Book review

Placemaking fundamentals for the built environment
by *Dominique Hes and Christina Hernandez-Santin (Eds)*
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This is a well-produced edited series that takes another overview of the ever-advancing field of placemaking. The editors' over-arching aim is to enhance the capacities and efficiencies of professionals, academics and communities working in placemaking strategies, and to expand the practice. The need for a publication such as this, according to Hes and Hernandez-Santin (2020), is evident from a research that showed theoretical knowledge of urban graduates is not adequately enriched with that of practical engagement in Australia.

Now, the book does not discuss something that is new – placemaking, with its human and environmental-centred approach is now a substantiated sustainable urban planning approach and tool. However, there are certain aspects that set it apart, making it a relevant contribution to the placemaking discourse: first, it is a collaborative work by academics from eight universities in Australia and another in Hong Kong. The 13 themes that map the chapters of the book were consolidated through an intensive workshop with 55 academics and industry practitioners. These chapters organise themes from those that address the general principles, concepts and modes of placemaking (Chapters 1–6), to blend into topics that cover implementation, management and sustainability of programs (Chapters 7–14). Each chapter concludes with a summary and key learning points. Second, unlike the more traditional edited book series, the chapters in this book are not standalones. They interact with each other: referencing and adding to related discourses and referring the reader to relevant chapters that expand on a current topic.

The first chapter "Fundamentals of Placemaking for the Built Environment" introduces the reader to the concept through its history, related benefits and issues that limit impact and cause "placelessness" rather than sense of belonging. The authors here tie their conception of placemaking simply to the conceptualisations of space by Lefebvre (1991), a claim on everyday life guided by needs and aspirations, culture and existence. This, for the reviewer, is interesting as Lefebvre's approach to space is multidimensional and active, as well as implicit (to the individual). The history traces placemaking's origins from the Project for Public Spaces (PPS) in the USA and protagonists that drove placemaking forward – Jane Jacobs and William Whyte for instance. As a practice, however, the authors link placemaking's manifestation to 17th century Edo period, Japan – the artful naturalness, *shakkei* (borrowing natural scenes) and natural environment and sociology of street life. Political manipulation, as noted by the authors, is a real challenge for effective placemaking, extending the discourse to aspects of social justice and opportunities creation.

Chapter 2 "People in Place: Placemaking Fundamentals" further expands on the concept of placemaking and its principles of connecting people to place. It starts with a brief review

of what 'place' means, gathering insight from relevant place theorists that include Christian Noberg-Schulz and Yi Fu Tuan. The authors further capture other proposed conceptions of meaning of place, and the link between enhancing place identity and the United Nation's sustainable development goal 11. Its principles are well placed to guide well balanced and beneficial place-based programmes. With a focus on context-specific placemaking strategies, the authors propose the Place Agency Placemaking Framework (5Ps), a collective suite of possibilities that can be creatively combined and include the following:

- people, as fundamental agents of change;
- process that is bottom-up, asset-based and purpose driven;
- product/projects that have multidimensional benefits and impacts;
- programmes, whether short or long term, which generate lasting connections between people and place; and
- progressive understanding, assessing and learning from place values and intervention outcomes.

Chapter 3 "Nature in Place: Placemaking in The Biosphere" provides a platform for embedding placemaking with nature. Emphasis on designing with nature in placemaking is not something new (Gifford, 2002). Here, however, the authors' focus is on community engagement via the values they uphold, priorities and degree of interest towards embedding nature in their daily place – a social-ecological perspective. The chapter moves on to define what "social" and "ecological systems" are and how they natural work interactively to support our complex living patterns, how sense of place is framed by these social ecological systems determining the degree of place attachment and belonging, and the role of people's stewardship of land and nature (care knowledge, agency) in strengthening the co-creation of well-connected places. These forms of stewardship are not new to, and deeply entrenched in, the Australian Aboriginal culture. With reference to Chapter 2, the authors re-calibrate the 5Ps to a framework of embedding placemaking with nature, with tips on what to do with community members and what to look for to implement these strategies.

Moving on from this, Chapter 4 "There's No Place Like (Without) Country" takes the reader into the complex world of the Australian Aboriginal people: on the one side is their rich culture, deeply entrenched in nature, ancestry and stories. These capture the fluidity of time past, present and future literal knowledge of the people that add depth and uniqueness to the Australian culture as a whole. On the other side is their continuing struggles for place and identity post-colonisation, and how these have translated into some vibrant placemaking initiatives and policies. Rather than site, the authors work with the concept of "Country". For the Aborigines, Country is not limited to discrete space, people, infrastructure, but include peoples' stories, experiences (including those of the ancestors) and every aspect of nature she comprises – a spiritual entity. The authors argue for "making place" where imminent versions of every self are projected, rather than "placemaking". They use the story of Wann Country (the Sydney Olympic park) and a collaborative placemaking initiative – the Miluni Songline, to exemplify this. Here, the language changes for the reader to become more folklore than academic. The people's stories and nature are main elements used in the project design and captured in outcomes. Engagement, they emphasise, is active, interactive and always on field. For this reviewer, the chapter brings a fresh perspective to understanding community and aligns with strategies for placemaking discussed in Hamdi (2010).

The next Chapter 5 poses the question "Community Engagement: What Is It?" The Author's aim is to present key tenets and processes of community engagement, which are essential to placemaking especially in the fast-paced, social media dominated times we

live in. It starts by trying to define "community" as a first step to identifying the appropriate mode of engagement to maintain "buy-in" with the community. The relevance of understanding community is highlighted in many a work on placemaking like the seminal by Sanoff (2000), and in the chapter by Brower (2005). Community exists in multiple dimensions, and there is still no standard agreed definition for it. The author then highlights what community engagement is and some relevant principles, the stakeholders and strategies for choosing relevant tools and techniques with examples – some well-known "old faithful's" and other new digital ones. The next steps are to ensure one has additional skills for managing different cultures and risk management, in addition to learning on the job.

Accordingly, Chapter 6 focuses on the role of two key stakeholders in the networked governance of place: "Local Governments and Developers in Placemaking: Defining Their Responsibilities and Capacities to Shape Place". The main aim is to understand why they value placemaking and to support design teams in effectively engaging with them. The authors fulfil this aim through two case studies and includes interviews with placemakers working with government, private and community sectors: the Town Team Movement in Perth, and specific to this, the Beufort street network; and the town team Inglewood on Beufort, which has fostered one of the most successful night markets in Australia. In summary, government stakeholders in Australia continuously seek and see the value in working with community organisations, especially where their own capacities are limited by resource challenges, whereas for developers, it presents an opportunity to make profits for shareholders while being socially responsible as well.

In Chapter 7, the topic "Design for Change: An Adaptive Approach to Urban Places" provides another perspective on socio-ecological systems discussed in Chapter 3, a dynamic and ever-changing concept. For the author, the understanding of, and strategies for placemaking in the context of urban transformations is essential to designing for resilience; however, this is still an underrepresented area of study. The discourse here can be related to arguments and ideas explored in for instance Thwaites *et al.* (2007). The chapter then goes on to identify four adaptive design strategies for urban change: transdisciplinarity, multifunctionality, incremental change and resilience [here bypassing the more traditional theory, as in Holling (1973), to more recent practical discourses, as in Walker and Salt (2012)]. These design strategies are then tested against a timeline case study of the greenway project in inner Sydney. For this reviewer, more experiments like these are, in truth, needed to better understand urban transformation and properly inform policy.

In the same vein, Chapter 8 also looks at the time factor in placemaking projects, with a focus on enhancing "Economics of Place" through simple analysis, however. Projects need to be financially viable and at the same time accrue benefits (economic, social and physical) for both community and government. The chapter starts by reviewing relevant literature on the value impacts of placemaking. It then outlines four approaches that can be used to assess placemaking's value:

(1) cost benefit analysis – when to measure, timeframe as projects mature, what to measure and project boundary or area;

(2) economic modelling with steps;

(3) the willingness to pay with processes; and

(4) financial analysis.

The authors also discuss what a business case is and in the context of placemaking. Australian states in general are now actively engaged with ensuring business case requirements for placemaking projects are fulfilled.

Placemaking "Project Implementation" is explored in Chapter 9. The authors present three case studies of small, medium and large-scale projects with the aim of highlighting the diverse nature of placemaking activities in Australia. They also refer to and highlight how the chapter focuses on the "process", "product" and "programme" aspects of the 5Ps framework (Chapter 2). The chapter starts by outlining what an implication framework is and its relevant parts, through which the case studies are discussed – governance, stakeholders, resources, timeline and maintenance. Aspects covered here also include the business case (Chapter 8) for the projects. In all, key to good project implementation are engaging people, place values, good funding and time management strategies that allow projects to evolve.

Following on, Chapter 10 introduces "Leadership in Placemaking" implementation with the aim of supporting stakeholders to navigate the complex management process. This follows an argument that in placemaking, seldom are the skills required to initiate, design and efficiently run projects discussed. The author starts by providing a brief background of leadership in context of the traditional, contemporary and transformational, and situational theories and frameworks. For him, placemaking is dynamic and, therefore, reliance on particular individuals is a risk. He proposes a new framework and tool – Leadership in Placemaking Reflective Tool – for a distributed form of leadership in placemaking. A clear outline of how this is developed is also presented. The author then reflects on case studies presented in the book through this leadership tool to draw out common strategies, lessons, and what are required to skilfully engage with stakeholders. For the readers is an invitation to reflect on their own capabilities.

The book then looks at how regulatory systems influence the production of place and decision making in Chapter 11: "The Systems of Place Agency: Adaptive Governance For Public Benefit". Project governance plays an active role in placemaking, from its inception to delivery and maintenance. Key terms for site-specific governance are first defined followed by a list of proposed tactics that can be used to leverage governance for public benefit depending on the politics and power dynamics of place. The conceptual framework, relevance and implication of these tactics are discussed through a series of Australian and international case studies. Essentially, whatever approach to placemaking is taken (top-down or bottom-up) or political and structural mechanism a city is run on, the objective is public value requiring consistent, multi-scaled and multi-tiered endeavours.

Chapter 12 diverts into digital placemaking – "DigitalXplace" – an emerging area of practice and research. The title, according to the authors, is a fashionable *collab* of digital and place, and their non-use of placemaking in the topic is deliberate. They argue for a re-evaluation of the concept as it is being monopolised by private developers and public agencies for profit-making rather than public value. Starting from a review of the varying perceptions of digital placemaking, the authors proffer a definition while considering the range of possibilities in its application. The many dimensions of digital placemaking and its application, tools, use of social media, associated approaches (workshops, focus groups, etc.), implications and impacts are then explored through four local (to Australia) and international case studies. For the reviewer, this chapter covers an emerging and fast transforming trend with the innovative technological developments at designers' disposal. It opens paths for new research, reassessments and interrogations of the dynamics between designers, people and behaviours and even ethics.

Chapter 13 takes the reader back to the topic of enhancing place attachment for people. It explores strategies for "Place Evaluation: Measuring What Matters by Prioritising Relationships", as projects need to be in-depth with greater inclusion of intangible benefits of place. This evaluation is necessarily at four levels of input, output, outcome and legacy.

The authors focus on the benefits of evaluating places, relevant tools in the process and its implication. They propose a comprehensive four dimensions of place framework (FDP), which they use to evaluate seventy-two place evaluation tools, followed by the theories and concepts that underpin their proposal. The applicability of the FDP is presented through a case study of a collaborative living pavilion project.

The last Chapter 14 further extends the topic of community engagement and connecting with the environment discussed in Chapters 3 and 5. It begins simply by highlighting a basic reality: urban places and all that are developed within them, their significance, functions and continued usefulness require the active engagement of people. For this reviewer, the publication by Habraken (1998) would have been a valuable reference here. The author then sought to show how art can become a sophisticated tool for reconciling
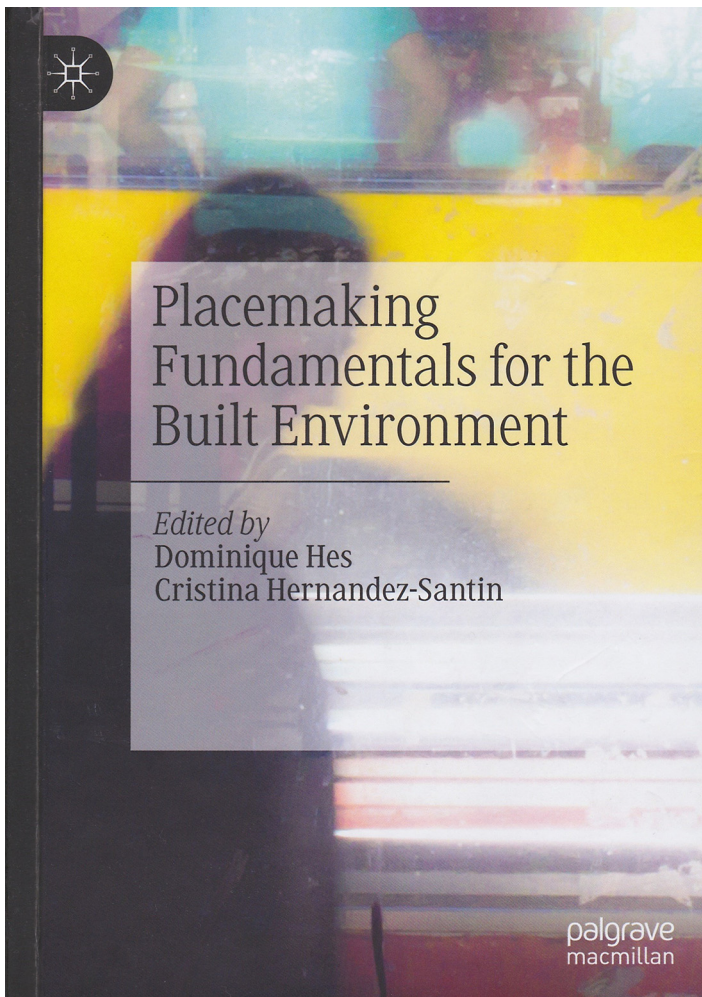
Figure 1.

tensions caused by historical invasions of indigenous space and place in Australia. This is done through an extensive literature review of placemaking and art as a process, and three documentary and case study analysis of community engagement via public art. These include examples of coastal place community engagement via public art, the use of art as resistance or social action for indigenous connection to place, and community urban renewal via public art.

Overall, this book is a recommended read for academics and practitioners as well as policy makers. For this reviewer, the print type is a good size and comfortable to read. Some of its greatest contributions to an already established paradigm that is continually advanced lies in its collaborative and interactive nature; furthermore, in the way it covers seldom discussed topics in placemaking, like its economic analysis, leadership and governance. However, one finds overlaps in the discourse between chapters, for example, on the aspect of engaging people, place and nature in placemaking. While at times, the author(s) build on and refer readers to topics in succeeding chapters. These are issues that may not have become evident where it not for the interactive and collaborative nature of the book chapters. Nonetheless publications like these that traverse topics for place improvement are ever more necessary as both global and local stakeholders continually strive to maintain lively and resilient cities. It is in this vein that the reviewer would have liked to see the research and application of ideas in the book extended to vulnerable urban contexts in developing world regions. Perhaps this can be an endeavour that can follow from the publication, drawing in international collaborations and learning platforms.

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