KNOCKDOWN-REBUILD IN SUBURBAN SYDNEY

Renewal, Reproduction, McMansionisation
Research team

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ARC Discovery, 2010-2012
Knockdown-rebuild (KDR):
Demolition of an older single-household detached dwelling and its replacement with a new single-household detached dwelling
to better understand owners’ motivations to reinvestment in ageing, low density housing stock through ‘knockdown and rebuild’, and the implications of this particular form of housing reinvestment/development
Analytical perspectives

- Housing reinvestment and suburban decline and renewal
- Middle-suburbs / Greyfields
- Suburban gentrification
- ‘McMansions’, ‘Monster homes’
Methods

- Survey of Development Applications in Sydney 2004-2009, from 29 councils - over 6,800 DAs for KDR identified

- Mail questionnaire survey of households - 1,200 (17%) responses

- Follow up interviews with 30 residents, and 10 builders and planners
KDR Scale and geography

- 30-35% of all new detached houses in greater Sydney (close to 100% in some LGAs)

- 10-15% of all new dwellings (30-35% in some LGAs)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Local Government Area (LGA)</th>
<th>Total DAs for KDR 2004-2008</th>
<th>Proportion of total detached dwellings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affluent middle-ring</td>
<td>Woollahra</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Waverley</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ku Ring Gai</td>
<td>616</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower income middle ring</td>
<td>Auburn</td>
<td>233</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bankstown</td>
<td>627</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fairfield</td>
<td>353</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inner-city</td>
<td>City of Sydney</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outer ring</td>
<td>Hawkesbury</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>0.02%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Camden</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>0.01%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The uncoordinated agents of suburban change:

- **Nuclear families**
  - 66% couples with children

- **Affluent**
  - 35% over $200k annual gross household income
  - 41% $100-200k

- **Gen-X**
  - 64% heads of households born 1961-1976
Motives to pursue KDR:

• Second or third time home buyers – desire to upgrade
• Desire for modern, larger dwellings
• Older dwellings seen as ‘hopeless’: too small, obsolete design, asbestos.
• KDR better value for money than renovations
• Ability to build ‘my own home’, ‘dream home’
• Desire to stay in the same area, same lot: attachment, social networks, lifestyle, access
Origins of KDR households:

- 66% Same Suburb or neighbouring suburb
- 29% Within Sydney
- Interstate
KDR homes

Before KDR

After KDR

Bedrooms: 159m² → 337m²

Bathrooms: 337m²

Living areas: 337m²

Off-street parking: 337m²
KDR homes

Bankstown
KDR homes
This is infinitely larger than I imagined but then I always figured on a block of this size, to under-utilise the site would be crazy in an area like this (Peter, Avalon)

That's purely for resale value because three bedroom homes don't sell anywhere near as well as four and five bedroom homes (May, Ryde)

Honestly, we could've done probably with a three bedroom house because there's only two of us but ... if a family moves in here - and it's a family-orientated area - you've got children (Ian, Randwick)
KDR homes: Lifestyle and investment

It's nice having your own space. Sometimes my husband comes home from work and I'll have dinner, and he'll still go sit upstairs and eat by himself because we'll be doing homework and he wants to watch TV and the kids are getting distracting ... I don't think we're selfish. Everyone's got their own movies, and you can watch your own stuff. It's just nice not being on top of each other. (Adele, Randwick)
I don’t mind staying inside this house day and night because it’s like it’s big ... I sort of walk around and it’s not that - I don’t feel boxed in. Once I retire like I’ll spend a lot of time inside that house and I’ve got room to move (Doug, Bankstown)

It's made us a little bit more homebodies I guess. Rather than having to get out on a weekend, we now - we don't. (Ian, Randwick)

Fantastic, unbelievable...were able to see for Christmas Eve, 48 people, sit down... just to show that you do need the space and the comfort. (Roberto, Randwick)
Probably a third of the house is not utilised enough (Terry, Ryde)

You got more space, you think of things to fill it up with (Melanie, Ryde)

Those rooms... they sit idle, very idle (Gerald, Ryde)

The most difficult part is the maintenance.... At the moment we are lucky, we get cleaners to do the work. (Pradip, Bankstown)
KDR homes: Sustainability

- Minimal, often reluctant, compliance with BASIX
- Energy reduction through modernisation, passive design of homes (positioning, bright coloured roof, insulation, eaves)
- Energy increase due to size of dwellings
- Loss of private green space in the suburbs due to increase in dwelling site coverage
- Reproduction of low-density suburban form:
  - Missed opportunity for higher-density development;
  - New generation of owners seeking to ‘protect’ their substantial investment from urban consolidation
KDR impact: summary

**Urban**
- Renewal of ageing housing stock
- Reproduction of low density suburban form
- Changes to ‘character’ of middle-ring postwar suburbs (McMansionisation)

**Social**
- Declining housing affordability
- Increased mismatch between housing stock and demographics
- Lifestyle changes: privatism
- Generational change in postwar suburbs

Cont’ next slide…
KDR impact: summary (cont’)

Environmental
- High energy consumption in larger homes (despite modernisation and BASIX)
- Loss of private green space

Economic
- Boosting housing industry activity
- Housing transactions exempt from stamp duty, capital gain tax
- Speculative development
KDR and planning

Despite urban, social, environmental, economic impacts...

• Flying under the radar of strategic planning ("Zero contribution to dwelling targets")
• Increasing disengagement from statutory planning (complying development)
Journal articles


Conference papers


KDR homes: ‘Monster homes’?

‘Tell ‘em they’re dreaming ... Of the Taj Mahal’
Sydney Morning Herald, 28 May 2011

‘Mere Mansion or Monstrosity’
North Shore Times, 28 January 2011