

# GOVERNING CITY FUTURES

population, climate change and the future of the low density city

16- 17 AUGUST 2012 SYDNEY



## CALL FOR PAPERS

'Population' has been an abiding preoccupation in the settlement of the Australian continent. It has never been a fixed concept, but one capable of promiscuous connotations and discursive articulations. It has featured in debates about the balance between the City and the Bush; the appropriate 'racial' composition of the nation; about fertility, families and the role of women; about development and economic growth; and, in particular, about the rules around immigration and the nature and prerogatives of the nation state.

Globalization and the rise of the environmental movement, however, have changed the terms in which we discuss the idea of population. It is a key concept in global debates about planetary sustainability, climate change mitigation and adaptation, the curtailment of human freedoms in response to uncontrolled population movements and potential struggles over resources. In Australia recent asylum seeker debates and the emerging issue of environmental refugees have sparked conflicts over the question of what is an optimal national population with regard to economic growth and the continent's carrying capacity.

In recent times, in Australia as elsewhere population has become associated with urban problems and their management. It is a key concept in expert debates about desirable models of urbanity – low density urbanism, consolidation, sustainability and so on – and about patterns of urban consumption and infrastructure such as transport, water, energy and food security and carbon emissions. The prospect of increased population sparks populist defences of the suburban dream and the 'Australian way of life' and triggers fears about the impact of demographic change on housing, on traffic congestion, and on environmental resources. Those seeking to challenge parochialism argue for a human rights perspective and a recognition that climate change is a global issue that refuses the notion of national borders and protectionist mentalities and is one that necessarily requires urban solutions to adjust humanity to its new biospheric conditions.

Centrally important in contending with Australia's urban future, the notion of population serves at once as a statistical object of social scientists, a field of intervention for urban planners, a rhetorical resource for politicians and activists, and a spectre haunting a popular imaginary concerned with the imperilment of the suburban everyday. This conference asks: What is the future of the low density city? What are its prospects

in a context in which ecological and population pressures make the infrastructure that under-grid such cities no longer sustainably, if it ever was? In the wake of these intersecting pressures, how are alternate futures for this urban form to be imagined and governed? How are its populations to be managed? Individual lives conducted? Resources circulated? How do these questions impact of relations of gender, ethnicity, and class and those between City and Bush? In addressing these questions this conference will bring together international and Australian academics, politicians and other expert speakers and commentators in the fields of cultural studies, urban sociology, urban infrastructure and population to discuss the future of the low density city in an era in which climate change and the prospect of population increase operates as a major challenge to established forms of urban life.

**Confirmed Keynote Speakers:**

Andrew Ross, Professor of Social and Cultural Analysis, New York University

Michael Neuman, Professor of Sustainable Urbanism, University of New South Wales

**Conference Themes:** climate change; population; immigration; urban densification; urban environmentalism; urban planning; gender; ethnicity; City and Bush

**Paper and Panel Proposals:** Paper and panel proposals addressing the conference themes are invited, those spanning one or more themes are especially welcome. Please send abstracts (up to 300 words), your affiliation, and a biography (up to 150 words) to Dr Ben Dibley: [b.dibley@uws.edu.au](mailto:b.dibley@uws.edu.au)

**Deadline for Submissions:** 31 March 2012.

**Convenors:** [Dr Fiona Cameron](#) and [Dr George Morgan](#) with [Professor-Emeritus Helen Armstrong](#), [Dr Amanda Third](#) and [Dr Ben Dibley](#), Institute for Culture and Society, University of Western Sydney, Australia

**For further information on the conference, please visit** [www.uws.edu.au/ccr/governingcityfutures](http://www.uws.edu.au/ccr/governingcityfutures)