

PLACEMAKING IN THE LEISURE REALM

Amanda J. Johnson
University of Waterloo



Agenda

- Space vs. place
- Placemaking
- Recent research
- Placemaking brainstorming exercise
- Connection to leisure
- Conclusion

Space vs. Place

- Space: absolute, physical and objective boundaries
- Place: relative, dimensions are subjective, interpretation

Placemaking

- “The way all of us as human beings transform the places in which we find ourselves into places in which we live”
(Schneekloth & Shibley, 1995)
- Capitalizes on a local community's assets, inspiration, and potential, ultimately creating good public spaces that promote people's health, happiness, and well being
(PPS.org)

Placemaking

- Fosters the creation of vital **public** destinations
 - Creates the kind of places where people feel a strong stake in their communities and a commitment to making things better (PPS.org)

Placemaking



- Important in creating social cohesion, sense of place/place meanings, and feelings of democracy and citizenship (Zukin, 1995)
- A (place) cannot be healthy if the built environment is constructed in a manner that prevents interaction between members of the community (Byers, 1998)

Place Meanings

“...people mean places. But, in turn, places also mean people. Places form a reservoir of meanings which people can draw upon to tell stories about and thereby define themselves. Thus place and identity are inexorably linked” (Thrift, 1997, p. 160)



Place Meanings

- Place meanings tell about our connections to the land – connections from the past as well as aspirations for the future
- They also reflect our social relations
- Our place meanings provide visions for land-use planning
 - ▣ How places are “made”

Place meanings

- Places the public collectively values (Goheen, 1998)
- Leisure connection?

Making Place



Making Place



Who/What Makes Places?

- Professional Disciplines
 - Architects
 - Planners
 - Developers
 - Engineers

“We have theories, specialisms, regulations, demonstration projects. We have planners. We have highway engineers. We have mixed use, mixed tenure, architecture, community architecture, urban design, neighbourhood strategy. But what seems to have happened is that we have simply lost the art of placemaking; or, put another way, we have lost the simple art of placemaking. We are good at putting up buildings but we are bad at making places”

- Bernard Hunt (architect)

Who/What Makes Places?

The people!

Users

Residents

Community-driven, bottom-up approach

Problem

- Need to define processes that empower communities and enhance place (via placemaking, sense of place)
- Traditional means of engagement fail to reach everyone
- Planners struggle for tools to facilitate discourse on public *values* related to places and landscape change

Research Study 1: Urban Vitality/Sense of Place

- Purpose: to examine everyday forms of urban leisure and its role in enhancing urban vitality and sense of place
- Study Site: Kitchener, Ontario
- Method: 20 participants, photo-elicitation, one-to-one interviews, civic discovery forum

Research Study 1: Urban Vitality/Sense of Place (Results)

- Local residents desired downtown development that incorporated:
 - ▣ Visual assurances of sociability
 - ▣ Unique interactions

Research Study 1: Urban Vitality/Sense of Place

- Visual Assurances of Sociability



“Parkettes...they are nice little areas where you can sit and relax and have a conversation. But again... as I go around and I see them like that, they are totally underutilized.”
- Mike

“And that’s the big thing. The whole downtown, there’s nobody down there. And the big thing is to get people down there.”
- Dan

Research Study 1: Urban Vitality/Sense of Place

□ Unique Interactions



"I like... the balcony there and the guy watching what was going on, on the street. That was a Saturday morning, I was walking down to the market...It's a really neat thing, [because] I don't know that there are people that can just go out and keep an eye on things, you know."
- Paul

"[Downtown] has to be something people can't get somewhere else."

- Sara

Research Study 1: Urban Vitality/Sense of Place

□ Civic Discovery Forum

- "Civic science" - facilitates social learning (Kruger & Shannon, 2000)
- Forums for social learning are often excluded in land-use planning processes
- Bring all stakeholders together
- Residents, planners, police officers, architects, city councillors
- All opinions are valued



Research Study 2: The Kitchener Market

- Purpose: to examine how community is created in an urban leisure setting
- Study Site: Kitchener Farmers' Market, Kitchener, Ontario
- Method: 22 participants, photo-elicitation, one-to-one interviews, ethnography (observations)

Research Study 2: The Kitchener Market (Results)

- The Kitchener Market provides a *place* for the enactment of community
- The process of placemaking contributes to feelings of community and social cohesion
 - ▣ The place contributes to meaningful relationships formed between and by members of the market community

“The market offers everything. There is nothing this market this market can’t offer. I mean that’s the beauty, that was the goal of this market, that it could be all things to all people, to any people.”

- Karrie





“The flip of that, and it’s a very big flip side, is the public has a say in what it’s to look like. They have a story to tell and they are able to. So, okay, do you want to pay for a fountain or do you want to have something that everyone benefits from? And the public benefits from the market, right?”
- Peter

Leisure Connection?

- Placemaking for:
 - Bars/cafés
 - Patios
 - Strip malls
 - Libraries
 - Laneways
 - Community centres
 - Squares and plazas
 - Parks
 - Markets
 - Sidewalks



Leisure Connection?

- “Without a space conducive to social life, community relations cannot prosper and grow” (Lloyd & Auld, 2003, p. 345)
- Instead of serving a specific purpose, most city parks are “unfitted, whether by location, size or shape, to serve successfully in the public yard fashion” (Jacobs, 1961, p. 106)
- Accessible and truly public spaces are locations where people can interact and socialize (Mitchell, 1995)



Conclusion

- Shaping our places means shaping our relations within these places
- Leisure practitioners and scholars should advocate for placemaking as a citizen-driven, bottom-up approach



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