RMIT
UNIVERSITY

Global Cities
Research Institute

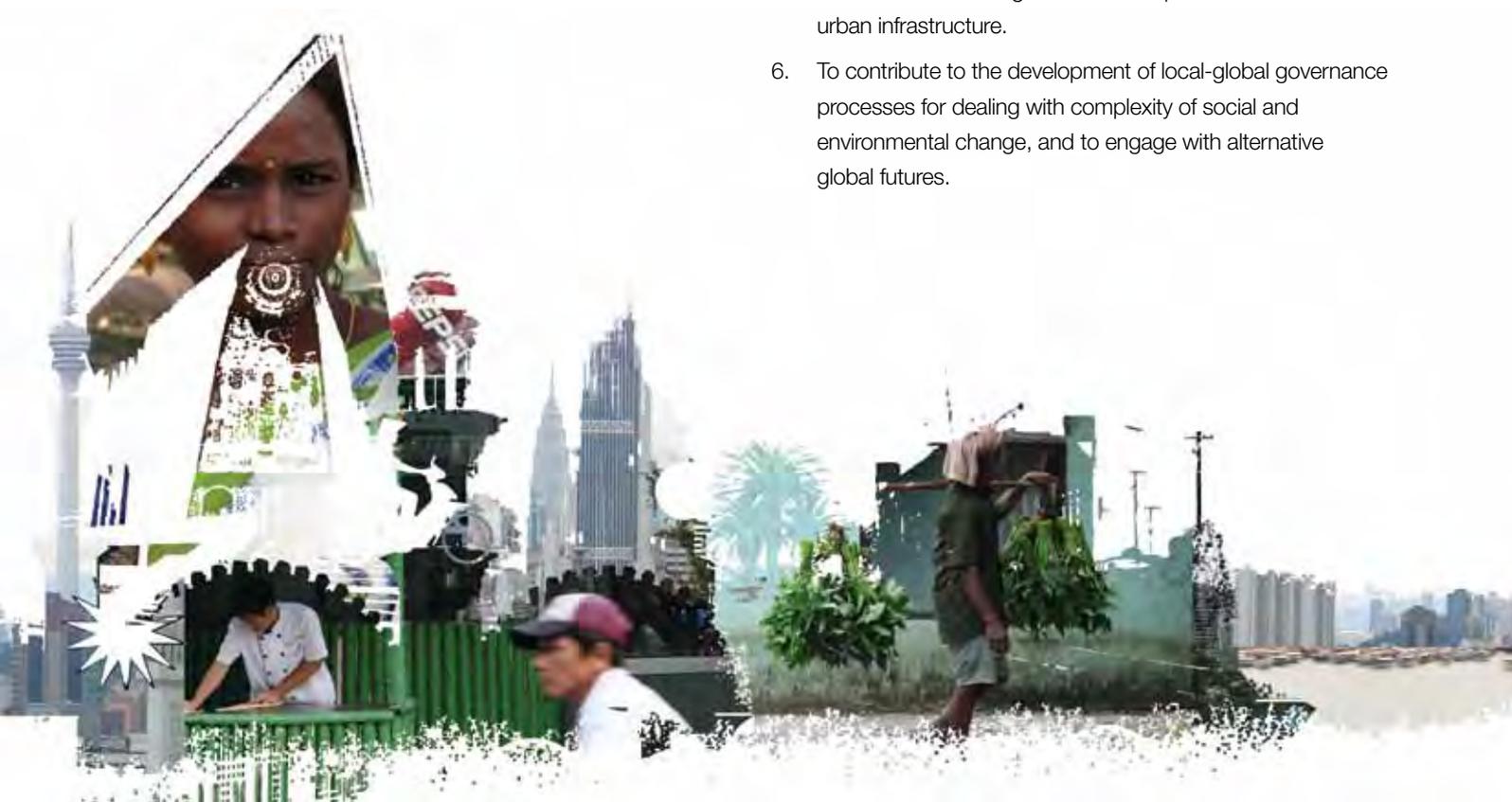# Insight, Partnerships and Engaged Alternatives

The Global Cities Research Institute directly addresses the challenge of sustainability, resilience, security, adaptation and reconciliation through engaged research programs with significant on-the-ground impact. We emphasize these questions in the face of processes of globalization and global climate change.

The Institute was inaugurated in 2006 to bring together key researchers at RMIT University, Australia, working on understanding the complexity of globalizing urban settings from provincial centres to mega-cities. The research is highly collaborative, linking with institutions and people around the world in long-term partnerships.

Focusing on a number of carefully-chosen cities and their hinterlands, the Institute engages in cutting-edge and applied research that has real-world consequences for communities, governments and organizations. Our overall aim is to develop interpretations and strategies for building sustainable cities in the world today, thus contributing to the quality of human life and the viability of ecologies in those places.

Objectives

1. To develop an overall understanding of the ways in which patterns of globalization and global climate change impact upon the human condition.

2. To explore the basic sources of insecurity and sustainability for different cities, with particular reference to the following:

   • risk analyses of urban infrastructure;

   • structural analyses of insecurity and vulnerability;

   • social analyses of cities, including through developing indices of sustainability; and

   • interpretive analyses of the conditions of adaptation to climate change.

3. To understand the resilience and adaptive capacities of communities in relation to climate change, globalization and other conditions of insecurity.

4. To examine questions of cultural transformation and develop an understanding of the conditions for alternative pathways to learning, knowledge-exchange, reconciliation and cross-community co-operation.

5. To generate policies and strategies aimed at maximizing social learning for cross-cultural dialogue and reconciliation; addressing sources of insecurity; minimizing the impact of natural and human-induced disasters and conflicts; promoting approaches to reconstruction that integrate physical rebuilding with political, cultural, and economic renewal; and applying environmentally and culturally sustainable technologies and techniques in the areas of urban infrastructure.

6. To contribute to the development of local-global governance processes for dealing with complexity of social and environmental change, and to engage with alternative global futures.

Key Research Programs

Climate Change Adaptation

How will cities best adapt to the anticipated impacts of global warming?

This Program's research approach is based on the integration of quantitative, qualitative, and participatory methodologies. Its activity is deliberately multi-disciplinary, cutting across academic schools and disciplines, as well as being shaped by new forms of engagement between scientific, policy, and wider stakeholder communities. This integrative approach to research is essential in order to effectively address the complexity of global environmental change and the real-world issues associated with a changing climate.

Globalization and Culture

How can we understand the intensification and expansion of cultural flows through globalizing cities and their regions?

This program is engaged in a range of research projects that investigate cultural aspects of globalization in local and global forums, and in cities around the world. Bringing together theoretical inquiry with empirically grounded and socially engaged research, Program members use interconnected methodologies in order to understand how globalization impacts upon cultural expression and how culture manifests in urban settings.

Community Sustainability

How do communities shape, and how are they shaped by, processes of globalization and the use of information and communication technologies?

This program is developing strengths in empirical research in cities, developing policy tools for measuring indices of community sustainability across these cities, and translating this research for more effective theory and policies around community sustainability. The study of communities is vital to understanding how cities can sustain themselves, given their unprecedented global growth. It is critical to think of community as a constant process of formation and reformation in response to ever-changing local and global conditions.

Sustainable Urban and Regional Futures

How will cities respond to the increasing demands on infrastructure?

This program will primarily address issues of social and environmental sustainability in urban areas experiencing global economic forces and climate change. The growing geographical footprints of cities are intensifying the consumption of natural resources. This phenomenon conflicts with the need to reduce urban environmental footprints, implying significant reconfiguration of the social and technical dimensions of the urban realm. Additionally, there is growing socio-spatial inequality and problems of social exclusion, increasing the likelihood of urban social conflict.

Human Security

How can cities harness their immense resources to cope with crises?

This Program focuses on the pathways for recovering from conflict, for building resilience, and for reducing disaster-vulnerability. This can be achieved by understanding and building on the strengths of cities and working to reduce the forces promoting violence and vulnerability to disaster. From the perspective taken by this program, security is human-centred, finding its location within communities, not an abstracted, unified understanding of the state. The promotion of health, protection against violence and sustainable environmental and economic development requires reflexive policies that effectively build upon existing communal and cultural dynamics in order to foster resilience and harness creative and productive responses to crises and conflict.

Urban Decision-Making and Complex Systems

How can technology assist in decision-making regarding such things as urban planning and risk analysis?

This program seeks to develop general approaches and tools that can be applied to a range of urban decision-making issues and questions. This involves the development and exploration of technologies and techniques to assist urban decision-makers in understanding the complex systems in which they are developing policies and infrastructure. The program aims to take specific questions and issues, and explore the use of leading-edge technology to contribute to addressing these questions and issues, with a view to building strong expertise in the interdisciplinary space between the social sciences and technology.

Contact Us

Director
Paul James

Deputy Director
Nevzat Soguk

Manager
Frank Yardley

Technology Directions Manager
Liam Magee

Research Administrator
Melissa Postma

Program Leaders and Managers

Darryn McEvoy	Program Leader, Climate Change Adaptation
Jane Mullett	Program Manager, Climate Change Adaptation
Manfred Steger	Co-Program Leader, Globalization and Culture
Chris Hudson	Co-Program Leader, Globalization and Culture
Supriya Singh	Program Leader, Community Sustainability
Yaso Nadarajah	Program Manager, Community Sustainability
Ralph Horne	Co-Program Leader, Sustainable Urban and Regional Futures
John Fien	Co-Program Leader, Sustainable Urban and Regional Futures
Prem Chhetri	Program Manager, Sustainable Urban and Regional Futures
Jeff Lewis	Co-Program Leader, Human Security
John Handmer	Co-Program Leader, Human Security
Robin Cameron	Program Manager, Human Security
Lin Padgham	Program Leader, Urban Decision-Making and Complex System

Street Address
RMIT Building 96
Level 2, 17-23 Lygon Street
Carlton VIC 3053
Australia

Postal Address
GPO Box 2476
Melbourne VIC 3001
Australia

Telephone
+61 3 9925 8322

Facsimile
+61 3 9925 0284

Email
info@global-cities.info

www.global-cities.info

www.rmit.edu.au