



# What is new in Placemaking research and practice?

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Published online: 6 March 2024

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Placemaking emerged as a critical urban design paradigm in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, with roots tracing back to the late 1980s and the critical insights of influential American urban design thinkers such as William Whyte and Jane Jacobs. While the concept gained traction in the 2000s, it signifies a departure from the dominant visual/aesthetic and social/humanistic traditions that shaped urban design until the 1950s (Knack 1984; Rowley 1994). This transformative approach integrated the spatial with the aesthetic and behavioral aspects of urban space. By bridging the gap between these historically distinct traditions, placemaking aimed to rectify the deficiencies of earlier paradigms, acknowledging a symbiotic relationship between spatial and visual appeal with the dynamics of human behavior in urban design (Fig. 1).

Despite its popularity, placemaking remains a nebulous concept within the public realm, given the lack of consensus on its definitions, as well as challenges in rationalizing and operationalizing it (Arefi 2014; Ellery et al. 2021). This lack of agreement translates into diverse assessments of its values and impacts, manifesting in varying degrees of quality in the practice and lived experiences of placemaking.

This issue compiles four articles delving deeper into contemporary placemaking research and practice across diverse geographical contexts. These articles collectively underscore that, notwithstanding distinct underlying rationales, the research and practice undertaken share a unifying objective: establishing essential tools, assessment criteria and standards for delineating effective, transformative, and responsive urban design and planning.

Francesco Rossini's (2021) article, "Urban Design and Informal Settlements: placemaking activities and temporary architectural interventions in BaSECo compound," explores

how collaborative action research with a university can strategically trace both formal and informal placemaking activities in revitalizing informal settlements in Manila, Philippines. The study aims to understand the intricate dynamics between informal and formal processes, translating short-term, community-driven practices into long-term strategies. The conclusion highlights that university-led projects foster synergistic relationships between research, teaching, and practice, and hold innovative urban design potential. Such initiatives not only offer frameworks for rethinking urban informality but also educate future practitioners to make socially and ethically informed decisions, enabling them to navigate institutional frameworks and challenges in conventional planning and design approaches.

Chen, Guaralda, Kerr, and Turkay's (2022) article, "Digital intervention in the city: a conceptual framework for digital Placemaking," explores the role of digital technologies in urban design. Using a theoretical review as its methodology, it examines the evolution of placemaking and digital placemaking theories across different periods and assesses their similarities and differences. The authors then conceptualize digital placemaking attributes and offer guidance to designers and urban planners for creating and enhancing public space. The conceptual framework emphasizes that to effectively enhance the value and meaning of public space in digital placemaking and incorporating both digital and physical elements requires a shift from the current physical placemaking mode to a comprehensive hybrid design mode.

Duygu Gokce and Conrad Kickert's (2023) article, "What if the 'sense of place' is already strong? An in-depth investigation in an award-winning American neighborhood," focuses on the sense of place (SoP) of Elmwood Village—an acclaimed American neighborhood known for its perceived robust SoP. This study sets out to provide empirical evidence to support the claimed strength of the neighborhood's SoP, and examines it at the building, street, and neighborhood scales. Furthermore, it seeks to offer a comprehensive understanding of SoP by investigating its four sub-indicators: place attachment, place identity, place dependence, and nature bonding. These results not only identify the

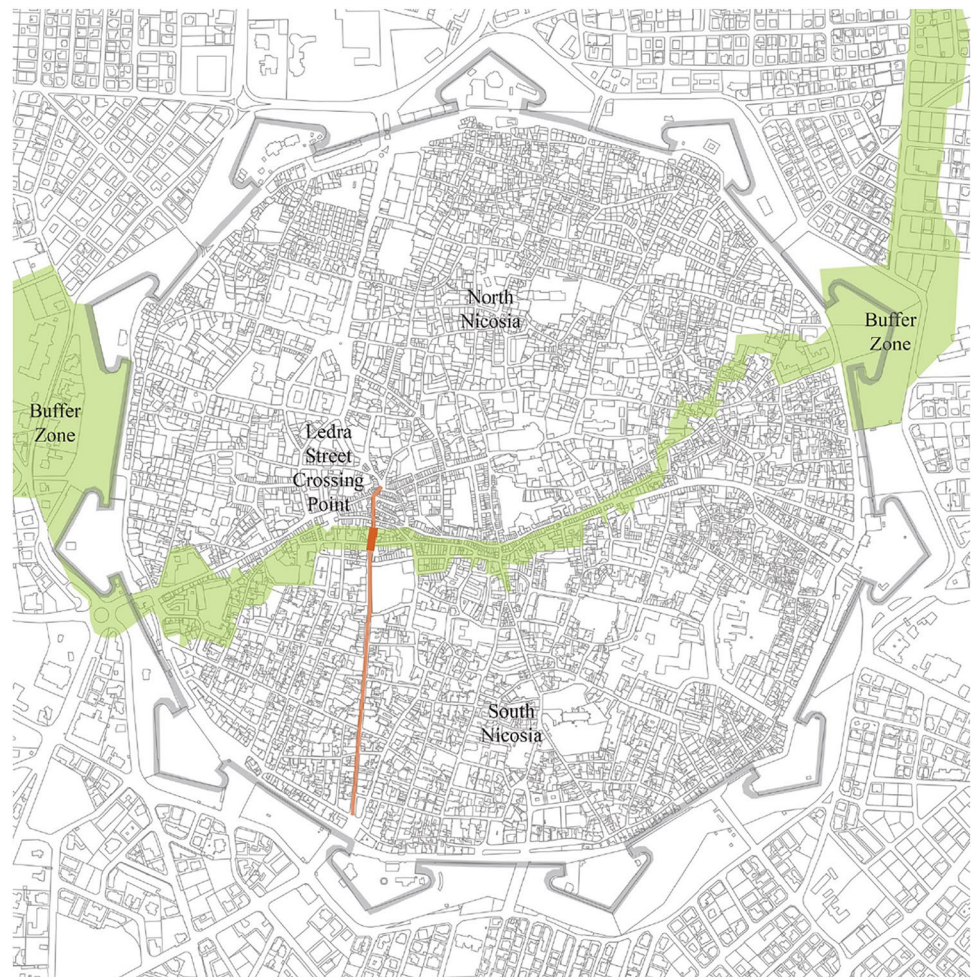
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**Fig. 1** Ledra Street Crossing Point in Walled City of Nicosia.  
 Source Nicosia Municipality  
 redrawn by Orac and Dagli  
 (2023)



perceptual qualities and their degree of importance and the contributing spatial qualities of buildings and streets, but also reveal that the indicators play crucial roles in achieving a better SoP at these scales, and offer several recommendations for practice and highlight the qualities that successful places employ in enhancing and maximizing their SoP.

Ediz Orac and Ugur Ulas Dagli's (2023) article, "Successful criteria for placemaking process in contested spaces: evaluation of non-governmental organisations at Ledra Street Crossing Point in Nicosia," recognizes placemaking as a transformative and powerful tool for addressing challenges in contested spaces and achieving comprehensive revitalization. As its analytical framework, the article provides a diagram for successful placemaking processes in contested spaces, and uses as a case study, Ledra Street, a buffer zone in the divided city of Nicosia. Informed by a robust public survey involving various local stakeholders, this research proposes a framework that establishes crucial criteria and reveals correlations during the placemaking process.

The article concludes that sociability, along with uses and activities, serves as key imperatives for successful placemaking processes in contested contexts. It specifically highlights

how social networks, shared space utilization, multifunctionality, and public space usage as essential elements contribute to creating successful placemaking in such environments.

### Selected order of articles

Rossini, F. 2021. Urban design and informal settlements: Placemaking activities and temporary architectural interventions in BaSECo compound. *URBAN DESIGN International* 1–21.

Chen, K., M. Guaralda, J. Kerr, and S. Turkay. 2022. Digital intervention in the city: A conceptual framework for digital placemaking. *URBAN DESIGN International* 1–13.

Gokce, D., and C. Kickert. 2023. What if "sense of place" is already strong? An in-depth investigation in an award-winning American neighbourhood. *URBAN DESIGN International* 1–17.

Orac, E., and U.U. Dagli. 2023. Successful criteria for placemaking process in contested spaces: Evaluation of non-governmental organisations at Ledra Street Crossing Point in Nicosia. *URBAN DESIGN International* 1–19.



**Data availability** Data sharing not applicable to this editorial as no data sets were generated or analysed.

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