

Reassembling the city: understanding resident-led collective property sales

City Futures Research Centre and the City Planning Program at UNSW is offering an MPhil scholarship on the theme of owner-led housing redevelopment. The scholarship is associated with a new Australian Research Council project called **Reassembling the city: understanding resident-led collective property sales**. The project investigators are A/Prof Simon Pinnegar, A/Prof Hazel Easthope and Dr Laura Crommelin, and A/Prof Kristian Ruming of Macquarie University.

This 3-year ARC project aims to investigate the emerging phenomenon of residential collective sales - where neighbours come together to sell their properties collectively - and the implications for urban residents and governments at local, metropolitan and national levels. It will provide a detailed empirical analysis of this phenomenon, including mapping, case studies and interviews across Sydney and Vancouver, two cities at the forefront of collective sales activity. Collaboration between neighbours as instigators of urban change raises myriad questions. It brings the tensions between housing as an asset and housing as a home into sharp relief. It blurs the boundaries between notions of individual and collective interests vis-à-vis property rights. It challenges conventional understandings of top-down versus bottom-up processes of urban development and the role and nature of the growth coalitions reshaping contemporary cities.

The MPhil scholar will be expected to develop and carry out a piece of research that supports the wider aims of the ARC project, but is encouraged to focus in depth on a particular aspect of the collective sales phenomenon. This might include (but is not limited to) one of the following areas:

- **Reconceptualising property rights:** Advancing conceptual/theoretical understandings of property ownership and interpretations of private, public and hybrid property 'rights' as cities and communities negotiate the change to more compact forms. Such a focus would build on increased academic interest in legal geographies and the politics of property, and how innovative practices around the world can feed into novel understandings of property rights and 'settlement' in growing Australian cities.
- **Comparative analysis:** The broader ARC project has two primary case study cities (Sydney, Australia and Vancouver, Canada). We will also be exploring complementary insights through three other cities where interesting examples of hybrid property rights can be seen, notably Hong Kong, Auckland and Fukuoka. Topics that drill down into collective sales activity and outcomes in a different case study city, or which explore differences in governance and policy contexts across different jurisdictions, are of interest.
- **The behavioural aspects of collective sales processes:** projects which examine the decision-making processes of collective sales participants from perspectives such as psychology or behavioural economics would be of interest. Such research might consider how participants define and rationalise their choices, how they weigh up factors in reaching a decision, and the emotional impact of being involved a collective sale.
- **Collective sales in the commercial context:** while the broader ARC project focuses on residential collective sales, non-residential land assembly efforts are also common. Projects examining the similarities and differences between residential and non-residential collective sales would be welcomed, and could compare the decision-making processes or financial assessments that occur in these two contexts.
- **Collective redevelopment processes:** in some cases, particularly in strata, residents may choose to remain involved in the redevelopment that follows a collective sale process. This may be through an agreement to buy back into a redeveloped building, or through a more proactive process where existing residents actually undertake the redevelopment process themselves. Projects which examine the outcomes of these approaches, and the experiences of those residents who participate, would be of interest.

The above are provided as a non-exhaustive starting point, and the team is happy to explore other potential research topics which contribute to the project and help advance our understanding of alternative models of urban renewal and redevelopment, and disrupt dominant conceptions of property rights in the compact city.

The MPhil will be supervised by A/Prof Simon Pinnegar with a supervisory team drawn from City Futures and the Faculty of Built Environment dependent on the research focus. The MPhil student will benefit from being part of the HDR community within the Faculty as well as enjoy support and opportunities provided through City Futures – one of Australia's leading urban research centres.

Scholarship Value

The successful candidate will receive a stipend of \$28,092 (2020 rate) per year which will be indexed annually for the duration of the award. The duration of the award shall be for a maximum of two years.

Entry Requirements

- Eligible students will have completed a Bachelor Degree in geography, urban planning, urban studies, law, psychology, economics or a related discipline with First Class Honours
- The applicant must be eligible to study for an MPhil in the Faculty of Built Environment, UNSW. For more information on eligibility and how to apply, please visit [our website](#).
- The scholarship is available to new applicants only.
- The scholarship is available to full-time candidates only.
- Students will be able to commence their degree in Term 3 2020 (September).

Nationality

Both domestic and international students are encouraged to apply. For international applicants, a fee waiver may be available but is not guaranteed. Please note that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it is not yet clear whether international students will be able to begin a higher degree research program at UNSW in 2020, unless already in the country.

Application process

Potential applicants are strongly encouraged to get in touch with A/Prof Simon Pinnegar [by email](#) in the first instance, for more information and to discuss how their specific research interests can align with the wider ARC project.

Following this initial expression of interest, candidates will be required to submit:

- a letter of application outlining your potential research topic in relation to the project and interest in undertaking an MPhil (no more than 2 pages)
- a CV
- proof of meeting English language requirements
- relevant academic transcripts
- contact details for two academic referees

Your application will be considered by the Reassembling the City ARC Project team, and the successful candidate will then be advised to formally apply for Higher Degree Research enrolment through [UNSW Apply Online](#)

Applications to be received by 18 May 2020.