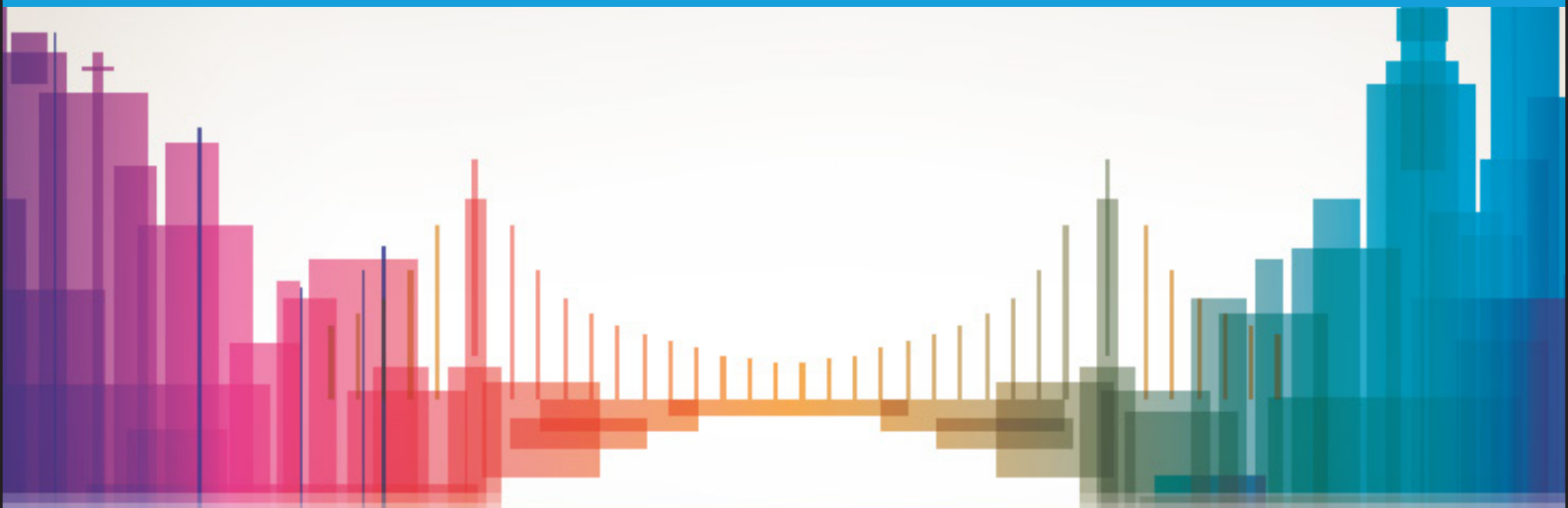United 4 Smart Sustainable Cities

Participatory urban planning

Case study of the U4SSC A guide to circular cities

June 2020

Convention on Biological Diversity

UNITED NATIONS ECLAC

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

ITU

UNDP
Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.

United Nations Economic Commission for Africa

UNECE

UNESCO
United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

UN environment
United Nations
Environment Programme

UNEP FINANCE INITIATIVE

United Nations
Framework Convention on
Climate Change

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Case study: Participatory urban planning

June 2020

Foreword

This publication was developed within the framework of the United for Smart Sustainable Cities (U4SSC) initiative.

Acknowledgments

The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of their respective organizations or members.

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Melbourne – Australia place-making case

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Introduction

The City of Melbourne is the main city of the state of Victoria, in Australia and is one of the most densely populated cities in the country. The City of Melbourne and Village Well, one of Australia's place-making consultancy companies – focusing on arranging, transforming and creating public spaces that promote people's health, happiness, and their wellbeing – initiated a cooperation project on sharing public spaces. The purpose of the project was to apply the concept of place-making to engage community members locally; to enhance public spaces; and to contribute to a healthy sustainable community. Place-making is defined as the new environmentalism, using processes, tools and practices to create liveable and resilient cities, towns, communities and places.

These three aspects could be implemented in the city by facilitating the creative patterns of the designing and managing of public spaces, paying particular attention to the physical, cultural, and social identities that define the city, and supporting its evolution and transformation.

Below is a summary of the 'Melbourne Liveability Story', and the opportunities to maintain and improve the city's social and built environment, as well as its identity and culture.

Melbourne boasts a compelling and modern story of transformation, which has arisen from the lessons learned along the way over a number of decades.

The 'Melbourne Liveability Story' and its five core strengths are:

- the city's collaborative culture and industry that focuses on people, inclusivity and diversity;
- the city's unique geography that has helped the city to address better innovation, responsiveness to local culture, and designing properly for its climate conditions;
- its values and its focus on education, science and research, professional services and creative industries;
- the city's culture, its relationship with the built environment, and the interaction of people with the environment;
- the city's expertise in planning, design and delivery of quality city-making projects.

Background

Village Well worked closely with the Government of the State of Victoria, including Liveability Victoria International and Trade Victoria, to develop an engagement plan that tapped into Victoria's design and built environment sector's expertise, to gain a deeper understanding of the elements that have contributed to the 'Victorian Liveability Story'. As Melbourne is the main city of the state of Victoria, this story and the lessons learned facilitated the creation of the 'Melbourne Liveability Story'.

Challenge and Response

Melbourne was ranked the 'World's Most Liveable City' by the Global Economist Intelligence Unit for seven consecutive years, until 2018. This is the result of work of the city government and its different departments, which were working together for many years.

Victoria embraces diversity and creativity and boasts numerous acclaimed houses of design. The Victorian College of the Arts, the Melbourne Theatre Company, the Victorian Opera and the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art are a few of the incubators of emerging artists, planners and designers.

The Project and the Challenges

Village Well has refined and developed processes of analysis, engagement, innovation and project management, researching historical and contemporary narratives, in order to present recommendations to enhance the city's position and sense of character.

The following challenges can be listed:

- **Infrastructure:** Investing in civic infrastructure and transport networks in suburban areas to improve services on the city fringes and increase social and physical connection (for the youth, single parents and the elderly).
- **Housing:** Improving quality-housing stock, in particular apartment design and construction.
- **Affordability:** Improving the affordability of property prices especially for families, the elderly, singles and young people.

The Response

The success of place-making is dependent upon close working relationships among various civic stakeholders such as governments, private investment entities, companies, not-for-profit organizations, artists and citizens. Melbourne has shared its public spaces and re-used its civic stakeholders' skills through place-making. With the introduction of the place-making concept to Melbourne, the following benefits can be observed:

- **Business Opportunities:** Developing a shared understanding of the sectors that have capacity to grow can enhance different business opportunities. The place-making can help to create new jobs and entrepreneurial opportunities, through supporting local economies and attracting tourism.

- **Policy:** The concept can help to improve policy and assessment criteria for all residential development that ensures quality design processes and outcomes.

- **Partnerships:** The concept can improve existing cross-sectoral relationships.

- **Branding:** Place-making can increase self-promotion and offshore promotion of the city, as well as the 'Liveability Brand'.

- **Government level benefits:** The concept can increase government and industry understanding of the importance of place-making: for instance, much of Victoria's livability case has been the result of building infrastructure and designing spaces for people.

- **Encourage volunteerism in the City:** The concept encourages volunteers to help the city in general.

- **Improve public health and environment and pedestrian safety:** Place-making is an evolving and transformative field of practice that intentionally leverages the power of the arts, culture, sense of meaning, purpose, engagement and creativity to serve a community's interest while driving a broader agenda for change, growth and transformation. This is done in a way that also leads to people's happiness, builds character and quality of place and the city, through creating cultural districts, artist relocation projects, entertainment, and public art. The purpose of introducing the place-making concept in Melbourne was to promote a shared meaning, and a sense of community. Through the use of public space and its sharing, society benefits from the increased interaction of a diversity of people, which, in turn, encourages greater social cohesion and promotes a sense of identity.

Promoting circularity

Village Well engaged with leaders within Victoria's design and built environment sector in the past to analyze the projects that also transformed Melbourne into the city it is today. Melbourne became the World's Most Liveable City as a result of long-term, strategic, state and local government planning and policy; its community driven, place-led engagement; and its commitment to its guiding principles of authenticity and individuality.

Other contributors to this story include: the advocates and activists who pushed policy reform for a social city founded by good design; leading planners and designers; teachers and leading education institutions; successful public private partnerships; as well as the many significant projects like 'Postcode 3000', cycling lanes, the women's rights movement, grids and greenery, Federation Square, street-trading policies, laneway culture, improved liquor licensing, design codes, and many more.

Vision and Content

To create the vision and the content of the 'Melbourne Pitch', an energetic and fun Victorian Livability Think Tank event was held at the Treetops of Melbourne Museum.

The group explored ideas about growing and exporting professional design skills, services and thinking around city making and urban renewal. It also explored the content of Melbourne's design and built environment sector's key strengths, and ways that the Victorian Government and the sector could share a role in pitching those strengths to wider local and international markets.

Ideas for how the government and the sector can work better together, and the immediate actions seen as critical to building momentum, are detailed in the next section.

Results

The project has produced the following results:

- A Liveability Panel of Experts has been set up. In fact, building on the success of the Australian Urban Systems cluster, Melbourne has established a panel of experts to lead design advocacy, international networking opportunities, and drive initiatives within this project. Furthermore, the panel guides the development of Melbourne case studies to tell the story, refine the pitch and implement the 'livability formula'.

- There has been an increased government and industry understanding of the importance of place-making with cooperation across government, industry and academia. Much of the livability has been the result of building infrastructure and designing spaces for people.

Furthermore, authentic and transformative community engagement is central to the success of Melbourne becoming the world's most livable city. Processes include:

- Citizen Juries: Where a group of randomly chosen Melbourne citizens are paid, educated and informed to give guidance and advice on future planning and development directions and policies.

- Creative on-line engagements where citizens vote for their favorite projects or give advice and direction for council projects.

- Business Inspirations: Special evenings where businesses come together to learn the latest successful business / retail practices.

- Kitchen Table Conversations: One to one, or small group conversations allowing citizens to be heard and expose their ideas.

The Melbourne central business district is well known globally as one of the event capitals of the world. The innovative busking street and food policy allows daily creative activation to happen day and night. Great food trucks bring dead spaces back to life, while world-class buskers and entertainment attract thousands at the weekend, thus supporting the activation of the everyday economy.

Such a strategic and focused plan allows the city to work 24 hours a day. The famous summer and winter night markets at the Queen Victoria Market attract thousands of locals and tourists.

The Melbourne Liveability Strategy has created a city that is inclusive and, some would say, a happy and welcoming place full of local shopkeepers and citizens. The renewal of the laneways has created an intimate gathering and shared space for the city's inhabitants, where people meet, connect, eat and play in one of the most creative street art scenes in the world. Distinct neighborhood cultures make popular public squares and meeting places unique with a diversity of places to sit, rest, talk and dine.

The world's largest tram network, which is free in the central business district, allows every citizen to quickly access all parts of the city day and night.

The concept of place-making has also generated a new way of designing green buildings that use locally sourced, sustainable and resilient materials. The city has implemented macro-scale master planning to detailed design micro-scale that is high quality, site specific, and people focused.

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- https://www.pps.org/article/australia-placemaking

List of discussion partners/interviews

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- **Professor Rob Adams,** Director of City Design, City of Melbourne

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