

## Building social capital through creative placemaking

### Construção de capital social através do *placemaking*

**Nikita Prakash Kelkar**

nikitakelkar21@gmail.com

College of Engineering, Design and Physical Sciences. Brunel University London. Kingston Ln, Uxbridge UB8 3PH, Reino Unido.

**Gabriella Spinelli**

gabriella.spinelli@brunel.ac.uk

College of Engineering, Design and Physical Sciences. Brunel University London. Kingston Ln, Uxbridge UB8 3PH, Reino Unido.

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#### Abstract

Placemaking brings out the best of knowledge and skills while supporting a participatory process that challenges and empowers local communities to take ownership of the space planning process. Placemaking is the interplay of the needs and the aspirations of the community enacted in the design of the built environment. Moreover, the focus on planning and development rather than the opportunities arising from designing the spaces in the local community leads to the need for intervention by civic organisations to let the community take control of their own welfare. The motivation for this study arises from the need to decentralise power for the creation and circulation of local assets within the community. By using qualitative methods of research, the study aims to uncover the community-based challenges and their components and to discuss locally-driven solutions for the long-term viability and vitality of communities through the arts and culture. Arts and culture can play a powerful role in the design of this process by building social capital through community engagement. Social capital is the network of relationships among people within a society and the bridging of diverse people to function effectively (Claridge, 2004). Findings reveal that a community is enriched in four respects: community-led design, identity, social capital, productivity. For the realisation of such assets an engagement strategy is necessary and the research demonstrates that creative placemaking is a key catalyst of such a strategy. The research proposes a CURIOSITY framework, a participatory process leading local people to shape their community whilst also realising social capital. This paper has been organised to achieve the aim of this research through five objectives on the basis of four aspects that influence a community, addressing creative placemaking as a common element through all aspects.

**Keywords:** community-led design, creative placemaking, identity, social capital, productivity.

#### Resumo

*Placemaking* traz o melhor de conhecimentos e competências ao apoiar um processo participativo que desafia e fortalece as comunidades locais para tomar posse do processo de planejamento. É a relação entre as necessidades e desejos da comunidade com o projeto do ambiente construído. Além disso, o foco no planejamento e desenvolvimento mais do que nas oportunidades decorrentes da concepção dos espaços na comunidade local leva à necessidade de intervenção por organizações cívicas para deixar a comunidade assumir o controle de seu próprio bem-estar. A motivação para este estudo surge da necessidade de descentralizar o poder para a criação e circulação de ativos locais dentro da comunidade. Ao usar métodos quantitativos e qualitativos de pesquisa, o estudo constatou principalmente que o desenvolvimento de soluções de âmbito local a esses desafios é fundamental para a vitalidade a longo prazo das comunidades. As artes e a cultura pode desempenhar um papel importante na concepção deste processo para construir o capital social por meio do engajamento da comunidade. A comunidade é influenciada em quatro aspectos; identidade, produtividade, capital social, design liderado pela comunidade e estratégia de engajamento com *placemaking* criativo como catalisador no processo. Em conclusão, o projeto propõe a principal recomendação sobre a forma como a abordagem *bottom-up* pode ser usada por organizações cívicas. A estratégia de design sugere um quadro de CURIOSIDADE, que é um processo que estimula a população local a moldar sua comunidade enquanto também resulta em um capital social. Este trabalho foi organizado para atingir o objetivo desta pesquisa através de cinco objetivos com base em quatro aspectos que influenciam a comunidade, abordando *placemaking* criativo como um elemento comum em todos os aspectos.

**Palavras-chave:** identidade, produtividade, capital social, design liderado pela comunidade.

## Introduction

### Designing the built environment through community engagement

The design of public spaces in the past was led by industrialisation. This entailed that space was planned around automobiles, urban renewal was centrally controlled and planned in a top-down fashion, ultimately leading to the elimination of the voice of the community and to the fracturing of the bond between public places and the community that inhabits them. (Silberberg, 2013). Casey (2015), in a lecture, stated, "Our society is facing complex challenges, but our public services are not set up to cope with these obstacles." Creative placemaking has the ability and the potential to do more than 'develop' a location. It holds the promise of elevating the identity of a place by enhancing its essence through a collection of visual, cultural, social and environmental qualities that inspire the community to be engaged (McMahon, 2010). Stewart (2014) suggested that research should delve beyond the conventional margins of an ideal place. This study focuses on the social dynamics of place, moving beyond technologies that in placemaking can only offer partial solutions. The key ethos of this research is to think globally and act locally.

### Placemaking through the arts and culture

According to Anne Gadwa Nicodemus and Ann Markusen, creative placemaking strategically shapes the physical and social character of a neighbourhood, town, tribe, city or region around arts and cultural activities (Markusen and Gadwa, 2010). Arts-related activities play a key role in contributing to an ideal place, which has the qualities to attract and retain talented citizens and enables them to convert all their talent to productivity. These flourishing places generate additional economic activity and innovation, thereby benefitting the community as a whole. Creative placemaking helps in shaping the physical and social characteristics of a place.

One of the chief factors in the success of arts and culture communities is their focus on arts and culture to build social interactions. The Social Impact of the Arts research project, conducted at the University of Pennsylvania by Mark Stern and Susan Seifert, documented that communities gained economic benefits and revitalisation because of the social and civic engagement that was led by the arts. However, art does not simply promote well-being; it is an indispensable element of social well-being. Just as one cannot strip out transportation, housing or health from social well-being, similarly neither can one remove the arts (Stern, 2014).

Consequently, scholars put forward the argument that the arts need to be in the limelight to bring about positive change within communities (Creative City Network, 2005). Creative placemaking can introduce a variety of tools to ensure that this happens.

### Challenges in creative placemaking

Public spaces have always been the core of conflict in disputes over the right of occupation within different

groups in society. The escalating economic crisis, power-hungry public bodies, centralisation of power and widespread societal divide have created new forms of methods to neutralise negative effects of public spaces through a bottom-up approach at the community level.

The practice of creative placemaking through the arts and culture faces a number of challenges including scepticism from the community and public bodies, inadequate funds and evaluating revitalisation not only as a function of the generated economic impact but also including the rather less quantifiable design and innovation interventions on the social aspect of the place (Markusen and Gadwa, 2010).

Generating a sense of belonging within the community is a key aspect in creative placemaking practices. Social challenges that are intrinsically complex ought to be approached with creativity, experimentation, empathy and systems thinking. The opportunity in placemaking lies in enhancing the community's understanding of citizenship whilst also interfering in the traditional perception of place design beyond the boundaries of leisure and consumption that designers and public organisations often have. This new realisation may help them to achieve strong and resilient communities that through social interactions can build equity and civic engagement. Currently a void is perceived between creative placemaking and the purpose of strengthening the community (Markusen and Gadwa, 2010). This void offers civic organisations and communities the opportunity to accelerate interactions and build social capital. It is this void that lies at the beginning of this research project and leads to formulating the research question at the core of this paper: "How can creative placemaking through community-led design generate a positive impact on local communities in urban neighbourhoods?"

### Methodological considerations

The main aim of this research is to develop a community-led creative placemaking strategy for civic organisations to support interaction and build social capital within local communities in urban areas. The research will be led by objectives instrumental to achieve the aforementioned aim:

- (i) Gaining in-depth knowledge of the value of community-led design in creative placemaking.
- (ii) Explaining the role and impacts of civic organisations in developing the identity of local communities through creative placemaking.
- (iii) Exploring the impacts of creative placemaking in building social capital within local communities.
- (iv) Critically examining if creative placemaking could lead to an increase in productivity and enhance local economies.
- (v) Generating a creative placemaking strategy for civic organisations to intervene and accelerate local communities, build social capital and review its value.

The formulation of the above research objectives gives a clear direction to the study and will help in achieving the aim. The first objective is set to understand the impor-

tance of inclusion of the local community in the process of design-led creative placemaking. This is essential to explore the scope and impact of community engagement in revitalising local communities through arts and culture by bringing the community into the design-led process. The next objective is to spell out the influence of civic organisations (non-profit organisations, non-governmental organisations) on community-led creative placemaking. In addition, the third objective is to examine collective values of the community and the inclination that arises from these networks in placemaking. This involves uncovering the relationship between citizens/community and their built environment. The fourth objective is to assess whether creative placemaking improves the local economy through arts and culture or only increases the power of the place to attract residents and developers. Finally, the last objective is to generate a strategy for civic organisations to build social capital through creative placemaking within communities by collectively using the analysis and data from the first four objectives.

### Using design thinking

The CEO of IDEO, Tim Brown, argues that design thinking is an approach which maximises innovation from a human-centred standpoint. It allows people who aren't trained as designers to use creative tools to address a vast range of challenges (Brown, 2008).

The three stages of IDEO's design thinking process, namely *Inspiration*, *Ideation* and *Implementation*, were applied as a base of the research methodology in this work. In order to develop a well-structured research, the methodology between these six stages and the three mentioned by Tim Brown has been divided into six stages. That is, *Explore*, *Discover*, *Dive-in*, *Extract*, *Organise*, and *Assess*. The first two stages, namely *Explore* and *Discover*, form the *Inspiration* for the research progressing further into *Ideation* through the next two stages, *Dive-in* and *Extract*. These stages guided the research through emerging themes by collecting data based on key topic areas. The last two stages, namely *Organise* and *Assess*, helped construct the process of implementation in order to form the design strategy through a set of recommendations.

#### Explore

This stage is designed to develop a foundation and identify a motivation for this research. A scope for this re-

search was developed through an investigation in the field of community-led design and placemaking.

#### Discover

At this stage, the material gathered aided in the problem definition. This led to the formulation of the research aim and objectives, providing a structure to the discovery process.

#### Dive-in

At this stage the researchers gather primary data through a number of techniques. In this particular project workshops, expert interviews and survey were employed.

#### Extract

At this stage the analysis of the primary data leads to the formulation of findings that are then explained in the light of the extant literature.

#### Organise

At this stage, the main findings from primary research are compared and contrasted with the secondary research to identify key themes and patterns that lead to the development of strategic ideas using design thinking. This stage helps in analysing data collected from previous stages to formulate discussions by interpreting and spelling out findings on the basis of the literature review.

#### Assess

Finally, this stage addresses the last objective of the research. By engaging in further discussion with interviewed experts, the development of the creative placemaking's design strategy to build social capital in communities is reviewed to test how the strategy is best put into practice.

#### Research tools

This section reviews the methods used to gather primary data in this project, with the intent to describe how such methods have been adapted to investigate creative placemaking.

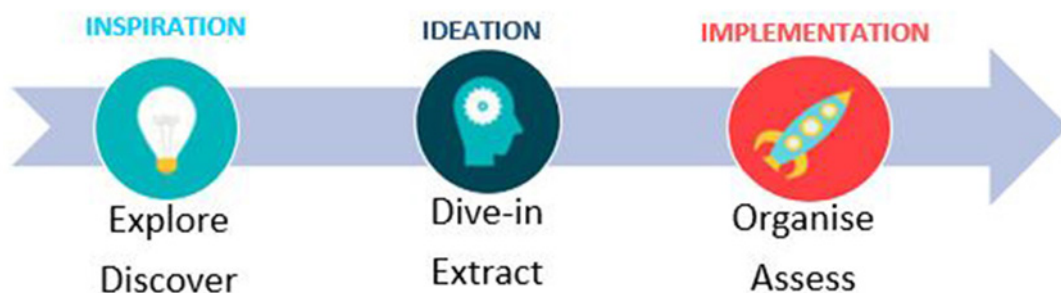


Figure 1. Six stages in the design thinking process.

## Expert interviews

The research was informed by in-depth interviews conducted over the Dive-in stage to gain maximum knowledge in the field of community engagement to build social capital through creative placemaking. The semi-structured interviews focused on eliciting information from experts in design-led community organisations. Three in-depth interviews with experts were carried out; two with practitioners involved in community-led projects in London, namely, Catherine Greig and Sophia de Sousa from the Make: Good organisation and The Glass-House Community Led Design, respectively and one with an academic, Dr Lam, whose research expertise lies in co-design and collaborative economy. The interview data has been organised through a thematic analysis to discuss research findings.

## Questionnaire survey

An online survey<sup>1</sup> was designed to reach residents of towns and cities. The survey received 79 responses by participants spread worldwide. The sample included people aged 13 to 72 and the gender split was 45 females and 34 males. The survey was comprised of 38 questions including demographic, geographical and social characteristics of the participants. Although not underpinned by formal hypotheses, the survey aimed to explore individuals' social interactions and network in the local community and their behavioural attitude towards arts and culture and community organisations.

Apart from the expert interviews, this web survey was conducted to attain a generic view on community engagement and its effects on building social capital within communities. A combination of open questions and multiple choice questions were included in the survey, which was developed around the respondents' past experiences of and future desires for their local communities.

## Community-led design

### Purpose of engaging the community

Lynch asserts that letting people take control of their own surroundings is a good strategy (Lynch, 2014). Allowing people to take control of their surroundings means fundamentally a change of attitude from being passive users of services and spaces to being designers and producers of them. Alexiou *et al.* (2015) suggest that community-led design improves civic participation, creates a strong sense of community and strengthens people's attachment to their place and to each other to produce sustainable solutions. In addition, Sanoff (2006) states that the design process only marginally reduces the control of those who are institutionally invested with the power of decision making and make public bodies relevant stakeholders in community-led design. Findings from the interviews with Catherine (Greig, 2015) and Sophia (de Sousa, 2015) reveal that communities have an uncertain attitude towards local authorities and this determines whether they seek or reject their involvement. The survey analysis unpicks this

point further and suggests that those aged above 55 years trust local authorities more than those younger. This conflict of trust and interest within the community can give rise to poor social interaction among the local people, leading to lower community engagement.

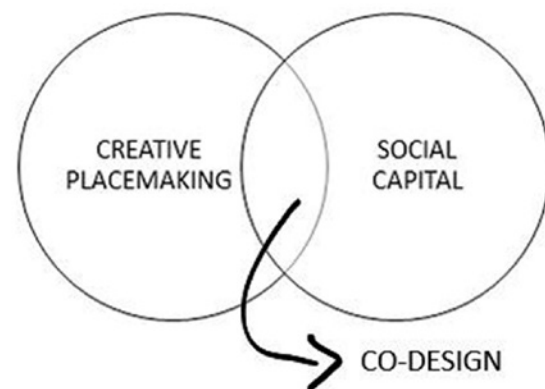
### Community-led design, co-design and participatory design

The difference between design and planning, as interpreted from the interview findings, highlights that design is more of a process-led exploration. This process can be closely linked to McCabe, Keast and Brown's concept of community engagement (McCabe *et al.*, 2006). The principle of co-design is a collaborative process where designers and non-designers work together with stakeholders. Consequently, co-design is a broader process of community engagement that dissolves the line of power between the local authorities and the community.

When community engagement uses design thinking, with a human centred approach, it leads to the process of community-led design. As this is a design characterised by a community focus, its approach is mainly bottom-up with the purpose of building the capacity of the community by the community itself. However, studies indicate that community capacity building fails to be sustainable in the long run (McCabe *et al.*, 2006). Co-design builds interaction and relationships leading to building capacity within the community in the long term. Thus, the role of design is transferred from civic organisations to communities, gradually, by building social capital. We agree with Levy (2014) that community engagement plays a central role in the sustenance of community-led design. Civic organisations help in bridging the gap between design and planning.

### Process of community-led design

It is agreed that community-led design projects give communities greater involvement in shaping their environment with a hands-on experience and generate greater community control (Sanoff, 2006; Alexiou *et al.*, 2015; Design Council, 2010). However, interview findings indicate scepticism to be one of the major challenges in the



**Figure 2.** Relationship between creative placemaking and social capital based on personal insight.

<sup>1</sup> Online Survey: [https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1prmOxs2mrfkwRml\\_GCILHFF6THsO6KTU9lwLu4FjBlk/viewform?c=0&w](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1prmOxs2mrfkwRml_GCILHFF6THsO6KTU9lwLu4FjBlk/viewform?c=0&w)

enhancement of community engagement (Greig, 2015; de Sousa, 2015; Lam, 2015). In an interview with Sophia (de Sousa, 2015), she points out instances where communities attend discussions so that they can oppose these discussions.

These findings identify factors for overcoming scepticism as follows; (Figure 3)

- (i) Approach the local people with an attitude designed to enhance the community
- (ii) Identify the local context, i.e. the character of the community
- (iii) Maintain a steady process of engagement rather than straightforward development.

Apart from the greater challenge of scepticism, community-led design realises local assets and skills within the community and instils confidence into local people, enabling them to tackle ongoing and new challenges.

Alongside realising local assets and boosting confidence within the community, the engagement process develops a sense of belonging and ownership (Greig, 2015). Community engagement also leads to fostering a sense of community (Ahlbrant and Cunningham, 1979), which in turn generates a sense of place, which serves as a starting point for community capacity building (Design Council, 2010).

The research shows that the term community is a notion among people that means consensus. The design process of community engagement does take longer and raises conflict, but overcoming these obstacles increases the possibility of creativity in designing an effective placemaking strategy.

### Strengthening identity through civic organisations

#### Engaging the community

Civic organisations help mobilise public will and resources around the vision for the common good of the community (Markusen and Gadwa, 2010). Active participation in cultural activities within the community con-



**Figure 3.** Process of community engagement based on personal insight

nects people to each other and to their local organisations, which in turn provides an opportunity for other forms of participation. Thus, civic organisations act as middle-men, brokers with the role of bringing members of the community together to solve problems by building relationships and getting involved in ways that re-build social capital through placemaking. Civic organisations help educate communities to become better clients and help developers by introducing design thinking in their planning methods, facilitating connections between local people and communities and strengthening communities (Figure 4).

It is important for civic organisations and communities to understand that one-sided charitable spending does not always lead to sustainable solutions (Figure 5). Local participation is required to achieve a positive outcome.

Both primary and secondary findings suggest that civic organisations encourage positive participation mainly through asset mapping. Mapping local assets induces assurance within the community, and this in turn brings about the confidence necessary to initiate projects that require change. The expert interviews show that civic organisations help in identifying the shared vision and public will of the community. Catherine (Greig, 2015) stated that civic organisations enable the community to make changes by providing the community with the time necessary to reflect on their assets and future aspirations; this is achieved in the engagement activities facilitated by the civic organisations. Although engagement activities empower the community to elicit their voices, the survey results revealed that 41% of the local communities have little trust in local authorities. This lack of trust makes the local people hesitant in voicing out their opinions.

### Approach of civic organisations towards community

Design thinking is a human-centred approach inspiring influencers to focus on the process more than the product. Community-led design primarily puts the focus on designing surroundings keeping in mind the needs and aspirations of the community utilising those spaces. An effective and well led process eventually results in a favourable outcome.

Interview findings help determine the approach that civic organisations take towards the local people and the community on the whole (Greig, 2015; de Sousa, 2015; Lam, 2015). "It is important to consider the character of the community and design the process in accordance with the local context" (Greig, 2015). But how can a community be classified as deprived or strong, and how can one determine whether it is a good thing to mark out a community as deprived and in need of development.

Findings indicate that communities with significantly fewer opportunities and lesser resources than others require regeneration. Survey results show that the local authorities are not as approachable, which puts pressure on the community to continue in unfavourable existing conditions. The approach that civic organisations take has the responsibility of bringing about a positive outcome.

Continuing the discussion on 'deprived' communities, it is important to identify these communities and support their development. However, a feeling of helplessness



Figure 4. Tools to enhance communities through civic organisations.



Figure 5. Need for local participation.

may arise among the local people, decreasing their potential in building social capital and strengthening their identity. Findings show that civic organisations enjoy investing efforts in communities which are more challenging. This enthusiasm constructs the local people as needing help from organisations. The Oxfam advert introduces the problem of dominance of civic organisations very clearly. “Give a man a fish, and he will be able to feed himself for just a day. But give him the means to catch his own fish, and he will be able to feed himself and his entire family for a whole lifetime” (Oxfam, 2007).

Considering the local people and their community as deprived creates a hierarchy and reduces their capability to contribute. Moreover, it leads to the perspective of civic organisations having an upper hand in the specialist knowledge and skills to address the community’s concerns. This diminishes the confidence among the local people and encourages ignorance of community engagement by trusting the motives of professionals. However, in an interview with Dr. Lam (2015), she highlights that tackling the problem of inadequate resources is minor as compared to improving the community’s mentality.

When the community and its people begin to be considered as knowledgeable and capable of participating and engaging in development, the approach of organisations and local authorities changes. Civic organisations encourage and promote the bottom-up approach by engaging the community in using their local knowledge, skills and talent. Grieg (2015), in the interview, claims that “The organisation’s attitude to ‘enhance’ the local community proves to be more effective than an approach that makes the organisation look ‘heroic.” Civic organisations help in providing a starting point for enabling communities to realise and value their own assets in building social capital and activating spaces within themselves. The ‘inside-out’ rather than ‘outside-in’ approach, mentioned by Rachel Lawes in her lectures, proves to be useful in approaching communities (Lawes, 2015).

The current hype around urban regeneration and the heroic approach brought about by developers largely suppress communities. Through human-centred design thinking, civic organisations can effectively develop the engagement process to enable the local people to become articulate clients and empower local people by activating social interaction within the community.

The survey findings indicate that communities are very often not included in the decision-making. Even though 82% agreed to voice out their opinion, a blind eye is turned towards the local people which gives civic organisations an opportunity to intervene. Civic organisations hold an advantage as enablers in overcoming the scepticism of local engagement existing in communities (Figure 6).

Civic organisation as design thinkers: Interview findings show processes developed by civic organisations that enable conversations and interactions within the community through inclusive spaces. Civic organisations most often have an approach through a process rather than the neighbourhood planning systems that focus mainly on mere development rather than design. Sophia indicates that most people do not understand the importance of place and their surrounding and, very often consider their house as a commodity (de Sousa, 2015). Civic organisations can be considered as drivers for change in four dimensions: they are mind-setters, innovators, researchers and process-oriented (Turner, 2013).

Civic organisations as resourceful: Community-based organisations bring about a sense of place and identity within the communities by providing them with adequate time. They possess tangible and intangible resources which the communities may not have access to, like networks, funds and the ability to enhance the sense of making a change. Civic organisations provide adequate time to communities to analyse the pros and cons of reviving the community, which in turn allows them (civic organisations) to overcome the scepticism of local people.

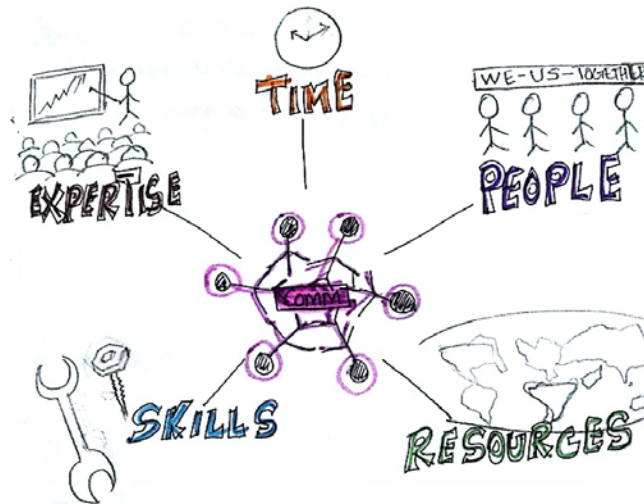


Figure 6. Advantages of partnerships.

Survey results show that a majority of the people accept art and culture to make their communities vibrant. This indicates the power of the arts in initiating social interaction through the amplification of shared concerns and a vision around the place. Findings show that art has the instrumental capacity to escalate community engagement. But most community leaders do not comply with art being infused in the process of placemaking (Vazquez, 2012). These practices arise out of the apprehensiveness of the local people towards arts activities. While creative placemaking should be organic, it is often random. This may be due to the lack of awareness of the impact of arts and culture which the civic organisations can overcome through campaigns to raise awareness among communities and officials. Arts and culture attract the local people, thereby fostering social interactions which indirectly increase the cultural capital of the local community.

**Civic organisations as team builders:** As gathered from the findings, the local authority has limited resources to engage local people in a community-led design approach to placemaking (de Sousa, 2015). This disconnect gives civic organisations the ability to balance limitations in local authorities and communities and to draw attention to common goals. They integrate policies and local knowledge through engagement so that places and their people are viewed as assets. Engaging communities in activating their space promotes shared leadership by giving the local people the ability to strengthen their identity and change perspective.

Although the questionnaire survey findings show that a majority of people have greater trust in civic organisations, it has been found that the older generation, even though a minority in the findings, trust the local authorities. This minority could largely affect the community's participation, collectively reducing the social capital of the community. A high social capital does not usually depend on the majority or minority within the community because even a small group among the local people can hinder engagement initiatives taken by civic organisations. As George R. R. Martin quoted in the words of George R. R. Martin, "Often times a very small man can cast a very large shadow."

## Impact of creative placemaking in building social capital

### Factors affecting people and place

It is important to identify existing assets within the community in order to develop them and to build capital in order to retain talent and reduce brain drain. With globalisation, the world today has a wide range of lifestyle choices that affect communities. These lifestyle options lead people to move from their local communities, thereby affecting the community's social capital. Hence, it is important to understand that creating pockets of self-contained and independent communities makes the communities affordable for the local people. The concentration of industries and residential areas in the urban context leads to inflation and dissatisfied communities.

The findings helped identify that human behaviour and environment are interlinked, so that they affect each other in an infinite loop.

With globalisation, younger generations have career prospects that lead them to move away, and this results in a decline of community social capital. However, strong networks created within the community generate trust among the local people, resulting in reciprocity. Trust and reciprocity within the community network tend to be the driving forces in creating opportunities from social relationships.

Findings show that trust and reciprocity are the two main pillars of social capital (Putnam, 2001; Pretty and Ward, 2001; Baland and Platteau, 1998; Jules Pretty, 2001). There are other variables affecting social capital within a community; these are diversity and generational shift.

As discussed above, trust results in reciprocity, which leads to positive participation.

However, survey results show that although 82% of the people are willing to participate in activities organised by the community organisation, a majority of them have not participated for the greater good of the community. Communities, whether rural or urban, differ considerably in their acceptance of diverse ideas and people. This is an important aspect that affects a community's ability to

make decisions that strengthen placemaking efforts. The decline in participation can, thus, be related to the factors of diversity and shift of generations.

Diversity and shift of generations affecting participation: Granovetter's concept of the strength of weak ties is partially proved through the survey, where the new generation is more open to accept diversity (Granovetter, 1973). However, the older generations between ages 45-75 only trust and build networks with people from their own type of background within their community. This could lead to the isolation of communities, but also provides an advantage in terms of avoiding external costly demands. It can be gathered from findings that diversity helps in understanding the sense of community. Diversity increases creativity based on the strength of weak ties, which could be connected to Putnam's theory of bridging social capital (Putnam, 2001). Creative ideas emerge from diverse social networks with both known and unknown social circles through expansive knowledge.

### Connecting people and place

In addition to these two factors, arts are a major tool affecting community engagement. Arts have the capacity to overcome barriers and result in positive participation and the building of stronger relationships and interactions within the community. However, using art in engaging the community in placemaking leads to a traditional perception according to which mainly physical attractions are developed. Hence, it is important for communities to understand the role of arts and culture in order to enhance experience, create openness to diversity and provide opportunity to understand that the identity of the community is not only to contribute to it through physical artefacts.

While economic development in cities can be achieved on a large scale through a cultural district, large-scale festival or event, community arts foster transferable life skills by directly impacting participants individually. Arts indirectly emphasise the purpose of the creative production process and most often require investing public effort. Engaging communities in art cultivates social capital through skill building, knowledge development and relationships that provide a platform for local people to interact with each other within their community and get involved in larger social issues. The creative process ignites the collective imagination and influences the local people towards a shared civic pride. In addition, it is worth considering that art doesn't always immediately fuel social change, but supports it; art on a microscale acts as a catalyst for engaging people in conversations about macroscale changes and issues.

In addition, the feeling of being in a great place gives people a sense of belonging even when diversity in a community is a challenge. When people feel encouraged to participate in shaping the life of a space, this creates the kind of participatory atmosphere that attracts a large audience of people. Dr. Lam (2015) advocates that the arts helps boost confidence and allows the community to map local assets. Reflecting on the community's identity in placemaking leads to developing a better sense of place, which sends positive signals outside the community.

A project to revitalise failed cities developed through Design Futures workshops led to the formulation of a

framework based on 'people' as the centre of the city's success. The framework showed the relationship between people and their habitat where the environment thrives while shaping and supporting its people (Dermi *et al.*, 2015).

## Productivity

### Tools raising productivity

Arts and culture have a significant impact on the larger economy; arts contribute to the distinctiveness of a place, making local places a magnet for young talents, who in turn are the primary fuel for the growth of the innovation economy (Gates, 2015; Greig, 2015; Lam, 2015). Florida (2002) rightly says that places thrive because creative people want to live there. Enterprises then follow as they are often established by the talented people who moved to the thriving community in the first place.

Putnam's (2001) theory of social capital may not comply with Woolcock's (1998) discussion on social capital as a boon to economic growth, because people work differently today and desire very different kinds of lives. However, the questionnaire survey's findings show 83% of the people agreed to participate in raising local productivity through a joint venture.

Ceschin (2014) points out that individuals and communities are inventing new ways of living by using the community's best assets to generate opportunities and make the economy flourish. Local assets, usually the local people themselves, are often useful to convert into activities that give productive benefits. The social networks and relationships generated through interaction among the local people arises innovation in turn raising productivity. Although social capital consists of the social interactions and inclinations that arise from relationships, productivity is just one minor factor leading to thriving communities. Findings suggest that productivity comes from strong social capital and collaboration with arts and community organisations; however, it is secondary as most collaborations are not permanent.

Productive activities through community engagement don't necessarily bring monetary benefit to the community but lead to the realisation of talent and skill through engagement, raising social capital and strengthening identity.

The findings of this work uncover some concerns about community productivity generated through external factors such as tourism, communities hosting events, etc. Although these factors could provide significant incentives and income for the community, they can also lead to a high level of dependency. The survey results of this research indicate that the majority of participants accept these external factors within communities.

### Productivity from reciprocity

Productivity is the outcome of social networks based on reciprocity and trust. Social capital can be considered a prerequisite to productivity as it may be difficult to generate trust without a strong community sense. Findings suggest that productivity thrives the most when it is fuelled by a diverse community, which, by being inclusive, allows exchanges that are enriching and creative.



However, for some communities, productivity is secondary but may help in maintaining placemaking efforts constant. Findings suggest that in order to maintain efforts it is necessary to build and continuously enhance the community's social capital. But social capital is ephemeral and most often challenging to measure. Thus, building social capital and interactions strengthens the identity of the community, which raises productivity and, in turn, validates identity. For this to happen, communities need to be brought together through effective engagement methods by civic organisations. Besides, as gathered from Sophia's interview, the obsession with longevity and sustainability deviates engagement motives, in communities by civic organisations, to foster social interaction and decreases the impact that placemaking has on building social capital (de Sousa, 2015). Although social capital is ephemeral, the temporary moments can have a powerful influence on communities.

In conclusion, the relation between placemaking, social capital and productivity is a strongly interwoven one through which placemaking enables social capital, which generates community identity. This, in turn, enhances the productivity that lies and develops within a better connected community.

### Connecting key elements to build social capital in a community

Figure 7 illustrates the analysis showing the interconnectivity and relationship of the following key elements and their influence on building social capital through creative placemaking. The emerging five elements are: *Community-led Design, Creative Placemaking, Identity, Social Interaction & Networks and Productivity.*

- **Community-led Design** – This process of design is a bottom-up approach, which empowers members of the community. The interview findings show that community-led design brings the community together through a civic organisation able to apply an innovative approach that puts people at the heart of the process, thereby generating a shared vision.
- **Creative Placemaking** – The space within the community tends to heavily influence local people (Florida, 2002). However, local people tend to consider the design of the built environment and their community as a commodity. Therefore, design thinking in the design of the built environment centres the

process on humans, making places based on the needs and aspirations of the local community. The survey identified that the instrumental capacity of arts and culture encourages local people to participate in the design process.

- **Identity** – The research led to the emergence of this construct as one of the most important aspects of placemaking. The identity of the community is not only built through the process of placemaking, but exists even before organisations intervene in the community. The survey gathered that it is difficult for local people to understand the identity of their community. The interviews suggest that the external intervention of civic organisations may help a community to realise its identity and, by so doing, activate communities.
- **Social Interaction & Networks** – Interview findings suggest that mapping local assets helps build social capital, the assets of which are most often the people within the community. The analysis of the survey shows that the majority of people trust their community, but these networks are usually not converted into productive relationships. Design builds trust, alliance and relationships within the community, which results in productivity.
- **Productivity** – Productivity is most often considered a factor that generates monetary benefits within the community. However, findings suggest that productivity derives from social interactions and relationships among local people and generates social impact and well-being within the community. Arts and culture prove to be a driving catalyst in increasing the productivity of a community.

The key thread that connects the above concept is placemaking through the arts by engaging the community in the design process. The findings clearly suggest that community-led design promotes an inclusiveness that broadens perspectives and identifies talents and skills. This leads to the realisation of the needs and aspirations of the local community to effectively design a bespoke built environment. However, in order to engage the community in the design process, arts are a useful tool. Hence, creative placemaking ensures not just the development of spaces but also the design of places that contributes to the identity of the community. However, the community's identity is built not only through the physicality of the built envi-

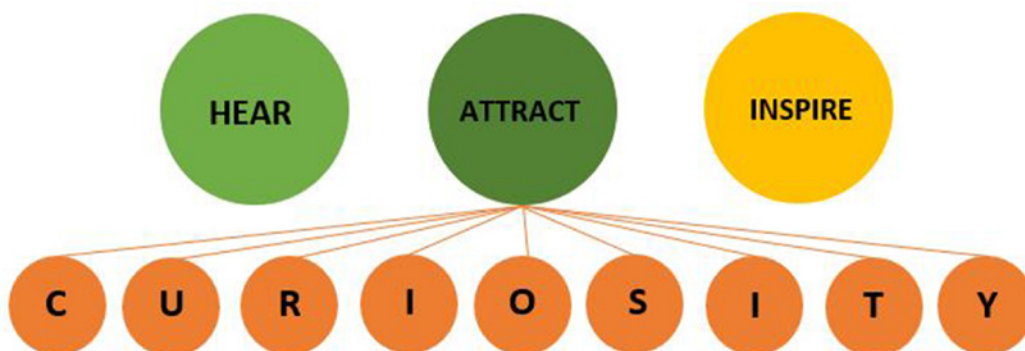


Figure 7. Key elements in building social capital.

ronment but also through the process of design thinking that promotes inclusiveness and engagement. Furthermore, the process of community-led design develops trust, alliance and relationships that give rise to organic opportunities within the community. These interactions build the community's social capital, which converts into productivity. Productivity, in this virtuous cycle, validates identity. Identity boosts confidence and is a catalyst for the realisation of local assets.

**Recommendations for civic organisations**

The design strategy is more of a process-oriented framework for civic organisations to observe in local communities. The process of community-led design aims to embed design thinking in placemaking, a human-centred approach, to foster greater engagement and interaction with civic organisations within the community.

For public spaces to foster social capital, diminish resistance to change, map assets and enhance interactions within the local community, civic organisations must Hear, Attract and Inspire (Figure 8).

It is essential to hear the community's thoughts, spell out previous actions and use them to inform decisions. The challenge lies in establishing the civic organisation as an external party to enhance the social dynamics of the community. It is necessary to build trust in order for civic organisations to establish connections with the local community. Hence, to build social capital and increase interactions within the local community, it is fundamental to first bridge the gap of trust between the civic organisation and the local community by generating curiosity. As social impact is not quantitatively measurable and not something the local people look out for, effective engagement activities lead to social interaction. Changing people from being passive users to being co-producers requires the activation of curiosity. The more contributions that are made to the process by both the civic organisation and the community, the more activity exists to engage in. Similarly, the more activity there is to engage in, the more contri-

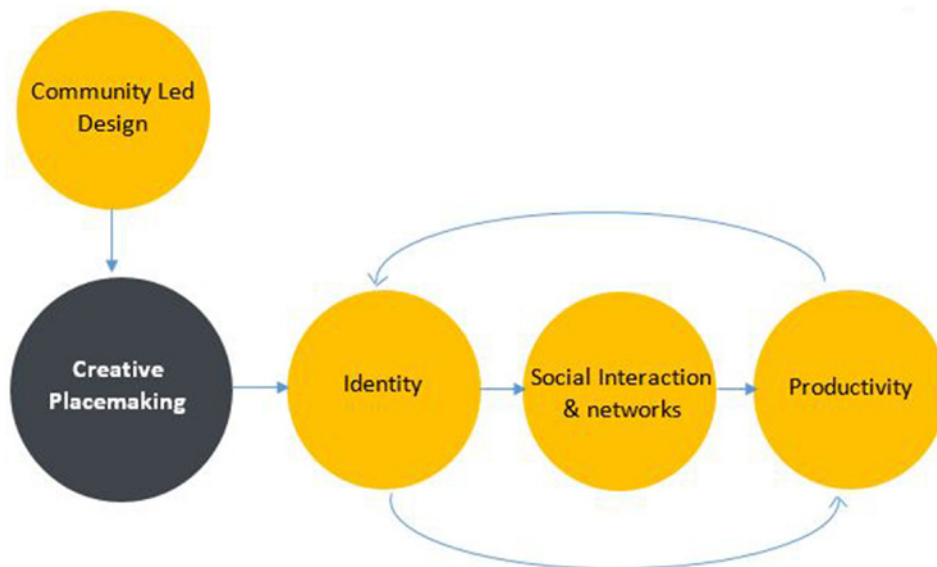
butions can be made to the process. The civic organisation is in charge of keeping the community inspired.

Prior to the decision of withdrawing from the community at the end of a project, a civic organisation must *Attract* by generating curiosity within the community (Figure 8). CURIOSITY is an acronym that summarises the following actions by the civic organisation:

- Take a creative risk through the design of engagement tools according to the character of the community.
- Understand the shared vision and concerns of the community through storytelling and other engagement methods.
- Relate to those not just by sympathising, but by empathising.
- Integrate the shared vision to create opportunity.
- Build security around the opportunity to maintain the consistency of the placemaking effort in order to build social capital.
- Continue innovation within the centre through various collaborations with arts and culture organisations, and
- Establish ties within the local community to yield positive returns.

**Take creative risk**

What: The process is often overlooked in order to achieve positive results. An approach with higher standards will stifle innovation. Excessive priority placed on results in the beginning leads to the community wanting to stick to safe methods rather than taking a chance on something new. Bringing together people with different backgrounds and experiences is a challenging task, but are all significant for effective problem solving. Here, using art as a tool to trigger creativity helps initiate conversations within the local community and between the local people, civic organisation and government. The word creativity is like a jargon to the local people. Thus, it is important to associate creativity with the use of art



**Figure 8.** Design strategy to build social capital.

and culture to infuse fresh perspectives among the people within the local community.

**How:** Involving the community in arts activities and identifying the culture of the local community to enable local people to bring out their creative self. Giving the community the assurance of enhancing their surrounding through arts and culture facilitates conversation and social interaction. Inventing creative activities like local dog shows, culinary arts workshops, crafts activities, tea tasting sessions, etc. attracts the community to begin their engagement in the process of building social capital.

### Understand

**What:** Understanding HOW and WHEN people want to get involved affects the efforts made by civic organisations. It is important to also investigate what hinders them from participating because access has often to do not just with transport and commuting but also with the psychological and economic aspects of the local community and its people. Civic organisations act as catalysts in involving people and initiating conversations both between the organisation and the community and among the local people themselves.

**How:** Arts and culture are a good form of community engagement and are particularly good at encouraging participation and generating ideas and interest. Activities like photography, artwork, cultural gatherings, hobby groups are interactive and engaging and help develop a common vision.

### Relate

**What:** Innovations driven by empathy are not only directed towards the most under-served communities or communities in crisis. The definition of crisis in the community is not restricted to unavailability of adequate resources but also refers to poor social interaction and social capital. However, it is important for civic organisations to be cautious so that their approach is not seen as a response to crisis. Sympathy channelizes efforts without broadening the vision to fresh perspectives. Thus, the step to *Relate* stresses empathising so that civic organisations approach the community with a motive of helping to access a broader range of services.

**How:** Civic organisations should avoid making resources readily available to the community. Instead, it is their responsibility to make local people realise their assets and generate self-sufficiency through asset mapping.

### Integrate

**What:** Translating the shared vision of the community into the desired outcome leads to keeping both the civic organisation and the community satisfied. This generates trust between the parties, which further helps in creating opportunities. The trust generated convinces the community to take the opportunity created by the civic organisation. In order to heighten community engagement, it is necessary to amalgamate the vision and concerns of the community with the objective of the civic organisation.

**How:** The actual use of the community's assets and creations from engagement activities in placemaking causes the local people to feel certain about the civic organisation's motives. This eases the process further. Engaging the community in designing their built environment for real through a physical model of their local area creates a sense of community and belonging. At this stage the designers, planners and officials remain present to answer questions only if asked by the local people. Additional information and inputs on the community's shared vision can be added to develop an action plan.

### Create opportunity

**What:** Integrating the shared vision of local people helps in understanding and highlighting the opportunities that can be initiated by civic organisations.

**How:** Landscape design and the effective design of public spaces gives the community a reason to linger in the public spaces after work. Civic organisations should look for small change opportunities where they can demonstrate local influence in the short term to build capacity and be involved in long term change. Looking out for local skills, interests and an appetite for change supports the opportunity created.

### Build security

**What:** Even though temporary actions have a powerful impact on communities, it is important for civic organisations to maintain the effort through a symbol of permanency. This symbol can be a sense of belonging and sense of community raised by community-led design. But to sustain this ephemeral effort, it is necessary to have a permanent catalyst as a symbol of placemaking in order to build social capital and interaction.

**How:** Once the civic organisation has understood what works, it's time to ensure the sustainability of the initiative. Building habits helps the local community keep motivated. Civic organisations should focus on building community centres in local communities to ensure that relationships are constantly built and maintained. The creation of positions for local governance, after engagement efforts by civic organisations within the community, leads to active community centres and diminishes chances of dormancy.

### Continue innovation

**What:** Large scale innovation initiatives from the top down rarely work in favour of the motives of civic organisations for the welfare of communities. Instead of implementing a new structure from the beginning, small and incremental changes spread the initiative organically. Small and incremental changes are likely to sustain communities for a longer period of time. Furthermore, incremental innovation gradually engages the local people more within the community and gives them ownership of the process if they are involved from the start. Jumping into big stuff directly feels daunting, but small changes and relationship building create social context for ongoing community engagement.

How: In the local area, graphic art on shop shutters, when closed, liven up the street while the shops are shut, which also makes the area vibrant and reduces the feeling of insecurity while displaying way finding directions through graphic art. These small innovation initiatives should be taken by civic organisations through community-led design. Always having a clear goal behind every step taken will add wrinkles around the previous innovation.

### Establish ties

What: To sustain incremental innovation it is necessary to maintain the social dynamics of relationships within the local community. Maintaining strong relationships builds networks that help achieve desired social objectives that are most often unknown and invisible to the community.

How: The development of a community centre within the local area provides a common space for the community to engage in activities that build networks and increase interactions. These interactions yield opportunities of incremental innovation that the community itself identifies through the networks built. Continuous innovation within the community centre leads to new avenues of interest that broaden participation by establishing a larger network of ties. These networks result in the inclination to do something for each other within the local community, thus building social capital.

### Yield positive returns

What: Yield positive returns through reciprocity from social interactions by establishing ties to generate further opportunities.

How: The development of a community centre allows the local community to broaden their social network, providing opportunities of employment, business and other forms of productivity. Employment within the community centre encourages the young and older generations to lower their dependency.

### Conclusion

Placemaking generates as many benefits for community-building and empowerment as it does for communities' public spaces. Berger (2009), in his book, states that design of the neighbourhood makes all the difference – it could make a place feel safer, vibrant, because that environment was built with thought and understanding of the needs of local people. Each place and its culture are unique. Every civic organisation has to grasp that every culture needs to find the tools and approaches that work best for it. The power of change lies in the citizens and in their elected officials. After a certain point, local communities and authorities, once their interests are aligned, have the power and possibility to successfully solve problems that they face. Every neighbourhood desires an innovative approach to transforming communities by creating and revitalising spaces around the needs and aspirations of the community. Adams (2015) of Future Brands rightly said that the "Best work comes from a sense of purpose and a sense of purpose is useless without action." Creation of civic infrastructure is necessary for healthy socie-

ties and collaborative problem-solving. Seymour (2015) emphasises that Anthropology comes before Technology, meaning that everything orbits around humans and that we see things not as they are, but as we are. This would suggest that people should lead any initiative within their community and should also be at the centre of the innovation process, as the authors of the design-led process of placemaking. Community-led design projects hold more advantages than disadvantages; they promote innovative ideas, customised solutions, behavioural change, funding opportunities, conflict prevention, positive environment and the relationship-building which builds the community's social capital. There is a growing attention to arts and culture within communities as a means to re-design their local area as the impacts of creative placemaking show positive results. Although the policy framework around creative placemaking has yet to be built, neighbourhood design initiatives will continue to spread from place to place, demonstrating that innovation is imperative and not optional.

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