School of the Environment
University of Dundee
Professions, Place-Making, and the Public: What Next?
The Geddes Institute for Urban|Rural Research (Symposium 4)

Organized by Husam AlWaer and Barbara Illsley

A report on the Symposium proceedings by Husam AlWaer and Barbara Illsley (University of Dundee), Eric Dawson (Architecture and Design Scotland), and Ian Cooper (Eclipse Research Consultants) February 2015

Introduction

The University of Dundee Geddes Institute for Urban|Rural Research held a Symposium with partners on 14 November 2014 on *'Professions, Place-Making, and the Public: What Next?'* to explore the changing nature of the professional in place-making. This report summarises the key themes explored during the event which developed and built upon three earlier symposia. Summary reports are available for these events at: [Masterplanning in current conditions](#); [The Practice of Community Charrettes Design in the UK](#); [Creating sustainable communities – better approaches to masterplanning practice](#).

This report is organised in four sections: the first sets out the background to the event; the second summarises the key issues and questions raised by the speakers; the third explores the collected views of participants working together in groups; and the fourth reflects on these and draws conclusions.

A video of the symposium is available at:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c37KoDupaPs&list=PLydAjKLQIfcHEY5zEvEVtHOLcdL_-cEFq

1. Background

Given current economic and environmental macro-conditions, governments, communities, and scholars are increasingly challenging built environment professionals to create quality places which make a difference for people on 'the ground'. Place making professionals (institutions, firms, and individuals) operate within complex, dynamic and evolving responsibilities. Professionals are expected to mediate between supply and demand; they occupy the ground framed by governments and markets. Better place-making solutions require shared long term visions, responsiveness to context, effective processes, and deep understanding of places, and sensitivity to community objectives in use. Successful place-making is based on knowledge of what actually works in practice and what needs improving.

Professional bodies and individual professionals are thus confronted with an unequivocal challenge: how to become more responsible and accountable for both place making and property market outcomes. Any search for a 'new professionalism' must therefore span all the built environment and urban design professions, as they have interconnected and collective responsibilities. They must find new roles in proactive 'market shaping', assessing future needs, demands and risks (at appropriate scales), taking longer-term responsibility for learning through the delivery of place-based objectives.

This Symposium explored the changing nature of professionalism in place-making, structured around the themes of professionalism, place making and the public. Key questions posed were:

1. Is there evidence that professional culture and practice is changing in response to calls for better place-making?
2. Is evidence is there of an emerging consensus, expressed through changes in professional practice, about how to do this?
3. Do you think place-making professionals should encourage people to participate in place-making?

2. Summary of Speaker Presentations

Delegates were welcomed to the university and the symposium by **Barbara Illsley and Dr. Husam Al Waer**. A series of presentations were then delivered by speakers with a diverse range of expertise, including urban design, architecture, planning, urban regeneration, professionalism and education.

Prof. Ian Cooper, Eclipse Research Consultants: *Professionalism, place making and the public in times of change*.

Prof. Ian Gilzean, Scottish Government: *'Delivering sustainable places – finding common ground'*.

Craig McLaren, Director of RTPI Scotland: *'Breaking out of silo thinking'*.

Prof. Tara J. Fenwick, Stirling University: *'Professionals' responsibility to collaborate with civil society'*.

Chris Brown (IGLOO): *'Linking professionals, value and delivery of better place making'*.

Prof. Ian Cooper, Eclipse Research Consultants, opened with a provocation on *Professionalism, place making and the public in times of change* which sought a clearer definition of the nature of placemaking, and noted how its meanings have shifted over time as demonstrated the changing focus of attention of both important publications and working practices. Because of such changers, there is a problem of [un]shared meaning where terms such as 'placemaking' or 'design' become 'false friends' - commonly used but with differing interpretations. To counter this, we need to be more explicit about what we each mean when we use the term 'placemaking'.


Courtesy of Elanor Warwick, (2012) **Creating a sense of place**, IDBE Course, Cambridge University

The notion of and the meanings attached to 'place' have changed significantly over the past 50 years. In the 1960s Lynch focused on the tangible and physical form. Now the focus of attention has moved to softer considerations such as identity or wellbeing, to performance related delivery measures along with stronger assessment of inter-relationships. This complexit is illustrated in Biedler's 'Sense of Place Framework' which showed how 'place' differs across a spectrum of meanings, stretching from the physical setting, through activities and experiences within the setting to the meaning associated with the setting and how people use these to construct their own sense of place (and self-identities). Professional interest/expertise varies across this spectrum. Professor Cooper suggested that it revealing to try to identify where you and those you have to work sit on this spectrum.

Beidler's sense of place framework
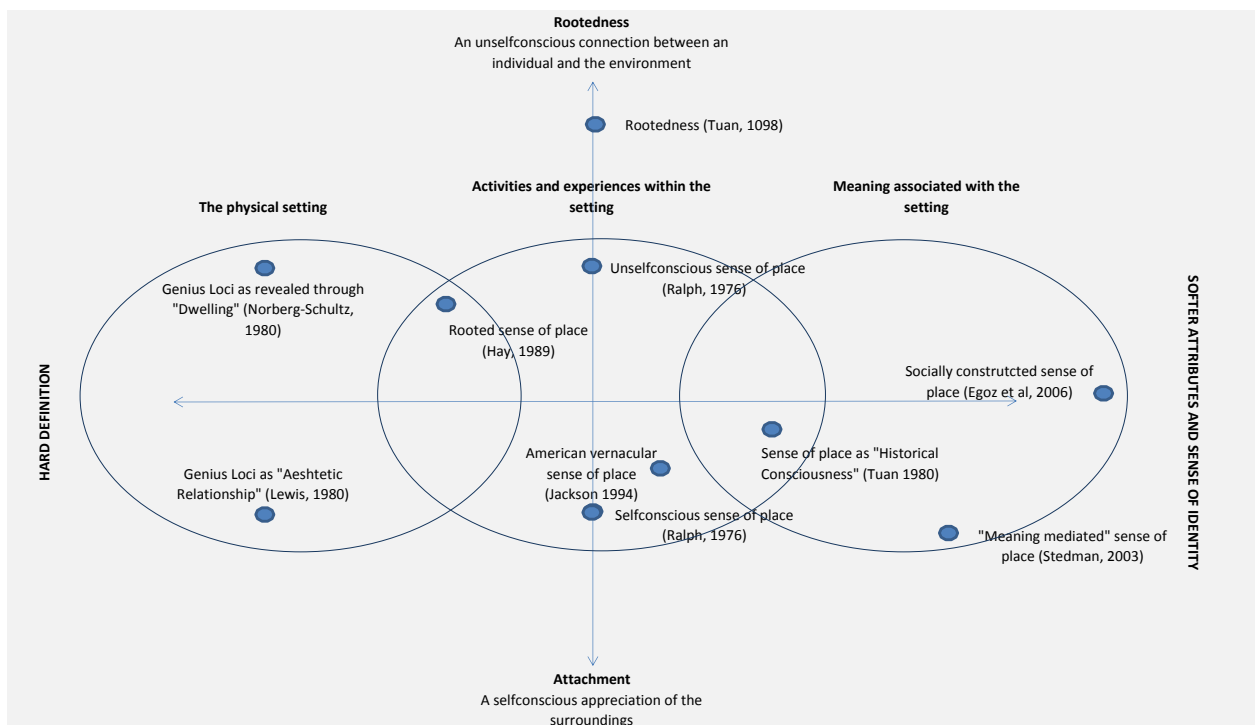
Professor Cooper also warned that the term 'public' is too undifferentiated to be useful for analytical or practical purposes. It encompasses the very broad range of stakeholders involved in placemaking: those who influence decision-making and those who don't but are impacted by them. There are very different types of communities involved here - of place, practice and interest. Typically placemaking only concentrates on the first of these. Consequently engaging all the relevant communities involved in a particular place raises considerable challenges in identifying and engaging with this 'public'.

Contemporary placemaking practice requires the formation of broad strategic alliances and coalitions of interests. The professions which grew from protecting divisions of knowledge now increasingly being asked to operate across the boundaries of their domains, collaboratively sharing their knowledge. Lay people are (and are increasingly being invited to become) more engaged in decision making affecting their lives. Placemaking professionals find themselves being expected to be more inclusive; beyond their client or employer, they are expected to owe a responsibility to civil society. Responding to these pressures means that they need to extend their engagement skills and activities to be do so effectively.

NEW PROFESSIONALISM:
TEN PRINCIPLES ALL BUILDING PROFESSIONALS COULD ADOPT TOMORROW

1. Be a steward of the community, its resources, and the planet. Take a broad view.
2. Do the right thing, beyond your obligation to whoever pays your fee.
3. Develop trusting relationships, with open and honest collaboration.
4. Bridge between design, project implementation, and use. Concentrate on the outcomes.
5. Don't walk away. Provide follow-through and aftercare.
6. Evaluate and reflect upon the performance in use of your work. Feed back the findings.
7. Learn from your actions and admit your mistakes. Share your understanding openly.
8. Bring together practice, industry, education, research and policymaking.
9. Challenge assumptions and standards. Be honest about what you don't know.
10. Understand contexts and constraints. Create lasting value. Keep options open for the future.

Building Research & Information, 44 (1), 1-128 (Jan-Feb 2013), Table 1, page 6

Prof. Ian Gilzean, Scottish Government, drew on personal experience in his presentation on *'Delivering sustainable places – finding common ground'* and reflected on how ideas can shape and influence outcomes; noting a challenge of working between two worlds: a 'real' world, and an imaginary world full of possibilities.

The national policy statement on Creating Places needs a shared vision and collaborative processes to make it work. Ideas are linked to who we are; we need to engage communities and the public. A significant percentage (80%) of Scotland's population lives in urban areas and we need to invite a new debate about the urban agenda and quality of life. The 1970s community led tenement renewal (e.g. ASSIST) programme offered an alternative to large scale housing redevelopment. Today, the Designing Streets document offers a key policy shift in how we think about making places.

Good things don't happen by chance; we need to seize opportunities when they appear, and work hard to deliver them. This was recognised by Barcelona's Mayor, Pasqual Maragall, and in a shift in focus from delivering big works to initiating small projects which can enable more community self-organised action and participation. Dublin's Temple Bar illustrated how local resistance to its redevelopment as a bus terminus led to the regeneration of the area as a cultural quarter.
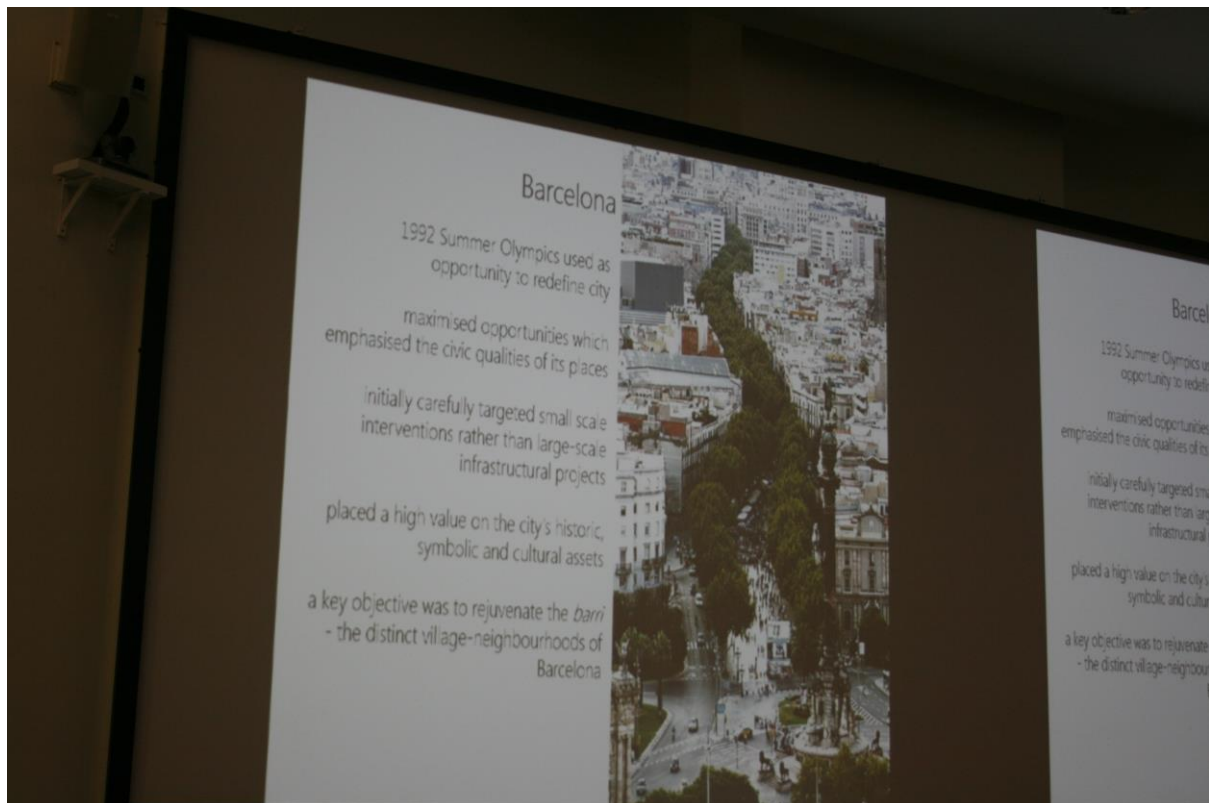
In Melbourne, efforts to reactivate a former lifeless core identified and incentivised people to inhabit the centre. Converting commercial property brought life, footfall and activity back to opened-up lanes; public realm improvement, street planting, and other initiatives has made Melbourne's centre an attractive and desirable living environment.

The Scottish Government has supported a variety of initiatives that promote wider engagement and participation, and which challenge silo professional working; e.g. the charrette programme, drawing skills programme, the A+DS Design Skills Symposium; supporting younger practices at the Venice Biennale ('self-made city'). The 2016 Year of Innovation, Architecture and Design presents an opportunity to bring the public together to engage in an interactive debate about where to go next.

Craig McLaren, Director of RTPI Scotland, started his presentation on *'Breaking out of silo thinking'* by highlighting four themes:
- **Focus on outcomes** - evident in bringing together spatial and community planning (and Single Outcome Agreements); this can help in managing complex issues; the National Performance Framework provides a useful framework to work with.
- **Challenge perceptions -** the planning system is seen as regulatory instead of positive; planners help to provide vision - of the 80/20 split between Development Management and Development Planning, which adds the most value?
- **Systems -** are both statutory and non-statutory; think beyond the statutory; aim for proactive rather than reactive.
- **Competencies and skills** – planning is seen as a homogeneous lump! In fact there are many different roles and different skillsets; planning looks to deliver long term holistic objectives.

Four challenges / opportunities were offered:

1. Grasp the corporate government agenda

Planners want to work across silos, and need to get better at demonstrating and articulating how and why this adds value. Presently Heads of Planning tend to operate at the 3rd tier and need to push up to 2nd tier; we need to get the message over that planning is helpful and central.

2. Spatial thinking

Structures are set up to think in terms of programmes and funding streams instead of working across silos (political committees perpetuate silos!). We need to move to corporate management that considers the spatial contexts of decision making (i.e. link spatial and community planning); could the development plan be the spatial articulation of the community plan? We need to better link up engagement processes and join things up. A focus on outcomes and spatial based thinking can assist this.

3. Culture change

We need to get better at: enabling; solutions focussed working; a can-do positive attitude that makes things work; collaborative, creative working; certainty; early engagement. A recent RICS report observed that the role of planning is changing. This is evident in: support for continuous improvement; the Planning Development Programme; the work of Improvement Service; works by individuals and organisations.

4. Measure success

There are a range of different indicators in the Planning Performance Framework that are indicative measures of success: Holistic – working across sectors; Open for business; High quality development; Certainty; Customer service; Decision making; Management structures; Finance and governance; Continuous improvement.

In conclusion planning needs to: show where it adds value; how it works with others; put in place systems that allow for creative cultures. Whilst the Scottish Government can help to create the context for this to happen, we all have responsibilities to take forward this agenda. As a footnote, the Coupland novel, Generation X: Tales for an Accelerated Culture, notes: "You must choose between pain or drudgery". Planning needs to choose 'pain' and avoid 'drudgery'!

Prof. Tara J. Fenwick, Stirling University presented on *'Professionals' responsibility to collaborate with civil society'* and noted a challenge for contemporary professions is how to manage dynamic complexity and uncertainty (e.g. evident in demographics changes / technological advances / resource cuts) whilst guaranteeing quality and continuity of service. Today's generation are born into different ways of understanding knowledge; they understand social media and are network oriented; they are accustomed to interactivity and used to having their say.

A definition of professionalism as 'a contract of trust between society and occupation group in exchange for a guarantee of service' faces many challenges: Conflicting demands; Fast changing knowledge (evidence of what works); Digital technology; Partnership working (falling between the cracks); Increased audit (handcuffing regulatory versus visionary practice); Declining public trust; Increased social anxiety; Projections of society's anxiety and guilt (how to handle a fair set of demands); Legal obligations to clients' interests, and also to broader society (the interests of one over the interests of the many); Virtue list (moral preoccupations for the good professional); Policy response to crises; Media / public scandals.

The nature of 'professional' is changing and different discourses of professionalism include: Innovative professionalism (the 'icon' of the incoming care giver); Restricted / extended; Regulatory / transformative; Civic professionalism; New discussions.

The changed nature of professionalism and ways of working present major challenges in relation to exercising responsibilities: Multiple conflicting roles and responsibilities; Relational responsibilities; Efficiency v good practice (demands to cut resources and increase paperwork and patient load vs. demands of care for each patient); Responsibility tends to be negotiated compromise (defining responsibilities through a series of compromises). Codes of ethics and rules have to be applied to practice, but responsibility is rarely the rational application of rules ("Impossible practices acting in spaces of undecidability").

Professionals have a wider civic responsibility - engineers [+ other professions: planners / architects] codes require contribution to greater social good. How does this affect co-production; collaboration; partnership working? When entering into such arrangements professionals can have concerns around: loss of professional accountability; lose different logics of practice; it's fine until bad things happen – who is accountable when it falls between the cracks?

Changing professionalism has implications for equity and social justice: how are the needs of the vulnerable and disadvantaged met; how to collaborate with culturally diverse knowledge practices; how is local wellbeing identified and promoted; how to work with concepts such as 'global citizenship (a 'false friend'), to understand and respect difference; to consider the needs of wider communities? In terms of civic responsibility, whose demands in the web of commitments will be dominant? The professional's role is inflated to symbolic importance. The flow is to encourage and support collective practices - what are the professional implications of managing community co-design and delivery of services. We must move towards an expanded sense of civic responsibility.

Chris Brown (IGLOO) provided a developers' perspective in his presentation *'Linking professionals, value and delivery of better place making'.* He started by noting a need to consider how professionals and placemaking can help to solve big issues (e.g. mental health, climate change, etc). Igloo's wider sense of responsibility is reflected in the triple aims of 'people, place and planet'.

Placemaking comprises hard / physical aspects and soft /people considerations (e.g. impact on wellbeing). The term 'people' is taken to mean anyone who experiences places now and into the future, and the relevance is summed up in Jan Gehl's philosophy: "Design places as if people matter" (Where is there a sunny spot? Use leftover land for something special); if places work for both young and old then they will work for everyone.

A starting point is to consider 'value' in a wider sense (society and the planet); better places are worth more; this is not about trade-off, but about achieving a win-win. However, most places are made by developers not by professionals; most places are housing (80%), and most housing is by volume house builders (70/75%) who don't see themselves as having a wider duty to society!

People making decisions are mostly ignorant of what is being discussed, and unaware of how to factor in the cost of negative externalities. Volume house builders have short term desires to get in and out as quickly as possible. They won't have to bear the costs of ugly buildings as they don't have a longer term stake in what is built. Negative costs are put onto wider society. How is it possible to incorporate negative externalities into financial appraisals?

Developers don't necessarily appoint professionals, and don't recognise a wider sense of duty; but they have to deal with issues when they come up against regulatory duty, and positive pressure can result in change. Pressures for positive change can come from different areas:
- 🎬 Employees - next generation are expecting things to happen differently
- 🎬 Investors - average length of time share owned on London Stock Exchange is 45 seconds!
- 🎬 Developers - sensitized to risks attached to bad business practice

- Customers - 2/3 would not buy from volume housebuilders – not much of a choice!
- Voters - via politicians: licence to operate
- Party leaders - talk about ethical practices

Certain developers (e.g. Barratt Homes) are setting a good example and starting to change the way they go about making places. How to make things better? Regulation is one option; but placemaking / planning system is not a good place to manage delivery as not good at getting design. Therefore propose a different approach:

1. League tables where performance ranked; could provide incentives (i.e. better access to public land; speedier planning consent). Behaviour will change – developers are good at imitating the success of others!
2. Royal Charters provide a basis for greater duty to wider society; therefore, enforce the Royal Charter and threaten to remove this if necessary!
3. Things happening in other parts of the economy, e.g. the Social Value Act, could be applied to placemaking and capital works.

We need to learn from the best and from the worst; but be wary of professionals telling us what's good for us! Salford Quays was designated as an enterprise zone but became a collection of rubbish buildings. In Birmingham (brownfield site next to canal) old buildings down were knocked down; to replace these assets a professional produced a plan and a vision – awful! In Leeds (brownfield site next to canal) old buildings were kept and occupied with young creative high tech businesses. We need to work with the assets that exist: this has been the experience of any number of sites that didn't have much going for them except the water e.g. Malmo; East Islands/Amsterdam.

There is potential to change placemaking; professionalism means owing a duty to places and the planet; various lessons are evident in a need for:
- a good client who cares

- a good urban designer (and we haven't been training them)
- lots of different architects / variety
- mix of uses; which need to be cross subsidised (and therefore complicated to achieve)
- community co-production (community as client and developer)
- long term investment (investors who invest for longer than 45 seconds!)
- make places "As if people matter"
- link community and spatial planning > to neighbourhood plans > to site briefs
- move from individuals to community custodians – it's their interest to do the right thing
- custom build - rather than having speculative volume housing that builds to the lowest common denominator, the person building their own house will do everything they possibly can to maximise the value – in every sense!

3. Group Discussion

Participants were asked to discuss three questions, in small, mixed groups and then feed their responses back to the participants as a whole.

- What is happening now? (What is the current state of play in placemaking?)
- What needs improving (in how placemaking is being practised)?
- What do you want to happen next (to improve the practice of placemaking)?

Over-arching concerns

Figure 1 shows the over-arching concerns that lay behind the participants' responses to these three questions, shown as a Tag Crowd. Unlike the symposium organisers, participants did not accord equal weighting to the three components of its title, placemaking, the

professions and the public. Instead, gauged by frequency of mention, they had a clear set of priorities: first, community (aka the public); second, placemaking; and a clear third, profession(al)s. And the last of these was of less concern than:

- access to knowledge, to community members, and of them to professionals,
- the process (of placemaking), and
- local/planning.

Figure 1. The overall priorities given to issues as reported by the discussion groups (Combined result for all groups by frequency of mention to all three questions)

What is the current state of play in placemaking?

In turn, behind these stands were concerns about involving and engaging people in development through working together. Figure 2 shows the four groups' combined responses to this question, again as a Tag Crowd.

Figure 2. The priority given to issues for Question 1 as reported by the discussion groups

Here the most frequently mentioned issues differ only slightly to those in Figure 1 by including 'examples' and 'working'. There was felt to a need to identify and share examples of local communities successfully working together through engagement in a design approach to the process of placemaking supported by professionals. One group asked, "13 years on, where are the examples". Another suggested: "There are some community-led projects (with professional support) – some good examples and learning". Another agreed, pointing to "Good examples of co-production – local government/charity/local community working". But one group also reported that "Engagement [usually?] happening too late – 'Tick the box'". Others identified "'Patchy' approach to consultation" or pointed to "Difficulties getting representatives of the public". There were also "Concerns about top-down approach", with "Too big a gap between communities and professionals - [who need to] use less jargon" and "Break down professional terminology". At present there are seen to be "People talking – not explaining or listening".

Doubts were also expressed about current understand of, and practice of, placemaking. "Do we know what placemaking is > place<u>s</u>?" "Placemaking is becoming too generic [with insufficient distinction between] city making, neighbourhood making, humanising process". Another group reported that placemaking has become "A lot less about the physical place, more about how it is used" and "About design process and build process". Another group called for two strands of placemaking: "Grass roots for existing communities", and "New site, very difficult, no resident community".

"Good placemaking can be very client-base informed" or arise from "Poorer communities – self-organising with little support /engagement from local authorities". But local authority engagement is essential because of "Spatial and community planners working together (or being asked to work together" and of the need for "New places [based on the] principles of sustainable development" to create "[A] sense of place –attachment". And appropriate policies, such as Designing Streets (http://www.scotland.gov.uk/resource/doc/307126/0096540.pdf) which prioritises 'place' over 'movement', were seen as important in helping to achieve this.

What needs improving in how placemaking is being practised?
Figure 3 shows the four groups' combined responses to this question.

Figure 3. The priority given to issues for Question 2 as reported by the discussion groups

In comparison to Figure 2, Figure 3 suggests that participants saw more issues competing for attention when considering how to improve placemaking. There was still the emphasis on community involvement in placemaking, but this was joined by attention to placemaking as a process and to the skills that people require to practise and engage in it. The relationship of placemaking to masterplanning was also emphasised as were local empowerment for early access and engagement in development.

Again this interpretation is borne out by what groups actually reported. "Placemaking as a process – generative -> community planning and development" with a "Need for more community involvement", "Utilis[ing] community skills" and with "Resources for community empowerment". There is a need to "Link community planning and physical planning – avoid[ing] consultation fatigue – through community involvement and empowerment". Recognition is required that "Masterplanning is not placemaking". "Early engagement" is necessary the "placemaking process", with "Planning weekends at [the] start – include local school kids". "The charette process" is needed "to demystify and get people involved". Because "Placemaking lacks [a] tangible definition", "Each project needs to define its own placemaking – [its own] attitudes/state of mind of how to work". Each project "Needs different skill sets and entry points, e.g. listening, asking the right questions". There is a "Need to engage communities in development and implementation [which has to be] animated in spaces", with "Continuous response to ideas for improvement, [as per] Copenhagen". This has to be "Accessible to everyone early –draw in and don't put off – as a cultural norm: this is the way we do things?" And this implies 'continuous involvement "throughout the constant change/ownership of community". But this raises questions about the "Skills for what local people want [and for] changing professionalism". Planning applications that are "Not bad enough to refuse" have to be deemed "not acceptable" as do the "Mediocre aspirations [of the] public/LPA/developers". There also needs to be "access to a new range of audiences [to] find the people who will make up the 'new community' – diversity of interest".

What do you want to happen next to improve the practice of placemaking?

Figure 4 shows the four groups' combined responses to this question.

Figure 4. The priority given to issues for Question 3 as reported by the discussion groups

In comparison to the other figures, Figure 4 indicates that there was less consensus about what are the priorities for improving the practice of placemaking. Instead many more issues were unshared – i.e. mention by only one of the groups (those shown in small font as the background). Jointly, the

main emphasis remained on community – on community access and community planning. Behind this there was a shared concern for the use of local knowledge in the planning of places, highlighting spatial and social dimensions. A clear desire for improvements to occur was signalled by the shared emphasis on the word 'become'.

One of the groups expressed a desire to equate sustainable places with more equality in the production of places, "Sustainable places = community involvement, empowerment, local democracy – not contractual relationship". This was seen as requiring "Easier access for communities to professionals" and a reduction or removal of "the tendency for council departments to give conflicting advice (Designing Streets)". But it also requires "Learning by doing" and "Examples of small things that can be done" so that the front on which improvements are being sought "is not the big masterplan". Instead "Service providers need to support placemaking" by "Improv[ing the] knowledge base" and giving "community groups" "access to that knowledge. There needs to be "Join[ed] up community and spatial panning", with "Spatial planners pulling together corporate ambitions for their areas". LPAs need to "Recognise the contribution of community-led placemaking to wider outcomes – we are all in this together – whole community and all strands of society". Hence "Communities have to know what else is possible and [the] negative externalities". "Short term developer interests" have to be weighed against "long term community benefits". One group threw down a specific challenge for local authorities who need to: become more accessible to good ideas; have the political will to engage with the community; and enable community planning (as part of a linking narrative).

Plenary session

In the closing plenary session, each group was asked to report what they saw as the three most pressing issues raised by each question they had discussed.

Against the current state of play in placemaking, they prioritised:
- the fragmentary nature of examples
- the patchy nature of consultation
- the need for different types of placemaking for existing and new places
- concern about the same terminology being employed being applied to widely differing phenomena – to whole city-making as well as at the small scale.

But they also expressed a measure of optimism. Placemaking should be seen as a 'work in progress'. There are some good community-led projects whereas others are just tick-box exercises.

Against the improvements required to placemaking, participants chose to list:
- improving the definition of the term – placemaking is seen as lacking a tangible definition
- improved resources of community engagement
- improved techniques for coping with small scale interventions.

They emphasised that there is a need for Local Planning Authorities to move away from the current default which is that applications are "not bad enough to refuse" towards a refusal to accept mediocrity. They queried how to raise the aspirations amongst professionals about what should be deemed possible. Placemaking was presented, not as a one-off solution, but as an evolutionary process capable of generating local capacity. There is a need for genuine community engagement, through co-housing projects and co-production, using meaningful examples which should continue

throughout the whole lifecycle of a development. They also chose to emphasise the need to integrate community and spatial planning.

Against what should happen next, participants prioritised:

• learning from doing

• discriminating between placemaking and "big masterplanning"

• the need for consistency of practice in future

Local Planning Authorities need to be able to match community needs and wants with the leadership required to deliver these – seen as an aspect of local democracy. To do this, local authorities need to be more accessible to good ideas. In practice, one group did not set their sights too high, suggesting the next step needs to be delivering against today's aspirations for what are 'tolerable places'.

4. Reflections and conclusions

During the symposium, participants were requested to respond to three questions posed in a pro-forma provided in their delegates pack.

🎬 Is there evidence that professional culture and practice is changing in response to calls for better place-making?

🎬 Is evidence is there of an emerging consensus, expressed through changes in professional practice, about how to do this?

🎬 Do you think place-making professionals should encourage people to participate in place-making?

Twenty of symposium participants completed and returned the pro-forma. (Not all of them answered every question.) Figure 5 combines all of the participants' responses, shown as a Tag Crowd.

Figure 5. The most frequently raised issues by individual participants

Is there evidence that professional culture and practice is changing in response to calls for better place-making?

A majority of the participants thought that there is evidence that professional culture and practice is changing in response to calls for better place-making. But about a third of these sought to qualify this by making 'Yes but ….' statements. Only a small minority thought that there was no evidence that this was happening. However, there is no simple story to be told here. Nor is there a single magic bullet that participants point to for delivering better place-making. Instead there is a very wide range of repeated concerns given similar levels of importance.

Figure 6. The most frequently raised issues by those participants who think that there is evidence for change towards better place-making practice

However participants think that professionals should take the lead in engaging the public and communities in discussion to educate them about the evidence for better place-making. These participants point to a change in design, moving beyond input from developers and architects, by using charrettes so that the knowledge and interests of the public can be engaged for urban sites so that, through discussion, the major issues involved can be identified and evaluated against examples.

Is evidence is there of an emerging consensus, expressed through changes in professional practice, about how to do this?

There was much less agreement amongst the participants about whether there is an emerging consensus about how to change professional practice to improve place-making. Most of them either did not know or thought that there was not but almost as many (a few with reservations) thought that there was. Amongst those who did not know, there was a shared concern that there is not enough evidence in practice of community engagement for a consensus to emerge.

Do you think place-making professionals should encourage people to participate in place-making?

Uniformly, with only a couple of reservations or abstentions, participants thought that professionals should be encouraging people to participate in place-making. Participants pointed to people becoming more aware of charrettes as one means of developing local communities engagement in place-making. One planner commented:

> "Places will only work if people who live there or would like to live there set out their priorities for services, activity and places

An architect/urban designer agreed:

"The local people are the place makers. It is not place making unless people are involved"

adding that this required"

"Ongoing, consistent, well resourced engagement which engages/influences policy, service delivery and physical aspects of a neighbourhood."

Another architect defined the role that professionals should play here:

"They should work to show people what is possible. 'Community' may only ask for short term or local answers. Role of professionals needs to expand to show clients/communities how this can be better."

An anonymous participant commented that this would require:

"Demystify[ing] the charrette process – [so that] everyone has a voice and contribution to make."

And a participant from Public Health suggested that professionals would need to:

"Find a common ground where they don't need to get over the hurdle of considering themselves the 'superior experts', e.g. discussions based on health and wellbeing as an outcome."

Emergent recommendations

This symposium set out to explore the changing nature of the professional in placemaking. It recognised that there is a need to confront pressures to create quality places that make a difference for people on 'the ground' in increasing strained economic circumstances. So successful placemaking will have to be based on knowledge of what actually works in practice and what needs improving. This is the territory which the participants in the symposium jointly sought to explore.

Participants were asked:

- What is happening now? (What is the current state of play in placemaking?)
- What needs improving (in how placemaking is being practised)?
- What do you want to happen next (to improve the practice of placemaking)?

Clear recommendations emerge from their responses to these questions.

Symposium participants recommended prioritising providing community members with access to the knowledge and to the professionals required for them to be effectively enrolled in the process of placemaking in local planning. They felt a need to identify and share examples of local communities successfully working together through engagement in a design-led approach to the process of placemaking supported by professionals. At present, consultation practices are viewed as 'patchy', with difficulty in engaging representatives of the public. Partly as a result of top-down approaches, some saw too big a gap between communities and professionals – with the latter using jargon, talking – not explaining or listening or asking the right questions. Doubts were also expressed about current understand of, and practice of, placemaking. Good placemaking can be very client-base informed or it can arise from communities self-organising with little support or engagement from local authorities. But participants recommended that the latter's engagement is essential because of the need for spatial and community planners to work together to create places based on the principles of sustainable development that create a sense of attachment to place.

Attention needs to be given to placemaking as a process and to the skills that people require to practise and engage in it. Local empowerment is necessary along with early access and engagement in development. Planning weekends at the start – including local school kids and the use of charrettes to demystify the planning process and to get people involved were both recommended as creating animated spaces where continuous responses to ideas for improvement can thrive. Continuous involvement was deemed important because of constant change to encourage engagement from the diversity of interest needed to build community ownership.

There was less consensus amongst symposium participants about what priorities should be pursued for improving the practice of placemaking. Instead a multiplicity of unshared issues were voiced. But one main emphasis remained focused on community – on community access and community planning, along with a shared concern for the use of local knowledge in the planning of places, highlighting spatial and social dimensions.

"Sustainable places = community involvement, empowerment, local democracy – not contractual relationship". Achieving this was seen as requiring easier access for communities to professionals and learning by doing through examples of small things that can be done rather than just large-scale masterplanning. Participants recommended that ommunity and spatial planning need to be intregrated so that planners can pull together corporate ambitions for their areas, with short term

developer interests weighed against long term community benefits. The challenge here is for local authorities to become more accessible to good ideas, demonstrate the political will to engage with the communities, and then empower them to engage effectively in community planning.

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