



UCL URBAN LABORATORY

Activities Report

2021—2023



Activities Report 2021–2023



In August 2021, just as we were emerging from the Covid-19 pandemic and teaching was returning face-to-face (albeit masked), Urban Lab was reconstituted as an academic unit, and I became a de facto Head of Department. Following on from intensive online negotiations with the Urban Lab community around our change of status the previous academic year, that first term was a challenge. We had no departmental staff for two months, and my time was largely dedicated

to the recruitment of a new centre manager, two new lecturers, a curator, and the final approval of our long-planned Global Urbanism MASc as a new programme located in our own department — as well as the ongoing planning meetings relating to the construction, fit-out and governance of our workspace and Urban Room at UCL East. Yet it was an exciting and inspiring period, emerging from the restrictions imposed by the pandemic into what felt like an optimistic new chapter of Urban Lab's existence, anchored in The Bartlett Faculty of the Built Environment as an explicitly cross-disciplinary unit and portal to other faculties: modelling what we hope can be a new kind of departmental identity.

It also felt like a positive moment in urban discourse, as we embraced the opportunities the pandemic seemed to offer for re-thinking normative models of urban governance and urbanisation. A great deal of the 2020/21 academic year had been spent grappling with the very meaning of 'cityness' and urban experience once emptied of social interaction and access to public spaces. Our two main online symposium events — *Covid and the Urban* (March 2021), and *Museums, Cities, Power* (June 2021) — interrogated the implications of epidemiology and quarantine for urban governance and accepted norms of public culture and urban communal life, while the pandemic also exposed the impact of climate breakdown and irreversible damage to the natural environment on the sustainability of cities. Much public discourse was focused on ideas of 'building back better', offering hope that urban policy and development would open up towards the production of new, sustainable and just urban futures. We hoped that our own new Master's programme would make a significant contribution to this, bringing forward both a new generation of young urbanists equipped with the skills and critical capacity to make a difference, and a new imaginary and conceptualisation of the urban 'built environment' as a hybrid urban/natural ecosystem harmoniously cohabited by humans of all backgrounds and non-human species.

Yet much of 2021/22 was spent embroiled in complex institutional processes, while the world around us forged ahead with 'business as usual', lifting the lid off construction and reverting to ever more entrenched conservative politics, alarmingly short on vision and radical ideas, while

the climate crisis raged on and global conflicts intensified. During this period, Urban Lab trained its sights on establishing its departmental staff community and preparing for the launch of its new programme at UCL East in autumn 2022. Our spring series of urban walks heading east paved the way towards the official arrival of UCL in the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in November.

This was preceded by our *State of the Legacy* conference in September, reviewing a decade of Olympic regeneration promises for east London. The event embodied the hope and deflation experienced by urbanists and ordinary people alike during the recovery from the pandemic, bringing forward a wealth of community criticism directed at the agencies entrusted with equitable, sustainable and just urban development in rapidly densifying and expanding urban agglomerations such as London. Urban Lab's network of academics and students subsequently dedicated another year (its 18th) of extensive enquiry into the 'wicked challenges' that cities globally share in common, with a particular focus on learning from Johannesburg, through its teaching partnership with the University of Witwatersrand, as well as a number of other cities such as Kingston, Skardu, Chennai, Accra, Medellín, Beirut, São Paulo, Guatemala City, Istanbul, Shanghai, Melbourne and Paris.

In this troubling context of global instability and injustice, we are buoyed with hope through our rich and varied academic collaborations and external partnerships, embracing the opportunities that the Urban Room has brought to have a grounded presence and space for participation in east London, as well as the unexpected benefits reaped from enforced online working during lockdowns to develop our international relationships and interactions. As a member organisation of the Urban Agency III network of European and international urban studies centres co-ordinated by the University of Antwerp, we have particularly enjoyed the opportunities our meetings have offered for therapeutic comparison of our experiences of the challenges and excitement of cross-disciplinary urban research in institutional settings defined by complex urban conditions.

As I prepare to stand down in May 2024 as Director and Head of Department, following two terms of privileged tenure in this post, I'd like to thank all my dedicated colleagues for their invaluable support. I know that UCL Urban Laboratory will continue to make a significant contribution to the way that urban experience is understood and shaped by urban processes, and develop from strength to strength.

Dr Clare Melhuish
Director, UCL Urban Laboratory
(May 2024)

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Forewords

View of the new UCL East campus in the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, with City Mill Skate in the foreground. Photo by Sophie Mepham.

Urban Lab has always been a great example of UCL's capacity for connection and collaboration across disciplinary boundaries. Since its founding over 15 years ago, this vital institutional space has enabled researchers, students, practitioners and community partners to come together to interpret and shape contemporary cities, all while pushing the conceptual and methodological boundaries of what constitutes 'urban studies'. Since the last iteration of this report, Urban Lab has embarked on a number of new ventures that build on this legacy of innovation.

From launching a new MASc in Global Urbanism and opening the Urban Room at UCL East, to hiring multiple new staff and becoming formalised as an official department within UCL's governance structure, Urban Lab has gone from strength to strength while maintaining the ethos of cross-faculty collaboration. Urban Lab is ideally placed to continue building UCL's profile in the field of collaborative, engaged urban research while addressing the challenge of how we create just and sustainable cities.

Christoph Lindner
Dean, The Bartlett Faculty of the Built Environment, UCL
Professor of Urban Studies

Simply put the Urban Lab has been a delight to watch and to support. It has an incredible track record of events and activities that have been instrumental in delivering impact. Core to that success has been the ability of the Urban Lab to recognise opportunities that affect a wide range of communities, and to develop, then adopt innovative ways to make a real difference.

Strong leadership and an enabled team working together and with a common purpose has provided a vibrant 'can-do' ethos. Having co-directors drawn from across UCL has also been a fundamental part of this success story. I'm very much looking forward to the next year of this brilliant initiative.

Nigel Titchener-Hooker
Dean, Faculty of Engineering, UCL
Professor of Biochemical Engineering

It has been a privilege to see the Urban Laboratory continue to thrive as a cross-faculty, interdisciplinary research hub, uniting urban research across the arts, humanities, social sciences, technology, and the built environment.

The Urban Lab continues to address a range of timely issues — Feminist Cities, Housing Urbanism, Queer Infrastructure and Wasteland — to name a few. The research insights generated from the Lab's priority areas are global in scope and applicability, making these interdisciplinary collaborations ever more essential to addressing today's urban challenges.

With the official opening of the UCL East campus, it's been wonderful to see the UCL Urban Room come to life as a hands-on, research-led, public-facing space where academics, students, practitioners and community partners can come together to engage with urban issues. Students from UCL's School for the Creative and Cultural Industries have benefited greatly from the opportunities provided by this exciting and dynamic space.

I offer my sincere thanks and congratulations to Lab Director, Professor Clare Melhuish, and the entire UCL Urban Laboratory team, for their outstanding, impactful contribution to our understanding of the urban experience.

Jennifer Hudson
Executive Dean, Faculty of Social and Historical Sciences,
UCL Professor of Political Behaviour



One of the advantages of working at a large university is the seemingly limitless potential for new encounters. Having worked around the world since completing my Master's in Cultural Heritage Studies at UCL, returning to the campus as an employee in 2019 felt surreal. But within a few months I was sat in a lively auditorium for Urban Lab's *At the Frontiers of the Urban* conference, excited to be making new connections across disciplines and countries while building my knowledge on topics I engaged with as a student.

I began my secondment in the Urban Lab at the same time Covid-19 brought daily life to a standstill. While socialising and travel abruptly ceased, the Urban Lab network continued to grow and develop activity through online and outdoor events. I gained new skills by producing my first podcast series *Museums, Cities, Cultural Power* with Professor Monica Degan, the Urban Miscellanea student society was born, and we launched our Urban Walks series curated by Joseph Cook.

As the world emerged from lockdown, I took on the centre manager role full time to support the Urban Lab in its new chapter as a department within The Bartlett. In September 2023, we welcomed the second cohort of Global Urbanism MASc students to UCL East, hosting a small get together one evening in UCL Urban Room during welcome week. Anybody walking past would see an everyday scene of friends and colleagues mingling with drinks and nibbles, against a backdrop of music, plants and exhibition pieces. But we can now all appreciate how precious it is to be physically together in this way.

Beyond that, I value the thought and energy of our team that brings these moments into being. From the careful recruitment of our fantastic academics and curator, to the design and setup of the Urban Room itself and the collaboration between departments which enabled our *In Practice* student showcase — all this hard work pays off when I see new encounters take place. Most special to me is the creation of our Ruth Glass Scholarship which enables students who would otherwise be unable to attend UCL to be part of our community.

It was thanks to an AHRC award that I was able to study at UCL at all, and from this blossomed many of the friendships, connections and opportunities that have built the life I have now. As such, finding ways to make research and education at Urban Lab accessible, enjoyable and rewarding will always be my priority.

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014		
TIMELINE	2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inspired by discussions between geography and architecture, the UCL Urban Laboratory was established by geographer Prof Matthew Gandy, quickly drawing in colleagues from other fields such as anthropology, engineering, film studies and urban sociology. 										
	2005	→			2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Urban Laboratory continues to grow, launching a dedicated website, and creating the Urban Salon seminar series in partnership with several London universities. 						
				2008	→				2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Urban Laboratory is awarded £250,000 by the Provost's Strategic Development Fund (PSDF). 		
				2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The interdisciplinary Urban Studies MSc is launched, now recognised as a flagship programme in the field. 		2009		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inaugural Cities Methodologies exhibition—'a marketplace of urbanism'—initiated with the Slade School of Fine Art. We begin hosting affiliated PhD students in urbanism from across the university and launch a student-led doctoral network, Stadtkolloquium. 			
								2011		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Urbanist and architectural historian Ben Campkin becomes director. Ongoing institutional commitment and funding for the Urban Laboratory is provided by a pioneering collaboration between UCL faculties. 		
									2013			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launch of the first <i>Urban Pamphleteer</i>, containing a range of articles on Future & Smart Cities. The seventh issue was published in summer 2018. First full-time researcher appointed with funding from UCL Estates to work on university-led urban regeneration case studies, published in 2015. We become a partner in the Urban Lab+ international network of urban laboratories, funded by the European Union's Erasmus Mundus programme.
		2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	
URBAN LAB	2015										<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The City Centre in UCL's Department of English merges with the Urban Lab to form Cities Imaginaries, a new strand of work on the cultural representation of cities, led by Matthew Beaumont. 	
	2016										<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launch of Cities Methodologies anthology <i>Engaged Urbanism</i> with Free Word Centre. LGBTQ+ nightlife spaces research initiated by Ben Campkin and Lo Marshall, in collaboration with community groups Raze Collective and the Queer Spaces network. A comprehensive report commissioned by the Greater London Authority is published in 2017. 	
	2017										<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Urban Lab Exchange launches to deliver professional short courses. 	
	2018										<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anthropologist Dr Clare Melhuish becomes Director. Launch of the Urban Laboratory's collaborative theme of Waste. The Urban Laboratory organises important international conference—<i>At the Frontiers of the Urban</i>—a three-day event featuring over 150 speakers, investigating how urban concepts and practices are responding to global change. 	
	2020										<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launch of our first Biennial Theme—Emergency. 	
	2021										<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UCL Urban Laboratory officially becomes a department of The Bartlett Faculty of the Built Environment. Urban Lab co-hosts <i>Museums, Cities, Cultural Power</i>, an online symposium. 	
	2022										<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launch of our second Biennial Theme—Memory. Launch of the Global Urbanism MASc, with Dr Nishat Awan and Dr Joe Penny appointed as lecturers. <i>State of the Legacy</i> conference marking 10th anniversary of London 2012 Games. 	
	2023										<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opening of the UCL Urban Room at the new UCL East Campus in the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park with Kara Blackmore appointed as Curator. 	
	2024										<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dr Catalina Ortiz is appointed as the next UCL Urban Lab Director. 	

Highlights

Museums, Cities, Cultural Power

Black Urbanisms

Urban Lab Walks

State of the Legacy

Cities Imaginaries

HIGHLIGHTS



1) DIVERSE
COMMUNITY

2) TO GET LOCALS INVOLVED, MEET THE
NEEDS OF THE PEOPLE.
MAKE SURE EVERYONE HAS A VOICE.
THE PUBLIC FUND AND INVESTMENT BOARD
OF THE PEOPLE

Museums, Cities, Cultural Power

Symposium 2021



Image Manuela Barz 2021.

The idea to organise a symposium to explore the relationships between museums and their surrounding urban environment arose from a study I conducted in collaboration with the Museum of London in 2017 on the sense of place of the Smithfield Market area. To inform the new museum's design and curatorial content, the study analysed the changing identity of the Smithfield area, drawing on advanced digital and experiential methodologies quantified for the museum in a series of evocative digital maps. These maps highlight the experiential dynamics, meaning the sensory, temporal and emotional markers of the area, and has informed the museum's interpretation plan as they relocate in 2026 to Smithfield Market.

The museum's Head of Creative Partnerships, Lauren Parker and I had lively discussions on the role the updated Museum of London would have not just as a cultural institution but as a new and influential building and neighbour in the public realm of the area. As we discussed the interactions of the new museum building and its activities with the Smithfield area, we started looking at other museums across the world and their relationships with and activities in their neighbourhoods. A key question emerged for us: *How can museums enter into dialogue with their surroundings architecturally, culturally and socially?* It quickly became clear to us that there are complex power relations at stake and many different ways of being and making museums — a comparative analysis was therefore essential to explore different approaches to museum design and implementation in a range of urban contexts. We were particularly interested in two questions:

- How can museums be designed to appeal to more diverse and broader global and local audiences?
- What is the role of city museums in contemporary urban environments and their relationship to the city?

Having attended some of the international and ground-breaking events the Urban Lab organises, we got in touch with the Urban Lab to discuss how to organise an international and comparative event around the questions of museums, cities and cultural power. We secured funding for the event from the



Image Annie Rickard Straus 2021.

Brunel University Seminar Awards, UCL Urban Lab and the Arts Council England.

The preparation for the symposium was interrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic that threw up new questions about the role museums play as civic institutions in cities, such as: *Post-Covid, what is the role of a city museum where the inner city is ‘emptying out’?* The Black Lives Matter protests further highlighted the importance of museums asking important questions around participation and representation of a diversity of bodies and voices: *How can museums represent and be of value to a wide cross section of society?*

Such questions led us to organise the online symposium in 2021 across three key themes: place, people and power — and to invite academics, curators and activists from across the world to compare a diversity of museum buildings, curatorial approaches and political activism in different urban contexts. The aim of the symposium was to create an open space to discuss the evolving power relationships between museums and their neighbourhoods. This led us to invite very diverse examples of museum making from the V&A East and the Black Cultural Archives to the Centre for Contemporary Culture Barcelona and District 6 Museum, Cape Town. We also invited attendants to take part in a series of lunchtime activities from Julie’s Bicycle’s Creative Climate Chats to the Museum of Homelessness discussing how to make museums in the 21st century.

Looking back, I am very proud of the symposium we managed to organise. The collaboration between Urban Lab, the Museum of London and Brunel University of London led to inspiring discussions and the organisation of a truly ground-breaking global event featuring 20 speakers from eight countries. Joining forces helped us publicise the event globally which resulted in nearly one thousand attendees registering from over 30 countries across the world. The Urban Lab followed up important discussions emerging from the event with a special issue of the *Urban Pamphleteer* in collaboration with the Museum of London and Brunel University London, which launched in 2023 at the Museum of London.

Prof Monica Degen,
Brunel University London



Scan here or visit soundcloud.com/uclurbanlab to listen to case studies from urban museums around the world.

Black Urbanisms

Podcast series 2021



Prof AbdouMaliq Simone at our 2019 conference 'At the Frontiers of the Urban'. Photograph by Declan Slattery, Mediorite.

Our Black Urbanisms podcast series launched in October 2021 in collaboration with Alana Osbourne (Laboratoire d'Anthropologie des Mondes Contemporains, Université Libre Bruxelles) and Whistledown Productions (Deborah Shorindé). It was supported by The Bartlett's Vice-Dean for Equality Diversity and Inclusion, Kamna Patel, alongside 'Race' and Space: a new curriculum for the built environment, developed by colleagues across the Bartlett faculty. The series was an output generated by two sessions of the November 2019 Urban Lab conference, At the Frontiers of the Urban (Urban Studies — starting in Africa; Black Urbanisms, curated by Jennifer Robinson). It was somewhat delayed due to complications caused by the Covid-19 lockdowns, with the whole production process co-ordinated and conducted online.

The lead conference presentation, 'Blackness and the Urban', by AbdouMaliq Simone became the hinge of the four-part podcast series, drawing together responses from session participants from across Europe, the US and Africa: Dr Lioba Hirsch, Prof Ola Uduku, Dr Hélène Neveu-Kringelbach, Victoria Okoye, Dr Evance Mwachunga and Prof Wilbard Kombé. It was skilfully scripted and hosted by anthropologist Dr Alana Osbourne, navigating and drawing together different perspectives on the complexities of race, space and urban experience which were significantly affected by the global scale and impact of the Black Lives Matter protests that took place during the Covid-19 pandemic in summer 2020, in London and internationally. The podcast episodes addressed four distinct themes: Blackness and the Urban; Black Urbanisms meet the Black City; Black Urbanisms, Unsettling and Collectives on the run; Black Urbanisms and Theorising from Africa.

The first episode revisits excerpts from Prof AbdouMaliq Simone's conference talk that considered the multiplicities of what he has termed 'Black Urbanism', through a series of refrains, calls and responses. The aim was to interpret some of his insights and transpose them to contexts of urban research in various cities.

The second episode explores Prof Simone's notion of the 'hallucination of Whiteness', through a re-presentation of Dr Lioba Hirsch's conference response on the coloniality and anti-black entanglements of Western global

health, and new recorded interview material with Prof Ola Uduku in relation to her research, thinking through the racialised city.

The third episode unpacks another key aspect of Simone's talk: his articulation of Blackness as a form of unsettling, with interview responses from social anthropologist Dr H el ene Neveu Kringelbach, drawing on her work in Francophone West Africa.

The final episode probes the relationship between the concept of 'Black urbanisms' and the African context, specifically touching on issues of land governance in African cities through an interview with Dr Evance Mwathanga. This is combined with excerpts from Prof Wilbard Kombe's conference talk on the urban transformations being driven by an inadequately regulated market/real estate sector.



To listen to the series please visit
soundcloud.com/uclsound/sets/black-urbanisms



The podcast production was co-ordinated by Urban Lab Director Clare Melhuish. Artwork was commissioned by Jordan Rowe from Jahnvi Inniss.

Urban Lab Walks

'Heading East' walks series 2022



LEFT: Visit to Pudding Mill Allotments led by Aude Vuilli, April 2022. RIGHT: Inspecting found items with beachcomber and author Tom Chivers, April 2022. Credit: Joseph Cook.



In spring 2022, UCL Urban Laboratory hosted our first Urban Walks series — free and open to the public — structured around our annual theme of 'Emergency'. Each of the walks were based on routes between UCL's main Bloomsbury campus, and our newer locations at UCL East and UCL PEARL (Person-Environment-Activity Research Laboratory).

Following the Covid-19 lockdowns, we felt it was important for our department to once again get out into the city, understanding urbanism from the lived experience of locals.

Author and researcher Tom Bolton led us through the neighbourhoods behind Euston, King's Cross and St Pancras stations, weaving stories of regeneration alongside those of historic communities in the area, highlighting the complexity of such inner-city landscapes. Author and lecturer Ashley Hickson-Lovence led us through the route from his novel, *The 392*, explaining how the inspiration for the book connected to his childhood in Hackney. Lighting researcher Satu Streatfield led us through Angel, Islington and Regent's Canal on a night-time walk that took in everything from the history of the night-time economy to the differing quality of light used across housing estates. Anthropologist and boater Joseph Cook explored the differing landscapes of the highly maintained Olympic Park to the wilderness of the Channelsea River. Poet and historian Tom Chivers took us along Bow Creek explaining some of the deep history from his latest work *London Clay* and PhD student Aude Vuilli led us across east London's Greenway, detailing biodiversity along the route. Finally, Paul Powseland, barrister, activist and chairman of the River Roding Trust explained the industrial history of London's third-largest river, the Roding and the community-led work to revive it.

Taking in themes ranging from the housing crisis and river pollution, through to gentrification and urban darkness, the series not only allowed us to learn from a wide range of experts, but also engage with those who joined us, often locals themselves, who provided their own narratives along the way.



State of the Legacy

Conference 2022



Kyarna Morris, Joy White and Büşra Turan Tüylüoğlu speaking at the conference. Photos by Jacob Fairless Nicholson.

UCL has been a key stakeholder in the process of redevelopment in east London, due to the establishment of the new UCL East campus in the park, and we have been profoundly implicated in the discourse of regeneration that has unfolded. Both UCL Urban Lab and the UCL Institute for Global Prosperity have been extensively involved in work to establish an ethical framework for regeneration in the area and ensure that the voices of under-represented communities in one of the most deprived and super-diverse boroughs in the UK are heard and acted upon.

A decade on from the London 2012 Olympics, we wanted to reflect critically on the long-term impact of the Games since the ‘Convergence’ agenda was adopted in 2009 by east London local authorities (the Olympic Host Boroughs) as a benchmark for what regeneration should achieve: equal opportunities for east Londoners in line with the rest of London’s population, in terms of access to housing, education, jobs and opportunities, green space, and improved health outcomes. Instead, the vastly unequal impact of the Covid-19 pandemic between 2020 and 2022 in the London Borough of Newham, adjacent to the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, seemed only to prove that these goals had not been achieved and urgently needed revisiting.

Accordingly, in September 2022 we hosted a conference at UCL Here East on the ‘State of the Legacy’, in collaboration with a number of expert partners from University of East London, University of Cardiff and Oxford Brookes University. Over 150 academics, community activists and researchers, east London residents, artists, two local mayors, local authority officers and built environment professionals came together to share their work and experience of the Olympic legacy from the ground up. The ensuing discussions revealed that concerns with race, class, economic exclusion and genuinely affordable housing were at the forefront of everyone’s minds.

A generation of young people have grown up in the shadow of Olympic regeneration. As youth and community worker Luke Billingham explained, many of these young people — like other local residents — feel a sense of betrayal after having been promised a bright future as a result of London 2012. In addition, larger pre-existing social challenges have not

We would like to thank the following for their involvement in the review and conference organisation:

Oliver Benjamin, Rachel Bentley, Penny Bernstock, Luke Billingham, Kara Blackmore, Jessie Brennan, Andrew John Brown, Sue Brownill, Oliver Bulleid, Hannah Caller, Gillian Chan, Linda Clarke, Phil Cohen, Joseph Cook, Piero Corcillo, Juliet Davis, Margaret Dickinson, Paul Dudman, Emma Dwyer, Ozlem Edizel-Tasci, Graeme Evans, Denise Evans-Barr, Liz Fenton, Mara Ferrari, Briony Fleming, Jonathan Gardner, Emmanuel Gotor, David Heymann, Aletha Holborough, Cameron Holleran, Farjana Islam, Twinkle Jay, Tahl Kaminer, Jason Katz, Rayhaan Lorgat, Anna Maguire, Monna Matharu, Clare Melhuish, Sophie Mepham, Johanna Meyer, Anna Minton, Catalina Morales Maya, Kyarna Morris, Michael Owens, Oliver Pohlisch, Mike Raco, Paul Regan, Terry Regan, Glyn Robbins, Flaminia Ronca, Xia Ruici, Alex Russell, Nick Sharman, Hao Sijia, Andrew Smith, Kelley Tackett, Myfanwy Taylor, Roger Taylor, Kim Trogal, Büşra Turan Tüylüoğlu, Niloufar Vadiati, Ralph Ward, Paul Watt, Joy White, Saffron Woodcraft and Anyi Zhu.

gone away, including violence and racism endured by young black people in east London. Dr Joy White discussed the resilience, resistance and creativity these young people have developed to deal with it in the form of grime and drill music. Meanwhile, Büşra Turan Tüylüoğlu explained how culture-led regeneration policy rolled out in Waltham Forest following the Olympics has been experienced as exclusive by under-represented communities in the borough.



Representatives of Focus E15, a local housing rights campaign group. Photo by Jacob Fairless Nicholson.



For more information on the conference, recordings of sessions, speaker's presentations, and our *State of the Legacy* review: ucl.ac.uk/urban-lab/state-legacy

State of the Legacy Review

It has been ten years since London hosted the Olympic and Paralympic Games. London's bid differentiated itself from other host cities in its commitment to legacy covering a range of themes from public participation in sports to the regeneration of east London. There have been more academic papers generated about London 2012 and its aftermath than any other Olympic host city, many of which have been produced by academics working in different disciplines at our host institutions — UCL (University College London), UEL (University of East London), University of Cardiff, and Oxford Brookes University — but never collated in one place. Therefore, it was agreed that to coincide with the tenth anniversary of London 2012 we would produce a literature review examining the 'State of the Legacy' from a critical, academic perspective, that would provide a summary and overview of the key themes and findings that had emerged in the literature over this period and identify any significant gaps for ongoing interrogation.

The review is an outcome of a collaboration between academics and postgraduate students at the aforementioned universities. Students worked with supervisory input on allocated topics linked to the Olympic legacy promises for the regeneration of east London and the governance context in which these have evolved and been delivered over this period. The resulting review provides an overarching insight into the contribution that has been made across a wide range of academic disciplines, including

architecture and planning, urban studies, the social sciences, environmental studies, political science and law, to understandings and critique of the urban legacy outcomes of London 2012. This body of work stands alongside, and often in counterpoint to, the more celebratory and affirmative outputs embodied in policy and governmental reviews of the Olympic legacy over the last decade. In that sense, it reflects the role and value of universities as independent centres of critical urban thinking and expertise, that can provide an important balance to the indicators and measures of success that inform decision-making in other domains of public life, and a depth of qualitative analysis that may be missing from policy-driven interventions.

Some but by no means all the authors whose work is referenced in the review contributed to the conference, alongside the new and emerging researchers whose voices will inform both the direction for new avenues of debate and future research in this field, and insights into the practical and transferable lessons which the legacy of London 2012 offers to future Olympic cities starting with Paris 2024. As such, we recognise that this review already represents a partial perspective on the ongoing task of documenting and analysing the long-term impacts of the legacy promises and look forward to embracing the opportunities it offers to promote the next generation of critical urbanists in addressing the challenges around development and regeneration that cities face in the mid-21st century.

Cities Imaginaries

Annual lecture



LEFT: Roger Robinson delivering Cities Imaginaries 2021 online.
ABOVE: *Poor* by Caleb Femi.

Led by our Co-Director Matthew Beaumont, our annual Cities Imaginaries lecture has been running since 2014, and has been delivered by a range of high-profile cultural figures, including David Olusoga, Sonjah Stanley Niaah, Urvashi Butalia, Gus Casely-Hayford and Linton Kwesi Johnson.

In 2021, writer and T.S. Eliot Prize winner Roger Robinson delivered his lecture titled 'The Actuality of Gentrification' investigating the danger of gentrification in Brixton, South London. Drawing from his own experiences in Brixton and those of Black and Brown residents he had spoken to, Robinson offered a 'deeply personal' account and deconstruction of gentrification as a 'good process' in Brixton. To read a full review of the lecture by urban geographer Sidea Ahmed, please visit our Urban Lab blog.

Award winning author and director Caleb Femi delivered our 2022 lecture, titled *Poor* after his debut poetry collection of the same name, in which he explored and shared powerful memories of friendships and experiences growing up on a North Peckham estate. Raised in south London, Caleb is a former Young People's Laureate, won the Forward Prize for Best First Collection (2021) and was shortlisted for the Rathbones Folio Prize (2021), and longlisted for the Jhalak Prize (2021).

For our most recent edition of Cities Imaginaries we were honoured to host Oscar and BAFTA-nominated film director Shaunak Sen, following a screening of his latest documentary film, *All That Breathes* at Bertha Dochose. The film focuses on two brothers — Nadeem and Saud — who devote their lives to the quixotic effort of protecting the black kite, a majestic bird of prey essential to the ecosystem of New Delhi that has been falling from the sky at alarming rates. Amid environmental toxicity and social unrest, the 'kite brothers' spend day and night caring for the creatures in their makeshift avian basement hospital.

Priority Areas

Feminist Cities

Globalising Urbanisms

Housing Urbanism

Queer Infrastructure

Urban Heritage

Urban Verticality

Wasteland

Urban Nights

PRIORITY AREAS



Feminist Cities

Research priority area led
by Dr Ellie Cosgrave



Urban Lab's work on feminist cities is dedicated to ensuring that well-established theory and research relating to gender inclusion in public space is understood and actionable for the built environment sector, including policy makers, developers and local communities who have the power to make a difference on the ground.

I hold a position at the urban design and research firm Publica, where I run its not-for-profit work and campaign on gender-inclusive public space. Through this connection I am able to bring expertise from across UCL to bear on public realm projects and policy development in Publica's work for the Greater London Authority (GLA).

As an example, in my role at Publica I was commissioned by the GLA to undertake a comprehensive literature review on gender-inclusive urban development, with a particular focus on the safety of women, girls and gender-diverse people. In addition to this review, we held a number of workshops with the Mayor's Design Advocates who have gender expertise and conducted one-to-one interviews with a variety of experts and activists (including trans activists) to co-develop a set of guidelines which will be tested in phase two of the project. The final report presents a framework for thinking about safety in public space, draws on key literature to describe the principles of gender-inclusive urban development and provides a set of questions to help guide urban public projects through key project stages: project set-up, understanding, making and using.

I was also commissioned by the charity, Greater Manchester Moving and funded by the Home Office to explore ways to make streets and public spaces safe and welcoming so that women and girls feel they belong and can be active residents. I was appointed as a subject matter expert to ensure the programme is built on solid evidence and best practice. A main element of this work has been to create a set of games that enable a variety of stakeholders to engage with the topics of gender inclusion, women's safety and public space. These will be made accessible on an open-access basis.

Dialogues for Gender Inclusive Mobility in London

I was awarded a grant from the Royal Academy of Engineering to explore the mobility experiences of female-identified domestic workers in London, Karachi and Cape Town. This grant was awarded in partnership with the social organisation Safetipin, Karachi Urban Lab and the University of Cape town. As part of this, students from each city undertook safety audits using a bespoke platform from Safetipin, as well as a survey of domestic workers' mobility experiences, needs and realities. UCL students explored how the design and provision of mobility infrastructure affects women's and nonbinary people's sense of safety, security, wellbeing and overall freedom to access the city, with a particular focus on domestic workers' use of buses in London.

Reflecting on the research, Master's student Taylor Smith shared:

This project exposed me to the vast and complex field of gender and mobility, particularly the significance of social infrastructure, such as care work, which was largely not addressed in the core modules for my degree... By partnering with students in Karachi and Cape Town, I gained a more global and intersectional understanding of gender and mobility that has enriched my perspective and approach to public policy in this area and beyond.

My Perfect City

Dr Cosgrave co-presented a series exploring global urban policy that is pushing the boundaries. Over the course of thirteen episodes, the team examine many urban themes, from policies that support women entrepreneurs in Kochi, community building initiatives in Barcelona, employment in Toronto, mental health in Singapore to knife crime in Glasgow.

Key presentations by Dr Cosgrave: *How Can We Design Cities for Women?* panel discussion, The London Legacy Development Corporation for the London Festival of Architecture (June 2022); *Feminist Urbanism: Gender impacts of housing and placemaking* panel discussion, Festival of Place (July 2022); Mayor's Design Advocates, Women and Safety Report (Jan 2023); Pride@ Grosvenor — *Transgender Visibility: Making space for everyone* panel discussion (Feb 2023); *Women Who Change the World*, Goodenough College for International Women's Day panel discussion, (March 2023); Keynote: Women's Health in the North conference (April 2023).

My Perfect City is available to listen to at [bbc.co.uk](https://www.bbc.co.uk) and most podcast platforms.

Globalising Urbanisms

Research priority area led
by Prof Jennifer Robinson



Over the last two years our Globalising Urbanisms theme has focused on two core activities involving research – Making Africa Urban (an ERC-funded research project) and the Global Urbanism MASc (a new programme of study at Masters level), as well as facilitating several events online and in person, reflecting the fact that much of the period under review was influenced by Covid lockdowns.

The Making Africa Urban project investigates how the future of African cities is being shaped by transnational processes based on sovereign, developmental and private investment in large-scale urban developments in Accra (Ghana), Dar es Salaam (Tanzania) and Lilongwe (Malawi). Extensive transnational research has followed actors, finances, ideas and policies shaping each of three cases of large-scale development in these three cities. In each case, interactions and overlaps amongst the three circuits of investment are explored through comparative city-based analyses of the distinctive path-dependent trajectories and political formations shaping outcomes across all three circuits. The project is funded by an ERC Advanced Grant (€2,495,276.25). It is hosted in the UCL Department of Geography and supported by UCL Urban Laboratory, with partner organisations University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, University of Ghana and University of Malawi.

The partnership with Wits University has been further developed through the delivery of the Global Studio pathway for Urban Lab's Global Urbanism MASc, launched in September 2022. Dr Njogu Morgan, based in Johannesburg, was appointed to support delivery of the pathway for the UCL Urban Lab with Prof Jennifer Robinson, through a detailed engagement with Johannesburg and the wider Gauteng City-Region. The programme includes close working with students at the University of the Witwatersrand while in Johannesburg and online before travelling there. It was developed in close collaboration with colleagues at the University of the Witwatersrand, Department of Planning — Prof Phil Harrison, Prof Alison Todes, Prof Sarah Charlton, Prof Fana Sihlongonyana and lecturer and PhD student Taki Sithago — as well as the Gauteng City Region Observatory, a jointly funded initiative of the Province of Gauteng, the municipalities of

Johannesburg and Tshwane and the Universities of the Witwatersrand and Johannesburg. Prof Nnamdi Elleh, Chair of the School of Planning and Architecture at the University of the Witwatersrand was an enthusiastic supporter of this initiative and welcomed students in 2023 with a personal tour of paintings in the Wits University Library which depicted South Africa's journey from colonisation to freedom.

The course explored urbanisation experiences which in South Africa are known as 'displaced urbanisation', shaped by apartheid era laws confining many Africans to settle far from city centres and employment opportunities. More generally, internationally there is a lot of interest in trying to understand the phenomenon of 'extended urbanisation', or urbanisation taking place far from established urban settlements. The group travelled to the Wits 'Rural Campus' which is now located next to a new and emerging city of almost one million people, giving rise to new governance and services challenges, which were explored with local municipal officials and researchers. This exciting new research frontier is inspiring staff involved in the collaboration to propose initiatives for future research on extended/displaced urbanisation across the wider Gauteng/Mpumalanga region, with comparative analyses planned with colleagues in other regions of South Africa, Africa and more widely. The course team plan to launch a MOOC based on the online elements of the course during the 2023–24 academic year on the Future Learn platform to support ongoing teaching and research collaboration.

We were delighted to host the CEO of the GCRO, Rashid Seedat to speak at an Urban Lab seminar in summer 2023. He shared his insights on the transitions from apartheid and the more recent governance instability and service crises in Johannesburg, drawing on his experiences as an anti-apartheid activist and during a long career since 1994 in local government and provincial government.

Globalising Urbanisms also hosted a number of book launches in this period through our ongoing collaboration with the London-wide seminar series, the Urban Salon, including former UCL Urban Laboratory Director, Prof Matthew Gandy's *Natura Urbana* (2022), and former Urban Studies MSc student Hannah Hilbrandt's *Housing in the Margins* (2021). The launch of *Trade Makes States: Governing the Greater Somali Economy* (co-edited by Tobias Hagmann and Finn Stepputat, 2023), in collaboration with KAYD Somali Arts and Culture, provided first-hand insights into the experiences of Somali businesspeople.

From a personal point of view, for this Co-Director this has been a very rich and rewarding series of collaborations with Urban Lab colleagues, and a special thanks to Clare Melhuish for her ongoing navigation of so many commitments and complexities.

Housing Urbanism

Research priority area led
by Prof Camillo Boano



There is a strong relation between the production of housing and the production of the city. However, housing is often divorced from urbanism, leading to the realisation of city models characterised by precarity and informality, from which decent housing is missing. Since launching this priority research area in 2019 following preparation of a major all-UCL research proposal (ESRC Global Housing Hub) we have undertaken several projects and initiatives that have attempted to unpack, problematise and reconstruct a critical inquiry into the discursive, practical and material dimensions of housing as one of the most powerful agents of urban transformation. We have investigated and constructed networks and opportunities among colleagues, institutions and organisations interested in shaping forms of inhabitation that reshape, resituate, confront and produce urban space, infrastructures and urban life within different latitudes and epistemic frameworks, understanding housing as the central struggle for just and inclusive cities.

In the early days of the Covid-19 pandemic, we collaborated with Catalina Ortiz (DPU) on a small project (April 2020), *'Stay at Home': Housing as a pivotal infrastructure of care*. This provided a platform for interrogating the politics of space and power manifested through the modalities of inhabitation, reframing the centrality of a key question *'what are the forms of collective life?'* within a pluralistic, responsive approach to social justice and the climate emergency, prompted by the global Covid-19 lockdowns.

This was followed in 2020–22 by a project I led with colleagues from the Polytechnic of Turin, and Urban Lab, *Lifelines*. It investigated systems of spaces, devices and relationships that generate a level of liveability in precarious environments and uncertain conditions. It offers a critical reflection on infrastructure in its affective dimensions and new insights into the political parameters of city-making at a time when bordering, exclusion and violence are permeating everyday experience, and when bodies are frequently detained or under threat of having their rights of mobility severely infringed.

The Lifelines that emerged provided opportunities for reflection on an emerging post-pandemic urban condition centred on a renewed

biopolitics of protection and immunity. From a conceptual point of view the investigation embraced an interdisciplinary and comparative approach allowing each member of the team, working either alone or in partnership, to develop specific insights into a case study or site that would contribute to a more precise, affective and political definition of lifelines. The project brought together analysis of spaces and their design through 18 case studies in different territories across Europe, the Middle East, the United States, Latin America and China. *Lifelines* was framed as a concept through which to rethink design in its constant ambiguity between control and abandonment, entanglement and separation, immunity and exposure, destabilising the affective cartographies of exception and leaving lines of flight, contamination and failure.

Urban Lab director Clare Melhuish participated in a roundtable seminar on the 16th April 2021 and the launch of the project publication on the 7th November 2022 in Turin, Italy. The book edited by me and Christina Bianchetti (Jovis 2022) includes Clare Melhuish's chapter on the tensions between regeneration, precarity and survival in east London (Culture and heritage infrastructures as *Lifelines* in east London), and my introduction and chapters co-written with colleagues and partners in Lebanon. The publication contributes to a rethinking of landscape as a relational survival project that involves ideas and actions through bodies in time and space whose interactions are never perfect or fully complete.

I subsequently presented the project in several seminars and lectures in Delft, Rome, Milan, Leuven, Cardiff and Santiago de Chile amongst others, as well as a reflection on the urbanism of inhabitation within different latitudes and epistemic frameworks at a weeklong workshop organised by the University of London in Paris (ULIP) and Sheffield Urban Institute: Experiments on uncertain terrain: extensions as re-compositions, Urban Life at the Extensions, curated by Abdou Maliq Simone in collaboration with the Beyond Inhabitation Lab, 17–21 April 2023, Paris.

In autumn 2023, Andrea Rigon and I organised the public seminar 'Social Housing in the 2020s: delivery and management models for a just city' at UCL (20th September). This workshop set out to generate a comparative discussion on how social housing is provided in different cities and the extent to which this contributes or not to a just city. It recentred social housing in the context of current urban planning debates, learning from different mechanisms, tactics and processes that transcend the global South/North divide. The sandpit workshop included participation from academics including Massimo Bricoccoli (PoliMi), Alan Penn (UCL The Bartlett) and Raquel Rolnik (USP), alongside key actors involved in social housing, including elected officials, civil servants and housing professionals. It served to strengthen the relationship between researchers and the policymakers with the mutual benefit of developing new research opportunities and collaborations for the future.

Queer Infrastructure

Research priority area led
by Prof Ben Campkin



Since our last Activities Report, this activity area has primarily been taken forward through the Humanities in the European Research Area (HERA) European Union Horizon 2020-funded Collaborative Research Project, *Night-spaces: Migration, Culture and Integration in Europe* (NITE). This international collaboration involved five institutions researching public spaces at night in eight cities. Led by Professor Ben Campkin, the UCL research funded two part-time Postdoctoral Research Fellows (Dr Lo Marshall and Dr Alessio Koliulis). It used innovative methods to produce outputs in multiple media including a website, an international conference, nine peer reviewed contributions to anthologies, more than 10 conference papers, podcast contributions, invited talks, an open access policy report, three cultural workshops with associated partners, the first digital scan and open access digital archive of an LGBTQ+ venue, a film made in collaboration with three artists (both films are on YouTube), and two digital exhibits (Design Museum, 'Electronic', 2021; UCL Octagon Gallery, 'Blueprints of Hope', 2023). The research also supported research underpinning some of the chapters in Ben Campkin's monograph, *Queer Premises: LGBTQ+ Venues in London Since the 1980s* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2023), and three journal articles are currently being completed by the team.

As an example of outputs from the project, *Urban Pamphleteer's* 'Reimagining the Night' issue documents some of the project's engaged research into night-spaces and migration. It includes texts and projects by artists, campaigners, the London Night Czar, academics, journalists, third sector organisations, the police, sex workers and platform workers; and documents experiences of Covid-19 lockdowns on night-time workers.

The NITE team have also given talks at a variety of UK and international universities, public institutions and practices including Ben Campkin's keynote at the prestigious German government-funded TU Berlin Collaborative Research Centre 'Re-figuration of Spaces' on Intersectionality and Urban Violence; and talks (2021–23) at international architectural and urban practices such as Grimshaw (London), MAKE Architects, AHMM, RIBA Inclusive Design Network and Arup.

structure activity area, in 2021, Ben Campkin, Sé Mali, Jordana Ramalho and Lo Marshall launched the international lecture series, 'Queering Urbanism', supported by The Bartlett's B.Queer LGBTQ+ network. This series connects queer and trans studies to urban studies and practices of urbanism, foregrounding issues of equity, diversity and inclusion in the built environment through a focus on sexual and gender diversity. Speakers have included established and emerging scholars and practitioners including Professor Petra Doan, Dr Dhiren Borisa, Dr Sarah Ensor, Professor Amin Ghaziani and Professor Matt Brim.

Other recent activities include participating in the Steering Committee overseeing Greater London Authority/Arts Council England research on LGBTQ+ creatives' experiences through Covid-19 (2021) and hosting a launch for this work alongside *Urban Pamphleteer* #9, 'Reimagining the Night' and think-tank Autonomy's 'Working Nights: Municipal Strategies for Nocturnal Workers', with the Mayor of London's Night Czar.

The Urban Lab team have also worked collaboratively with the Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain's LGBTQ+ on programming for the Society's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion initiative.

Recent publications

- Campkin, B. (2023). *Queer Premises: LGBTQ+ Venues in London Since the 1980s*. London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Campkin, B. & L. Marshall (2023), 'Fabulous Façades' in M. Jobst and N. Stead, *Queering Architecture: Methods, Practices, Pedagogies*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Campkin, B. (2022), 'Royal Vauxhall Tavern', 'London Lesbian and Gay Centre' and (with R. Pereira do Rego) 'Aterro do Flamengo' in A. Nathaniel Furman and J. Mardell, *Queer Spaces: An Atlas of LGBTQIA+ Places and Stories*. London: RIBA Publishing, 126-127; 150-152, 206-208.
- Campkin, B., Ross, R., Krakowska Rodrigues, K., Litschel, L.-S., Pardue, D., Rowe, J., & Young, K. (Eds.). (2021). Reimagining the Night. *Urban Pamphleteer* #9. UCL Urban Laboratory.
- Campkin, B., & L. Marshall (2020). *LGBTQ+ Spaces in Camden: 1986–Present*, UCL Urban Laboratory.
- Campkin, B. and L. Marshall (2020), *Electronic: From Kraftwerk to The Chemical Brothers*, Design Museum, digital maps of LGBTQ+ venues in London, 2006–17, invited exhibitors.
- Campkin, B. (2020). *Queer Infrastructures: LGBTQ+ Networks and Urban Governance in Global London*. In R. Ramos, S. Mowlabowcus (Eds.), *Queer Sites in Global Contexts Technologies, Spaces, and Otherness*. London and New York: Routledge.

Urban Heritage

Research priority area led by
Urban Lab Director Clare Melhuish



Since launching this priority research area in 2018, we have explored the ways in which tangible and intangible heritage is constituted as a fundamental dimension of urban identity, shaping conceptions of place-based, transnational and transcultural urbanity. We have investigated how the field of heritage is both actively shaped and manipulated by numerous urban actors and institutions as a tool in the making and reproduction of urban neighbourhoods, cities and metropoli, and demonstrated its significance for critical engagement with questions around racial, spatial and climate justice.

Notwithstanding the disruption caused by the pandemic lockdowns of 2020–21, we were lucky to be able to use that enforced time spent online, at home, in bringing to fruition some projects with national and international partners that made a significant contribution to research in this field. Firstly, Lorenzo Ciccarelli (Florence University) and I published an edited volume, *Post-war Architecture between Italy and the UK: Exchanges and transcultural influences* (UCL Press 2021), which, following the conference in Rome/Florence of Nov 2019, shows how cultural and transcultural heritage has literally shaped the legacy of architecture and urban planning in the two countries since the post-war reconstruction period.

In summer 2021, still operating online, Urban Lab developed further transcultural exchanges with our collaborators at Brunel University (cultural sociologist Monica Degen) and Museum of London (Lauren Parker), along with participants from around the world, through the podcast series and online symposium *Museums, Cities, Cultural Power*. This event, and the subsequent issue of *Urban Pamphleteer #10* under the same title (Urban Lab 2022), explored the connections between museums and universities in their engagement with urban neighbourhoods through narratives of heritage and identity, manifested in both material and social form. This linked to similar themes explored in the publication of *Co-curating the City: Universities and urban heritage past and future* (UCL Press 2022), which materialised from four years of cross-disciplinary work led by our Curating the City research cluster in the

Centre for Critical Heritage Studies. This critical examination of universities' role in 'curating'

urban heritage narratives as part of spatial development initiatives in Europe, Brazil and Lebanon, gave space to consideration of UCL's own UCL East campus development as part of the London Olympics legacy, and within the context of the rich urban heritage of east London, themes which we revisited in our State of the Legacy conference (with IGP) and review in autumn 2022.

Another lockdown project which came to fruition in October 2021 was Urban Lab's four-part Black Urbanisms podcast, which provided a valuable opportunity to open up a dialogue between viewpoints grounded in black identity, heritage and experience of European, African, Asian and American cities, from the conceptual starting point of AbdouMaliq Simone's work on Blackness and the Urban.

Thinking further through the pluralistic heritage of a cosmopolitan, post- or ex-colonial city such as London, I revisited the site of its post-Olympic regeneration in the east, the gateway to the city for generations of migrating, transnational settlers, as part of the 'Lifelines' project coordinated by Camillo Boano in 2021. This exchange provided a post-lockdown opportunity to reflect on how we understand and act on cultural heritage as a lifeline to survival in vastly unequal cities constituted of diverse communities and cultural traditions, published in the eponymous volume (Jovis 2022).

Moving away from the ex-metropole to the sites of its influence in the Gulf and Caribbean, areas of my personal research engagement, I published a chapter discussing the use of architectural and urban heritage narratives to bring forward contemporary urban development in Doha and Kingston, critically interrogating the roots of these processes in the historic legacies of British intervention, and their implications for the perpetuation of social inequalities and exclusions in cities structurally connected through transnational networks of exchange and mobility (Melhuish 2023 in Cross and Giblin, eds).

As institutional lead for London in the international research network Heritopolis (heritage and the metropolis) we have been involved in developing a research agenda and activities exploring heritage as a critical field for climate action, social inclusion and sustainability in metropolitan-scale urban formations, linked to UN-Habitat's MetroHUB and localisation of the Sustainable Development Goals. In collaboration with our policy partners, Historic England and the GLA, and thanks to the efforts of our ESR and PhD candidate in the BSA, Clemency Gibbs, we are moving towards the consolidation of a London hub from which to mobilise urban-natural heritage within the field of policy as part of an urgent response to the climate crisis.

In all this work, the role of my Urban Lab-affiliated PhD students, working on the anthropologies of urban heritage in sites around the world including Madrid, Cairo, Abu Dhabi, Shanghai, London, and the islands of southern Taiwan, has been critical to maintaining the grounded production and vitality of knowledge in this field, and its contribution to evolving analysis of the broader field of urbanism.

Urban Verticality

Research priority area led
by Dr Andrew Harris



1. Vertical urbanism in London and Paris / Urbanités verticales in Londres et Paris

This one-day workshop, organised by Urban Lab Co-Director Dr Andrew Harris (UCL Geography) and Dr Martine Drozd (LATTS, Paris) on 30th June 2021, explored some of the key drivers, technologies and motivations underpinning dynamics of urban verticality in Paris and London.

In the first panel, ‘Verticality and cartographic imagination and instrumentation’, architectural historian Min Kyung Lee discussed the creation of Hausmann’s maps, and how the surveyors involved in this process of map-making in essence built upwards to then flatten the city. Oliver Dawkins (UCL CASA) then focused on three-dimensional visualisations of London, thinking not only about buildings above, but also infrastructure below. Architect-engineer Nathalie Roseau (LATTS) was the panel’s discussant with arguments exploring the relationship between the situated city and the model city.

The second panel looked at the production of urban verticality through high-density urban spaces. LSE’s Fanny Blanc and Tim White discussed their 2016 ‘lived densities’ study, which examined residents’ experiences of living in high-density housing in London. Following this, Martine Drozd and André Lortie (LATTS) presented on the production of urban verticality in Paris between 1902 and 2016 from a post-occupancy perspective. Claire Colomb (UCL Bartlett School of Planning) responded to these two presentations. One key point she raised was about distinguishing between ‘high-density’ and ‘high-rise’.

The final panel of the workshop, entitled ‘More-than-human volumetric enclosures’, was delivered by Simon Marvin (Urban Institute, University of Sheffield) and Jonathan Rutherford (LATTS) and focused on contemporary climate-controlled forms of vertical enclosure, with a comparative focus on London’s Kew Gardens and the Paris Zoo. Discussant Clare Melhuish (UCL Urban Lab) connected Simon and Jonathan’s work to the role of climate control as a key technology in the emergence and maintenance of vertical developments.

2. Tower Block Dialogues / Grands Ensembles en Dialogue

Through a focus on tower blocks, or *grands ensembles*, in London and Paris, this project has sought to re-evaluate the role of more ordinary high-rise life in the contemporary European metropolis. Bringing together perspectives from photographers, urbanists and residents themselves, the project aims to open new creative, comparative dialogues between Paris and London around vertical urbanism. The central collaborative partners are London-based visual artist, PhD researcher and writer Nathaniel Télémaque, and geographers Dr Andrew Harris (UCL) and Dr Martine Drozd (CNRS France). As well as UCL Urban Lab support this work has also been funded by the UCL Cities Partnership Programme.

The first stage of the project involved a short photo-essay created by Nathaniel Télémaque in August 2021 on the Trellick Tower in West London, a 31-storey housing block designed by Ernő Goldfinger, including responses on this tower from some of his PhD interlocutors at the White City Estate.

The final stage of the activity will be to compile different components for a ‘pamphleteer’ entitled ‘Multi-Stories: Estate interventions // *Interventions de grand ensembles*’. The publication will foreground approaches, developing intersections across visual, ethnographic and historical methods, that counter and re-imagine the widespread past and present stigmatisation of multi-storey social housing in London and Paris.

3. Shard Decade

A panel discussion held on 5 July 2022 on The Shard’s relationship with 21st Century London, organised by Dr Andrew Harris and Sidra Ahmed (UCL Geography), and held at the UCL School of Management in Canary Wharf.

This event marked 10 years, to the day, since the Shard was formally inaugurated. The Shard — still London and Western Europe’s tallest building — has subsequently become a familiar London landmark and a common establishing shot or icon for the city, featuring in adverts, tourist promotions, films and TV programmes. The event, with the Shard in view down-river, reflected on the Shard’s branding, function, position and symbolism, and its relationship to the city around it.

Panellists, all of whom have been closely involved with the Shard’s construction, marketing and leasing, were William Murray, director and co-founder of MurrayTwohig, a real estate strategy consultancy; April Taylor, a brand, marketing and product development consultant; David Healy, director at engineering and professional services firm WSP and James Goldsmith, Head of Leasing at AXA IM Developments.

Wasteland

Research priority area led
by Dr Pushpa Arabindoo



When wasteland was launched as one of the eight priority areas of UCL Urban Laboratory in 2019, our starting point was how the increasing challenge of societal waste could open up new ways of charting the uneven geographies of urbanisation. For us, wasteland encompasses the real and the imagined of a waste-defined landscape in a (un)canny utilitarian valorisation of land within the production of the urban. Our objective was to bring in multidisciplinary conceptual tools from archaeology, anthropology, geography (human and physical), architecture and planning, as well as literary and cultural studies to challenge not only its pejorative connotations but also to open it up as a critical analytical category. To this end, UCL Urban Laboratory collaborated with UCL Institute of Advanced Studies (IAS) during the 2019–20 academic year on a shared annual research theme, 'Waste'. Associated research and teaching initiatives that commenced in this year were interrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic and extended into subsequent years informing further activities until now. These are detailed as follows:

Teaching

'Waste' constituted the thematic focus of the interdisciplinary programme, Urban Studies MSc in 2019–20, including its core module, Urban Practices which aims specifically to challenge students to think of urban scholarship as a category of practice, emphasising action and engagement in dialogue with urban theory and intellectual debate. One of the key elements of Urban Practices that year was agit-prop enactments by students who, working in groups, addressed waste performatively across a loose assemble of UCL sites, re-cast as wasteland. Their final outputs were practice-embedded involving role-play and resulted in proposals ranging from a business plan for a 'spare and share' food truck, a trash talk blog, a 'crap shop' operating out of a boat as a social enterprise and a pitch for a short film on waste and intersectionality.

Dissertation

I received funding from UCL Cities Partnership, Paris Programme for a waste-related project

proposal, 'Circulations of zero waste: Policy and planning ideas across London and Paris' undertaken in collaboration with Professor Eric Verdeil, Sciences Po Paris. This was considerably curtailed by the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic and we were unable to pursue all intended activities. I supervised a dissertation in the Environment Politics and Society MSc programme (Geography) that was specifically related to this project where the student investigated zero-waste programmes in London and Paris exploring how the idea of zero waste evolved as a policy and planning objective in the two cities.

Research and other associated activities

As part of the 2019–20 annual theme 'Waste', I applied for the UCL Creative Fellowship pilot scheme with playwright Nicola Baldwin. The fellowship was launched by the Faculty of Arts and Humanities and held at the IAS. Our proposal, *The City Dionysia: Narrating Wasteland in Urban Life* was one of two fellowships awarded that year. During 2019–20 Nicola engaged in a series of activities, especially exploring how waste as a specific concern of contemporary urban life might be apprehended through the reference of theatre. She contributed to the Urban Practices module of the Urban Studies MSc programme, and wrote a play tentatively titled 'Wasteland', with a first draft reading held online in July 2020. Nicola and I organised a panel discussion at the IAS's Alternative Epistemologies festival in May 2021 where we presented extracts from the play, discussed its themes. The play was read again at UCL's Quo Vadis festival. Our reflection on our collaboration and how wasteland is both a creative and critical register formed the crux of our presentation at the two-day symposium titled *Growth–Emergency: Re-Imagining Cities, Economies and Ecologies in the Time of the Anthropocene*, organised jointly by UCL Urban Lab and the IAS in June 2022. On this basis, we jointly authored a journal article, 'The City Dionysia: Narrating Wasteland in Urban Life', published as part of the special feature *Hybrid Futures: Theatre and Performance in the Post/Pandemic Anthropocene*.

In December 2022, to mark the centenary anniversary of T. S. Eliot's poem, *The Waste Land*, and drawing on its eponymous connection to our own priority area theme, we organised a roundtable discussion on Eliot's *The Waste Land* in the Anthropocene, and how it can be known again the foreshadow of the Anthropocene. Reflections and contributions from the participants of the roundtable was published on the Urban Lab online blog.

Urban Nights

Research priority area led
by Prof Matthew Beaumont



The appointment of Amy Lamé as London's Night Czar in 2016 focused the attention of policymakers and politicians on the significance of the night-time economy in the 24/7 society and on the politics of the city after dark, both in its commercial and non-commercial spaces. Academics including Urban Lab's Ben Campkin, through his collaborative research on Night Spaces and recent monograph, *Queer Premises*, have made a significant contribution to developing critical perspectives pertinent to such policy developments (cf Queer Infrastructures priority research area).

The Covid-19 pandemic severely curtailed such developments, bringing urban daytime and night-time sociality in public spaces to an abrupt and unexpected halt. But in the meantime, Urban Lab's Urban Nights research priority area continued to explore alternative perspectives on the night, drawing particularly on the fields of literature and historical and comparative geography. Matthew Beaumont's work engages with the literature and philosophy of insomnia and sleeplessness, as phenomena explicit to night-time experience. His monograph *Lev Shestov: Philosopher of the Sleepless Night* (Bloomsbury 2021), attempts to revive the reputation of a half-forgotten Russian Jewish philosopher of the early twentieth century whose anti-rationalist intellectual project, a significant influence on Bataille, Deleuze and other French thinkers, affirmed a spiritual, ethical and political vigilance that is figured in terms of wakefulness/insomnia. In 2022 he published a further article exploring the themes of sleeplessness, wakefulness and watchfulness in the Aeschylean drama *Prometheus Bound*, 'Standing Upright, Unsleeping'.

At the 2023 Poetics of the City conference at Stanford University (Center for the Study of the Novel), Beaumont explored the effects of electric light on the city at night in his lecture, *Profane Illuminations*. Since 2022 he has led on curating Urban Lab events which have stimulated further reflections on human and non-human experience of the nocturnal city in textual and visual media, including the launch of writer Lauren Elkin's *No. 91/92: notes on a Parisian commute*, and the screening of film-maker Shaunak Sen's *All That Breathes* (see also *Cities Imaginaries* p.22).

Research + Engagement

Biennial Theme 20–22: Emergency

Covid and the Urban

Covid, Culture + Freelance Work

Growth – Emergency:
Hybrid Symposium

Biennial Theme 22–24: Memory

Urban Agency III:
Research Network

Innovation Districts with
Sharon Zukin

Topological Atlas

Housing Inequalities

RESEARCH +
ENGAGEMENT



BIENNIAL THEME 20–22: EMERGENCY

Nishat Awan presented Undocumented? at UCL Urban Room, stemming from her research project Topological Atlas.



Marseille Underwater by Sophie Mephram.

In much of the time covered in this Activities Report, the UK and the world were engulfed by the Covid-19 pandemic, which led to the sudden imposition of substantial emergency measures across the globe. These measures were designed to control and restrict movement of populations across urban and rural areas, and fundamentally altered our interactions as an academic community on and off campus. In collaboration with the UCL Institute for Risk and Disaster Reduction, UCL Urban Laboratory therefore chose to explore ‘Emergency’ as our biennial theme for the 2020–22 academic years.

But Covid-19 was not the only global emergency in recent times to have particular implications for urbanism, generating far-reaching interventions in the ways that cities and towns are being governed, designed and managed. For years, cities in the UK and abroad have been thrown into crisis management mode as a result of floods, fires and other hazards. Many cities around the world have taken the lead on declaring their commitment to measures designed to address human-caused climate change, alongside various forms of disaster, famine, impoverishment, environmental devastation, racism and other forms of social marginalisation and exclusion. These phenomena, closely interconnected with war, terrorism and political conflict, have stimulated large-scale movements of displaced peoples, mass public demonstrations and violence, and a variety of further emergency

management responses, resulting in the implementation of significant measures in the surveillance and control of urban space.

Policing and other urban emergency services have themselves become the focus of emergency orders to facilitate intervention and control in the context of mass protests and other scenarios of urban crisis management. Such interventions, and abuses of power, have heightened debates in the public domain about citizens’ rights, racial inequities and government authority.

The aim of this biennial theme was therefore to explore the characteristics and consequences of ‘emergency urbanism’ in its different forms, and in relation to the underlying structural causes of planetary and other emergencies. When does a momentary crisis become an emergency, and what happens next?

Working in collaboration with the UCL Institute for Risk and Disaster Reduction, we hosted a series of online/hybrid format talks, workshops and activities connected to the overall theme of ‘Emergency’ including symposia on ‘Covid and the Urban’ and ‘Growth–Emergency’ and a policymaking workshop on ‘Covid, culture and freelance work’.

BIENNIAL THEME 20–22: EMERGENCY

Covid and the Urban

Online Symposium



Researcher Melissa Wehmayer reflected on what was said in a blog post for Urban Lab's Medium platform. We present an abridged and edited version of her post here.

On 26 March 2021, in the middle of the UK's third national lockdown, UCL Urban Laboratory and the Institute for Risk and Disaster Reduction hosted an interdisciplinary group of speakers online, to draw together diverse perspectives on the ongoing Covid-19 emergency. Bringing together academics and practitioners, this event created surprising linkages between disciplines. The contributions spanned from film and music to ethnography and critical insight on data sciences. We also heard concrete examples of plans by city governments to show how theoretical concepts from urban studies translate to policy.

Part 1, titled 'Scrutinising infrastructures of risk and recovery across uneven urban landscapes', featured Simon Marvin (University of Sheffield), Austin Zeiderman (LSE), Mehrnaz Ghojeh (C40 Cities) and Clare Melhuish (Director, UCL Urban Laboratory). The panellists situated the current pandemic within longer-term trajectories of urban crisis and change, emphasising that, given what we already know about the links between epidemiology, urbanisation, infrastructure and globalisation, pandemics like Covid-19 should come as no surprise. They provided a stark demonstration of the interconnectedness of risk, and the need to promote action to ad-

dress inequality, notwithstanding hot contestation in the political sphere as to how to do this. C40 Cities, a network of mayors from the world's largest cities that advocate for action on climate change and other new challenges like pandemic response, emphasise short-term benefits but also see the pandemic as an opportunity to make longer term investments, such as blueprints for longer-term programmes to combat food insecurity. Those cities that started with a stronger understanding of inequality and inequity before the pandemic were also better able to reach vulnerable communities.

Alongside the widespread appreciation of scientific advancements in vaccine production, the pandemic response relied on scientific rationales and technologies to guide its policies, celebrated for being apolitical, enlightened and cost effective. But like many previous urban operating systems, their transformative potential was often overstated, for example, where the use of smartphone data was hampered by significant gaps in coverage, especially of more vulnerable populations. A key example of 'technocracy gone wrong' was the surprisingly corporate application developed by the UK Government, the massive £22 billion Test and Trace platform, that was insufficiently used by the public and decision-makers alike. Marvin and Zeiderman both pointed to the ways in which seemingly apolitical technologies are in fact doing significant political work.

OPPOSITE: Kasia Mika (Queen Mary University), Carina Fearnley (UCL-STS), Ajay Heble (University of Guelph) and Ilan Kelman (Chair, UCL Institute for Risk and Disaster Reduction)

BELOW: Clockwise from top left: Simon Marvin (University of Sheffield), Austin Zeiderman (LSE), Mehrnaz Ghojeh (C40 Cities) and Clare Melhuish (Director, UCL Urban Laboratory).



Indeed, numbers and models can be counterproductive to mounting a collective and holistic response, as explored in Part 2, titled 'Improvise, innovate, adapt: perspectives on emergency from beyond the city', which featured Kasia Mika (Queen Mary University), Carina Fearnley (UCL-STS), Ajay Heble (University of Guelph) and Ilan Kelman (Chair, UCL Institute for Risk and Disaster Reduction).

Going beyond the numbers are the systems and guidelines that instruct and shape the behaviour of individuals in the social context. They are enabled by visuals that range from practical to highly emotive. Mika explored the diversity of reactions to crisis through film, arguing for creativity and artistic expression as critical sites of political intervention, not just therapeutic outlets, which bring into being new ways to deal with ongoing crisis as well as alternative modes of recovery. Fearnley studies early warning systems that are intended to be as simple and predictable as possible to mobilise stakeholders into action. But the various systems used in the United Kingdom demonstrated at least two different approaches introduced throughout the pandemic that led to confusion and even distrust, reducing compliance with guidelines. Both Mika and Fearnley demonstrated the importance of visual communication in times of crisis, and the role of community imaginations and storytelling in mobilising stakeholders rather than top-down policy directives, a position recapitulated by moderator

Ilan Kelman in his characterisation of early warning systems as social rather than technical processes.

As a composer and critic, Ajay Heble emphasised that to improvise is to engage with states of ongoing precarity, a skill honed while adhering to a set of rules. This process of embracing the unknown can create new paradigms for solving problems, but also involves risk-taking, and that risk may be higher for some people than others. Indeed, the dialogue between these urbanists reminded us of the need to maintain a variety of tools in our 'emergency response toolbox', as no one tool can do it all: improvisation, creativity, standardisation, data models, risk mitigation planning and seasoned city managers.

Melissa Weilmayer is a PhD Candidate in Regional and Urban Planning Studies at the London School of Economics and Political Science. Her interdisciplinary approach stems from a Bachelors in Anthropology and German from the University of Chicago and a Masters in International Relations from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University.

Covid, Culture + Freelance Work



Online workshop

The precarity of freelance work is an issue that has long affected the arts and culture sector and has been especially acute in London. The Covid-19 pandemic has only made it more urgent.

In April 2021 the Urban Lab hosted a policy-making workshop for postgraduate and PhD students to reflect on the impacts of the pandemic on cultural labour. The workshop was led by Laia Gasch, Senior Advisor for Culture and the Creative Industries for the Deputy Mayor of London, who reflected on how support for freelance workers has featured as a concern in the Mayor of London's most recent Culture Strategy and

associated policies, before challenging participants to discuss what more might be done in light of new emergencies in the future.

Laia has been instrumental in creating the first ever London Cultural Infrastructure Plan and the most pro-culture London Plan ever, leading on new policies for affordable workspace and the ground-breaking Agent of Change. She is Director of Partnerships for the World Cities Culture Forum, a leadership network of 40 global cities. For more information visit world-citiescultureforum.com.

Growth — Emergency

Hybrid Symposium

In June 2022 the UCL Urban Lab and the Institute of Advanced Studies interlaced their respective research themes of Emergency and Growth in a cross-disciplinary symposium to reflect critically on each of these concepts and their relationship to each other in the current moment. Two half-day workshops were held, followed by an evening panel presentation for a public audience.

The idea that growth — economic, biological, scientific and personal — establishes a secure foundation for the future underpinned the modern era and has proved remarkably persistent despite the increasing volume and intensity of criticism to which it has been subjected over the last two decades. The Growth—Emergency symposium was prompted by an urge to discuss the extent to which the conditions for debate have been irreversibly changed by the Covid-19 pandemic. During this period emergency measures have been imposed by governments of all political stripes to suspend normal economic and social activity throughout the world, and much discussion of the need to implement new and better models of operation post-pandemic has been aired. At the

same time, there has been an acceleration of extreme weather events, which have increasingly affected parts of the world hitherto accustomed to temperate living conditions. Public discourse has mutated from a framework of crisis to one of emergency: we are no longer talking about a crisis of capitalism or even a crisis of civilisation, but instead of a state of planetary emergency that threatens our very existence, and challenges certain assumptions around continuous growth as a desirable paradigm for the future.

Questions engaged with by the symposium included: Are terms such as 'sustainable development' or 'Green growth' inescapably self-contradictory and wedded to the avoidance of necessary change? Is it possible or even desirable to break with the logic of growth? Which other concepts might we bring to bear to calibrate the possibilities for human and nonhuman flourishing? In current conditions, what realistic options are there for re-configuring our economies, our cities, our societies — not to mention our universities — in the face of the multiple emergencies we face, and to redress fundamental historical inequalities in access to the planet's resources?

BIENNIAL THEME 22–24: MEMORY

The Urban Lab's biennial theme (2022–24) of Memory shaped the timing for the development of a new exhibition of Urban Lab research, MemoryWork, scheduled to open in July 2024 in the Urban Room at UCL East.

Following on from our previous theme, Emergency, our engagement with Memory has been in large part a response to the work that needed to be done to process our individual and collective experiences of living through the pandemic, its lockdowns and bereavements, trauma and grief. It was also a response to the exciting current and future prospects offered by the official opening to the public in January 2023 of the new UCL Urban Room and integral Memory Workshop which Urban Lab now co-manages at UCL East, on behalf of The Bartlett, in collaboration with the new School for Creative and Cultural Industries. After many years of planning, seeing this space finally in action to accommodate teaching on our new Global Urbanism MASc programme and a whole range of public-facing activities, workshops and events, is a significant moment in Urban Lab's history that prompts reflection on our past as much as on our plans for the future.

We have welcomed as curator of this space Dr Kara Blackmore, whose own expertise in the field brings an important resource for us to draw on. As she explains, 'memory work' often addresses past conflicts or traumas in order to understand their impacts and determine subsequent strategies for repair or reconciliation. This collaborative curatorial initiative aims to assemble and present the work of the Urban Lab network through a range of critical and creative research, teaching and engagement projects. By showcasing the rich contribution that members of our network have made to the continuing development of cross-disciplinary urbanism and urban studies at UCL, and the reputation of the Lab nationally and internationally, it provides an opportunity to reflect on Urban Lab's past achievements as a cross-faculty research entity since 2005, and its future trajectory anchored within an academic department that, following many years of work, now has a material presence in east London at the UCL East campus and Urban Room. As such it embodies an approach to memory that encompasses past, present and future in its framing of urban experience and dynamic processes.

Cities and landscapes have received considerable attention in scholarly literature as mnemonic systems, acting as 'memoryscapes' (Basu 2013) through places, paths and monuments (Tilley 1994), patterns and space syntax, navigated individually and collectively. In this field, radical and alternative cartography has played an important role in recovering and making sense of memory embedded in place,

which has been particularly valuable in relation to processes of urban change. Heritage studies have been key to understanding how social memory is embodied in an assemblage of inherited material fabric and infrastructure, natural resources and associated cultural practices, forming the substance of continuity between generations across human societies — but also a complex field of contestation in which different social identities and claims to space and resources are embedded, as manifested during the Black Lives Matter protests of 2020, catalysing public debate about processes of memorialisation.

The Urban Room provides an inclusive space for difficult conversations and interactions, bringing together different communities and identities at difficult times, within a broadly framed decolonial and feminist ethics of care. In this exhibition we look forward to engaging with each other and with our public interlocutors on topics ranging from methodologies of memory co-production; queer heritage; smell, memory and wellbeing; participation through social media; culture wars and ownership of cultural property in the UK; reconstruction of Ukraine; colonial heritage and reparation; displacement from social housing in London; gang-related outmigration in Guatemala City; the Peacewalls of Belfast; destruction and forgetting; and the pain, loss and trauma that can be caused by urban development politics, processes and practices.

Guided by Kara and her expertise in different disciplinary and visual approaches to memory-related research, participants will be supported to visualise their research in a public format and explore the potential for other forms of evaluation of academic work besides the conventional routes of peer-reviewed publication. As a new initiative for the Urban Lab academic community, this group exhibition will form a celebration of work across diverse disciplines which offers new insights into the significance of memory and memory work within the field of urbanism and urban studies.

Urban Agency III: Research Network

UCL Urban Lab Director Clare Melhuish and Co-Director Andrew Harris joined colleagues from urban research centres in Europe, the UK and the US for the first in-person meeting of Urban Agency III at Harokopio University, Athens, on 22 August. The Scientific Research Network, co-ordinated by Bert de Munck and based at the Urban Studies Institute, University of Antwerp, aims to examine the relationship between the institutional embedding of urban studies and the orientation, nature and performativity of the research involved, particularly in terms of its contribution to the conceptualisation of urban studies, and its real-world engagement with policymakers and other urban stakeholders.

The workshop comprised two roundtables designed to address these issues. The first, chaired by Guy Baeten, Institute for Urban Research at Malmö University, asked 'What is the relevance of urban studies today?', with Talja Blokland (Georg-Simmel Centre for Metropolitan Studies, Humboldt-University Berlin), Eric Corijn (VUB, Cosmopolis Centre for Urban Research) and Erik Swyngedouw (Manchester Urban Institute). The second roundtable chaired by Bas van Heur (Brussels Centre for Urban Studies, Vrije Universiteit Brussels),

focused on the question of urban studies' engagement with different publics and included Clare Melhuish (UCL Urban Lab), Marianna d'Ovidio (URBEUR University of Milan Bicocca), Lior Volinz (Crime and Society Research Group, VUB) and Nik Theodore (Centre for Urban Economic Development, University of Illinois at Chicago). An evening keynote lecture, Teaching on the Map: Southern Urbanism as Pedagogical Practice, was delivered by Anna Selmeczi (African Centre of Cities, University of Cape Town), reflecting on the experience of teaching a semester at ACC for students taking the Critical Urbanisms MA, University of Basel.

For further information on Urban Agency III, see uantwerpen.be/en/research-groups/urban-studies-institute/research/urban-agency. Its Global Urban Dialogues webinar series of interviews with directors of member institutions kicked off last September with Clare Melhuish interviewed by Bas van Heur, and extracts from the series will soon be accessible online at uantwerpen.be/en/research-groups/urban-studies-institute/research/urban-agency/global-urban-dialogues.

Innovation Districts

with Sharon Zukin

In April 2023, UCL Urban Lab and The Bartlett School of Planning co-hosted a lively workshop on Innovation Districts: Political Economy, Aesthetics and the Concept of Place, highlighting the recent work of the esteemed visiting scholar, Professor Sharon Zukin (Professor Emerita, Brooklyn College and the CUNY Graduate Center). Sharon has written extensively on political economy, landscapes of power, cultural change and gentrification in cities. She is perhaps best known for her work on 'Loft Living' in New York City. Her more recent work has focused on 'tech ecosystems' and the innovation complex in New York and beyond. In 2022, Sharon delivered the Annual Sir Peter Hall Lecture, Placemaking in the Metaverse. Due to Covid-19 precautions, this lecture took place online, so we were very pleased to be able to host Sharon for an in-person workshop and have the opportunity to welcome her to the Urban Room at the UCL East campus, itself located in the heart of one of London's newest innovation districts emerging in the Queen Elizabeth

Olympic Park, SHIFT. The half-day workshop brought together an interdisciplinary panel of academic and professional presenters and discussants from the fields of architecture, planning and urban governance; advanced urban spatial analysis; cultural economy; media theory; and cultural studies. Cases from the USA, UK and China were enthusiastically debated by the audience of invited attendees. The workshop coincided with a walking tour of SHIFT and a PhD masterclass led by Sharon, open to Bartlett and UCL Geography research students and postdocs.

Topological Atlas



Still from Topological Atlas platform 'Atlas Otherwise'.

Topological Atlas was a multi-year (2018–23) research project, led by Professor Nishat Awan and funded by the European Research Council. It investigates infrastructures of border management through their material, affective and social dimensions alongside a concern with the experience of undocumented migrants and border communities as they come into contact with these infrastructures. Based on intensive fieldwork in border areas at various locations across the Pakistan-Iran and Iran-Turkey borders, as well as in the megacities of Karachi, Pakistan and Istanbul, Turkey, the work explores the relationship between technologies of border security, systems of documentation, border landscapes and the experience of crossing borders without papers. It approaches migration as a system of circulation where deportation regimes, precarious lives and militarised borders work together to keep people moving. Beyond their physical instantiation as lines in the sand, the research considers how borders are produced through the entanglements of terrain, technology and subjectivity.

Work related to this project, as well as Nishat's wider research on migration, funded in part by the Independent Social Research Foundation, was shown at the UCL Urban Room in collaboration with curator Dr Kara Blackmore and artist Cressida Kocienski in autumn 2023. Here, the question of migration was approached through the central role that the lack of documentation plays in such journeys.

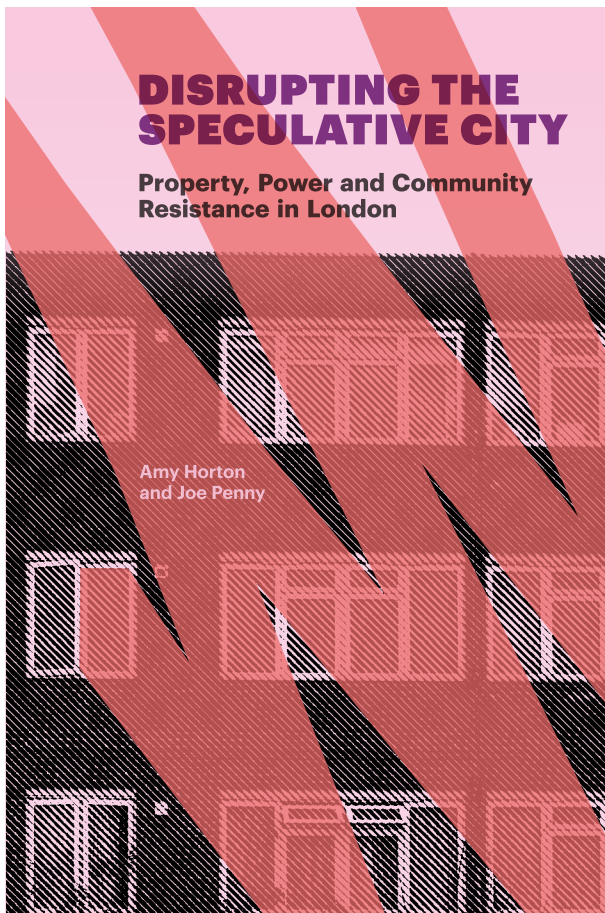
This lack is often compensated by stories, advice and anecdotes from those who have gone before. They are crucial to navigating across what are hostile grounds and unknown lands. *Undocumented?* پیدل explored these journeys of migration as a series of situated vignettes from the edges of Europe. It documented lives caught in movement, lives that for those policing the borders of Europe would be better left undocumented, as mere statistics. The exhibition was open to the public between November 2023 – February 2024.

Housing Inequalities



Dr Joe Penny is working on two research projects on housing in London. First, with UCL Geography's Dr Amy Horton, he has recently completed the manuscript for a book forthcoming with UCL Press entitled *Disrupting the Speculative City*. Engaging themes of property investment, local statecraft and grassroots organising, the book uses in-depth interviews and critical policy analysis to tell the story of how a diverse community-led coalition of tenants, traders, trade unionists and activists defeated one of the most ambitious programmes of state-led gentrification ever planned in London. The research for the book was made possible by funding from the UCL School of Social and Historical Sciences Dean's Strategic Fund and a British Academy/Leverhulme Small Grant. Second, drawing together case studies of council and social housing estate regeneration across London, Joe is also currently working on a research report funded by the Public Interest Law Centre entitled *Working Class Displacement: Case Studies of Council Estate Regeneration Involving Demolition in London*. The report develops an expert evidence base for strategic litigation in the legal defence of London's working-class tenants facing the prospect of demolition, displacement and dispossession, and has been developed through critical and forensic scrutiny of planning reports and viability assessments.

Dr Joe Penny joined the Urban Lab in 2022 and is Programme Director of the Global Urbanism MASc



Disrupting the Speculative City will be available to read for free at uclpress.co.uk from September.

Publications

Urban Pamphleteer #9

Urban Pamphleteer #10

Co-curating the City

Post-war Architecture

Queer Premises

Comparative Urbanism

PUBLICATIONS

REIMAGINING
THE NIGHT

URBAN
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Urban Pamphleteer #9

Reimagining the Night

Following years of supporting the *Urban Pamphleteer* through my role as Urban Lab's Centre Manager, I was pleased to have the opportunity to co-edit an edition of the series relating to my own research interest of the urban night. Published in December 2021, *Urban Pamphleteer #9: Reimagining the Urban Night* took the form of a cross-European editorial collaboration with members of the HERA-funded NITE research project. Working with my colleagues Kamila Krakowska Rodrigues (Leiden), Laura-Solmaz Litschel (Humboldt), Derek Pardue (Aarhus) and Katie Young (Limerick), our aim with the issue was to understand the future trajectory of urban night activity, management and policy in a 'post-Covid' Europe. The issue engages perspectives from nightlife cultural organisers and associations, artists, industry representatives, policymakers, scholars and others, with a narrative focus on spaces important to migrant communities. The digital version is available at urbanpamphleteer.org, and physical copies are available on request.

In the same year, I had the opportunity to represent *Urban Pamphleteer* on an international stage through our invitation to Hamburg's annual Indiecon publishing festival in September 2021. Over the weekend, hundreds of people visited our stall to chat, make enquiries about the series, and — most importantly — to pick up copies from our back catalogue.

Jordan Rowe,
Former Centre Manager — UCL Urban Lab

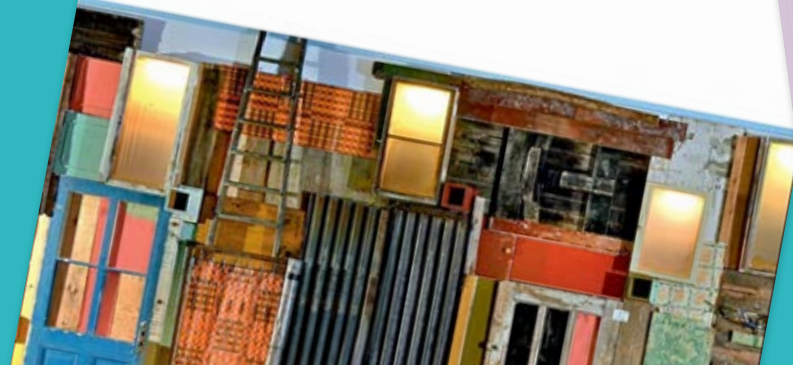
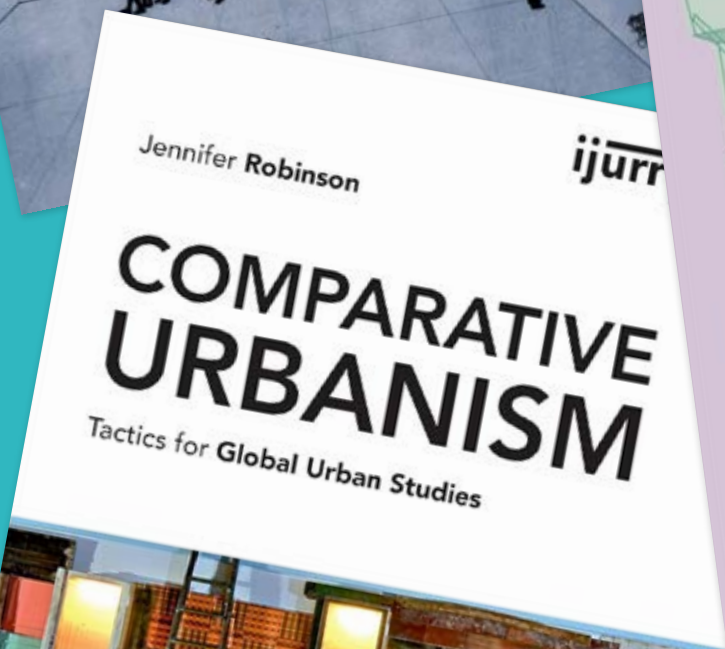
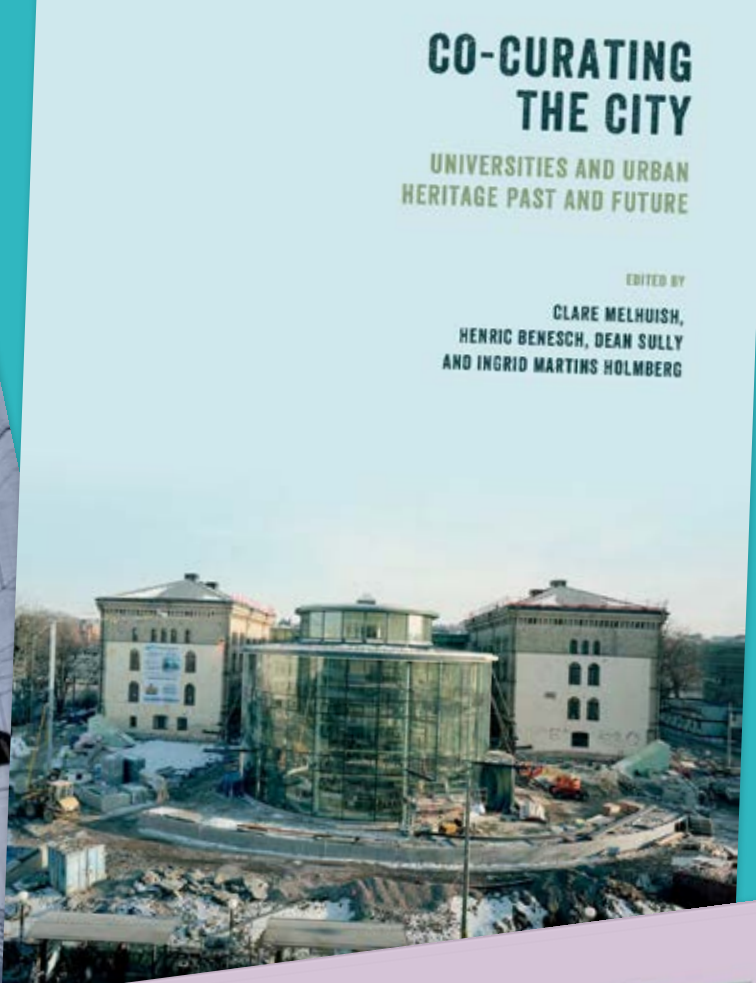
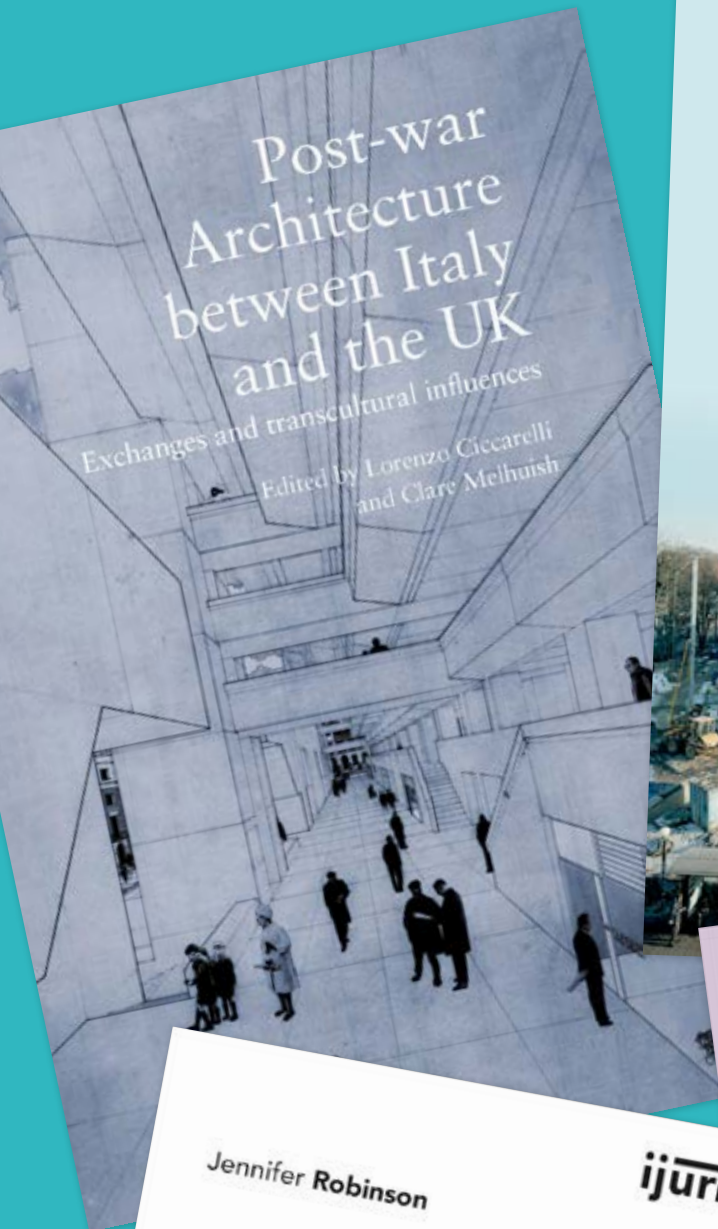
Urban Pamphleteer #10

Museums, Cities & Cultural Power

Starting with the Museum of London's upcoming move to West Smithfield, our latest issue of *Urban Pamphleteer* explores the relationship between museums and urban areas from a variety of viewpoints and locations globally. Inserting a new cultural venue into an existing neighbourhood changes its social, cultural and economic dynamics. In recent decades, many new urban museums have been built with the aim of revitalising neighbourhoods and cities, raising significant questions about their local impact, and the roles and authority of cultural institutions in cities. The Covid-19 pandemic also prompted questions around their local significance when city centres emptied suddenly of tourists.

Edited by Monica Degen, Clare Melhuish and Lauren Parker, *Urban Pamphleteer #10* brings together the voices of practitioners, activists and academics under the rubric of 'place, people and power' to consider how museums can reflect, represent and be of value to a wide cross-section of society in cities. Museum buildings are not just designed to store and display collections, but also as symbolic opportunities to support city branding, attract visitors, stimulate place-based regeneration, and build architectural reputations. Simultaneously as public institutions, they have a duty to reflect critically on their capacity to generate social change.

Museums have increasingly sought to attract a wider range of audiences to their buildings. These discussions consider what a museum created by, with and for its city entails. Museums have historically played a key role in shaping and representing particular ideologies and social value systems, and this continues today in relation to evolving public concerns around sustainability and the environment, economic inequalities and social justice, globalisation and marketisation, decolonisation and migration. Simultaneously, they are powerful actors in spatial redevelopment, the maximisation of urban property values, and the production of new landscapes of consumption. Our contributors consider how museums should engage with their position of power in society, interrogating the possibilities which they hold for the creation and management of new kinds of relationships and interactions in cities.



Co-curating the City: Universities and Urban Heritage and Future

Edited by Clare Melhuish, Henric Benesch,
Dean Sully and Ingrid Martins Holmberg
UCL Press, 2022

Co-curating the City explores the role of universities in the construction and mobilisation of heritage discourses in urban development and regeneration processes, with a focus on six case study sites: University of Gothenburg (Sweden), UCL East (London), University of Lund (Sweden), Roma Tre University (Rome), American University of Beirut, and Federal University of São Paulo, Brazil.

The aim of the book is to expand the field of critical heritage studies in the urban domain, by examining the role of institutional actors both in the construction of urban heritage discourses and in how those discourses influence urban planning decisions or become instrumentalised as mechanisms for urban regeneration. It proposes that universities engage in these processes in a number of ways: as producers of urban knowledge that is mobilised to intervene in planning processes; as producers of heritage practices that are implemented in development contexts in the urban realm; and as developers engaged in campus construction projects that both reference heritage discourses as a mechanism for promoting support and approval by planners and the public, and capitalise on heritage assets as a resource.

The book highlights the participatory processes through which universities are positioning themselves as significant institutions in the development of urban heritage narratives. The case studies investigate how universities, as mixed communities of interest dispersed across buildings and urban sites, engage in strategies of engagement with local people and neighbourhoods, and ask how this may be contributing to a re-shaping of ideas, narratives and lived experience of urban heritage in which universities have a distinctive agency. The authors cross disciplinary and cultural boundaries, and bridge academia and practice.

Co-curating the City is edited by Clare Melhuish, Director of UCL Urban Lab, alongside Henric Benesch (University of Gothenburg), Dean Sully (UCL Institute of Archaeology) and Ingrid Martins Holmberg (University of Gothenburg).

Downloadable for free at uclpress.co.uk.

Post-war Architecture Between Italy and the UK: Exchanges and Transcultural Influences

Edited by Lorenzo Ciccarelli and Clare Melhuish
UCL Press, 2021

LORENZO CICCARELLI: This publication investigates a network of historic cultural exchanges and formed the starting point for new exchanges and research. Favourably received by the scholarly community as 'a valuable addition to knowledge', the book brought together and compared the methodologies and research of British, Italian, French and American scholars, aiming to construct a discourse on the built environment of transnational value and European scale. The book's publication also facilitated a period in which I was invited as a Senior Visiting Researcher at the Urban Lab, during which I was able to work on the ongoing research project, *The Barbican: Making a Public Space for the Post-war London*, and participate in-person at the book launch held online with contributions from Otto Saumarez Smith and Paolo Scrivano.

CLARE MELHUIH: As the government's 'Check, Change, Go' information campaign made its presence felt on the UK's streets, preparing its citizens for the end of the Brexit transition period and a possible 'no-deal', the necessity of consolidating strong cultural and academic collaborations with European colleagues and friends felt all the more pressing. I was very pleased therefore to have been involved in two publications in 2020 which showcase British post-war architecture and urbanism in a European context, and highlight the depth of intellectual and artistic entanglement which historically binds the UK to its neighbours, and shapes our common urban futures.

My chapter on the Brunswick in this volume examines the influence of Italian approaches to post-war urban reconstruction and the historic morphology of Italian towns and public spaces on Patrick Hodgkinson's design of the development. It highlights the contrast between the critics' view of the Brunswick development as ultra-modern in its aspirations, and Hodgkinson's insistence on the influence of historical precedents, demonstrating how fundamental the European context was for design, as architects and urbanists struggled to come to terms with the destruction of war and chart a better future for urban society and everyday life in cities. Architecture and urban design across the UK presents everyday material evidence of those historical collaborations across the English Channel, and clues for collaboration and mutual admiration in the future.

For the full text originally published on the UCL European Institute blog see: ucluropeblog.com/2020/12/11/how-european-is-the-brunswick-centre.

Queer Premises: LGBTQ+ Venues in London Since the 1980s

by Ben Campkin
Bloomsbury Academic, 2023

Queer premises provide vital social and cultural infrastructure — a queer infrastructure — connecting different generations and locations, facilitating the movement of resources, across and beyond the city. *Queer Premises* offers evidence for how London's diverse LGBTQ+ populations have embedded themselves into urban space, systems and resources. It sets out to understand how, across their different material dimensions, bars, cafes, nightclubs, pubs, community centres and hybrids of these typologies, have been imagined, created and sustained.

From the 1980s to the present, Campkin asks how, where and why these venues have been established, how they operate and the purposes they serve, what challenges they face and why they close down.

Comparative Urbanism: Tactics for Global Urban Studies

by Jennifer Robinson
Wiley, 2022

The rapid pace and changing nature of twenty-first century urbanisation as well as the diversity of global urban experiences calls for new theories and new methodologies in urban studies. In *Comparative Urbanism: Tactics for Global Urban Studies*, Jennifer Robinson proposes grounds for reformatting comparative urban practice and offers a wide range of tactics for researching global urban experiences. The focus is on inventing new concepts as well as revising existing approaches. Inspired by postcolonial and decolonial critiques of urban studies, she advocates for an experimental comparative urbanism, open to learning from different urban experiences and to expanding conversations amongst urban scholars across the globe.

The book features a wealth of examples of comparative urban research, concerned with many dimensions of urban life. A range of theoretical and philosophical approaches ground an understanding of the radical revisability and emergent nature of concepts of the urban. Advanced students, urbanists and scholars will be prompted to compose comparisons which trace the interconnected and relational character of the urban, and to think with the variety of urban experiences and urbanisation processes across the globe, to produce the new insights the twenty-first century urban world demands.

Teaching

Urban Studies MSc

Global Urbanism MASC

Fieldtrip: Johannesburg

Ruth Glass Scholarship

Postgrad Urbanists

Urban Miscellanea

TEACHING



Urban Studies MSc

The Urban Studies MSc programme, launched by the UCL Urban Lab in 2008, develops distinctive interdisciplinary approaches to the study of cities and urban life, attracting excellent, highly committed students from a wide range of backgrounds. The MSc continues to benefit from close links with the Urban Lab particularly in exploring a shared annual thematic. In 2020–21 and 2021–22 this was ‘emergency urbanism’, and for 2022–23 ‘urban memory’.

The unprecedented challenges of remote working during Covid-19 sparked several students in 2021 to initiate a new curatorial collective and platform called Urban Miscellanea. Responding to our ‘Emergency’ theme, they curated and launched an online exhibition entitled States of Apprehension featuring submissions across a variety of artistic mediums such as art, photography, poetry and music with an incredibly uplifting launch event at Chiswick House in October 2021. In March 2022, the programme enjoyed a sneak preview around the ongoing construction of the new Google HQ in King’s Cross, and MSc student Michael Fleetwood-Walker represented UCL on University Challenge in 2022 reaching the quarter finals.

There is now an Instagram account sharing examples of student work and programme activities including some recent collages created for the Urban Imaginations module.

The Urban Studies MSc programme was a key moment in the development of my practice. It allowed me to situate myself in the wider field of urbanism and delve into my academic interests with support from several faculties at UCL. The professors that accompanied us throughout the year offered the expertise that I was seeking prior to enrolling, and I felt encouraged to pursue my intellectual curiosity within a rigorous academic framework. This allowed me to bring together the fields that I have engaged with in the past (namely media, fine art, urbanism and ecology) to find my voice as a writer during my dissertation project, which was awarded the Frank Carter Prize and the Human Geography Dissertation Prize.

I joined the programme in 2020 during the Covid pandemic hoping to be able to focus on research and writing at a time of lockdowns, but the programme exceeded these expectations, and it turned out to be an interesting time to be studying cities. Despite the difficulties of that year, I am hugely grateful to the faculty that went above and beyond to stay close to us (albeit virtually), and to the UCL Urban Lab which supported our efforts to launch Urban Miscellanea, a collective project which resulted in an online exhibition featuring the work of over 20 practitioners on the theme of urban emergency. It allowed me and my peers to develop a challenging project together at a time where we did not even meet on campus, while getting to know each other’s inspiring trajectories and build lasting relationships.



UCL

MAsc Global Urbanism

UCL Urban Laboratory

A new transdisciplinary Master of Arts and Sciences degree that will equip you with the critical skills and specialist knowledge to operate as an urbanist in today's global environment, collaborating across sectors to tackle urgent challenges and shape fairer cities.

- Engage with the distinctive breadth of UCL Urban Lab's state-of-the-art urban expertise and its critical, creative and collaborative approach to addressing urgent urban problems.
- Enjoy a collaborative, immersive, case-study based approach to learning, grounded in the ethos of transdisciplinary studios, where the arts, humanities, and social sciences intersect.
- Work with local and international partners at UCL East in a bespoke setting designed for transdisciplinary education, including a new public engagement space, the UCL Urban Room.
- Choose from two learning pathways, Global Studio or London Studio, and specialise in the highly globalised urban contexts of Johannesburg and/or London.
- Graduate ready to engage across diverse cities and lead in a variety of roles in urban policy, research, and practice to shape socially and ecologically just urban futures.



Global Urbanism MASc

In the 2022–2023 academic year, we at UCL Urban Laboratory took a significant step in our development as a fledgling teaching department with the launch of our Masters of Arts and Sciences (MASc) in Global Urbanism. One of several inaugural programmes based at the new UCL East campus, in the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, the Global Urbanism MASc is an innovative postgraduate degree that builds comparative understandings of global urbanism across a diversity of urban contexts, including London, Johannesburg, Skardu and Kingston.

Inspired by UCL Urban Lab's longstanding commitment to 'engaged urbanism' as a methodology of urban theory and practice, we've designed the programme to help students reflect critically on the political, ethical and practical challenges and possibilities of being an urbanist in our contemporary moment of intersecting and compounding crises.

We feel strongly that the urban knowledge we need to meet this moment is being co-produced all around us across a variety of sites, through a multiplicity of situated practices and by a range of different actors. Recognising this, through our teaching we've introduced students to some of the creative methods, collaborative approaches and interdisciplinary frameworks that will help them to contribute to these collective efforts. This year the theme for one of the core modules on the MASc was 'thinking the future', a skill that all urbanists require. Yet, future thinking is often caught in a causal and linear logic that struggles to account for multiple and situated worlds. For this reason, we introduced students to speculative methods of storytelling, fictioning, critical mapping and collaging as ways of imagining and working with complex and uncertain futures, as well as difficult and silenced histories.

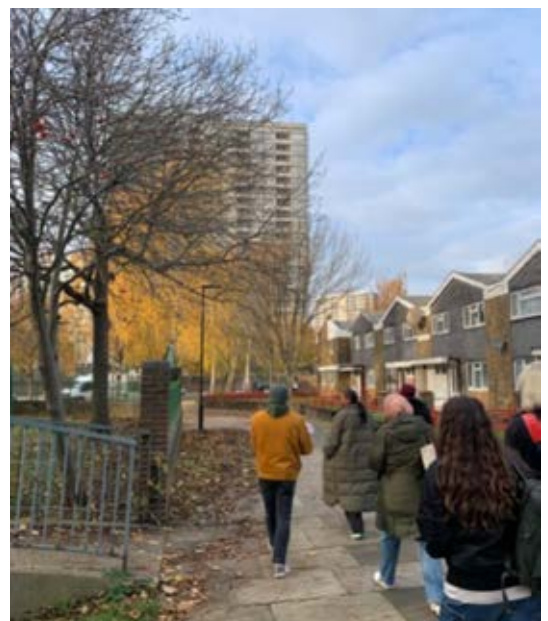
Pedagogically we have used site visits, critical dialogues, collaborative workshops and exhibitions — including In the UCL Urban Room — to learn with and from different experts. As one of our students put it:

Just in the first term we visited the Alton Estate to talk about its People's Plan, discussed housing policy and delivery with a politician, an architect and a GLA housing strategist, heard from a visiting professor about community collaboration in Cape Town, explored masterplanning on the Carpenters Estate, delved into the rebel archives at Elephant & Castle's 56a Infoshop, thought about apartheid through art at the Royal Academy's William Kentridge exhibition, learnt from tenant organisations about the fight for housing justice, and wrote our own manifesto!

One of the highlights of the programme this year was the two-week intensive fieldtrip to Johannesburg led by Dr Njogu Morgan and Prof Jenny Robinson and organised with our international partner, the



Writing a Housing Justice Manifesto in the UCL Urban Room.



Masterplanning on the Carpenters Estate in east London.

University of Witwatersrand (Wits). The field trip offered students an opportunity to think about and experience the concept of 'extended urbanisation'. A key objective was to explore the interrelationships between Johannesburg and urban settlements, some as far as 500km away. This was realised through lectures, seminar discussion, practical exercises, interviews and field observations together with Wits students and partners from an urban observatory, the Gauteng City Region Observatory. One of the students in reflecting on the trip said:

Many thanks to the professors and Wits for arranging everything. My whole study process was full of happy and important moments and this was the most important of all of them. It was the most rewarding and meaningful field trip I have ever experienced.

Reflecting the cross-disciplinary nature of the programme, the core teaching team has been drawn from across different UCL departments and this year included: Prof Nishat Awan, Dr Joe Penny and Dr Clare Melhuish from UCL Urban Laboratory, together with Dr Njogu Morgan (UCL Urban Laboratory and Wits History Workshop), Prof Ben Campkin (UCL Bartlett School of Architecture), Prof Jenny Robinson (UCL Geography), and Dr Pablo Sendra (UCL Bartlett School of Planning).

We have also benefited from expert teaching contributions from across UCL Urban Laboratory's wider network, including those from across UCL, other universities across the world, and external organisations such as Forensic Architecture.

Prof Nishat Awan and Dr Joe Penny
Programme Leads, Global Urbanism MASc

The Global Urbanism MASc is giving me so many new ways to think about cities – different perspectives on London and new insights into the urban processes that are important elsewhere. It's challenged a lot of my assumptions, and I'm finding that it's helping me think critically about my own practice as well as opening up new vistas.

Jen Storan,
MASc Global Urbanism student (part-time) and
Senior Project Manager at Meanwhile Space CIC



Delving into Rebel Archives at Elephant & Castle's 56a Infoshop.



UCL and Wits students in Bushbuckridge, South Africa, observing rapid urbanisation driven in part by socio-economic connections with Johannesburg.

Before the plane touched down, I thought I knew Johannesburg. In our Global Urbanism MASc class we had discussed the city-region's urban form, stretched and fragmented by mining, apartheid and a burst of highway-building. We had watched videos, looked at photos and studied maps, we had read papers on extended urbanism in the South African context. I could picture it in my head.

Nonsense, of course. A city is not an abstraction. All the theory, history and economics were useful frameworks but stepping off the plane into the streets entered us into a landscape that wove them together, peopled them and became tangible. Part of that was the city unfolding into physical space, and the other part was meeting people whose voices we had previously only encountered on the page, or as reported by others, or not at all.



The Johannesburg field trip was a collaborative module with Wits University and the first week was split between talking to researchers, planners and academics on campus and touring Johannesburg City, with its gated communities, malls, townships, hijacked buildings, backyard shacks, security guards and fences and cameras and dogs, empty new BRT stations and ex-office blocks filled with hundreds of micro-stores selling cheap imported goods. We drove out of the centre, through the gleaming commercial district and eco-luxury fantasy city, and spoke to a king, traditional authority councillors and local municipal officers about tensions and challenges in the region's urbanising city outskirts.



We spent the second week at Wits Rural campus in Bushbuckridge, a former homeland area near Kruger National Park. It is over 400km by road from Johannesburg and Pretoria, and yet its settlements are expanding rapidly and merging into one another, and grand new houses are being built. The heart of the trip was a collaborative exercise with Wits students and a cross-disciplinary group of South African experts to try to understand what is driving this dynamism in a remote rural area with few signs of any significant local economy.

Being in at the beginning of a piece of work that could serve a practical purpose as places like Bushbuckridge change helped mitigate some of the constraints of a field trip. It is not just the carbon debt racked up by all that travel that will need repaying somehow, through

future actions informed by lessons learnt from this sprawling, car-dependent, extractive urban region. The two-week time limit imposes a partialness, a selectivity in what you can see and who you can talk to. And as a visiting student without much to offer interviewees in exchange for their time and knowledge you are an observer — in our case, because of the security situation and the amount of ground we had to cover, observers who also spent a lot of time looking out at the city through a bus window.



Still, even to visitors like us, it was clear that this is a place that has enormous energy but is still scarred by its history. As a city-region it faces complex challenges. Inequality is sharp and boundaries are policed. Population outstrips formal housing and jobs. Infrastructure is crumbling and power cuts have become normalised. Municipal politics is in paralysis. Johannesburg shows how much the decisions we make about our cities matter. It was inspiring to encounter the determination of urbanists who push on, despite the fading of the optimism of the immediate post-apartheid era: the planners fighting persistent segregation but recognising there are no easy purely spatial fixes; the transport expert still championing trains and buses despite the stalled multi-billion-rand BRT scheme.

While I have returned acutely conscious of the diversity of Johannesburg and how much more there is to know, the field trip was a great opportunity to deepen our understanding of the urban processes at work in this African megaregion. For me, I feel I have gained a new urgency to bring to my thinking, and I am hugely thankful to everyone at UCL and Wits University who made the trip happen and to all the academics, Gauteng City-Region Observatory experts, local guides, planners, municipal officials, traditional leaders and fellow students who were so generous with their time and their insights.

Ruth Glass Scholarship

In 2023 we were pleased to announce a new funding opportunity for UK home fees status students to cover tuition costs and a 52-week living stipend, designed for applicants intending to study our new Global Urbanism MAsc programme.

This scholarship acknowledges the huge contribution made by sociologist Ruth Glass to the development of cross-disciplinary urban scholarship in the UK; specifically at UCL, with the establishment of the Centre for Urban Studies in 1958. Her formative work, *London: Aspects of Change* (1964), brought together 10 chapters by sociologists, geographers, planners, historians and health scientists to build a brilliant and critical portrait of a city that was undergoing rapid change. It covered issues including high-density housing, immigration and racial discrimination, metropolitan governance, land values, transport access, and not least gentrification — a term which Glass coined. These continue to play a major role in transdisciplinary debates and discussions about London's ongoing transformations and its future aspirations. They have been core to UCL Urban Lab's research and teaching agenda since its establishment in 2005.

The Ruth Glass scholarship has given me the opportunity to meet with academics and practitioners at the forefront of housing justice. This experience has been invaluable. It has given me the time to begin to develop a critical lens through which to imagine more equal cities in a dynamic and supportive learning environment.

Lily Flashman,
Ruth Glass Scholarship recipient 2023–24

Postgrad Urbanists

Postgrad Urbanists launched in Summer 2021 as an interdisciplinary academic forum aiming to generate and engage in lively discussion, community and relatable content. Our first term in 2021 saw us run a series of monthly reading groups, writing groups and socials. We also launched our digital #myurbanlab initiative where our PhD community shared what the term meant in relation to their research. In 2022 we hosted 'PhD Life: The Workshop', a virtual international conference with speakers invited to present on academic wellbeing, public speaking, research impact, and an interview with Dr Giada Peterle, editor of *Narrative Geographies*. On the back of this workshop, we have been successfully running a weekly writing group. We launched a 'Southern Urbanists Reading/Doing Group' (autumn 2022 — summer 2023) which evolved over time into a collaboration with The Bartlett School of Architecture and The Bartlett Development Planning Unit's BUDD programme. Southern Urbanists has now become 'The Maintenance Corner for Southern Urban Practitioners', with an emphasis on 'practice'. We started 2023 with a book launch for Dr Zoë Ayres' *Managing Your Mental Health During PhD* (2022) and later in the year, we ran a spring writing retreat and Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park walk at UCL East.

Sidra Ahmed and Jhono Bennett

Urban Miscellanea

In the summer of 2021, a group of our Urban Studies MSc students launched the curatorial collective Urban Miscellanea in collaboration with the Urban Laboratory. Building on, and inspired by past Urban Laboratory events (Cities Methodologies 2009–2014), they established a platform centred on student voices through expressive frameworks. They recognised that Covid-19 had significantly disrupted and complicated engagement beyond classrooms, and therefore sought to establish a bridge between students and the Urban Laboratory.

Since then they have curated digital submissions in all creative formats, including, but not limited to: poems, photography, short essays, video, net art, audio clips, DJ mixes, playlists and more! Expressions of interest, unfinished work and proposals were also welcomed, as selected participants were invited to take part in crit sessions to collectively reflect on the development of submissions.

In October 2021 the group launched 'States of Apprehension', an online exhibition connected to our theme of 'Emergency' with an event at Chiswick House and Gardens, as part of their 'Bring into Being' programme. The launch featured a live performance from second-year geographer Sadia Munye, whose song 'Hanging On' was included in the exhibition. Other contributions from students include 'Baby' by Emilia Weber (PhD) and 'The Descent from Rupperather Berg' by Alexander Salem (Urban Studies MSc), while Nikos Akritidis (Urban Studies MSc) wrote the introductory curatorial essay.

To learn more about the group's work, please follow @urbanmiscellanea on Instagram.

Urban Miscellanea is an amazing student-led multi-media creative anthology and I cannot recommend it enough. Catalysed out of the unprecedented challenges of last year, this new initiative has proved brilliantly miscellaneous, conjuring all sorts of connections and possibilities out of the topic of emergency that would ordinarily close these down.

Dr Andrew Harris,
convenor of Urban Studies MSc



Urban Studies MSc students Alex Salem and Nikolaos Akritidis on the decks at the Urban Miscellanea launch, Chiswick House, London, 2021. Credit: Sophie Mephram.

Urban Room

Welcome from the Curator

SE1 Stories

Navigating the System

Testing Ground

Opening of our New Campus

URBAN ROOM



19 January – 3 March 2023

Monday – Friday (10am – 6pm)
Saturday appointments on request

SE1 STORIES

UCL URBAN ROOM



SE1 Stories:
Community action in a London neighbourhood

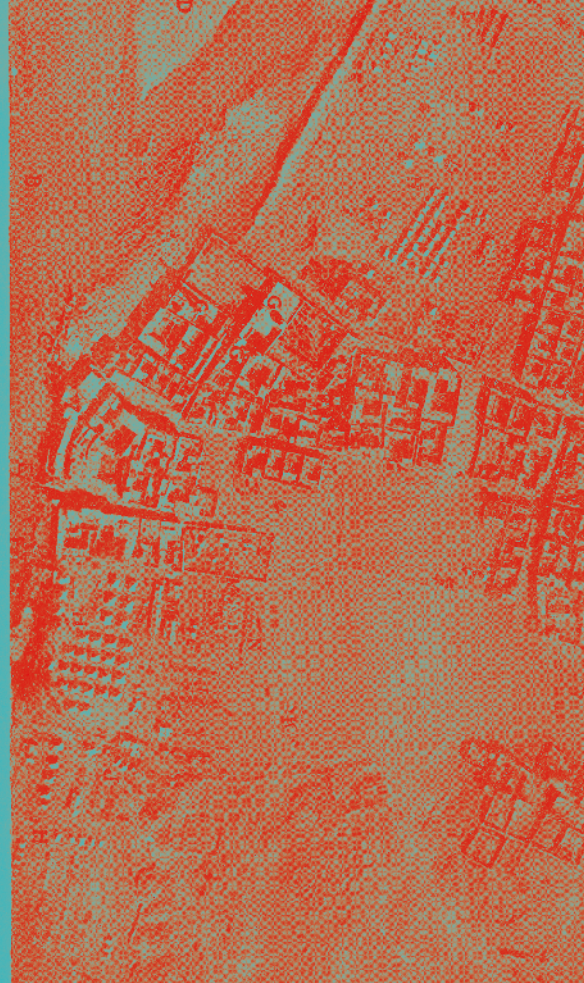
UCL Urban Room
UCL East, One Pool Street, Stratford, E20 2AF

NEIGHBOURHOOD



A. Town. B. River Euphrates. C. Native boats (note mast Shadows.) D. Island. E. Bridge of boats F. New bridge under construction. G. Minarets (note long Shadows.) H. Camps. I. Trenches. J. Dumps. K. Pits for field-guns mounted as A.A. L. Motor transport. M. Chetai shelters. N. Transport lines.

Height taken from: 4,000 ft.



COMMUNITY ACTION IN A LONDON

Welcome from the Curator



In my first year of curating the UCL Urban Room I have been excited by the potential as well as challenged by the context. On the one hand, placemaking in a university means that I have a support system to critically reflect on my curatorial practice and take risks. On the other hand, being situated in the East Campus of UCL, in the Olympic Park and in the borough of Newham has specific challenges, such as responding to the regeneration project that we are a part of, building an audience in a relatively depopulated area and ensuring that our programming reflects the diversity of students and residents who we work with. I embrace these challenges by seeking counsel from students, artists, area residents and knowledgeable colleagues at UCL. It is being in community with them and through the practice of making together, failing and holding space for each other, that I approach this work.

The UCL Urban Room has been creating spaces for experiential teaching and learning through exhibitions. Our exhibitions are a format for collaboration, engaging with community partners, researchers and students. Since opening in 2023 we have hosted six exhibitions featuring work by activists, academics and emerging artists.

SE1 Stories was the inaugural exhibition which brought an existing showcase from activists who had been working in the 1960s and 70s in Southwark. Expanding their material with new images and archiving practices helped us to define our position as a space for dialogue around important community action.

Navigating the System created a visual reference point for research conducted by PhD students at UCL. The Urban Room supported the realisation of findings about the challenges faced by people living on boats in London. The photographs, stylised quotes and scenographic elements supported a wide-ranging dialogue about creative approaches to public health challenges.

In line with our commitments to exploring creative ways to approaching difficult knowledge, we then hosted *Testing Ground*, an immersive video and sound installation. Bringing together histories of colonial surveillance, this exhibition was a way to recognise how urban forms of violence are rooted in longstanding legacies.

Different from other galleries and museums, the UCL Urban Room is a space for experimentation and improvisation. This ethos underpinned our collaborative hosting of the first Seeded East Bank Artists in Residence. Four artists, all engaging in social practice worked with the Urban Room and London College of Fashion over five months. The results of that time was a showcase that featured film, textile installation and drawing.

To round off the academic year, we hosted our first student showcase, *In Practice*. It featured work from our core programmes in Global Urbanism and Public History in collaboration with Connected Environments. Here students displayed visual reflections of their dissertation research and creative course-work outputs. We will run this show annually.

We ended 2023 with the opening of *Undocumented?*, an exhibition exploring everyday experiences of migration between Odessa and Istanbul. Making that context relevant in London was done through programming that recognises the Urban Room as a space to simultaneously work through hyper-local and global issues.

Kara Blackmore
Curator, UCL Urban Room



Navigating the System exhibition.
Photo by Caitlin Vinicombe.

SE1 Stories

19th January – 3rd March 2023



SE1 Stories exhibition, 2023: view of exhibition panels displaying photographs and archive material from the *SE1 Newspaper* collection.

In early 2023 the Urban Room hosted SE1 Stories, an exhibition created from a collection of thousands of photographs and archives, including the *SE1 Newspaper* publication that was produced from 1975–91.

Having previously been shown across London, the UCL Urban Room edition of SE1 Stories included new photographs, archives and sound components. The exhibition showcased historical fights for housing, social services and residents' rights with meaningful resonance to contemporary activism in east London. The six-week stay at UCL Urban Room included a Public History open day, Archiving Activism workshop, and Community Action dialogue event.

The exhibition features an extraordinary period of community action in the 1970s and 80s in Blackfriars, Waterloo and North Southwark along London's South Bank. For many it was a fight for survival as businesses moved out and land was earmarked for office development leaving isolated communities struggling to maintain their way of life. It was a period of huge empowerment for local residents. Campaigns, protests and direct action were the tools to force local authorities and developers to recognise the community's needs. Estate tenants formed associations to negotiate with their landlords and community groups flourished.

SE1 Stories is an umbrella group of people who were active in the campaigns in the 1970s and 80s. The group came together in 2019 when thousands of photographs were discovered in the archives of Southwark and Lambeth councils. Many were taken by members of the group for *SE1 Newspaper*. Many more come from the innovative Blackfriars Photography Project that gave people the equipment and skills to be photographers.

Please visit se1stories.uk for more information.

Navigating the System

24th March – 29th April 2023

In the spring of 2023 the Urban Room hosted *Navigating the System*, a co-curated exhibition about London's boater community and difficulties they face accessing healthcare.

Based on research by boat-dweller Joseph Cook (UCL Anthropology) and Nura Ali (UCL DPU), the exhibition featured photographs by boater and photo-journalist Caitlin Vinicombe and testimonial accounts of how the issue of having no fixed address impacts accessing everyday services and urgent healthcare.

London's canals and rivers host an estimated 4,000 boats. In the past, most boat-dwellers had permanent moorings where they could tie their boats to land. An increase in boat numbers, combined with housing pressures, means that the majority of London's boat community now hold licences requiring them to move every 14 days. They are known as 'continuous cruisers'. The powerful imagery and displays evoked life on the water and riverbank, while illustrating how being a 'continuous cruiser' with no fixed address impacts access

to everyday services including education and urgent healthcare.

Throughout the exhibition a number of events were held, often including the participation of liveboard boaters local to UCL East, and a range of stakeholders interested in healthcare, transient populations and life on water.

The exhibition has gone on to be shown at Campus Condorcet in Paris, and UCL East will also host an 'Accessible Waterways Day' in late 2024, in a collaboration with the Accessible Waterways Association, who participated in both Navigating the System's research and exhibition dialogue events.

This exhibition was supported by UCL East Community Seed Fund and UCL Grand Challenges. For more information visit navigatingthesystem.co.uk



Navigating the System exhibition.
Photo by Mediorite.

Testing Ground

31st May – 21st June 2023



Notes on Aerial Photography (detail from manual). Annotated aerial photograph made by the RAF over Mesopotamia 1918.

An exhibition of visual and sonic installations examining contemporary and historic helicopter surveillance over London, Iraq and Belfast, *Testing Ground* was hosted in the Urban Room in June 2023.

Techniques of aerial surveillance were developed by the British Army over Belfast during the 30-year conflict — the so-called Troubles — that have since been adapted by the National Police Air Service for use over London and other British cities. Through the exhibition, Bartlett-based artists/researchers Henrietta Williams and Merijn Royaards set out to reveal how the British state developed aerial knowledge systems in colonial space and how these now play out over contemporary London.

Williams and Royaards' unique and powerful exhibition interweaved archival material gathered from the Imperial War Museum's 'Northern Ireland Collection' against contemporary video footage and sonic field recordings of helicopter surveillance at moments of protest in London. Alongside the exhibition, the artists hosted a series of workshops with MayDay Rooms and Maeve McDaid discussing topics connected to the show's theme.

Opening of our New Campus

by the Pro-Provost (UCL East)



I was absolutely delighted to officially open our UCL East campus in September 2023 with Christine Ohuruogu (double Olympic, World and Commonwealth 400m Champion), Justine Simons (Deputy Mayor of London for Culture and Creative Industries), Victor Chu (UCL Chair of Council) and Michael Spence (UCL President and Provost). It was a fantastic day, filled with emotions, pride and fun as we celebrated the huge and generous collaboration that has brought colleagues from across UCL to work together to make this happen.

We held three separate events for our different friends and colleagues, partners, stakeholders, funders and neighbours. The launch of UCL East gave me the opportunity to reflect on what it has actually taken to get to this point.

Back in 2014, we set ourselves a fantastic challenge to achieve an incredibly ambitious vision: we wanted to redefine what a university campus can be. We wanted a campus that is fully embedded in the local community and where there are no boundaries between disciplines, no boundary to the spontaneous cross-pollination of ideas. We wanted UCL East to be a campus dedicated to solving real-world problems, bringing transformation here locally in east London as well as globally, combining technology with art and culture.

The result today is visible all around us, UCL East is a campus where collaboration is designed in, from the architecture of the buildings to new ways of working where sharing research labs and facilities is the norm. The vision for UCL East has been the foundation for the development of new multidisciplinary programmes and new high-tech research laboratories dedicated to robotics and AI, ecology, green manufacturing, decarbonising transport, assistive technology, the cultural and creative industries, fair finance and global health. The aim is to find solutions that enable sustainable cities, health and wellbeing, cultural understanding, justice and equality — very much aligned with our UCL Grand Challenges.

Local engagement is at the very heart of our academic vision for UCL East. The opening of our unique Urban Room in One Pool Street in November 2022 has brought this to life, through a series of exhibitions co-curated with local communities which have stimulated debates and curiosity on topics related to urban development and future living.

Collaboration has underpinned every step of our journey in the making of UCL East, and it will continue to shape our work going forward. As a founding partner of East Bank and of the new innovation district, SHIFT, we look forward to seeing blossom the fantastic opportunities these partnerships bring to collaborate with our world-renowned partners, V&A, Sadler's Wells, UAL: London College of Fashion and the BBC, and with innovators and businesses from the local community and internationally as we embed UCL East in the locality of the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park and Newham.

Professor Paola Lettieri FEng — Pro-Provost
(UCL East) and Professor of Chemical Engineering



View of atrium towards Urban Room,
One Pool Street, UCL East.

People

Reflection from Jordan Rowe

Visiting Researchers

Staff Biographies

International Advisory Board

PEOPLE



There was a bittersweet moment halfway through my leaving party in the bar of the Curzon Bloomsbury when I realised that we were toasting not only the end of nearly seven years at UCL Urban Laboratory, but also marking an unbroken decade-long association with the wider university itself. Arriving as a confused History undergraduate in 2011, I somehow managed to navigate the complex corridors of this institution,

later finding work at The Bartlett, a short stint in the university's Media Relations office, assisting a European Research Council project in the Geography department, and eventually on a secondment in the Provost's Office to create an institutional-level race equity plan. But there's no doubt, the role that shaped me most was my work with the Urban Lab.

A burgeoning interest in the forces that shape our cities was cultivated from 2014 onwards, when I joined the centre, at the time led by Prof Ben Campkin. Working closely alongside him, and later Dr Clare Melhuish, I was in a supportive environment that encouraged me to pursue my pursuits and trusted my ability to take a lead in collaborations, such as with our friends at Bertha DocHouse — who hosted my leaving party — or through our artist residency and creative fellowship programmes. Their support led me to pursue a (generously funded) part-time MSc in Urban Studies, and gradually build an independent research agenda that has been the foundation of my career since then. It was a pleasure to serve this relatively long stint at the Urban Lab.

Jordan Rowe,
Centre Manager, UCL Urban Lab 2014–21

Visiting Researchers

Aya Musmar

I was a research fellow at UCL Urban Lab in 2022–23. During my fellowship, I worked with Professor Nishat Awan on several research projects that brought together questions of religion, race and displacement, with the urban space as the realm hosting these questions. In February 2023, we put out the *Infidelities* call for papers with the Journal of Architectural Education (JAE), and our paper, *The Muslim Posthuman: Thinking the relational ontologies of the refugee camp through Sufi philosophy*, was accepted at the Rhetoric and Religious Traditions Conference at the University

of Memphis. The two projects were planned throughout my time as a fellow in the Urban Lab.

The Urban Lab is a vibrant space that brings together researchers from different geographies and with varying interests. Meeting other visiting researchers and residing colleagues culminated in countless knowledge exchanges, making it the major highlight of my research visit. During my time as a visiting fellow, I met Dr Zahra Hussein, a postdoctoral researcher with the Urban Lab, and my fellow panellist at the *Heritage Ecologies* seminar that was held in the *Institute of Advanced Studies* (IAS) at the UCL during my time in London.

The Urban Lab sits in the heart of London giving walkable access to major cultural centres and academic venues. This fellowship has provided the access to

resources that I needed to develop my future research pursuits. Most recently, I was selected by the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture (ACSA) as a JAE fellow to resume my research on questions similar to those that I had explored while a fellow at the Urban Lab.



Florian Koch

When I think about my time as a visiting researcher at Urban Lab from May to August 2022, three main experiences come to mind:

Firstly, I had the opportunity to analyse the role of data in urban policy and development in London, particularly in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals. The findings from this were comparable to those of my research on German cities, showing a strong belief by cities in the use of data and monitoring, but neglecting the social processes of urban data selection and analysis.



Secondly, being at the Urban Lab allowed me to learn more about an interdisciplinary urban research centre with strong collaborations with the academic and non-academic world. As my home university (Hochschule für Technik und Wirtschaft Berlin) is working on a similar project, it was very fruitful to learn how an established centre like the UCL Urban Lab works.

And thirdly, being in London during the 2022 heatwave, I had the opportunity to experience

London's attempts to adapt to a climate emergency as well as its vulnerability to a changing climate.

Max HoLLeran

My experience at the UCL Urban Lab was exciting and supportive. It came just as I was finally able to travel again from Australia after the end of nearly two years of coronavirus lockdown. For my first night in London, Urban Lab hosted a wonderful reading of a new book on commuting by Lauren Elkin. The professors associated with Urban Lab were very welcoming despite me arriving at the end of the semester and I had a dozen great chats sitting in Gordon Square and watching students picnic or study on the grass.

My project on the transnational history of urban greenbelts was greatly assisted by archival research that I completed in London and Welwyn Garden City. In particular, I am interested in how different political and economic systems — settler colonial, joint-stock companies and public full employment schemes — all latched on to the idea of the greenbelt. While there are many examples that follow Ebenezer Howard that demonstrate the utopianism of these ideas, I also think there is a large influence of worrying about maximum city populations which would again become very relevant in the 1960s and 1970s. This means that the idea of encircling the city with a green growth barrier is both an attempt at creating a holistic and unified urban area but also a means to gatekeep how many people have access to urban life. These debates were active at the inception of European and North American greenbelts and they rage on today.

My time at the UCL Urban Lab was an amazing adventure and a delight for someone who has never spent significant time in London. I felt so welcome from the second that I arrived: going to the Beating of the Bounds ceremony with colleagues and being invited to plays by the Director, Clare Melhuish. It's a true example of a vibrant academic community and I cannot wait to visit again.

ABOVE: Scorched grass in London, summer 2022.
BELOW: Granary Square, Kings Cross, London,
summer 2022. Photos by Florian Koch.

Staff Biographies

Director

Clare Melhuish

Prof Clare Melhuish has been Director of Urban Lab since 2018, having joined in 2013 to undertake research on university-led urban regeneration. This was linked to the early planning of the new UCL East campus in east London and to Clare's research focus on the processes and social impacts of large-scale urban developments in the UK and abroad, especially conceptualisations of urban heritage within transformative processes of change in postcolonial and decolonial urban contexts.

Centre Manager

Sophie Mepham

Joining the lab in late 2020, Sophie has an MA in Cultural Heritage Studies with a focus on urban heritage in conflict cities, having previously worked on development projects in the Middle East and Afghanistan for NGOs and UNESCO. In addition to her Centre Manager role, she also manages UCL's Grand Challenges programme for Sustainable Cities and Transformative Technology.

Academic Staff

Nishat Awan

Nishat is Professor of Architecture & Visual Culture. Her research focuses on the intersection of geopolitics and space, including questions related to diasporas, migration and border regimes. She is interested in modes of spatial representation, particularly in relation to the digital and the limits of witnessing as a form of ethical engagement with distant places.

Njogu Morgan

Njogu is remotely based at the University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa, supporting Urban Lab's partnership with Wits through collaborative delivery of Global Urbanism MASC. His research focuses on sustainable transport and mobility in African cities, exploring the intersections between place, space, society and everyday bicycling.

Joe Penny

Joe's research interests sit between urban economic geography and urban planning, with a focus on issues of urban social justice in his adopted home city, London, especially: lived experience and governance of austerity urbanism; the restructuring of local state action through financialisation of public land, housing, and social infrastructure; urban politics and grassroots resistance to austerity, gentrification and displacement.

Urban Room Curator

Kara Blackmore

An anthropologist and curator who specialises in community-driven exhibition making, Kara has an established track record in developing innovative collaborations between educational institutions, government agencies, NGOs and cultural organisations.

Co-Directors

Pushpa Arabindoo

Associate Professor in Geography & Urban Design, Pushpa trained in architecture and urban design before completing her PhD in planning and finding her place in UCL's Department of Geography. Drawing on her ethnographic research in the Indian city of Chennai, she has been using the specificity of her research to engage with broader debates in urban studies ranging from middle class activism and subaltern politics to the idea of the public and waste in the South as well as planning modes of regionalisation and conceptualisations of the hinterland.

Matthew Beaumont

Professor of English Literature at the UCL Department of English, Prof Beaumont is the author, among other books, of *Nightwalking: a Nocturnal history of London* (2015) and *The Walker: On Finding and Losing Oneself in the Modern City* (2020). He is responsible for the Urban Lab's Cities Imaginaries strand, which organises an annual lecture whose speakers have included Amit Chaudhuri, Linton Kwesi Johnson, Urvasi Butalia and David Olusoga.

Camillo Boano

Professor of Urban Design and Critical Theory in The Bartlett Development Planning Unit (DPU), Prof Boano's interests centre on the complex encounters between critical theory, radical philosophy and urban design processes, engaging with informal urbanisations, urban collective actions and camp urbanisms. He is working on a series of interconnected research projects in Latin America, South East Asia and the Middle East on habitability and city-wide upgrade.

Ellie Cosgrave

Ellie is Associate Professor in Urban Innovation and Policy at UCL's department of Science Technology Engineering and Public Policy, and Director of Publica's Community Interest Company and Research. She is also an outspoken advocate and campaigner for increasing the quality of women's health services. She is a BBC broadcaster, presenting the *Tomorrow's World* podcast and the BBC World Service series *My Perfect City*.

Andrew Harris

Dr Andrew Harris is convenor of the Urban Studies MSc and Associate Professor in the Department of Geography. Dr Harris has worked extensively on the role of culture and the visual arts in urban regeneration strategies as well as on the three-dimensional geographies of cities, with expertise in London and Mumbai. He convenes the interdisciplinary Urban Studies MSc programme and is co-lead for the Global Urbanisms research cluster in the department.

Jennifer Robinson

Based in the department of Geography, Prof Robinson was Principal Investigator of the project *Governing the Future City: A Comparative Analysis of Governance Innovations in Large Scale Urban Developments in Shanghai, London, Johannesburg* (2016–2018), and has recently been awarded a European Research Council Advanced Grant for her latest project *Making Africa Urban: The Transcalar Politics of Large-*

Scale Urban Development (2019–2024).

Steering Committee

Yasminah Beebeejaun

Based in The Bartlett School of Planning, Prof Beebeejaun's research focuses on the relationship between spatial planning and ethnic and gendered identities; community engagement in decision-making; and exploration of the creation of inequalities both within historical and contemporary debates about nationhood, colonialism and postcolonial society in post-war Britain and North America. She is a founding editor of the *Journal of Race, Ethnicity and the City*.

Ben Campkin

I am Professor of Urbanism and Urban History and Vice-Dean Public and City Engagement for The Bartlett Faculty of the Built Environment. He was previously Director of the Urban Lab (2011–2018) and the author of *Remaking London and Queer Premises*, as well as a founding co-editor of *Urban Pamphleteer* (2013–).

Joseph Cook

Based at the Institute for Global Prosperity, Joseph helps lead the UCL Citizen Science Academy, a new initiative empowering citizens to undertake research of, and change within, their own communities. He has a background in architecture and anthropology, and research interests in work and healthcare.

Ava Fatah Gen. Schieck

Ava Fatah is an Architect, Educator and Researcher. She is Professor of Media Architecture and Urban Digital Interaction and teaches on the Architectural Computation MSc. She is the Principal Investigator of the Research in the Wild funded project 'Screens in the Wild', which aims to explore the potential of networked urban screens for communities and culture.

Kalliopi Fouseki

Professor in Sustainable Heritage Management at UCL's Institute for Sustainable Heritage, Prof Fouseki's research interests fall within the field of heritage management, including heritage values; heritage, conflict and cultural diplomacy; urban and rural regeneration; and energy efficiency in historic neighbourhoods. Prof Fouseki is also the course director of the Sustainable Heritage MSc, the Director for Research and the lead for the heritage risk and resilience research strand at ISH.

Mark R. Frost

Mark Ravinder Frost is Associate Professor of Public History, with research interests in war, empire and decolonisation in modern Asia, and their place in popular memory. He is the author of *Singapore: A Biography* (2009; 2012, co-authored by Yu-mei Balasingamchow) and he currently leads the ongoing 'War Memoryscapes in Asia Partnership' and the 'Living with Violent Heritage: contests and coexistence in post-war Sri Lanka' exchange.

Haidy Geismar

Professor Haidy Geismar is the inaugural Director of UCL's School for the Creative and Cultural Industries. Professor of Anthropology and co-convenor of the Digital Anthropology MSc, Prof Geismar's research interests include

intellectual and cultural property; indigenous rights; new forms of cultural representation; and the anthropology of art, critical museology and the South Pacific.

Aris Komporozos-Athanasiou

Dr Aris Komporozos-Athanasiou is a sociologist and a writer. He is the Director of the UCL Centre for Capitalism Studies, Director of the Sociology BSc programme, and Head of the Sociology & Social Theory Research Group. Along with Judith Butler and Chiara Bottici he convenes the project 'Imaginal Politics' in collaboration with the ICCT Program at UC Berkeley.

Barbara Lipietz

Prof Barbara Lipietz is Professor of Urban Development Planning at the Development Planning Unit and Vice Dean International of The Bartlett Faculty of the Built Environment.

Anna Maguire

Dr Anna Maguire is Lecturer in Public History. She is a historian of migration, war and empire in twentieth century Britain and the British Empire. She is currently working on a history of sanctuary for refugees in Britain from 1950 to 2000. She is also interested in history education and co-production and collaborative public history approaches.

Gabriele Manoli

Hon Lecturer in Environmental Engineering at UCL, Dr Manoli's research focuses on the complex mechanisms regulating water, carbon and energy exchanges at the land surface considering both natural and urban ecosystems. In 2022 he joined EPFL (Lausanne) as Assistant Professor in the Laboratory of Urban and Environmental Systems.

Susan Moore

Dr Susan Moore is Associate Professor in Urban Development and Planning in The Bartlett School of Planning. Her research deals with the relational geographies of urban (and suburban) development and built form, specifically the formation of development cultures and the normalisation of 'best practice' in planning and development. Her teaching focuses on comparative understandings of planning, urbanism and social change. Her recent work explores platform urbanism, the use of social media in localised practices of urban transformation, and comparative studies of urban data cultures in European housing policy and provision.

Gabriel Moshenska

An Associate Professor in Public Archaeology, Dr Gabriel is a historical archaeologist and heritage researcher with a strong interest in conflict, intellectual history, and the public understanding of the past. As a researcher Gabriel runs or collaborates on a number of projects including fieldwork in Spain, Finland and Kenya.

Michał Murawski

An anthropologist of architecture and of cities based at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, UCL, Michał is an Associate Professor in Critical Area Studies. His work focuses on the complex social lives of monumental buildings and on the architecture and planning of Eastern European communism. He is especially interested in the powerful – and subversive – impacts that communist-era built environments continue to exert on the capitalist cities of the 21st century.

Florian Mussgnug

Professor of Comparative Literature and Italian Studies, Prof Mussgnug is interested in the emergent cross-disciplinary framework that links cultural theory, the modern languages and the environmental humanities. His current research explores apocalyptic thinking and narratives of emergency, catastrophe and survival in a damaged world. He is Academic Director for Rome for the Cities partnerships programme, a cross-UCL initiative that supports, funds and promotes the work UCL academics carry out with partners in global cities and co-director of UCL Anthropocene..

Catalina Ortiz

Catalina is an urbanist who is passionate about spatial justice. Her research uses decolonial and critical urban theory through knowledge co-production methodologies to study the politics of space production to foster more just cities and the recognition of multiple urban knowledges. Dr Catalina Ortiz will join UCL Urban Lab as Director, effective June 2024.

James O'Leary

Associate Professor in Architecture and Situated Practice at The Bartlett School of Architecture, James directs the Situated Practice MA. He is also a partner in Kreider + O'Leary—a collaborative pairing who make performance, installation and time-based media work in relation to sites of architectural and cultural interest. His current research explores the contested spaces of the 'peacewalls' in Belfast, Northern Ireland.

Kieren Reed

Professor of Fine Art and former Senior Lecturer and Director of the Slade School of Art, Kieren Reed's practice encompasses sculpture, performance and installation, from studies in form to the production of architectural structures. He co-led Urban Lab's Cities Methodologies exhibition programme and the our 2017 Edge symposium series, in collaboration with the Folkestone triennial.

Katherine Saunders-Hastings

Dr Katherine Saunders-Hastings is Lecturer in Latin American Studies at UCL's Institute of the Americas, where she teaches and researches on urban and political anthropology. Her research interests encompass issues of violence, (in)security, illicit economies, citizenship, and governance in Latin American cities. As an anthropologist, she employs ethnographic methods based in long-term fieldwork to understand urban violence and criminal economies in poor and marginalized neighbourhoods.

Rafael Schacter

Dr Rafael Schacter is an anthropologist, author and curator, working on issues related to public art, global art, and socially engaged art practice. a lecturer in the Department of Anthropology, he has published several books, most recently *Street to Studio* (2018). His most recent project, *Motions of this Kind*, took place at the Brunei Gallery, SOAS, from April 11–June 22 2019. He is currently conducting a three year research project on vernacular art practices in Manila, Philippines.

Pablo Sendra

Associate Professor of Planning and Urban Design at The Bartlett School of Planning, Dr Sendra is an architect and urban designer. He combines his academic career with professional work through his own urban design practice, LUGADERO LTD, which focuses on facilitating

co-design processes with communities. At UCL, he is the Director of the Urban Design and City Planning MSc programme and the Coordinator of the Civic Design CPD.

Helena Titheridge

Helena is Professor of Mobility and Sustainable Transport in the Department of Civil, Environmental and Geomatic Engineering at UCL. She joined UCL in 1997, working as a researcher in The Bartlett School of Planning, before leaving for a short period to work in the Transport Studies Group at the University of Westminster in 2003. She returned to UCL in 2004. Prior to working at UCL, Helena worked in the Energy and Environment Research Unit at the Open University, where she did her PhD on the sustainability assessment of city-wide energy strategies.

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Looking Ahead: Incoming Urban Lab Director Dr Catalina Ortiz



Amid a civilisational crisis, it is imperative that urban thinkers and practitioners work together to dismantle the colonial matrix of power. In the coming years, UCL Urban Lab will deepen its mandate to promote critical, creative and collaborative inquiry by nurturing collectives and spaces of solidarity as crucial elements for reimagining cities. Building on the Urban Lab's legacy and leadership, I will continue to simultaneously support the department and its interdisciplinary and cross-faculty network.

As the new director, I bring to the post my perspective on transdisciplinary approaches to decolonial and southern urbanism, creative methodological approaches to co-creation for urban learning, and the ability to support international networks of scholars, civil society organisations and policymakers. With the Urban Lab community, I will champion three intertwined strategies:

Strengthen a research-based agenda: consolidate a department-level intellectual project to bring a fresh perspective to decolonial urbanisms, emancipatory spatial practices and experimental urban methodologies by channelling grant funding and expanding the repertoires of research-based teaching with the support of the cross-faculty network.

Nurture the network: bring together local and global enthusiasts to expand the horizons of urban thinking and practice. The lab will link long-term collaborators of the lab with new groups of early career researchers, postgraduate students and colleagues outside the UK, and showcase their work following the successful legacy of the Cities Methodologies gatherings.

Bridge with East Bank: leverage UCL Urban Room, our links with UCL community engagement and the public programming agenda to realise the potential of the 'innovation, cultural and educational hub' and co-create a cutting-edge platform of urban humanities with the cultural institutions in the vicinity.

In the vibrant environment of our new UCL East campus and as our Global Urbanism MASc grows, we expect to expand the creative energy of the Urban Lab community in the years to come. The strength of the lab is in the collaborations among its members, partners and urban enthusiasts across the globe. Join us!

Dr Catalina Ortiz,
Incoming Director, UCL Urban Laboratory, from June 2024.
Associate Professor, Development Planning Unit, UCL

© UCL Urban Laboratory
Published in June 2024
ISBN 978 0 9956637 6 3

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Editors: Joseph Cook, Clare
Melhuish, Sophie Mephram
and Srijana Gurung

Design: Guglielmo Rossi, Bandiera

Printed in Great Britain by
Belmont Press

