

# Placemaking in Practice

## VOLUME 1

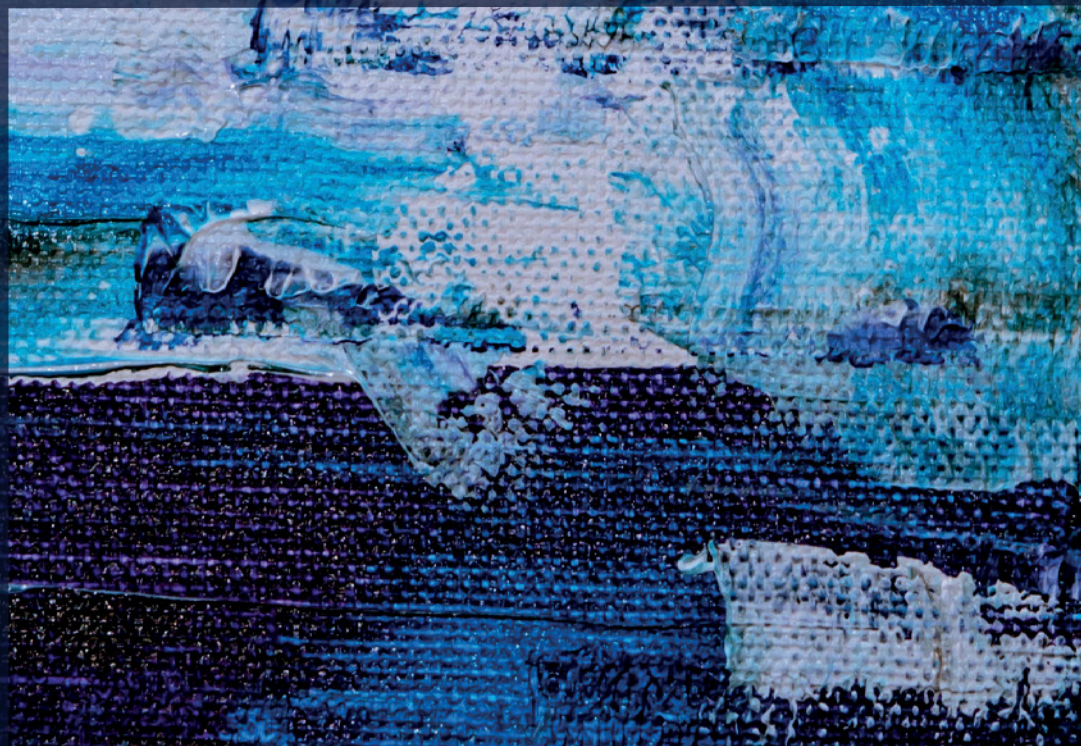
### *Experiences and Approaches from a Pan-European Perspective*

*Editors-in-Chief*

**Carlos Smaniotto Costa, Mastoureh Fathi and Juan A. García-Esparza**

*Editors*

**Aleksandra Djukic, Conor Horan and Francesco Rotondo**



Dynamics of Placemaking  
Volume 1



# Dynamics of Placemaking

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# Introduction

*Mastoureh Fathi, Juan A. García-Esparza and Carlos Smaniotto Costa*

Placemaking can be understood as an intentional process of situating, revealing, and creating meaningful environments.

C. G. FREEMAN (2020)



*Placemaking in Practice – Experiences and Approaches from a Pan-European Perspective* is a collective effort from multiple scholars in different contexts to bring Freeman's message into practice. It is the result of a COST Action, an interdisciplinary research network of researchers and innovators who spend several years investigating a topic together. The main aim of this COST Action was to analyse “how placemaking activities re-imagine and reinvent public space and improve citizens’ involvement in urban planning” and to understand the role of “digital tools to record, transform, produce and disseminate a citizens’ knowledge about the urban spaces throughout Europe’s cities” (Dynamics of Placemaking, 2019, p. 2).

This volume addressing the above objective, uses case studies that were conducted in the European context to explore placemaking as a process, as a tool, as a methodology and as an innovative way to think about the past, present and future of cities. In this process, the contributors to this book have focused on different aspects of placemaking in relation to digitization of space, time and practices in cities that have contributed to different understandings of how space and place are experienced.

Placemaking is a multi-layered and multidimensional approach used in different disciplines engaged in urban planning and the involvement of people in the development of their environment. Firstly, placemaking focuses on the processes of understanding public open spaces that are shared among people, such as streets, neighbourhoods, parks, town squares, ports, quays, shopping malls, etc. Planning, designing and maintaining open public spaces are important in understanding practices of placemaking by actors such as young people, women, migrants, etc. (Fathi & Ní Laoire, 2021). These new forms of knowledge can be used to inform future plans.

This volume aims, first, to show the kinds of activities, processes and outcomes of living that use urban spaces in different European contexts. The cases offered in each chapter, amalgamated through variegated perspectives, provide insights for instigating more collaborative results in urban development.

The second element in placemaking that this book addresses is digitization (such as virtual, AR, mixed reality, Bluetooth, wireless beacons, surround sound). Digitization is an important aspect of the methods and tools used in placemaking. As has been argued, digitization can enhance the capacity, competitiveness and communication between users (e.g. tourists, visitors and citizens) (Smaniotto Costa et al., 2019). Most importantly, digitization can offer solutions that enhance and accelerate the experiences and practices of users, citizens, visitors, and agents that use a space. Digitization and development driven by information and communications technology (ICT) are gradual but widespread and they are changing the process of placemaking in the public and digitization can add value to the experience of placemaking in the public (Menezes & Smaniotto Costa, 2017).

## 1 What Is This Book About?

This volume draws on increasingly used digital tools, current approaches and theories through case studies in different projects and contexts. To highlight this, each chapter has utilized more than one placemaking method and digitization tool and across different European countries. Including more than one case in each chapter enables the reader to gain a broad insight on how these tools are applied comparatively and to understand the “meaning” of a place and the “making” of it. The practices of placemaking discussed here range from micro practices to meso and macro. All chapters address how placemaking is put into practice and how the practice/approach shaped the dynamics of making places.

This book is the first volume of a trilogy on placemaking and is a result of the COST Action “Dynamics of Placemaking and Digitisation in Europe’s Cities” (CA18204). Under the title *Dynamics of Placemaking*, the trilogy aims to investigate the current practices of placemaking in order to increase shared knowledge across different countries to develop “a new agenda in placemaking” using digital technologies. The authors all belong to the COST Action’s large transnational network (over 90 members) who have collaborated for almost three years. All chapters have gone through a double-blind peer reviewed process carried out by the editorial team and other colleagues. The first volume *Placemaking in Practice – Experiences and Approaches from a Pan-European*

*Perspective* is aimed at academics, practitioners and stakeholders who are interested in the concepts of space and place, city environments, urban planning and human interactions in social settings. Each chapter features specific lessons that were learned in each case as a way forward to understand placemaking.

## 2 A Brief Layout

The book is divided into two sections: “Cultural Heritage and Placemaking” and “Collaborative Processes for Placemaking”. The first section consists of an introductory chapter to the topic and six thematic chapters on a diverse range of cases. The aim of this section is to show how individuals use public places and make sense of a place individually and/or collectively. This section offers novel insights into placemaking through cultural heritage, memories of the past and related current cultural practices. It is oriented to help to (re)construct a place from a cultural perspective (Altaba & García-Esparza, 2018; García-Esparza & Altaba, 2020).

The second section brings together an introduction and eight chapters that collectively address the role of different stakeholders in placemaking processes and discuss the outcomes of such processes. This section sheds light on a series of innovative and novel methods on placemaking in the public space. These chapters show “what” can be “done” collaboratively in order to make public spaces of cities more inclusive, participatory and engaging.

To conclude, the chapters in both sections expand our current knowledge about placemaking, the ways in which places are used and understood. Whilst this book is based on cases, the comparative aspect of each chapter offers novel insights into the dynamics of placemaking in these contexts. It is hoped that the book is used as a start of a comprehensive argument on placemaking that will be followed up in the next two volumes.

## Acknowledgements

In the production of this volume, which accompanies the development of COST Action “Dynamics of Placemaking and Digitisation in Europe’s Cities” (CA18204), several people have helped tremendously. First and foremost, we want to thank the authors for their contributions and their willingness to put their trust in this volume as the platform for sharing their valuable experiences. Second, we are grateful to the section editors (Aleksandra Djukic, Conor

Horan, Francesco Rotondo and Juan A. García-Esparza) for their engagement and constant work. We are particularly indebted to Nicole Shea and Aurora Marijke Martin for reviewing some of the chapters. Third, we also thank the COST Programme for the trust placed in this Action. The COST Programme provided the financial frame for the setting up of working group meetings and conferences, the organization of short-term scientific missions and other dissemination activities that helped the authors to find each other and identify common grounds towards understanding the scope of placemaking and digitization. The COST Programme has also financed the publication of this volume.

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## PART 1

### *Cultural Heritage and Placemaking*





# Cultural Heritage and Placemaking

*Conor Horan and Francesco Rotondo*

The role cultural heritage plays in our understanding of place and urban planning is underdeveloped within placemaking research activities. Placemaking Europe highlights that

a placemaking project never starts from scratch, it is intimately linked to a specific context and to the cultural heritage of a place – both tangible and intangible. Whether tangible (key monuments, squares, statues) or intangible (social customs, rituals, expressions), this heritage needs to be embraced by placemakers along with the community to understand the “soul of the place”. (Placemaking Europe, 2022)

Whereas the multifaceted concept of cultural heritage can be understood in different ways, this section offers insights into the role of both tangible and intangible elements and how they might contribute to, and impact on placemaking practices.

In Chapter 2, “Placemaking and Networking of Heritage for Sustainable Tourism”, Aleksandra Djukic, Dina Stober, Piero Tiano, Mircea Negru, Jelena Maric, Marichela Sepe and Agisilaos Economou use case histories drawn from Romania, Italy, Croatia, Greece and Serbia to investigate how emotional connections can create a common community identity across various communities. The focus is on how this might be harnessed to improve sustainable tourism. This chapter also analyses the relationship between digitalization and the networking of cultural heritage. It discusses how digital tools can help preserve community identities. Here the networking of heritage represents a goal to improve sustainable tourism between small- and medium-sized towns.

In Chapter 3, “Cultural Heritage as an Inspiration for Placemaking in the Historic City: A Transversal Approach”, Juan A. García-Esparza, Carola Hein, Ljiljana Rogac Mijatovi and Mircea Negru focus their attention on tangible historical artefacts as starting or reference points to reclaim what might otherwise be lost identities. The authors investigate how cultural heritage regulation can provide new forms of appropriation and integration in permanent scenarios of the past. They also discuss how placemaking and cultural heritage serve to delineate new forms of heritage-making in historic cities. The chapter also asks

how we might define and further explore ethical forms of culture-based placemaking practices.

In Chapter 4, “Placemaking at a Time of Changing Port City Relations”, Carola Hein, Juan A. García-Esparza and Lucija Ažman Momirski illustrate three examples of the preservation, transformation and adaptive reuse of historic water- and port-related structures. The authors investigate the role of placemaking concepts in a historic port environment, with emphasis on the linkages between a working port and a living city. How this might inform policy and design approaches are explored.

In Chapter 5, “Memory and Placemaking: Competing Memory, Forgetting and Distorted Rediscovery in Eastern European Cities”, Emina Zejnilović, Erna Husukić, Nika Đuho, Tatisiana Astrouskaya and Edmond Manahasa highlight the role of memory in placemaking. The authors discuss how identity in placemaking activities is inherently linked to the concept of memory or memorization (as, for example, already illustrated by Choay, 1992). Placemaking activities that are sensitive to the concepts of memory and memorization are inherently linked to identity. Placemaking tools can help to capture and preserve “memory”. This presents an interesting challenge around the relevance of historical references. Conflicting or competing interpretations of such artefacts can be a source of tension which may need to be managed.

In Chapter 6, “Placemaking within Urban Planning: Open Public Space between Regulations, Design and Digitalization”, Branislav Antonić, Despoina Dimelli, Francesco Rotondo, Alexandra Delgado Jiménez and Agisilaos Economou highlight how open public spaces in urban design can represent core aspects of a community’s identity. As many authors have shown, urban spaces in themselves can be understood as complementing the knowledge communities hold of their own identities and many planned urban spaces provide a multi-layered and multifaceted understanding of these identities. The authors warn against ignoring urban relationships and connections – even if they are less prominent or poorly understood. Whereas capturing this complexity represents a challenge for placemaking practitioners, it is important for sustainability. Five case histories from Bari in Italy, Chania and Trikala in Greece, Estepona in Spain and Smederevo in Serbia are drawn upon. These reflect countries sharing the Southern European experience of vibrant public open spaces. In addition, how urban planning has become more complex in the digital age is highlighted.

In Chapter 7, “The Use of Digital Technologies in Improving the Quality of Life: ICT-Supported Placemaking in Urban Neighbourhoods”, Matej Nikšič, Cor Wagenaar, Gilles Gesquiere and Kinga Kimic describe how capturing

and maintaining memory alongside historical references contributes to our understanding of identity. Three case histories from Groningen, Ljubljana and Lyon are presented. Similar to other chapters addressing how digital tools and digitization can improve sustainability, the quality of life of local communities (safety, health and well-being) as well as creating a common language is highlighted. How such tools help to reclaim aspects of cultural heritage across urban regeneration processes in Europe between 1950 and 1980 where hundreds of neighbourhoods were rebuilt is used to illustrate this point.

## 1 Conclusion

Three interrelated themes can be found across the chapters in this section. The first addresses how intangible elements of cultural heritage (“community identity”, “memory” and “emotional connection”) can contribute to placemaking activities. The second theme focuses on using tangible historical references to reclaim intangible elements of cultural heritage, such as lost identities and issues of memorization. The final theme considers the role of digitization and blurring the boundaries between tangible and intangible elements in capturing and/or rekindling different aspects of cultural elements that might have previously been underutilized.

### 1.1 *The Intangible Elements of Cultural Heritage*

The first theme evident in the chapters focuses on the role intangible elements of cultural heritage can play in improving placemaking activities. Here cultural heritage represents the emotional connection people have to place. Intangible elements such as “emotional connections” (Chapter 2), “memory” (Chapter 5) and “community identities” (Chapter 6) play in understanding the importance of cultural heritage in placemaking activities. Across these chapters we see how emotional connections, memory and community identity can be seen as essential intangible resources that have previously gone under-researched.

### 1.2 *Using Tangible Historical References to Reclaim Intangible Elements of Cultural Heritage*

The second theme evident across the chapters focuses on using tangible historical references as a basis for reclaiming intangible elements of cultural heritage, such as lost identities. Tangible elements are important for sustainable development (Chapter 2). Historical artefacts can be seen as reference points to reclaim lost identities (Chapter 3). Industrial spaces can be used to

reclaim a lost heritage as in the example of a port city (Chapter 4). The relevance and meaning of historical artefacts can become the subject of much debate (Chapter 5).

### 1.3 *The Role of Digitization and Blurring the Boundaries between Tangible and Intangible Elements*

The final theme that plays out across the chapters in this section refers to the role digitization plays in capturing and representing cultural heritage, memorization, building emotional connections and community identities. Here we see how digital tools can combine both intangible and tangible elements to help enhance the historical significance of a site, improve our understanding of cultural heritage and, in turn, improve the quality of life of local communities. As digitization represents an ambiguous ontological status, we see a further blurring of the boundaries between both tangible and intangible elements (Chapters 2, 6 and 7).

By way of conclusion, this section offers various case studies to illustrate how both tangible and intangible elements when combined in various ways have the potential to improve placemaking practices. As digitization improves, various layers of cultural heritage will become increasingly important for experiential engagement with place. Placemaking activities can benefit greatly from a comprehensive review of the role cultural heritage plays in influencing how multiple stakeholders, involved in and influenced by placemaking activities, engage with a given intervention.

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Placemaking has become a key concept in many disciplines. Due to an increase in digitization, mobilities, migration and rapid changes to the urban environments, it is important to learn how planning and social experts practice it in different contexts. *Placemaking in Practice* provides an inventory of practices, reflecting on different issues related to placemaking from a pan European perspective. It brings different cases, perspectives, and results analysed under the same purpose, to advance knowledge on placemaking, the actors engaged and results for people. It is backed by an intensive review of recent literature on placemaking, engagement, methods and activism results - towards developing a new placemaking agenda. *Placemaking in Practice* combines theory, methodology, methods (including digital ones) and their application in a pan-European context and imbedded into a relevant historical context.

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