Welcome

Recently Dr Emma Baker of CHURP organised a forum examining climate change in South Australia and its implications for future social and economic wellbeing. The forum was one of the final outcomes of the project ‘Human Dimensions of Climate Change’ that was funded by the Premier’s Science and Research Fund and linked to the ‘TREND’ project that is based with Professor Andy Lowe at the University of Adelaide, but includes partners from SARDI and other institutions.

Leigh Radford, National Editor of ABC Rural Radio spoke at the event, reflecting upon the way the media generally deals with the issue of climate change, and reports climate change stories. He noted that the ABC is bound by a Code of Conduct that requires unbiased reporting, and that commercial media are largely driven by the need to develop and sustain high ratings.

Leigh’s presentation generated an interesting – and from my perspective – unexpected reaction from some of my academic colleagues. Some expressed their dismay that the media continues to give attention to what they see as mis-leading stories that call into question the science and reality of climate change.

Such reactions, of course, missed the point of Leigh’s argument: the more important insight is that all media outlets have a short attention span, they are attracted to run a story (or not) by the first one or two sentences of any media release, and the news cycle moves ever onwards.

I think there are critical lessons from this experience that are transferrable to both the broader debates around climate change and its potential impact on human society and our wider understanding of how best to communicate complex ideas with a wider audience.

No matter whether the topic is climate change, urban density, the need for affordable housing or the importance of good quality accommodation for health, engagement with public debate needs to be a long term commitment that accepts that change will only take place gradually.

This acknowledgement reinforces the educative role that universities, and entities such as CHURP, must play in engaging with the broader community and, where necessary, leading the debate. Our forthcoming event, Building the City We All Want, is one example of how university-based researchers can have an impact both in the academic realm and in contributing to public life. There is more on the timing and structure of this event in the later sections of this Newsletter but urban planning issues remain highly topical in Adelaide and we seek to make a real contribution to these debates.

Recently I returned from holidays and flew into Adelaide Airport (yes, it was Bali and yes I had a wonderful time). But the fact that I was able to fly into Adelaide on a carrier, other than Qantas, reflects the success of the new airport and the changes that investment has facilitated. Many airlines now use Adelaide Airport, with resulting improvements in the number and affordability of flights. Indeed the Rann and Weatherill Governments have overseen some remarkable building projects over the past decade or so, including the Northern Expressway, the Anzac Highway underpass, the new bridge over the Port River and the building of Techport. Admittedly many of these projects enjoyed substantial Federal funding, but the impact on Adelaide and its liveability has been overwhelmingly positive. The challenge remains, therefore, how can we continue to invest in our built urban form and improve the quality of our housing and infrastructure, while retaining the best aspects of our lifestyle and architecture? Hopefully our event will generate a solution.

Professor Andrew Beer
Director
Reflecting Upon the Thatcher Legacy

Guest Contribution

Thatcher was influential in shaping urban policy and the dynamics of cities. This review by Professor David Bailey should remind us all to reconsider these moments in history.

The 1970s was a tumultuous decade for the UK economy. It witnessed the oil price shock, the three day week, double digit inflation, an International Monetary Fund bailout and the winter of discontent. Such economic traumas framed the entry of Margaret Thatcher as Prime Minster, who went on to tear up the post-War consensus in an effort to treat what many on the Right saw as the ‘sick man’ of Europe.

Thatcher subsequently embarked on a monetarist experiment and launched the ‘Big Bang’ in the City of London, mass privatisation and an effort to ‘roll back’ the state, a concerted attack on trade unions, and eagerly sought foreign investment.

To her supporters, as we have witnessed in their comments since her death, Thatcher ‘saved Britain’ and transformed the UK into a competitive market economy. What remained of the manufacturing base was more productive and more competitive. And not long after Thatcher left office, the ‘transformed’ UK economy subsequently saw one of its longest periods of uninterrupted growth, from 1992 right through to 2008.

Inflation was brought down to 4-5% a year but at the cost of unemployment running at over 10% for much of the 1980s — whether that was a ‘price worth paying’ comes down to your point of view. (And whether the fall in inflation was actually due to her policies or really because of falls in global commodity prices remains a hotly debated point amongst historians even today).

But this ‘transformation’ anyway came at great cost. The manufacturing base collapsed in the 1980s under the weight of high interest rates and a severely overvalued exchange rate. Unemployment soared and the resulting unbalanced economy is a tragic legacy that we are still living with today.

Industrial policy in particular was seen as excessively interventionist and was banished, even though other ‘developed’ market economies continued to back new technologies and industries and paid more attention to the manufacturing sector.

And the DNA of the recent credit crunch and financial meltdown in fact goes right back to Thatcher’s 1980s big bang and the deregulation of the City. Subsequent governments – of whatever political ilk – continued with this financial deregulation, ending in a self-destructing orgy of excessive risk taking and the credit crunch for which we are still, quite literally, paying the price.

To be fair, even if Jim Callaghan had won that key election back in 1979, Labour would also have to think long and hard about how to reform an economy suffering from declining relative competitiveness, high inflation and relatively poor growth, especially after seeing its ‘social contract’ with trade unions collapse in the 1978-79 ‘winter of discontent’. And even Denis Healey, after taking an IMF bailout in 1976, had already started to move away from full employment as the key target of macroeconomic policy.

But what came next was quite different, even if ‘Thatcherism’ wasn’t a fully formed philosophy straight out the blocks. Critically, the power of unions was hugely reduced, with a series of reforms in the early 1980s placing severe limits on unions and shifting power to employers. These reforms ended the closed shop, banished mass and secondary picketing, and imposed secret strike ballots.

Linked to this, Thatcher and her Chancellor Geoffrey Howe shifted the focus of macroeconomic policy away from full employment towards the targeting of inflation. Demand management was out and in came the control of inflation, initially through a ‘Medium Term Financial Strategy’ that targeted the money supply.

Interestingly, Thatcher clashed strongly with the then Bank of England Governor Gordon Richardson and she accused the Bank of failing to support her. Minutes of meetings showed her arguing that “the clearing banks did not seem to be deeply attached to the government strategy, indeed they were shovelling money out.” If only we had the same problems today. But as a result monetary policy was heavily controlled by Howe at the Treasury.
Next, industrial policy was effectively scrapped, except in two senses. While Thatcher didn’t believe in any role for the state in “picking winners”, she deliberately sought and financially backed foreign investment in the UK (such as Japanese automotive firms) and focused on the City as a driver of economic growth. And in an attempt to reduce the role of the state, nationalised industries such as British Telecom, British Airways, British Steel, British Gas and the British Airports Authority were all privatised.

While at the time there was much talk of ‘unleashing market forces’, the reality was more a botched privatisation which saw incumbent management shape privatisation for its own benefit, for example by hanging onto monopoly power for as long as possible even after privatisation. Effective competition for British Telecom didn’t arrive until years later, and even today the energy market remains dominated by a few big firms able to hike prices when they want to.

Finally, Thatcher embraced the ‘aspiration nation’ well before George Osborne tried some retro-style self-marketing in the last budget. Under Thatcher there were big tax cuts for big earners (cut from 60% to 40% in the 1988 budget), supposedly to boost entrepreneurship. But in a tilt to the masses, there were also reductions in the basic-rate tax, which was cut to 25% in 1988.

Meanwhile under the slogan of a ‘property owning democracy’ council house tenants were encouraged to buy their houses and the wider public to buy shares in firms being privatised. In my own case shares were then sold on immediately for profit through ‘stagging’ which boosted my student grant considerably. Quite how far that all this really deepened as opposed to widening share ownership isn’t clear.

Overall, what is Thatcher’s economic legacy, especially here in the Midlands? To Thatcher supporters, her record is a successful one in that the relative decline of the UK came to end, days lost through strikes fell and the UK attracted inward investment.

But to detractors, the UK in general and the Midlands in particular saw its manufacturing base severely damaged. As a result we are still living with high levels of unemployment and worklessness in many parts of the region because of good, well-paid manufacturing jobs disappearing.

That damage, exacerbated by a lack of supportive industrial policy and an over-emphasis on financial services left the economy vulnerable to financial crisis. We remain badly unbalanced as an economy and this goes right back to the 1980s.

But there is one final dimension I’d like to note. Whilst a curbing of union power back in the 1970s may well have been necessary, this has gone too far in the sense that unions can no longer ensure that wages keep pace with inflation. Indeed many people in middle and low income jobs have barely seen any improvement in their incomes over the past 30 years. A much bigger share of national income now goes to employers and the elite. But even Henry Ford worked out a long time ago that he had to pay his workers decent wages so that they could afford to buy the products he – and they – produced, and thus to drive growth. We seem to have forgotten that simple lesson.’

Professor David Bailey
Coventry University Business School, UK

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Public Seminar and Master Class

On 21 June CHURP will host a Public Seminar and Master Class - *Building the city we all want: putting people in their place*. The event will expand our understanding of community participation and engagement and its benefits for urban renewal and housing affordability, infrastructure provision, transport planning, place making, health and sustainability.

We have invited an eclectic panel of presenters to inform, entertain and engage us in an animated conversation as we consider how to get people actively thinking and involved in the discussion and debate about the design of our city and neighbourhoods, the nature of our housing and our capacity to build a vibrant economy—in the face of demographic, climatic and technological changes.

The Master Class is designed to equip built environment professionals with the knowledge and skills to provide a range of engagement opportunities for community groups and individuals.

Further information will be sent separately.

Congratulations

Kristine Peters has been awarded the John Lewis Medal for Geography 2012 by the Royal Geographical Society of SA for her PhD thesis entitled *Normalising New Behaviour: Networks and the uptake of environmental practices amongst small businesses in Australia* and will receive her award at Government House in June. Dr Peters was supervised by Andrew Beer and Alaric Maude.

Master of Philosophy student Rafe Pfitzner has been awarded one of 10 grants given to post graduate students by the National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility (NCCARF) to attend their annual conference and present a paper. More than 100 students applied to NCCARF and Rafe’s win is evidence of his outstanding scholarly qualities.

CHURPie Participation

Research Tuesdays

The ‘Research Tuesdays’ seminar series aims to put industry, business and the broader community in touch with the latest work of some of the University of Adelaide’s finest minds. This sharing of knowledge has the power to open the door to new ways of thinking, living and doing business.

Research Tuesdays runs on the second Tuesday of every month at our North Terrace campus.

**Denser, Poorer, Older...the Future of Housing?**

11 June 2013, 5.00 pm, Scott Theatre

Andrew Beer, Chris Paris, Debbie Faulkner and Nathan Paine, Executive Director, Property Council of Australia - SA Division

Please register from 17 May at:

http://www.adelaide.edu.au/researchtuesdays

Andrew Beer attended and presented at the RSA Conference in Tampere, Finland in May and, by invitation, attended a meeting with the Chinese Academy of Science, Beijing.

Andrew Beer and Rafe Pfitzner presented at the SA Climate Change Adaptation Showcase, Adelaide in March.

CHURP/University of Adelaide has now been accepted as a participant in the AHURI housing network.

The AHURI National Housing Research Program, through a network of universities, delivers high quality, policy-relevant evidence on housing and related urban issues to inform the policies and practices of governments, industry and the community and to stimulate debate in the broader Australia community.
Upcoming Conferences

2013 National Adaptation Conference
‘Climate Adaptation 2013: knowledge+partnerships’
25-27 June, 2013
Hilton Hotel, Sydney
The conference will bring together end-users and researchers from across Australia to share experience in adaptation and showcase activities, strategies and research. It also marks the fifth and final year of NCCARF’s initial funding period.

2013 Annual International Conference
‘New Geographical Frontiers ’
28-30 August 2013
Royal Geographical Society (with IBG), at the junction of Kensington Gore and Exhibition Road in Kensington, London and Imperial College, London
http://www.rgs.org/

2013APNHR Conference
‘Global Housing Dilemmas: The Ways Forward’
20-23 August, 2013
Faculty of Built Environment
University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.
http://www.apnhr2013.com/

8th National Housing Conference
30 October – 1 November, 2013
Adelaide Convention Centre
Convened by the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) in partnership with Housing SA, the 8th National Housing Conference will provide a platform for sharing, debating, celebrating and promoting ideas in affordable housing research, policy and practice.

The conference will provide the opportunity for delegates to come together and further debate key issues including housing affordability, undersupply, homelessness and Indigenous housing.

To register now, or for more information visit: www.nhc.edu.au/adelaide2013.

Publications


The Association is now recruiting for a **Senior Development Manager** to join the existing RSA team.

The post is full time, on a 23 month fixed term contract and is to start as soon as possible after an appointment is made.

Hours of work are 35 hours/week in Seaford, East Sussex (close to Brighton and Eastbourne). Some internal and overseas travel will be required

**Salary:** University and College Union Salary Grade 8

**General Purpose of Role:** Acting as an ambassador for the organisation, the Senior Development Manager has full events, marketing and networking remit and will be expected to deputise for the CEO when needed. This role requires considerable flexibility and a pragmatic approach to working within a matrix organisation of a small and multi faceted team.

**Closing Date:** Monday 20 May 2013, 9 am UK time.

**First interviews** to be held in London on Wednesday 29 May 2013.

**Second interviews** will be held in Seaford at the Association’s offices (probably) on Tuesday 4 June 2013 (TBC).

For further information and how to apply, please email hr@saramacdougall.com

www.regionalstudies.org

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**Farewells**

CHURP farewelled Emily Thwaites-Tregilgas and Felicity Prance with a morning tea held in March.

David Bunce was also farewelled after completing and submitting his PhD Dissertation — congratulations.

The Refugee Council of Australia Refugee Week is used to inform the public about refugees and celebrate positive contributions made by refugees to Australian society. Contact Email: admin@refugeecouncil.org.au

Website: [www.refugeeweek.org.au](http://www.refugeeweek.org.au/)

Please send items of interest to: churp@adelaide.edu.au


**Contact us**

Centre for Housing, Urban and Regional Planning
School of Social Sciences,
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
Ground Floor, Napier Building
University of Adelaide, South Australia 5005

andrew.beer@adelaide.edu.au

Phone: 08 313 3216 or 0409 696 485

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