Welcome to PowerLab Newsletter

A MESSAGE FROM THE CO-DIRECTORS

2018 was a good year. Our research was a catalyst for policy change. For example, Wollongong City Council released their 20-year Urban Greening Strategy citing many of our studies on green space and health. We also grew, with two new researchers (Walt Davis and Kristian Kumbier) and three new PhD students (Shumirai Mushangwe, Jiangmei Liu, and Gideon Meyerowitz-Katz). Elyse, Aimee and Krystian all completed their Honours degrees. Thomas was promoted to full Professor. Xiaoqi began her NHMRC Career Development Fellowship.

We continued our ‘Power-Up’ strategy to build awareness in big health and environmental data, strengthen quantitative research capacity and forge new partnerships. For example, Xiaoqi presented keynote talks at the KidsSafe conference in NSW Parliament House and the Australian Health Promotion Association national conference at Old Parliament House in Canberra. Thomas presented new findings during National Diabetes Week for Western Sydney Diabetes. We organised several PowerTools workshops for PhD students across our Faculty in multilevel modelling (with NIASRA) and masterclasses in NHMRC project grant and CRE writing and oral presentation skills. We hosted PowerTalks from Sjerp de Vries (Wageningen), Gavin Turrell (Deakin), Paula Hooper (UWA), Sarah Foster (RMIT), and Iain Butterworth (AHURI). We also won grants to strengthen our collaborations with UCL and Ludwig Maximillian University Munich (LMU) through 2019 and 2020.

We capped the year with the inaugural PowerFest (Population Wellbeing and Environment Research Festival), bringing together over 80 people from the NSW Ministry of Health, Heart Foundation, local councils, universities and members of the public. PowerFest’18 was opened by Tim Marchant (UOW Acting Deputy Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation) and featured talks from Xiaoqi, Thomas, many of PowerLab’s students, visiting academics, policymakers and practitioners. Photos from PowerFest’18 feature in this report.

This is just a flavour of our activities and achievements in 2018. We you hope enjoy reading about them in this report. If you are interested in learning more about study, career or collaboration opportunities, please contact us on powerlab-enquiries@uow.edu.au.
Research Focus Areas

**CHILD HEALTH, DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT**

This program, led by Associate Professor Xiaoqi Feng, uses birth cohort studies and bespoke data collections to develop understandings of how where children are born and grow up shapes their health, behavioural and developmental trajectories. This program includes Honours research by Ms Aimee Marchesi and PhD research by Ms Selin Akaraci (both in the photo above, left to right). This program has received support from the NHMRC and Hort Innovation Ltd.

Professor Thomas Astell-Burt leads this research program which uses primary and secondary data sets to explore how social and physical characteristics in cities (e.g., green spaces) influence behaviour, health and wellbeing among adults and especially seniors. Some of the research is being conducted for Honours study by Ms Elyse Kambisios, and PhD studies by Ms Shumirai Mushangwe and Mr Faysal Shuvo (see the photo above, left to right). This program is supported by the NHMRC and Hort Innovation Ltd.

**ENVIRONMENTS FOR HEALTHY EQUITABLE AGEING**

This program is jointly led by Professor Thomas Astell-Burt and Associate Professor Xiaoqi Feng. It harnesses sources of big data to examine urban planning contributions to prevention and management of type 2 diabetes. Studies include PhD research by Mr Tashi Dendup and methodological studies by Dr Michael Navakatikyan (see photo above, left to right). This program is supported by the NHMRC and the National Heart Foundation.

**MORTALITY & CHRONIC DISEASE SURVEILLANCE IN CHINA**

This program is jointly led by Professor Thomas Astell-Burt and Associate Professor Xiaoqi Feng and involves long-term collaborations with the China CDC National Center for Chronic and Non-communicable Disease Control and Prevention, the National Institute for Environmental Health, Ningbo University, and the Peking Union Medical College (affiliated with The Chinese Academy of Medical Sciences and Tsinghua University).

Our People 2018

**ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR XIAOQI FENG**

- Associate Professor of Epidemiology
- Founding Co-Director, PowerLab
- NHMRC Career Development Fellow (Child Health and Environment)

**PROFESSOR THOMAS ASTELL-BURT**

- Professor of Population Health and Environmental Data Science
- Founding Co-Director, PowerLab
- NHMRC Boosting Dementia Research Leadership Fellow

**MS TAMARA RASO**

- Project Officer

**DR MICHAEL NAVAKATIKYAN**

- Research Fellow

**MR WALT DAVIS**

- Senior Research Fellow

**DR MEHBUB ANWAR**

- Research Fellow

**PROF. TERRY HARTIC**

- UOW Visiting Int. Scholar Awardee

**MS SELIN AKARCI**

- PhD Candidate

**MS JESSICA CERNI**

- PhD Candidate

**MR MAO FAN**

- Visiting Fellow from China CDC

**MS YUNNING LIU**

- Visiting Fellow from China CDC

**MR KRISTIAN KUMBIER**

- Research Assistant

**MR FAYSAL SHUVO**

- PhD Candidate

**MR TASHI DENDUP**

- PhD Candidate

**MS SHUMIRAI MUSHANGWE**

- PhD Candidate

**MR GIDEON MEYEROWITZ-KATZ**

- PhD Candidate

**MS JIANGMEI LIU**

- PhD Candidate

**MR KRYSTIAN STERGIOU**

- Honours student

**MS AIMEE MARCHESI**

- Honours student

**MS ELYSE KAMBIOS**

- Honours student

**MS YUNNING LIU**

- Visiting Fellow from China CDC
2018 Highlights

1 March
Associate Professor Xiaoqi Feng received the 2018 Dame Bridget Ogilvie Citation Award for the excellence of an early to mid-career female researcher who has demonstrated high impact in their respective field.

19 April
The April Graduations saw four students of PowerLab Graduate, Grace Norton; Elyse Kambisios; Krystian Serpiou; Aimee Marchesi.

26-27 April
PowerTalk with Dr Sjerp de Vries of Wageningen University, The Netherlands. Dr de Vries presented a PowerTalk and joined PowerLab’s Journal Club.

2-3 May
Associate Professor Thomas Astell-Burt gave a presentation on big data and spatial inequalities in Type 2 diabetes to policymakers and practitioners for National Diabetes Week 23-08-18.

10 July
Associate Professor Thomas Astell-Burt was profiled in UOW’s "The Stand".

1 August
Xiaoqi Feng presented the PowerTalk "University-community Engagement: The Key To Generating Research That Makes A Difference".

8 June
PhD candidate Tashi Dendup was awarded "Highly Commended" for his presentation at the Faculty 3-Minute Thesis competition.

23 July
The PowerLab has welcomed PhD candidate Shumirai Mushangwe.

10 October
PowerLab Co-Directors travelled to UCL, UK, for three days of knowledge exchange with Prof Anne McMunn and Prof Amanda Sacker. UCL Global Sponsorship has led to a further exchange scheduled for February 2019 when UCL colleagues will visit PowerLab.

12 October
Dr Sarah Foster & Dr Paula Hooper present PowerTalk "The HIGH LIFE: Evaluating the impact of apartment design policy on health".

11 November
Three Honours students submit their honours thesis and complete their studies.

30 November
Universities Australia-DAAD grant success provides funding for research on Green Space and Children’s Health. PowerLab co-directors teamed up with colleagues researchers from Ludwig Maximilian University, Munich.

23 August
Xiaoqi Feng presents AHFA Symposium Keynote at Old Parliament House, Canberra.

23 November
Kidsafe Keynote presented by A/Prof Xiaoqi Feng in Sydney.

12 November
New Staff member Walt Davis joins PowerLab.

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21 December
Honours graduate Aimee Marchesi received a Graduate Position with Comcare. Honours graduate Elyse Kambisios received a Graduate Position with the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (Tobacco, Alcohol & Other Drugs Unit, Housing and homelessness Group).

PowerFest’18.

5 December
PowerLab Office moves to the Innovation Campus.

28 February
February/A/Prof Xiaoqi Feng was profiled in the Sydney Morning Herald.

25 April
Thomas Astell-Burt has been appointed an Adjunct Professor in Population Health and Environment at the School of Public Health in Peking Union Medical College, the top medical school in China. Thomas’ appointment recognises his research and capacity building in epidemiology and environmental health in China.

1 May
The PowerLab welcomed PhD candidate Gideon Meyerowitz-Katz.

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The inaugural Population Wellbeing and Environment Research Lab Festival (PowerFest’18) was held at iAccelerate on December 7th, with over 80 delegates from across the Illawarra and the Sydney metropolitan area. This was the largest public meeting organised so far by the PowerLab founding Co-Directors, Associate Professor Xiaoqi Feng and Professor Thomas Astell-Burt.

PowerFest’18’s theme was Urban Greening and Health In the Asia-Pacific. Speakers included Associate Professor Xiaoqi Feng and Professor Thomas Astell-Burt, visiting professors from Uppsala University (Prof Terry Hartig), National University of Singapore (Dr Chao Yuan), and National Taiwan University (Prof Chun-Yen Chang), the Principal Landscape Architect of NSW (Barbara Schaffer), the President of Parks and Leisure NSW/ACT (Lei Mann), and three of PowerLab’s PhD students (Faysal Shuvo, Selin Abaraci, Jess Cerni). All PhD students in PowerLab also gave poster presentations. Photos from PowerFest’18 feature below and on the backpage of this report.

Feedback was unanimously positive from a diverse audience, which included representatives of local councils, the NSW Ministry of Health, the National Heart Foundation, local health districts in Western Sydney and the Illawarra and Shoalhaven, Wollongong and Kiama councils, as well as many academic staff and students from across UOW.

### Selected Publications

- Astell-Burt T, Feng X. Is the risk of developing Alzheimer’s disease really higher in rural areas? A multilevel longitudinal study of 261,669 Australians aged 45 years and older tracked over 11 years. Health & Place. 2018. 54, 132-137.
- Astell-Burt T, Rowbotham S, Hawe P. Communicating the benefits of population health interventions: The health effects can be on par with those of medication. SSM - Population Health. 2018. 6, 54-62.