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Place Matters

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Place Matters

Opportunities for interdisciplinary research collaboration
at the University of Melbourne

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Executive Summary

The University of Melbourne established the Melbourne Social Equity Institute in 2012 to foster collaborative research related to key public and social policy concerns. One of the four research streams is 'Place Matters', previously 'Access to Public Goods'. This report is intended to support and focus research investment in that research stream.

There has been a steady increase in interdisciplinary research over the last decade. The value of collaborative interdisciplinary research, according to Rickards (2012) includes the potential to make real difference to policy debates.

The evidence base on interdisciplinary research makes the following claims:

- There is greater capacity to effectively harness the knowledge of a wider range of scholars.
- Interdisciplinary research is underdeveloped across institutions and requires continued facilitation.
- Avoids duplication of research and thereby can maximize research effort.
- Interdisciplinary research can identify gaps in the evidence base and advance methodological rigour when developing research programs.
- Is more favoured by female researchers than their male counterparts.
- Is more likely to be undertaken in research areas that have strategic or policy orientations.
- Does not necessarily contribute significantly to career development or advancement.

Access to public goods affects individual and community life chances, as well as how local places, our cities and nation function. Individual and communities' access to public goods is inherently spatial. For example, where people live has real and perceived impacts on their access to public goods. Where we live affects individuals and households' access to employment, education, cultural activities, health services and open space. These access

issues, in turn, have an impact on peoples' immediate and longer term health and wellbeing. In short, place matters.

An environmental scan of University research showed there are some disciplines and collaborative efforts within the University that are focused on the key policy questions related to access to public goods. Most notable is the research efforts in the areas of global and population health. The research being undertaken in this area is both interdisciplinary and collaborative. It also seeks to respond to key public and social policy issues facing Australian communities.

There are however, other areas of social and public policy research that are under-developed. Most significantly, the gaps are most evident in the areas of housing affordability. Secondly in the area of disability research, there is very little research being undertaken. While this absence has been noted within the social sciences and humanities literatures for decades, the shift towards a national disability insurance scheme opens up this research space to be focusing on how this significant shift in national policy impacts on people with disabilities choice and control (including access to public goods). While there are other areas such as education, transport accessibility and age friendly cities, much of this research is often not targeted towards specific policy questions. It is this targeting of research to policy questions of interest to government that has the potential to open up other sources of funding. It also provides greater capacity to have research impact.

Introduction

This report focuses on the relationship between interdisciplinary research and social equity. Social equity research is for example, identified in the national and international evidence as one benchmark of quality amongst leading universities across the globe. A 2011 University of Melbourne report identified that there were major areas of significant interdisciplinary research currently being undertaken in the area of social equity across the University of Melbourne (University of Melbourne 2011). To enhance and enable this existing research potential, the Melbourne Social Equity Institute was established in 2012. The Institute supports interdisciplinary research, facilitates researchers working with government and community organisations, and assists with the dissemination and translation of research for public benefit (University of Melbourne 2013).

The case for establishing an interdisciplinary research institute focused on equity at the University of Melbourne included: allowing a formalised and coordinated approach to social policy research; bringing together leading researchers from across the University to enhance collaboration; building community involvement; and providing evidence based policy advice around key components of social inequality and disadvantage. A centralised institute is considered a key enabler of capacity building amongst graduate students and early career researchers as it provides a vehicle for formalised partnership.

The Melbourne Social Equity Institute has developed four main research strands that foster interdisciplinary endeavours. These research strands include:

- Place Matters (including access to health, education, space, shelter, employment, transport).
- Citizenship and cultural difference (including cultural identity, social diversity, community, migration, legal pluralism).
- Human rights (including discrimination, and anti-discrimination, national and international human rights, other perspectives on human rights)
- Social policy across the life course (including labour, taxation and income support policy, transitions and pathways from early childhood to youth, family and aged care).

Social equity research is broadly defined to encompass that which seeks to uncover and explain the experiences and impacts of social inequality and disadvantage:

...as these are manifest across the life course and across the full spectrum of social life – health, law, education, housing, work and transport to name a few. This is necessarily a broad agenda, including research on factors shaping inequalities as well as research on approaches to address and ameliorate disadvantage; it includes research on immediate problems and current policy issues and directions as well as research on philosophical and historical dimensions; and it can refer to research that advocates a social justice and social change research framework (University of Melbourne 2011, p3).

This report focuses on the first research strand identified above; place matters. The aims of the report are to map interdisciplinary research currently being undertaken at The University of Melbourne that directly address issues of access to public goods. The report is divided into four chapters:

- Chapter 1 provides a background on interdisciplinary research.
- Chapter 2 reviews the national and international evidence on the social equity issues related to access to public goods. This analysis will include a critique of the importance that space and place play in social equity and access.
- Chapter 3 compiles and assess a small number of research projects currently underway at the University that demonstrate collaboration and interdisciplinarity in the core research strand place matters.
- Chapter 4 provides recommendations for future directions in interdisciplinary social equity research, including suggestions for increased collaboration; potential sources of funding; and the key policy questions identified in current public policy.

1.1 Interdisciplinary research

According to Millar (2013) much attention has been paid to interdisciplinary research over the last decade. This contention is confirmed in previous research by Jacobs and Frickel (2009) who found that there has been a steady increase in interdisciplinary research over the last decade. The evidence regarding interdisciplinary research has found that it has created opportunities for researchers and graduate students. Graduate

students who have engaged in interdisciplinary research during their dissertation are more likely to gain employment in academia. Other positive gains from interdisciplinary research include a growth in interdisciplinary degree programs (Millar 2013).

The value of collaborative interdisciplinary research, according to Rickards (2012) include:

- The potential to make real difference to policy debates.
- Denounces narratives of the academy as being an 'ivory tower'.

Lewis (2013) undertook a small research project within Melbourne University to better understand how researchers from different disciplines understand and enact interdisciplinary research. She concludes that there are significant differences between disciplines:

- Medicine and science operationalise interdisciplinary research primarily through working in teams in research endeavours.
- In the humanities and social sciences researchers often construe interdisciplinary research as an activity where research is individualised but includes support/ intellectual stimulation from others to achieve real outcomes.
- Public health researchers are more likely to define and engage in interdisciplinary work that includes a range of researchers within their field.

The evidence base on interdisciplinary research makes the following claims:

- There is greater capacity to effectively harness the knowledge of a wider range of scholars.
- Interdisciplinary research is underdeveloped across institutions and requires continued facilitation.
- Avoids duplication of research and thereby can maximize research effort.
- Interdisciplinary research can identify gaps in the evidence base and advance methodological rigour when developing research programs.

The positive attention paid to interdisciplinary research has much to do with this research models' ability to solve complex problems. As such Millar (2103) suggests that this is the greatest innovation of interdisciplinary research.

Interdisciplinary research is a term coined to describe the recent shift towards evidence building that brings together knowledge from a wide range of disciplines. This does not mean that interdisciplinary research is 'new' in and of itself, however there has been a widespread acknowledgement by researchers, policy makers and universities of a need for a different model of research. This incorporation of evidence and view points from a range of disciplines has emerged in more formal ways within the academy as a result of a need to provide better and more holistic solutions to key social policy questions facing government and society today. Aboelela et al. (2007) argue that scientific and medical research has often been able to successfully discover and understand the dynamics of critical questions facing society. The authors give the example of how tobacco use was related to lung disease. The technical components of this research is highly valued, however alone it was not able to reduce tobacco use and/or lung disease. It is here that the knowledge and evidence from a range of disciplines, including health, health promotion, and sociology assisted in providing solutions, policy innovation and enabled social change. In the same vein research in the social sciences, economics and humanities is better able to find workable policy solutions to climate change when linked effectively with science. The authors suggest that interdisciplinary research ensures that human experiences are not reduced to a one dimensional understanding.

What has become evident from the national and international evidence is that an understanding and definitions on interdisciplinary research vary across disciplines, institutions and scholars. Aboelela et al. (2007) develop a typology of interdisciplinary research (see Appendix 1). This review by the authors attempts to conceptualise the divergence in the operation and understanding of interdisciplinary research; that it takes many forms. Notwithstanding a 'formal' definition, interdisciplinary research includes research that formalises collaboration and the incorporation of a number of disciplinary perspectives to produce evidence. The amount and nature of collaboration and incorporation within individual research programs varies.

Similarly Rickards' (2012) summary of the evidence on collaborative interdisciplinary research, finds that this shift in the orientation or approach to research is part of a wider spectrum ranging from disciplinary based, through to multi-disciplinary, and to interdisciplinary. In the report she suggests that interdisciplinary research is not intended to become a substitute for other research

approaches but to complement existing research strategies currently in operation in the academy.

Raasch et al. (2013) believe interdisciplinary research can create hybrid disciplines, however also suggest that interdisciplinary research can wane and decline in certain disciplines over time. The suggestion here is that if interdisciplinary research is not formally underpinned then some disciplines and scholars will return to mono research vehicles.

Additionally van Rijnsoever and Hessels (2011) suggest that interdisciplinary research is:

- More favoured by female researchers than their male counterparts.
- More likely to be undertaken in research areas that have strategic or policy orientations.

Interdisciplinary research does have some disadvantages. Rafols et al. (2013) for example, undertook a recent analysis of the impact of interdisciplinary research and suggest that journal rankings often are more likely to have a single or mono disciplinary focus. This suggests that in higher ranking journals, interdisciplinary research is less favoured. Also van Rijnsoever and Hessels (2011) suggest from their study, that interdisciplinary research does not contribute significantly to career development or advancement.

Place Matters

2.1 Introduction

One of the research strands identified by the Melbourne Social Equity Institute was place matters. This particular area of focus is concerned with how place impacts on social equity and subsequent life chances. The issue of accessibility to public goods includes, but is not limited to, areas such as:

- Adequate, diverse and affordable housing for individuals and families.
- Easy walking, cycling and public transport access to employment and educational opportunities.
- Public open space and other recreational, culture and leisure opportunities.
- A range of health and social infrastructure.
- Healthy food.
- Local democracy and community capacity to ensure that these needs are met.

The University of Melbourne has an overarching research strategy that identifies three grand challenges. These challenges are grouped around three broad themes and include:

- Understanding our place and our purpose.
- Fostering health and wellbeing.
- Supporting sustainability and resilience.

The place matters research strand intersects across all these grand challenges. Inequitable access to public goods impacts on individuals and communities as well as how local places, our cities and nation function. For example, a lack of affordable housing can impact negatively on individuals and their immediate households, particularly in terms of their health and well being. However wider concentrations of households who are living in unaffordable housing can impact on our connections to the world in which we live, our ability to contribute to democracy and public life (Fincher and Iveson 2008). Government policies and mechanisms to attend to the current housing affordability crisis require sustainable solutions that create resilience, both within the market and wider community.

As is alluded to above, individual and communities' access to public goods is inherently spatial. For example, where people live has real and perceived impacts on their access to public goods. In addition how public goods are dispersed across and within urban and rural locations can have a range of impacts on people's experiences of daily living and life chances. Place matters. Where you live matters. How urban environments are configured matters.

This chapter will briefly outline the concept of how place matters, including the evidence regarding the outcomes of inequalities in access. The chapter will also explain the important role that place plays in understanding outcomes of inequality and solutions to a more equitable distribution of public goods.

2.2 Why place matters to social equity

Much of the evidence base on the outcomes of social inequality has focused on two main themes. The first is a consideration of what are the causes and effects of social inequality; and second how these inequalities are spatially manifest. This second strand of evidence provides additional and compelling knowledge about the relationship between social relations and place (Jacobs and Fincher 1998). For example, the evidence base demonstrates that the health and well being outcomes of Indigenous Australians is far worse than that of non-Indigenous people. This first order analysis is critical in identifying a key social issue. Additional analysis on the spatial dynamics also tells us that there are significant differences in health status of Indigenous Australians depending on if you live in rural, remote or metropolitan areas (Paradies et al. 2008). These differences are symptomatic of the uneven access to public goods for Indigenous Australians. As such place matters in social equity debates. In the geography, planning and urban sociology literature, socio-spatial polarisation has been a dominant framework used to conceptualise how and why place matters in issues of social equity.

The socio-spatial polarisation evidence base is well developed both in Australia and internationally (Sassen 1991; Hamnett 1994; Fainstein et al. 1992; Stillwell 1995; Gibson et al. 1996; Murphy and Watson 1994). It refers to the gap between the 'have' and 'have nots', or less crudely the spatial patterning of social inequality. This means that within urban and rural environments there is locational segmentation according:

- Income and wealth
- Access to affordable housing and safe neighbourhoods
- Access to resources and facilities
- Access to labour markets, education and training
- Access to transport and infrastructure (Arthurson 2004).

These inequalities in access can exacerbate poverty and disadvantage, both individually, within communities and also across generations (i.e intergenerational disadvantage). It also leads to stigmatisation, marginalisation and social exclusion (Fincher 2008; Morrison 2010). Well resourced areas can create healthy, vibrant and connected communities through the creation of physically attractive environments with high levels of social inclusion and sense of belonging within the community (Carpenter 2006).

Schaff et al. (2013) argue that health inequalities are disproportionately experienced by groups according to their race; ethnicity, income, and where they live. The research also suggests that government disinvestment in local places, in terms of infrastructure, services, facilities and place making, decreases economic and educational opportunities, leads to a lack of affordable housing, poor access to healthy food, safe parks and clean air and water. Furthermore, according to the authors this has a downstream impact on people's health outcomes.

Recent research by Jack (2010) found that children's connections with people are a significant determinant in their life course, however equally important is their attachment to place. In this research the author suggests that children's attachment to place impacts on their sense of belonging, security and contributes to the development of their identity. Likewise Newberger et al. (2010) document evidence in an edited collection of research monographs about the importance place plays in the understanding of inequalities as well as the role it plays in the development of inequalities. The evidence documents the role that place plays in a range of outcomes including:

- Health status.
- Ability to access employment and education.
- How neighbourhood conditions in children impact on the health in later life.
- Safety and security within neighbours and the role that plays in social interactions.
- Poverty and community isolation.
- Discrimination.

2.3 Access to public goods and place

The origins of the term public good is often related to the ways that economists discuss consumption. Public goods are broadly defined in economic terms as those 'things' which are open to consumption by all, without competition. The development of a 20th Century welfare state shifted the notion of public goods to encompass access to resources and facilities that are funded through taxation but are still open to consumption by all. Over time the terminology used to describe public goods has shifted in social policy to refer to goods and services and/or resources and infrastructure. For example in the 1990s social researchers began to conceptualise the inequitable access to public goods through the lens of spatial differentiation. There was an acknowledgment that the manifestation of social equity was spatial.

The growth of the spatial equity paradigm shifted in the 2000s to rethinking the role of place. In particular the notion that place matters to the distribution and access to public goods. Kunzmann (1998) provides an analysis of what spatial equity can mean:

For some, spatial equity is just equal access to basic public facilities, measured in distances, such as accessibility to schools, health facilities or cultural events. For others, spatial equity is more ambitious and would include a choice of jobs, not one; a choice of accessible educational institutions, not just one; a choice of cultural events for different target groups and different age groups, not just a local or regional amateur theatre. And, what becomes more and more important in the emerging information society is that spatial equity could also mean equal access to information (p.103).

According to Dreier et al. (2004) where we live has a significant impact on our lives and lifecourse. More specifically where we live impacts on individuals and households access to employment, education, cultural activities, health services and open space. These have an impact on peoples' immediate and longer term health and wellbeing.

Access to public open space, for example has been found to contribute to increases in exercise (Giles Corti et al. 2005). This in turn is link to better health and well-being outcomes. Kent et al. (2010) also found that access to open space has positive impacts on people's mental health and general well being. The report

also provides a systematic analysis of the evidence linking poor access to open space and health. The evidence overwhelmingly associates increased urban sprawl and sedentary lifestyles with increases in obesity levels.

There are particular groups whose access to public space is diminished, specifically people with disabilities, the elderly and the young. Poorer access to public space creates social isolation and exclusion, which in-turn impacts on individuals' health and well being. Kitchen and Law (2001) argue that people with a disability are excluded from daily activities and use of public space due to the way cities and spaces are designed. As such, the design of cities limits choice and control for people with disabilities. The elderly and the young also are limited in their access to public space. Too often public space is organised and designed in ways that limit choices for some groups. Gleeson & Sipe (2006) suggest that there is increasing awareness of the relationship between children's health and well being and access to public space. Access to public good is not just about where you live but how urban environments are designed.

Bowen et al. (1995) also examine other negative externalities that some communities are subject to that create spatial inequities. For example, they explore the relationship between environmental hazards with race and income in two US cities and found a high correlation between the location of minority households and toxic releases. These relationships have been found in more recent environmental disasters in the US, such as the response to Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans (Thompson 2009).

Race is not the only social determinant that has come into view in recent times. As Australia's population ages, the issue of age friendly urban environments has become prominent within policy.

This lack of access to public goods can create social exclusion and isolation. As polarisation within metropolitan areas continues to grow it can create concentrations of disadvantage, circumstances that have intergenerational impacts. Dreier et al. (2004) argue that the problems associated with spatial polarisation and disadvantage are often the result of poor public policy implementation. As a consequence they see the solution in reshaping government policies that enable a more equitable distribution in access to public goods.

2.4 Outcomes of restricted access to public goods

The scope of what constitute public goods is diverse. What the evidence base clearly identifies is that restricted access to public goods can create and reinforce social inequality. Below is a brief summary of the evidence related to the outcomes for individuals and households in two key research areas, as a result of disproportionate access to public goods. These summaries of two key public goods only provide a brief analysis to demonstrate the importance of finding policy solutions to enhance social equality across the community. The evidence below also clearly establishes the need for any interdisciplinary research on access to public goods to include a component of spatial analysis.

2.4.1 Affordable housing

Poor access to affordable housing is related to a wide range of social inequalities. These can range from limiting peoples access to employment, education, health care (Yates et al. 2007). Likewise poor housing can lead to a range of outcomes that create and further entrench social inequality. For example inadequate housing can lead to poor health outcomes for households, including children; people with unstable housing circumstances can have higher rates of mental health issues; public housing tenants are often disadvantage in access to a vast array of public goods, including computer and internet access, public transport, social services, open space (Mee 2009; Gwyther 2011; Waters 2001; Forster 2011).

Mullins and Western (2001) found that poor housing is directly related to:

- Poor health, economic circumstances and mental health.
- Living in areas of high crime and poverty.
- Low educational attainment rates and success for children.
- Low levels on employment.

A report by Foster et al. (2011) concluded that unstable housing (including insecure tenure and housing stress) can have an effect on people's mental health and wellbeing. Marsh et al. (2000) suggests housing insecurity can also increase people's risk of disability or severe ill-health.

Dockery et al. (2010) too found that poor housing can be linked

to children's development, health and wellbeing. The lack of appropriate housing for young people was linked to their poor access to public goods such as: lack of open space; overcrowding within their household; and restricted access to household amenities.

Research has found that children living in households that are at risk of eviction or have high housing mobility have worse educational, employment and health outcomes in the long term than their stably housed counterparts (Phibbs and Thompson 2011; Mallett et al. 2011; Mee 2010). Phibbs and Thompson (2011) have found that there are relationships between unsatisfactory housing and disease. These include:

- overcrowding and infectious disease
- damp and asthma
- indoor infestations and asthma
- low temperatures and heart disease

There is a lack of affordable housing in locations that have good access to public goods. According to Wulff and Reynolds (2010) lack of diversity in housing (price and tenure) has made Australian cities polarised. This polarisation in house prices according to location creates social disadvantages for some groups. The polarisation of housing diminishes individuals and households access to services, programs and other economic functions of the city. As such the social inequity of the housing affordability crisis is that low income households have restricted access to areas that are well resourced.

2.4.2 Transport

Accessibility to safe, efficient and cost effective transport has been identified as an important component of social equity. The increasing dependence on cars as a means of mobility has had a range of impacts. For example, Whitzman et al. (2010) have shown that children's decreased independence in travel has resulted in an increase in obesity. Other research has link childhood obesity with increases in childhood diabetes (Han et al. 2010). The relationship between the onset of type-2 diabetes, obesity and children's sedentary living is well established in the literature. Likewise Markovic and Lucas (2011) found that increased car dependence also creates social isolation, particularly for people

in the later stages of life or those with a disability. Markovic and Lucas (2011) found that people with low educational attainment and from lower socio-economic backgrounds are more likely to be involved in traffic accidents, particularly children. Traffic related noise lowers quality of life and in children noise can impact on cognition.

Other important impacts of inequitable access to transport include social exclusion. Much of this is related to transport accessibility. Transport accessibility is broadly defined as:

The extent to which land-use and transport systems enable (groups of) individuals to reach activities or destinations by means of a (combination of) transport mode(s) (Geurs and van Wee 2004, p128, cited in Markovic and Lucas 2011, p19).

Markovic and Lucas (2011) identify different components of transport accessibility that are particularly relevant to first world economies. These include:

- Transport availability and access – enables people to engage in a variety of activities that increase their life chances. Increases participation in activities (e.g. education, employment, sport, leisure activities, access services). People living in areas and locations with poor access to transport facilities can become marginalized and isolated.
- Levels of service – the hours and levels of transport service operation impacts on peoples mobility and therefore accessibility to public goods. The hours of operation and cost of public transport disproportionately affects people from lower socio-economic groups.

A number of Australian researchers have undertaken research on the relationship between transport dependency (Currie and Delbosc 2010; Delbosc and Currie 2011; Dodson et al. 2007). These authors expand on the notion of transport dependency and demonstrate that while some households are dependent on cars others are dependent on public transport. Both transport options have their own negative impacts on individuals but their dominance has other negative externalities such as limiting the safe and accessibly use of other modalities (e.g. walking and cycling).

Transport dependency affects groups in different ways. Research by a range of authors has demonstrated that groups such as women, the elderly, people with disabilities, low income households have

been found to have significant transport dependency (Markovic and Lucas 2011; Currie and Delbosc 2010; Delbosc and Currie 2011; Dodson et al. 2007). Other important features from the evidence base include:

- People who are car dependent and live on the urban fringe are constrained by fuel costs, toll way prices, and parking fees. People living closer to the metropolitan centre are well serviced transport options (Dodson et al. 2007).
- Low income households living on the urban fringe experience transport poverty (Currie and Senbergs 2007).
- There is a statistical association between transport dependency and social exclusion. Furthermore there is an association between social exclusion and well being (Currie and Delbosc 2010).
- Well being is low for people with both transport dependency and social exclusion. The most significant cause of social isolation was found to be unemployment (Delbosc and Currie 2011).

The evidence on the role that transport accessibility, as an example of a public good, demonstrates that inequitable access contributes to people's social exclusion and marginalisation.

Interdisciplinary research at the University of Melbourne

3.1 Introduction

Interdisciplinary research at the University at Melbourne is not new. Indeed in many areas of the University collaboration and interdisciplinarity is a core feature across some disciplines (e.g. medicine and public health). In areas that directly respond to issues related to access to public goods the breadth of interdisciplinarity is in its infancy. The chapter will outline the some of the activities that have been undertaken, some prior to the establishment of the Melbourne Social Equity Institute and since, that foster interdisciplinary research activities to address the social equity and access to public goods nexus.

3.2 Research activities

Prior to the establishment of the Melbourne Social Equity Institute there were a significant number of researchers who have demonstrated an interest in working in a collaborative and interdisciplinary manner to address key social policy questions, particularly in relation into access to public goods. A number of activities has been undertaken to address the inequitable access to public goods prior to the formalisation of a stream within the MSEI research groupings.

3.2.1 Industry collaboration

A workshop held in November 2011 with the Brotherhood of St Laurence focusing on social infrastructure. This workshop addressed issues related to the creation of healthier cities into the future. In particular the workshop identified infrastructure gaps in middle and outer suburban Melbourne. The interdisciplinary research engagement included a partnership between researchers from the University of Melbourne, local and state

government representatives, and a wide range of community sector organisations. The aims of the workshop were to: develop a research agenda for social infrastructure provision; strengthen collaborative partnerships between researchers, government and industry; and bring together interdisciplinary and whole-of-government learning on social infrastructure.

The workshop was responding to the proposition that investment in social infrastructure is essential for the health, social wellbeing and economic prosperity of communities. Social infrastructure includes:

- Universal services such as health, education, childcare, community meeting places, arts and culture.
- Open spaces, recreation centres, and housing; and targeted services for women, children, youth.
- Families, people with disability, aged people, and indigenous and culturally diverse people.

The day long workshop discussed current research and future research needs in relation to social equity and access to social infrastructure. The workshop was part of a larger research initiative on Place, Health and Livability, aimed at establishing indicators and integrated policy tools that can assist in shaping planning and design policy towards outcomes that promote health and livability.

3.2.2 Seminars

In October 2012 the place matters stream invited Professor Roz Hansen, (Roz Hansen Consulting Pty Ltd) to address public seminar on the role of planning in metropolitan Melbourne and the implications for economic development. According to Hansen, the new Melbourne Planning Strategy will provide the blueprint for planning Melbourne's future growth and development over the next 30-40 years. During that time metropolitan Melbourne will undergo significant changes in its demographic make-up, urban form and economic structure. At present not all areas of our metropolis present equal opportunities for economic and social participation and yet there is sound evidence showing that communities with greater access to public goods perform better across a wide range of social and economic measures. Hansen suggested that social participation can improve society's

health and well-being. Unfortunately past metropolitan strategies for Melbourne have underplayed, and in some instances failed to recognise the close association between social issues and a person's capacity to contribute to the economy. The public seminar asked the following question: how can the next planning strategy for metropolitan Melbourne deal with these issues so that we can provide the opportunity and the capacity for residents to build a good healthy life?

April 2013 provided an opportunity for collaboration with researchers from other universities in Australia and internationally. In April 2013, Professor Peter Newman, from Curtin University (WA) delivered a public seminar entitled *Deliberative Democracy and Sustainable Transport*. Professor Newman has been driving policy changes towards sustainable transport in Perth, Sydney and Melbourne over the past 30 years. He outlined a new project in India where deliberative democracy has been planned into the structure of a street design exercise in Pune and a train and station upgrading exercise in Bangalore.

In June 2013 an invitation only workshop was organized to launch a report undertaken by Melbourne researchers on livability indicators. The workshop presented the findings from *Liveable, Healthy, Sustainable: what are the key indicators for Melbourne neighbourhoods?*, the first research paper arising from the Place, Health and Liveability (PHL) Research Program. The PHL research program is a partnership between the University of Melbourne (The McCaughey VicHealth Centre for Community Wellbeing and the Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning) and the Victorian Government (Department of Health and the Regional Management Forum for the North and West Metropolitan Region of Melbourne, comprising eight state government departments and 16 local governments). The goal of the program was to create evidence that can inform public policy, to build healthy, liveable and sustainable communities in Victoria and beyond. This invitation-only workshop aimed to discover:

- What are the most powerful neighbourhood level indicators that influence your work?
- How should local governments use neighbourhood level liveability indicators?
- How should the Metropolitan Planning Strategy for Melbourne use indicators?
- How can the Commonwealth government support and respond to neighbourhood liveability indicators?

- Which indicators need most development, in your previous experience?
- How can we best report indicators to influence policy?

In October 2013 Professor Susan Fainstein from Harvard University gave a public lecture on Creating a More Just City. She discussed the fundamental issues around planning and policy with a more just city in sight. What are the possibilities for creating a more just city under conditions of global capitalism and the triumph of neo-liberal ideology? Fainstein argues that using the criteria of diversity, democracy, and equity, one can evaluate existing examples of urban redevelopment and make an argument concerning the leeway for greater justice at the local level and the types of policies that would further this goal. Wide variation of policy in cities of world within capitalist political economy shows the potential for creative state role. Changing the discourse of planning and policy making from competitiveness to justice in itself would contribute to progressive change.

Finally February 2014 brings together a wide range of researchers for the Imagining Social Equity conference. The range of research dealing with access to public goods is extensive and includes:

- Housing and neighbourhoods – dealing with issues such as the role of open space on health; housing affordability and health outcomes; housing and disadvantage.
- Place based initiatives to address racism in schools
- Creating inclusive cities for people with disabilities; the elderly; migrants, CALD groups and refugees.
- Indigenous health and well being
- Equity and education
- Transport and its role in access and equity.

3.2.3 Internal grants schemes

The University has prioritized and elevated interdisciplinary research, particularly within non-traditional disciplines. This is most evident by the formation of MSEI but also in the range of interdisciplinary research grant schemes currently in operation across the University. As the table on the following page demonstrates, there has been significant investment in interdisciplinary research.

Scheme	Grants	PM Grants
MSEI (2011-13)	19	6
Interdisciplinary Seed Funding Scheme (2010-13)	92	17
Carlton Connect	33	6

This data was accessed through the University website and other information provided to the authors. It is not a comprehensive enumeration.

The research that has been funded in the past and currently that deals with issues of access to public goods includes:

- Urban placemaking, social equity and cultural diversity
- Transport systems, Energy, Social Exclusion, Health and Well-being
- Affordable family housing in the inner city
- Health and Wellbeing in Broadband-enabled Greenfield Communities
- Place, Health and Liveability
- Women’s economic security across the lifecourse
- Disaster recovery
- Poverty and disadvantaged neighbourhoods
- Drug use and social exclusion amongst Indigenous communities

3.3 Research projects at Melbourne

This section includes an analysis of interdisciplinary research on access to public goods currently being undertaken at The University of Melbourne. The analysis makes preliminary conclusions as to how this research contributes to the evidence base on access to public goods. This is not an exhaustive list but includes projects that demonstrate varying levels of interdisciplinarity. The purpose of this process is to provide recommendations and conclusions about the best way to enhance research being undertaken at the

University of Melbourne that addresses the social equity and access to public goods nexus.

Using the Melbourne University database (Melbourne Research Windows) an analysis was undertaken of research at the university that dealt directly with social equity. The objective was to identify research related to social equity and to enable a mapping process. The following search terms were used in Melbourne Research Windows:

- Social equity
- Place equity
- Place and disadvantage
- Access health care and education
- Access to jobs
- Place health
- Place making
- Place matters
- Access to open space
- Access to employment, transport, housing,
- Healthy cities
- People and places

This search identified 494 research activities within the University of Melbourne addressing social equity. The results were filtered to assess the direct relevance to the place matters theme. This process identified 191 research activities from the initial 494. Of the 191, 157 were identified as research grants, while the remaining 34 were publications. The publications were excluded from the analysis. The 157 projects were then mapped against the Melbourne University grand challenges to determine what research is being conducted that best fits within the University's current strategic directions (n=94). In addition research that was commenced prior to 2009 was excluded and there were 48 projects identified as dealing directly with the social equity/ access to public goods.

The research being conducted at the University addressing social equity in the areas of access to public goods cuts across a range of Schools as shown in the table on the following page.

School	Projects
Architecture, Building and Planning	4
Medicine	5
Education	9
Business and Economics	1
Resource Management and Geography	1
Population and Global Health	28
Total	48

The research also covers a diverse range of topics as seen in the following table.

Topic	Projects
Access to Education	2
Access to Open Space	1
Employment	2
Housing	4
People and Place	2
Place-based Disadvantage	3
Place Equity	6
Place Health	16
Place Matters	1
Social Equity	11
Total	48

The mapping of research at the University also included a crude analysis of the number of research projects addressing key social policy questions being posed in Australia today, such as:

- Disability
- Housing
- Transport
- Open space
- Health
- Education

Only 31 projects across the University are being undertaken that directly address the social/spatial equity issue and access to public goods. Of these almost half were being undertaken on health inequalities.

Opportunities for Future Collaboration

The Melbourne Social Equity Institute is a mechanism employed by the University of Melbourne to enhance the research efforts in the areas of social equity and social justice. The charter of the Institute is also to foster and encourage interdisciplinary collaboration between researchers within the University and develop partnerships with key stakeholders including government, NGOs and the wider community.

This report investigated one of the four research themes within the Institute, place matters. The national and international evidence clearly establishes that poor access to public goods creates social inequality. The research has also demonstrated that poor access to public goods can result in:

- Diminished health and well being.
- Social isolation and exclusion.

Critical to these findings was the importance that place plays in social inequality; that place matters and makes a difference to peoples life chances.

As the evidence shows, there are critical policy questions related to access to public space that need to be addressed. Similarly the analysis of what research is being undertaken at the University of Melbourne shows that there are key policy areas where little or no research is being undertaken. These areas include:

- Disability – The implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme in 2012 represents the most significant social policy initiatives in Australia in the last 50 years. Undoubtedly the NDIS changes the policy and fiscal configuration of how people with disabilities live their lives. This new way will create fundamental shifts in how community services are delivered, when, where are how.
- Housing affordability – While Australia has a strong tradition in housing research, this is not reflected in the research being undertaken at the University. The lack of affordable

housing requires significant policy attention now and into the future. The housing system requires significant changes to attend to the range of long term and intergenerational impacts that a lack of safe, secure and affordable housing produces.

- Transport – needs to be about social policy not just modelling, climate change.
- Education – currently has a primary focus on curriculum issues.

The University of Melbourne has invested significantly in the research efforts in access to public goods and health. The research being undertaken is:

- Collaborative
- Interdisciplinary
- Addressing key policy questions

4.1 Suggestion for the future

Interdisciplinary research harnessed through MSEI provides a significant opportunity for research at the University to continue to engage in key policy questions. There are areas where research effort might need to change which are outlined below.

1. Of critical importance is to shift the emphasis of research questions from broad structural questions, towards more specific and targeted research that engages and addresses the needs of policy makers. The evidence regarding interdisciplinary collaborative research shows that often times, research being pursued is more focussed on individual research interests and addressing gaps in the evidence base. In contrast policy makers are becoming more focussed on using evidence that directly addresses their jurisdictional interests and policy questions. This is increasingly so within the current fiscal environment where budgets are tight.

2. Research environments within Universities are often at odds with how government and policy makers use evidence. For example, Category 1 funding sources are directed towards longer research programs, while policy makers require a faster turn around of evidence. Longer term projects do not necessarily fit within the shorter policy cycles of government. This creates a dilemma for researchers and university administrators.

3. MSEI has been an effective mechanism to address issues related to public goods. The research efforts on access to public goods, are however overwhelmingly concentrated in one area, public health. While this is a positive example of success, there are other areas where investment could be further supported, particularly housing and disability research.

4.2 Sources of funding

The dilemma for researchers is that sources of Category 1 funding is measured and celebrated within the current system. Other sources of funding that do not fit within this categorisation could put researchers at a potential disadvantage. In addition other funding bodies require research to be undertaken within a consultancy framework, with shorter timeframes and with a focus on research questions that directly address the needs of the funding body. There exists large numbers of philanthropic organisations who have funding available, however this requires a more strategic approach to be taken by researchers. This includes a shift from trying to force individual research interests to fit within funding guidelines, to a consideration of directly addressing the evidence needs of funding bodies. Similarly, while governments are operating in a tighter fiscal environment, they still require and fund research activities. This demands a different and better engagement with government departments and officials to undertake research that meets their policy needs.

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Appendix 1- Typologies of Interdisciplinary Research

Degree of synthesis		Author	
	Lattuca (2001)	Klein (1996)	Rosenfield (1992)
Least	<p>Informed disciplinarity disciplinary questions may be informed by concepts or theories from another discipline</p> <p>Synthetic disciplinarity questions that link disciplines (question either belongs to both or neither disciplines)</p>	<p>Instrumental interdisciplinarity bridge building between fields. Problem-solving activity, does not seek synthesis or fusion of different perspectives</p>	<p>Multidisciplinary teams work in parallel or sequentially from their specific disciplinary base to address a common problem</p>
Moderate	<p>Synthetic disciplinarity</p>	<p>Epistemological interdisciplinarity restructuring a former approach to defining a field</p>	<p>Interdisciplinary teams work jointly but still from a discipline-specific base to address a common problem</p>
Most	<p>Transdisciplinary: the application of theories, concepts, or methods across disciplines with the intent of developing an overarching synthesis</p> <p>Conceptual interdisciplinarity: questions without a compelling disciplinary basis</p>	<p>Transdisciplinary: a movement toward a coherence, unity, and simplicity of knowledge</p>	<p>Transdisciplinary: teams work using a shared conceptual framework, drawing together discipline-specific theories, concepts, and approaches to address a common problem</p>



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