

From livable to lovable: Making cities more human

By **Duleesha Kulasooriya** and
Mark Wee

Illustrations by **Greg Mably**

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From livable to lovable: Making cities more human

Cities can take concrete steps to embody elements of a lovable city, helping their residents feel more connected. The payoff: happier, more resilient citizens poised to drive economic growth.

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“I ♥ NY.” Perhaps nowhere is that iconic sentiment more evident than in New York City, where millions of New Yorkers take pride in its colorful neighborhoods, its diners and jazz clubs, its museums and theaters, and, of course, its inhabitants’ unique character. And New York’s not alone. Millions of others feel just as passionate about the cities they call home, be it Paris’ boulevards and cafés, Lima’s eclectic blend of cultures, or Hong Kong’s throb of commerce. They recognize their city’s limitations, but they also revel in its rewards. They’re part of the city, and they feel that the city is part of them. Many wouldn’t dream of living anywhere else.

What drives such pride, passion, and joy—in a word, love—for a city? Too often, the qualities that inspire love may be viewed as intangible and unquantifiable. But there *are* identifiable attributes that make a city lovable, and city planners and governments can shape those attributes to help the city and its citizens form an emotional bond. That emotional bond, in turn, can deliver benefits to individuals and institutions alike, chief among them happiness. After all, more and more of us are living in cities every year,¹ and the more we can relate to our cities, the more vibrant our lives will be.

There's more to being lovable than being livable and smart

The impulse to rehumanize cities amid rapid change is not new. Jane Jacobs' battle with Robert Moses, where Jacobs mobilized grassroots opposition to Moses' plans to build interstates through New York neighborhoods, is one of the more prominent examples where the desire to humanize cities—or keep them human—has clashed with efforts to modernize them.² These days, technology and an obsession with convenience dominate conversations on city revitalization. It's important to bring the relational aspects of dense urban environments back into prominence.

Most urban planners, as well as the general public, evaluate cities on two main dimensions. One is livability, a city's ability to satisfy its citizens' pragmatic physical, social, and professional needs. Livability is measured on factors such as safety, mobility options, employment and educational opportunities, public space, and political stability. More recently, much of the discourse on cities has revolved around making cities smart. The focus here is on deploying broadband and other technologies, such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, and the internet of things, to do everything from manage traffic to improve security surveillance to allow citizens to report accumulated trash or snow using their smartphones.

Both livability and smartness are foundational to lovability. Basic infrastructure and services should be in place, and going about one's daily life should be reasonably easy and pleasant. And we should unquestionably use advanced technology to help improve quality of life and alleviate issues such as congestion and crime.

However, lovability also relies on a third attribute that's often overlooked. That attribute is human connection: a city's ability to foster community and evoke a sense of belonging. Though it may be less concrete than livability or smartness, human connection is no less important because that's where the social and emotional components of lovability, those feelings of pride, passion, and joy, spring from.

A city can be human in many ways

Teasing out being human from being livable and smart is somewhat artificial, since the three domains overlap and, ideally, positively reinforce each other. That said, research led by the DesignSingapore Council has identified six key attributes that contribute to being a human city: inclusion, connection, attachment, stimulation, freedom, and agency.³ While individuals may experience these attributes differently depending on factors such as their socioeconomic status, gender identity, ethnicity, (dis)ability, immigration status, and sexual orientation,

all of the attributes are related and interact with one another to create different levels and types of humanness.

Inclusion

A city's residents need to feel included for the city to feel human. This is true on both a social level, meaning acceptance by other residents, and a legal level, meaning the universal extension of social rights and the provision of basic services.

Many cities may find that promoting inclusion is a challenge. For instance, Western European cities have historically performed well on inclusion metrics due to their comprehensive social security nets and abundant employment opportunities. But recent widespread social unrest between those who consider themselves natives and newly arrived migrants is an indicator that overarching narratives around social inclusion might need to be revisited. Furthermore, hate crimes have been on the rise in countries as far-flung as New Zealand, the United States, China, and Israel. The United States, for example, has seen a resurgence of hostility toward ethnic minorities, sparking movements such as Black Lives Matter and Stop Asian Hate in protest. These grassroots campaigns constitute efforts of reconciliation—attempts to raise awareness and increase the inclusion of minority voices in civic society.

Inclusion also extends beyond new migrants and race to all edges of society, from the LGBTQ community to the elderly. All of these individuals must feel welcomed and safe for them to experience their city as lovable.

Connection

Connection embodies how well a city facilitates the creation of social bonds, which can lead to a feeling of closeness to and affection for others in the city.

Urban planners can do a great deal to facilitate community through infrastructural design. Designing open spaces with porous perimeters, for instance, encourages social interaction by inviting passers-by to join. But it's also important not to be overly prescriptive. Restraint from overplanning allows for citizens to take ownership of their neighborhoods and develop connections in their own authentic manner.

Superkilen park in Copenhagen, Denmark, incorporates an eclectic mix of furnishings from all over the world, including a picnic table from Armenia, a swing set from Baghdad, and three tons of soil from the Palestinian territories. These elements were chosen by the community to cultivate points of discussion and learning among visitors. In this way, the park was designed to bridge the gaps between diverse neighborhoods. On the other hand, the favelas of Rio de Janeiro achieve the same thing without

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having been deliberately planned. The improvised design of favela streets, with their long and winding staircases that meander between and around homes, facilitates interaction between the favelas' inhabitants. These examples demonstrate that city design, whether planned or fortuitous, can increase connection between citizens anywhere.

Attachment

Attachment differs from connection in that it refers to the affinity that people feel for the city rather than for each other. It's a city's ability to cultivate a sense of familiarity and rootedness with the city. Typically, residents who have lived in a city for longer feel a greater sense of such attachment.

Attachment is strongly related to the unique aspects of a city's identity, meaning that it arises out of what a city does differently, rather than the aspects that it has in common with its neighbors. In Southeast Asia, for instance, food is often a badge of identity. It's not uncommon to hear Malaysians and Singaporeans arguing about whether Penang or Singapore has the best *char kway teow*.

Policymakers worldwide have struggled with navigating the varied attachment levels of newcomers to a city. There are, however, some bright spots. For the past 40 years, Australia has pursued a policy of multiculturalism that's encouraging new migrants to embrace both Australian and other cultural identities on an equal basis. Importantly, newly arrived migrants are supported by comprehensive national policies that provide significant financial investment into their integration into the broader community, assisting with translation, providing English classes, and funding community initiatives, thus cultivating a sense of connection. Sydney is an example of a city that embodies this ethos: It evidences high levels of attachment despite many of its residents being foreign-born.

Paradoxically, part of the reason is the emergence of ethnic enclaves in which different ethnic groups concentrate their cultural activities. Sydney's Fairfield district is home predominantly to Iraqi and Syrian Christians, whereas part of southwest Sydney is now known as "Little Athens" for its Greek community. Allowing such enclaves to form allows newly arrived migrant communities to remain connected to their roots, increasing their attachment to the city by providing a welcoming context in which they can express their uniquely diasporic identities.

Stimulation

Stimulation is the excitement a city cultivates among its population. A stimulating city keeps its residents excited about what

each new day brings, providing widely accessible opportunities for exploration, leisure, socializing, and learning. To ensure that cities are stimulating, local governments need to take creativity seriously. Without the support of the creative industries, night life and entertainment, which are vital cultural assets, could be lost forever.

London is an example of an already stimulating city that has explicitly committed to maintaining its position as one of the most exciting cities in the world. In addition to maintaining a strong commitment to diversity, the metropolis highly values creativity: It's home to more than 250 museums and art galleries, many of which are free to the public. Further, in 2016, London appointed its first Night Czar,⁴ whose sole responsibility is to ensure that the city is just as vibrant during the night as it is during the day. The role has pioneered initiatives such as the Night Tube, which initiated 24-hour public transportation on Fridays and Saturdays, measures to support queer venues such as nightclubs, and reviews of licensing approval processes to attract diversity within London's nightlife venues.

Freedom

For a city to be lovable, residents should feel free to be and express themselves. This can be one of the more difficult characteristics to achieve, as the factors that affect the feeling of freedom differ from person to person.

Throughout the years, large cities have attracted those who do not conform to social norms. During World War II, gay sailors were routinely expelled from the navy at the ports of San Francisco, leading many to settle in the area. Further migration of gay individuals to the city resulted in San Francisco establishing itself as the United States' queer capital through the mid-20th century. Its progressive attitudes have since evolved into a culture of acceptance that goes beyond gender identity and sexual orientation.

One reason people may feel a sense of freedom in a city is the anonymity that their large populations provide. Nowadays, though, the concept of freedom has progressed beyond anonymity towards acceptance. For this reason, freedom overlaps largely with inclusion. Authorities should consider focusing on cultivating acceptance across the community through education to allow residents, including minorities, to feel free to be themselves.

Agency

Agency is a measure of empowerment, the extent to which people believe that they're able to influence change within their cities. This perception is often greatly influenced by how inclusive a city is in its decision-making around policies. Achieving this

HUMAN-CENTERED CITIES TEND TO HAVE HAPPIER PEOPLE

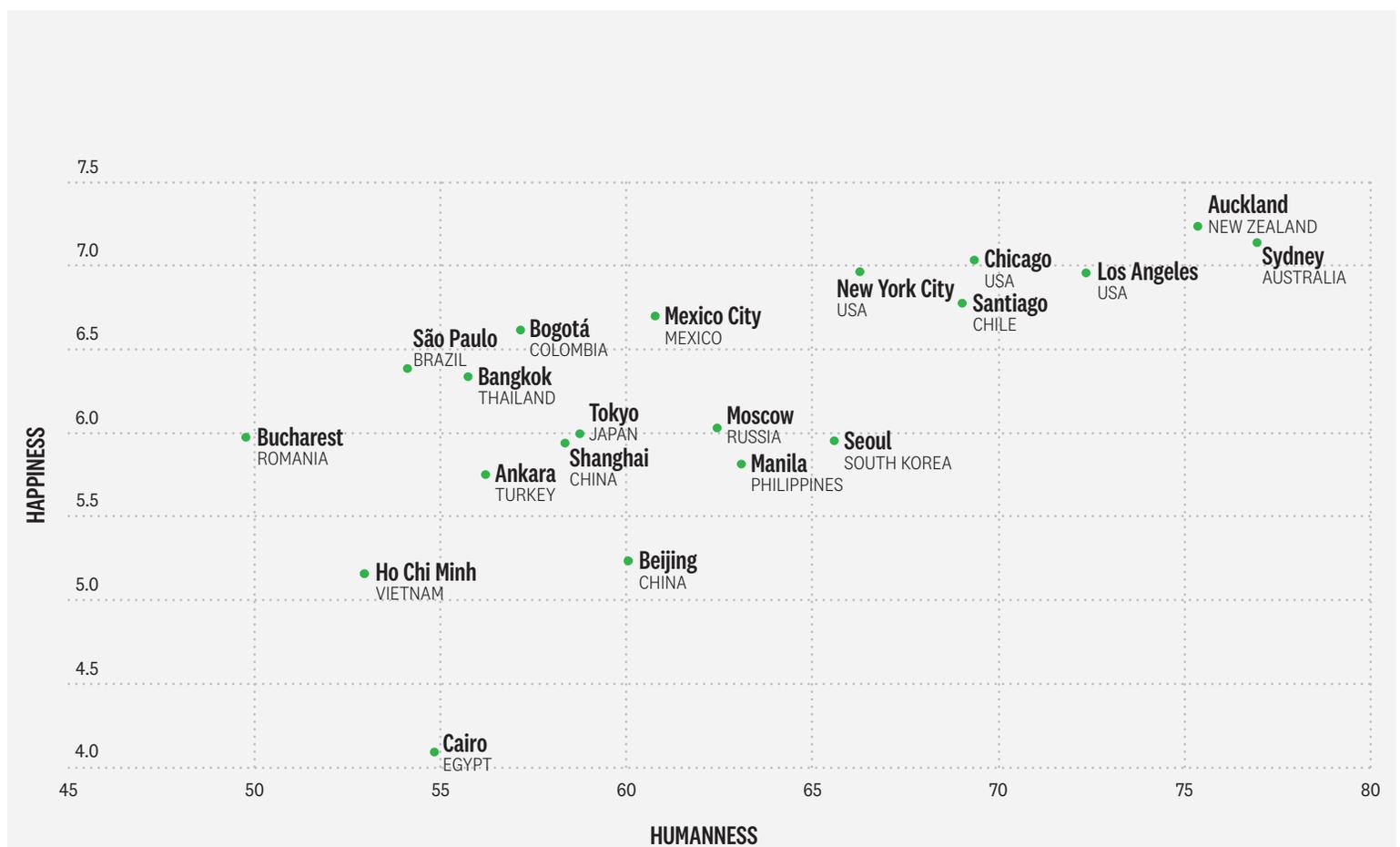
Happiness as an outcome for cities is imperative, as it's a significant predictor of peoples' resilience in adversity. From the plot in figure 1, it's evident that there's a positive relationship between a city's "humanness," as measured using proxies from the 2017–2020 World Values Survey, and its residents'

happiness, as measured by the World Happiness Report 2020, which ranks nations and cities on their citizens' happiness based on respondents' ratings of their lives.⁶

The World Happiness Report finds that people in a high-trust environment that promotes happiness

experience "extra well-being resilience" that makes them better able to weather hardships such as illness, divorce, a family member's death, and unemployment. It may not be too far a stretch to infer that this resilience, in turn, could help people more effectively work toward consistent economic growth.

FIG 1: Happiness correlates with humanness across 20 cities



Note: A fuller examination of the relationship between happiness and humanness would need to incorporate livable and smart city variables as well other variables known to be associated with happiness. This investigation is beyond the scope of this paper.

Source: Deloitte analysis based on data from the 2017–2020 World Values Survey and the World Happiness Report 2020.

When considering lovability, city leaders will run up against the question: Lovable for whom? A city that's lovable for one might not necessarily be lovable for another.

inclusion, however, may be difficult in cities whose leaders and citizens have more pressing concerns. The tendency to de-prioritize agency is a particular challenge in poorer cities, where escaping poverty is the primary concern.

Though civic agency often manifests in a democratic, participatory model, some city populations can achieve a sense of agency even without directly democratic mechanisms. This is more often the case in monolithic societies where people feel represented by those in power simply because their interests may align. Data from the World Values Survey,⁵ a global study of people's beliefs, values, and motivations, exemplifies this tendency in Beijing and Shanghai. When respondents were asked to rank four priorities from a list that also included strong defense, economic growth, and maintaining a beautiful environment, only 18% of Beijing respondents and about 14% of Shanghai respondents mentioned communal decision-making as one of their top two priorities. This is considerably lower than the average of all 22 cities surveyed, across which 47% of respondents identified public decision-making as a top priority.

Policymakers should be careful to account for varying conceptions of agency. The type of decision-making that's typically thought of as being conducive to agency in the West is not universally valued. While some people find agency in representation in political decision-making, others may find it in the freedom of economic choice.

Lovability has many shapes

Zooming out now to lovability as a whole, it's possible to find proxies for each of its three central qualities—livable, smart, and human—to measure and visualize a city's lovability. The sidebar “Shapes of love” shows these shapes of love, according to several chosen proxies, for the three cities of Shanghai, Sydney, and Berlin.

The important point here is that cities can be lovable in many ways, with some of the most desirable shapes depending on its residents' needs at a particular time. Parsing out

lovability's three aspects can allow leaders to help address a city's needs in a more nuanced manner than a single index figure. Investments can be planned to shift the shape of the triangle as needed with the city's changing demographics and needs.

Lovability also has many shades

When considering lovability, city leaders will run up against the question: Lovable for whom? A city that's lovable for one might not necessarily be lovable for another. The honest truth is that city planners and managers are unlikely to be able to design cities that are equally lovable for all. This is why it's important for leaders to consider not just the shapes but the shades of love—the desires, needs, and sentiments of specific population segments—and make conscious choices around which segments they want to prioritize.

To do this, leaders can craft a set of personas that represent the key groups that the city serves. One approach could be to start with traditional city demographics and develop personas that cover most of the city's residents (see figure 3, “Shades of love”). Another approach could be to create personas representing the types of people city leaders most want to attract and engage—for example, young professionals, artists, or new immigrants—to define a city that's lovable to them as well.

With the personas defined, city leaders can use methods such as ethnographic research, interviews, and surveys to help determine the dominant desires of each. Each persona would therefore also have a triangle that designates its preferences. The goal is to unearth both the commonalities and the tensions among desires of city residents.

For the purposes of illustration, a city's shape of love was depicted as a single triangle earlier in this article. In reality, however, cities have many neighborhoods, all of which can have different shapes of love, and whose particular populations may have different needs. New York, for example, has Brooklyn, Harlem, SoHo, Lower Manhattan, Jamaica, Chelsea, Hell's Kitchen, Greenwich Village, the Upper West Side, and the Lower East

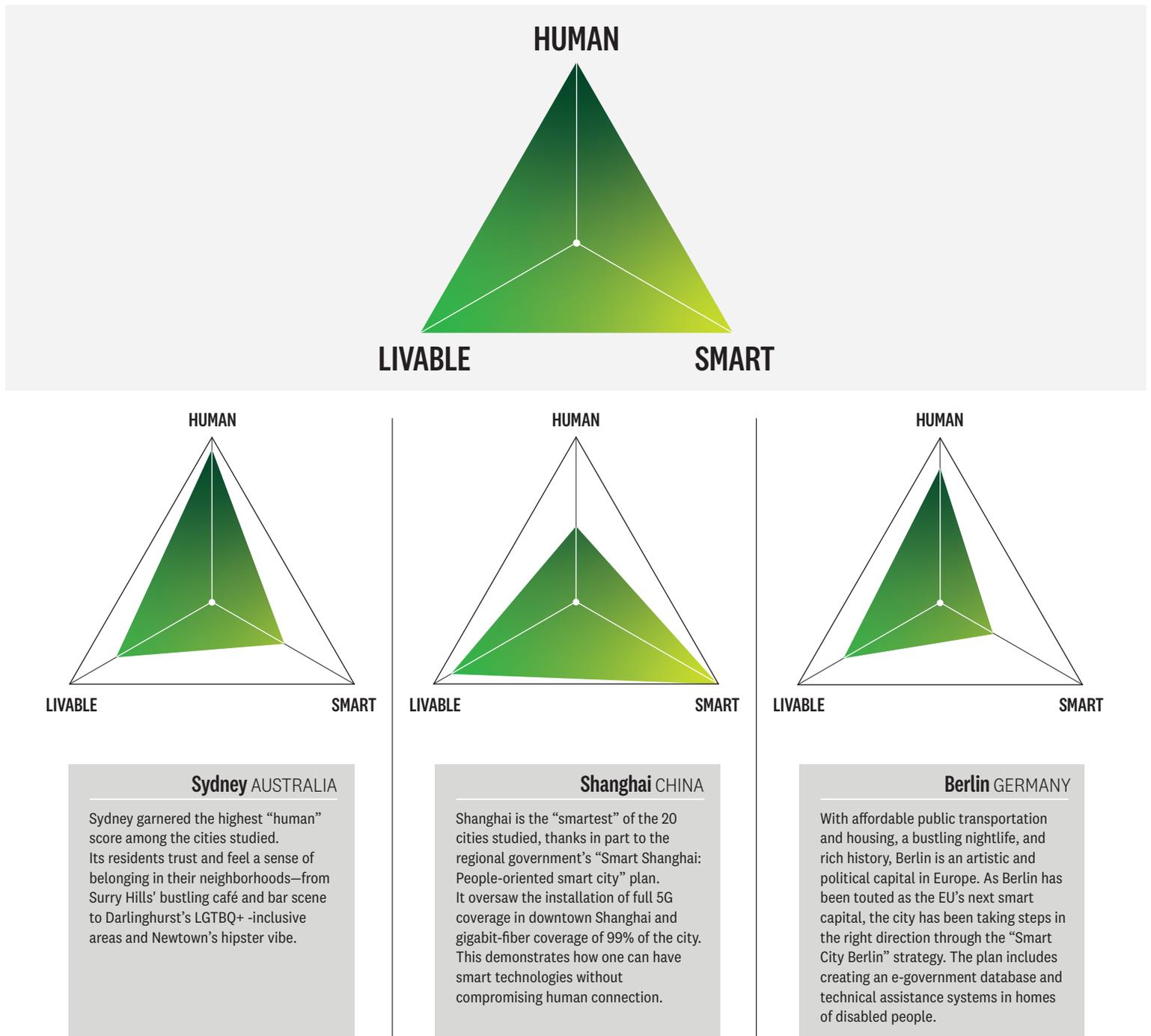
MEASURING THE SHAPES OF LOVE

The metrics used to illustrate the three principles of lovable cities are weak proxies, but they are drawn from the most credible publicly accessible data sets that can be found for a broad spectrum of cities. The livability dimension was assessed using the “Structures” section of the Institute for Management Development's (IMD) Smart City Index 2020.⁷ The 19 metrics within this index cover the five areas of health and safety, mobility,

activities, opportunities, and governance. The smart dimension was assessed from metrics from the “Technologies” section of the same IMD Smart City Index. These measures evaluate factors such as the availability of ridesharing apps, the extent of online reporting of city maintenance issues, and the quality of IT lessons in schools. Finally, while there are no data sets that capture the human dimension in as nuanced a way as would have

been preferred, the current research uses data from the 2017–2020 World Values Survey the proxy. The humanness metric draws upon questions that dealt with respondents' perceptions of free choice (freedom), life satisfaction (stimulation), closeness with their neighborhood (attachment), trust within the neighborhood (connection), neighbor preferences (inclusion), and political actions that they have thought of or might engage in (agency).

FIG 2: Shapes of love: Different cities, different lovability profiles



Source: Deloitte analysis.

Side, each with a distinct character and citizen priorities. City planners can therefore match the scale of analysis with their goals and the purpose of the study.

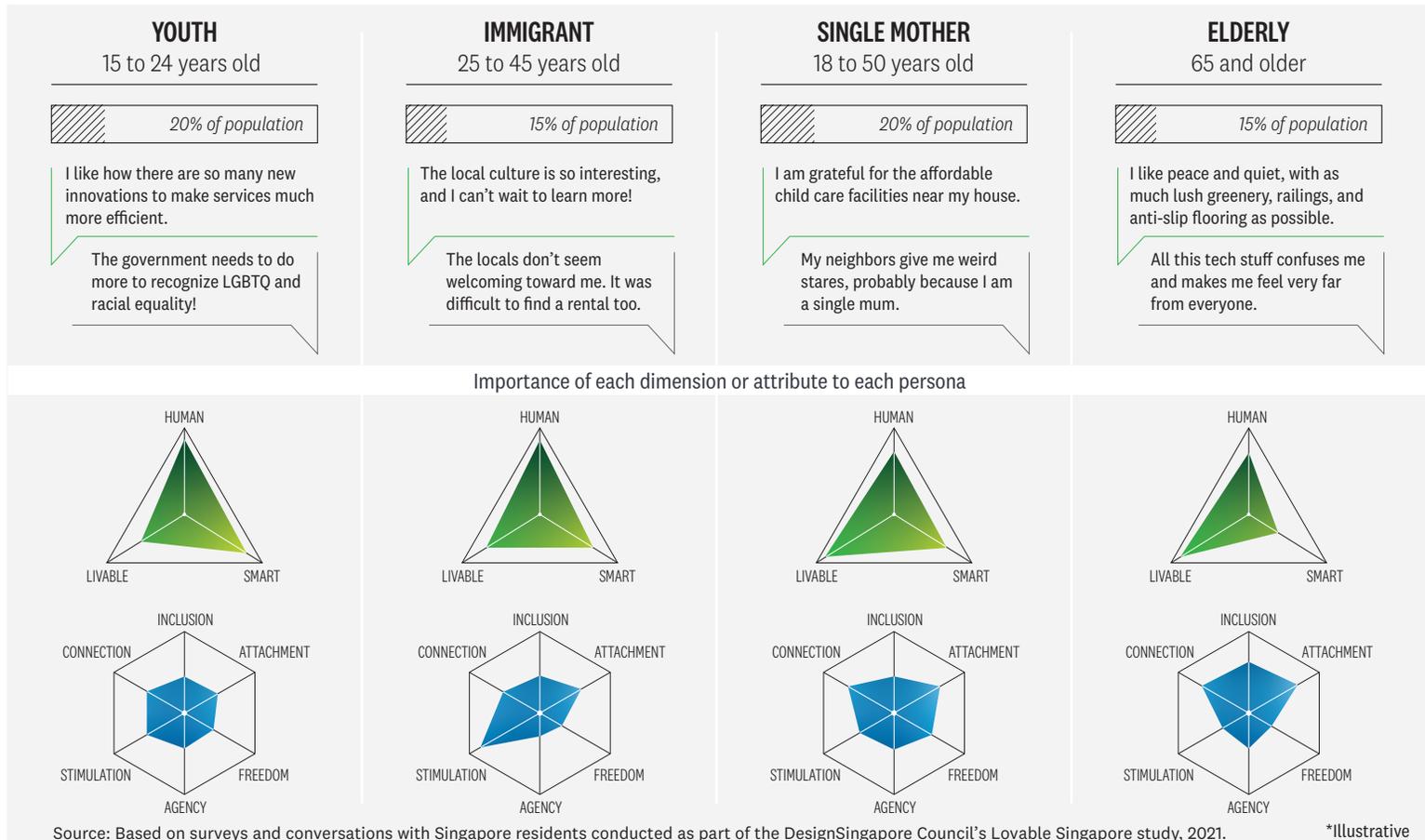
It's worth reiterating that how a city chooses to reshape its triangle will likely depend greatly on factors such as its existing infrastructure, its leaders' priorities, its current capabilities, and even its prevailing cultural ethos. In Singapore, pursuing lovability might take the form of establishing local museums to recount the young city's social history rather than its colonial history; in busy Athens, it may be expressed in the pedestrianization of the city center. But starting by mapping the shapes and shades of love is a powerful way for city planners and managers to understand where they may need to focus in designing and operating their cities to be more lovable—and more human.

Being human is what makes a city truly lovable

Many of the experiences that go into a city's lovability can be planned and intentional. Many are also inherently emergent as the scaffolding of the city's design is filled in by its occupants. It's up to city planners and governments to plan what can be planned, and influence what can't be planned, to move their cities toward being lovable. If we skimp on acknowledging and addressing the human underpinnings of what makes a city worth living in, we risk solving for the wrong factors. We shouldn't stop at making our cities livable. We should strive to make them lovable. ●

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FIG 3: Shades of love: Different populations have different needs and desires*



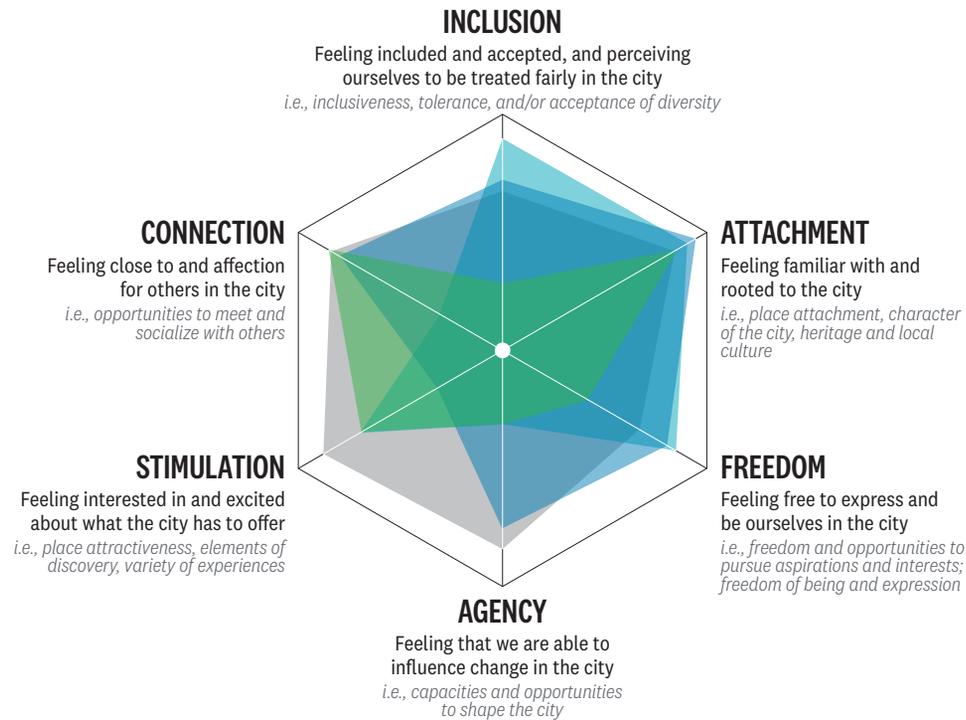
SINGAPORE'S QUEST FOR LOVABILITY

The Lovable Singapore Study is the city-state's inaugural concerted effort to uncover what it means to live lovably in Singapore and how the city could design for it. Led by the DesignSingapore Council (Dsg), Singapore's national agency for design, and with participation from both public agencies and private organizations,⁸ the study aims to increase lovability by balancing economic and cultural pursuits across an increasingly diverse and sophisticated population.

To establish the current landscape of Singapore's strengths and gaps, Dsg engaged almost 2,500 citizens to explore two questions: "What makes Singapore lovable?" and, "What would make Singapore more lovable?"

From this research, Dsg mapped four personas—unloved but attached, loving but disengaged, loved and engaged, and loved but disengaged—to the six emotional connections of the "human" dimension

of lovability, using the same visualization approach as used to map a city's livable, smart, and human attributes more broadly. The mappings were then stacked to identify where more targeted approaches may be needed for the city to be lovable to these personas. For instance, issues around a lack of attraction—the study's synonym for stimulation—were found to be associated with a lack of vibrancy in public spaces due to over-curation and regulation.



PERSONA A

Unloved but attached

Persona A often feels excluded or marginalized in some way.

- This affects their ability to move about freely in Singapore, metaphorically but also sometimes literally. This persona would feel stuck, and thus low on agency.
- They may also be anchored by nostalgia, personal history, and a sense of heritage. They therefore score higher on the attachment and stimulation fronts.



PERSONA B

Loving but unengaged

Persona B may personally feel included in Singapore but is disturbed by injustice in society. This group is likely to see others being excluded, impacting their perception of Singapore's lovability.

- Their sense of connection is high, as this group is driven by social justice and connection.
- They want to take action, but it might not be clear to them how to do so. Their sense of agency is therefore lower.

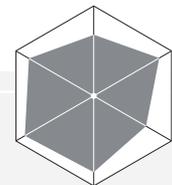


PERSONA C

Loved but unengaged

Persona C has been treated fairly well and lives a good life. This is what's most important to them.

- They have a high sense of freedom and inclusion, but their sense of agency is on the lower side, though they often do not feel this is important. This group may be uncomfortable with societal change.
- The group's stimulation is negatively affected by stress.



PERSONA D

Loved and engaged

Persona D represents those who believe that Singapore is home no matter what.

- They feel a sense of attachment and agency. Those who fall in this group also tend to be involved in grassroots and volunteer work.
- They are doing well in their own lives, so they feel free to be themselves in wider society.

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P11

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P19

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P30–32

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P33–35

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P46–51

Unshackling the creative business

1. China’s Broad Sustainable Building has developed a similar approach, though different in its details. The firm is known for its plan to assemble Sky City, a 220-floor building in Changsha, in 90 days. As with all good ideas, it germinated in multiple places.
2. Design for Manufacture and Assembly (DFMA) is a design approach that focuses on the efficiency of manufacturing and assembling the final product. The foundation of applying the approach to construction is a digital model of the building—a building information model (BIM). Rather than treating BIM as a tool to streamline existing operations, which is common, the DFMA approach centers the model and uses it to drive all building activities.
3. Hickory’s approach is built on a set of parametric digital models that enable a bespoke building to be broken down into a set of custom parts—precast stairs and pretensioned concrete flooring system with preattached façades—that are manufactured offsite and then assembled onsite. A key difference between Hickory’s and early modular systems is the focus on creating an approach that could be used to construct any bespoke building, rather than restricting the building to a set of predefined manufactured components.
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5. The regulation the City of Melbourne was considering would not directly mandate DFMA; however, it would favor night-time construction, with the implication that night-time noise restrictions would make it impossible to use a conventional construction process.
6. This two-part definition—where for a thing to be creative, it must be both novel *and* useful—is common in research into creativity. While definitions vary, they all generally adhere to this two-part form. Some definitions have *appropriate* rather than *useful*, and while

there is a semantic difference, one does imply the other. See Jonathan A. Plucker, Ronald A. Beghetto, and Gayle T. Dow, “Why isn’t creativity more important to educational psychologists? Potentials, pitfalls, and future directions in creativity research,” *Educational Psychologist* 39, no. 2 (2004): pp. 83–96.

7. Don Miller, Tsutomu Okamoto, and Trevor Page, *Organizational design: The rise of teams*, Deloitte Insights, March 1, 2016.
8. Early self-checking kiosks are an interesting example of the tension here. It was commonly assumed that good customer service implied doing as much as possible for the customer, so that there was little that they needed to do. A self-service kiosk pushes responsibility for navigating the check-in process to the customer, which contradicts this assumption. Many customers preferred the experience though, as it provided them with more control over the processes.
9. Vlad P. Glăveanu, *Distributed Creativity: Thinking Outside the Box of the Creative Individual* (New York City: Springer International Publishing, 2014).
10. The Four Ps framework was first proposed in Mel Rhodes, “An analysis of creativity,” *Phi Delta Kappan* 42, no. 7 (1961): pp. 305–10.
11. Place is called “press” in the research literature, as in “the influence of the ecological press on the person” in Rhodes’ initial formulation (ibid). The authors have chosen to use “place” instead to avoid confusion.
12. Alfonso Montuori and Ronald Purser, “In search of creativity: Beyond individualism and collectivism,” presented at the Western Academy of Management Conference, Kona, Hawaii, accessed July 30, 2021.
13. Rob Withagen and John van der Kamp, “An ecological approach to creativity in making,” *New Ideas in Psychology* 49, pp. 1–6, April 2018.
14. Views on the source of creativity—our understanding of creativity’s *cause*—have shifted over the centuries, passing through the *He* and *I* paradigms to end up at the current *We*. *He* is the lone genius, where creativity is due to the influence of god or, later, a person’s genetic inheritance—an essentialist view. *I* has the “normal” person replacing the genius, with creativity as a quality of the (lone) individual, the “creative personality,” a skill that can be taught—a reductive view. *We* has creativity as the result of multiple factors that must converge for creativity to occur, a “systems approach” or “social creativity” where creativity is the result of human interaction and collaboration.
15. This is both demographic diversity—diversity in identity and cultural background—and functional diversity—diversity in thinking style, business area, or discipline. While the two are correlated, they are not the same. See Lu Hong and Scott E. Page, “Groups of diverse problem solvers can outperform groups of high-ability problem solvers,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 101, No. 46 (2004): pp. 16385–9.
16. A number of techniques have been developed that enable us to measure creativity. One such approach is the consensual assessment technique (Teresa M. Amabile, “Social

psychology of creativity: A consensual assessment technique,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 43, no. 5 (1982): pp. 997–1,013). The Creative Solution Diagnosis Scale (David H. Cropley, “The Creative Solution Diagnosis Scale (CSDS),” *Creativity in engineering: Novel solutions to complex problems* (San Diego: Academic Press, 2015), pp. 78–85) is a similar tool, though more narrowly focused on engineering products. A similar product-focused tool is the Creative Product Semantic Scale (Susan P. Besemer and Karen O’Quin, “Confirming the three-factor creative product analysis matrix model in an American sample,” *Creativity Research Journal* 12, no. 4 (1999): pp. 287–96).

P52–61

From livable to lovable: Making cities more human

1. The World Bank, “Urban Development,” April 20, 2020.
2. Anthony Paletta, “Story of cities #32: Jane Jacobs v. Robert Moses, battle of New York’s urban titans,” *The Guardian*, April 28, 2016.
3. Developed from DesignSingapore Council’s “Lovable Singapore project” study.
4. Mayor of London, “Night Czar,” accessed July 10, 2021.
5. C. Haerpfer, R. Inglehart, A. Moreno, C. Welzel, K. Kizilova, J. Diez-Medrano, M. Lagos, P. Norris, E. Ponarin, and B. Puranen et al., World Values Survey: Round Seven - Country-Pooled Datafile. Madrid, Spain, and Vienna, Austria: JD Systems Institute & WWSA Secretariat. doi.org/10.14281/18241.13, 2020.
6. John F. Helliwell, Richard Layard, Jeffrey Sachs, and Jan-Emmanuel De Neve, eds., World Happiness Report 2020, Sustainable Development Solutions Network, New York, 2020.
7. Arturo Bris, Christos Cabolis, José Caballero, Marco Pistis, Maryam Zargari, and Bruno Lanvin, *IMD Smart City Index 2020*, International Institute for Management Development, 2020.
8. These organizations are Deloitte Center for the Edge, Centre for Liveable Cities, Housing and Development Board, National University of Singapore (School of Design and Environment), the Singapore Together secretariat, and the Urban Redevelopment Authority.

P64

The end note

1. Michael Argyle, Florisse Alkema, and Robin Gilmour, “The communication of friendly and hostile attitudes by verbal and non-verbal signals,” *European Journal of Social Psychology* 1, no. 3 (1971): pp. 385–402. This finding has been repeated in multiple behavioral studies such as Patricia Noller, “Video primacy—A further look,” *Journal of Nonverbal Behavior* 9, no. 1 (1985): pp. 28–47.
2. Jeremy N. Bailenson, “Nonverbal overload: A theoretical argument for the causes of Zoom fatigue,” *Technology, Mind, and Behavior* 2, No. 1 (2021).

Humanizing performance management

Some research and insights have a short shelf life, while others continue to gain color and context. In each issue of Deloitte Insights Magazine, we look back on research we published and ideas we pitched, and evaluate whether they've stood the test of time.

By **Timothy Murphy**

Director of research and insights for Deloitte's CMO Program



What we said then

“Nonverbal information often trumps verbal content. In one experiment, subjects were asked to rate video recordings of participants reading various passages. ... Subjects who were asked to assess the feelings of the participants assigned up to 13 times more importance to the nonverbal over the verbal content.”¹

Avoiding the feedback monsters: Using behavioral insights to develop a strong feedback culture, Deloitte Insights, April 2017.

What we say now

Put simply, we often communicate more meaning to our team members in how we deliver the message rather than just what we say. Words matter, but the tone and other nonverbal cues speak volumes.

Consider that fact within the context of our heavily remote—or hybrid—work environment today, in which emails, IMs, and conference calls are our primary modes of communication. The research we shared four years ago was conducted over video, but even video calls now are fraught with complexity when it comes to nonverbal communication. (The fatigue is *real*.)²

So how do team leaders host meaningful performance management conversations in a world in which face-to-face interactions can be few and far between, and video calls often involve staring at a shy, fatigued, or tuned-out team member's headshot?

Make videoconferencing the exception rather than the rule. Using video less frequently can help your team members avoid videoconferencing fatigue, and can help you increase the impact and meaning of those video-based touch points when you use them, tapping into your entire arsenal of communication—that is, both verbal and nonverbal cues. And if you're in a hybrid work model, reserve those relatively rare in-person moments for one-on-one feedback sessions and check-ins with your team, rather than just spending that time in the office for business as usual. ●

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CONTACT

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