

VIEWPOINT

**Placemaking in the European context.
The movement is here to stay**

Jeroen Laven, Anna Bradley
STIPO / Placemaking Europe, The Netherlands
jeroen.laven@stipo.nl | anna.bradley@stipo.nl

Levente Polyak
Eutropian, Austria
levente.polyak@eutropian.org

Abstract

The importance of public space as a foundation for good cities is recognised across Europe at a policy level and also amongst practitioners. Placemaking Europe, previously known as the European Placemaking Network, is a fresh network connecting a growing number of practitioners, academics, community leaders, market parties and policy makers working on public spaces in ways that give due consideration to placemaking and the City at Eye Level. Through this approach, Placemaking Europe shares knowledge, exchanges ideas, and actively shapes collaborative projects.

Keywords: placemaking, city at eye level, ground floor, STIPO, Europe

To cite this article:

Laven, J., Bradley, A., Polyak, L. (2019). Placemaking in the European context. The movement is here to stay. *The Journal of Public Space*, 4(1), 135-154, DOI 10.32891/jps.v4i1.1159

This article has been reviewed and accepted for publication in *The Journal of Public Space*.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution - Non Commercial 4.0 International License <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

Public space quality is the backbone of a sustainable city. To ensure quality in the public realm, cities need; great streets supported by places that intuitively captivate users, compelling them to want to stay longer; a human scale inspired by the interaction between buildings and streets; user ownership; placemaking; good plinths (active ground floors); and a person-centered approach based on user experience¹.

Different groups of people use public spaces for a variety of purposes throughout the day, and because public spaces harbor the potential for encouraging such diverse uses and users, they are also where a broad cross-section of local, national and global agendas converge².

The importance of public space as a foundation for good cities is recognised across Europe at a policy level³ and also amongst practitioners. Placemaking Europe, previously known as the European Placemaking Network, is a fresh network connecting a growing number of practitioners, academics, community leaders, market parties and policy makers working on public spaces in ways that give due consideration to placemaking and the City at Eye Level. Through this approach, Placemaking Europe shares knowledge, exchanges ideas, and actively shapes collaborative projects.

This article:

- looks back into some of the history of the rise of placemaking and the City at Eye Level
- elaborates on how Placemaking Week Amsterdam led to Placemaking Europe
- highlights recent European placemaking projects that show the diversity of the movement
- asks the question, who benefits from placemaking
- goes into challenges for the coming years, to be addressed during Placemaking Week Europe 2019.
-



¹ Karssenbergh, H., Laven, J., Glaser, M., van 't Hoff, M. (2013), *The City at Eye Level: Lessons for Street Plinths*, Eburon. Available at: www.thecityateyelevel.com

² Whyte, W.H. (1980), *The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces*, Project for Public Spaces (2001).

³ As stated in the United Nations New Urban Agenda specifically, with reference to SDG 11 'Make cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable'. Access at:

<http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/blog/2016/10/newurbanagenda/> and in the EU urban agenda at: <https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/urban-agenda>

Looking Back: The Rise of Placemaking and the City at Eye Level

Placemaking is a strategy for co-creation that focuses on economic and social well-being, as well as, quality of life.⁴ Moreover, placemaking recognises the human need for prosperity, sociability and security as being indispensable and necessary to counter alienation⁵.

Placemaking gained traction in the 1960s, with special mention to Jane Jacobs and William H. Whyte and their respective groundbreaking ideas to design cities for people, not just cars and shopping centres.

Since the 1990s, Project for Public Spaces (PPS)⁶, a non-profit organisation based in New York committed to supporting public places that build communities, began consistently using the term "placemaking" in the mid-1990s to describe their approach towards building community around place. PPS has been one of the leading partners in pushing the placemaking movement forward, working on projects all over the world.

Placemaking inspires people to collectively reimagine and reinvent public spaces as the heart of every community. Through strengthening connections between people and the places they share, placemaking refers to a collaborative process by which many can shape their public realm in order to maximize shared value. More than just promoting better urban design, placemaking facilitates creative patterns of use, and pays particular attention to the physical, cultural, and social identities that define a place and support its ongoing evolution.⁷

Placemakers achieve their goals by offering concrete tools to incorporate all stakeholders that are involved in a public space, and by working towards a solution together with those stakeholders.⁸ As both an overarching idea, and a hands-on approach for improving a neighborhood, city, or region, placemaking inspires people to collectively reimagine and reinvent public spaces as the heart of every community.⁹

PPS introduced new and also strengthened existing narratives, such as regularly used placemaking terms like: "the power of ten", "zealous nuts", and "triangulation."

The success of placemaking is clearly visible from the immense speed with which this innovative energy has grown into a worldwide movement and has connected actors across disciplines and backgrounds. An increasing number of placemaking networks, institutions, and conferences across the globe (including PlacemakingX¹⁰, Placemaking Leadership Council¹¹, Future of Places¹², The City at Eye Level¹³ among many others) exemplify this growth.

⁴ Oldenburg, R. (1999), *The Great Good Place: Cafes, Coffee Shops, Bookstores, Bars, Hair Salons, and Other Hangouts at the Heart of a Community*, Da Capo Press.

⁵ Silberberg, S., Lorah, K., Disbrow, R., Muessig, A. (2013), *Places in the Making: How placemaking builds places and communities*, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

⁶ Project for Public Spaces (PPS). Access at: <http://www.pps.org>

⁷ "What is Placemaking?" Project for Public Spaces, 2007. Access at: <https://www.pps.org/article/what-is-placemaking>

⁸ Markusen, A.M. and Gadwa, A. Creative Placemaking, National Endowment for the Arts and Markusen Economic Research Services and Metris Arts Consulting. 2010.

⁹ "What is Placemaking?" Project for Public Spaces, 2007. Access at: <https://www.pps.org/article/what-is-placemaking>

¹⁰ Access at: <https://www.placemakingx.org>

¹¹ Access at: <https://www.pps.org/plc>

¹² Access at: <http://futureofplaces.com/>

¹³ Access at: <https://thecityateyelevel.com/>

STIPO and The City at Eye Level

The establishment of The City at Eye Level programme by STIPO in 2012 was a clear push forward for placemaking in Europe. STIPO¹⁴, an urban development team established in 1994, strategically focuses on co-creation in area development, with a special focus on public space and plinths. The firm practices steadfast core values to ensure

“**durable quality** reflecting the wishes of the time, **the soul of the place** with distinctive character in which people continue to want to invest, **stratification** multiple and diverse use for a fair and inclusive city, **public quality** where the public space is a place for interaction and the plinths are the leitmotif in the surroundings, **ownership** of the people, entrepreneurs and users of the place”¹⁵.

STIPO practices both in the Netherlands and internationally, and propels the firm’s core values in joint with research, training, tool development, and network development. The City at Eye Level is a multifunctional and globally applicable programme, an open-source learning network, and a program for improving cities, streets, and places all over the world which has been published in a series of books. Importantly, The City at Eye Level programme uses the power of local knowledge and hands-on interventions to inform best practices and document lessons learned from cases throughout Europe and beyond. More than a hundred authors, mostly practitioners, have published their stories in *The City at Eye Level* books and on the website to exemplify, share, and uncover feedback in respective projects.

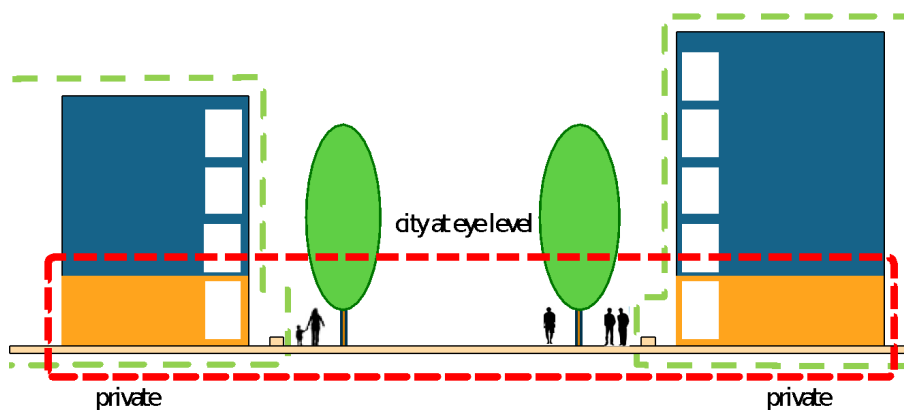


Figure 1. Diagram of the public realm. Source: Karrsenberg et. al, 2013.

The City at Eye Level programme looks at both public space provision and what is happening in the adjacent buildings on the ground floor: the plinth. The plinth is a building’s most crucial part concerning the city at eye level. What do you as a pedestrian experience when you look around? Do the buildings, their use, and their design constitute an attractive urban environment where you feel at home? Do the plinths connect with the pedestrian flows in the urban area? What are good functions and how can plinths and

¹⁴ Access at: <http://www.stipo.nl/>

¹⁵ “About STIPO” STIPO, 2019. Access at: <http://www.stipo.nl/>

public space strengthen each other? The City at Eye Level programme introduced original outlooks, such as:

“The ground floor may be only 10 per cent of the building, but it determines 90 per cent of the street experience.”

- Karszenberg et. al, 2013

The City at Eye Level’s strategy for co-creation towards establishing economically viable, livable, and sustainable streets and places is constructed on the basis of the interaction between these three fundamental components;

- 1) Hardware: physical structures that provide the basic services required in a city such as: infrastructure, housing, and design.
- 2) Software: the people and communities that make use of the everyday city and also who programme the plinths and public space. Their activities dictate whether a space is useful or not.
- 3) Orgware: the networks and processes that underpin spaces in the city, such as: financial, decision-making and maintenance with long-term strategies in mind.

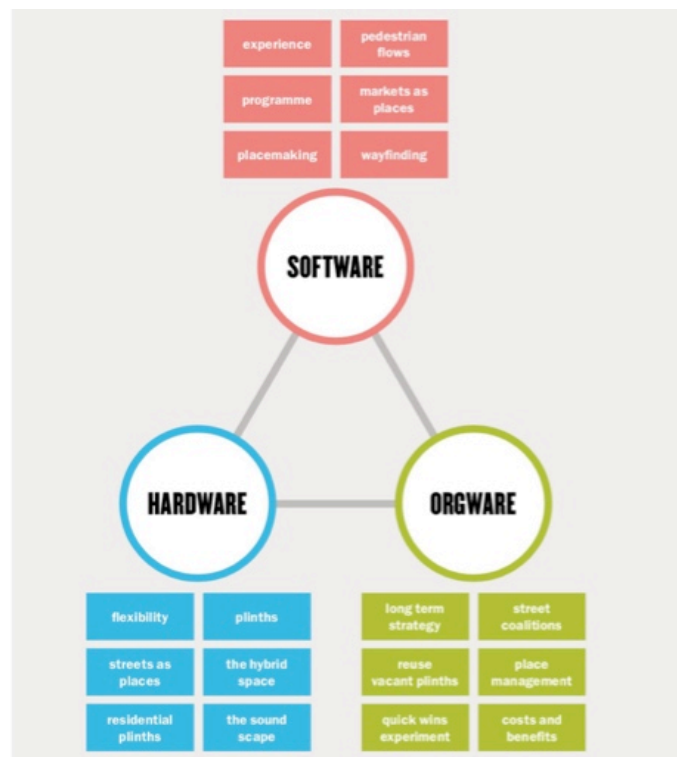


Figure 2. Depicts three components of the City at Eye Level strategy to motivate successful places and streets. Source: Karszenberg et. al, 2013.

From Placemaking Week Amsterdam to Placemaking Europe

In 2017, PPS co-organised Placemaking Week Amsterdam with STIPO and others, the event engaged participants from 46 countries and, ultimately, was at the time, the world’s

biggest placemaking event. During Placemaking Week Amsterdam, a dedicated European session opened a platform to pointedly discuss the challenges posed by the European context. Audience members for this session included practitioners, academics, knowledge institutions, civil servants, and others.

The session concluded with numerous arguments for starting a European Placemaking Network while building on the existing City at Eye Level programme. These arguments include opportunities, such as a common belief in the relevance of good public space and the need to exchange different methods, approaches and experiences. Other arguments focused on motivations such as the variety of threats that gentrification and touristification pose in many cities throughout Europe and their effect on cities from Venice to Amsterdam and London. Arguments were made about the challenges that shrinking cities pose for Southeastern Europe; the need to ensure inclusive and safe cities for all, in combination with varying political regimes and priorities. There were also arguments stressing the need for new financial and management models for both plinths and public space.



*Figure 3. Downtown Amsterdam during Placemaking Week 2017 co-organised by PPS and STIPO.
Source: STIPO, 2017.*

STIPO has outlined seven mechanisms that work against us to create a good public space and city at eye level

1. Cities and developers' lack of advantageous rules for protecting human scale.
2. The human scale is considered too late in the planning process.
3. Short-term profit focus.
4. Standardisation and sterile development.
5. Lack of proper management for good quality public places
6. Top-down planning leads to sterile public space and lack of feelings of ownership
7. Designs formulated according to a bird's eye view with no attention to street-level considerations.

Working together in a European placemaking network, will increase the ability to influence and improve upon practices and, hopefully, make them more visible on a European scale. Among the challenges for this network are finding methods to meet the mechanisms listed above head-on and generate effective solutions.

Born from efforts to fulfil this purpose, the then European Placemaking Network was avidly developed and launched during the Cities for All Conference in Stockholm in the spring of 2018. In spring 2019 the network's official name was changed and it is now known as Placemaking Europe.



Since the launch of Placemaking Europe in Stockholm, a two-pronged strategy has expanded the placemaking movement in Europe: 1) a group international actors, chaired and facilitated by STIPO took the lead and 2) the network diversified as exemplified by the community's projects and focuses.

A group of international actors, chaired and facilitated by STIPO, took the lead in organising and formalising the network as a not-for-profit organisation. In addition, an international board with representatives from all over Europe now manages the network. Specifically, the board is comprised of members from Greece, Hungary/Austria, Bulgaria, Spain, Sweden and the Netherlands. One of the activities of Placemaking Europe is the creation of an open-source placemaking toolbox, a process in which besides the board partners from Bulgaria, Slovakia, Sweden and the United States have been participating. The creation of this toolbox is accelerated by the PlaceCity project¹⁶; a cooperation co-financed by the Joint Programming Initiative (JPI) including partners from Austria, Norway, the Netherlands, and Belgium, together with Placemaking Europe

A group of approximately 65 Placemaking European Leaders currently help the network expand across Europe and act as liaisons, connectors, and catalysts for their country's

¹⁶Access at: www.placemaking-europe.eu

placemaking initiatives. Close to 2000 followers use the knowledge offered by the network, share ideas, come up with suggestions, and take the lead in activities. Placemaking Europe is connected to a worldwide network of gathered placemakers including the PlacemakingX¹⁷ network, key connections which help advance and give due consideration to placemaking and the City at Eye Level worldwide. Through the robust placemaking network, Placemaking Europe links soulmates in their efforts towards making communities and the City at Eye Level stronger in Europe and beyond.

Recent Projects that Show the Diversity of Placemaking Europe

Placemaking Europe binds initiatives on the European level to the national level. The leaders and members are mostly practitioners who run an independent practice in a local or national context. For instance, Nabolagshager¹⁸ from Oslo combines working on community-driven projects in Oslo, from urban farming to revitalising a former inner city prison, with partnering with PlaceCity¹⁹ a JPI funded project aimed at investigating placemaking tools in cities all over Europe with a view to build a Placemaking Europe Toolbox. Future Place Leadership took the lead and built a Nordic placemaking network, thus linking the needs of local Nordic placemakers to the European context. Wigwam²⁰, from France, actively involves European partners to strengthen knowledge banks towards aimed at improving the waterfront in Angers, while concurrently sharing their own lessons learned during Placemaking Week Europe.



Figure 4. PlaceCity team members gather to analyse the case site in Floridsdorf, Austria, considering good public places and the City at Eye Level. Source: Placemaking Europe, 2019.

¹⁷ Access at: <https://www.placemakingx.org>

¹⁸ Nabolagshager is based out of Oslo and activates communities and public spaces using gardening and participatory processes as tools. Access at: <https://nabolagshager.no/>

¹⁹ PlaceCity project is a Joint Programme Initiative between various European countries, working to collaboratively create better cities by gathering placemaking tools and implementing those tools in the partner's cities. Access at: <https://jpi-urbaneurope.eu/project/placecity/>

²⁰ Wigwam, based in France, works to further the "interconnection of the human with nature, the relevance of constructive choices and dialogue, by setting up a transversal vision on all of its projects." Access at: <http://wigwam-ingenierie.com/>

Placemaking Europe is growing and becoming more diverse. This is evident in the topics discussed and also in the projects that placemakers are working on within their respective countries and internationally. Included below are examples that illustrate the diverse nature of what is occurring in the network in the European context.

Bottom up Initiatives are Taking the Lead

To improve local public space through placemaking techniques, bottom up initiatives are at the forefront. A recent Bulgarian example, from Todor Kesarovski²¹, a Placemaking Europe Leader and Tool Development Member, developed an original placemaking tool and presented this work at the *Cities for All* conference, held in *Stockholm in 2018*. At this conference, a number of workshops aimed at experimenting with gentrification, segregation and inclusion. Specifically, the *Placemaking Facilitation Game workshop*, utilised a tool to support the development of a hypothetical placemaking process and more precisely, the enhancement of community engagement and interest management. Moreover, during the Bulgarian workshop, two decks of cards - 'Persona Cards' (ten archetypes of the local community) and 'Case Cards' (types of situations encountered), were used. Based on the card draw combination, each group had to resolve multiple practical situations (opportunity, challenge, issue) by drawing connections between the personas and outlining specific engagement strategies. Subsequently each solution was presented to all participants, providing the latter with the chance for reflection.



Figure 5. *Cities for All* attendees participate and discuss solutions within the Persona and Case card game.
Source: STIPO, 2018.

²¹ Access at: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/todor-kesarovski-14a45333/>

The Place Management Model

Social-cultural-economical organisations are taking the lead, developing new business models, and creating a sustainable new model - the place management model. Ten years ago, inspired by international examples like Bryant Park in New York, cultural institutions, local businesses and residents around the Schouwburgplein in Rotterdam started the association known as Vereniging Verenigd Schouwburgplein (VVS)²² to programme the square. Jeroen Laven, from STIPO and the Placemaking Europe Board, is one of the board members of VVS .

Although cultural institutions around the square attract over 2.4 million visitors a year, for a long time the square between those institutions was poorly utilised and, as such, was underused. The square's material aspects, size, and a lack of interaction between programming inside and outside the cultural buildings were among the reasons why the square was not popular. After years of successfully experimenting with techniques from placemaking and the City at Eye Level, strategies applied intentionally in relation to hardware, software and orgware have made the square into a place that users and Rotterdammers are proud of. This success is certainly a credit to three of the many successful techniques applied to the square:

- The VVS hired two square coordinators who programme close to 100 activities each year—from open air yoga to cultural events—and who are available during working hours in the form of customer service representatives to receive both ideas and complaints.
- The cultural buildings around the square opened up their plinths and invited users from the square to use the buildings, and vice versa in order to bring a selection of cultural programmes outside.
- The VVS, together with the municipality, learned from successful areas all over the world and added functions to the square that were meant to seduce local parties into organising their own activities. Among those functions were Enzos that were copied from Vienna, movable chairs from Jardin du Luxembourg, an adjustable stage, and, until recently, the world's biggest artificial temporary park -The Flying Grass Carpet²³. This temporary surface was such a success that the idea of it being removed lead to strong emotions from users and visitors.

The square is now open to future opportunities; for example, innovative sustainable parties want to turn the square and the buildings around it into a flagship of sustainable squares all over the world (Seven Square Endeavour Program²⁴). In order to achieve this, the square needs a hardware improvement which would increase opportunities for additional parties around the square to become more involved.

²²Access at: <https://schouwburgpleinrotterdam.nl/>

²³ Access at: <https://www.flyinggrasscarpet.org/>

²⁴ Access at: <http://www.7square-endeavour.nl/>



Figure 6. Schouwburgplein in Rotterdam. Picture by Eric Fecken



Figure 7. Users recline on movable and dynamic benches in Schouwburgplein. Source: STIPO.

Embracing Place-led Development

Traditional planning organisations, such as local governments, developers, and market parties are using placemaking to create better areas and embrace concepts like creative bureaucracy and place-led development. The waterfront and port of La Marina de Valencia²⁵ is being developed and managed by a dedicated government body. La Marina de Valencia's Strategic Plan 2016-2021²⁶ outlines a new vision for the future of the waterfront whereby both tradition and inventiveness drive the transformation of the economy, and the urban and cultural environment. With this vision in mind, the plan set two main goals: convert La Marina into the city's engine for economic development through innovation and create a sustainable, inclusive and dynamic public space.



Figure 8. Recent activity on the walkway of La Marina de Valencia. Source: La Marina de Valencia, 2019.

Placemaking is an important method. Through starting with small lighter, quicker, and cheaper actions, La Marina is investing in turning the area into a place that many people now like to visit. The actions that have led to increased use include providing space for skaters and creating an open-air music venue featuring live music every week that is partly programmed by music schools from the neighbourhood. This programming is also gradually paired with functions that make the area better and add a new quality to the city—these benefits stem from innovative startups to new leisure facilities along the coast. A pushing factor in this process is the La Marina Living Lab²⁷. The Lab builds on the value of co-creation and the paramount importance of including different actors in the process of designing and improving the urban environment. This is why the Lab collaborated with Western Sydney University (WSU) to consolidate La Marina Living Lab—an urban laboratory, which uses systematic practices of participatory co-creation to design and reimagine inclusive and innovative public spaces. The Lab is a user-based process through which public space is adjusted to the preferences of those who work, study and play in La Marina. Furthermore, it follows a multi-stakeholder approach,

²⁵Access at: <https://lamarinalivinglab.com/>

²⁶Access at: <http://www.lamarinadevalencia.com/mreal/uploaded/transparencia/librillo-cast-web-B.pdf>

²⁷ Access at: <https://lamarinalivinglab.com/>

counting on the support of research organisations, public administrations, and civic associations, as well as the private sector.

Innovative Financial Models and Tools

Innovative financial models and tools for placemaking at the City at Eye Level act to turn a space into a place and also consider sustainable longevity. The latter, although, is an additional challenge to ensuring that these places exert influence in the long-term.

A sustainable strategy must include management models, financial models and inspiring examples. Rozina Spinnoy²⁸, a Leader from Placemaking Europe is the driving force behind BIDs Belgium²⁹ and is actively taking on a pivotal role in exploring how to best transform the Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) model into an Innovation Districts Model (IDS model), in order to make room for social investments districts next to existing BIDs.

As previously discussed, together with the city of Rotterdam and market parties, Schouwburgplein Rotterdam is being explored in terms of establishing models for sustainable business practices in relation to the broader management of the square, including securing permanent funding for the programming from the VVS, in place of current periodical subsidies.

In Nieuwegein, Hans Karssenbergh from STIPO, together with Emilie de Vlieger, took the lead to start Club Rhijnhuizen³⁰. Club Rhijnhuizen is a platform for everyone who lives, works, takes initiative, owns property or develops in Rijnhuizen. We work together to distinguish Rijnhuizen and to improve the quality of the area through; collaborative events; the establishment of new facilities; encouraging employee and resident activities; engaging owner and company services; and promoting sustainability, joint area marketing, placemaking and quality of public space. The club members are working together on the themes of quality and identity to co-create the city. Rijnhuizen is an area owned by 100 stakeholders and is being developed organically, in phases. Every new development and initiative, small or large, contributes to the identity of and reinforces the area's qualities, especially if parties work together effectively. The membership model that distinguishes Club Rhijnhuizen is set to secure a healthy business standard for years to come.

Who Benefits from Placemaking?

The Cities for All Conference, in Stockholm in April 2018, explored opportunities and challenges related to placemaking and inclusive cities. Specific questions focused on at this event included: *when do people feel at home in a city, when do they call it "our city"?*, and *what are suitable strategies for creating and maintaining inclusive cities?*

Although many actors display collaborative and genuine efforts to improve the public realm through activating the users themselves and connecting resources, there is still a major source of concern with placemaking in terms of its long-term impact and the durability of its inclusiveness: at the end of the day, *who benefits from placemaking?* While placemaking is conceived as a set of tools and methodologies to improve public spaces and make them more accessible and enjoyable, it is also a tool that inevitably creates monetary value through interventions and improvements. One of the key dilemmas of

²⁸ Access at: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/rozinaspinnoy/>

²⁹ Access at: <http://bids-belgium.com/>

³⁰ Access at: <https://www.clubrhijnhuizen.nl/>

placemaking is how to ensure that the community benefits resulting from public space improvements outweigh individual profits made.

Historically, the creation of high-quality public spaces was indistinctly linked with the ambition of developers to raise property values in the neighbouring areas; some of the major parks and squares of Manhattan, including Bryant Park and Union Square³¹, were all created with this objective in mind, while also effectively contributing to the quality of life in their surroundings.

Public interventions and public space improvement projects are not immune to private value capture either. Barcelona's rebranding in the 1980s, corresponding with the city's hosting of the 1988 Summer Olympic Games, brought about a spectacular transformation of Barcelona's public spaces but also opened the way to the city's unstoppable touristification and inevitable housing crisis³².



Figure 9. Members of Club Rhijnhuizen meet regularly to discuss next steps for the area and share a meal.
Source: STIPO.

Another striking example of this process is Largo Intendente in Lisbon³³. Largo Intendente, the centrale square of a historical neighbourhood that was for decades infamous for drug trafficking and prostitution, has undergone a radical transformation over the past years. Identified as a priority investment zone, Intendente received millions of euros of public investment in physical infrastructure and public spaces, and significantly smaller amounts for social programmes. Largo Intendente benefited from a major facelift that turned the previously run-down area into an attractive urban living room. The local

³¹ Access at:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/282790022_Patriotism_and_Protest_Union_Square_as_Public_Space_1832--1932

³² Access at: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/sep/02/mass-tourism-kill-city-barcelona>

³³ Polyak, L. (2019, April 1). Personal interview with Mota Saraiva, T.

population, however, has seen little benefit from these investments; gradually displaced by increasing housing prices and growing pressure from the tourism industry, they became victims of irresponsible placemaking, unaware of the consequences of value creation. Understandably, the multitude of stories that recount the shift from placemaking to real estate speculation, has created fear around development and improvement in many communities across Europe and beyond. In 2008, inhabitants of New York's SoHo area famously opposed the pedestrianisation of some of the neighbourhood's streets — interpreting the project as a further step towards the complete touristification of the area³⁴.

Resistance to public space improvements occurring in many cities reveals a popular sentiment that amalgamates development with speculation, improvement with gentrification, and placemaking with displacement. Therefore, it is important to place value capture (the mechanism through which different actors capture the added value created by public space interventions from improvements) at the core of placemaking, in order to secure community benefits before individual profits.

Critical Placemaking, or the preoccupation with distributing the benefits of placemaking equally among local communities, is a key notion within the Placemaking Europe Network. Learning from the experiences of many of its members, the network has worked with a variety of development tools and financial instruments that steer placemaking towards community benefits, and away from speculative public space improvements. This approach is a crucial step towards regaining communities' confidence, and giving them back control over urban development.



Figure 10. Rambla del Raval, a Barcelona street rich in history, cafes, and shops.
Source: Free access Google - Sant Jordi Hostels, 2017.

³⁴ Access at: <http://www.gothamgazette.com/transportation/3930-street-closures-and-the-battle-of-prince-street>

The Challenges for the Coming Years and Focus Points at Placemaking Week Europe 2019



Moving forward, June 2019 will see hundreds of placemakers gather in Valencia on the occasion of Placemaking Week Europe³⁵. The network is rallying to co-organise its 3rd annual conference and intends to continue this tradition every year.

With this year's participants, the conference will address five main themes within placemaking in Europe that are also highly relevant to the topics explored thus far by the Placemaking Europe network, and are predicted to be high on the placemaking agenda in the coming period.

Within each theme, participants will not only exchange knowledge, but also test new tools, start new coalitions for research or projects and importantly, discover innovative new solutions whilst also combining skill sets and broadening individual perspectives. Placemaking Week Europe is the next step in expanding this Euro-centric placemaking movement globally.

The themes of Placemaking Week Europe include: Placemaking for Innovation, Creative Bureaucracy, Open-source Sharing from Placemaking Practice, Future-proof Cities through Placemaking, and Waterfront Cities.

- **Placemaking for Innovation**

During Placemaking Week Europe, speakers, international attendees, and locals will analyse questions around innovation for the public good, including the future of work and social innovation. *What does the future landscape of innovation look like? How can this contribute to improving our cities, the public realm, and third spaces for all? How can placemaking contribute to this process, as well as provide a better connection between innovation hubs and city fabric?*

The network and this event are building on existing knowledge, for example PPS provides information on innovation hubs and placemaking, while projects promoted by the non-profit Re:Kreators network³⁶ indicate bottom-up area development strategies, and placemaking and innovation combinations. Furthermore, Improvement Districts and Business Improvement Districts are being compared and explored.

³⁵ Access at: www.placemakingweekeurope.com

³⁶ Access at: <https://recreators.eu>

- **Creative Bureaucracy**

The process of placemaking breaks down disciplinary silos and transforms the way societies govern cities today. To boost the impact of placemaking, systemic change is imperative and needs to become highly prevalent. To pacify this need, creative bureaucrats and people working in the public sector with transformative abilities to change the status quo and enable innovative processes, must be respected and provided with the appropriate resources. How can local governments catch up with the progress made by placemakers and get on board as sustainable partners? What role should policy makers and civil servants play in placemaking processes?

The network also builds on existing knowledge and examples from the city-wide strategy models reputedly stemming from San Francisco, New York, and Paris, as well as place-led development models from STIPO and PPS. One of our partners for the organisation of Placemaking Week Europe is Charles Landry³⁷, a worldwide knowledge leader in creative bureaucracy.

- **Open-source Sharing from Placemaking Practice**

The inherent value of placemaking as a process is that in each context it is closely tied to the local community's needs and specific circumstances. However, most placemakers find stability through personal tool application, in addition to mechanisms and strategies developed by peers in other contexts. *What are the common patterns of placemaking practices around the world? How can actors easily tap into the worldwide knowledge bank and still provide context-relevant practices?* Through open-source sharing, Placemaking Europe builds capacity and increases the impact of the placemaking movement.

In the coming years Placemaking Europe will work on an open-source placemaking toolbox. The creation of this toolbox is a project already started in 2017 by STIPO and partners from Placemaking Europe. The creation of the toolbox is currently being accelerated by the PlaceCity project³⁸. In PlaceCity, the partners gather placemaking tools and experiment with these tools in Vienna and Oslo. The network calls upon placemakers to share their best practices, tools, and innovative models for place management, place-led development, and financing. Other municipalities, developers and placemakers are also invited by Placemaking Europe to test the tools in their own projects. New rituals like tool-testing days, that will be launched by Placemaking Europe during Placemaking Week Europe in Valencia, will give momentum to the testing of new tools within a widening network.

The Placemaking Europe website³⁹ will feature an open-source platform sharing these available tools. Media and research-oriented platforms like The Journal of Public Space⁴⁰, the first interdisciplinary, academic, open access journal entirely dedicated to public space, can help share this knowledge and discuss the value of different approaches.

³⁷ Access at: <https://charleslandry.com/themes/creative-bureaucracy/>

³⁸ Access at: <http://www.placemaking-europe.eu/tools/>

³⁹ Access at: <http://www.placemaking-europe.eu>

⁴⁰ The Journal of Public Space was established in 2015 by the non profit organization City Space Architecture, based in Italy, in partnership with UN-Habitat. Access at: <http://www.journalpublicspace.org>

- **Future-proof Cities through Placemaking**

In order to connect the impact of placemaking to the importance of improving our cities for future generations, Placemaking Week Europe concentrates on two important urban challenges in particular: climate change and inclusion. By sharing practices, lessons and critical discussions Placemaking Europe demonstrates and explores how placemaking aims at producing shared benefits and public impact. Placemaking has a vital role to play in creating more inclusive cities for all, while lowering our carbon footprint and mitigating climate impact. *How can placemaking contribute to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 11: by making cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable?*



Figure 11. Future-proof cities through placemaking - a focused theme at Placemaking Week Europe 2019. Renee Roojijmans, Husain Al Afoo, and Giulia Gualtieri work to green public space in ZOHO neighbourhood, Rotterdam. Source: STIPO.

Placemaking Week Europe will mark the launch of *The City at Eye Level for Kids*, a book and methodological framework for child-friendly cities, in addition to a second book entitled *Our City?*, the lessons contained in these books and other sources can be used by placemakers around the world. The tools to effect changes will be included in the Placemaking Europe toolbox: a collection of best practices and insights into inclusive city-making from Europe and beyond.



Figure 12 & 13. Published through STIPO, *The City at Eye Level for Kids* (designed by STIPO), and *Our City?* (designed by Studio Punkt) will be released in 2019. Source: STIPO.

- **Waterfront Transformations**

Today, many cities are witnessing waterfront transformations which are being repurposed from their initial industrial uses as places for people; in Valencia, Fred Kent from PPS, will present an exhibition of *The Social Life of Great Waterfronts* to “show the key tools for the city’s economic development and the creation of sustainable, inclusive and interactive public spaces, as well as to analyse and make visible different successful case studies along great waterfronts of the world.”⁴¹ The photo series capture scenes from Riga to Thessaloniki, Oslo to Angers, and Valencia to Amsterdam and speaks to how many cities use placemaking to improve their waterfronts.



Figure 14. *Waterfront cities* - a focused theme at Placemaking Week Europe 2019. Passerbys stroll and enjoy the marina waterfront in Valencia. Source: La Marina de Valencia.

⁴¹ Kent, F. & Madden, K. (2019). *The Social Life of Great Waterfronts* [Display]. Exhibited at La Marina de Valencia, Valencia, Spain June 2019.

placemaking week europe

Placemaking Week is an important opportunity not only to discuss and analyse content, but also to determine and execute the next steps together. Moreover, the board, leaders and the overall network will continue developing the five themes highlighted in Valencia in addition to the topics the community has focused on thus far. In September, the network leaders will meet in Rotterdam to take the themes to the next level and explore context-specific needs for respective countries. This is an opportunistic moment to collaborate across disciplines, borders, and experiences that is now taking hold and offering real solutions. It is our shared responsibility to connect and learn from one another as part of a commitment towards creating better and more representative public spaces for all. Hereby, the network is open to placemakers asking for help, offering help, and/or sharing and discussing best practices and information. The power and success of this network lies in its inclusive character. The network is open-minded and is interested in including other members and establishing collaborative projects with other institutions, in Europe and beyond. Therefore, Placemaking Europe invites everyone to join, team-up, and spread the placemaking movement.

Through the website, placemaking toolbox, activities, events, and flow of knowledge within the network, Placemaking Europe is determined to create better and lasting cities. Placemaking is revolutionising the system in terms of how we work on cities globally, across disciplines and bureaucratic processes. Placemaking is here to stay as an effective and inspiring way to empower people, communities, and organisations to influence and improve the places and areas where they live, work, and play.

For more information about Placemaking Europe visit:
www.placemaking-europe.eu