

**Australian Population Association Eleventh Biennial Conference
University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia, 2 to 4 October 2002**

Title:

Constructing and testing a typology of socio-spatial polarisation: Melbourne, Australia

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Abstract:

In this era of globalisation and rapid economic, political and social change, new patterns in the nature of socio-spatial distributions in cities are emerging. Several factors have been put forward to explain this trend. These include changes in household composition, labour force, ethnicity and, importantly, household income distribution. The latter variable, household income, is employed frequently as a measure socio-spatial polarisation. In this paper, a typology of polarisation is developed to illustrate the nature of socio-spatial change in Melbourne between 1986 and 1996. The polarisation typology classifies 327 Melbourne suburbs into five groups reflecting the type of change in household income distribution in each suburb over the decade. By thematically mapping this typology, clear spatial patterns of socioeconomic polarisation in Melbourne are identified. Spatial polarisation in Melbourne is characterised by increasing socio-economic distance between growing advantage in the inner and eastern-middle suburbs and increasing disadvantage in the surrounding outer and particularly western suburbs. Change in Melbourne's fringe is much more differentiated. The underlying determinants of spatial polarisation (and polarisation type) are tested through the application of multivariate analysis, which takes into account related explanatory variables such as household composition, age, labour force status, occupation and ethnicity.