

MELBOURNE. ALLEYS EXIST TOO

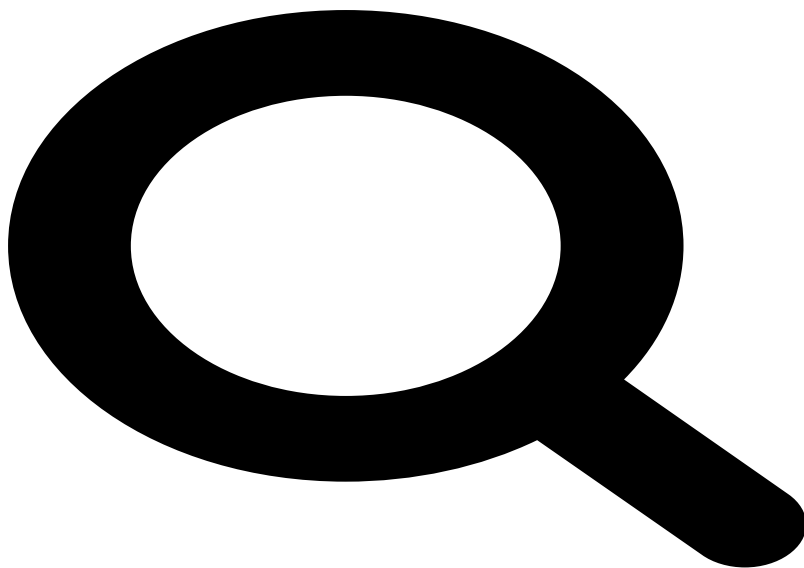
Posted on 14/02/2012 by Naider

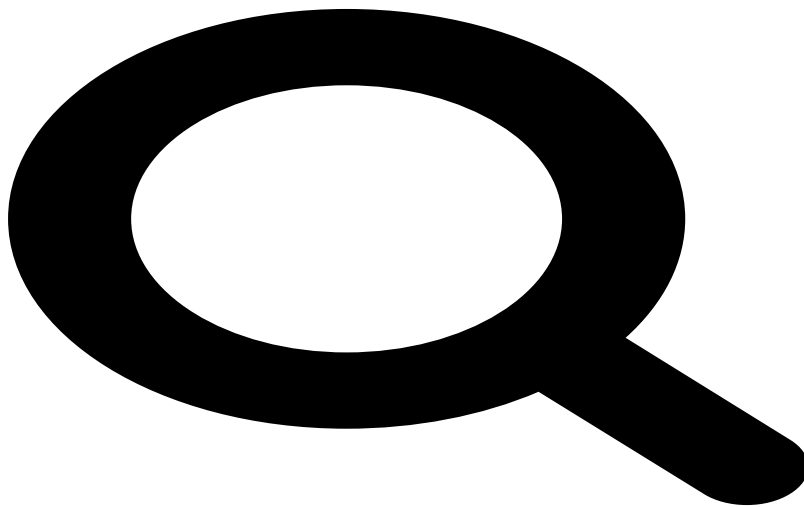
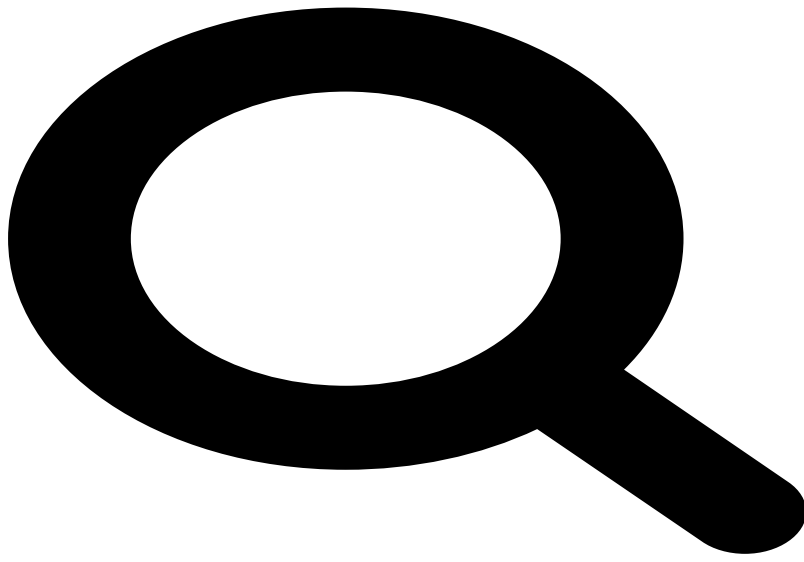
Melbourne is one of the most recognized cities for its [quality of vida](#), among other things due to its vibrant cultural life and the high quality of its public spaces and streets, at least in comparison with the typical image of urbanism in the North American tradition and which is so influential in Australia. I was in the city a few weeks ago and one of the things I wanted to explore was the alleys in the center of the city. An article discovered shortly before the trip, [Off the Grid, Exploring the Sydney Laneway](#), put me on the track of how Melbourne's alleyway activation model was the inspiration for what Sydney is doing now.

The **center of Melbourne** (the Central Business District) has a grid morphology that accommodates practically alleys in all its blocks that link its main streets. They are relatively narrow passages, but most of them are open from one side to the other, between buildings of moderate heights in most cases.

These alleys are condemned, almost in any city, to be **residual spaces**, with little activity, dark and of little social and economic value. In the case of Melbourne, this grid-shaped structure of the urban fabric has given rise to almost hidden spaces between its streets conceived as great avenues and those [alleys](#) function as articulators and manifestations of cultural diversity and alternative uses beyond the bustle of the main streets. Small shops, art studios, cafes, spaces for social innovation, murals, urban art installations,... is what you can find, making this **one of the hallmarks of the city** by walk through it and find so much life in a type of space that we normally find abandoned and without a defined use.

This is a strategy that began in the eighties of the last century, with the Postcode 3000 urban revitalization project designed by Rob Adams, Director of Urban Design for the city, which projected, among other things, the need to **put in value and reuse the buildings and spaces of the urban center** that were unused at that time. Since then, the alleys have been gradually welcoming small local businesses through the integration of these uses in the planning, but also a growing activity of artistic, cultural and community actions around them. In fact, the City Council itself supports these activities through the annual program [Laneway Commissions](#), which seeks to energize these spaces through temporary activities.





It is an experience, obviously, difficult to transfer to other contexts; First, due to the very urban form that has allowed the widespread existence of this type of space, which is more difficult to find in other cities. The **logic behind it** is more relevant: take advantage of, **activate as much as possible, the capacities in the city**. In this case, they are physical resources that, however, allow the expansion of social capacities, generation of activity and public spaces.

This video collects some of the ideas behind this model of social reactivation of underused spaces to give them community value:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=w6xVe8GgxRc

You may also like:

- [*Adaptive urbanism. It's time for meanwhile*](#)
- [*Notes on adaptive urbanism for EQUlciuDAD 2011*](#)
- [*Post-crisis adaptive urbanism. Urban gardens*](#)
- [*Post-crisis adaptive urbanism. Empty lots as urban solar farms*](#)
- [*The time of non-expansive urbanism*](#)
- [*Meanwhile. Recover inactive commercial markets for community uses*](#)

Source of the images:

- [Image 1](#)
- [Image 2](#)
- [Image 3](#)

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