



MELBOURNE CENTRE FOR CITIES

ANNUAL REPORT 2022



THE UNIVERSITY OF
MELBOURNE

—
Melbourne Centre
for Cities

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2022 ANNUAL REPORT

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Melbourne Centre
for Cities

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CENTRE COMMUNITY

The Centre plays host to a **broad, multidisciplinary and diverse urban studies community**, with much of the Centre's work conducted and co-designed with external partners and peers. As of 1st December 2022, the centre hosts a **core team of 24 fellows**, coordinated by a **management group of 6**, and an administrative team of 3 professional staff and 2 project officers. This core group is complemented by 6 active honorary academic staff (including three honorary professors) and across 2022 8 visiting fellows including four international visitors. The Centre engages proactively across the University campus, with 25 'centre associates' mainly in the Faculties of Arts and Science but with already growing outreach in Laws, Economics and Engineering too. Many of the Centre projects also involve weekly where not daily co-location and close collaboration with Centre partners like City of Melbourne and United Nations agencies.

CENTRE PROFILE AND FOCUS

Over the course of 2022 the centre has hosted 43 formal projects in total (not including PhD research projects), with 76% of Centre project either funded fully or in major part by external partners and donors, and but 5 of 43 projects not with a formal external partner to the university (and only 3 placed in a single faculty). As of December 2022, the Centre engages with 39 formal partners through contracts, grants and MoUs, a wide network of collaboration that continued a mounting track record of impact delivered through collaboration. These are facts that to us offer clear indication of our distinctive focus on **partnership and international engagement as distinctive to our centre identity**. This is wide mix of work well represented by the four key expertise areas (urban policy, sustainability and climate, equality and urban data and knowledge) and a thriving set of emerging specialisms (urban nightlife, digital transformations in cities, city networking, urban nature and biodiversity) that characterize our profile locally and internationally.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The Centre has taken to heart the role of offering a university platform for urban research *and training* as key to our mission to **support the next generation of city leaders**. On campus, a pillar of this has been the pilot Centre Doctoral Academy, the **'Horizons' program**, ran in 2022 for a select cohort of graduate researchers. This has gone hand in hand with a double 'City Building' and 'City Fix' discussion series for centre early career scholars. Alongside these, the Centre's 2022 has focused on convening community-building and socialisation across different faculties and diverse disciplinary backgrounds, with the annual Centre Retreat in the Yarra Valley (August) and a series of 6 research and engagement roundtables as core activities to this end.

CENTRE INITIATIVES AND ENGAGEMENT

Building on our three-year track record as 'Connected Cities Lab' (2018-2020), the Centre remains engaged as a key driver or lead in major research programs that are directly plugged into international responses to global challenges like climate change. In 2022, Centre fellows have taken part in over 66 publicly accessible events, and 29 workshops and conferences, in Australia and overseas, with an initial **return to a proactive presence in international urban platforms** and engagements in Europe, East-Southeast Asia, North America and the Pacific.

In 2022 the Centre saw the completion of the 4-year \$12m Knowledge in Action for Urban Equality (KNOW) program, as well as pilots on the impact of city rankings and urban philanthropy, alongside the continuation of the Evidence 2 Action program for Fondation Botnar's youth engagement in cities, Innovate 4 Cities for Global Covenant of Mayors and C40 work on cities' climate action, and ARC projects on homelessness, street harassment and the gig economy. It also saw the launch of new engaged projects on night shifts, city diplomacy (with DFAT) and more exciting new work on our key expertise areas.

CENTRE OUTPUTS

Centre staff has delivered 69 scholarly works for 2022, including 41 peer reviewed journal articles and 12 book chapters, alongside **four books** in 2022, well received across urban studies but also beyond academia. In 2022, centre staff has been contributing directly to over 35 news pieces, 16 *Pursuit* and *The Conversation* pieces, and numerous international public interventions as on the World Economic Forum blog, with a wide **presence in public discourse** about cities locally and internationally. The Centre also maintains an active social media presence (e.g. reaching out to 13 thousand twitter followers) or the *Connected Cities* podcast as well as co-production of the *Climate Talks* podcast. 2022 saw a wide circulation of the 6-episode miniseries *Cities After Dark* – a fitting example of centre work that leverages the teaching-research nexus.

FROM THE DIRECTOR



2022 has been a transformative year for us.

Needless to say, the momentous impact of 2020 and 2021 on our lives and ways of working echoes still deeply in what we do. Yet I would say that by far and large our aspirations have not changed dramatically, and our resolve to making space for a community of engaged cities scholars in the University remains all the livelier. The pandemic reminded us how cities are more and more on the frontline of today's most pressing challenges, and how we have witnessed much of that firsthand in Melbourne, from the bushfires of 2019 and the floods of 2022 to the lockdowns and deep health inequalities of the 2020-2021 coronavirus.

With the resolve to build on these experiences, 2022 has been a pivotal year for us. If the latter part of 2021 took the shape of a busy transition period from a pandemic recovery and of planning ahead as to what a centre *could be*, to a first full year of what a centre *actually is*. In 2022 we have tested and piloted ways of running centre operations, transitioned 'lab' approaches into our wider community and convening many incredibly diverse conversations about what 'cities' research and practice is and what we should put our busy heads to as a new group of colleagues.

Centrally, as we have been re-learning to operate across campus and the city, convene conversations and launch new programs, we have also begun to re-engage internationally as part of our distinct centre ethos and nature. It has for instance been great to have a chance to begin again to host international visitors coming from the likes of the UK, Poland, Thailand and South Africa, and for at least some of us to put feet back again in the 'field' in the likes of Europe, the Pacific or Southeast Asia.

Sited principally at the heart of a city that witnessed one of the longest streaks of COVID-19 lockdowns, we have had to ease back in our campus routines at a slower pace than many around the world. We have had moments of quiet in our brand-new offices, and spaces of busy but complex interactions at all-staff days like our retreat. We have learnt about the complexities of community

building after two years of community disruptions. The simple but pivotal addition of centre coffee machine got us chatting and plotting in the kitchen again, and the great collective effort of putting up the first centre annual symposium showed us the power of what we can do as a diverse and impact-oriented community.

Undoubtedly the pandemic has prompted us to be more responsible and responsive to our surroundings. Between 2021 and 2022 we have deepened and expanded our engagement with the City of Melbourne across many different programs. In doing so we have learnt a better way of providing for our local urban governance system, and sharpened a model fit for other contexts as well as now recognized internationally. The launch of a new major training program with our Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade or continuation of our efforts through Innovate 4 Cities, to name but two, show our continued capacity to expand impact on these fronts and link research, to practice and change in cities.

We have also engaged more closely with some amazing emerging Indigenous voices not only on campus but overseas and strengthened our resolve to committing to reconciliation and celebration of first nations resilience, as reflected in our strategy's principles and commitments.

At the same time, our new centre management team has found their feet through trial, and as much error as successes, with a group of scholars across three very different faculties that I remain highly in debt to for all the support and trust in the Centre project they provide me with daily.

Overall, and in spite of complex shifts in academic funding as much as university support, we have achieved again a strong financial, outreach and academic outputs performance, celebrating for instance four books, the release of the City of Melbourne's voluntary local review of the SDGs or yet another impactful year of support for climate action by cities, showing the strength of a resilient and adaptable group of scholars and the mounting recognition we command locally and internationally.

To that end I would like to express my gratitude to a busy and diverse community that comes from so many different scholarly and cultural backgrounds and that valiantly emerged from the pandemic with resolve and conviction that we can still make a sizeable difference in cities close and far across borders.

At times it has been tricky to stress how the Melbourne Centre for Cities is not just for Melbourne or indeed neither for cities only, spanning work across several countries and urban realities regional and metropolitan alike. Our engagements have taken us from Honiara in the Solomon Islands to Mackay in Queensland via Singapore, Montreal in Canada and Tokyo in Japan. In doing so we continue to make a 'case for cities' on a near daily basis speaking not only the proverbial 'converted' but to many audiences that might not quite be familiar with why cities matter.

I am particularly proud of how we have come together to sharpen our profile, and of how we have already put into place some amazing work for 2023. Skimming through the pages of *Connecting cities*, or 2025 strategic vision, you will see a bit of further styling of our own identity, maintaining some well-established - starting for instance from a more distinct nod to our focus on people in cities through our 'street profile' imagery (by our former centre coordinator Kate Murray), to more visual work produced through creative research work in Studio N on night shift work, to name but a few.

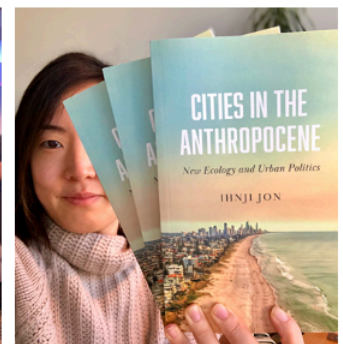
It has been amazing to see new modes of urban scholarship emerge even clearer, not just by means of 'traditional' research, but via an even bigger and bolder commitment to policy impact and engagement in the politics of cities, as well as deeper effort in teaching and capacity building. We are, I think, starting to look quite like an exciting place to be for all things cities, and an experimental hub that strives to connect often disparate strands of practice.

So, in sum, 2022 has been a year of big changes. This has been the case in terms of staff, bidding farewell to several long-standing core team members of what was the Connected Cities Lab first and the Centre for Cities next, who have found new homes in Europe and across campus, but also many new team members joining us. We have recruited a new administrative team grappling with the complexities of academic thinking and operations, without whom we would be little more than a stray clowder or rowdy academic cats.

We have also welcomed a cohort of Centre-appointed fellows representing our diverse parent faculties, alongside a steady and sizeable number of project-specific fellows, whose work is already been heard and seen not just by academics but by a mounting audience and deeply 'in the field' from the floating habitats of the Birrarung Marr river, to the peri-urban outskirts of the urbanising Pacific, to the deep halls of DFAT. Along with our Horizon graduate researchers, another standout of the year for me, I firmly believe that this cohort represents a brilliant next generation of city and indeed centre leaders.

I look forward to seeing what we will collectively deliver on these exciting grounds, and more, in 2023.

Prof Michele Acuto,
Director, Melbourne Centre for Cities



From the top: an annual symposium roundtable on partnerships with colleagues from Sheffield, RMIT and SMU; the kick off class for our Doctoral Academy; a virtual roundtable with 9 distinguished scholars honouring the 30th anniversary of Saskia Sassen's *The Global City*; Melanie Lowe receiving the 2022 PIA Excellence in Research Impact award, and the launch of Ihnji Jon's much discussed *Cities in the Anthropocene*.

THE CENTRE'S COMMUNITY

The Melbourne Centre for Cities launched in September 2021 to build on the work of its predecessor, the Connected Cities Lab which piloted what is now the Centre's urban governance and impact-oriented focus from 2018 to 2021. After initial outreach and roll out in the latter part of 2021, the **Centre has grown considerably over the past year in 2022 both in size and purview**, maintaining a solid portfolio of research initiatives and an expanding set of training initiatives, not least as both interest across diverse faculties surged, and whilst new projects got underway.

As of 1st December 2022, the centre hosts a core team of **30 fellows** either employed directly (17) or with FTE formally

dedicated to the Centre (13) across the faculties of Arts, Sciences and Architecture, Building and Planning. The centre is led by **director**, accountable and supported by a **management committee** of 5 senior academics, with a dedicated **administrative team** accounting for 3 professional staff and 2 project officers for bespoke initiatives.

The centre's is characterized by a **changing and diverse community** looking at consolidation in 2023

The size of core centre staff ('fellows' and administration) is indicative of both the variety of externally funded projects supporting early career appointments, as well as commitment by university academics from variety of diverse discipline to engage with the Centre. This also influences the permanency of the Centre core team, resulting in a continuously changing community, due to the nature of the fixed-term and impact-oriented projects we undertake.

Notably, since launching as a Centre in September 2021 we have employed 42 professional and academic staff to fix term contracts, and 12 casual staff. As outlined below in the priorities for the next year (2023), we are looking at consolidating this core centre staff group and planning on less short-termism in a variety of our programs, but also take this as a valuable sign of the opportunities for development, employment and impact the centre offers to early career staff in the university.

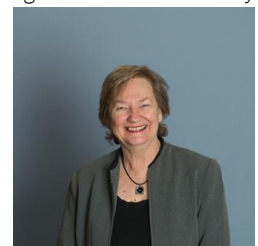
More information about staff profiles can be found on the [Centre's website](#) and dedicated University [Find an Expert Centre Page](#) both linked here.

The centre is also actively engaged with a large community of graduate researchers in two capacities: PhD Researchers supervised by centre fellows and connecting with centre activities in a variety of ways, and the more formalised 'Horizons' doctoral training program which is set to become the Centre's Doctoral Academy from 2023.



Horizon's inaugural cohort consisted of 13 graduate students from across campus selected competitively (see more below). In total in 2022 the Centre doctoral fellows accounted for 26 researchers from five faculties, 11 of whom have also been employed in casual (5) and fixed-term research fellow (5) roles on Centre projects. Overall Centre staff present a **varied mix of disciplinary and cultural backgrounds**, with currently 57% overseas-born staff and 38% of PhDs.

This staff profile is complemented by, currently, a group of 25 'centre associates' across campus mainly in Arts and Science but with already growing outreach in Laws, Business & Economics and Engineering too, who constitute a lighter touch community of close friends of the Centre and who have been engage in our activities throughout the year. Importantly, the Centre also offers an engaged program of centre visitors and honorary academics aimed at connecting temporary as well as longer-term affiliates from outside the university with our research initiatives. It currently hosts 6 honorary academic staff (including **three honorary professors**) and **8 visiting fellows**, many of whom having contributed closely to peer reviewed publications, outreach across the multilateral and philanthropic sector, or implementation of major centre projects in 2022. The Centre has a specific approach to keep this visiting/honorary cohort limited in number and highly engaged in explicit effort to avoid silent affiliations and in reserve build an engaged community of Centre guests and honorary staff.



Above: The Centre team in our Baldwin Spencer offices; below: Honorary prof Louise Johnson, a suburban Australia, has been a proactive voice in casting the centre's profile at events and retreats and regularly supervises centre PhD research.

PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES

Much of the identity of the Melbourne Centre for Cities emerges from its broad swathe of urban research and training projects, which in large part span the eight main thematic areas detailed in our *Connecting Cities* strategy. Whilst the **role of cities in sustainability and climate change**, and a focus on **urban policy and governance**, remain by far and large the major pivots of focus for our Centre, work across two other main areas is well represented and commonplace for us, and in particular around, on the one hand, urban equality and inclusion, and on the other hand the role of urban data and science in cities. These, in 2021-2022 have been coupled with two emerging themes, **urban nature and biodiversity**, alongside **digital transformations** in cities, both present solid and growing capacities for us. Finally, it is worth stressing the Centre already garners sizeable external recognition for two specialisms that are clearly distinctive of, by far and large, any other major centre for urban research internationally. These are represented by our critical mass of work around questions of urban **night-life** and the night-time economy of cities, alongside our research and training in **city diplomacy** and city networks.

CENTRE IDENTITY: OUR KEY AREAS OF FOCUS

In terms of overall Centre profile, as of December 2022, the Centre hosts 21 current research projects, alongside (see below) three educational initiatives. This is wide mix of work well represented by the four key expertise areas (urban policy, sustainability and climate, equality and urban data and knowledge) and a thriving set of emerging specialisms (urban nightlife, digital transformations in cities, city networking, urban nature and biodiversity) that characterize our profile locally and internationally. Over the course of 2022 the centre has hosted 43 formal projects in total (not including PhD research projects), with 76% of Centre project either funded fully or in major part by external partners and donors, and but 5 of 43 projects not with a formal external partner to the university (and only 3 placed in a single faculty). These are both facts that to us offer clear indication of our distinctive 'partnership' and 'international' identity.

43 projects76% externally
funded+partnered

AUSTRALIAN RESEARCH COUNCIL PROJECTS

The Centre continues on a **strong track record** of Australian Research Council (ARC) successes in grant applications and federally-funded research, building on projects as the ARC Discovery *Justice in the Streets* project lead by Prof Alison Young on Responding to Public Homelessness and Public Protest, or A/Prof David Bissell's ARC Discovery on *How the digital remote working revolution is transforming Australia homes*, with the newest ARC Discovery *Night Shift* (Acuto and Young as leads)

kicking off in mid-2022 focusing on night shift workers. The Centre also continues to play host to individual fellowships, with four currently funded focusing on achieving justice for street harassment (ARC DECRA), on innovation districts (ARC DECRA), on the phenomenon of urban greenbelts (Urban Studies Foundation Fellowship), and on cities within the pacific (Melbourne Postdoctoral Fellowship), stressing once again our keen eye for **playing an effective role as supportive venue for career development in urban studies**.

INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS

Building on our three-year track record as a Lab, the Centre remains engaged as a key driver or lead in major research programs that are directly plugged into international responses to global challenges like climate change. These are not only focused on research and analysis but also on dissemination and capacity building in the multilateral arena and for cities well beyond Australia. The Centre's leadership of the Global Covenant of Mayors **Innovate4Cities** program has for instance supported a wide variety of initiatives or reports launched at the United Nations COP27 climate summit in 2022. These included the Summary for Urban Policy Makers of the IPCC report on climate change (which in itself made wide reference to centre work), a Second Edition of The Multilevel Climate Action Playbook and support for the set up of the *initiative on "Bridging Cities Climate Research Priorities"* with the Global Innovation Hub of the UNFCCC.

Working at the heart of
**international
networks** by bridging
global and local agendas

Similarly, the 2022 saw continuation of an ongoing three-year partnership with Swiss philanthropy Botnar Foundation for the **Evidence2 Action (E2A) program**, delivering the Foundation's E2A framework and shaping its engagement and funding initiatives supporting youth in cities in contexts like India, Tanzania and Romania. The E2A project is a further demonstration of the distinctive capacity of the Centre to work with philanthropic organisations not only as funders but as agents of change in cities, supporting an inclusion- and evidence-based approach to urban governance especially with an eye to international settings.

PILOT PROJECTS AND ADVISORY

The Centre also continues to host targeted pilot programs provoking international debate as well as collaboration and opening up venues for critical reflection on how city leadership is connected globally. In 2022 this was the case of the *Comparative Imaginations* project on the impact of city rankings in local government, or *Philanthropy and the City* on the 'urban agendas'

that large international philanthropies have when investing in cities, or a partnership with Brookings Institution on how central-local relations shape city diplomacy. Whilst doing so, the centre continues to provide high-level advice to multilateral organisations and foreign governments. For instance, in 2022, the Centre worked with UN-Habitat's Capacity Development and Training Unit in reviewing how the agency has been partnering with universities, not least through the 10-year Habitat UNI program, for an analysis involving over 200 survey respondents.

COMPLETIONS AND NEW INITIATIVES

In 2022 the centre completed three sizeable programs with both distinct local partnership emphasis, with the City of Melbourne, and broad international networking and recognition, in close collaboration with University College London. These were the **SDGs for Melbourne** program funded by the City and the University VP Strategy and Culture, which resulted in Australia's first Voluntary Local Review of the SDGs, the **Urban Observatories** program with UN-Habitat providing a world first global review of the role 'observatories' play in cities, and the \$12m UK Global Challenges Research Fund project "**Knowledge in Action for Urban Equality**" (KNOW) with University College London. Whilst the SDGs program demonstrated again our close connection with City of Melbourne but also an effective partnership with Monash University, KNOW and Urban Observatories leveraged formal networks of 14 universities and 17 observatories respectively to animate conversations across Global North and South on the value of urban data and knowledge mobilisation in cities.

These global-local translation and large networking programs continue in 2023 through both ongoing initiatives like Innovate 4 Cities (noted above, and entering its fourth year), as well as new major programs: **the City Diplomacy Masterclass**, supported by DFAT and linking our internationally recognized expertise in city networking to practical training for local government officers, and the launch of **a new Retrofit Lab** that puts the City of Melbourne Chair work in urban resilience into practice around questions of sustainable transitions for buildings and infrastructure.



Above: Cathy Oke and Benjamin Jance from the Global Covenant of Mayors at the UCLG Summit in Daejeon, South Korea.

CONVENING URBAN RESEARCH

The Centre has taken to heart the role of **offering a university platform for urban research and training** across the University of Melbourne and tackled this role head on in its first year of operations. This role has not only sought to outreach across the centre's Faculties with a university associates program, but also taken the shape of a program of events and training detailed below. Key in achieving our mission to support the next generation of urban researchers has been the pilot Centre Doctoral Academy, the 'Horizons' program, ran in 2022 for a select cohort of graduate researchers. This has gone hand in hand with a double 'City Building' and 'City Fix' discussion series for centre early career scholars and graduate researchers.



Alongside these, the Centre's 2022 has focused on convening **community-building and socialisation** across different faculties and diverse disciplinary backgrounds, with the annual Centre Retreat in the Yarra Valley (August) and a series of 6 research and engagement roundtables as core activities to this end. These core activities are briefly summarised here.

HORIZONS DOCTORAL PROGRAM

The Horizons program is a pilot program, hosted by the Melbourne Centre for Cities, with a pilot program grant from the Researcher Development Unit in 2022, designed to support the **internationalisation of emerging researchers in a time of deep global disruptions and disconnections**. The program aims to support graduate researchers through peer-learning opportunities and mentoring from experienced academics. Participation in the program will involve engagement with internationally focused scholars and organisations, as well as the fostering of critical skills that can inform the development of their own research and equip them in international career building. Convened by a team of 5 Centre staff for a select group (by application only) of 13 second-year PhD researchers from

Architecture & Planning, Health, Business & Economics, Arts, Science, and Engineering.

Critically, Horizons has allowed Centre leadership to co-design with current PhD researchers the shape and focus of the upcoming Centre Doctoral Academy (to remain named 'horizons') starting in 2023.

A detailed report on Horizons is available separately.

CITY FIX, CITY BUILDING – A DOUBLE SEMINAR SERIES.

The Melbourne Centre for Cities **City Fix** and **City Building** double series is a monthly roundtable workshop for Centre members. The City Building workshops are designed to equip postgraduates and early career scholars who are part of the Melbourne Centre for Cities with professional skills to enable them to position and represent themselves for their future careers. The series is open to all but is designed with an audience of early career researchers, doctoral students, and ambitious honours and masters' students in mind. Alongside these, City Fix sessions offer similar monthly spaces for Centre members where we collectively work through challenges that people are facing in their cities research. From April 2022 – through to November we have run 8 City Building and 6 City Fix sessions that have built connections across the centre to develop shared ideas and discuss points of tension with other researchers working on design, governance, ecology, technology, and other city-related issues.

offering a space for
**collaborative
and career-
building
connections**



Left: the 2022 Horizons cohort.
Top right: workshopping the Centre's contribution to urban biodiversity.
Bottom right: a city building seminar on building networks; bottom right:

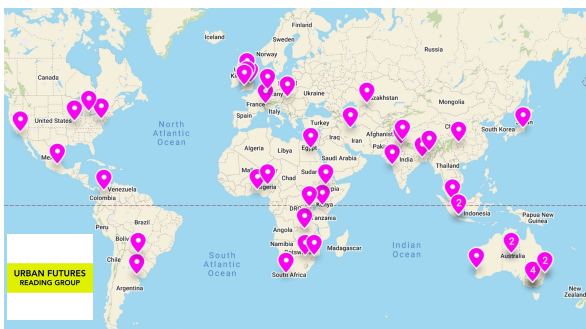
CENTRE ROUNDTABLES

A key task set by Centre management and Advisory Board in early 2022 has been that of identifying key areas of expertise and focus for the Centre's broad "cities" mission. In order to do so the Centre hosted four bespoke research and industry-focused roundtables.

These have focused on: undertaking urban research at night time; working in megacities across Asia; SDGs data and assessments in urban governance; and urban biodiversity mission of the centre. Coupled with discussions at the Annual Symposium (see below) the roundtables have allowed to cement existing areas of expertise (e.g. night-time and the SDGs) and propel the establishment of new ones (urban biodiversity) as a clear commitment to centre work in 2023.

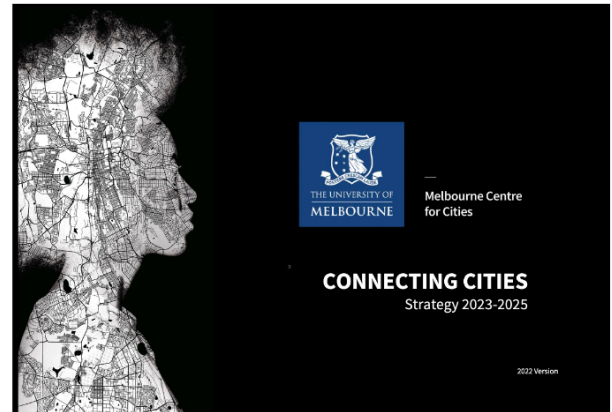
URBAN FUTURES READING GROUP

Born in the throes of the pandemic from the initiative of centre graduate researchers undertaking a joint PhD overseas, and University of Manchester colleagues, the Reading Group is a monthly reading group affiliated with the **Melbourne** Centre for Cities and the **Manchester** Urban Institute. It is run by PhD researchers and is open to anyone with an interest in urban futures, meets online the first Thursday of each month.



ANNUAL RETREAT

In August the centre embarked on its annual retreat offering 34 centre academics and professionals the opportunity to reflect on our own research and our place on Country, meet others in the Centre, learn about their research and participate in developing strategies for the Centre's current and future activities. Across the two days, centre management facilitated six sessions, ranging from discussions around "objects of research" through to Centring Indigenous Knowledge, igniting discussion and ideas, and leading to the development and delivery of the *Connecting Cities* centre strategy released alongside this annual report and framing our identity and ambition toward 2025.



Top: the Centre Strategy *Connecting Cities*
middle: the team at the annual Yarra Valley retreat;
bottom: a centre roundtable on data and monitoring the UN SDGs.
Left: the growing map of Urban Futures Reading Group participants.

PARTNERSHIPS

Partnering is a fundamental characteristic of the Centre's work. Our explicit 'partnership' approach was identified by the Centre's advisory board in its 2022 (May) meeting, a distinctive feature of how we operate as a Centre and that **distinguishes us locally and internationally as an innovative academic unit**, but also as to how we deliver impact through excellent research and training.

As of December 2022 the Centre engages with 39 formal partners through contracts, grants and MoUs, a wide network of collaboration that continued a mounting track record of impact delivered through collaboration. This involved both the extension of existing links inherited from Connected Cities Lab (e.g. with the Global Covenant of Mayors and C40 Cities), expansion of core partnerships (e.g. with City of Melbourne and UN-Habitat), or development of new strands of collaboration (e.g. with DFAT).

This partnership emphasis cemented the centre's development throughout 2022 as one of the most successful strands of strategic priorities.



DEEPENING COLLABORATIONS

Centre projects have also focused on depth of partnership, with collaboration seen not simply a matter of collecting wide lists of associations but rather as **a measure of our presence and two-way communication** with scholarly peers as well as non-academic institutions. It has generally translated into common commitments, goals and investments, often involving jointly engaged (where not jointly appointed) staff and teams.

A perfect example of this depth of partnership is our engagement with the City of Melbourne. Engagement with the City is represented not only by the Centre hosting the jointly funded program of the City of Melbourne Chair in Urban Resilience. The Centre also provides regular input and evaluation across a variety of other areas. These are for instance linked to an ARC DECRA Fellowship in Arts, in the *Project Night Justice* initiative focused on inclusion and safety of gender-diverse people at night.

Similarly, the Centre has hosted over two years of close collaboration for the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the City, helping Melbourne chart a national frontrunner role as the Australia's first Voluntary Local Review of the SDGs – now implemented across the City's planning and strategy approaches.

The **depth of these partnerships** is also measured by their capacity to innovate in modes of cooperation. This is for instance the case of the collaboration in the set up of, and advice to, the City of Melbourne Night Time Economy Advisory Committee (NTEAC) which emerged from the visibility of the centre's pilot research program and podcast series Cities After Dark, as well as by collaborative research-teaching work between the City and the Centre through the Melbourne School of Design Studio N capstone for graduate planners and architects. Whilst the collaboration with the City presents a unique city-university partnership model that has gathered attention internationally (e.g. at the German Marshall Fund city diplomacy summit in Turin in June 2022), the Centre's work continues to provide advice to many international peer local governments in the areas of internationalisation, global outreach and strategy, as well as climate action and data mobilisation.

PARTNERSHIP WITH IMPACT

Our partnership approach engages with a variety of industries and at a number of governance scales beyond local government. For instance, a distinctive expertise the Centre offers and that 2022 further advanced is that of **working with philanthropy**. This is for instance the case of a close collaboration with Fondation Botnar (Switzerland) and Lord Mayors Charitable Foundation (Australia). In 2022 the Centre further rolled out work in delivering Fondation Botnar's "Evidence 2 Action" (E2A) framework to empower youth in cities to mobilise the kind of evidence needed for transformative and inclusive urban change. With support from Centre fellows and honorary staff, E2A is now being implemented across the Foundation's programming across complex realities like India and Tanzania.



This is an area that will likely see further strengthening and expanding as both DFAT City Diplomacy Masterclass and FYA Young Mayors programs expand into 2023, but also as we continue to engage with Botnar, Global Covenant of Mayors and more.

Right: an SDGs implementation workshop with City of Melbourne
Left: the E2A team in Delhi for a review workshop for the framework.

OUTREACH, OUTPUTS AND EXTERNAL ENGAGEMENT

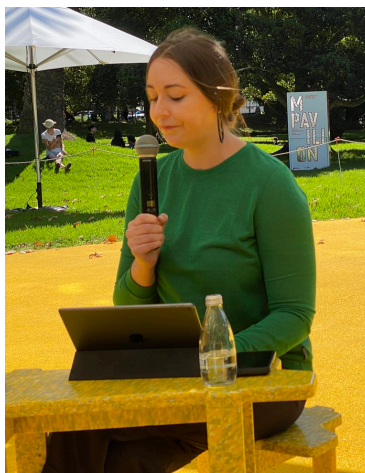
Outreach and external presence in debates and discussions around cities is a key dimension of work for the Centre. Over 2022 the centre has delivered on a sizeable portfolio of scholarly outputs ranging from a diverse mix of academic publications to policy and industry work, via creative and multimedia outputs aimed at a variety of styles of communication.

Centre staff has delivered **69 scholarly works for 2022** (updated as to 1 December 2022) including 41 peer reviewed journal articles and 12 book chapters. Centre fellows have produced **4 full academic monographs** in 2022, which have been well received with growing attention across urban studies debates but also impact beyond academia. These have tackled issues of planning in the wake of environmental uncertainty, the determinants of what makes for a 'global city', the debate on development and gentrification of 'Yes-in-My-Backyard' movements, and the management of night-time economies in cities.



THE CENTRE IN PUBLIC EVENTS

Alongside a very successful annual symposium framed around the theme *Difficult Urban Questions* (more in detail below), Centre staff have been engaged in a wide variety of public-facing events and convenings. This reflects not only engagement in public and professional debates, but also represents how the Centre has been explicitly pushing for a diversity of Centre voices in outreach, representative of our diverse expertise but also make-up and horizontal approach to scholarship. For instance, the Centre has had a wide presence at this year's **MPavilion program**, with talks at three of the *Excellent City* series panels co-organised by City of Melbourne alongside



two individual talks by early career scholars in the Centre (Centre PhDs Loren Adams and Meli Leaversley), demonstrating an active public presence and diversity of Centre voices intervening in major local debates in inclusion, design and post-pandemic recovery.

Overall, in 2022, Centre fellows have taken part in over **66 publicly accessible events**, and **29 workshops and conferences**, in Australia and overseas, not least with an initial but more cautions return (not least from a climate change impact point of view) to in-person presence across a variety of international urban research and practice platforms. Notably, in 2022 the Centre was also invited as 'knowledge partner' of the Melbourne Convention Bureau, with initial scoping and collaboration underway and funding of scoping activities taking place already this year.

THE CENTRE IN THE MEDIA

Widely across national news outlets like the ABC, *the Age*, Seven or SBS News, and international media, as with A/Prof David Bissell commenting on the shape of the gig economy in the *Sydney Morning Herald* in October, Prof Michele Acuto on city rankings on the CNN in July, or A/Prof Cathy Oke on urban greening and heat in the *New York Times* in March.

Overall, centre staff has been contributing directly to **over 35 news pieces in 2022**, with presence in public discourse about cities locally and internationally. Yet we do so as a Centre not only by responding to media queries and requests for input. Centre fellows have weighed in major current affairs issues with over **16 Pursuit and the Conversation pieces** and a wide cast of additional comments, interviews and interventions in news outlets.

This approach extends internationally, where Centre fellows have not just offered interviews to international media, but also penned interventions such as columns, blogs and special featured authored in major international outlets.

This was for instance the case of Dr Alexei Trundle's *World Economic Forum* blog piece on why cities are key to the sustainability of the Pacific in October.



Left: PhD researcher Loren Adams speaking about bots and planning at MPavilion. Right: Max Holleran presenting his *Yes to the City* book at NYU's Institute for Public Knowledge

The Centre also maintains an **active social media presence** currently centred on a widely followed account reaching out to over 13 thousand twitter followers, with a sizeable activity throughout the year (e.g. 656 retweets, 2,138 likes), and Fellows active communicating outputs and themes of Centre research across other platforms like LinkedIn, TikTok, Instagram and more recently Mastodon.

THE INAUGURAL ANNUAL SYMPOSIUM: DIFFICULT URBAN QUESTIONS.

Our **inaugural one-day symposium** featured thought-provoking speakers, cutting-edge research and practice, and collaborative research roundtables. It offered the opportunity for delegates to think about opportunities and challenges in managing, planning, living, working, and governing cities. The event showcased city leadership in an interconnected but disrupted world, and how questions, however difficult, are important prompts to explore our collective futures. Speakers at the symposium included: a keynote from Aunt Mandy Nicholson and plenary panels including Vice Chancellor Duncan Maskell and Lord Mayor Sally Capp, as well as **six plenary guest speakers** from partner institutions (Lord Mayors Charitable Foundation, Singapore Management University, Monash, Sydney, RMIT, Sheffield), alongside over **20 additional speakers across the four collaborative roundtables**.



Distinctively, as many symposium guests remarked, **each roundtable was actively co-hosted by Centre and City of Melbourne staff**, in a great display of engaged city-university partnership, with a total of thirteen City staff engaged across the day.

Left: Lord Mayor Sally Capp, VC Duncan Maskell, Michele Acuto and Alexei Trundle in conversation on city-university links at the annual symposium;
Right: Cathy Oke with the Melbourne Climate Futures team in the studio for a recording of *Climate Talks*

The symposium attracted wide interest with 258 registrations, attendees across the breadth of research at University of Melbourne as well as from over 40 external organisations and continued to experiment with innovative communication approaches with over 500 views across the three live streamed plenary sessions via the centre's Twitter account. The symposium also hosted an on-site speakers' lunch with our neighbourhood association Carlton Inc., whilst also stressing the value of creative research outputs by engaging 3 graphic illustrators alongside one artist developing a bespoke Indigenous design artwork for the Centre.

CONNECTED CITIES: PODCASTING AS CENTRE OUTPUT

The Centre produces 2022 saw a wide circulation of the 6-episode miniseries *Cities After Dark*. The **podcast miniseries** also represents again a great example of work in the centre that seeks to leverage the teaching-research nexus at the University, with a very explicit target toward accessibility by a more generalist public, with *Cities After Dark* also working as core 'listening' for the centre's graduate education through the capstone course Studio N in the Melbourne School of Design, alongside the volume *Managing Cities After Dark* as purpose-developed core reading. This is an approach now well established in the Centre after having produced the UCL Press *Leading Cities* book in 2020 for the graduate elective City Leadership (and supported by the World Bank Group).



The Centre has also collaborated on the last two seasons of *Climate Talks* (8 episodes per season in 2021 and 2022) produced and hosted in partnership with Melbourne Climate Futures. Last but not least, centre podcasting on urban issues has been led also by the initiative of graduate researchers, as our joint Manchester-Melbourne PhD Caitlin Morrissey also delivered at the end of 2022 (and ongoing through 2023) a bespoke podcast called *The DNA of Cities* with 29 episodes planned featuring 70 voices on what makes for the identity of cities. In short, the commitment to podcasting as a method of outreach is widely shared by our community with more in store for the year to come.

In fact, the Centre has a clear plan to continue this engagement with its podcasting program and ramp up this with more regular content in 2023. This will be fronted by a new miniseries focused on urban resilience produced in late-2022 as a special feature of the City of Melbourne Chair program.

EDUCATION AND CAPACITY BUILDING

The Melbourne Centre for Cities aspires to expand the horizons of applied research across the whole spectrum of the university's social mission. To do so, and in recognition of much of the impact of academia is via its educational offer, a key component of the development of the centre in 2022 has been that of **connecting the Centre's research base with a growing offer in teaching and training** programs. These are of course taking place alongside many of the teaching engagements already built in the work of our fellows across Arts, Science, ABP and Laws, with 9 of our fellows already holding formal teaching responsibilities across these faculties and another 10 (including PhDs) taking active part in undergraduate and graduate teaching. Overall, our effort to innovating on the teaching-research nexus has taken place across a set of three strands of experimental work, with a fourth emerging for delivery in 2023. These are detailed below in brief summaries.

Alongside these efforts, and as demonstrated by the Young Mayors initiative, the Centre has progressively paid attention to **fostering from early stages city leadership and opportunities for capacity building**. The Centre director has acted as a mentor for a cohort of 6 students in the 2022 Hansen Scholarship Program awarded to talented undergraduate students whose financial circumstances present a challenge to accessing a first-class education. The Centre also played host to a work experience placement from Euroa Secondary College in the Shire of Strathbogie, with the awardee, Rachael Buerckner, engaging in the City of Melbourne Chair Program, and eventually succeeding in being awarded a University Kwong Lee Dow scholarship for 2023.

POST GRADUATE COURSEWORK || CITY LEADERSHIP

Developed through a [University Learning and Teaching Initiative grant](#), City Leadership (PLAN90003) is a Summer Term intensive graduate coursework subject designed to equip University students to better understand how cities are led. The 2021 and 2022 success of the program and explicit practitioner engagement focus, with a wide array of international experts and practitioners in city leadership, has led to further development opportunities currently underway to run the subject again in 2023 in parallel and **collaboration with University College London's Master of Urban Innovation and Policy**, cementing a continuously productive link with UCL and between Melbourne and London.



GRADUATE 'STUDIO' WORK BETWEEN RESEARCH, TEACHING AND CENTRE PARTNERS || STUDIO N

Studio N (*Managing Cities at Night*) is currently taught by Centre staff as a joint Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning capstone course. Working with Centre partners, and in particular Arup and the City of Melbourne, Studio N focuses on 'night time' governance, design and policy to train built environment practitioners in how to manage cities at night-time. The studio has already delivered (in 2021) **tangible research impact** by supporting the establishment of the City of Melbourne Night-Time Economy Advisory Committee, and continued in 2022 by engaging the centre's ARC Discovery program *Night Shift*. Studio students have investigated the policy and design challenges confronting night shift workers in the City of Melbourne, making substantial advances on a 'virtual walkthrough' method that *Night Shift* will roll out in other Australian cities in 2023



Above from the top: Anna Edwards and a student from Studio N reviewing work on the layout of 7Eleven shops in Melbourne; and below the final multimedia exhibition for Studio N with partners from Arup and City of Melbourne

CAPACITY BUILDING FOR CITY LEADERSHIP || *THE YOUNG MAYORS INITIATIVE*

In late 2021 and throughout 2022 the Centre presented a case for development and supported **Foundation for Young Australians** in the development of a program of city leadership for youth in Australian cities. The 'Young Mayors' initiative is aimed at democratically electing youth councils and mayors of 11–17-year-olds across the country, starting in early 2023 with the regional councils of Horsham (Victoria) and Mackay (Queensland) signing up enthusiastically and with strong mayoral endorsement to trial the program in regional settings.



More information about education and capacity building activities can be found on the [Centre's website](#) on a dedicated training page.

Left: the FYA team at the kick off of the *Young Mayors* partnership in Mackay
Right: Alexei Trundle at the Pacific Islands Forum on the SDGs with RMIT and UN colleagues.

EXECUTIVE TRAINING || *CITY DIPLOMACY MASTERCLASS*

The City Diplomacy Masterclass is an online professional short course for **early career city diplomats**. It is delivered by the Centre research and practice experts over a one-month period (total time commitment approximately 48 hours) through live interactive course delivery, combined with peer-to-peer learning and practical application of skills and knowledge. In 2022 the Masterclass kicked off with program development and recruitment, and a specific focus in 2023 on **enhancing climate action by cities through city diplomacy**, resulting in growing interest across Australian capitals, but also regional hubs and even towns, which will lead into two busy cohorts running in 2023. Centrally, the masterclass secured a sizeable investment by the **Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)** through the competitive National Foundation for Australian-China Relations (NFACR) 2022-2023 focused grant round, which will in turn support a bespoke bilateral exchange cohort of Australian and Chinese local government officials.



ANNEX: CENTRE STAFF IN 2022

CENTRE MANAGEMENT

Michele Acuto (Centre Director)

Alison Young (Arts); **David Bissell** (Science); **Cathy Oke** (ABP);
Sarah Bell (City of Melbourne Chair); **Alexei Trundle** (ABP).

2022 CENTRE FELLOWS

Research Fellows: Anna Edwards[^]; Benedicta Rousseau;
Benjamin Hegarty; Daniel Pejic[^]; Diane Hu; Ika Trijsburg; Kazi
Fattah; Kajsa Lundberg[^]; Kylie Soanes; Melanie Lowe; Renee
Miller-Yeaman; Rewa Marathe[^]; Rebekah Plueckhahn; Sam Miles;
Stephanie Butcher; Zahra Assarkhaniki[^].

Faculty Fellows: Anna Kosovac; Bianca Fileborn; Derlie Mateo-
Babiano; Georgia Garrard; Jennie Day; John Hajek; John Stone;
Julie Miao; Lieve Donnellan; Max Holleran; Peter Rush;

Research Assistants: Dianty Ningrum; Enzo Lara Hamilton;
Merrick Morley[^]

([^]also a doctoral researcher)

2022 CENTRE ADMINISTRATION

Brianna Carroll; Jen Dam; Kate Murray; Marita Doak; Marley
Holloway-Clarke; Paola Rossi.

2022 CENTRE DOCTORAL RESEARCHERS AND HORIZONS* COHORT

Alana Scully; Amber Howard^{*}; Amelia Leavesley^{*}; Anastasia
Gramatakos; Angela Chen^{*}; Caitlin Morrissey^o; Elisabetta Crovara;
Emily Ross; Emma McRae; Hannah Fairlamb; Hannah McNichol^o;
Hristijan Poposvki; Ian Rafael Ramirez^{*}; Katherine Horsfall^{*}; Jana
Perkovic; Joanna Stubbs; Lei Hou^{*}; Loren Adams^{*}; Maxine
Chan^{*}; Paul Hanley^{*}; Sam Holleran; Shiva Nouri^{*}; Sombol
Mokhles; Sophie Devine; Subharthe Samanbdr^a; Tim Barber^{*};
Uly Faoziyah.

(^otwo joint Manchester-Melbourne PhDs)

2022 CENTRE UNIVERSITY ASSOCIATES

Simon Batterbury (Science); Dave McDonald (Arts); Annisa Beta
(Arts); Una McIlvenna, (Arts); Judy Bush (ABP); Monica Minnegal
(Arts); Brad Clarke (Science); James Murphy (Arts); Ben
Gook (Arts); Nikos Papstergiadis (Arts); Hannah Gould (Arts);
Kirsten Parris (Science); Amy Hahs (Science); James Petty (Arts);
Benjamin Hegarty (Arts); Catherine Phillips (Science); Julia Hurst
(Arts); Theresa Jones (Science); Soheil Sabri (FEIT); Catherine
Kovesi (Arts); Megan Sharp (Arts); Stephen Livesley (Science);
Ariane Utomo (Science); Claire Loughnan (Arts); Mark Yaolin
Wang (Science); Claire Maree (Arts); Nicholas Williams (Science).

2022 CENTRE ADVISORY BOARD

Julie Wells (Chair), Michael Wesley, Mark Hagreaves, Julie Willis
(all University of Melbourne);

Alison Leighton (City of Melbourne), Catherine Brown (LMCF),
Winston Chow (Singapore Management University), Riyanti
Djalante (ASEAN), Rachel Huxley (C40 Cities), Tony Pipa
(Brookings Inst.), Aromar Revi (IHS), Malcolm Smith (Arup), Molly
Whelan (FYA).

2022 CENTRE VISITORS

Andreina Seijas (Harvard); Clinton Moore (UN-Habitat); Kris
Hartley (HKUST); Maya Costa Pinto (Berkeley); Michał Gzik (Uni
Lodz); Sarah Barns (Sitelines).

2022 HONORARY STAFF

Ihnji Jon (hon lecturer - Cardiff Uni); Jessie Briggs (hon. Fellow -
city of Melbourne); Joyati Das (hon principal fellow - Botnar);
Lars Coenen (hon prof - Western Norway U); Louise Johnson;
(hon prof); Pablo Fuentenebro (hon fellow - Université Paris VII);
Roger Burrows (hon prof - Bristol Uni); Sebastian Fastenrath
(hon lecturer - Uni Wien)



Melbourne Centre
for Cities