Urban History Review
Revue d'histoire urbaine

The Events City: Sport, Culture, and the Transformation of Inner Melbourne, 1977–2006

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Cite this article

O'Hanlon, S. (2009). The Events City: Sport, Culture, and the Transformation of Inner Melbourne, 1977–2006. *Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine*, *37*(2), 30–39. https://doi.org/10.7202/029575ar

Article abstract

In 2006 Melbourne, Australia, played host to an almost monthly lineup of major international sporting and cultural events: the Australian Open Tennis tournament, the Commonwealth Games and associated cultural festival, a Formula One Grand Prix, an International Flower and Garden Show, an arts festival, and what is billed as the third largest comedy festival in the world. Almost all of these events were staged primarily in a revitalized region within a five-kilometre radius of the city centre, and all—bar the Commonwealth Games—are annual events, part of a deliberate economic and tourism strategy that attempts to sell Melbourne as an "events city." This paper charts the emergence of this events strategy and argues that, rather than being a phenomenon of the 1990s as is often assumed, its origins lie in the early 1980s and was a deliberate response to deindustrialization, urban decay, and "crisis" in the inner Melbourne economy in the 1970s. The paper recognizes the many successes of this economic policy but raises questions about a policy that adds to a growing economic gap between the now prosperous, gentrified inner city and the increasingly marginalized outer zones of the metropolis.

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In 2006 Melbourne, Australia, played host to an almost monthly lineup of major international sporting and cultural events: the Australian Open Tennis tournament, the Commonwealth Games and associated cultural festival, a Formula One Grand Prix, an International Flower and Garden Show, an arts festival, and what is billed as the third largest comedy festival in the world. Almost all of these events were staged primarily in a revitalized region within a five-kilometre radius of the city centre, and all—bar the Commonwealth Games—are annual events, part of a deliberate economic and tourism strategy that attempts to sell Melbourne as an "events city." This paper charts the emergence of this events strategy and argues that, rather than being a phenomenon of the 1990s as is often assumed, its origins lie in the early 1980s and was a deliberate response to deindustrialization, urban decay, and "crisis" in the inner Melbourne economy in the 1970s. The paper recognizes the many successes of this economic policy but raises questions about a policy that adds to a growing economic gap between the now prosperous, gentrified inner city and the increasingly marginalized outer zones of the metropolis.

En 2006, la ville de Melbourne en Australie a été l'hôte d'une série d'événements sportifs et culturels d'envergure internationale: le tournoi de tennis Open d'Australie, les Jeux du Commonwealth auxquels était associé un festival culturel, un Grand Prix de Formule 1, un festival international d'horticulture et de jardins, un festival d'arts et un festival de l'humour qui fut alors présenté comme le plus grand au monde. Presque tous ces événements se sont déroulés dans une zone revitalisée se trouvant dans un rayon de cinq kilomètres du centre de la ville. Tous, à l'exception des Jeux du Commonwealth, sont devenus des événements annuels et ils s'inscrivent dans une stratégie délibérée de développement économique et touristique visant à promouvoir Melbourne comme une ville de festivals et de grands événements. Cet article reconstitue la mise en forme de cette stratégie de revitalisation du centre. J'y argumente que cette stratégie n'a pas été élaborée dans les années 1990 comme il l'est souvent évoqué. Visant à relancer l'économie du centre de Melbourne, cette approche soutenue par les pouvoirs publics en partenariat avec les acteurs privés et civiques trouve plutôt ses origines dans les années 1980 alors que Melbourne traversait depuis une dizaine d'années une phase de désindustrialisation et de dévitalisation urbaine. Tout en reconnaissant les retombées positives de cette stratégie de développement économique sur la vitalité du centre, cet article soulève aussi des enjeux reliés à l'écart économique prévalant entre les zones prospères et gentrifiées du centre-ville et les secteurs excentriques de plus en plus marginalisés de la métropole.
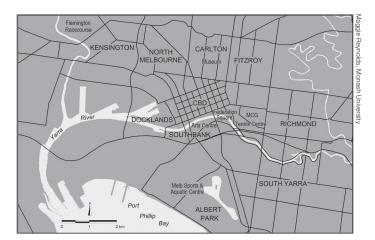
Introduction: Sport, Culture, and Urban Regeneration

In 1977, Melbourne's then metropolitan planning authority, the Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW) issued two reports on the city's inner region. The first, *Melbourne's Inner Area: A Position Statement*, noted a recent rapid decline in blue-collar employment in the region and warned of the potential for "serious problems of chronic unemployment" among unskilled workers and others, unless efforts were made to generate alternative employment strategies for people displaced by economic restructuring.[1] The second report, *Socio-economic Implications of Urban Development*, also voiced concerns about the effects of economic change on inner Melbourne, but was much more alarmist in tone, declaring that the region was experiencing a "crisis" in manufacturing that was rapidly leading to deindustrialization, economic stagnation, and rising unemployment.[2] This report predicted that if "the overseas pattern of the rundown of larger cities were repeated in Melbourne then the consequences for the inner areas would be very grave indeed." These consequences might include "unemployment rates of 15–20% . . . with more than double that for certain groups such as the young, who are forced to remain in the inner city."[3] The report went on to intimate that, if these trends were left unchecked, there existed the real possibility of the emergence in inner Melbourne of British- or American-style urban decay and social disorder.

Today, thirty years later, the predicted deindustrialization of inner Melbourne has essentially occurred, but neither the mass unemployment nor the social unrest has come to pass. And rather than being a place of abandonment and decay, Melbourne's inner city has become the main locus of a highly successful urban economy based on services, spectacle, and consumption. As with numerous other cities around the world, Melbourne

has witnessed a massive transformation in the physical, social, and cultural profile of its inner area in the decades since the 1970s, and, notwithstanding the success of Sydney in hosting the Olympic Games in 2000, has been the Australian city that has overtly followed a strategy of utilizing its cultural infrastructure and tradition of mass spectatorship at sporting events to drive economic development, and in the process revitalize the urban economy.

The physical impacts of these policies are most notable in the downtown area and its immediate surrounds, which have been transformed by massive development or redevelopment of what were already extensive sporting, arts, and cultural institutions. In the period since the early 1980s this area has seen the Melbourne Cricket Ground completely rebuilt as a 100,000-seat day/night sporting venue; a 52,000-seat multi-purpose indoor/outdoor stadium constructed as a centrepiece of the regenerated Docklands precinct, immediately to the west of the Central Business District; the National Tennis Centre built (and rebuilt) as a sports and entertainment venue on the eastern fringe of the Central Business District; and the Melbourne Sports and Aquatic Centre established and then extended at inner-suburban Albert Park. In the cultural realm, the State Library of Victoria, Melbourne Museum, Public Records Office of Victoria, and the National Gallery of Victoria were all rebuilt or refurbished in the 1990s and early 2000s, while Federation Square, completed in 2002 is an avowed showpiece of architecture, which alongside a number of bars, cafes, and shops, houses a new Australian wing of the National Gallery, as well as the Australian Centre for the Moving Image and the Victorian headquarters of multicultural broadcaster SBS.[4] All of these projects are located in the "downtown" region of the city, that is within a five-kilometre arc of the Central Business District, and most have been funded from public or public-private sources, and overseen by a state government instrumentality, Major Projects Victoria, founded in 1987.[5]

Recent years have also seen Melbourne's political, civic, and business elite seek to reinvent the formerly manufacturing and commercial-focused metropolis as an "events city" of sporting, cultural and other attractions, pitched to local and international tourists. These "events" have now become almost monthly fixtures on the urban calendar. An especially busy year was 2006, as the city played host to the Commonwealth Games and its associated cultural festival, the Australian Open Grand Slam Tennis tournament, a Formula One Grand Prix, an International Flower and Garden Show, and what is billed as the third-largest comedy festival in the world. Other cultural events included an international puppet festival, a major international film festival, and the Melbourne International Festival of the Arts.[6] In sport there was also the Australian Football League Grand Final, the Boxing Day cricket test, and the "race that stops a nation"—the Melbourne Cup—run on the first Tuesday in November.[7] All of these events—except the Commonwealth Games and the puppet festival—are annual fixtures, and almost all are staged primarily in the new or refurbished inner urban cultural and sporting facilities described above.

MAP 1: *Inner Melbourne.*

In turning to culture and sport for economic salvation in recent decades, Melbourne is far from alone. Across the Western world, cities that formerly relied on manufacturing or heavy industry to sustain employment and wealth have in recent years set about expanding the profile of their urban sporting and cultural infrastructure, seeking to capture the economic benefits and employment opportunities that stem from urban spectacle and local and international tourism. In the post-industrial era, successfully staging major sporting and cultural events is, like hosting an international exhibition was in the nineteenth century, increasingly considered a mark of civic or national strength and "global" status.[8] Sport, culture, and "creativity"[9] have come to be regarded as central to urban economics, and in the period since the 1970s there has been a pronounced international interest in the economic and tourism benefits of sports-led urban regeneration. As geographer Andrew Smith argues, "Sporting developments in cities are often motivated by, and justified by, the desire to forge a new image for a city," particularly in places which have been "severely affected by the restructuring . . . and collapse of their manufacturing sectors."[10] So too have a city's culture and cultural institutions became important marketing symbols.[11] Planning historian Stephen Ward has argued that in the post-industrial era the "promotion of culture has become a centrally important theme" in "selling" cities, while urban sociologist Sharon Zukin has gone further, suggesting that "with the disappearance of local manufacturing industries and periodic crises in government and finance, culture is more and more the business of cities [and] the basis of their tourist attractions and their unique, competitive edge."[12]

Documenting the transformation of the physical, cultural, and social profiles of inner-city regions has been a staple of research in geography, sociology, and planning for several decades. Similarly, scholars in a range of disciplines have produced a number of case studies focusing on the role of sport and urban spectacle in the regeneration of deindustrialized or economically depressed cities or city regions in a variety of locations across the developed world.[13] Few historians have, however, ventured into this

field, perhaps because it is considered too recent, too much of an unfolding story to be genuinely the stuff of history. As John Gold and Margaret Gold have argued, however, there is a need for a more historically informed approach to studies of the role of festivals and events in the urban past, and a recognition that the more recent manifestation of these things as drivers of urban regeneration and renewal have historical precedents going back decades, if not centuries. As they note, recent studies of these phenomena have "primarily comprised of narrowly focused essays on individual events . . . broadly polarised between, on the one hand, heavily theoretical essays in which the empirical context seemed largely gratuitous, and on the other hand, researchers offering detailed, but poorly conceptualised case studies."[14]

Given that the processes of deindustrialisation and reinvention of inner-city regions has been underway for more than thirty years—more than a generation—it is time for urban historians to bring our methods to this phenomenon and to document and historicize this latest period of urban change. This article seeks to begin that task by uncovering the genesis of the strategy of using sport, culture, and events to aid the revitalization of Melbourne's inner city.[15] It does so by showing that, while the "events" strategy is popularly seen as a response to the severe economic recession of the early 1990s, and its genesis attributed to the radical-free-market Kennett government elected in the wake of that downturn, in reality the policy was initiated by the Cain Labor government first elected almost a decade earlier in 1982.[16] And, rather than being a response to the early 1990s recession, the policy was overtly developed by members of that government as a means of reviving and diversifying Melbourne's economy, especially the inner-city economy, which had been hit hard by economic restructuring and the decline of traditional manufacturing industries in the 1970s. As we shall see, support for sport, culture, and urban spectacle were key elements in the Cain government's economic agenda, which saw revitalization of the inner Melbourne region as being central to a revival in the wider city and state economy.

The Crisis City: Inner Melbourne in the 1970s

As noted by the MMBW, in the 1970s inner Melbourne was not a place of excitement or spectacle. Indeed, it seemed to be facing real economic crisis and stagnation. As old manufacturing industries died in the face of competition from newly industrializing countries in Asia and elsewhere, there developed a sense that the city's days of economic and social pre-eminence might be coming to an end. As manufacturing declined in importance, newer industries such as financial services, the media, and high technology appeared to be locating in Sydney, then fast becoming Australia's gateway city.[17] There was also emerging evidence of population drift to sunny Queensland, which was going through a resources and tourism boom and to a lesser extent Western Australia, which was experiencing massive investment in resource-based projects. A strong sense emerged that, like many other Western cities with a manufacturing-focused economy, Melbourne was entering a period of decline.[18] This seemed to be most noticeable in and around the inner city,

which, as the two 1977 MMBW reports noted, began to experience deindustrialization and economic stagnation from the mid-1970s onwards.

Former treasurer Rob Jolly has confirmed that, by the time the Cain Labor government was elected in 1982, real concerns existed about Melbourne's future prosperity. As the home of much of Australia's heavily tariff-protected manufacturing industry, the city and the wider state of Victoria were particularly vulnerable to economic restructuring and a changing international economic order. Commercially, Melbourne was declining relative to Sydney, which had emerged in the 1970s as the major location of Australia's small but rapidly expanding financial sector.[19] Jolly recalls inner Melbourne as being in decline, its economy "moribund" and lacking "long-term growth opportunities" in new industries beyond its traditional reliance on manufacturing.[20] There was also a sense of "decay," with evidence of the rapid collapse of traditional industries visible across the inner city. Individual factories and whole industries closed down in the wake of the 1975 recession, and with the collapse of the early 1970s property boom, the Central Business District was pockmarked with any number of "bombsites," temporarily in use as car parks. The high-profile Southbank region adjacent to the Central Business District and its gateway from the south was "derelict," a slum area with most of its factories abandoned.[21]

Across the inner urban region, the 1970s had seen a rapid decline in low-skill jobs, especially in manufacturing and retail. The number of manufacturing jobs in inner Melbourne declined by one third in the decade 1971–1981, from a high of almost 120,000 to fewer than 90,000.[22] A further third were lost during and after the recession of 1982. Many of the factories that closed down at this time were long-established businesses in prominent locations, their high visibility seemingly adding to the sense of economic crisis. At the same time a number of major retailers, including high-profile department stores, closed their doors or were absorbed into the then emerging national retail chains. As with manufacturing, inner-city retail employment declined rapidly in the 1970s, with almost 7,000 jobs—one quarter—disappearing between the censuses of 1971 and 1981. Again, given that many of the businesses that closed were large enterprises housed in multi-storey retail emporiums in the Central Business District and major urban thoroughfares, the sense of decline was palpable. In both the Central Business District and in secondary shopping destinations such as Chapel Street, Prahran and Smith Street, Collingwood, a number of Edwardian-era department stores closed in this period, unable to compete with the emerging car-based shopping malls of the suburbs.[23] While some of these buildings were readapted for use as office space, supermarkets, and arcades, others were abandoned or had their upper floors closed off and boarded up. In some cases they remain that way today, more than thirty years later.

The Restructured City: Inner Melbourne in the 1980s

This was the economic and social environment inherited by the Cain government elected in April 1982 after twenty-seven

FIGURE 1 : *South bank of the Yarra River, Melbourne, ca. 1973.*

years in opposition. Its response to these problems was to diversify the urban economy away from its historical reliance on manufacturing employment towards an emphasis on tourism, leisure, and spectacle. Almost immediately new economic policies were announced that explicitly recognized the role that Melbourne as a major sporting and cultural city would play in the new post-industrial economy of the 1980s and beyond. While previous governments had tentatively explored the role of these things in driving economic growth, the Cain government's "economic initiatives" statement of 1984 overtly declared that the "national role of Melbourne as a major trading, cultural and sporting centre," was one of Victoria's "competitive strengths" that could and should be harnessed for economic purposes. Capturing and capitalizing on the growing financial importance of professional sport was to be an important component of future economic growth. Doing so, it was suggested, could have unexpected spinoffs for activities and industries beyond the purely sporting:

> Melbourne is widely regarded as the sporting capital of Australia. Apart from the obvious publicity and tourist activity generated by events like the Melbourne Cup, the Australian Rules Grand Final and the Australian Open Tennis Tournament, sport is important in employment and decision-making. Five of Australia's six largest participation sports have their administration headquarters in Melbourne, and there are also other important derived demands in the sale and distribution of equipment. For example, Melbourne has the finest golf courses in Australia, and this is clearly an economic benefit for both equipment distributors and the tourist industry. Other indirect links exist too: for example the association between the Melbourne Cup and Melbourne's leadership in the Australian fashion industry.[24]

As foreshadowed in this statement, the city's sporting infrastructure and tradition of mass attendance at sporting events were to become key elements in the revitalization of the urban economy. Government resources and expertise were thus made available to enhance and in some cases rebuild inner urban sporting facilities and in the process reinvigorate the "ambience" and "image" of the city.[25] Rob Jolly saw this policy as a way to enlivening the inner-city region and thus promote confidence in the wider city economy.[26] Both he and Planning Minister Evan Walker—a former architect—were aware of similar developments internationally, especially in the United States, and were keen to kick-start a similar urban revival in Melbourne.[27] Jolly, a strongly Keynesian-influenced economist, believed that government should have a central role in the economic development of the city and the state. He also felt that Melbourne's obvious problems and the emerging post-industrial era provided an opportunity to rethink economic strategy and for progressive governments to move economic debate beyond narrow concerns with budgets and resource allocation, important as these were. Instead, he, Walker, and other colleagues within the government and the bureaucracy sought to facilitate economic growth in part by strategically using government funds to renew the "physical presence" of the inner city and in the process bring a "sense of vibrancy" to a region that had become "moribund."[28]

Early decisions on this front saw government support for "additions to grandstand capacity at Flemington Racecourse," home of the Melbourne Cup, and help with costs associated with installing lights at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, the largest sporting stadium in Australia. The government also declared the Australian Rules football grand final "a major sporting event" and passed legislation to ensure that it would always be played at the Melbourne Cricket Ground rather than at a recently completed purpose-built stadium in suburban Waverley.[29] In the largest initiative, a new, centrally located, government-funded sports and entertainment facility was built at Flinders Park as both a permanent home for the Australian Open tennis tournament and as a venue for indoor sports and "associated uses."[30] Completed in time for the 1988 tournament, the centre (now known as the National Tennis Centre) featured an innovative retractable roof that allowed tennis to be played under an open sky in January, while at other times, "its roof [could be] closed for other functions such as concerts."[31]

More broadly, harnessing the tourism potential of the inner city was a key element of the new economic strategy. Soon after coming to power, the government established both a "Central Area Task Force" and a "Central Melbourne Tourism and Leisure Study" group. The former's brief was to work towards enhancing "the 'well-being' of and 'image' of central Melbourne," while the latter's was to "integrate tourism, recreation and arts activities," and therefore "encourage a joint approach" to the tourism and other possibilities of the inner city.[32] In both initiatives, Central Melbourne was portrayed as the "heartland of the State capital—an economic and social 'area' not encumbered by municipal boundaries." In physical terms it covered the Central

Business District as well as "adjoining areas such as Southbank, Jolimont, East Melbourne and parts of North Melbourne, Carlton, Collingwood and the Port area." But it was also wider than this: "In assessing tourism and leisure potential the concept has been extended to include parts of St Kilda, Richmond and recreation resources such as the Flemington Racecourse." While expressing concern at trends that seemed to show the decline of the economic importance of inner Melbourne, this study insisted that

> Central Melbourne performs a unique social role by providing the greatest diversity and most compact distribution of cultural, sporting and entertainment in the State or even in a national context. Efficient utilisation of existing assets and enhancement of the resource base is a factor in maintaining Central Melbourne's image as the [city and state's] major leisure activity centre.[33]

The redevelopment of the south bank of the Yarra River as an arts and tourism zone remains the most visible outcome of this policy. While urban renewal had begun there in the 1960s with the construction of the National Gallery and Arts (Cultural) Centre, the Labor government dramatically accelerated the process by taking advantage of the closure of many factories and other sites adjacent to the river to open up the area for comprehensive redevelopment. In 1984 Southbank was declared an "action area," and in 1986 a "development strategy" was released for public discussion that recognized the area as "offering development opportunities in areas such as the arts, tourism, housing and commerce."[34] The development strategy would see the whole Southbank area divided up into nine zones, two of which—"the arts precinct" around the Arts Centre, and the downstream "maritime precinct" with its "distinctive heritage" such as "a number of port-related and historical features including the *Polly Woodside* (a restored sailing vessel) and an associated maritime museum run by the National Trust"—were to be utilized to encourage local, national, and international tourism.[35]

Culture, too, was to have an important role in the new economic strategy. While recognizing that "prosperity should be based not only on acquisition of goods, but also on participation in a vigorous intellectual, social and cultural life within the community," the government argued that the city's cultural capital ought to be utilized as a driver of economic development.[36] As with Melbourne's sporting infrastructure, its arts and cultural facilities were recognized as competitive strengths that could and should become increasingly important components of the urban economy. The 1984 economic statement noted that "Melbourne has an unquestioned national role in Australian artistic and cultural life," but warned that this needed to be underpinned and strengthened in the 1980s and beyond—an imperative possibly reflecting concerns at that time about the increasing centralization of national arts and cultural institutions and funding bodies in Sydney.[37] The state government undertook to investigate and, where possible, free up centrally located sites potentially suitable for the development of cultural institutions, such as a new museum and state library. It also promised to make land available "to build up strategically important sectors of Victoria's

economy including tourism, research, [and] the media industry." The nearly complete Victorian Arts Centre was to be "developed both as a cultural and economic resource as part of wider proposals for the development of the Southbank area" as a tourism and cultural precinct.[38]

While new buildings and structures were important, there was also a recognition that a revitalized city needed a vibrant cultural agenda. The economic initiatives statement of 1984 thus undertook to begin a campaign to promote "Melbourne as a Festival City," the main component of which was to be an "agreement to create and stage an annual Arts Festival in Melbourne."[39] That festival became Spoleto in 1986, and then from 1990, the Melbourne International Arts Festival. Agreement to hold this festival in Melbourne, as the third arm of Spoleto—a celebration of "three worlds"—along with Spoleto in Italy and Charleston in the United States was finally reached in 1985, but the idea of holding such a festival had been bubbling since the late 1970s, under the previous Liberal government of Rupert Hamer. According to former director of Arts Victoria, Paul Clarkson, Premier Hamer had been impressed by the success of Adelaide Festival and had been keen to find a suitable use for the Arts Centre then under construction. A team of advisors had toured the world and recommended that Melbourne hold an annual festival, more focused on the "higher" arts than the annual Moomba Festival, with its community "fun" orientation. The advisors also recommended that the new festival not attempt to compete with or undermine the biennial Adelaide event and that it be launched to coincide with the completion of the Arts Centre. But this wasn't to be, partly because of the ongoing delays in completing the centre, but also because of the general economic downturn of the early 1980s, and the resignation of Hamer as premier in 1981.[40]

Hamer's government had promoted the arts and culture, but perhaps mindful of its political powerbase in regional Victoria, efforts in these fields focused on the whole state, rather than just the city. From 1975 a series of year-long triennial festivals were sponsored by the government under the banner of its newly formed ministry, Arts Victoria. The first of these festivals was "Arts Victoria: Visual Arts" focusing on painting and photography, while in 1978 the emphasis was on crafts and in 1981, music. While there was a solid Melbourne link, with festival management based at the refurbished Meat Market Craft Centre in North Melbourne from 1977, and a ceramic "arts path" created in a city park as a physical outcome of the 1978 program, these festivals were explicitly created to have a state-wide impact. Sponsored artists were required to travel around the state to display their work while simultaneously holding local discussions and workshops in regional towns and cities.[41] A press release announcing the 1978 festival stated noted that Arts Victoria festivals differed significantly from their counterparts in Edinburgh, Adelaide, Perth, and Sydney:

> Unlike most Festivals they are not programs concentrated in one city for a short period so as to draw world attention, but spread throughout the State over most of the year because they are
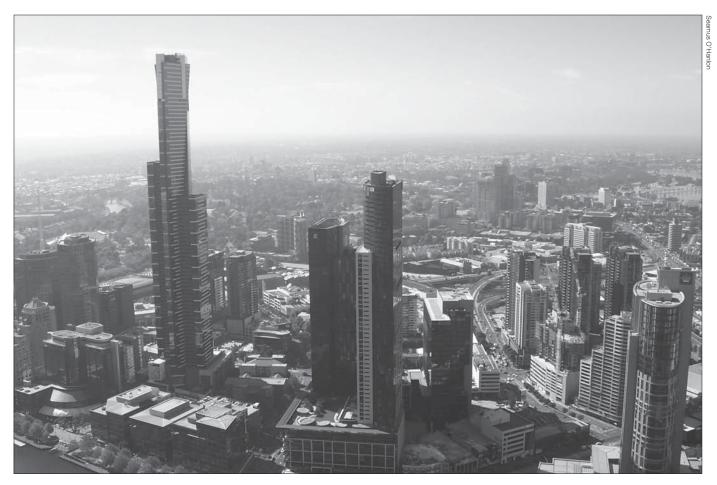
Seamus O'Hanlon

FIGURE 2: Southbank, 2009.

primarily for Victorians, and with the widest possible involvement of people.[42]

When the Labor Party came to power in 1982, the cultural emphasis moved strongly back to Melbourne. The final Arts Victoria festival, 1984's "Let's Dance," coincided with the Victoria's sesquicentenary celebrations and featured a huge dance party in March, and a major public dance extravaganza (including dancing lessons) in June.[43] Proposals for a major Melbourne-based festival were also revived at this time. According to Paul Clarkson, "shortly after taking office" the new Arts Minister Race Mathews was approached by a group from the Melbourne Italian Arts Festival, who had in turn been approached by representatives of the Spoleto Festival in Italy with the idea of including Melbourne as a festival partner.[44] As early as July 1982 the minister announced a plan to link Melbourne to the Spoleto Festival. The Melbourne festival would, he said, "provide a showcase of the diversity of Australia's culture, as well as bringing to Melbourne a unique opportunity for Victorians to experience the finest contemporary international work in the performing and visual arts."[45] Agreement to stage the festival was eventually reached in 1984 and the first festival was planned for September 1985.

The announcement of the festival is instructive for what it tells us about the Labor government's thinking and attitudes towards the economic potential of culture and the arts. Arts Minister Mathews was joined at the announcement by the Minister for Industry, Commerce, and Technology, Ian Cathie and the Minister for Ethnic Affairs Peter Spyker. This was a joint announcement, according to a press release, "because of its importance for the arts, tourism and the ethnic communities."[46] The economic benefits of holding the festival, most notably from tourism, were strongly highlighted. Arts Minister Mathews said, "The State Government believed a major arts festival was an important factor in Victoria's economic advancement," while the industry minister saw the festival as "a concrete expression of the importance [the government] attached to international festivals to promote tourism," which had been identified by the economic strategy as one of the "major areas in which the State could compete internationally." He further announced that a "small but highly professional festivals unit" would be established "within the Victorian Tourism Commission to provide advice on the organisation of those festivals which can attract interstate and international visitors."[47] The role of this unit was spelt out by Chairman of the Victorian Tourism Commission Don Dunstan

in 1985. It would, he said, harness the enthusiasm of those most closely involved in community festivals in Melbourne and across the state, but also draw on the tourism expertise of his organization to "assist and advise in areas such as programming, marketing and organisation to ensure they had something unique that could be saleable nationally and internationally." The broader aim would be to "build something unique and which enhanced community life in the district and produced long term benefits in terms of increased employment in the area."[48]

The steering committee created to organize Melbourne's Spoleto Festival was charged with a similar task. Chaired by retail magnate Marc Besen, its original "statement of purposes" was unambiguous on this matter and is again instructive of the Labor government's thinking about the economic role of the arts and culture in the 1980s and beyond. Along with promoting and developing artists and the arts and culture, the committee was to ensure that the festival should "further Victoria's economic development by promoting and advancing tourism and the tourist industry by creating a unique festival of international standard." It was also required to "engag[e] and employ Victorian firms, companies and residents to administer, manage, organise, present, promote, produce and control the Festival."[49] In spite of all this enthusiasm and organization, the first festival did not go ahead as planned. Instead, it was postponed to 1986, after delays and difficulties made the first date seem terribly ambitious.[50] And while the first festival was deemed by many to be a great success, others, including Foundation Director Giancarlo Menotti, were concerned that Melbourne was simply too big a city to stage such a festival.[51] But its festival has survived, and the renamed Melbourne International Arts Festival is now one of the major events of Melbourne's arts and cultural calendar and, despite the almost ritual annual rainfall deluge, is a continuing critical, popular, and commercial success. More than 450,000 people attended the festival in 2006, down by one-third on 2004's record, but still nearly double the 2002 attendance and more than quadruple that of the first in 1986.[52]

Conclusion: The Unequal City

Inner Melbourne is now a place very different from what it was thirty years ago. Fewer than 10 per cent of the region's residents are now employed in manufacturing, down from just over 30 per cent in the early 1970s.[53] Working-class residents have left the inner city, and so too have most of the jobs they once performed. In the 2001 Census, the largest number of jobs in the inner city was in the Australian Bureau of Statistics "property and business services" classification, which, combined with "finance and insurance services," accounted for more than one-third of all jobs in the region, far higher than the metropolitan-wide average of about 18.5 per cent.[54] Evidence of the success of the Cain government's events and culture strategy can be seen in the emergence of the "cultural and recreational services" employment category in the inner-city economy. In 1971 this was a very minor sector, accounting for 6,000 jobs, or just over 1 per cent of all jobs across the inner city region. By 2001 it had grown by over 300 per cent to 20,000 jobs or 4 per cent. Again,

this is far higher than the metropolitan average of 0.02 per cent. In 2001 jobs in this field were equivalent to about 70 per cent of those in manufacturing within the City of Melbourne municipal area, whereas in 1971 manufacturing had provided almost sixteen times as many. It is highly likely that within a few years cultural and recreational services will provide more jobs than manufacturing in the inner city.[55]

Inner Melbourne has been largely deindustrialized over the last few decades, but the decay, abandonment, and social unrest prophesied in the 1970s has not come to pass. Population in the region had declined to about three-quarters of its 1971 level by the mid-1980s, but in recent years there has again been a significant increase, as a "back to the city" movement has seen a large number of multi-storey apartment complexes built in the Central Business District and other high-profile locations around the inner city.[56] Even so, the current inner city population of about 270,000 is still more than 10 per cent below its 1971 level—largely because the number of residents per dwelling has declined considerably in that time, from more than three in 1971 to fewer than two today.[57] As has happened in many other Western cities, inner Melbourne has gentrified in the last few decades, and its residents are now overwhelmingly professionals and other white-collar workers, rather than the poor and blue-collar workers of yesteryear.[58] According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics figures, the most common occupation of Melbourne's inner-city residents at the time of the 2006 Census was in management or the professions, which together accounted for about 46 per cent of all employment. Inner-city residents are now overwhelmingly rich rather than poor or working class, as was the case until the 1970s. Incomes across the region are high: in 2006 almost 30 per cent of residents earned more than $1,000 per week, compared to 19 per cent across the metropolitan area and 12 per cent nationally. The same figures show that, while the region was home to less than 7.5 per cent of the metropolitan population, almost 20 per cent of Melbournians who earned more than $2,000 per week lived there.[59]

As in many other cities worldwide, within the space of a generation there has been a transformation in inner Melbourne that has seen a range of sporting, cultural, and artistic venues created and/or refurbished. Rather than displaying the abandonment and decay and despair that threatened to become ubiquitous in the 1970s, inner Melbourne is now a vibrant place with a thriving economy based on events, services, tourism, and conspicuous consumption in new retail complexes and refurbished shopping streets. While a major economic downturn in the early 1990s saw unemployment peak at above 13 per cent in Victoria, and the Labor Party trounced at the polls in 1992, recent governments—both conservative and social democratic—have built on the legacy of the 1980s events strategy to ensure that sport and culture remain central components of inner-city life and economic endeavour. The actual economic impact of the "events strategy" is almost impossible to calculate, but a recent Tourism Victoria report claimed that approximately 230,000 international

events visitors come to the State of Victoria each year, and that this represents 42 per cent of all events visitors to Australia. The report went on to suggest that these visitors generated "an annual economic impact of $1 billion," but provided no real evidence to back up these figures.[60] More recently, a Victorian auditor general's report on the events strategy, *State Investment in Major Events*, was highly critical of some of the economic modelling used to justify the economic benefits of the policy, but was generally in favour of the idea of using events to attract tourists and investment to Melbourne and Victoria.[61]

The Melbourne that these tourists get to know and that viewers of major sporting events regularly see on their television screens is essentially the same area that thirty years ago appeared to be in terminal decline. Melbourne's recent experiences demonstrate that rebuilding inner cities and staging "events" can bring substantial economic and tourism benefits. Ensuring that the short- and long-term spoils of this urban renewal go to the broad population is, however, a much more difficult social and political task. In Melbourne and elsewhere in Australia, there is increasing evidence that poverty and urban deprivation are now overwhelmingly concentrated in outer metropolitan regions rather than the inner city, as was the case thirty years ago.[62] Spending scarce government resources on an economic strategy delivering infrastructure projects that are socially and geographically removed from the majority of the population is likely to entrench this rapidly growing economic divide. In the years ahead there may well be a case for increased public spending on decentralized and socially worthwhile infrastructure projects that benefit the majority, rather than an already privileged minority. These projects may not appeal to international tourists or be seen on television screens across the globe, but their construction and continuing operation will provide jobs and services in neighbourhoods and communities that have to a considerable extent missed out on the turn of the twenty-first-century economic boom.

Acknowledgement

Notes

1. Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works (MMBW), *Melbourne's Inner Area: A Position Statement* (Melbourne: MMBW, 1977): 2.

2. Urban Economic Consultants, *Socio-economic Implications of Urban Development* (Melbourne: MMBW, 1977), 6–7.

3. Ibid., 30.

4. The development of inner city sporting and cultural facilities continues, with the latest projects under construction including a new lyric theatre and recital hall adjacent to the Victorian Arts Centre and a 31,000-seat soccer and rugby stadium adjacent to the National Tennis Centre. Both are scheduled for completion in 2009. See Major Projects Victoria website: http://www.majorprojects.vic.gov.au/.

5. Ibid. Some explanation about terminology may be necessary at this point. In Melbourne. as in most other Australian cities, there is no such defined

entity as "the city" or "the suburbs." The designation "city" in the Australian context generally refers to the entire metropolitan area. Colloquially, however, Australians also generally refer to the downtown area as "the city." In Melbourne, the original grid settlement of five main east-west streets bisected by nine north-south streets is variously known as the Central Business District (CBD) or more colloquially as "the City," "the City Centre" or the "Golden Mile." Until the 1950s, it was the major business and cultural centre of the metropolis, but in the years since these uses have spilled out into surrounding regions. Since the 1960s, St. Kilda Road and South Melbourne, immediately south of the CBD, have become high-rise office and residential precincts, while East Melbourne, Parkville, and Carlton—the "University" or "Knowledge" precincts—to the immediate north and east have become prime nodes of employment, leisure, and high-rise residential development. In its 1977 report, the MMBW referred to the region within an approximately five kilometre radius of the CBD as Melbourne's "central core." Later, in the 1980s this area became known as "Central Melbourne," but the boundaries of this new zone were quite fluid. While theoretically "downtown" in the Melbourne context refers to the distinctly defined boundaries of the CBD grid, in reality it has long since made more sense to designate the inner region of the metropolis, rather than simply the CBD as "downtown." Throughout this article, therefore, I use the terms "CBD" to denote the central city grid, and "inner city" or "inner Melbourne" to refer to this broader inner region.

On the emergence of Melbourne's grid layout, see Andrew Brown-May, "The Desire for a City," in *Melbourne Street Life: The Itinerary of Our Days* (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 1998), chap. 1; and Paul Carter, "Elysiums for Gentlemen," in *The Road to Botany Bay: An Essay in Spatial History* (London: Faber and Faber, 1997), chap. 7. On the expansion of industry and commerce into areas beyond the CBD in the period since the 1950s, see Victorian Council of Social Service, *Towards an Urban Strategy?* (Melbourne: Victorian Council of Social Service, 1975), especially chap. 3, "Postwar Changes." On the role of St. Kilda Road as Melbourne's second major office market, see Judith Raphael Buckrich, *Melbourne's Grand Boulevard: The Story of St. Kilda Road* (Melbourne: State Library of Victoria, 1996), chap. 7, "1957–1995." For boundaries of the "central core," see MMBW, *Melbourne's Inner Area*, xi. On the 1980s redefinition of "central Melbourne" to include most areas within a five-kilometre radius of the CBD in the early 1980s, see "Central Melbourne Tourism and Leisure Study," 1983, Draft Report, Public Records Office Victoria (PROV), VPRS12827P/1/240. For a brief account of the problems encountered in defining urban areas in the Australian context, see Seamus O'Hanlon, "Cities, Suburbs and Communities," *Australia's History: Themes and Debates*, ed. M. Lyons and P. Russell (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2005), 173.

6. The "international" tag appended to many of these Melbourne events and festivals is probably a case of a wishful thinking rather than a reflection of the reality of these things, which for the most part attract a local and national audience, rather an international one. My thanks to Sophie Watson for pointing this out. For a discussion of the ongoing propensity for Australians, like other former colonial peoples, to optimistically play to an imaginary world stage, see Graeme Davison, "The Imaginary Grandstand," *Meanjin* 61, no. 3 (2002), especially 4–5.

7. On the changing style of the AFL Grand Final in recent years, see Stephen Alomes, "One Day in September: Grass Roots Enthusiasm, Invented Traditions and Contemporary Commercial Spectacle and the Australian Football League Finals," *Sporting Traditions* 17, no. 1 (2000): 77–96. On the recent internationalization of the 137-year-old Melbourne Cup, see John O'Hara, "Globalisation, Historical Consciousness and the Melbourne Cup," *Sporting Traditions* 23, no. 2 (2007): 33–45.

8. See Graeme Davison, "The Culture of International Exhibitions," in *Victorian Icon: The Royal Exhibition Building, Melbourne*, ed. David Dunstan (Melbourne: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 1995): 11–18. Also see John R. Gold and Margaret M. Gold, *Cities of Culture: Staging Urban Festivals and the Urban Agenda, 1851–2000* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2005), especially chap. 3, "The Great Exhibition: London, 1851."

9. On the emergence of "creative cities" and the role of culture and tertiary industries—especially in the fields of design, technology, and media and communications—as drivers of economic development in the post-industrial period, see Charles Landry and Franco Bianchini, *The Creative City* (London: Demos, in association with Comedia, 1995), as well as a number of subsequent publications by Landry. On the "creative class," see Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class, and How It's Transforming Work, Leisure Community and Everyday Life* (New York: Basic Books, 2002). Also see his website: http://creativeclass.com.

10. Andrew Smith, "Sporting a New Image? Sport-Based Regeneration Strategies as a Means of Enhancing the Image of the City Tourist Destination," in *Sport in the City: The Role of Sport in Economic and Social Regeneration*, ed. Chris Gratton and Ian Henry (London: Routledge, 2001), 127.

11. For a lively discussion of the ostentatious building or rebuilding of iconic cultural institutions in a number of cities in the 1970s and 1980s, see Deyan Sudjic, *The 100 Mile City* (London: Deutsch, 1992), chap. 6, "The Museum as Landmark." On "selling cities," see Stephen V. Ward, *Selling Places: The Marketing and Promotion of Towns and Cities, 1850–2000* (London: Spon, 1998), especially pt. 5, "Selling the Post-industrial City." Also see *Selling Places: The City as Cultural Capital, Past and Present*, ed. Gerry Kearns and Chris Philo (Oxford: Pergamon, 1993), especially the introduction by the editors.

12. Sharon Zukin, *The Culture of Cities* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1995), 2.

13. There is a vast literature on the uses of culture and cultural infrastructure in urban renewal strategies across the world. For an early 1990s overview, see Franco Bianchini and Michael Parkinson, eds., *Cultural Policy and Urban Regeneration: The West European Experience* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993). For a more updated, historically informed discussion, se Gold and Gold, *Cities of Culture*, especially chap. 1, "Introduction." The use of sport and sports events to revitalize depressed or abandoned inner city regions has similarly spawned a huge literature in recent years. The introduction to Gratton and Henry's collection, *Sport in the City,* provides a good introductory overview.

14. Gold and Gold, *Cities of Culture*, xii.

15. For a comprehensive planning-themed study of recent inner city and waterfront developments in Melbourne, see Kim Dovey, *Fluid City: Transforming Melbourne's Urban Waterfront* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2005).

16. On the role of events and spectacles in the political agenda of the right-wing Kennett government, see Louise Johnston, William S. Logan, and Colin Long, "Jeff Kennett's Melbourne: City, Planning and Politics, in the Twentieth Century Urban Planning Experience, *IPHS/UHPA Conference Proceedings*, ed. Rob Freestone, 436–441 (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 1998); and Colin Long, "Edifice Complexes, Credit Card Consumers, Sports Stadia and Marinas: Melbourne's Docklands as Symbols of Late 20th Century Urban Development" in the same collection: 535–540. For a more political science-oriented discussion of the same issues, see Adam Shamshullah, "'The Policy of Confidence': Politics in Victoria, 1992–8," in *The Kennett Revolution: Victorian Politics in the 1990s*, ed. Brian Costar and Nic Economou (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 1999), 3–14.

17. Peter Spearritt, *Sydney's Century: A History* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 1999), 128.

18. On industrial decline and abandonment in a number of cities, especially in North America in the 1970s and 1980s, see Steven High, *Industrial Sunset: The Making of North America's Rust Belt, 1969–1984* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003); and his more recent *Corporate Wasteland: The Landscape and Memory of Deindustrialization* (Ithaca: ILR Press, 2007), co-produced with David W. Lewis. Also see "The Memory and Politics of Deindustrialization in Canada," special issue of *Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine,* 35, no. 2 (2007), for a series of responses to restructuring, deindustrialization, and abandonment across Canada from 1900 to the present. On similar issues in the United States, see Jefferson Cowie and Joseph Heathcott, eds., *Beyond the Ruins: The Meanings of Deindustrialization* (Ithaca: ILR Press, 2003). For a brief discussion of the severe problems London faced in the 1970s, see Joe Kerr, "Introduction," in *London: From Punk to Blair*, ed. Joe Kerr and Andrew Gibson (London: Reaktion Books, 2003), especially 18–20.

19. Spearritt, *Sydney's Century*, 260.

20. Rob Jolly, interview, 28 April 2008, Melbourne.

21. Ibid.

22. These and the following figures are based on unpublished material collated by the former Victorian Department of Infrastructure (DOI). I would like to thank Andrew Watkins and Jeremy Reynolds for this information.

23. Sally Wilde, *The History of Prahran* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1993), 2:143–144.

24. Government of Victoria, *Victoria: The Next Step; Economic Initiatives and Opportunities for the 1980s* (Melbourne: Government Printer, 1984). In 1981, a Liberal government had undertaken some research into the tourism impacts of major events, but concluded that, unless linked with a place, site, or physical structure, the ongoing effects were minimal. See Government of Victoria, *Tourism: A Research and Information Paper,* (Melbourne: Government Printer, 1981), 122–123.

25. Government of Victoria, *Economic Strategy for Victoria: Detailed Papers* (Melbourne: Government Printer, 1984), 167.

26. Jolly, interview.

27. Evan Walker and Victor Sposito, interview, 7 May 2008, Melbourne.

28. Rob Jolly, interview.

29. Simon Clarke, "Grand Final Law on Its Way," *Age*, 21 January 1984, 36.

30. Government of Victoria, *Economic Strategy*, 167; Victor Sposito, "The 'Planning Parents' of the National Tennis Centre,' *Australian Planner* 29 (2003): 20; Walker and Sposito, interview.

31. Sposito, "The 'Planning Parents,'" 21.

32. Walker and Sposito, interview; Victor Sposito, "Central Melbourne: Planning and Design Initiatives in the Past Five Years—A Quiet Revolution," *Australian Planner* 25 (1987): 12; "Central Melbourne Tourism and Leisure Study."

33. Also see Ministry for Planning and Environment Victoria (MPEV), Central Area Task Force, *Central Melbourne: The State of the Capital* (Melbourne: MPEV, 1983).

34. Sposito, "Central Melbourne," 14–16: MPEV, *Southbank: A Development Strategy* (Melbourne: MPEV, 1986), 4.

35. MPEV, *Southbank*, 5.

36. Government of Victoria, *Victoria*, 1.

37. Ibid., 172. For a discussion of concerns about cultural institutions and therefore arts funding concentrating in Sydney in the 1970s and early 1980s, see Jim Davidson, "Introduction," in *The Sydney-Melbourne Book*, ed. Jim Davidson, 6–11 (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1986).

38. Government of Victoria, *Victoria*, 170.

39. Ibid., 172.

40. P. Clarkson, *Melbourne International Arts Festival 1986–2005: The First Twenty Years* (Melbourne: Melbourne International Arts Festival, 2005), 9.

41. On "Arts Victoria 78: Crafts," see "Arts Victoria 78: General" file, unit 15, consignment 1, Victorian Ministry for the Arts (VMA), Victorian Public Record Series (VPRS) 12827, Public Records Office Victoria (PROV).

42. Transcript of radio broadcast by the Honourable R. J. Hamer ED, MP, Premier of Victoria, 18 December 1977, "Arts Victoria 78: General" file, unit 15, consignment 1, VMA, VPRS 12827, PROV.

43. On "Arts Victoria 1984: Dance," see "Arts Victoria 84: General" file, part 3, unit 12, consignment 6, VMA, VPRS 12827, PROV.

44. Paul Clarkson, interview, 27 November 2007, Melbourne.

45. "Major International Arts Festival for Melbourne," media release, 29 July 1982, "Spoleto Arts Festival: General" file, part 1, unit 95, consignment 1, VMA, VPRS 12827, PROV.

46. "Melbourne Spoleto Festival Launched," media release, 18 April 1984, "Spoleto Arts Festival: General" file, part 1, unit 95, consignment 1, VMA, VPRS 12827, PROV.

47. Ibid.

48. "The Opening Address of the Chairman of the Victorian Tourism Commission, Mr. Don Dunstan to the 'Festivals Futures Seminar,' Echuca Town Hall, 23 June 1985," "Festivals" file, unit 42, consignment 1, Victorian Ethnic Affairs Commission, VPRS 11790, PROV.

49. "Spoleto Melbourne Foundation Incorporated: Statement of Purposes," "Spoleto Arts Festival: General" file, part 1, unit 95, consignment 1, VMA, VPRS 12827, PROV.

50. Clarkson, *Melbourne International Arts Festival*, 9.

51. Alomes, "One Day in September," 77.

52. MIAF general manager, personal communication, June 2007.

53. Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census 2006.

54. ABS Census 2001. Note that full results from the 2006 Census are not yet fully tabulated, hence the use of some 2001 figures in these counts.

55. Ibid.

56. ABS Census 2006.

57. Seamus O'Hanlon, "Full Board and Lodging: Hostels for Migrant Workers in Early Postwar Melbourne," *History Australia* 2, no. 3 (2005): 88.12–13. Municipal boundaries were redrawn in 1994, so the recent figures are based on a slightly larger area than the earlier one.

58. William Logan, *The Gentrification of Inner Melbourne* (St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1982).

59. These figures are based on ABS Census 2006, table "Weekly Individual Income by Age and Sex.'

60. See Victorian Tourism Commission, *10 Year Tourism and Events Strategy,* (Melbourne: Victorian Tourism Commission, 2006), http://www.diird.vic.gov.au/corplivewr/_assets/main/lib60026/tourism-strat.pdf.

61. Victorian Auditor-General, *State Investment in Major Events* (Melbourne: Victorian Auditor-General, 2007), http://www.audit.vic.gov.au/reports_par/agp119_majorevents_report.pdf.

62. Mark Peel, *The Lowest Rung: Voices of Australian Poverty* (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2003).