

A Review of Global Urban Placemaking Assessment Frameworks

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Abstract— Public urban spaces are considered one of the significant places in contemporary cities. They promote interaction between different people. Appropriation of spaces can lead to more connections to and between these spaces and more opportunities to interact and further, to socialize. Most of the existing public urban spaces in many cities are poorly designed without any consideration to the concept of urban placemaking. They are unable to promote accessibility, sense of community, pleasant social life that an urban open space is envisioned to. Hence, it is necessary to change the concept of developing public urban spaces and adopt a new strategy based on a holistic development view which identifies multi challenges and dimensions. Place-making assessment of public urban spaces has been one of the major guiding principles for urban planning and policymaking. Assessing how placemaking can positively contribute to urban environments is critical to inform both the continued development of the place and the way placemaking is done as a practice. Therefore, this paper aimed to study the concept of urban placemaking and review the state of art of current global placemaking assessment frameworks.

Keywords— Literature Review, Public Urban Spaces, Placemaking Assessment, Placemaking Dimensions, Placemaking Assessment Frameworks

I. INTRODUCTION

Public urban spaces are an essential component in any urban settlement. They are quite important in enhancing the quality of urban life while offering social, health, environmental and economic benefits to a city and its residents. The evaluation and definition of public urban spaces through place-making assessments have been fundamental principles in urban planning and policymaking. This has emerged as a critical research area. It is becoming increasingly important to mitigate the negative effects of urbanization in cities while enhancing the resilience of public urban space to environmental, social, and economic changes. Several place-making assessment instruments (PATs) have been devised on a global scale to make such informed decisions. They serve as a catalyst to increase the market demand for sustainable products and services by recognizing excellence. Assessing how placemaking can positively contribute to urban environments is critical to inform both the continued development of the place and the way placemaking is done as a practice. Therefore, this study aims to review

different themes for assessing urban placemaking in public urban spaces.

A. Research Problem

The development of urban public spaces is presently proceeding, but there is no evidence that the concept of urban placemaking or public participation in decision-making is being considered. These public spaces end up lacking elements that attract users. In addition, the lack of amenities, such as adequate illumination, monitoring, accessibility, and maintenance, contributes to insecurity. Some of these open spaces are unattractive, psychologically uncomfortable, and unsuitable for social interaction and recreation at certain times due to the perceived unfriendliness of nature and vegetation towards their users.

This underlines that the concept of placemaking is not given enough consideration in the current urban development and there is a clear emphasize to assess public urban space designs through placemaking concept. Globally, several place-making assessment tools (PATs) have been developed to make such informed decision-making. Meanwhile, the process tends to be about assessment as a product (creating a score) rather than or questioning how the evaluation can inform future redevelopment.

B. Research Aim

It is necessary to change the concept of developing public urban spaces and adopt a new strategy based on a holistic development view which identifies the main challenges. This paper aims to analyze existing global placemaking assessment frameworks and develops conceptual framework to address an integrative placemaking assessment framework including physical, environmental, social, economic, cultural, and psychological dimensions.

C. Research Methodology

This paper provides an overview of how Placemaking can be understood as a concept and touches briefly on assessing placemaking in public urban spaces. It will tend to review and analyze three global existing placemaking assessment frameworks which are Place Standard Tool (UK), The Place Diagram (USA) and Place Score (AU) according

to their ability to cover the main indicators of urban placemaking.

II. PUBLIC URBAN SPACES AND PLACES

Carmona et al. (2010) define public space as an outdoor configuration that typically facilitates relief from urban existence. This classification encompasses civic plazas, thoroughfares, and recreational areas within a municipality. These spaces are considered to be suitable environments for human habitation. They contribute to the development of communal identity, promote social interaction within the community, and foster a sense of belonging. Additionally, these locations play a crucial role in determining the land-use values of society (Fainstein, S., 2005).

Public spaces serve as a representation of the amalgamation of social, political, economic, and physical viewpoints, signifying the fusion of social activities, traditions, and cultural practices. They embody a broader facet of the community or culture. The comprehension of public space is shaped by individuals' diverse daily activities, obligations, and accountabilities. Individuals utilizing public spaces can disseminate information and engage in discourse pertaining to political matters. The provision of public spaces facilitates increased opportunities for social interaction. The significance of public life within a community is evidenced by its capacity to mitigate social isolation (Ayeghi, A. et al., 2014).

Public urban space and place are related concepts, but they have some important differences. Public urban space refers to the physical areas that are accessible to everyone in a city or urban environment, such as streets, parks, plazas, and other public areas. These spaces are usually designed and maintained by the government or other public entities and are intended for use by the general public.

On the other hand, place refers to the social and cultural meanings that people attach to specific areas within a city or urban environment. Places have a sense of identity. In other words, when a person or group links a space to their own personal experiences, cultural values, and social meanings, it is transformed into a place for them (Hunziker et al., 2007). According to Knox (2005) place serves as a backdrop for social interaction and plays a crucial role in shaping the daily routines of economic and social life. It also influences people's life trajectories by presenting them with opportunities and limitations. Furthermore, place serves as a space where individuals gather common-sense knowledge and experience, and where socialization and social reproduction take place as shown in figure (1).

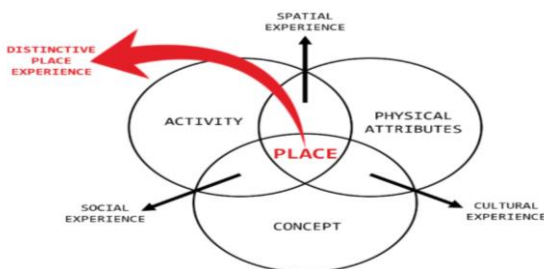


Fig. 1: Model of Place

Source: Ghavampour and Vale (2019)

III. URBAN PLACEMAKING

The concept of urban placemaking is a crucial aspect of urban design and planning. It involves the creation and enhancement of public spaces that are attractive, functional, and accessible to all members of the community. The goal of urban placemaking is to foster a sense of community and social interaction, while also promoting economic development and sustainability.

This approach involves engaging the local populace in the design process, crafting spaces that are hospitable to citizens, revitalizing community areas into lively and appealing places, and enriching the standard of living and prospects for current inhabitants. Furthermore, the objective is to establish or reconstruct a distinct sense of locality or branding of a place (Carmona, M. et al., (2003).

Placemaking is a participatory approach that involves the collective efforts of community members to transform and reinvigorate public spaces with the aim of enhancing the quality of urban environments. The procedure enhances the tangible, intangible, and communal characteristics of a place through the promotion of unity and a collective consciousness among its users. Wood, L. et al., (2008)

The concept of placemaking aims to enhance social interaction and foster a sense of community within a shared space, as shown in figure (2). This is achieved through encouraging community participation in various activities, ultimately contributing to the social sustainability of the space. The concept of placemaking is known to foster a notable sense of attachment and connection to a particular location, as the revitalized communal area is a product of the creative ideation, engagement, and labor of individuals. The establishment of a distinct identity for a location is crucial for its overall welfare, protection, and stability. This is because it fosters a sense of community among individuals who share a common identity, as noted in reference (Ellery, P.J. et al., 2019).



Fig. 2: The Umbrella Project installation in Portugal turns a street into a venue for special events.

Source: <https://www.pps.org/places/umbrella-sky-project>

Using the concept of placemaking as an urban design strategy has the potential to generate dynamic and habitable cities that cater to the requirements of their residents. Placemaking initiatives have the potential to revitalize underutilized public

areas into vibrant community centers by emphasizing human needs over physical infrastructure, fostering community involvement, and advocating for sustainability and inclusivity as shown in figure (3). Although placemaking poses certain challenges and limitations, its advantages are evident. By means of meticulous planning and investment, urban areas can establish public spaces that are genuinely sustainable and conducive to human activity (Madden, K., 2011)



Fig. 3: Unique Inclusive Playground within a Shopping Center at Stockland Point Cook, Australia
 Source: Tewari, S. et al., 2018

A. Placemaking Movement

Placemaking refers more specifically to creating places in the built environment. From the 1960s, concerns about auto-centric planning and bad public spaces began to emerge, as insights into human-scale movement and social interaction in the built environment were made. Influential works include Lynch’s “The Image of the City” (1960), which presented empirical research on how individuals navigate the urban landscape (Lynch, K., 1960), and Jacobs’ “The Death and Life of Great American Cities” (1961) which described the interaction between people in her home of Greenwich Village (Carr, S. et al., 1992). Jacobs (1961) argues that for pedestrian safety and wellbeing, protection and civic trust comes from other people’s “eyes on the street” (Jacobs, J., 1961). These works were fundamental in illustrating the link between the built environment and social wellbeing.

B. Benefits of Urban Placemaking

Urban placemaking is becoming one of the most celebrated aspects of urban design in sustainable cities. (WAKABA, D., 2016). Urban Placemaking in public urban spaces aims to:

- 1) Improves Accessibility
 - More Walkable
 - Safe for Pedestrians and bicyclists
 - Compatible with public transit
 - Reduces need for cars.
 - Enhance connections between users.
- 2) Improves Environmental Quality
 - Visually pleasing and appealing.
 - Provides cooling effects.
 - Absorb city carbon emission.
 - Regenerate ecological system.
- 3) Builds Social Cohesion and Inclusion
 - Improves social and cultural interaction.

- Foster sense of belonging
 - Draws a diverse population: youth, women, elderly, and vulnerable.
 - Encourages community creativity.
- 4) Promotes Health
 - Increased physical activity.
 - Provides a calming environment.
 - Enhance feeling of safety and security.
 - 5) Builds Local Economy
 - Supports small-scale entrepreneurship.
 - Increase real estate values.
 - Attracts Investments.
 - Greater tax revenue.
 - 6) Defines Sense of Community
 - Improves mutual trust among diverse groups.
 - Increase sense of pride and volunteerism
 - Less need for municipal control

IV. SELECTED GLOBAL PLACEMAKING ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORKS

Assessing public urban spaces through the place-making agenda is important to identify the most important criteria to design successful public urban spaces, and to enable the stakeholders, urban designers, and architects to plan further steps to improve the quality of public urban spaces, as well as to enhance the role of the community. The selected assessment tools are Place Standard (UK), The Place Diagram (USA), Place Score (Australia).

A. Place Standard (UK)

The Place Standard tool simplifies place-related conversations to enhance Scottish localities. Scotland's public authorities created the tool in December 2015 to help deliver high-quality, sustainable spaces. It helps participants evaluate a place's physical, social, and environmental characteristics and choose their priorities as shown in figure (4).

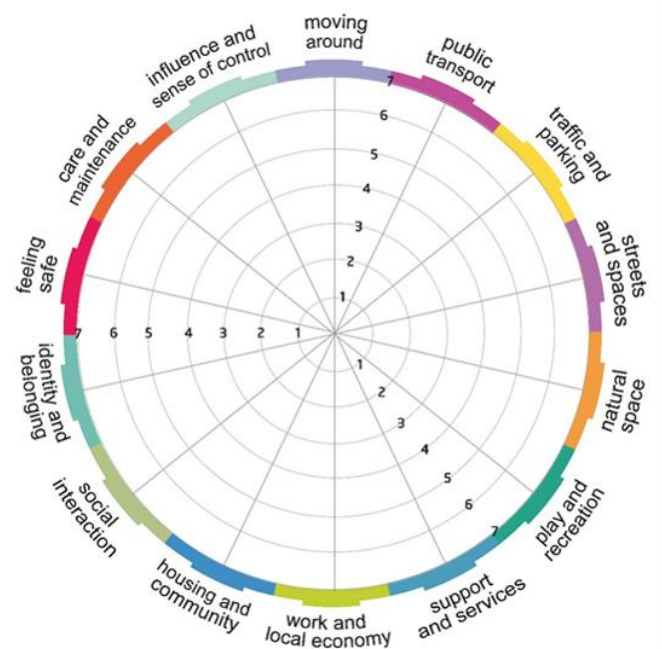


Fig. 4: Place Standard tool (UK)

It facilitates organized involvement, promotes constructive dialogue and collaboration amongst relevant groups, and identifies areas for quality improvement as shown in table I. (Hasler, K. and Howie, J., 2020).

Table I. Place Standard Tool Indicators & Sub-indicators (UK)

Indicator	Sub-Indicator
Movement	Moving Around
	Public Transport
	Traffic and Parking
Space	Streets and Spaces
	Natural Space
	Play and Recreation
Resources	Facilities and Amenities
	Work and Local Economy
	Housing and Community
	Social Contact
Civic	Identity and belonging
	Feeling safe
Stewardship	Care and maintenance
	Influence and Sense of control

B. The Place Diagram (USA)

In evaluating thousands of public spaces around the world, Project for Public Spaces (PPS) in New York has found that to be successful, they developed **The Place Diagram** below as a tool to help people in judging any place, good or bad as shown in figure (5). Generally, they share the following four qualities: they are **accessible**; people are engaged in **activities** there; the space is **comfortable** and has a good image; and finally, it is a **sociable** place: one where people meet each other and take people when they come to visit bad as shown in table II.



Fig. 5: The Place Diagram (USA)

Table II. The place Diagram Framework Indicators & Sub-indicators (USA)

Indicator	Definition	Sub-Indicator
Accessibility	People access to the space	Place easy to get to
		There is parking or access to public transport
		Place meet disability access requirements
		There are other destinations nearby
Activities	People like to visit the space	How people are using the space
		It is used at different times of day
		There is a balance of ages and genders
		There are different types of activities offered
Sociability	People interaction in the space	A place to meet friends
		People use the space regularly
		It is used by the broader community
		people have a sense of pride and ownership
Comfort	People want to stay in the space	The place is clean and safe (e.g., hygiene, lighting, security)
		Place provides shade and shelter
		There are enough places for people to sit
		It has a good aesthetic and atmosphere that people want to return to

C. Place Score (Au)

Place Score is an Australian-based tool that measures place experience (PX) before and after placemaking activities have occurred, allocating the place a score out of 100. It is said to be a quantitative tool, which captures community values, across physical, economic, social and cultural dimensions as shown in table (III).

Table III. Place Score Tool Indicators & Sub-indicators (AU)

Indicator	Definition	Sub-Indicator
Care	How well a public urban space is managed, maintained, and improved. It considers care, pride, personal and financial investment in the area.	General condition of public open space (street trees, footpaths, parks etc.).
		Protection of the natural environment.
Look and Function	Physical characteristics of a public urban space: how it looks and works, the buildings, public space, and vegetation.	Quality of public space (footpaths, verges, parks etc.).
		Landscaping and natural elements (street trees, planting, water features etc.)
Sense of Welcome	The social characteristics of a public urban space, and how inviting it feels to a range of people regardless of age, income, gender, ethnicity, or interests.	Sense of personal safety (for all ages, genders, day or night).
		Sense of public spaces safety (from crime, traffic, pollution)
		Access and safety of walking, cycling and/or public transport (signage, paths, lighting etc.)
Things to do	Activities, events and inviting spaces to spend time in a public urban space that might lead to a smile or a new friend.	Walking/jogging/bike paths that connect housing to communal amenity (shops, parks etc.)
Uniqueness	Physical, social, cultural, or economic aspects of an area that make a public urban space interesting, special or unique.	Elements of natural environment (natural features, views, vegetation, topography, water, wildlife etc.)
		Locally owned and operated businesses

The tool is considered to be a ‘diagnostic, engagement, benchmarking and tracking tool’, and can be applied to various scales, for example, neighbourhood, town centres, workplaces (Place Score, 2019).

V. DISCUSSION

The Place Standard tool utilised in the United Kingdom comprises a total of 14 distinct indicators for evaluating placemaking. The framework offers a straightforward structure for organising discussions pertaining to locality and society. The subject matter pertains to the evaluation and analysis of the physical surroundings, encompassing the edifices, thoroughfares, communal areas, and ecological landscapes that constitute a locality. The social environment encompasses the various interpersonal connections, social interactions, and support systems that constitute a given community as shown in figure (6).

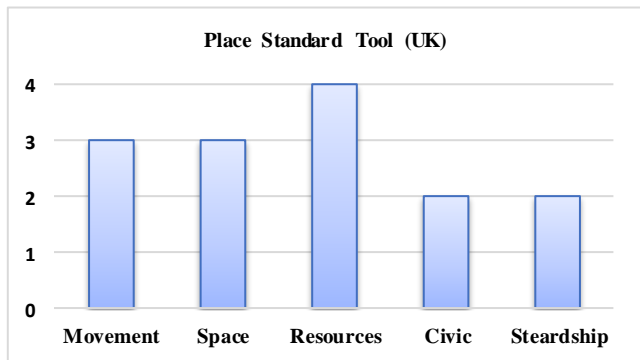


Fig. 6: The main indicators of Place Standard Tool (UK)

The project of public space (PPS) was based on Whyte’s theory, focusing on social interaction and qualities of space that enhance usability. PPS aimed to enhance place making to strength the connection between people and the places they share, through promoting better urban design, facilitates creative patterns of use, paying particular attention to the physical, cultural, and social identities that define a place and support its ongoing evolution.

The place diagram (USA) has more emphasis on Sociability (8 criteria), Use & activities (9 criteria), Comfort & image (9 criteria), and less on Access & Linkages (7 criteria) as shown in figure (7).

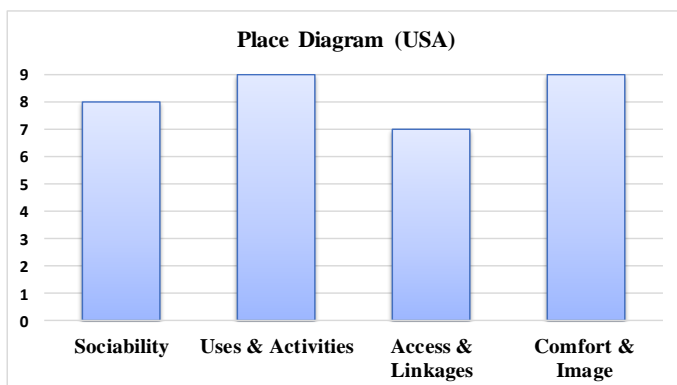


Fig. 7: The main indicators of Place Diagram (USA)

Meanwhile, place score tool in Australia focuses on the livability improvement priorities (those things identified that are important to the community but which are currently underperforming) as quality of public space, access and safety of walking, cycling and/or public transport, walking/jogging/bike paths that connect housing to community amenities (like shops and parks), the general condition of public open space (street trees, footpaths, parks), and protection of the natural environment as shown in figure (8).

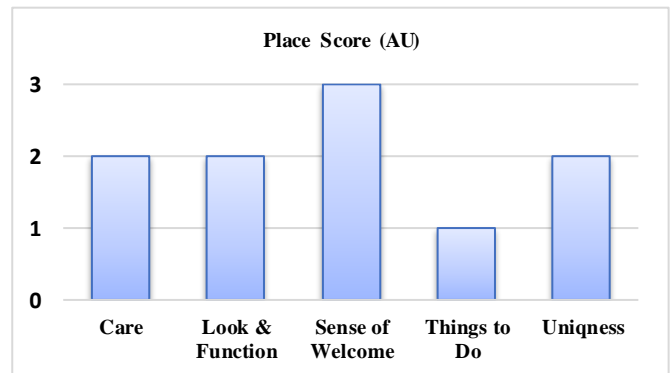


Fig. 8: The main indicators of Place Score Tool (AU)

From the previous discussion, it is shown that urban placemaking is a multidisciplinary research domain as it concentrates not just on the physical element but considers the non- physical elements as well as the overlap among them. This study concluded that placemaking dimensions can be categorized into six dimensions (physical, environmental, social, economic, cultural, and psychological) as shown in figure (9).

1. Physical dimension is about “provision” or the physical structure of public space which are accessibility, connectivity, mix of uses, visually attractive, adaptable, and resilient...etc.
2. Environmental dimension deals with the ways in which space promotes environmental sustainability, green infrastructure, and protection of biodiversity.
3. Social dimension is about how people interact and socialize within space, such as how it fosters social connections, community engagement, and a sense of belonging.
4. Economic dimension is about how well-designed public urban space contributes to the local businesses, create job opportunities, have a positive impact on property values in the surrounding area, attracting visitors and tourists, and ensuring that resources are allocated effectively and efficiently.
5. Cultural dimension include the cultural identity of the place, contribute to its distinctive character. Each space has its own characteristics that represent the civilization in which it was established through its culture and values.
6. Psychological dimension focuses on the emotional and mental impact of public urban spaces on people such as sense of place, comfort, safety, and promoting healthy places.



Fig. 9: Suggested Dimensions of Urban Placemaking
 Source: Author

VI. CONCLUSION

Placemaking assessment frameworks are designed to help evaluate the quality of public urban spaces and to identify areas of improvement. They help create more vibrant, inclusive, and functional public urban spaces that meet the needs of their users and contribute to the overall health and well-being of the community.

By reviewing previous global placemaking assessment tools (Place Standard Tool, UK - The Place Diagram, USA - Place Score, AU) that seek to create safer, more vital, and dynamic public urban spaces, this study concluded that global

placemaking should be more holistic approach to create physical change, shape the environment, encourage social interaction to ultimately promote people’s quality of urban life. Placemaking should emphasize cultural identity that rich and diverse cultural heritage of a community, promotes environmental sustainability, resilience and preserves biodiversity. placemaking contributes to the economic vitality and supports local businesses. In addition, placemaking can improve the overall psychological well-being of a community, by creating public urban spaces that support feelings of belonging and happiness.

Therefore, this paper intended to develop a conceptual urban placemaking framework to address different dimensions of creating vibrant places including physical, environmental, social, economic, cultural, and psychological dimensions.

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