

Professorial Lecture: Planning, Politics and Power



Presented by

Professor Nicky Morrison

Professor of Planning

21 October 2019

11:00am - 12:30pm (followed by lunch till 1.30pm)

Parramatta South Campus - EB.3.33 (CLS)

Western Sydney University

ABSTRACT:

‘Those whose needs are well-articulated and reflected in the city’s broader policy ambition are likely to be included in future planning policy. The needs of others considered ‘less valuable’ to the socio-economic sustainability of a locality may, in turn, be forgone’ (Morrison, 2013)

In this presentation, Professor Nicky Morrison explains how the above contention about the UK planning system led her to investigate this question in numerous international settings thereafter. Who are the winners and losers of planning decisions and outcomes? Not only has this quest motivated her academic career but also her advocacy work on behalf of local community groups that have the least voice in planning and housing systems over the world. In 2019, the Royal Town Planning Institute commended Professor Morrison for her leadership and significant contribution to the planning profession.

Showcasing her previous work (in the UK, China, and Ghana), Professor Morrison will highlight the challenges that urban planners face in managing economic, social, and environmental priorities and how they reconcile competing stakeholder expectations and conflicting interests. Despite different historical, cultural, and political contexts, she will demonstrate why a common narrative prevails. Speculation over land and real estate opportunities along with rent seeking behaviour that uses the political planning processes to seek private gain are rife in all urban land markets. At the same time, planners are not neutral nor value free. Politics and planning are very much intertwined. Planning rules embody power relations, privileging certain positions and courses of action over others. The stroke of a Planning Minister’s pen and rezoning of land use creates immediate land value uplift, with financial windfalls bestowed on certain stakeholders, whilst others lose out.

Professor Morrison will draw on examples of the way that planning policy is used to accommodate the needs of powerful landowners, why economic imperatives invariably take precedence over social and environmental interests, and suggest how academics can advocate for inclusive growth for all. She will offer salient lessons for Western Sydney as it undergoes extensive urban transformation, and explain why this challenge has become her new and critical area of research.

BIOGRAPHY:

Nicky Morrison is Professor of Planning at Western Sydney University and a Senior Visiting Fellow at Cambridge University. She is a leading academic authority on overcoming barriers to securing affordable housing through the planning system and ways to deliver sustainable communities and inclusive growth through participatory planning practices. Nicky has over 27 years of experience working with interdisciplinary teams on high impact international and UK planning and housing research projects, attracting major competitive external funding from the European Commission, Norwegian, German, UK and local governments, Shelter Homeless Charity and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. She has acted as a strategic advisor to Chinese Ministers as they implemented China’s first Public Housing Act and Amnesty International ‘Housing rights live here’ programme in Africa. Nicky is passionate about developing truly collaborative planning through effective partnerships between government, the private sector, NGOs, and community agencies. She was a long-serving Board member of a UK community housing provider. Nicky serves on Habitat International Editorial Board, WESTIR Ltd Board and the Planning Institute of Australia NSW Judging Panel for Planning Awards for Excellence with the aim of rewarding the next generation of professional planners.

RSVP at SSAP-research@westernsydney.edu.au by 11 Oct 2019