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# Curating Inclusive Cities through Food and Art

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**Abstract:** *Flavours of Glenroy* (2013–4) was an action research project where artists imagined mobile edible gardens as a way to connect and engage with locals through project presentation and execution. As a socially engaged art project, it focused on developing ways to connect the mobile, diverse and transforming community of Glenroy, Victoria, Australia. The transnational, Australian dream suburb, reflecting the fluid and globalizing conditions of our cities, was emphasized through the strategy of growing and distributing plants using a mobile system that aligned with the mobility and diversity of the suburb. The project emphasized how social relations, encouraged through art, has the capacity to transform public spaces, providing a platform to introduce new voices and narratives of a community and encourage inclusive participation in sustainable citizenship.

**Keywords:** curating; socially engaged art; urban; public art; contemporary art; edible gardening

## 1. Curating Inclusive Cities through Art and Food

The love of growing, producing and consuming food is a common passion on an international scale, inspiring social, cultural and religious expressions in cities the world over. The rituals, habits and behaviors relating to food have also inspired many contemporary artists. There have been legendary projects such as *FOOD* (1971–74) [1] an artist-run restaurant in New York founded by artists Carol Goudden, Tina Girouard and Gordon Matta-Clark, which brought together artists and communities over meal sharing. In 1992 Thai-American artist Rirkrit Tiravanija's *Untitled (Free)* (1992) [2] famously turned 303 Gallery, New York into a kitchen and served up Thai vegetable curry and rice to audiences, inviting them to consider contemporary art practices from a more sociable and cross cultural perspective. Closer to home, *Luxury with Leftovers* (2013) [3] by Melbourne art collective, the Hotham Street Ladies, used cake decorating ingredients such as fondant, butter cream, royal icing, food coloring and gum paste to re-create the evidence of a share house dinner party, installed in the foyer of the National Gallery of Victoria for the exhibition *Melbourne Now*. The work was developed by a collaborative group of female artists and friends who shared a house at various times over a five year period; Cassandra Chilton, Molly O'Shaughnessy, Sarah Parkes, Caroline Price and Lyndal Walker. The work humorously celebrated their friendship through the communal act of cooking and eating, playfully re-imagining the domestic in relation to contemporary notions of the feminine.

With this history of artists connecting communities through food, *Flavours of Glenroy* (FoG) (2013–4) was a public art research project implemented in the suburb of Glenroy, Victoria. The project considered how increased technological connection through social media and other networked platforms is having an impact on the decrease or altered experience in physical gathering and engagement of people in public urban spaces. The development of a temporary public art project was to socially connect and meaningfully engage individuals to create strengthened connections to place. Rather than the cooking and sharing of food, FoG focused on the growing of edible plants to engage, acknowledge, connect and celebrate the intensely diverse cultural interests and practices of the neighborhood. By creating an event focused on installing playful mobile edible gardens, conversation about the gardening of edible plants were exchanged with local participants.

The project aimed to counter claims that the suburbs are lacking in culture. In Australia, there is a history of criticism of the suburbs, most evident since architect Robyn Boyd's *The Australian Ugliness* (1960) was published. Boyd focused on critiquing the crudeness of the aesthetics of the suburbs, representing the nationalism of the era. More recently, new housing 'McMansion' developments were also attacked as 'monocultural' and promoting an unsustainable lifestyle in the mass media (including popular sitcoms such as 'Kath and Kim' which aired from 2002–7). Professor of History Mark Peel defended these claims as an elitist class divided attitude towards the outer suburbs, claiming the suburbs are actually culturally diverse and that criticisms are focused on blaming the suburbs for inadequate urban planning and growth issues which impacts on the entire city environment [4]. The project aimed to counteract such claims by recognizing the immensely diverse migration patterns of inhabitants existing in Australian cities, which can be described as a 'super-diverse' society, a term first coined by sociologist Steven Vertovec [5], in order to describe the impact of diversified immigration on society in the United Kingdom. Super-diversity has arisen due to an interplay of various social, political and economic circumstances, an increasing characteristic of post-colonial societies, with this trend evident in Melbourne.

In 2015 Community Indicators Victoria, The McCaughey VicHealth Community Wellbeing Unit and the School of Government at the University of Melbourne released a report *Superdiversity in Melbourne*, written by Melanie Davern, Deborah Warr, Carl Higgs, Helen Dickinson, Jenny Phillimore [6]. The report focused on Steven Vertovec's concept of superdiversity and analysed Australian Census 2011 data of country of birth, years of arrival and religion to further understand cultural diversity in relation to specific regions and social disadvantage in Melbourne. According to the report, neighborhoods with the highest 'superdiversity' include Local Government Area (LGA) City of Hume, Glenroy is officially part of the City of Moreland, but is the most northern section of the area, with its northern boundary next to the City of Hume and was formerly part of Broadmeadows, which is in the City of Hume. The LGAs with the highest superdiversity include Wyndham, Brimback, Hume, Whittlesea, Greater Dandenong and Casey, with over 100 different countries, with Hume and Dandenong the most socially disadvantaged neighborhoods in Melbourne (lowest 10% in Australia) according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics Social-economic Disadvantage and Advantage data (SEIFA).

Using participatory public art, the project focused on the universal (defined as commonly used the world over [7]) theme of food, through the growing of edible plants, as a way of connecting locals. The project became a platform to reveal the character of local suburbs as having a global sensibility "linking that place to places beyond" as described by geographer Doreen Massey in her discussions on global cities [8] (p. 157) and as a way of encouraging the right to the city through active citizenship and engagement [9]. The aim of the project was to interrogate the relationship between the local and the global in the suburbs, through engaging participants in an accessible dialogue on their food growing practices in relation to their personal environments.

I focused on the middle ring suburbs, where a significant proportion of the urban population lives. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (2017) [10] states that greater Melbourne's population was 4.53 million, with only 159,992 residents residing in the central Melbourne local government area. In Melbourne the suburbs are expansive and include the inner, middle and outer rings. The middle and outer ring are often not part of the city associated with arts and cultural access, due to the distance from the arts infrastructure in the central urban environment, or the focus of global cities research. This is changing in recent years with the introduction of funding programs such as Creative Victoria's *Creative Suburbs* [11] program, (the Creative Suburbs funding program was established in 2016 by Creative Victoria to fund projects developed by local government communities and address issues of access to the arts in outer suburban areas the city). This program in 2016 focused on funding Local Government Authorities in developing arts-based projects more specific to the needs of local suburban communities. As an artist and curatorial researcher, I focus on projects which draw out urban community narratives to 'curate inclusive cities' with action-based projects designed to 'care for' urban sites and their social

relationships. 'Curating' refers to the origins of the meaning of the term '*cura*', meaning 'to care' in Latin, usually in the context of a 'collection' or exhibition [12]. Working with an urban community, curating is viewed as an expanded concept, with caring for a 'the collection' focused on care of the place and the community. This was expressed through producing an art project about the place and community, and curating it in the urban spaces of Glenroy.

This expanded notion of 'curating cities' considers the curation of urban spaces as a distributed model of exhibition practices, an alternative yet parallel model to the traditional museology. The curation of cities contributes to the urban public sphere by encouraging participation, particularly at a time when urban spaces are increasingly contested in gentrifying global cities. These projects are developed and implemented with community partners in appropriate parts of the creative process. In my projects working in the field, I have enacted both the roles of artist and curator, mostly due to working in locations with less formal arts infrastructure, activity and limited resources, often requiring me to act in more than one role. Earlier research focused on central urban environments, where institutional arts and cultural activities are traditionally based in Australian cities and many resources. During this project, the focus on the middle ring working class suburbs as a site of exploration, was to understand how a targeted suburban community experiences arts and cultural activity through a public participatory project. In this case, I initiated the project as both the curator and as a collaborating artist. The two project collaborators were Australian artist Rowena Booth and academic Shane Hulbert.

The project resulted in the development of a socially engaged art project made up of a fleet of transportable garden beds filled with a wide range of herbs and edible plants. These mobile garden beds were used initially as a public art intervention *FoG* at Post Office Place (2013) and also at a number of local events such as the *Glenroy Festival* (2013 and 2014) when we held *The Great Mobile Edible Garden Races* (2014) and at our *Gathering Glenroy* (2014) art event. Herbs with their aromatic scents were specifically chosen as they relate to many people of various cultural backgrounds and inspire the senses. Edible plants have the ability to remind us of past experiences and perhaps even transport us to other places, times and cultures.

## 2. Considering Engagement, Space, Time and Rights in Glenroy

Contemporary art methodology, focused on socially engaged art practices, has a long history throughout the twentieth century. Various artistic movements such as the Dadaists (1900–1920s), the Situation Internationalists (1960s) and the Community Arts movement (1970s) all used varying methods and processes for engaging people and communities as a key part of their practice. In recent years, the concept was promoted again, reframed as 'participatory art' by curator Nicholas Bourriard, through his publication *Relational Aesthetics*, first published in French in 1998 [8]. Bourriard discusses artists' renewed focus on "human interactions and its social context, rather than the assertion of an independent and private symbolic space" [13] (p. 14). Bourriard's perspective recognized a significant shift towards art making as a politically driven social experience rather than a viewable object for contemplation. UK based art historian Claire Bishop critiqued Bourriard's initial discussions with her discussion in *Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics* in *October*, 2004 [14] by querying the value of creating further dialogue through encouraging social relationships through art and whether or not art which creates further dialogue is better or necessary? Claire Bishop has since gone on to research the politics of social engagement in art further, through *Artificial Hells*, 2012 [15] which extensively critiques the history of social engagement in art practice, in particular focusing on the emancipatory claims made by socially engaged projects. From an American perspective, Grant Kester, art historian and editor of *Field: A journal of socially engaged art criticism* [16] has also written on social practice, collaboration and collective modes of production in relation to social activism [17]. To implement a project conscious of social engagement was suitable for a project focused on the social relationships with place.

In considering the applied nature of this project, action research as a methodology was used, as it is used by various social researchers and practitioners to take into consideration local variables of a

place and social context [18] (p. 1). Action research is a systemic approach, where a research team of practitioners implemented our art practice in the particular context of Glenroy to reflect on the processes of a socially engaged art project, to further understand the complex social, cultural and artistic dynamics of a suburb in Melbourne's north. The research uses a continuous cycle of investigation, taking into account variables including the character of place as informed by the use of space, time of the project, various communities and relationships between communities and individuals of the neighborhood. The action research process gave our team an opportunity to reflect, analyze and understand our creative process in the context of actual circumstances, communities, relationships and place to gain new knowledge about the social and cultural context of an arts-based project in Glenroy.

Focusing on the development of social relationships was a key consideration in this project, as it is a significant growing area of contemporary art practices internationally, seen in many levels of the contemporary art sector, from international biennales, to smaller scaled local exhibitions and public art projects. Through discussions in 2013 with City of Moreland urban planning and public art staff, we identified a need to increase social connectivity in the neighborhood through community planning activities, which led to their financial and backing support for our project. In particular, we focused on how to engage local people, encourage dialogue between various residents of the area, exchange knowledge and create connections between individuals of the community through creating a day public event (10 a.m.–2 p.m.) in Post Office Place, Glenroy with our *Mobile Edible Gardens*, filled with seedlings of parsley, chives, rosemary, sage, mint, basil and oregano. This stimulation of dialogue through our mobile garden beds was to encourage the development of the urban public sphere at a local level. An RMIT University ethics application provided us clearance to ask local people to participate in our event through conversation and to be photographed as part of the project. A total of 113 residents participated by being asked, "What will you cook with these herbs?" Our conversations prompted by this question led to dialogues expressing their private practices (or 'private symbolic space' as suggested by Bourriard) in exchange for edible plant seedlings to contribute towards their existing gardens or to even to start their garden.

FoG initially developed from a temporary public art perspective, focusing on the site and place of Glenroy. However, during the course of the project it became evident that the project was more aligned with the relationship between space, place, communities and local narratives of the neighborhood. As we collected stories, powerful histories emerged that marked Glenroy as a constantly transitioning suburb—from an early farming community, to a returned-soldiers "Australian Dream" suburb, to the now super-diverse, globalized neighborhood that it is today. This diverse character, informed by the large population of new migrants, is yet to be recognized as an enriching trait of the community. The aim of our project was to draw from these dimensions, to not only acknowledge, but also embrace and celebrate these diverse and abundant influences in Glenroy.

In investigating Glenroy's transitioning social space narrative, I drew on expanded notions of space, in particular spatial urban theorist Edward Soja's idea of 'thirdspace' offered a more complex and inclusive definition of space. Soja redefines space as a "three-sided sensibility of spatiality-historicity-sociality" which has evolved from the "... interwoven complexity of the social, historical, and the spatial, their inseparability and interdependence" and also to consider the impact of mental spaces including imagined and re-imagined spaces in the past, present and future [19] (p. 3). This expanded notion of 'thirdspace' influenced me as an artist to consider the history of this transforming idea of Glenroy as a place, the relationship between the various people of the community, their mental spaces (actual and imagined) of a place, the physical built environment and their relationship to the natural environment and how this expanded defining of space could contribute towards re-imagining Glenroy through the design of an art project.

The aim of the project was to encourage dialogue and participation from local citizens, to encourage people to reclaim their 'right to the city' by participating in a creative project. Participation was important, as the site analysis revealed that Glenroy had limited public creative activity. The notion of the 'right to the city' originates from sociologist Henri Lefebvre (1901–1991). Soja, was also influenced

by Lefebvre, a pioneering author on space and urbanization, in particular the production of social space as a result of capitalist processes (*The Production of Space*, [20] originally published in 1974). Lefebvre's writings on urban social space later led to his ideals of 'The Right to the City' (1968) [21] which promotes further consideration and participation in the social and cultural aspects of urban life to further the rights of urban citizens.

With this more expanded notion of space as a theoretical framework for the project provided by Soja, philosopher and historian Michel Foucault's (1926–1984) [22] method of 'unearthing genealogy' developed in his own studies of the discourses of marginalized communities, such as the prison and the medical system, were also of great influence. These studies became ways of understanding the relationships of power between social, cultural and political structures and the idea that power is dispersed as micro power through a social system. Foucault's discussions on power were useful in considering the existing narratives of power existing in the neighborhood. Recorded documentation of Glenroy from media, local government and historical reports pointed to narratives of a struggling Australian working class community, colloquially known as 'Aussie Battlers'. In recent years, media representations have focused on bad behavior exhibited in the local area (such as hooligan driving, shooting incidents and poker machine addiction) indicating economic disadvantage affecting a proportion of the community.

Spending time in the neighborhood, speaking to people, walking around the streets, observing and photographically documenting the place enabled me to gain further insight into the locale. I discovered a large majority of local people I encountered were new immigrants, who seemed far removed from the media stereotypes portrayed of the local community. I was greatly interested in understanding these historical perceptions of place, real and imagined, in comparison to the physical location and the gaps between what is recorded as documents, what is remembered and imagined and whose voice is represented to understand gaps in representation in the community. It became apparent, that the voice of a celebrated cultural diversity was unrepresented. This knowledge provided our research team with an opportunity to re-imagine Glenroy as a place rich and dynamic in cultural influence through art, culture and food.

### 3. From Australian Dream to Transnational Suburb

The Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation, who occupied the greater area of Birrarung (The Yarra Valley) and the area currently known as Melbourne, were the original inhabitants of the area now known as Glenroy for over 40,000 years [23]. After Australia was established as a British colony in 1788, the area of Melbourne was dispossessed from the original inhabitants with colonizers settling Melbourne in 1835, land in Glenroy was sold soon after, demonstrating a new cultural outlook towards possession of land through economic means. The first colonial landowners were the Camerons, giving the area the name Glenroy, a result of their Scottish ancestry. The area was established as pastures for agricultural use and for the growth of the township of Glenroy.

A State Library of Victoria document from 1888 promoted Glenroy as the 'Toorak of the North' [24], an attempt by the property sector to elevate the urban fringes as a middleclass luxury neighborhood, a property development strategy still commonly seen today to lure investors. Yet the campaign reputedly failed, leaving Glenroy with a few grand estate properties of the Victorian era, now listed as heritage sites. The suburb remained relatively dormant, until the post war 'suburban dream' era, when the quarter acre block was king and promoted to returned soldiers and their new families.

Glenroy became a classic middle ring working class neighborhood in Melbourne's north and even has its own series of award winning literature, *The Glenroy Novels* [25] which recalls the author Steven Carroll's post war experience of living in an 'Australian Dream' suburb as a child of the 1950s, eerily recollecting the transition from township to frontier suburb, sold as a national narrative of aspiration. The legacy of this era is still evident around the neighborhood through the remaining weatherboard suburban houses and the aging strip shopping precinct located near the railway station.

Today, Glenroy is experiencing further transformation, as a result of urban population growth, with many former suburban blocks being transformed into more adequate housing for urban density through consolidation. Many Australian Dream houses, a singular house on a quarter acre block, are being replaced by a 'six pack' of town houses, leaving the formerly prized suburban backyard disappearing as a result of city planning becoming more focused on urban consolidation [26]. This current transformation is due to relative affordability, a 13 kilometers distance to the center of the city, and a growing urban population led by new migrants.

As an urban researcher, I investigated the distribution of social disadvantage of suburban populations, in relationship to Glenroy, in order to further understand the social context of the neighborhood. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) *Census of Population and Housing: Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA)* [27] which maps social advantage and disadvantage according to suburb in relation to "people's access to material and social resources, and their ability to participate in society" (2016) Glenroy is considered socially disadvantaged, rated Category 2 (lowest 40% of the Australian population). The SEIFA scale is divided into categories 1–5, where Category 1 is the lowest 20% and the most disadvantaged and Category 5 is the highest 20% and most advantaged (ABS 2016). Today, under globalizing conditions of mass migration, urban growth and planning to encourage density, it is a culturally diverse neighborhood; data published on the City of Moreland's profile of Glenroy (sourced also from the ABS) showed that 50.8% of the population was born overseas, with the majority of residents migrating from India, Pakistan, Italy, Nepal and Lebanon. We identified that Glenroy has three main groups of residents which identify as immigrants, people who come to live permanently [28]; migrants, people who move from one place to another [29]; and Australian born residents. Participation in tertiary education is at 19.1% significantly lower than the Moreland average of 27.3% [30]. The social inequality evident is dictated by the historical precedence of a working class population, social housing located in the surrounding area and the local political landscape. The ongoing lack of care for local infrastructure and lack of services, is evident in the central retail precinct of the neighborhood, in particular, the aging infrastructure. The continuing argument from the community to remove the level crossing, which cuts the suburb in half, is a legacy of this aging infrastructure (Glenroy's railway crossing is identified as a crossing in need of upgrading, but has not yet been acted upon) [31]. Glenroy also lacks cultural infrastructure such as local galleries or a theatre space, most activities in the past occurring as temporary community public art projects or as local festivals.

In Australia, the super-diverse character of globalizing cities is not always celebrated or viewed in a positive light, as evidenced by media reports focusing on social problems of new migrant communities. The cultural diversity is most apparent in the food related businesses dominating the area. In particular, Nepali, Indian, Vietnamese, Chinese, Assyrian, Sri Lankan, Pakistani, Lebanese, Polish and Italian grocers, cafes and restaurants.

This super-diverse characteristic, as discussed by Vertovec, allowed me to consider geographer Doreen's Massey's conceptualization of globalizing cities embracing its complex character linking to many other places [8] (p.156). Many associations to other places such as Italy, Turkey, India, China, Lebanon, Sri Lanka, Vietnam, Korea, Japan and Poland were observed in the main streets of Glenroy, representing the diverse cultures of the business owners, although I did not have the sense that there was pride in this character, due to the overall lack of care for the neighborhood.

These issues were also being considered by the local government at the time. I began having conversations with the urban planners from the City of Moreland, who also identified similar issues with the ageing infrastructure and the connectivity of the community, due to a large and transient population of new migrants settling into the area. As a resident, I spent time conversing with local urban planners about the potentials of a creative project to encourage community connectivity, and a deeper engagement with place through a creative and playful process.

In considering these transforming immigration conditions of the Australian suburbs, the community garden movement, which evolved from increased global environmental and

sustainability awareness, was a key influence informing the development of the project. The growth of the community garden movement has created social and physical spaces for local people to connect, share cultural and environmental knowledge and build social relationships through collaborative gardening activities and encourage 'sustainability citizenship' [32] where citizens are actively participating in the issues relating to sustainability through their public and private practices. Community gardens are another type of 'third place', an informal publicly accessible place where people can gather and interact for community vitality, as framed by urban sociologist Ray Oldenburg *The Great Good Place* [33] in 2009. Community gardening creates social spaces inviting participation from individuals to engage with their local urban environment and community to encourage sustainable citizenship and the right to the city (as championed by Lefebvre in his urban ideal that an urban society should reflect a civil society) and offers an alternative to consumption-based activities. Joshua Zeunert, Lecturer of Architecture and Urban Planning in *Getting the veggie garden out in public* (2011) [34] writes "Food. It is the great unifier of place and race, the common ground sustaining our very existence", an idea, which became a foundational principle in the development of a project in connecting with diverse people.

In the conceptual development of the project we used this underlying philosophy as the basis, adapting these ideas to suit the specific conditions of a transient community to reflect the character of a migrant community in the design of the project. The lack of a local gallery or a performance space required us to consider and explore how a public art project focused on social engagement would be a suitable approach for the Glenroy neighborhood.

#### 4. Mobility, Connectivity and Edible Plants

Reflecting on the conditions of the neighborhood led to the design of an art project focusing on food as a unifying factor, mobility, community gardening and working in partnership with local community groups. The project was public-focused due to a lack of an arts infrastructure in the area, but also because a public project would be more accessible for reaching out to a broad cross section of the community.

I saw the local neighborhood as full of cultural influences, but lacking a method of expressing, reflecting and taking ownership of the neighborhood character in a contemporary way relevant to many locals. Our project sought to value the diversity through an arts platform that reflected the local community. Through our site analysis, we found the growing of food to be a universal theme, which was a common trait of various community groups represented by local businesses. Walking through the neighborhood, you could smell the many spices used in the local cooking of the cafes, restaurants and grocers. Conversations with local business owners often led to discussions on specific cultural and religious practices in relation to food, such as the Islamic festivities relating to *Eid Mubarak* and the important role played in fasting and celebrating by feasting.

The design of the project expressed mobility to reflect the globalizing conditions of the city, engaged local community groups and also sourced materials from as local as possible. This included sourcing our materials from local businesses, charity stores and various social service based organizations. Working with ideas developed by collaborating artist Rowena Booth, we evolved and adapted ideas of gardening and mobility to develop six *Mobile Edible Gardens*, which were re-imagined using materials sourced in the local environment. The bodies were made from up-cycled wheelbarrows, adapted to attract attention. Our gardens were enhanced by vibrant patterned beadwork and dress fabrics sourced from local Indian textile business, which sold fabric used for traditional Indian dress for celebrations, ceremonies and festivals. Our participants from many parts of Asia, also commented that these fabrics were often used in other cultures of Central Asia and in the Middle East, reflecting some of the shared cultural practices across the region, dating back to the Silk Road era as early as 200 BC. We also explored the many 'discount' stores of Glenroy, which also sold an unusual combination of products, often humorous and quirky, to be used as part of the design, items such as loud bicycle horns and trinkets. The process of focusing on locally sourced products revealed Glenroy's local are globally

orientated, as people, products and services were from a diversity other places, an idea resonating with Massey's idea of places that link to the beyond, showing Glenroy's potential to be viewed as open, porous and embracing of difference.

As a socially engaged project, "where human interactions and its social context" [13] (p. 14) were being taken into consideration, we engaged local people from businesses, the neighborhood house, the local choir, the library, social service groups, the local community garden and nursery through various stages of the project. Each of our partners was involved in different ways and chose to be involved based on a level of commitment appropriate for their services. To begin with the project focused on concepts of place, but as we worked through the project the focus of the project became more about place and the relationship that place has with the contemporary community which resides in it. As the project progressed we realized how many disparate communities make up a neighborhood, creating an extremely diverse and not always connected community. It was challenging reaching out to an entire suburb, as there was much support and interest from social services groups, but it was often difficult to engage their clients, due to the lack of experience working with artists. Many of the organizations showed interest, but were very busy in providing their services to the community, and therefore did not as much time to commit to engaging in our project.

### 5. Creating A Public Platform for Private Habits

In the end, we focused our relationship on a partnership with Scope, a local disability service. Together we developed edible planting workshops with their clients through their day service programs to contribute to our garden beds. They were keen for their clients to be involved in social activities and to participate in the local community. They grew basil, thyme, curry, parsley, mint, rosemary, spring onion and chives. We also received excess plants as donations from the local CERES Nursery for use in the project, as they also wanted to contribute back to the community. Local government also supported the project by providing space to work in, project and financial support. The local choir, *The Glenroy Harmonisers*, led by a community minded music teacher, also supported by contributing songs about gardening.

The activation of the site through our combined event presenting our garden beds, the performance and a barbecue attracted much attention from people passing by. It was a surprise to find cultural activation in the street, a transformation from the usual conventional uses of the space, which included post office visits, catching the train and other general errands. The engagement resulted in enthusiastic responses from local participants who were excited to see the street transformed by creative expression. Conversations revealed that our audiences were passionate about edible gardening and made proclamations such as "I'm Italian, growing food is in my blood!" and "The plants remind me of home and where I grew up". As the project was dialogue-base, it was initially conceived as appealing to adults. But as the garden beds were designed to draw attention through sight, color, sound and smell, we also found many children were drawn to the project, creating a buzz, and they in turn gave their parents the permission to be inquisitive and to participate. These observations made me consider how the aesthetics of the project, such as color, design and music, have the potential to create inclusive and accessible social spaces for many age groups.

Our fleet of garden beds had a local presence, as we were in conversation with various partnering groups over six months. After the garden beds were built, other opportunities presented themselves to re-perform the project in different contexts, such as the local festivals and community events. The Glenroy Festival director invited us to participate in 2014 and together we conceived *The Great Mobile Edible Garden Race* to be more inclusive of how children and families could engage with edible gardening in an active and embodied way. In this instance, we partnered with the Itiki Pacific Islander Sports Network, a local sporting group made up of children, teenagers and families in the local area. They supported us by participating in racing and encouraging other people to be involved. The Vicseg Iranian Asylum Seekers Social Health group were also partners, participating by assisting with managing the project and the children of the group taking part in the racing.



## 6. Transforming and Social Spaces for Community Expression

Key findings from the project revealed new ways to develop a participatory art project in relation to place focused around issues of inclusion and belonging.

Fluid ideas of place are fundamental to the way immigrants imagine their sense of belonging and identity. By making the project align with mobility, participation was heightened and related well to the participants, leading to many locals wanting to take part and also to recognize this as a significant characteristic of the local community.

Expanded ideas of 'Thirdspace' as presented by Soja was a key conceptual framework in developing a site analysis and considering the social, historic, spatial and imagined spaces of Glenroy to inform the design of the project. Reflection and analysis of the site allowed us to identify food from diverse cultures as a key theme connecting the community through the activities of consuming food such as purchasing ingredients and eating at local cafes and restaurants, at the time of the project. This diversity reflected the "Superdiverse" character of Melbourne, as recognized as a growing characteristic of many post-colonial cities, as originally discussed by Vertovec and in relation to Melbourne as studied by Davern, Warr, Higgs, Dickinson and Phillimore. This finding of the common thread of food influenced the design of our method, as we recognized that local people also enjoy the growing of food, rather than just consuming it. As a private habit, not completely based on consumerism, these activities are not often publicly expressed. This finding led to using the mobile edible garden theme, informed by the community gardening movement, as core to the project, with the aim of providing an opportunity to develop a new social space celebrating the diversity of the neighborhood through material forms, in order to stimulate discussion about the migration of cultural habits to the area and reflecting the globalizing transnational nature of the neighborhood.

Another key finding from the project was the value of a 'rhizomatic' conceptualization of the project, where multiple entry and exit points exist, and the developing opportunities were unpredictable. The 'rhizome' was a term first coined by philosophers Deleuze and Guattari (1972–1980) [35,36] where the research process had multiple entry and exit points in data and interpretation in a project, rather than vertical and linear, an idea drawn from nature where there is co-operation from more than one species, such as bees working with flowers in a relationship of multiplicity. Being open to mobility as a way of making also meant fluid opportunities followed, where the project could travel from site to site, reflecting a society that was transportable and responsive to these evolving conditions.

The project was developed with multiplicity in mind, in terms of drawing from and collaborating with various partners of the community and was originally focused on an intervention in Post Office place, but through the process, we found that there were many other outcomes such as building relationships with local groups, various roles and contributions were taken on by individuals of the groups and were able to contribute different types of knowledge, skills and resources through the process. The wider community experiencing the Post Office Place intervention led to further exposure for the project and thus other opportunities to develop the concept in different social contexts, unexpected in the early stages of planning, developing rhizomatically, as place and community cannot be contained, reflecting the fluid and transforming nature of cities.

Not only was the social engagement event a key outcome of the project, but from a local government perspective, the activation of *FoG* was an opportunity to pilot a model of artists working with local communities. The project led to the development of an 'Artists Incubator' research framework in partnership with the City of Moreland. The framework led to the establishment of a studio as an incubating space at the Wheatsheaf Hub, the former Glenroy Primary School, recently purchased (2014) by the City of Moreland for future community use. The purpose of the Artists Incubator studio was to create and support artists in producing art projects in a local place, focusing on nurturing social relationships and potentially developing community collaborations to develop art projects. A further five Melbourne based artists Sofi Basseghi, Phil Edwards, Rebecca Mayo,

James Voller and Claire Tracey were invited to participate, working on projects over a six month period, leading to several socially engaged public art outcomes in 2014.

The activation of the Wheatshaf Hub through arts activity led to building and strengthening community relationships in preparation for the development of the site as a new centralized physical community hub for Glenroy to address the growing community and ageing infrastructure and facilities of local services. The 'Artists Incubator' model was adopted by the City of Moreland as an arts policy approach towards working with north of Bell Street suburban communities, where arts infrastructure is minimal. Arts incubators are a model of arts activity focused on the early stages of arts organizations and focuses on the production of new works to contribute towards capacity building of the artists [37]. The key approach adopted was the methodology of community led activation through arts activity, the nurturing of artists through their practice and social engagements, reflecting and building upon emerging local narratives of new residents to create new inclusive social spaces, supported by local government through the provision of space and resources. The model of an arts project focused on social engagement, demonstrates how the application of new models of practice, can have an impact on local policy and planning.

## 7. Curating Inclusive Social Spaces and Recognizing Cultural Diversity

By surveying the site of Glenroy to develop a project focused on the growing of edible plants, the FoG project was able to create universal social and cultural connections, drawing out the super-diverse character through conversations, which were exchanged. Drawing from the community gardening movement, the global nature of the locally sourced materials used to produce the garden beds, represented the migration of cultural practices and materials into the neighborhood, representing the 'superdiverse' people and places making up Glenroy today. Relatable universal themes of mobility, growing, eating and cooking food were used as a platform to discuss various cultural interests, habits and practices expressed through our conversations with individuals and to connect disparate individuals through sharing experiences. By curating an urban community through a socially engaged art project, our research team was able to navigate the many layers of diversity experienced in the suburbs of globalizing Australian cities. The creation of a new mobile 'third place' reflected the conditions of locals and gave them an opportunity to participate, express, exchange and celebrate their personal experience of growing, cooking and eating food, building their capacity and encouraging them to take part in active citizenship.

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