


THE CITY AT EYE LEVEL ASIA



COMPOSED BY STIPO, URBAN DISCOVERY AND THINK CITY

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THE CITY AT EYE LEVEL ASIA - MINI BOOKLET

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The City at Eye Level is an open-source project. Visit www.thecityateyelevel.com for:

- Download of the book (pdf) and find more chapters, extended versions, and new chapters
- Links and backgrounds, and The City at Eye Level films
- Great tools and working materials from plinths to placemaking
- The network of contributors, and become a contributor yourself.
- Join www.facebook.com/thecityateyelevel and become part of the community, find day to day inspiration, and share events on the City at Eye Level.

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ABOUT THIS BOOKLET

Hans Karssenbergh and Siënna Veelders

In early 2012, STIPO started the project that would become The City at Eye Level. We sought collective answers to the question: How can we create a user-friendly ground-level that is flexible for years to come, adaptive for multiple uses, pleasing to the eye, with short term action for long term change? The project rapidly developed into an open-source project with more than 80 contributing co-authors worldwide with new editions like *A Cidade ao Nivel dos Olhos* for the Brazilian market, *The City at Eye Level in The Netherlands* for the Amsterdam global Placemaking Week and *The City at Eye Level for Kids* for global market working with cities and children. Next step: *The City at Eye Level Asia*!

The City at Eye Level Asia publication is an open-source project and book, a response to the increasing demand from Asian urban practitioners for case studies on creating great cities at eye level, suitable to their local context. For the City at Eye Level we turn streets and areas into places where people feel at home and want to stay (placemaking), enhance the quality of public space and active ground floors, together with the community. Our method combines use, design and

organisation (software, hardware and orgware). Because of the unprecedented growth in the recent decade in Asian cities, there is more need than ever for clever and creative planning solutions and better design principles. The book will adopt urban challenges particular to the Asian context, which impact the preconditions for achieving a better city at eye level who translate to a themes framework of the book. The book is a co-production and composed by a collaborative of STIPO, Urban Discovery (Hong Kong & Bangkok) and Think City (Malaysia), with international organisations like UN-Habitat, Isocarp, SEANNET, Project for Public Spaces, PlacemakingX and Bernard van Leer Foundation as network partners. We are very proud to now present the booklet before you, with special thanks to over 90+ contributors from 17 Asian countries and funding provided by Think City and Stimuleringsfonds Creatieve Industrie (Internationalization Grant) to make this happen.

This booklet is a special edition for the Placemaker Week ASEAN and City at Eye Level Asia network launch. The booklet is a sneak peek of the City at Eye Level Asia publication, to be launched in April 2020 in Kuala Lumpur. In this document, we will first introduce the basics of the City at Eye Level and we showcase our best Asian cases so far to give you an impression of what is to come. With this booklet, we reach out to Asian urban practitioners as potential collaborations and network members. We are very happy to be able to create this new edition on great cities, places and streets in Asian cities with you, so please visit our City at Eye Level Asia booth during the conference to get in touch with us!

Help grow the network and the collection of great Asian case studies. We still look for:

- Highrise developments with great attention for the human scale and connection to the street
- City-wide strategies on human scale development
- Examples of great private development for public space (and with) the community
- New town developments
- Case studies from Laos and Brunei

October 2019

THE CITY AT EYE LEVEL ASIA

THE BASICS



INTRODUCTION



INTRODUCTION TO A BETTER CITY AT EYE LEVEL

Hans Karssenberg, Siënna Veelders,
Charlot Schans, Nady Nassar

Public space is the backbone of a sustainable city. Great streets, places where you instantly like to be, human scale buildings and streets, co-creation of the public space by the users, placemaking, active ground floors and a people-centred approach based on how we as human beings experience the space around us — that is what The City at Eye Level is all about.

We all know that intuitive feeling when we really feel at home in a street, a park or a square: it is not just a public space, it is a place. With the City at Eye Level, we aim to understand the mechanisms behind that feeling. Because if we do, we can recreate these places in newly developed or in already existing parts of our cities. We can then work with the community to get from spaces to places, from liveable to lovable.

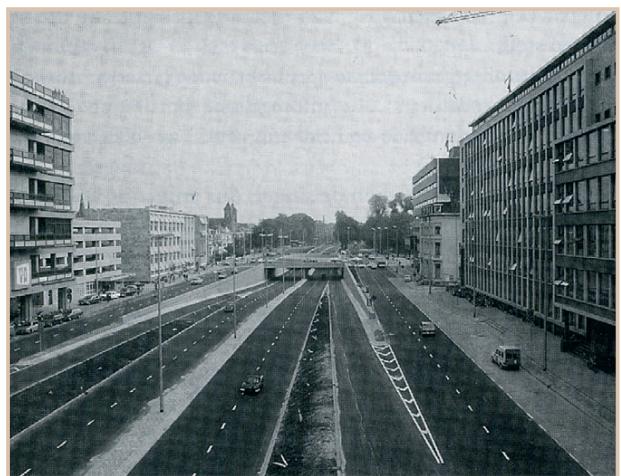
ABOUT THE CITY AT EYE LEVEL

We ask ourselves: what do we as pedestrians experience when we look around? Is the street comfortable, welcoming and walkable? Do the surrounding buildings, their use, and their design makes an attractive urban environment where we feel at home? Do the ground floors connect with pedestrian flows in the urban area? Do the squares, parks and terraces function as places where we exchange ideas and encounter new, different types of people?

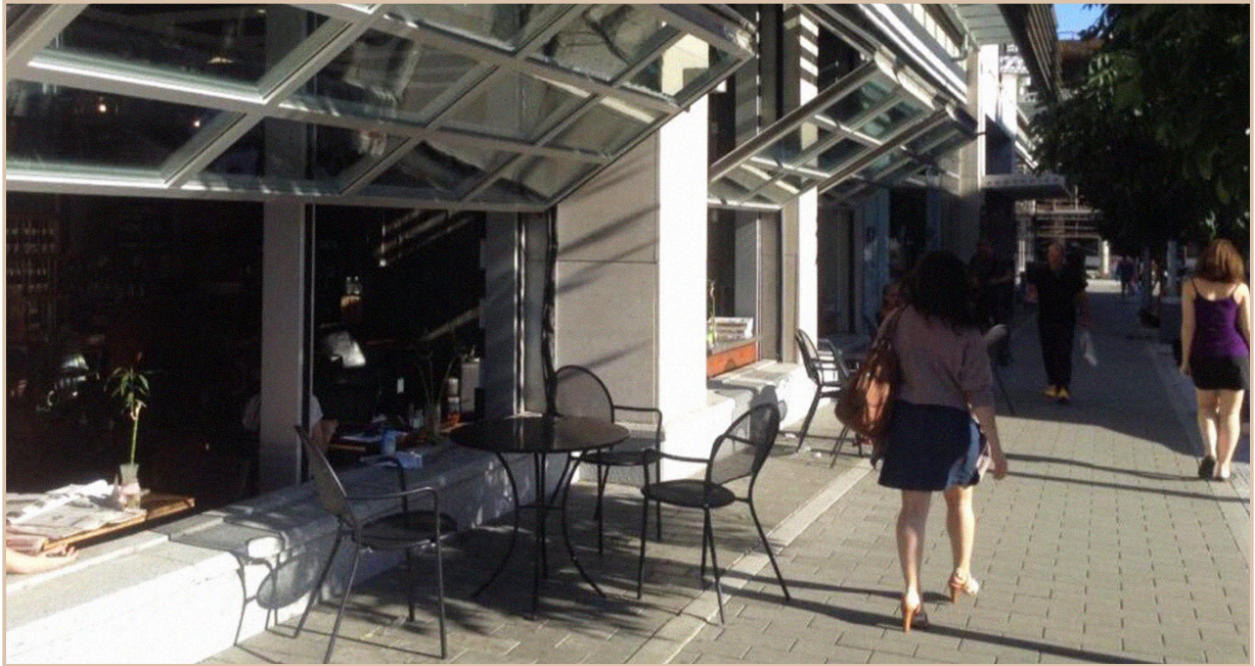
To understand the underlying mechanisms better, and work on strategies for change, we (STIPO, a team for urban development based in Rotterdam, The Netherlands) initiated the international program The City at Eye Level. The network was built with partners such as UN-Habitat, Project for Public Spaces, Gehl Architects, The Future of Places, Think City and PlacemakingX. With them, we generated a group of 80+ contributors worldwide and collectively wrote the book *The City at Eye Level*. All the lessons are open source and shared via the website: www.thecityateyelevel.com.

HOW DID WE LOSE HUMAN SCALE?

Before, we built our cities on walking distance. Everything had to happen within one hour walking: living, working, shopping. It led to compact, walkable, mixed use cities that adapted to the local climate. Not because we wanted to, but simply because that was the way life was organized. This all changed in the 60s, with the mass introduction of the car, and the modernist approach to urbanism, separating functions. Le Corbusier's Plan Voisin was the example: a rational high-rise model designed to replace the historic inner city of Paris. It did not get implemented there. However, it did get built in the Paris outskirts, and in so many other cities across the world throughout the 60s, 70s and 80s. Most cities lost their eye for a walkable, human scaled city.



This book is not meant as a plea against modernism in general, nor as a plea in favour of traditional architecture. Modernist architecture



has brought about some of the most exciting buildings of our time. Modernists sought to create liveable, green, clean cities. However, modernist urban design neglected one key element: we have two parts of our brain. We want our cities to function rationally, but we also want to be inspired and to listen to our hearts. We cannot capture the city in simplified rational models only. Jane Jacobs advocated to embrace the full complexity of the city, and she made us aware of what we throw away when demolishing existing urban fabric. We stand on her shoulders now.

This City at Eye Level book, if anything, is meant as a plea to combine and enrich any kind of urbanism with human scale, with the eye level experience, that has been so often overseen in the past decades. This is why from 2014 to 2016, we worked together with UN-Habitat, Future of Places, Project for Public Spaces and many others towards a new World Urban Agenda. We advocated a holistic, fine-grained city, human scale and a people centred, and participatory approach, and adequate public spaces for all. This was adopted in Quito in 2016, in Habitat III for the New Urban Agenda.

In the meantime, our cities have started to become more attractive to live in. More and more, our economy is based on creativity and innovation. High quality public space and interaction between people are no longer nice to have but need to have. Many cities are working on restoring the balance between pedestrians and cars. We are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of healthy and happy cities, with public spaces that invite its citizens to walk, cycle, play and engage in sports.

HOW DO WE EXPERIENCE THE EYE LEVEL?

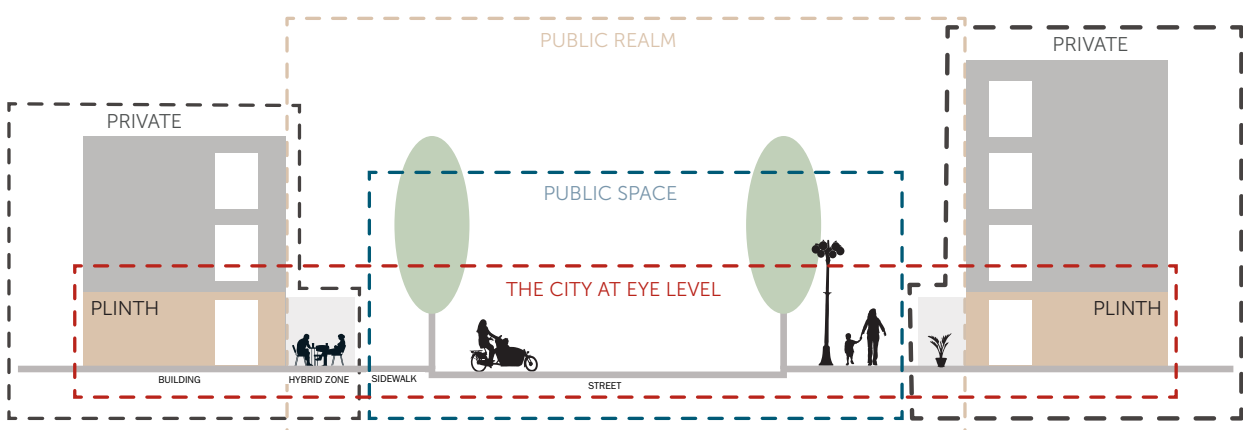
If we want to work on the eye level more, we should first dig deeper into how we, as human beings, experience our surroundings when we walk down the street. Let us dive into urban psychology for a bit and now highlight three universal aspects of how we experience:

1. How do we see? For our eyesight, we have to go back to the frog eye. Frogs can't only register moving objects, like a fly passing by. Human eyes are the same, but evolution has provided a trick: tiny muscles make our eyeballs tremble so that we do register still standing objects. Yet, like the frog, we are much more drawn to moving objects. What does this mean for our cities? If we walk in a street with long, horizontally oriented façades, our frog eyes get bored and our view wanders off. We don't feel at home and feel in a hurry. We know from Jan Gehl's research that people turn their heads much less, make fewer stops and walk faster. However, in streets with vertically oriented façades, variety and new units every 5 – 10 meters, our frog eyes are drawn

to the side. We slow down, look around, spend more time, and feel at home more.

2. How do we hear? *The City at Ear Level*, a chapter in the first City at Eye Level book, shows that sound determines approximately half our experience. In the city, all (mechanical) sounds pile up. With stony and glass surfaces we create the same effect as an empty living room after moving house. Once we have to raise our voices to have a normal human conversation, we don't feel at home anymore. The environment should have 'sound dispersers', as urban acoustics call them, where grass may take the role of the carpet in your living room, and trees, benches, façades jumping in and out, break the sound and help create a human soundscape.

3. How do we feel? There is a lot of research here, on how we need a 'circle of intimacy' around us, on how we react to urban heat islands, and on how we feel more comfortable with a building in our back. Among others, it relates with the size of the squares that people



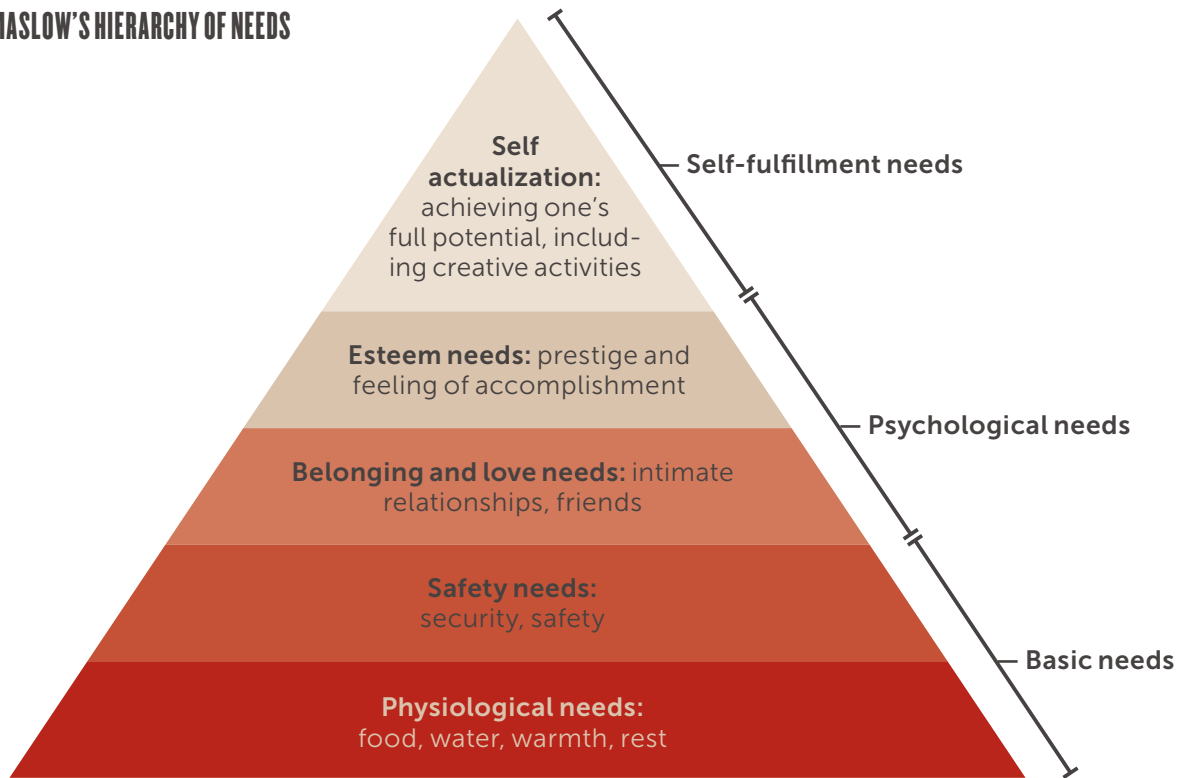
like as a place to stay. People like the Italian piazzas that are 40x40 to 50x50 meters on average. Why this size? It taps into subconscious behaviour. While we walk, we constantly scan the expressions on other people's faces to judge whether we will be safe. Under 40 to 50 meters, we can still see these expressions. Over 40 to 50 meters, we feel anonymous and lost.

Our frog eyes call for variety, our ears call for trees and our feeling calls for intimate spaces. These are universal values. Of course, if we want to understand the full experience, the next step should be to dive into the specific aspects depending on the local culture, the social and political relations, the local acceptance of what is decent behaviour, the local climate. These are the reasons to compose this book, specifically delving in the specific contexts in Asia. But first, we will go into the elements we can take to Asia from the international experiences.

FOUR KEY LESSONS FROM THE CITY AT EYE LEVEL

The City at Eye Level book, fed by many insights and cases from across the world, describes the mechanisms needed to create a more human scaled city. Let us first summarize four key lessons that are a fundament for a better city at eye level in the Asian context just as much.

1. Public space should be the backbone for sustainable development, not just the leftover space next to buildings.
2. Public space is not 2D but 3D. Public space is not just the street the city council owns and maintains, it is the entire environment we experience around. So it includes buildings, and most important is the ground floor. It may be only 20% of a building, it determines 80% of our street experience.
3. From liveable to lovable. City councils and developers usually take care of only the two basic layers or Maslow's hierarchy of needs for a liveable, whole, clean and safe environment. With placemaking we take it to a higher level to turn it into a lovable, social, active, fun, health, tempting and inspiring place.
4. Software, hardware *and* orgware. First of all, understanding current and potential use patterns and activities (software), the design follows (hardware), followed by programming of new activities (orgware). For the long-term, think of a strategy, a method, an approach, a set of rules, a coalition, funding to keep the learning and investment cycle going for a longer time.



WHAT ARE THE MECHANISMS WORKING AGAINST US?

Working to achieve a better city at eye level, we need to understand why we are getting so little of it in day to day practice. If we know which mechanisms are working against us, we will know better which issues to address in developing new strategies for our cities. In brief, we recognize at least 7 mechanisms:

5. **Cities and developers lack good rules for human scale;**
6. **Human scale often comes too late in the process;**
7. **Short term profit orientation;**
8. **Standardisation of the construction industry, sterile development;**
9. **Lack of proper management for good places (place management);**
10. **Top down planning and lack of (mental) ownership;**
11. **Designs being made from the bird's eye view.**

With the City at Eye Level program, we are uncovering criteria, new approaches and methods for development and transformation,

systemic change and tools to address these mechanisms working against us:

- There is an open source list of **Eye Level Criteria** to use in urban development projects to achieve a better city at eye level.
- We work on **organic transformation** to turn existing urban areas and streets around with the local partners.
- We work on **place led development** with real estate partners to embed the eye level into the development process from the very first stages.
- We work on **creative bureaucracy** to open up city councils to work together with communities and tap into the city's energy and creativity for improving public space.
- We work on **place management** to build sustainable communities, public-private partnerships and cooperatives to keep programming and improving over time.
- We are building a **global toolbox** with open source tools for the city at eye level and placemaking.

*If you would like to learn more, please read the complete article in the to be published book *The City at Eye Level Asia* from April 2020, and visit our website www.thecityateyelevel.com, where you can also find the other *City at Eye Level* books and downloads, and join the global community for exchanging ideas.*

THE CITY AT EYE LEVEL ASIA

Some of the underlying mechanisms for human scale public space and great social life in the streets are universal, as described before. Many other mechanisms, however, are local and contextual, such as climate, and the specific local cultural perception of public space.

Working with our partners in Asia, Think City, Urban Discovery, SEAN-NET, Isocarp, UKNA, UN Habitat and Eyes on Place, to name a few, we felt the need to have a City at Eye Level book specifically aimed at the Asian situation, containing Asian cases only.



SPECIFIC THEMES FOR ASIA

With our partners, we have identified the following themes to address the specific situation in Asia:

- FLUID X FORMAL:** resident created or upgraded public spaces.
 How to amplify to resident created public spaces? We look at citizen led examples of urban upgrading, like random street corners or bus stops turned into lovely sitting out areas or community gardens with home-made furniture, pots and plants, religious artefacts and even self-fabricated exercise equipment.
- PRAY X PLAY:** religious sites as public spaces and child- and family-friendly places.
 How to replicate the shared space concept of urban religious sites? How can we create inclusive family-friendly places, other than your stereotypical playgrounds that stimulate playful learning? And how can children and their caregivers in the city play an active role in city-making? We look at temple complexes, churchyards, mosque compounds, school- and playgrounds that also function as important public, community and recreational spaces, not just to pray but also to play.

- **DAY X NIGHT:** multi-purpose day/night spaces.
How to optimise the use of space in cities that are dictated by hot climate and high rents? We look at creative use and management of spaces; for example, a street food market in the morning, traffic lane during the day and a football pitch by night, or busy thoroughfare during the week and pedestrian zone in the weekend.
- **PUBLIC X PRIVATE:** privately managed public spaces.
How to demarcate the line in between what is public and private space in a dense urban environment? It is often blurred. We look at successful examples of privately managed public spaces that are responding to the citizens needs such as rooftops, arcades, footbridges, courtyards and private parks.
- **COLOUR X CREATIVITY:** the city as a canvas for urban creatives.
How to use streets and back alleys as performance venues, exhibition space and creative outlet for urban artists and performers? How to turn abandoned buildings or complete areas into a hub for creative use like incubator spaces or multi-use buildings? We look at successful artistic projects that do good for the city and community.
- **OLD X NEW:** keeping the human scale in skyscraper cities.
How to vitalize old forgotten buildings for a sustainable future? How to use the qualities of old city centres (human scale, character, open squares, walkable streets) and translate them successfully for high rise environments? How to keep activity at street level like vibrant historical inner cities? We not only look at successful projects that give back life to the old existing environment but new projects that function as an example of new and high-rise development with a great connection to the street level and its surrounding neighbourhoods.
- **INDOOR X OUTDOOR:** creating a comfortable environment.
How to create comfortable spaces when the urban environment becomes hostile to humans? How to deal with heat, pollution and flooding? We look at creative solutions like providing shaded streets, connecting walkways, water gardens and separated cycling lanes.
- **OVERCROWDED X UNDERUSED:** accessibility and empty spaces.
How to steer people away from overcrowded places and open up underused spaces? Parks, plazas, waterfronts are not always

accessible for all. We look at places where attractive spaces were created in unusual places like under footbridges, disused laneways or overpasses.

The different stories in this book are all in their own way connected to the themes and tell from their own perspective how to contribute to a more human centred in their own local environment.



THE CASES

THE REVITALI- SATION OF SAM CHUK MARKET

Chawanad Lansing (Community Architects Network)

The Sam Chuk market was comprised of 200 timber shophouses oriented towards the Suphan Buri River. Once, it was a lively market and the rest-stop for those going to or from Bangkok by water, when rivers were the main channel of transport in Thailand. As time passed by, the market fell into decline and became dilapidated. It no longer attracted passersby, not to mention patrons who purposely come for shopping. And when it came to Sam Chuk's residents, many working-aged people had moved out to pursue their studies and careers in other big cities. Only the elders and kids were left in the community.

At the same time, the residents were facing a land tenure issue, since the land belongs to the Treasury Department, who only offers a one-year contract to be renewed every year. This led to a lack of incentive for residents to upgrade or revive the market and houses due to land insecurity. Moreover, in 2003, there was a plan to evict the locals to renovate the buildings in a bid to upgrade the area's property values.



Chawanad (on behalf of ChumChon Thai Foundation at that time) and his team found how interesting the Sam Chuk community was and started running a participatory process with residents to explore and identify relevant issues, shared values, and a shared vision. As a result, in 3 years the market has become vibrant again under the complete self-management of community residents.

PROCESS AND MAIN ACTIVITIES

Food festival: The first self-attempt of the local residents to promote the old market was a food festival called “Aroi Tee Sam Chuk”, translated as “Delicious at Sam Chuk”. The event has since been held once a year. The aim is to tell local stories and histories of the traditional market to the visitors and also to communicate indirectly to the landlord about the possibility to redevelop the area with the locals rather than get rid of them.

Big cleaning day: It had been over 60 years since this place had been cleaned up. Mops, scrubs and brushes were handed out on market cleaning days held by the residents together with the district-municipality. After the cleaning was finished, they ended the day with a huge collective home-cooking dinner. Who would have thought — that such an activity would be the new beginning where they started to get a sense of togetherness from this collaborative achievement. Consequently, this good momentum also led to the establishment of several working committees in the community.

Living museums: From an initial idea by the locals who wanted to showcase their town's history, a decision was made to refurbish the 3-storey wooden house of Khun Chamnong Chinarak, a former Sam Chuk's nobleman, and turn it into the community museum. This site would be filled with photos, history panels, maps, models of the community and antiques. As of today, a further 22 houses in the market have become living museums where the owner-merchants still live in the house while the museums are operating. These include a Thai traditional herbal medicine shop, a Thai ancient coffee shop, a clock shop, an antiques shop, a blacksmith and more.

At first, the community's intention was just to revive the community market for their own next generation, but after setting up the first living museum and seeing a lot more visitors at the market, the tourism aspect started to come into their mind. Just a short drive from Bangkok, the market has become widely-known in a very short time due to its 100-year history, well-preserved wooden houses, the great riverside landscape, and the uniqueness of local Thai food and sweets. It is not an overstatement to say that the trend of vintage markets in Thailand in recent years was initiated by Sam Chuk Market.

KEYS TO SUCCESS

Storytelling: Telling the community's stories is something the local residents and merchants never get bored of. They're very proud of their unique community market history and always love to share their good old days again and again to the visitors.

Active ageing: It could be said that all these community projects would never have succeeded without this group of active ageing residents. They're passionate and motivated to revitalise the community. As many of them are retired, they have plenty of time to contribute, and decades of working experience, and powerful connections to promote each event. That's how it works.

Rebranding by new generation:

Many local businesses are inherited by the young generation, who also played a significant role in the transition of the market. They have rebranded many kinds of old-fashioned local products, creating a new vibe in the market.

IMPACTS

In the third year of the revitalisation project, a lot of young-gen local residents quit their jobs in big cities and returned home to do businesses in the community market. They realized that this way they can earn a lot with much less living costs. They can also have quality time with their families in their hometown, so they could not ask for more!

As the landlords realized the value of the community's history and economic potential of the market, they eventually extended the land tenure to 15-year lease instead of one-year lease.

The surrounding poor communities also benefit from the growth of Sam Chuk market as the market creates a number of job opportunities. The people from nearby communities can also bring their local products to sell at the market in a short distance instead of transporting





to big markets in Bangkok. This proved that the market drives the economic growth in the town and surrounding areas.

From selling community souvenirs to the donations made to the living museums, the community committee earns enough money to set up a community revolving fund. This fund is mainly used for lending to local residents to renovate their houses at low-interest, improving public infrastructure, and supporting business startups for new blood local entrepreneurs.

In 2009, the Sam Chuk community received the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Heritage Awards for the outstanding restoration



and conservation of the community, which has a major impact in raising awareness for grassroots heritage conservation and being a role model for empowering other historic communities in Thailand. Now, the Sam Chuk community market is a well-known case study of a great market and a learning center that welcomes visiting study groups from all over the world.

LESSONS LEARNED

Do:

- Connect the people who realize the community values and work with them.
- Encourage the community to work and make their own decisions as much as they can. Collective decisions are powerful to connect people.
- Better to use soft power when it comes to problem-solving.

Don't:

- Don't look through the lens of any principles or frameworks, rather looking for people's interests, values, and concerns by observing and talking to them. Amazing ideas usually came from that moment. Just go with the flow.
- Don't talk too much. Too long meeting and aggressive discussion might lead to conflicts. Get your hands dirty, make it happen and learn from it.

- Don't create too strict common rules, make it more flexible. Fewer conflicts will occur.

TODAY'S CHALLENGES

The community market has already done a great job in promoting its values out to the world. Now, it's time to get back to the core community and reconnect the people in the neighbourhood. The new challenge is to maintain and to re-focus on the sense of community from collaborative actions and pass on this spirit to the new generations.

At the same time, as the community never expected to become this famous, they don't have a proper plan to handle this extreme scenario. Thus, the fast-growing market has also experienced several issues regarding management, such as insufficient public facilities, and waste management.

Lastly, even though locals are prioritized to run the shops in the market, there are more and more outsiders coming in. They rent the shophouses and rent out at a higher price. And in many cases, they don't follow the community's long-held rules and traditions. These are among the recent issues that the market committee has been working on.

AN EXPERIMENTAL COMMUNITY DESIGN STUDIO FOR HONG KONG

Benjamin Sin (Magic Lanes Design Studio),
Stephanie Cheung (Urban Discovery)

COPING WITH A RAPIDLY CHANGING NEIGHBOURHOOD

Sai Ying Pun is one of the many typical old neighbourhoods in Hong Kong that has witnessed an urban transformation in the last few decades. Fuelled by the arrival of a new MTR station in the neighbourhood, new high-rises shot up in the historic grid of small streets with traditional shop houses. Typical mum-and-pop shops were replaced by hip cafés and bars, bringing in a new wave of residents and tourists. The newcomers brought flair and spending power, rents went up and within 10 years the socio-economic status of the neighbourhood had completely changed. For many of the old residents, they didn't realise how precious the character of their neighbourhood was until it was changed beyond recognition; how valuable their public space was until it was slowly eaten up by new developments. The neighbourhood sentiment is what triggered this community-led public space initiative.

COMMUNITY DESIGN STUDIO AS SOCIAL ANCHOR

Caritas Mok Cheung Sui Kun Community Centre (“Caritas”), a local NGO with a long-standing history in Hong Kong, started a series of activities in Sai Ying Pun in 2012. Their location of choice was Centre Street, a long and steep slope, so characteristic of the neighbourhood. With financial assistance of the Urban Renewal Fund, Caritas spearheaded a variety of activities to connect to the original residents in a time of rapid urban change: street markets, outdoor movie screenings, Christmas carolling, pop-up street furniture and even artificial lawns on the slope. A few years of experiments yielded an overwhelmingly positive response, and a very clear conclusion: local residents wanted a community hub where they could gather without having to worry about weather or government permits. This planted the seed of what became the Magic Lane Community Design Studio (“Magic Lanes”).



The originators agreed that Magic Lanes had to become an anchor to channel residents’ sensitivity towards their surroundings, and recover their sense of belonging and identity as Sai Ying Pun-er. It should be a place where residents can gather when they want and get involved in a variety of discussions and activities. Most importantly, a comfortable, homey place to brainstorm and re-imagine the future of the neighbourhood. Ideally, not a fluid or temporary pop-up, but a permanent and shaded space, like a street-level shop space. It was not an easy task to convince the Urban Renewal Fund to commit to renting a space in Hong Kong’s skyrocketing property market, but they managed.

Looking for the right location, they stumbled upon a small vacant shop in Sheung Fung Lane, a steep alley with busy pedestrian traffic similar to Centre Street, but with a higher percentage of locals and as an added bonus, Sheung Fung Lane was a privately-owned thoroughfare, eliminating the need to deal with government administrative bureaucracy.

They were able to rent the space for a period of two years and opened the Magic Lanes Design Studio in March 2017. The first project they embarked on was a community-led process to re-design the Sheung Fung Lane. Visualising and articulating the residents' needs and demands in an actual physical project as a way to empower those residents who feel helpless towards the rapid changes in their neighbourhood.



This positioned Magic Lanes firmly in the neighbourhood as a credible, neutral party to help a conversation between public and private parties as well as help channel public resources into maintaining safe and quality public space.



TWO YEAR BENCHMARK: LESSONS LEARNED

Two years into the project, the Caritas team is taking stock and is ready to share three key lessons:

1. **Balancing rights & responsibilities of different stakeholders.**

Sheung Fung Lane is a privately-owned laneway, yet it is publicly accessible and used by hundreds of residents and commuters on a daily basis. This opaque distinction between public and private space is common in Hong Kong, where developers can offer the “right of way” on their properties to the general public, to increase their plot ratio.

In the Sheung Fung Lane case, it was the original developer — now absent landlord — indeed capitalising on this legal loophole, yet the current apartment owners' corporation and the building management company are now left with the responsibility to manage a public space they didn't ask for and have no incentive to care for. In fact, until the Magic Lanes project happened they didn't even know they 'owned' the laneway. It took the Magic Lanes team a good while just to understand the complexities of the urban context and map out the different stakeholders, rights and responsibilities. Although a lengthy process, this redefined the project and positioned Magic Lanes firmly in the neighbourhood as a credible, neutral party to help a conversation between public and private parties



as well as help channel public resources into maintaining safe and quality public space.

2. Demographic analysis of target audience.

The resident profile of Sheung Fung Lane residential towers is distinctly middle-class, many of them newcomers to Sai Ying Pun. Their relationship with the neighbourhood is typically more functional and less community driven. They use the alleyway as a passage, but don't necessarily spend a lot of time in it. This made that mobilisation and organisation of residents required a lot more time and resources than expected. The team decided to revise the project's target audience and include not just residents in the immediate vicinity but in wider radius, in order to target more of the neighbourhood's original residents, rooted in Sai Ying Pun, frequent users of the space and happy to be involved.



3. Aligning expectations of funding agency and local residents.

While the fundament of the project is community planning and empowerment, the project team realised it's important to link that to physical interventions. Not just to satisfy the funding agency but for the residents to see visible changes based on their inputs. Combining the two makes it easier to engage the community and lower the threshold of involvement.

Even though the physical changes may be temporary — like plants on railings, colours on the stairs or pop-up play equipment — they form an important engagement strategy and a good way to test different uses of space.

FIVE PRINCIPLES FOR REDESIGNING QUALITY PUBLIC SPACE

Consolidating resident surveys and project results, the Magic Lanes team articulated five principles for redesigning public space in this old Hong Kong neighbourhood:

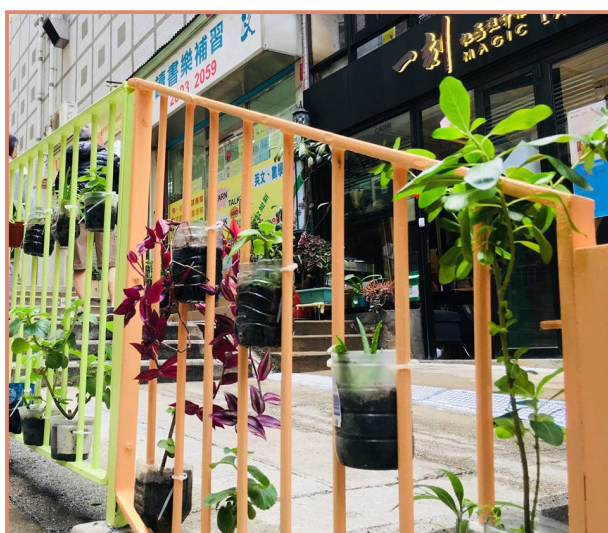
- Cultural inclusion: connecting new and old residents by establishing the identity and identifying the cultural assets of the neighbourhood i.e. what does it mean to be a “Sai Ying Pun-er”, what are places in the area that matter to people?
- Eco-friendliness: increase vitality by planting functional greens
- Inter-generational space: bridge elderly and children via activities like Hopscotch and plants where elderly can demonstrate their knowledge and tell their stories
- Playfulness: installing temporary play equipment such as slides, merry-go-round, Hopscotch, and simply add colours and decorations to the dull space
- Safety: improve age-friendliness and safety by widening steps, surfacing, adding street furniture



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Even though the physical changes may be temporary — like plants on railings, colours on the stairs or pop-up play equipment — they form an important engagement strategy and a good way to test different uses of space.

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WHAT'S NEXT?

With a recent renewal of lease, the project will extend its duration until January 2020. Navigating the field of stakeholders and respecting their rights and responsibilities with caution will remain a challenge, but essential to keep the project going. Now that Magic Lanes has built trust among both ends of the spectrum, the team can move forward to the next stage. The objective is to improve the quality of space on a more permanent basis within the existing complex context of ownership and maintenance. With building principles laid out and preliminary consensus reached, Magic Lanes is now working on a feasible design proposal. Physical improvements, albeit small, will still be a breakthrough in Hong Kong's rigid and non-human centred planning practice. Magic Lanes will be one of the pioneers of community-led design of public space in the city.

MURALS TO SAVE THE SOUL OF A COLOMBO NEIGHBOURHOOD

Firi Rahman (#WeAreFromHere),
interviewed by Ester van Steekelenburg (Urban Discovery)

Colombo, Sri Lanka's capital is undergoing a make-over. After years of civil war the city is set to become a Singapore-like economic powerhouse. Chinese and Indian-fuelled investment has poured into the country to make this dream come true. But at what cost? Slave Island, an old neighbourhood in the heart of the city, is where the skyscrapers are going up faster than one can imagine. What used to be a unique and vibrant urban district is transformed beyond recognition. The quarter is quickly being swallowed up by the shiny new apartment buildings rising around it. Artist Firi Rahman has lived his whole life in Slave Island and as more buildings in the neighbourhood are threatened by demolition he started a campaign together with his artist friends to save the soul of the neighbourhood. "#WeAreFromHere" is a unique artistic initiative that maps stories of ordinary and extraordinary locals to highlight the unique multicultural community of Slave Island.

A UNIQUE MULTICULTURAL NEIGHBOURHOOD

Slave Island — locally known as Kompannaveediya — has lived so many lives. In the colonial days, when it still was an island in a crocodile-infested lake, the Portuguese and later the Dutch considered it the ideal location for a slave prison. The name stayed long after the slaves were set free. Later it became a military station until the British transformed it into the country's first botanical gardens. It was 1810 (not very long after they had taken Colombo) and the area became a popular picknick spot. Being so centrally located, the garden was slowly engulfed by the urban jungle around it, and the area grew into what it is today: a hub of vibrant activity where African, Indian, Javanese, Burgher, Moor and most prominently, Malay heritages, are visible at every street corner. Heritages of those who once came here as slaves. You can hear it in the music, see it in the colours and taste it in the food. No longer an island, it is now a diverse community that is unique in Colombo. Here, people of all faiths live together in colourful small alleyways, be they Christian, Muslim, Hindu, or Buddhist.

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

Slave Island is about to undergo another reincarnation. The location, just south of the city's Central Business District Fort is triple A, so the small alleyways had become valuable property. The eviction of residents in an area of approximately 160 acres in the heart of Colombo 02, began in 2012. Seventy thousand households are now



being relocated to newly constructed apartment-style housing in other parts of the city. It is part of an ambitious USD287 million 'City of Colombo Urban Regeneration Project' spearheaded by the Urban Development Authority, fuelled by Chinese and Indian money.

The scale and speed of the project is mind-boggling, with some streets being erased from the map—and with it its social fabric and memories of place. Java Lane, a little laneway, is one of them. The only thing the developers left standing was the green/white neighbourhood mosque, now surrounded by nothing but apartment blocks, disconnected from its community.

"Slave Island is undergoing a huge change now. Tall, shiny buildings are taking over the old, colonial architecture. We no longer have the old people here. They've all gone away. It's sad, and because of that, we're losing our sense of community," says Amir Inthizam, owner of a picture frame shop on Sir Henry De Mel Mawatha Street, one of the oldest business in the neighbourhood. He has lived through the better (or worse) part of Sri Lanka's multi-coloured history.

AN ARTISTS' INITIATIVE

Slave Island-based artist Firi Rahman and Vicky Shahjahan's started "#WeAreFromHere" in 2012. A visual project portraying the people that make up the unique neighbourhood that Slave Island

is. Their wall murals feature people from the community: sportspeople, street vendors, mechanics, musicians, actors and artists. Firi shares: "Slave Island is often perceived as an area filled with criminals, drug dealers and danger. It is also a place that is fast changing and

disappearing, being swallowed up by the rapidly "modernising" Colombo.

#WeAreFromHere showcases the people who make Slave Island a fascinating, unique and diverse place."

Firi and his friends wanted to document places that maybe disappearing from the streetscape. "There are many places that have

been demolished or damaged already, like the popular Castle Hotel and the Java Lane mosque. There are many more places, where we don't know whether they'll still be here in a few years' time, like the famous Rio Cinema, or the iconic row of De Zoysa shop houses. That street already changed beyond recognition with the big skyscrapers, you can no longer see the sunset because of these new tall buildings," says Firi.

But more than just the buildings, the project wanted to document the local community. They collected stories from ordinary and extraordinary residents and turned them into wall murals. Firi adds: "It's a time of rapid change for us and we're all adjusting. I want to give people the feeling that this place, its heritage and culture has value. With all these new buildings they may feel that their land and their properties can be bought just

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**Our mural project
is like a treasure
hunt. Through
this, I want to tell
people's stories.**
”



like that. I tell the stories of the community, to make people feel proud of their place."

Firi started by recording voice cuts of the conversations and he was soon joined in his artistic journey by local artists Parilojithan Ramanathan and Vicky Shahjahan. Wanting to make it more interactive, the trio decided to draw portrait murals of the people around Slave Island. "We first wanted to make one big mural, but then

decided to spread them through the neighbourhood to better blend in with the urban fabric, create less disruption and get more traction" says Vicky.

One of the persons we 'meet' on the walls is Fazil, a respected member of the local society. His portrait tells the story of how here in Slave Island, funerals are occasion of togetherness for people, irrespective of their faith. We then meet 'the captain' a popular car repair man, Rifakath, a known

rugby player and Milan, a street cart vendor, each with their own story that we learn through a set of accompanying cards. We later meet Milan in real life and buy a faluda from his cart.

"It's like a treasure hunt, but with people! You get a card of a person, and you have to find the respective wall mural. The idea is not just to get to know a person, but also find out how they matter to the community."



ARTICULATING THE VALUE OF A PLACE

The mural project proved a trigger point, an outlet for many concerned citizens and an opportunity for them to communicate the value of place to others. What followed was series of #WeAreFromHere walks, talks, exhibitions, gatherings and celebrations. The effect of the project was

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The effect of the project was that Slave Island's many little laneways were uplifted and connected with an invisible artistic thread.

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that Slave Island's many little laneways were uplifted and connected with an invisible artistic thread. What started as an art project became the face of the resistance against the big developers, the voice of the community.

CAN THE SOYSA SHOPHOUSES BE SAVED?

Now a new challenge has surfaced for Firi and his friends. De Soysa Buildings, a pastel coloured row of shop houses opposite the Kompannaveediya train station holds the honour of being the longest intact colonial shop house road frontage in the country, but it may not be there for much longer. The iconic street will suffer a similar fate to that of the nearby 140-year-old Castle Hotel that was demolished in May 2017. Yet, many locals feel the shop houses are key to Slave Island's unique heritage, being built in 1870 by famed philanthropist Charles Henry De Soysa, the wealthiest Ceylonese of the 19th century and brains behind the first bank in the country. It was a landmark building in those days and one of the earliest examples of shop house design in the city. In the old days

this was a prestigious address. Here was the headquarters of the esteemed Cave&Co, the country's leading publisher. "The story goes that in the 1920's and 30's the premises of HW Cave & Company was considered one of the most fashionable addresses in Colombo," says local architect Ismeth Raheem.

The glamour of those days may be gone. Once a prominent street, now you only find drycleaners, tailor shops and cheap café's. The shop houses are a bit run down, with creaky staircases and paint peeling off the pastel coloured façades, but the signature architectural style remains unique and synonymous with the face of Slave Island. Fifty-year-old Kareema Anwar Deen has lived in the Soysa building for 18 years, above Ceylon Cleaners which has occupied the space since 1934. She points at the solid wooden floors and says: "These are strong enough to run on." Ranil de Soysa, a great grandchild of the original owner agrees: "There is history in every block and beam of the Soysa building: from the people who have worked and lived here for decades to its distinctive colours. Some things once lost cannot be replicated."

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If Colombo wants to be like Singapore, why don't the city leaders preserve the shop houses and use it as an asset to create a unique, world class urban district with a distinct identity?

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Firi, Vicky and many others in the community are now lobbying to get the row of Soysa buildings listed. Academics, architects and international experts have come to the scene and unanimously pointed out the solid structural condition of the properties and its unique heritage value. But yet to no avail.

In September 2019, Nihal Rupasinghe, Secretary to the Ministry of Megapolis and Western Development said, "There was also no legal obstacle to demolition, the Archaeological Department has not officially recognised the Soysa building as being of heritage value and thereby requiring protection," when asked about the fate of the iconic row of shop houses. "The Urban Development Authority (UDA) will grant the developer, Tata Housing, permission to carry out the demolition." We hope this will not be the final episode of the Soysa story, but the #WeAreFromHere crowd will continue to amplify the community voice to convince developers and administrators about the value of this place.

BE LIKE SINGAPORE?

Elsewhere in Asia, with Singapore as a leading example, these rare structures are protected by strict regulations and are premium spaces for apartments and shops. One cannot help but wonder, if Colombo wants to be like Singapore, why don't the city leaders preserve the shop houses and use it as an asset for building a unique, world class urban district with a distinct identity?

#SINGFORYOUR- PARKS: BUILDING HOPE THROUGH CHOIR SINGING

Tina Nandi (LYPMumbai)

LYPMumbai started with our friendship in January 2017, when a mutual friend introduced us to each other. As mothers to boys a few weeks apart, and partners to architects with a penchant for cities, Anca and I soon discovered a shared sense of frustration with the status quo of our local parks, and we decided to do something about it.

I began to learn about some of the work Anca and her partner Alan had been doing at their firm Abraham John Architects in mapping out the parks of our two neighbouring suburbs, and their work on Bombay Greenway, a series of urban planning proposals where open spaces, connectivity and active modes of transport are the key to thriving communities. I admit, at the time I was still struggling to love Mumbai and secretly plotting ways to convince my partner to move to a more “livable” city.



I was inspired by the effort that Anca and Alan had put into these ideas and began to realise that instead of finding a way to escape, I could find a way to contribute my creative skills as a photographer, filmmaker and graphic designer, to make Mumbai more “livable.”

While I only had a superficial understanding of urban planning and design, I knew that Anca and Alan were onto something good. But how do you get other cynical Mumbaikars like myself to care? How do you inspire a population that lives in starkly contrasting worlds to care about improving accessibility to open spaces? Most Mumbaikars are too busy just surviving, while others are so insulated in their luxurious gated communities and private clubs that public open spaces simply do not register as an urban necessity.

We began to brainstorm about how we could reach young mothers like ourselves who needed access to urban green spaces to get their kids out of the apartment. Maybe a guide book of parks in our neighbourhood? A website? An app?

One night in late October 2018, I was starting to feel the Christmas vibes and wishing I could sing in a choir. And the idea suddenly came to me: why not start a community choir and perform in our local parks?

Anca, being the kindred spirit that she is, responded with unabashed enthusiasm. Within two weeks, we had co-founded LYPMumbai and put out posters asking people to:

- *Join the LYPMumbai Chorus as we celebrate our local parks with singing this December!*
- *Love Your Parks Mumbai is a community-led initiative to promote engagement, stewardship and LOVE for our local parks through the creative arts.*
- *We thought the best way to kick off our little initiative was to fill our parks with song this festive season.*

Unbeknownst to us at the time, we were what the placemaking movement lovingly refers to as “zealous nuts” and rather intuitively, we had begun a placemaking initiative — capitalising on our local community’s assets, skills and potential to advocate for better public open spaces for all.

The challenges were immense. It was no easy task to explain to people why we were trying to do what we were doing. We were met with many naysayers who said: “There’s no way you’ll get permission to sing in a park,” or “No one will understand or come to watch.” Others warned us: “No one will pay to join a choir,” and “No one will give you a venue for free to rehearse.”

But we believed in our idea and eventually it seemed like the very Universe aligned to make things fall into place (albeit at the last moment when we were beginning to get a bit stressed)!



A local app business HaikuJam generously offered their office premises for our choir to rehearse from 9 to 11pm two days a week for 5 weeks. A Dutch choir conductor who had recently made the city his home agreed to teach us to sing and about 15 people with varying singing abilities joined the choir while local newspapers and community WhatsApp groups enthusiastically spread the word.

In December 2018, our fledgling choir performed at two local parks to an audience of about 200 people, who clapped, sang and danced under the setting sun. Who could have thought that a simple act of creative civil disobedience (technically, we had not sought official permission to perform in the park and our choir conductor was not permitted to play his guitar in one of the parks!) could reignite a conversation about the state and importance of our public open spaces.

The truth is, this discussion is nothing new. Many nonprofits in Mumbai have been fighting for decades and have achieved so much for public open spaces in our city. However, there is still plenty to be done.

We believe that the time is ripe for Mumbai to finally shift its collective focus from private gain to public and environmental good, especially by tapping into the growing global movement of placemaking and communication modes such as Whatsapp and Social Media that have made it easier than ever to mobilise people and build community.

Today, if a government agency proposes to axe down a forest for a metro shed, or build a parking lot under a park, they cannot hope to get away with it without any creative resistance both on the ground and on social media. We also believe that the government has no excuse to shy away from community collaboration in decision making, and our local municipal corporation (MCGM) is beginning to recognise this.

Since our successful choir performance, LYPMumbai has organized music, story-telling, and other free and short pop-up events and workshops in parks and other public open spaces. We have been steadily building out a platform both online and on the ground to catalyse community collaboration to make open spaces in our city more accessible, inclusive and sustainable.

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There's no way you'll get permission to sing in a park.

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No one will understand or come to watch.

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No one will pay to join a choir.

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No one will give you a venue for free to rehearse.

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In August 2019, the MCGM put out an invitation in the local newspapers and on their newly activated social media platforms for the public to give their recommendations for a new open spaces policy. LYPMumbai wrote a 6 page document of recommendations combining our research on great public spaces and feedback gathered from our audiences. We then mobilised 280 people to send in these recommendations to the municipal corporation.

Recognising our passion and commitment, the MCGM extended an invite for us to join a roundtable discussion with 4 other like-minded organisations to elaborate on the new policy. From our initial meeting, we were able to come home with a promise that parks would now be open from 6am to 10pm everyday! Previously, all local parks were being closed for 3 hours (or more) in the afternoon with the cited reason of “maintenance”. This was a big win — one of many more that we hope to see in the coming weeks.

In conclusion, we have learned that complacency in policy making and in citizen involvement may sometimes need a creative “kick in the backside”. Working with local governments, municipal corporations and even local councils or resident associations can sometimes feel like banging one’s head against a wall. In complex cities like Mumbai people are often too busy, stressed or jaded in the face of the massive bureaucratic challenges that can obstruct even the smallest positive changes. A little creative inspiration can go a long way in loosening up the cogs in the wheel.

Using online engagement for creative placemaking and programming to get strangers together under the open sky can do wonders to chase away the cynicism and we should do more of it. The very survival of our cities depends upon it.

LESSONS LEARNED

We took the “ask for forgiveness later” approach with Sing For Your Parks 2018, by not seeking permissions for our public performances. However, we have had paperwork in hand for every event we have conducted in parks since. Looking back, we are not confident that we would have received this permission in time for our first choir singing performances. The concept was unheard of and sadly, as a rule, local municipalities and councils seem to be overly cautious of any activity out of the ordinary in public spaces. We made sure to document our first events through professional photography and videography and this has truly helped us to better communicate our intentions and



gain trust from local governance and the public at large. While the municipality and local councils have traditionally worked hand-in-hand for the maintenance and management of public spaces, we believe placemaking and public art initiatives like ours play a crucial role in activating these places. We hope to see more transparency and ease in the bureaucratic processes that can allow for these activities to flourish.

YANGON'S ALLEY GARDEN PROJECT

Emilie Roell (Doh Eain)

Sometimes projects aren't long-planned and strategised — they just unfold. The Yangon Alley Garden project is an example of such a project. It started when a group of us young local and expatriate residents in Yangon were searching for a plot of land to make a small permaculture garden. At that point, we were an informally organised group of volunteers worried about the lack of public space, the government's focus on cars and absence of provisions for pedestrians and cyclists, and destruction of heritage buildings in favour of new shiny condominiums.

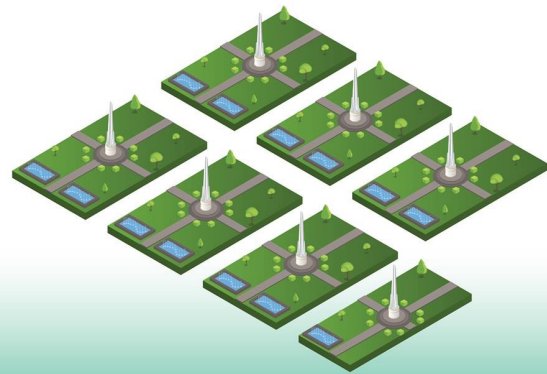
As we couldn't find a suitable free plot of land for our permaculture garden anywhere in or near downtown, our eye fell on the back alley space behind the site of a small heritage restoration project we had also started undertaking. Like all back alleys in Yangon, this was a smelly place filled with 2 feet of trash and rodents. Yet after some deliberation, we thought, why don't we just start here? It was small and very dirty, and might not have enough sunlight exposure, but at least it is near, "free", and it will allow us to experiment.

It was only when we started actually cleaning the site, and seeing how pleasant a place it was becoming, that we realised its potential. Downtown Yangon only has 1 small public park called Mahanbadoola Garden, but it has over 150 back alleys, each about 250 meters long and 5 meters wide. Some quick math told us that if we could clean them all, we could create another 6.7 times the surface area of Mahanbadoola Garden.

သင်သိပါသလား ?



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180 alleyways in
Downtown Yangon makes

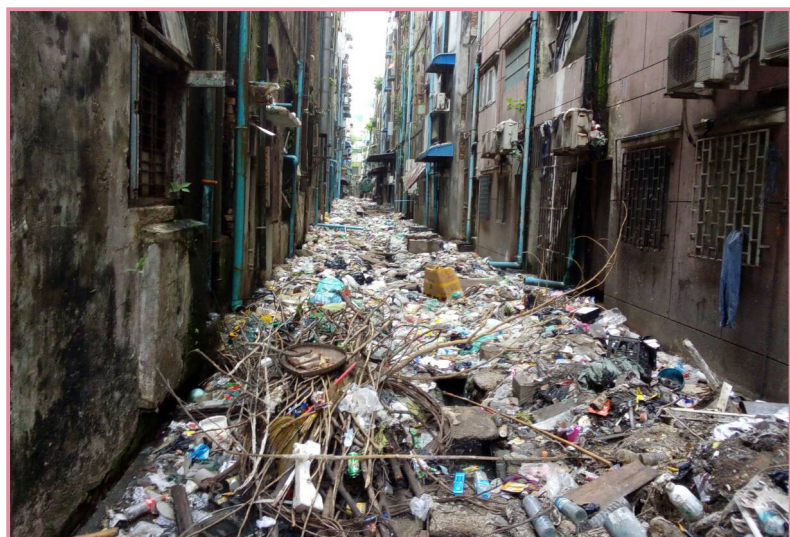
6.7 Mahabandula Parks

ABOUT YANGON'S BACK ALLEYS

When the British established Yangon in 1852, a new city plan of wide roads in a grid pattern was implemented with an emphasis on proper drainage systems as Yangon was suffering from frequent floods. In between buildings along two parallel roads, 15-foot wide back alleys with open gutters and underground sewage facilities were built to provide sufficient space for air ventilation, light, and protect the city from disasters such as flood and fire. From these early days, residents used the space for unintended purposes such as for resting or passage. Due to a lack of maintenance, and dictatorial rule as of 1962 which sought to restrict people's opportunities and spaces to gather, Yangon's back alleys were closed in the 1980s. In the next 3 decades, the back alleys became waste dumps, with residents throwing their trash out of the back window in the absence of a proper waste collection system.

THE TIPPING POINT

We started engaging our neighbours and the rest of the street in the idea to clean up and transform our back alley. This initially was an uphill struggle as people on the street were divided, upset with the government for not providing good alternatives for their waste



disposal, and generally thought it was all too much trouble. Only after organising a mural painting workshop for children in the neighborhood, to bring some colour to the freshly whitened walls, did the idea finally really land. The residents saw how this could be a space for their children to enjoy and play in safely. After



this, the space and idea went viral. We had the mayor visiting within a few days, and were able to crowdfund 60,000 USD within the space of 3 months from residents of Yangon, local businesses and embassies.

It was at this point that we fully merged what had previously been 2 separate activities; the other one having been helping heritage building owners to preserve and maintain their building through offering restoration support on a deferred payment scheme, where we would be allowed to manage the space for a few years to recoup the investment made. Doh Eain was born with the mission to preserve cultural identity and ensure that cities are livable, inclusive and sustainable, through working on the preservation of heritage and improvement of the public realm around.

THE PROCESS

Just as with the heritage work, where we wanted to realise restoration while the original owners would maintain ownership, we wanted the alleyway transformations to be community-led. We started developing a methodology around joint research of sites, asset mappings, participatory design exercises, community building days and long-term programming and maintenance amongst others supported by additional revenue from walking tours and impact days. For a full overview of the process, see Figure 1 on page 42.

An assessment of the use and perceptions of the first 6 transformed back alleys undertaken in 2018 revealed that the project brought positive impact overall by increasing the usage of these back alleys from nearly zero to 50%, improving the residents' perception of these spaces and encouraging communication among different stakeholders.

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The project brought positive impact overall by increasing the usage of the neighbourhood's back alleys from nearly zero to 50%.

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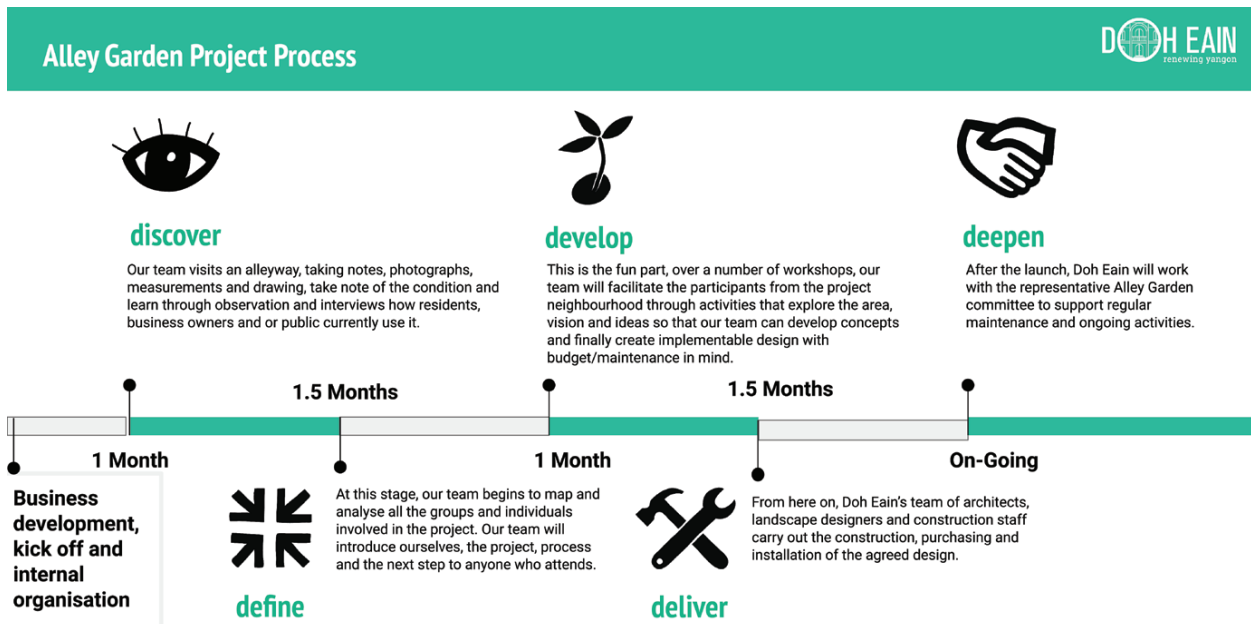


Figure 1.

However, despite its success in increasing the use and perception of back alleys, the survey revealed that the participation level in the project by the residents remained limited to the committee members and the ground floor residents, who were most directly affected by the changes.

Over time, 5 key principles became central in our work on public space: 1) participation, 2) inclusion, 3) taking an asset based approach building on heritage, strengths & other existing resources, 4) environmental sustainability and 5) financial sustainability.

With regards to broader participation, we started building in more and more creative ways to build the interest of all residents. An important strategy was to undertake more pop-up style events from the beginning of any project. A limiting factor was and remains the limited accessibility of the alleyways. While all apartments are supposed to have emergency escapes into the back alleys, over time these have been equally neglected. With limited awareness of the potential of natural disasters (which is not aligned with reality as Yangon is highly prone to earthquakes) there remains little initiative to repair or install emergency escapes.

With regards to inclusion, we started undertaking placemaking projects specifically centered around certain vulnerable groups such as girls. It is widely known that girls and young women in Myanmar are less involved in decision-making, and that they experience more discomfort in public space. We launched a number of girl-led place-making projects giving girls a platform as a form of empowerment



but also to see how that might influence the design of public spaces and its future use. Lessons from such projects helped us understand how we can represent the voices of vulnerable people in all of our projects.

Financial sustainability is a big theme for us. This doesn't simply mean finding enough funding to sustain a project. Rather, we try to build in strategies through which the community projects and communities themselves can generate revenue, e.g. through making the space available for events by third parties, or by organising guided walks. Beyond sustaining the projects themselves, we want our projects to contribute to the livelihoods of people as much as possible.

CONCLUSIONS AND GOING FORWARD

Since its inception, the Yangon Alley Garden project has brought back into public use nearly 15,000 square meters of public space. The 12 different sites

now feature gardens, playgrounds, street art, seating areas, exercise equipment as well as other elements depending on local priorities. Aside from bringing wastelands into public use, the project has been instrumental in supporting Yangon resident's civic engagement and sense of ownership over the public realm — which after 60 years of dictatorship had understandably weakened. In addition, the project and our experiences have been the foundation on which we have branched out to other types of spaces such as streets and playgrounds.

The main thing we have learned in the last 2.5 years is that a project like this requires constant reflection and adjustment to keep moving forward to its full potential! We have realised the importance of local champions, and learned what style of conversation and collaboration appears to instill most ownership in community counterparts, e.g. never focusing on things that go wrong or are not done, but always shining a spotlight on the champions



and positive changes that are being achieved. We have realised the helpfulness of a bit of playful competition amongst neighborhoods. And we have fully recognised and embraced the need for long-term approaches from the start, integrating cultural programming and maintenance activities in project plans and funding schemes.

A challenge not only for the Alley Garden project but for all of our projects — and no doubt all placemakers out there — is finding the right financing schemes to undertake in-depth and long-term participatory processes. Our processes are demanding in terms of resources and time while the benefits are not always fully understood by funders. One strategy is by linking our projects and sites increasingly together, and linking them to other schemes including community based tourism, social cohesion, natural disaster resilience, sanitation, etc. (in addition to the smaller revenue generating opportunities within the projects themselves). On the other hand, we are looking to decrease our involvement by setting up neighborhood committee networks and providing small grant opportunities.

CONTRIBUTORS

Chawanad Lansing is a community architect and Co-founder of CAN (Community Architects Network in Asia). Since 2001, he has been working with urban poor communities in Thailand and searching for a way to empower and uncover people's potential. Ultimately, he aims to solve and build better cities and urban communities using co-creation processes.

Benjamin Sin obtained his Master of Social Work degree from the University of Hong Kong in 2002 and joined Caritas Hong Kong, becoming the Social Work Supervisor of Caritas Mok Cheung Sui Kun Community Centre. He practiced Asset-based Community Development approach, and promote poverty alleviation, community resilience, authentic craftsmanship, and social innovation.

Stephanie Cheung is executive director of Urban Discovery, a Hong Kong based social enterprise that managed the cultural mapping aspect of the Magic Lanes project. Stephanie is based in Hong Kong and is partner of *The City at Eye Level Asia* publication.

Ester van Steekelenburg is co-founder of Urban Discovery, a social enterprise that has developed an app-based methodology for community-led cultural mapping in historic neighbourhoods in Asia. Ester is based in Hong Kong and is partner of *The City at Eye Level Asia* publication.

Firi Rahman is an artist who has lived his whole life in Slave Island, Colombo. In an effort to save the soul of this neighbourhood and protect its

buildings from the threat of demolition, he and his artist friends started the campaign #WeAre-FromHere.

Tina Nandi and **Anca Abraham** co-founded the non-profit organisation Love Your Parks Mumbai (LYPMumbai) in October 2018. As professionals and mothers of toddlers living in Mumbai, they were disheartened with the quality and regulations of parks in the city. LYPMumbai's vision is that one day every Mumbaikar will have access to abundant, welcoming and user-friendly public open spaces. They aim to work towards this vision by catalysing community collaboration through stewardship, advocacy and creative use of public open spaces.

Emilie Roell is the founder and director of Doh Eain, focusing on overall organisational strategy and growth. Emilie has been based in Myanmar since early 2013, working on heritage and nature conservation. An anthropologist by training, she is interested in social business opportunities that make use of and preserve cultural and natural capital while also creating sustainable community impact.

ABOUT STIPO

STIPO is a multi-disciplinary consultancy team for urban strategy and city development. Its operating area consists of spatial planning and strategy with economic development, culture, urban anthropology, community planning and placemaking. STIPO, based in Rotterdam and Amsterdam, is affiliated with the international network Inspiring Cities and has extensive experience in international exchange settings. STIPO works for cities, housing providers, regions, ministries, private developers, knowledge and innovation centres, international networks and universities.

STIPO stands for Strategy, Innovation, Process development and Open-source. STIPO started at the University of Amsterdam in 1995, and is based on the principle to create stronger cities and stronger societies. STIPO's core values are the breathing city (long lasting quality), the public city (public realm quality) and the soul city (identity). STIPO approaches the city as a whole with connecting spatial, social, economic, and cultural components. The STIPO team works by the innovative and strategic Stipo approach on urban development. Stipo works in collaborative networks, involving partners and co-makers from both the 'planned city' and the 'lived city'. The STIPO approach ensures that results are not shelved, but used. It is only by integrating content, process, and management that we can safeguard real innovation, improvement, and production - and this is the ultimate objective. Often the STIPO approach leads to new ideas for cities. As a public developer we make ourselves co-responsible to bring these ideas from the strategic level to implementation, always with the co-makers we involve in the projects.

STIPO has an extensive experience in innovative projects, both in The Netherlands and internationally. STIPO shares its knowledge through training programmes, concept development, complex project management in urban practice, knowledge exchange, and social media. The STIPO Academy shares knowledge and insights in the what and how of urban development. Recent themes are the shift from making to being a city, new investment strategies, smart cities, urban development after the crisis, collaborative urban development, co-creation, incubator strategy, organic renewal, urban anthropology and urban psychology, cultural clusters, social enterprise, public squares, area coalitions, child-friendly areas, co-working, vacant buildings, temporary use, the future role of housing providers, synchronicity, soul and plinth strategy. www.stipo.nl

THE CITY AT EYE LEVEL ASIA

Public space is the backbone of a sustainable city. Great streets, places where you intuitively want to stay longer, human-scale interaction between buildings and streets, ownership by users, placemaking, active ground floors and a people-centred approach based on the user's experience — that is what *The City at Eye Level* is all about. Some of the underlying mechanisms for human-scale public space and great social life in the streets are universal, such as the way we as human beings experience the space around us. Many other mechanisms, however, are local and contextual, such as the specific opportunities and challenges that the local climate brings; and for instance the specific local cultural perception of public space.

Working with our partners in Asia: Think City, Urban Discovery, SEANNET, Isocarp, UKNA and Eyes on Place to name a few, we felt the need to have a *City at Eye Level* book specifically aimed at the Asian situation, containing Asian cases only. We are very proud to now present the book before you, with special thanks to the 90+ co-authors and the funding provided by Think City and Stimuleringsfonds Creatieve Industrie (Internationalization Grant).

The City at Eye Level is not just a series of books, but an open-source learning network and a programme for improving cities, streets and places all over the world. With the knowledge as fundament, we help cities and their partners to develop strategies to create and improve their own great City at Eye Level.

With our local and worldwide network partners, we:

- set up rules and strategies for new city
- help change existing streets and districts;
- set up place and plinth games to co-create with the local network;
- set up street coalitions and place management;
- give public lectures and organize training programmes and master classes.