab to engage more responsibly and supportively with questions of indigenous knowledge.

Innovate4Cities

What knowledge do cities need to meet their climate action ambitions?

Dr Cathy Oke speaking at the United Nations Climate Change Conference

Innovate4Cities, a program of the **Global Covenant of Mayors (GCoM)**, is a city-focused research and innovation initiative enabling cities to take accelerated and ambitious climate action by addressing critical data, innovation, and technology gaps. The GCoM is a global coalition of over 10,000 cities in 135 countries addressing climate change by pledging to cut greenhouse gas emissions and prepare for the future impacts of climate change. By providing core support for Innovate4Cities, a flagship initiative of GCoM, we are helping build a roadmap to generate the knowledge, tools, partnerships and funding cities need to meet their climate action ambition, at the speed and scale required.

In 2019, the Connected Cities Lab has been developing the research strategy for the Technical Working Group of GCoM's Innovate4Cities initiative and will continue to do so in 2020.

Highlight

On Monday 9 December, Dr Cathy Oke spoke at the United Nations UNFCCC climate summit (COP25) about how cities can better engage with National governments on research and innovation, on a panel discussion titled Scaling up action through research and innovation, moderated by Patrick Child, European Commission Deputy Director General for Research and Innovation. The session was part of a dedicated day of GCoM activities at COP25 that put Innovate4Cities under the spotlight in international conversations on climate action.

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CITIES —
— LAB

**Melbourne
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The University
of Melbourne

8

Annual
Report 2019

CONNECTED
CITIES —
— LAB

**Melbourne
School of Design**
The University
of Melbourne

9

Annual
Report 2019

OUR GLOBAL COLLABORATIONS

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PUTTING THE 'INTERNATIONAL' IN PRACTICE

2019 has been a busy year of networking for the Lab. The focus of our activities has principally been on grounding our major partnerships, as well as project-specific connections, whilst at the same time testing new grounds where to learn and engage with urban thinking and practice. Behind all of this lays a network of collaborations that explicitly seeks to engage as equals (learning from and listening to) urban stakeholders in the Global South and North alike.

North America

- Chicago Council on Global Affairs
- University of Chicago Mansueto Institute
- New York - Open Society Foundations
- Los Angeles - C40 Climate Leadership Group
- Philadelphia - University of Pennsylvania

South and Central America

- Havana - CUJAE
- San Jose - FLACSO
- Lima - PCUP
- Buenos Aires - CARI

South/East Asia

- Bangalore - Indian Institute for Human Settlements
- Bangkok - Asian Coalition for Housing Rights
- Manila - WHO regional office for the Western Pacific
- Seoul - CityNet

Australia

- Melbourne - Arup
- Melbourne - City of Melbourne
- Melbourne - Resilient Melbourne
- Melbourne - Banksia Foundation
- Melbourne - BCSD

Europe

- London - University College London the Bartlett Faculty
- London - UK Research and Innovation (GCRF)
- London - the Business of Cities
- London - the Economist
- London - Nature Research
- Bristol - City of Bristol
- Durham University Department of Geography
- University of Sheffield Urban Institute

- Manchester University Urban Institute
- Paris - International Science Council
- Brussels - European Commission
- Geneva - World Health Organisation
- Barcelona - United Cities and Local Governments
- Barcelona - CIDOB
- Bonn - ICLEI
- Basel - Fondation Botnar
- Berlin - Robert Bosch Foundation

Africa

- Freetown - City of Freetown and SLURC
- Kampala - Makerere University
- Dar es Salaam - Ardhi University
- Nairobi - UN-Habitat
- Cape Town - City of Cape Town
- Cape Town - University of Cape Town African Centre for Cities
- Johannesburg - Gauteng City Region Observatory

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— LAB

**Melbourne
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The University
of Melbourne

10

Annual
Report 2019

CONNECTED CITIES LAB-LED RESEARCH

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INFORMING URBAN GOVERNANCE

City Networks

The networked frontier of city leadership

In a time of uncertain national politics and shifting global markets, the new frontier of city leadership might be one that extends across boundaries, continents and geopolitical divides. Cities are now more connected than ever before on a global scale: it is hard to think of major global hubs in isolation today, whilst worldwide challenges like climate change, nationalism or economic turmoil affect cities big and small irrespective of state borders. This is a frontier that is increasingly tangible, as cities mobilise to form partnerships with peers in what have been called "city networks". The Lab is leading the international conversation on, as much as of, city networks by providing a snapshot of the international landscape of formalized city networking. This includes a major international review of over 200 city networks of national, regional and international focus, detailing trends and challenges to these activities over the last century and looking at major drivers of change in the way city networks operate today.

Science and the Future of Cities

The networked frontier of city leadership

If cities are central to life on Earth, knowledge about our planet from an urban perspective is central to the integrity of present and future living conditions. Yet responding effectively to contemporary city challenges requires a step change in both scientific capacity and science-policy collaboration.

Numerous calls after the UN Habitat III conference in 2016, and its 'New Urban Agenda', noted how this step change is far from happening, with substantial hindrances in both academia and policy. A wider and more action-oriented conversation is urgently needed. This ethos was at the heart of the establishment, between April 2017 and December 2018, of an independent and **international Expert Panel on "Science and the future of cities" endorsed by Nature Sustainability** – Nature's new interdisciplinary journal. The Panel gathered twenty-nine experts in contemporary urban scholarship from across disciplines and perspectives ranging from STEM disciplines, to social sciences and arts/humanities. Panellists were tasked to survey the challenge of science-policy interactions in cities today, and the issue of developing a greater collaboration across academia, or even an 'urban science', that can enable more effective interfaces between research and practice. The Panel's open access report, Science and the Future of Cities, offers an overview of the key challenges, messages and recommendations emerging from the Panel's deliberations, highlighting pathways for reform in science and policy.

This international expert panel saw several internationally visible events marking the delivery and launch of its report Science and the Future of Cities. The 2018 Singapore World Cities Summit Nature Research and Springer hosted a special event panel to commemorate the launch of the report, moderated by the chief editor of Nature sustainability Monica Contestabile and featured Prof Michele Acuto, Prof Xuemei Bai from the Australian National University and City of Melbourne deputy Mayor Arron Wood in conversation about what makes for an informed city. Likewise, a panel at the 9th UN World Urban Forum in Kuala Lumpur saw a discussion between Prof Nick Tyler of UCL, Dr Charles Ebikeme of the International Science council and Prof Luis Bettencourt of the University of Chicago debating the applicability of the panel's recommendations.

L-R: Monica Contestabile, Arron Wood, Xuemei Bai and Michele Acuto

CONNECTED
CITIES –
– LAB

**Melbourne
School of Design**
The University
of Melbourne

11
Annual
Report 2019

City Resilience Strategies

City actions contributing to resilient urban futures

Resilience has been a key theme in urban governance over the last decade. Accomplice major natural disasters like hurricane Sandy or international programs like the Rockefeller foundation's 100 Resilient Cities initiative (100RC), resilience has been an important driver of urban policy and action. But at what scale? Drawing on a database of actions being undertaken by cities involved in the 100RC network, we analyse and compare the characteristics of actions set out in city resilience strategies developed through the 100RC program according to a range of attributes including lead actor, timescale, focus, geographical scale, impact metrics and financing. Importantly, we consider how the initiative frames resilience, whether and how the initiative is systemically scaling up its impacts, and the city networks evident in collaboration, learning and benchmarking between cities. Through this research, we aim to build a clearer picture of global city resilience activity and to better understand and evaluate the drivers and scope of those actions.

Cities and the UN

What place do cities have in the United Nations?

The role that cities play in a number of challenges facing the world, such as poverty, resilience, economy and sustainability, both as the source of global problems and a possible key part of their solutions, has been increasingly acknowledged by the United Nations, not least with a New Urban Agenda and a specific cities-focused Sustainable Development Goal. Yet what role do cities and city leaders have within a multilateral system devised by and mainly for states? How are they engaged in the workings of UN and how are they recognised? What shape is 'global urban governance' taking? This project looks at the 'place' of cities in the United Nations system, analysing their recognition in formal frameworks, the types of city-UN engagements and the possibilities for this 'glocal' connection. The project highlights the vast variety of recognition of both 'urban issues' and 'cities', as international actors, within the UN system and aims to offer more in-depth and systematic understanding of the role of cities in global governance.

City Diplomacy

Do cities need foreign policies?

City Diplomacy has been defined as the conduct of international relations by legitimate representatives of local governments. With a lineage that goes back historically to the renaissance at least, and with a mounting global landscape of international urban action on the likes of climate change and inequality, it might be today a commonplace activity in cities the world over. Developed in collaboration between the Lab and the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, an internationally recognized public affairs think tank, this project investigates the capacity of cities to engage in international relations. If cities are now more connected than ever before on a global scale, local governments are not just spectators of this networked age. Cities are actively forging links across borders, taking part in setting the international agenda, and shifting the landscape of urban politics from local to increasingly global. City diplomacy is and must become a strategic activity for cities worldwide if they are to remain relevant in the new global order: the goal of this project is put tangible evidence to this need and offer a global viewpoint as to the international operate of cities. To get do so, the project is exploring city diplomacy strategies, structures, expertise, and possibilities in an increasingly 'urban' age. It builds on a discussion paper that involved survey 26 global cities in 2018 and aims at an international review of 52 major metropolises in both Global North and South, highlighting capacities, challenges and unique opportunities for cities to, more strategically, internationalize their urban governance approaches.

The Lab and the Chicago Council ran two exploratory workshops on 'city diplomacy' both in Kuala Lumpur, first at 9th session of the UN World Urban Forum in February 2018 and then at the Localising the SDGs Summit of CityNet, the major city network in the Asia-Pacific, in July 2019.

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CITIES –
– LAB

**Melbourne
School of Design**
The University
of Melbourne

12

Annual
Report 2019

Comparative Imaginations

How do cities think of eachother?

In an increasingly connected and urbanised age, cities are inevitably asked to pay attention to each other. As they seek a place on the world stage, cities not only draw inspiration from each other but also see themselves in competition with each other. Facilitating this competitive perspective is the proliferation of city benchmarking studies that seek to compare and assess the relative position of cities all over the world against increasingly numerous criteria. Despite a mounting interest in comparative analysis in academia little is known beyond anecdotally about the tangible impact of these 'comparative gestures' not only in urban policymaking and the development directions set by city leaders, but in terms of the 'urban imaginary' these gestures provide. The Lab's pilot program on Comparative Imagination seeks to systematically and empirically further academic understanding of the changing imaginary of 'cities in a world of cities'.

Originally developed in consultation with **the Economist Intelligence Unit** (EIU), the project is run in collaboration with **The Business of Cities**, a London-based strategic consultancy firm. It aims to reflect on the changing imaginary of 'cities in a world of cities'. Developed as a pilot project geared toward developing an initial insight onto these issues, the project unfolds over ten months to offer an initial agenda-setting analysis of these themes and open up a broader, more evidence-based, discussion on the impact and role of benchmarking exercises in shaping the international comparative approach of cities in the Global North and South. It engages **Bristol City Council in the UK and the City of Cape Town in South Africa** to ground-truth the international review of 'city rankings' conducted with The Business of Cities, and open up an agenda for a more proactive role for academia and cities to set the tone of international city benchmarking.

To set the project's conversation with cities and scholars, the Lab and The Business of Cities teams published a Scientific American op-ed in in July 2019 to argue as to "why city rankings matter".

Environment Politics Beyond Environment

How can environment politics go beyond the essentialist morality of 'protecting nature'?

This project looks at the mainstream-isation process of the "green agenda" and how cities approach engagement with those who are not necessarily interested in 'nature' or 'the environment'. It considers the role of culture and linguistic articulation in this process of engagement and how the popularisation of the 'resilience' concept can contribute to pursuing a more socially and ecologically responsible urban agenda.

The project is set to deliver two monographs for Pluto Press and Palgrave MacMillan, along with a series of peer reviewed articles, discussing the ways in which nature is articulated in and for urban governance.

Highlight

In 2019 we undertook fieldwork in Tulsa, Darwin, Cleveland (June - July) and Cape Town (November), identifying these as cities not extensively covered by the mainstream academia

Tulsa and Darwin were chosen for their territorial (i.e., state-level) economic dependency on extracting natural resources (e.g., the oil, natural gas, and mining industries). Such an economic dependency creates a specific political context where it is not easy to initiate a conversation using words such as "the environment," "nature," or "ecology." This research revealed urban planners and environmental activists in these two cities—who fundamentally acknowledge the impacts of climate change on the economic and social functioning of their cities—developed a special set of strategies to engage with a broader range of audiences whose political spectrum varies drastically given their regional political economic contexts.

Despite vastly different political contexts, Cleveland and Cape Town share important characteristics that can reveal the realities of what it is like to pursue pro-environment initiatives especially under the heightened pressure of urban poverty and inequality. Above all, both of them suffer from high poverty rates, which obliges them to chase after further economic development and investments. Such aspirations for economic boost (for the purpose of job creation) are also embedded in these two cities' efforts to be more 'green' (e.g., going carbon neutral or adopting nature-based solutions to flood mitigation). Both cities also suffer from spatial segregation of poverty and unequal disinvestment. As one of the major 'rust-belt' cities, Cleveland had to endure a drastic economic downturn after post-industrialization, including exodus of manufacture jobs and population. Similarly, Cape Town carries the historical legacy of apartheid in its physical form, where the white inhabitants occupy the scenic hillside areas along the coastline in the west while the majority of non-white citizens reside in townships in the east.

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CITIES —
— LAB

**Melbourne
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The University
of Melbourne

13
Annual
Report 2019

**The city as group agent in global migration governance –
Lab PhD project by Daniel Pejic**

Recognising the significant impact of 21st century global challenges on urban environments, city leaders are increasingly engaging with political affairs at the international level in order to achieve outcomes for their local communities. This phenomenon has been occurring across a range of diverse policy areas including climate, health and recently, international migration. The focus on migration is unsurprising considering that cities are the primary destinations for international migrants and, despite the often-contested politics of migration at national levels, cities are often responsible for delivering the main support services to new migrants and assisting them to integrate into local communities. Notwithstanding the visible advocacy of high-profile mayors in global fora on migration, there is a limited understanding of the way city agency in this policy area has developed, or its impact on international processes and the cities themselves. This research project seeks to address this lacuna through a comparative case study analysis of two cities that have been strong advocates for locally led, inclusive migration policy, Bristol and Montreal. The research aims to understand how local governance approaches to international migration have developed in these cities, with a focus on the range of public, private and NGO actors operating at different scales that influence local approaches. Further, utilising a theory of group agency, it seeks to understand how the intentions and behaviours of these varied actors are combined through functions of aggregation to create a holistic, if incomplete, unitary city agent in migration politics. Finally, the research seeks to understand the impact of Bristol and Montreal's engagement with global migration governance and, in turn, the impact it has had on the respective cities.

Form Follows Finance: Market-Based Housing Innovation in Times of Financialization - Lab PhD project by Jana Perkovic

Financialisation of housing has created a global housing market where, previously, there had only been strictly localised, at best national, mortgage programs. In economic theory, financialisation refers to the relatively straight-forward process of capital moving from investment into the production of material goods to investment into financial instruments (from the secondary to the quaternary sector); as the profits in the quaternary sector are much higher, the process of financialisation gradually distances finance from the material. It is not clear to what extent new forms of housing have been enabled by the emergence of innovative financial instruments, and to what extent has innovation appeared as a resistance to the perceived commodification of housing. Do these new housing projects resist financialisation, or do they roll with it; do they curb it, dodge it, surf on its waves of newly released finance? They do appear to be productively collocated: the most innovative new housing forms are appearing in cities experiencing the most severe affordability

crisis, such as Melbourne and Berlin. This study will prepare an in-depth analysis of four new housing products in three cities that have felt the effect of the financialisation of housing. Many cities have seen the influx of international capital into housing markets, and significant shifts in house prices. However, the responses have been distinct and quite unique. This research will attempt to provide some fine-grained studies of emerging housing phenomena in a way that elucidates their working. By doing so, it will attempt to make a contribution to our knowledge of how financialisation of housing operates in different urban contexts. Methodologically, it will attempt to articulate a multi-scalar methodology for analysing a multi-scalar phenomenon, which should prove useful to built environment disciplines wishing to engage with global finance flows. Essentially, this research attempts to use what is fundamentally a design approach – mapping of a building with its programs and services – but in an expanded way, accounting for international finance flows and human decision-making, as a way to bridge scales in analysing financialisation.

States by Other Means: Global Markets, Sovereignty Bargains and the Changing Politics of Extra-State Space - Lab PhD project by Darcy Gunning

In recent decades, the changing processes of statehood under global capitalism have attracted considerable scholarly attention. These literatures have unsettled state-centric epistemologies and made more complex how we now theorise global political economics. These debates have also engaged in a concerted reterritorialisation of political economic theory. Critical observations of the changing nature of sub-national delineations of space, including cities, urbanised regions and everything in between, have become increasingly important to how we view the contemporary world. This theorising has largely been confined to examining the formal mechanisms by which 'state space' is configured: urban policy, state facilitated capitalist development and urban change. However, political economic processes have always been governed simultaneously by formal and informal articulations of state power. Recognising this, this thesis seeks to contribute to the literature on urban political economics and global governance by examining the role of special economic zones, privatised cities and emerging transnational urban sites as elements of a rapidly proliferating logic governing the contemporary state system: 'extra-state space'. It argues that an intentional 'legislating-out' of territory within contemporary states into delineated and deliberately flexible state-spatial areas has occurred through a process of 'sovereignty bargaining'. In the process, these areas have become fundamental political technologies of contemporary statecraft and the bedrock of a formalised, state led legislative architecture that has been used to direct global capitalism.

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— LAB

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of Melbourne

14

Annual
Report 2019

OUR EDUCATION AND ENGAGEMENT

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BUILDING INTERNATIONAL CAPACITY

The 'action research' and applied nature of the Connected Cities Lab lends itself naturally to couple scholarly investigation with education and engagement in shaping the very field it aims to study. This has meant an explicit program of initiatives that are seeking to link academic research to capacity building and policymaking. At the end of its first year, the Lab has already established a series of international networks geared toward this end and spanning from research and community mobilisation, to capacity building for international organisations and strategic advice to major philanthropies. However, the Lab's capacity building rapidly developed locally in Melbourne too, playing a role in the Studio offer of the Melbourne School of Design with two urban planning graduate studios, and paving the way to the roll of out of further graduate and professional training on city leadership.

Dr Stephanie Butcher (far left) in Sierra Leone.

Knowledge in Action for Urban Equality (KNOW)

Can we co-produce more equal cities?

KNOW is a response to growing inequalities in cities. Three quarters of cities are now more unequal than in 1996. Inequality directly impacts the ability of cities to deliver prosperity and resilience for all their citizens.

In both the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the UN-Habitat New Urban Agenda, addressing growing inequality is a priority. Urban equality is a multidimensional experience for urban dwellers encompassing access to income and services, recognition of diverse social identities, and inclusion in decisions that affect them. To address these challenges, with support from **UK Department for International Development** and the **UK's**

Grand Challenge Research Fund, the AUD $12m 'Knowledge in Action for Urban Equality' program ('KNOW') aims to develop transformative native research for urban equality, build greater research capacity and work directly with key partners to enhance city progress towards national and global goals on urban equality. The KNOW consortium comprises of researchers based at UCL, University of Sheffield, Durham University, University of Melbourne, IIHS (Indian Institute of Human Settlements), Ardhi University, and FLACSO (Latin-American Social Sciences Institute). KNOW will work with local academic and community-based partners in Sierra Leone, Uganda and Tanzania in Africa; in Cuba, Peru, Costa Rica, and Colombia in Latin America; and in India as well as with the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights in South-East Asia.

Highlights

In February 2019 the KNOW program held its first KNOW annual workshop in Havana, Cuba, gathering the vast KNOW network of city partners and academic institutions for a week of busy co-production activities and discussions on urban equality. Hosted by the **Technological University of Havana** (CUJAE) the workshop afforded both an opportunity for reflection and a launching of numerous strands of work within this program, including Melbourne's focus on the 'international' dimension of knowledge translation. It was also an opportunity to learn from the experience of advocacy, research and planning on the ground in Cuba from the local KNOW team. Following this, in June 2019, KNOW Research Fellow Stephanie Butcher was in Freetown along with UCL colleagues for further fieldwork. The visit presented an opportunity to interact with the local platforms of stakeholders that had been activated at both the community and city-wide scales to work with the Sierra Leone Urban Research Centre (SLURC) in advancing the urban equality agenda. The visit was also an opportunity to participate in the conference "Urban Transformations in Sierra Leone" organised by SLURC.

In November 2019, the Lab team took part in the UCLG World Congress and World Council in Durban on the 12-15th November 2019, hosting a special session on the role of "partnership for urban equality" as part of the KNOW program. Co-organised with the **Development Planning Unit (DPU)** team at **University College London** that collaborates with the Lab in "work package 4" of KNOW (focused on knowledge translation), the session featured a series of high level speakers, but also a chance for Congress participants to take part in the co-creation of a discussion on the value of partnerships for urban equality. The session examined the role and kinds of partnerships which can support the aims

CONNECTED
CITIES –
– LAB

**Melbourne
School of Design**
The University
of Melbourne

15
Annual
Report 2019

of urban equality. It engaged government officials, Mayor Yvonne Aki-Sawyerr drawing on the experiences of Freetown (Sierra Leone) and Dr Anelis María Marichal González drawing on the experience of Havana and Cuba with the New Urban Agenda. It also leveraged expert inputs from Prof Caren Levy, PI for KNOW at the DPU, Prof Jorge Peña from CUJAE (Cuba) and Prof Michele Acuto from the Lab. The panel led to round-table sessions with Jorge Peña on Cuba and Braima Koroma from the Sierra Leone Urban Research Centre (SLURC) on Freetown, chaired by Camila Cociña (UCL) and Stephanie Butcher (Melbourne). This was then tailed by a discussion chaired by Alexandre Apsan Frediani (UCL) with two discussant, William Cobbett (Director of the Cities Alliance) and Ana Falu (Board member of the Habitat International Coalition, HIC), highlighting key principles that can drive effective partnerships for urban equality, and concluded by a poem by Fatmata Shour, the City of Freetown's resident poet. The aim of the session was to delineate a set of key principles for partnerships that can support the establishment of a 'community of practice' on urban equality, to enhance the local and global attention to equality in innovative practices in urban policy and planning.

Urban Observatories

Leveraging urban data to shape cities

The growth of data within, about, and from cities has been one of the fundamental trends in contemporary urban governance. Yet who knows what about cities? A desire for urban knowledge based on the collection, analysis and interpretation of large, complex datasets innately requires platform(s) capable of performing these operations. Furthermore, data needs to become the basis for decisions about how cities are managed.

There are organisations that are designed to 'bridge' and navigate this 'knowledge transition zone' between research and decision-making. 'Urban observatories' – urban research organisations that work across policymaking and academia – have emerged as a visible, if broadly defined, class of institutions operating within this knowledge transition zone. Leveraging a well-established collaboration on question of informed city governance between University College London, UN-Habitat and the Lab, this scoping study aims to understand their role, institutional organisation, capacity and value proposition as drivers of more informed city leadership. It lays out the ground not just for international report on the 'value', shape and capacity of urban observatories, but also to drive further development in this field at both UN and city levels.

Highlight

Lab director Michele Acuto addressed the ethical challenges of mobilising urban data in a special roundtable for the 2nd session of the UN World Data Forum in Dubai in October 2018, discussing with other international experts on this theme what we can learn from the 'boundary-spanning' role of urban observatories.

FROM EVIDENCE TO ACTION: SUPPORTING PHILANTHROPY

Fondation Botnar is a Swiss-based new philanthropic organisation aimed at improving health outcomes in children and adolescents in growing urban environments around the world. As part of its global city engagement strategy, Fondation Botnar plans, over time, to support several secondary cities over the world. To aid in this mission, this project aims to support the Foundation in thinking through what makes for effective **"evidence to action" (or 'E2A')** partnerships in cities when it comes to encouraging an information-based approach to urban innovation that support the lives of children and adolescents and encourages the application of innovative technological methods. The Lab is supporting Fondation Botnar in determining what a possible action agenda built on this evidence could look like. This was set up to be a 'discovery' approach, aimed at defining key principles and actions the E2A could be based on, and completed via both an evidence review approach studying different models of evidence mobilisation in cities, as well as conducting a series of high level expert interviews with key voices in international urban policy and practice. The discovery part of the project, completed in November 2019, has rapidly opened up the stage for a 'design' phase aimed at supporting the Foundation to put principles and strategic actions identified in the discovery part of the program, into an operational plan for the E2A framework to be rolled out effectively on an international scale and with both effective evaluation processes as well as tangible capacity to drive change for the wellbeing of youth in secondary cities around the world. This phase will be aimed at making concrete principles and actions from the discovery phase into a proposal on the E2A framework action agenda and operational plan for consideration by the foundation in 2020.

Highlight

In October 2019 the Lab and Fondation Botnar hosted an international workshop in Basel gathering key inputs from international organisations, entrepreneurs and scholars, but also guidance from the Foundation's experts and Board, to shape a set of 6 core principles for effective (and equitable) mobilisation of "evidence to action" in secondary cities.

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CITIES –
– LAB

**Melbourne
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The University
of Melbourne

16

Annual
Report 2019

ENCOURAGING COSMOPOLITAN AND FORESIGHT THINKING

Cities at the heart of the future of global governance

Michele Acuto (far left)

The Global Governance Futures – Robert Bosch Foundation Multilateral Dialogues (GGF) program brings together exceptional young professionals to look ahead to the year 2035 and think of ways to better address global challenges. GGF assembled 27 professional fellows from Brazil, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Japan, South Africa, and the United States (three from each country). Over the course of nearly 18 months, the fellows participate in a series of 'dialogue' sessions, in Washington, DC, New Delhi, São Paulo, Paris and Berlin. The program is sponsored by the **Robert Bosch Foundation** and supported by the Berlin-based think tank Global Public Policy Institute with the help of three Senior Fellows and featured in 2018-19 a special track on cities and global governance with Prof Acuto as Senior Fellow.

Highlight

At the closing session of GGF, the 'cities' fellows presented the final report of the program titled Make or Break: How will Cities Shape Global Governance? At the event, Prof Acuto intervened on this theme in a conversation hosted in May 2019 at the Robert Bosch Foundation Berlin headquarters in with Andrea Coleman, director of government innovation at Bloomberg Philanthropies, in a discussion that focused on how the global landscape of urban innovation is changing and how philanthropy is driving it.

SUPPORTING WHO'S URBAN HEALTH LEADERSHIP

Through a rapid urbanisation rate, and over 54% of the population now living in urban areas, the Western Pacific region2 has been influentially shaped by cities, and health in this area of the world is not immune from these dramatic changes. Critically, cities have themselves been claiming a clear spot in the international agenda, with both clear recognition in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as well as mounting initiatives to leverage their capacity to connect across borders to deliver on global challenges more broadly and health promotion more specifically.

This was subscribed clearly by WHO in the 2016 Shanghai Declaration on Health Promotion (and its annex Mayors Consensus), but the organisation has already a well-established 30-year experience of connecting 'Healthy Cities' to deliver on joint agendas and promote city-to-city cooperation. Against this background, the Connected Cities Lab collaborated with the **World Health Organization's Western Pacific Regional Office (WPRO)** on a technical review of the progress of the Regional Framework for Urban Health in the Western Pacific 2016 –2020 and WPRO's capacity building initiatives on city engagement and leadership in the region, especially in light of the sustainable development goals.

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CITIES –
– LAB

**Melbourne
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The University
of Melbourne

17

Annual
Report 2019

LAB STUDIOS AND GRADUATE OFFER

Informing the next generation of city leaders

Studios

Part of Lab's belief better information can drive better city leadership is embodied in our effort to engage in research-led education. Even though this operational role was not originally inscribed in the initial Lab plan, in 2019 we have begun experimenting with studio teaching for graduate students of the Melbourne School of Design.

Over the last 14 months the Lab has led two studios in particular: **Studio N on "managing cities at night", and Studio R on "Urban Resilience".** These both build on current Lab research on questions of urban resilience as well as on the night-time dimension of urban governance. The studios have been run both intensively (N) and across a whole semester (R), contributing to the bi-annual MSDx graduate work exhibition hosted by the faculty and engaging with 45 students to date.

Studio N has also experimented with industry collaboration for education: over the course of its two editions (2018 and 2019) it has been delivered in collaboration with global consulting firm Arup, and in particular its Research, Lighting and Sound teams, and has looked both at comparative analysis of international case studies of night time management as well as, in 2019, specific application to the City of Melbourne.

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Graduate education

In June 2019 the Lab was also awarded (PIs Drs Jon and Mateo-Babiano) a grant from the University's Learning and Teaching Initiative (LTI) to develop a graduate-level intensive course focused on "City Leadership" and available for intake from 2020 at the Melbourne School of Design (PLAN90003).

The subject focuses on city leadership, the institutions and trends that underpin it, and a set of strategic skills needed to deliver effective urban governance in the wake of these international challenges. The business of managing 'who gets what, when and how' in cities is becoming an increasingly complex and international job that goes beyond the purview of locally oriented urban managers. Instead, it is intertwined with the agendas and influence of private sector, academia and community groups.

The politics and governance of cities is changing the world over: from a leadership and brokering role played by private actors, the emergence of entrepreneurial and global cities, to different dynamics in emerging regions in the South, and the importance of international agendas and geopolitics in influencing the future of cities. The course offers students a space where to engage with these changes, learn practical leadership skills, and do so in collaboration with a 'resident' international organisation (e.g. a UN agency) collaborating with University lecturers in the delivery of the course content.

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CONNECTED
CITIES –
– LAB

**Melbourne
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The University
of Melbourne

18
Annual
Report 2019

EVENTS AND OUTREACH

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In 2019 the Lab has taken an explicit strategy of collaborating in the delivery of discussion-oriented events rather than hosting large forums. Staying true to its core mission to 'internationalise' urban research, the Lab has sought to encourage events and outreach that is capacity-building and knowledge-exchange oriented, centred as much as possible on creating stages within major international contexts where to open up a progressive discussion on the future of cities, and taking part collaboratively in the global urban conversation. Central to this have been a set of engagements both with and within major international fora in the North (e.g. Chicago) and South (e.g. Penang). Equally,

Below we offer a snapshot of some of the highlights of this year's events and engagements.

CHICAGO PRITZKER FORUM ON GLOBAL CITIES

Since 2015, the Pritzker Forum on Global Cities, co-hosted by the **Chicago Council on Global Affairs and the Financial Times**, has featured an internationally visible dialogue to examine strategic policy interventions cities can use to address the pressing challenges. Since its very early days in 2018, the Lab has been a knowledge partner of the forum, providing input on themes, content and facilitating discussions. In July 2018 this begun with working group aligned to the 'city diplomacy' project by the Council and the Lab, featuring a moderated roundtable with Denis Coderre, former mayor of Montreal, Octavi de la Varga, secretary general of the Metropolis network, Sheila Foster from Georgetown University and Lucy Turnbull, Chief Commissioner of the Greater Sydney commission. In 2019 the Lab and the Council then convened again one of the Forum's workshops to focus on the role of the UN Sustainable Development Goals in cities, with interventions from Penny Abeywardena, New York City Chief Commissioner for International Affairs, mayor Kirk Caldwell from the City of Honolulu, Eugenie Birch from the University of Pennsylvania, Kris Hartley from the Education University of Hong Kong, and Mauricio Rodas, former mayor of Quito. The SDGs workshop resulted in a working paper issued by the Council in December 2019 and foregrounding the Lab and Council's joint event at the 10th UN World Urban Forum in 2020.

VISITING SIERRA LEONE

Dr Stephanie Butcher (third from left) in meeting the Mayor of Freetown (centre).

In June, KNOW Research Fellows Emmanuel Osuteye (WP1), Camila Cociña and Stephanie Butcher (WP4) were in Freetown, Sierra Leone for fieldwork. The visit was a follow up on the initial scoping work conducted in October 2018, and presented an opportunity to interact with the local platforms of stakeholders that had been activated at both the community and city-wide scales to work with the **Sierra Leone Urban Research Centre (SLURC)** in advancing the urban equality agenda. The visit was also an opportunity to participate in the conference "Urban Transformations in Sierra Leone" organised by SLURC.

In partnership with the SLURC team, two workshops were conducted in the informal settlements of Dworzark and Cockle Bay to interact with the respective community platforms (appropriately called the "Community Learning Platform" – CoLP). The cardinal aims of the workshops were:

- To assess changes in the objectives and expectation of the platforms for the KNOW project;

- Understand further community mobilisation strategies and spaces for capacity building;

- Assess and understand the potential of communities to leverage on agency, knowledge and experiences to draw on external support, particularly from international development agencies;

- And to document the process and approaches of co-production, highlighting community perspectives on the value and utility of their knowledge

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CITIES –
– LAB

**Melbourne
School of Design**
The University
of Melbourne

19

Annual
Report 2019

Both platforms albeit in their initial stages of regularising meetings, had made some significant progress in expanding the criteria for the selection of representatives, in that process ensuring that they accounted for the social diversity of constituents within the communities, including gender, disability, employment and different age groups.

The KNOW and SLURC research teams furthermore paid visits to selected members of the established Freetown KNOW "City Learning Platform" (CiLP). This was to continue the dialogue on the objectives of the platform in advancing an Urban Equality Agenda in Freetown. During the visits, in-depth interviews were conducted with representatives of the Ministry of Land, Country Planning and Environment, the Centre for Dialogue on Human Settlements and Poverty Alleviation (CODOHSAPA), the Disaster Management Department (DMD), the Development Planning and Management Department of the Freetown City Council, and the leadership of the Federation of the Urban and Rural Poor (FEDURP). The interviews with these selected stakeholders were particularly useful in documenting the history and trajectory of policies, practices and events that relate to informal settlement housing and upgrading needs. As well as the observed shift in government discourse from mass evictions to "upgrade where possible, relocate where necessary".

The KNOW and SLURC teams also visited the Mayor of Freetown, Yvonne Aki-Sawyerr (OBE), building on the relationship the KNOW programme has developed with her office. The visit allowed us to discuss further some substantive details of how the SLURC-led City Learning Platform under KNOW, could make a meaningful contribution to the 'Transform Freetown' development agenda that is championed by the Mayor's Office. The visit also provided the opportunity for the research team to interact with a section the Transform Freetown delivery team.

The courtesy call to the Mayor also provided an opportunity for the KNOW team to discuss and invite her to participate in a session about Partnerships for Urban Equality at the next UCLG World Summit of Local and Regional Leaders, to be held on Durban South Africa in November 2019, which will be curated by KNOW.

7TH UNITED NATIONS ASIA-PACIFIC URBAN FORUM (APUF)

15 - 17 October 2019, Penang, Malaysia

Attendees of the UN's Asia Pacific Forum

Delegates across civil society, government, business, and academia gathered for the **UN's 7th Asia Pacific Urban Forum (APUF)**. Held every four to five years, it is the largest regional gathering of its kind, focused on the identification of common actions and on building partnerships to achieve sustainable urban dvelopment.

This year's APUF coincided with the launch of the Future of Asian & Pacific Cities Report, outlining the four major developmental challenges faced by the region, namely: natural resource management, climate change, disaster risk, and rising inequalities. KNOW researchers Barbara Lipietz (WP1) and Stephanie Butcher (WP4) attended with KNOW project partners Somsook Boonyabancha, Brenda Pérez-Castro, and Minh Châu Trần, from the Asian Coalition of Housing Rights (ACHR), a regional network of grassroots community organizations, NGO's and professionals actively involved with urban poor development processes in Asian cities. The ACHR Secretariat coordinated attendance of an impressive delegation of over forty grassroots leaders and civil society groups from the South-East Asian region.

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– LAB

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The University
of Melbourne

20
Annual
Report 2019

EXCHANGE VISIT WITH THE AFRICAN CENTRE FOR CITES

November 2019 African Centre for Cities at the University of Cape Town and City of Cape Town.

L-R: Darcy Gunning, Stephanie Butcher, Ihnji Jon and Michele Acuto in Cape Town

In November our researchers visited the African Centre for Cities at the **University of Cape Town (UCT)** to learn about the Centre's approach to urban studies, the challenges of research and practice and the ways in which the role of urban 'laboratories' are interpreted from a Southern Urbanism perspective. The visit included a public roundtable with Dr Stephanie Butcher, Prof Michele Acuto, Prof Edgar Pieterse (director of the African Centre for Cities) and Prof Winnie Mitullah (from the University of Nairobi), discussing the challenges of today's 'global urban agendas' in respect to urban equality and building on the Lab's work in the KNOW program. A more detailed outline of the session is available below.

GLOBAL AGENDAS AND URBAN EQUALITY: EXPLORING SYNTHESIS, CONNECTIONS AND CONTESTATIONS

While great strides have been made in recent years to help place the urban more firmly on international development agendas, questions remain as to how and in what ways global policy can be operationalised at an urban scale. Bringing together leading thinkers on urbanisation this moderated discussion will explore the scalar connections between global processes and policy agendas and their material, political and social impacts across urban environments in the global South.

The visit also included a workshop ran by the Lab's team, including Dr Ihnji Jon and Darcy Gunning, and the City of Cape Town's Economic Opportunities & Asset Management Directorate, focusing on the value and challenges of city benchmarking as part of the Lab's "comparative imaginations" project.

UCLG WORLD CONGRESS AND WORLD COUNCIL, DURBAN

Durban, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) network

The Lab team took part in the **UCLG World Congress and World Council in Durban** on the 12-15th November 2019, hosting a special session on the role of "partnership for urban equality" as part of the KNOW program. Co-organised with the Development Planning Unit (DPU) team at University College London that collaborates with the Lab in "work package 4" of KNOW (focused on knowledge translation), the session featured a series of high level speakers, but also a chance for Congress participants to take part in the co-creation of a discussion on the value of partnerships for urban equality.

Hosted by the Knowledge in Action for Urban Equality (KNOW) programme, which is led by UCL, the session examined the role and kinds of partnerships which can support the aims of urban equality. This session was opened with a with presentations by two government officials, Mayor Yvonne Aki-Sawyerr drawing on the experiences of Freetown (Sierra Leone) and Dr Anelis María Marichal González drawing on the experience of Havana and Cuba with the New Urban Agenda. Prof Caren Levy, PI for KNOW at the DPU, Prof Jorge Peña from CUJAE (Cuba) and Prof Michele Acuto from the Lab. The panel led to round-table sessions with Jorge Peña on Cuba and Braima Koroma from the Sierra Leone Urban Research Centre (SLURC) on Freetown, chaired by Camila Cociña (UCL) and Stephanie Butcher (Melbourne). This was then tailed by a discussion chaired by Alexandre Apsan Frediani (UCL) with two discussant, William Cobbett (Director of the Cities Alliance) and Ana Falu (Board member of the Habitat International Coalition, HIC), highlighting key principles that can drive effective partnerships for urban equality, and concluded by a poem by Fatmata Shour, the City of Freetown's resident poet. The aim of the session was to delineate a set of key principles for partnerships that can support the establishment of a 'community of practice' on urban equality, to enhance the local and global attention to equality in innovative practices in urban policy and planning.

Michele Acuto (far right) at the UCLG World Congress and World Council

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CITIES —
— LAB

Melbourne
School of Design
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of Melbourne

21

Annual
Report 2019

GREAT POWERS AND URBANIZATION PROJECT (GPUP) WORKSHOP ON CITIES, GEOPOLITICS, AND INTERNATIONAL LEGAL ORDER

5-6 September 2019, Perry World House, Pennsylvania, USA.

The Great Powers and Urbanization Project, or GPUP, is a collaboration of global leaders in international and urban affairs: the Connected Cities Lab, the University of Pennsylvania's Perry World House, the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, and the Argentine Council for International Relations (Consejo Argentino para las Relaciones Internacionales).
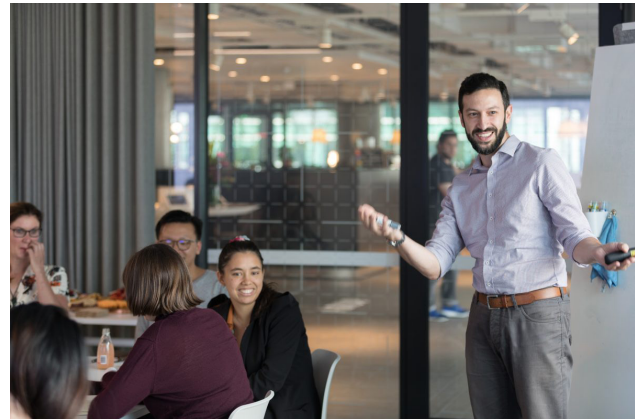
In September, we travelled to Philidelphia for the inaugural GPUP workshop hosted at Perry World House, the University of Pennsylvania's global affairs hub. This workshop explored the nexus of urbanisation and great powers, past and present, as well as national urban policies and national security strategies.

The workshop also focused on how cities are engaging international law and legal institutions, identifying the potential implications of cities' expanded role in global affairs in creating and changing international legal norms. Finally, it examined how cities are shaping, and being shaped by, great power politics.

The second GPUP workshop will be hosted in Melbourne by the Lab in 2020 and will focus on urban geopolitics from 'off the map': emerging cities and emerging countries.

MELBOURNE DESIGN WEEK WORKSHOP: WHERE DOES MY RECYCLING GO?

19 March 2019, Arup Melbourne

Does our waste still go to China? What can and cannot get recycled? Does our recycling even get recycled and what can we do about it? In March 2019, **hosted by Assemble and Arup Melbourne**, Prof Michele Acuto led a workshop on the global waste economy, and where the yellow bin fits in.

The workshop was part of the 'Circular Thinking: Designing Out Waste' is a series of hands-on Melbourne Design Week events to communicate the principles of circular economy. Starting from individual choices to encompass the global waste system, Assemble Papers and Arup bring experts from across product design, urban design and urban management to guide participants through the steps towards zero waste - designers, decision-makers, and citizens.

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22

Annual
Report 2019

CITIES, COFFEES, CHATS SERIES

2019 saw us testing new models for communicating accessible research and at the same time continuing to do so in a discussion setting, not simply by broadcasting information. The goal of the "cities, coffees, chats" series, then, is that of presenting in an accessible format a space for taking stock of the role of cities in some of today's major global challenges. It does so by convening, around a cup of coffee or two, experts from different fields of research, and doing so in a discursive format that is produced by the Lab and MSD in podcast format for wider audiences, whilst allowing for a more informal conversation on the day in Melbourne. Two conversations kicked off this format in 2019, focusing on questions that emerge from talking of cities and the SDGs, and from discussing cities and infectious disease. These are set to be followed, in 2020, by a set of further conversations on cities and diplomats, climate change, and data, to name but three of the upcoming topics.

coffee with… Susan Parnell and Thomas Elmqvist: Sustainable Development Goals and the 'global agenda'

24 October 2019, University of Melbourne

The last few years have seen cities stepping up to a global role in sustainable development, climate action, resilience, biodiversity and more. At the same time, the United Nations has progressively recognised cities in major processes like the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Paris Agreement on climate change and many others. Some argued we have seen the emergence of a 'global' urban agenda. But where is this agenda at? And can an 'urban planet' with over 4 billion people living in cities really be sustainable?

October 2019 saw the first of our caffeinated conversations taking place between professors Susan Parnell, Global Challenges Professor of Human Geography at the University of Bristol, and Thomas Elmqvist, Professor in Natural Resource Management at the Stockholm Resilience Centre.

In the discussion Parnell and Elmqvist highlighted the inherent tensions embedded in global agendas like the SDGs, the data and capacity gaps and the critical role of scholars in developed and developing countries to advance equitable urban development whilst seeking to transform the often-siloed ways in which we speak of cities.

coffee with… Roger Keil & Jodie McVernon: a conversation on cities and disease

13 December 2019, University of Melbourne

The urbanisation of our planet, and the globalisation of our cities into an increasingly complex web of cross-continental connections, has been having dramatic effects on the wellbeing of those who inhabit this increasingly 'urban' world. Cities have been driving positive improvements in health but are also raising critical challenges. Viruses, not just people, travel across increasingly porous borders. Much of planetary health might now be inextricably linked to the future of cities. From the SARS, scare of 2002 quickly spreading from China to Canada, through the 'swine flu' of H1N1, to recent Ebola and Zika crises, viruses seem to have become a visceral challenge to the future of our society.

December 2019 saw the second of the Lab's coffee conversations this time taking place between Roger Keil, Chair in Global Sub/Urban Studies at York University and author of *Networked Disease: Emerging Infections in the Global Cities*, and Jodie McVernon, Professor and Director of Epidemiology, at the Doherty Institute of the University of Melbourne and the Royal Melbourne Hospital. In the discussion, Keil and McVernon tackled issues of health equality and information, the intertwined nature of urban and wellbeing processes, and the challenges to the current capacity to manage pandemic threats at a global scale with massive urban differences across continents.

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23

Annual
Report 2019

SNAPSHOT: TWITTER ACCOUNT

Since its kick-off, the Lab's Twitter account has been one of the main means for Lab communications to the wider urban community and general interested public. @networkedcities now accounts for **11,630 followers** with a wide geographic outreach across countries and interests.

SEED FUNDING COLLABORATIONS

MSSI Future Cities Cluster 2019 seed funding: the Lab collaborated with the Melbourne Sustainable Society Institute for its regular seed funding support for projects that build on the objectives of MSSI's Future Cities Research Cluster. A special **joint Lab-MSSI grant** of $10,000 was be awarded to a project that, in addition to the core objectives of the cluster, has a strategic focus on international sustainable urban development and global urban governance. The grant was awarded to Dr Simon Batterbury (School of Geography) and Dr Derlie Mateo-Babiano (ABP Urban Planning) for a comparative evaluation of community bicycle workshops in Australia, France and UK. The project will be focusing on low carbon urban transport, individual wellbeing, community economies, and cycling cultures across these countries with various international activities.

A top-up award of up to $5,000 to the Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning (ABP) Research Development Grant, awarded to a group led by Dr Jennifer Day (ABP Urban Planning) and focused on the challenge of urban "development without displacement in the south pacific", supporting international engagement in Geneva at the IDMC and the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC) and at the 10th World Urban Forum.

MSSI/Lab travel awards to attend 10th World Urban Forum in February 2020. Six early-to-mid career researchers from PhD to level C have been awarded travel grants of up to $3000 to support their attendance to the WUF in Abu Dhabi as part of a University of Melbourne delegation and supported by the Lab team attending and running a number of events at the Forum.

OTHER ENGAGEMENTS AND EVENTS

August 2018 DFAT Queensland and Griffith workshop on city diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific keynote

September 2018 Georgia State University workshop in Cape Town on the "urban university" following on the publication of special forum on the role of universities in Singapore in Cities

October 2018 RMIT National Urban Policy writeshop and release of official UN guide

October 2018 2nd UN World Data Forum panel and address on the ethics of data

October 2018 Global Parliament of Mayors summit in Bristol and panel on the role of city networks in advancing urban agendas internationally

February 2019 role in SDGs Global Council on SDG11 in Dubai during the World Government Summit

July 2019 CityNet annual summit of the largest network of municipalities in the Asia Pacific, hosted by the CityNet secretariat and held in Kuala Lumpur, with CityNet and the Lab convening a summit session on city diplomacy

October 2019 CitiesWithNature: A Melbourne Perspective workshop hosted by the Lab with attendees from City of Melbourne and the Stockholm Resilience Centre

October 2019 Bristol Festival of the Future City panels on data and on democracy

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24

Annual
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PUBLICATIONS

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Rapoport, E., Acuto, M., & Grcheva, L. (2019). *Leading Cities: A Global Review of City Leadership*. UCL Press.

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25

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In the Black magazine (Oct 2019) – "the pros and cons of moving capital cities" interview

Elephant in the Lab magazine (May 2019) – "science for cities: overcoming boarders" interview

SBS News (Apr 2019) – SBS News "what will it take to move Indonesia's capital?" interview

Herald Sun (Apr 2019) – "do reusable coffee cups help the environment?" interview

ABC News (Mar 2019) – ABC News "will data centers end up eating our cities?" report

ABC Radio (Feb 2019) – Talking Point "nighttime economy" episode

BBC Radio (Jan. 2018) – Tomorrow's World "pandemic cities" episode

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