

Re-Enchanting the City: Designing the Human Habitat Massive Open Online Course (MOOC)



Central Park Sydney



One Central Park heliostat & light show



Irving Street Brewery adaptive reuse

About the course

Re-Enchanting the City: Designing the Human Habitat MOOC is an introduction to the interdisciplinary nature of city making, through a cutting-edge, high-density urban infill project as case study: Sydney's Central Park.

The case study is used to explore the interdependencies of the various built environment professions, including urban design, architecture, construction management, planning, sustainable development, landscape architecture, interior architecture and industrial design.

Since the course was designed to be introductory, it is also suitable for high school students, and the learning activity is primarily through rich discussions - promoting a social engagement amongst participants.

Course design aims

The course was created with intentions to:

Develop expertise in fully online course delivery for a large audience.

Promote the Faculty and the programs to potential students.

Test and explore a course that could form a common experience for first year students in the Faculty.

Approach

The material was structured in 3 layers:

1. Academic – video discussions by academics of the Built Environment.
2. Profession and stakeholders – interviews with those involved with Central Park Sydney.
3. Narrative – Associate Professor (Practice) Elizabeth Farrelly giving a perspective on Central Park and weekly themes.

Each week had a Built Environment academic lead that introduced the themes as well as its specific discipline focus.

Videos were supplemented with external resources, including infographics illustrating elements of Central Park and the built environment disciplines.

Social Learning included discussions around focused questions and sharing of participants own images related to the subject – through the social media platform of Padlet.



Padlet activity



ZeeMaps - Participants' locations

Outcomes

Participant satisfaction was very high. Learners praised the nature of the social learning and commended the diversity of contributions. Learners stated they see their cities and the built environment differently after completing the course. A number of participants expressed interest in future study at UNSW with at least one enrolling in a Master's degree.

"The course has broadened my understanding of the built environment and believe that I will look at these elements of the built environment with new light now in my day to day experiences."

"I have done several MOOC courses and the points and debate from participants here is probably the most engaging of all of them, really enjoyed hearing and seeing posts from those interested in the same subjects around the world - a global community!"

"It has been a great time. Thanks a million. I love the experience of scholars and mentors involved in this course. I also love the case study. Central Park is a perfect case study. I love the illustrations, examples and different ways of communicating ideas."

"I'm knocked out by Patrick Blanc's passion and enthusiasm. I was unconvinced before ... now I'm converted!"

"I am thrilled with the discussions in particular, which are adding greatly to my experience of the course. I have participated in some quite good (and a few mediocre) MOOCs up to now, and this is by far the best in terms of both content AND class participation."

"Thank you for making me think differently."

