

complex relationship is that, in the Australian complex, the fundamental question is commonly posed in the reverse manner to that in Britain and North America. Rather than ask whether there is a decline in social deviance with rehousing, characteristically through slum clearance, the concern in Australia seems to be whether the establishment of public housing estates and their common lack of community facilities promotes higher incidences of deviant behaviour.

The simple answer is that in all national contexts deviancy exists before and after rehousing. It may well be slightly ameliorated by improved housing conditions, or it may well be exacerbated through lack of recreation facilities, but the critical point is that there is no simple connection between environment and behaviour. Deviancy reflects wider social considerations and fundamental social inequalities, and it requires multi-faceted explanations and solutions. Even if inadequate community facilities do contribute to delinquency in areas of public housing, the provision of adequate recreation facilities will not in itself eliminate deviant behaviour in housing estates which are isolated and stigmatized. More fundamental questions of social inequality must be tackled if any real success is to be achieved in this field.

The score-sheet for social consequences of public housing policies suggests that while government housing sharply reduces social inequalities of access to decent shelter at reasonable cost, planning policies related to the location and nature of public housing estates may exacerbate other elements of inequality. This reflects not so much on the housing authorities themselves, but on broader government and welfare agencies which have failed to recognize and come to grips with the multi-faceted nature of social need and social inequality.

Fundamental social inequalities explain why there is need for public housing at all. Within a framework of governmental concern for housing, and within the financial constraints facing public housing authorities, distinctive housing policies and planning practices have developed. These policies and practices may, inadvertently, have created further social inequalities which arise from the nature of public housing estates. As such, attention has become focused on the characteristics of housing estates, especially the problems caused by isolation, homogeneity and lack of community facilities. The 'solution' to these characteristics has tended to become the 'problem', and the more fundamental issues of a broader social inequality have been forgotten. Only when public housing policies and urban planning agencies embrace this broader framework can we hope to make any headway in long-term crime prevention.

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SOCIAL CONDITIONS IN THE INNER CITY

BY BOB GRAHAM

1. Why Concentrate on the Inner City?

All of us who live and work in urban areas have impressions about the inner parts of our cities. These impressions are largely formed by our own experience, and secondly through popular attitudes.

Our own experience is predominantly a visual one. Most of the inner city is seen as an area of ageing building stock,

changing land uses, traffic congestion, poor environment, poor quality housing, and a general appearance of neglect and decadence. Our attitudes are formed through a number of channels but popular attitudes can be summarised to include at least the following:

- the inner city is an area in which poor people live;
- the population is transient;

- *there are high proportions of migrant population;*
- *unemployment is high;*
- *crime rates are high;*
- *anti-social attitudes are prevalent;*
- *and the people who live there have less regard for the area in which they live (these impressions do not apply to some areas which have recently undergone regeneration, such as Paddington, North Adelaide or Battery Point).*

As we shall see, many of these impressions do have a basis in fact. So the inner city has come to be regarded as an area of concern by planners, bureaucrats, engineers, sociologists and other professionals who feel that they have a mission to improve living conditions. This mission encompasses many fields of practice and has resulted in redevelopment programmes, environmental improvement programmes, housing programmes, social welfare programmes and a host of other efforts motivated at least at the professional level by a concern to do something for areas of the city that are obviously seedy and run down and for the people who live in these areas.

It is ironic however, despite all of this effort over a number of decades, that our inner cities still continue to exhibit the same characteristics, that the people who live in the areas are not grateful for what is being done for them and that increasingly, inner city residents are becoming vocal and rejecting the efforts of bureaucrats, politicians and professionals to improve the lot of those who live in the inner cities. This is an interesting phenomenon and one that causes many of my colleagues much anguish. To my mind the opposition to these efforts is likely to grow and to become increasingly bitter and increasingly political as time proceeds. There is already evidence of a head-on collision between consumers of these programmes and those who provide them.

These programmes and the conflicts they have generated, together with the popular impressions that are held about the inner city are the reasons why it is so important to concentrate our thinking to these areas. Recently in the U.K. four major studies have been completed on the inner areas of Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham and London. In each of these studies the common conclusion was that it is in the inner city that all of the symptoms of social and economic disadvantage reached their peak. This means that to any person who is concerned about welfare and the social condition of the population, the inner city's the area where we can best understand what has gone wrong and what sort of effort is required to bring about the required changes.

I mentioned above the effect of popular impressions and I place a misconception formed from those popular impressions at the centre of the reasons why our efforts in the inner city have been so ineffectual. We observe that the inner city is physically run down as a poor environment. We observe that social conditions are also bad. We then assume that there is a direct causal link between these two observations. So we assume that if we improve physical conditions of those people living in the inner city either by relocating them to more pleasant surroundings or by improving the physical environment of the inner city, we shall resolve the social problems. This misconception which is not borne out in fact, forms the basis of much planning, redevelopment and social theory that has been implemented in the inner parts of our cities over the last 30 years. We implement major redevelopment schemes but we find that the crime rate does not go down. As professionals we feel upset that the recipients of our largesse have not been grateful and have not changed their anti-social ways. I believe it is the professionals, bureaucrats and the politicians who have made the mistake by not understanding what the inner city is and what is happening in these parts of the urban areas.

2. What is the Inner City?

As mentioned above there is some basis in fact for the popular impressions about social conditions in the inner suburbs of our cities. Table 1 provides some details relating to social and economic conditions in different areas of the City of Hobart. Areas A and B are the inner city suburbs of North, West and South Hobart. People living in these areas have the lowest levels of education, the lowest incomes, the greatest expenditure on housing as a proportion of income, and the highest level of dependence on private rental accommodation. In addition these areas have the highest proportion of single parent families, dependent population (mainly age pensioners) and the highest proportion of persons dependent upon social service payments.

The inner suburbs are characterised by predominantly low to very low income households occupying rental accommodation. Much of the accommodation is sub-standard. The areas are increasingly being given over to commercial and industrial uses. In North Hobart, between 1971 and 1976, over 200 houses were demolished or converted to non-residential uses. The living environment has also been adversely affected by road widening and development schemes, a lack of investment in residential amenity, increased traffic and on street parking associated with commercial and industrial development, and an overall loss of social cohesion. Investment in community facilities of direct benefit to the population is low in the inner suburbs. For example, 49 per cent of the useable and accessible local open space in Hobart is in the two most affluent suburbs, while only 12 per cent of these areas are found in the 4 innermost suburbs.

Actual evidence of the relationship between crime and residential environments is sketchy but what there is does not support the assumption that there is a causal link between the two. Some evidence has been found for a positive correlation between housing density and rates of adult crime and juvenile delinquency, Schmitt (1963). However, further studies by Winsborough (1965) showed that once the effect of socio-economic status was eliminated there was a negative relationship — i.e. the higher the density, the lower the crime rate. Obviously, the relationships are complex and it is not possible to draw simple conclusions regarding these relationships.

There is evidence that areas with a poor physical environment also have residents of low socio-economic status. Whether or not the two are causally related is an entirely different matter. It is useful to look at how this situation has developed in order to ascertain whether or not planning in our urban areas can lead to an improvement in the social condition of the population.

Our society consists of different groups that have differing levels of resources available to them. The level of influence that each of these groups can exert in the urban land market is directly related to the resources available to them. In the market for residential land those with the most resources have the least choice. Because of this situation there are a series of housing sub-markets within which those with generally similar levels of wealth and power will occupy the same area. Upper income groups have a well developed sense of social status and prestige, and they vie for prestigious housing in the most desirable areas. Low income groups have little or no choice beyond lower cost private rental housing, low cost owner occupancy, or public or welfare housing. The first two forms of housing tend to be concentrated in inner city areas.

This concentration of private rental and lower cost housing in the inner city occurs for the following reasons:

- Much of the housing stock is old and inappropriate in terms of available space and facilities to present day demands.*

- (b) *Many houses are small and are on small lots.*
- (c) *The physical environment is not as amenable or attractive as in outer suburbs.*
- (d) *Many houses have been purchased by speculators for eventual change to other uses and are being let out awaiting such changes.*
- (e) *The local environment has deteriorated because of age, lack of investment and invasion by other uses.*

They are the least attractive of the city's residential environments and those groups with more resources do not choose to live in these areas so they are left for those with less resources. The processes of residential and social segregation in cities are complex and are associated with the operation of the urban land market, land use change and development, this operation of different private and public institutions and the distribution of wealth in our society. These processes virtually ensure that those groups who are least equipped in educational, economic and social terms to compete in our society also live in the worst conditions. The people do not necessarily cause the conditions, nor do the environmental conditions cause the social conditions, although the two are not entirely unrelated.

The social groups who are concentrated in the less environmentally attractive parts of the inner city are also the social groups who are more likely to be involved in anti-social activities especially minor crime. They are also the people who have the least control over their own lives in the sense of being able to make meaningful decisions about their future and the future of the areas in which they live. They are the least articulate, the least organised and the economically weakest groups in society. As a result they have little or no chance of influencing the future of the area in which they live. Decisions are made for them by absentee landlords, planners, politicians, land developers and many others, but rarely are they consulted and even less are they considered as having anything meaningful to say. It is interesting to note that the wholesale destruction of many of our inner suburbs has ceased only after the old, economically weak populations have been replaced by more affluent, better educated and younger people, as has happened for example in Paddington, Battery Point and Carlton.

There is increasing evidence of a real feeling of alienation from society by those who are in weak positions and the planning and re-development actions that have been carried out have tended to heighten these feelings. The large multi-storey blocks of flats may not necessarily cause social dysfunction but they do little to reduce the feelings of frustration, loneliness, boredom and helplessness of the occupants. Road schemes that destroy living environments do not engender the co-operation of the affected residents. It is interesting to note that the first real opposition to planners and re-developers by residents is occurring in relation to these two types of projects. In such situations, the feelings of alienation can only be increased.

The main conclusion that arises from this brief discussion is that by improving the physical environment of our inner cities we will be unlikely to solve the social problems, including the incidence of crime, that exist there. On the other hand we have carried out many actions and allowed many things to happen which may act to increase the likelihood of people feeling alienated and acting in an anti-social manner.

3. How Should the Inner City be Planned and Developed?

Traditional planning faces a dilemma if it seeks to improve social conditions by means of improving the physical environment. There is no guarantee that the desired results will be

achieved. This does not mean that effort should not be directed towards enhancing the physical environment of our cities and improving the living conditions of those groups in society with the least resources. If, however, it is done in a manner which alienates those groups who most need assistance and assists those in positions of wealth and power it is possible that it can act as a catalyst for disadvantaged groups to act in an anti-social manner. Vandalism of public areas could well be associated with these feelings of alienation. The residents of re-developed inner city areas and of areas subject to land use change and environmental deterioration are unlikely to identify positively with things in which they have no say.

This, I believe, gives us a clue to the way in which our planning of these areas should be heading. At present, intimate knowledge of how and why a city works is taken and used by planners (through surveys, public participation etc.) reduced to rules, laws and formulae, (population densities, shopping hierarchies, traffic models, etc.) and standardized into a set of rules or plans which set out the one best way of carrying out any task (zoning plans, redevelopment schemes etc.). These schemes do not necessarily reflect the wishes of those being planned for, and in many cases works directly against their interests. If people in economically weak situations were able to have more effect on the development of their living area and to be able to effectively resist and manage unwanted change, then the tendency towards alienation could be reversed.

To reduce the levels of alienation that now occurs in the planning and development of our inner cities, planners and developers should at least recognise that:

- *society consists of a number of different groups with different levels of wealth and power and different interests;*
- *urban development is a complex process;*
- *inappropriate change and development may lead to alienation; and*
- *professionals do not necessarily always have the right answers.*

Professionals working in urban areas should then provide people in the community with information, resources and assistance which will allow a better understanding of how society works and a better ability for people to take part more meaningfully in the decisions that influence their lives. Planning and development agencies can assist in this process by:

- *providing information and resources to disadvantaged groups to understand development processes in their area and to assist them in planning and developing that area;*
- *working with local groups to identify their attitudes to the growth and development of their area and producing and implementing plans to reflect these aspirations;*
- *working towards making planning and development less bureaucratic and unresponsive to people's needs; and*
- *working actively for a shift of emphasis in resource allocation from the servicing of property to meeting the needs of people.*

While these strategies will not resolve the social problems so evident in our inner cities, they will at least make some positive contribution towards producing a more humane and socially just approach to the planning and development of urban areas. Planners must be seen to be clearly working with and in the interests of those groups who are disadvantaged by the processes of urban development and change. This involves much more than just a simple improvement in the physical environment of our cities, it involves a fundamental shift in the aims and practices of planning and development agencies.

TABLE 1 — RESIDENTIAL LAND USE SUB-MARKETS

Household Income/ Annum		% Tertiary Qualification (Including Technical)	% Who Rent	% Purchasing	% Owners	Average Median Rental/ Month \$	Average Median Mortgage Repayment Month \$	% Owner Occupied	Average housing Expenditure as a % of average household income
< 8,000	A	3.1	87	—	13	108	—	13	16.2
8- 9,000	B	6	50	24	26	117	100	50	15.3
9-10,000		9	37	33	30	136	78	63	12.6
10-11,000	C	10	34	34	32	135	87	66	11.8
11-12,000		12	22	48	30	163	57	78	8.4
12-13,000	D	13	19	52	29	167	73	81	8.7
13-14,000		15	17	58	25	157	67	83	7.3
> 14,000	E	20	11	64	25	211	80	89	6.3

Source: 1976 A.B.S. CENSUS

**PLENARY SESSION —
TUESDAY 14th AUGUST 1979**

(Morning Session)

The seven discussion groups were clearly stimulated by the speakers and were not short of topics. Their comments included:

1. Poor physical surroundings are a precipitant of crime, and these include the lack of services and facilities being available at the time housing estates are built.
2. Social group structures that are planned and imposed by town planners are a "bad thing". Communities that grow out of common interests are more worthwhile.
3. The more that an area is stigmatised, the fewer people who have a choice will want to live there, and therefore the opportunity for "social mix" will be diminished. The stigmatisation could be a barrier to obtaining employment. It was noted that in stigmatised areas there was a lack of community cohesion unless there was an emergency which brought people together.
4. Unstable parental relationships contributed to deviancy.

Recommendations from groups included:

1. Community facilities should be built at the time of subdivision. These facilities must include recreation areas.
2. Social mix should be encouraged. It not only leads to a lowering of stigmatisation, but eventually, is probably more economical. (If all the houses in an area are occupied by the same age group there will be a "bulge" as the children pass through primary and then high school, with institutions in succession becoming redundant). Social mix can be encouraged by an increase of housing subsidy schemes so that the poor have a greater choice of areas in which to live.
3. Support Services. There were many recommendations for increase in these, in particular that there should be better information about community resources available to people in housing areas.
4. Planning. It was recommended that a multi-disciplined approach to planning is essential, and that given better planning, opportunities for undetected criminality can be reduced.

There was further discussion on "social mix" in the general discussion at the end of the session. Dr. Lee suggested further ways that this could be achieved. These included encouraging private building on public land and the key to this policy must be to have a large enough percentage of private lots for sale (up to 75%). The alternative would be to sprinkle Housing Commission tenants throughout the urban area on a much more widespread basis, or to have smaller Housing Department areas.

There was further discussion on planning and a question to the speakers as to why other agencies were not involved in town planning (e.g., the Social Welfare Department, etc.). It was mentioned that there was a move towards this as well as a tendency to think that the people affected should have a say in their own planning.

**TUESDAY 14th AUGUST 1979
(Afternoon Session)**

From the programme:

"... and in the afternoon the work of volunteers will be studied."

Volunteers in the Community

- CHAIRMAN: Mrs Penny Mountain, Voluntary Agencies Representative, A.C.P.C. Executive.
- 1.00-2.30 pm Dr. Zula Nittim, Senior Lecturer in Town Planning, University of N.S.W.
 - 2.30-3.00 pm Father Julian Punch, Director, Chigwell Community Centre.
 - 3.20-4.15 pm Group Discussions.
 - 4.15-5.00 pm Plenary Session.

COMMENTS ON THE AFTERNOON'S PROCEEDINGS:

If one considers the programme for the week and the theme of the Conference, this afternoon was far from successful. The theme of "Volunteers in the Community" was hardly touched on by the speakers; one of them did not speak to his paper at all. Unemployment, the unemployed and the conflict between big business and the deprived in the community were themes that were aired instead, and consequently the delegates appeared confused when it came to the group discussion time as to what they should be talking about, and the Conference lost direction. However, in spite of this, interesting recommendations emerged including one that volunteers working in the community should be paid a small maintenance wage or at least paid their expenses.