ACTIVATING ADELAIDE’S PRECINCTS: PLACEMAKING THROUGH CULTURE, ARTS & EVENTS

TOPLINE REPORT

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SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT
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OVERVIEW

Creating vibrant and successful spaces is the core of place-making that empowers communities and offers touristic opportunities and thereby boost economic, social and environmental returns. Main streets and precincts are spaces which form focal points of urban activity. They compete for human and financial capital and appear to be essential in the era of experience economy, which requires unique and memorable experiences as economic offerings. Evidence from other cities suggests that arts, culture, tourism and events are powerful tools in regenerating and activating urban spaces, and they can deliver more vibrant, healthy and economically robust communities. Despite this, there is limited evidence-based research to inform key stakeholders in Adelaide about effective placemaking strategies through the use of arts, culture, tourism and events. This project develops better understanding of placemaking strategies employed in metropolitan Adelaide, highlighting successes, challenges and opportunities in this area. The report provides an overview of the findings obtained from 20 in-depth interviews which were conducted in metropolitan Adelaide with 28 representatives from 10 local councils and 10 business associations.

Key findings:

| Placemaking generates economic development by showcasing offerings, increasing exposure for local businesses, foot traffic and visitors who buy goods and services |
| Placemaking assists in regenerating urban spaces and creates behaviours and experiences by encouraging and guiding visitor behaviour |
| Placemaking brands a precinct, giving it an identity, transforming it, making it unique |
| Placemaking is often community-centered as Council officers seek to meet local needs |
| Culture, arts and events have various roles in placemaking and assist in all of the above by creating vibrancy and attention, foot traffic, image & identity, showcasing offerings, building social capital and changing precinct use and visitor behavior |

Key challenges:

| Financial and human resource constraints |
| Stakeholders need to be actively engaged while meeting different interests of each stakeholder |
| Placemaking needs to fit Council and community vision, needs, image and identity of the place |
| In order to be successful, places need to feel unique with a context-specific strategy |
| Place makers need to plan and measure long-term impacts of place activation activities in order to make evidence-based decisions |
WHAT WE DID

The project

The project, undertaken by Arts, Culture and Tourism Management academics in the University of South Australia (UniSA) Business School, examined the role of arts, culture, events and tourism in local placemaking strategies.

We conducted 20 one-hour interviews with 28 representatives from 10 local councils and 10 business associations in SA who are responsible for the development and maintenance of significant precincts and main streets. In the interviews we explored:

- approaches to placemaking in precincts and main streets;
- the role of arts, culture, events and tourism in employed placemaking strategies; and
- key issues and challenges faced by local Councils and business associations in implementing placemaking strategies.

UniSA Business School Breakfast Forum

A breakfast forum was held on 24 October 2016 at the Art Gallery of South Australia with 47 participants. The forum shared successful placemaking strategies that have been employed throughout Australia, highlighting opportunities enabled by culture, arts, events and tourism in activating urban precincts. Three key-note speakers communicated their experiences in developing and managing precincts and main streets. The preliminary findings of the project were presented by our team. All presentations are accessible for public viewing from the UniSA YouTube channel:

- Ms Vanessa Schernickau, Manager Vibrant & Creative City at the City of Port Phillip (Victoria): https://youtu.be/k5I-hGNZ61c
- Mr Bruce Mills, Manager of the Place Services team at City of Parramatta Council (NSW): https://youtu.be/ex-9ipeC17Y
- Ms Rachel Walsh, Director Place at Renewal SA: https://youtu.be/9bxWxxPn5fk
- Dr Sunny Lee & Dr Chris Krolikowski, UniSA Business School: https://youtu.be/8vk5uITL0Zc
Four broad themes and five challenges were identified based on our data regarding the practices that underpin placemaking in local councils and business associations to better engage community and visitors, build community, boost employment and jobs, and build economic and social capital (see Figure).
Community centred practice sees the community as the user of the space, thus making their needs and demands central to decision making. As each place and community is unique, engagement and collaboration with the community is essential to maximizing benefits for them. Community orientation as an approach to placemaking featured strongly within all Council and business associations. There were, however, variations of the community’s role and direct engagement. Some councils saw the community as driver and decision maker for placemaking while other councils saw themselves as facilitators and leaders of change, engaging with wider stakeholder groups such as tourists as well.

It was highlighted that place activation activities should be designed for community engagement, developing networks of relationships, enabling community to function effectively, and building social capacity to create new initiatives and activities. Long-term impacts, like social capital building, have been found to be achieved through culture, arts and events but were less commonly mentioned in the interviews related to community practice regarding placemaking strategy.

We use place activation events as a catalyst to inspire others to take the model and continue its life.

It is important to engage deeply with the community about what they want to see in terms of the placemaking.

[placemaking is about] leveraging inherent capacity within the community to make a difference.
THEME 2: Economic development generator

Placemaking has been seen as means of improving the economic well-being of a community. Increasing popularity of a precinct is attractive for businesses and fosters economic growth.

Arts, culture and events have been found to provide an opportunity for economic development by showcasing offerings, increasing exposure of local businesses, foot traffic and visitation as shown in the quote. Economic development was of high importance to Councils and business associations in place making. It was significant but it was balanced with the need for a community orientation. Not surprisingly, it was more important to business associations than Councils.

One of the goals is a prosperous economy and so economic development - investment attraction, placemaking, place business activation, all of those link in to that goal particularly but other goals within the community plan as well.

Winter is awful down here. It is a hard time for traders. That's why we do things [events]. We create events that will bring people here in winter.

THEME 3: Urban regeneration and creating behaviours and experiences

In local Councils and business associations, place making is applied as a strategy for urban regeneration and to activate spaces. Arts, culture and events can assist in changing the use of and the behaviour in the place by encouraging desirable forms of behaviour and creating a unique ambience in the place.

By changing the use and behaviour of the community in the place, and making it more interesting and engaging, a place can become more attractive to community and to tourists, therefore boosting regeneration. Place making can also change and discourage negative or unwanted behaviour in places by putting the ‘eyes on the street,’ encouraging a positive behaviours or use of the space to improve the experience for all users.

[Urban regeneration attracts more visitors] creating passive surveillance and changing behaviour, and you can guide the behaviour by what you have in the place

[Both streets,] Which were really just quite dry, ordinary kinds of spaces and streets beforehand, really came to life with quirky unique business makeup in there now and offerings from a local and visitor experience point of view.
THEME 4: Constructing new place identity and branding

Place making makes place more attractive for specific uses and users in the community. Placemaking creates an identity and a brand for the place; a meaning or ambience with which the community associates.

Interviewees told us that placemaking is considered as an approach in local Councils and business associations to create an identity by transforming places and giving them a meaning. Repositioning or improving the image of a place has been achieved by designing a new identity or brand for the place. Additionally, culture, arts and events have been found to promote the place and build image and identity. As the quotes illustrate, not everyone we spoke to supported branding a place. Nonetheless, most agreed that by creating an identity through engagement with the place and participation in events, places can attract certain groups of people, who will contribute to the brand building and spread the word-of-mouth on social media. Word of mouth is an ideal means to engage visitors, having them help construct a new place identity.

We have an annual event which involves all of our traders. The event just fits perfectly with our traders here. We do a huge marketing campaign for our street in conjunction with the event so it enhances the brand of our street as well.

I think that they're sort of just fancy terms for creating an identity for a location that currently exists.

Placemaking is about defining a space and, and identifying what that space means to people and creating, that might involve creating a new definition or a new brand that's associated with that space.
The study uncovered five key challenges in relation to effective placemaking and the selection of place activation. They are: 1) the availability of resources; 2) stakeholder engagement; 3) fit; 4) uniqueness; and 5) long-term impact.

All participants saw resources as an important challenge to placemaking. Human resources, time, budgets and capacity have a great impact on the selection of activities. Within some Councils, place maintenance occurred to address the functional issues of the place, but not to create an ambience for the place.

"it’s not a whole lot of money which sets you almost up to fail"
"we don’t have money to hire a designer, so I do all the drawings and all the idea generation"

Engaging stakeholders is challenging, time consuming and requires high-level capability. As such, some interviewees did not seem to be active in engaging with the stakeholders. However, when done well it provided a feeling of ownership to all stakeholders, built social capita for Councils, and encouraged external partners such as community and local businesses to create initiatives and activities.

*Placemaking activities “strengthened internal and external relationships and helped to start to build a platform for future events”*

Fit is shorthand for strategically determining what works in each place. Ensuring placemaking and its activities fit the needs of community, local businesses and visitors is challenging; however, if done well it can facilitate to achieve the vision, image and identity of the place, boost activities and grow economic and social capital. Knowing the strengths and weaknesses of the place helps determine best fit. Additionally, existing events and activities can be extended or new ones be created to fit identity and placemaking strategy.

“I think true place-making is actually engaging the residents and businesses in that area, trying to establish a vision in conjunction with them, understand what their expectations and hopes are for their precincts”

Places need to be unique if they are to attract people to them. Creating context specific activities is essential to make a place unique and differentiated from other precincts. This is, however, very challenging. Many Councils have a unique place identity and character and carefully plan what activities and events can add to or enhance the image. Others are yet to achieve this goal.

*Placemaking and engaging with stakeholders “is what creates a unique environment. The world is becoming more homogenous, so celebrating the local unique traits, cultural expression through art or local environmental features should be highlighted and marketed”*

Some place activation activities create only short-term impacts. To sustain the impacts created by place activation activities, long-term impacts should be strategically addressed and planned. Local Councils conduct market research focusing on immediate impacts rather than long-term ones, leaving a gap in evidence-based decision-making. Although long-term impacts are challenging to measure, they can justify the investment in placemaking activities by enabling evidence-based decision making for future development.

“We need to reassess events… to ensure that there are long-term impacts of activities, like connecting people to a space or trying to use activities as a catalyst for environmental change, building relationships or capacity building within the community”
WHAT WE RECOMMEND

1. Create a strategic placemaking plan and place management strategy, addressing specific objectives and focusing on different target markets.

2. Develop a placemaking strategy focusing on tourists. There is potential for tourism in many precincts due to their unique identity and the trend that tourists want to engage in the same activities that locals do. Local precincts and main streets can be a tourism attraction. It is essential for economic development of precincts.

3. Promote precincts and main streets to tourists. For example, produce a local map of precincts and main streets for tourists with a distinctive identity and character of place.

4. Design an activity which can create meaning of place and make people attach to place. Place activation is more than bringing more people into the place.

5. Create a placemaking culture that values collaboration among stakeholders. Placemaking cannot be successfully done by one stakeholder. Awareness and education on the importance of placemaking can aid in creating a positive culture. Providing evidence of value created by successful placemaking practices can be also helpful.

6. Build social capital. Produce know-how and what-to-do guides and toolkits for community to follow in placemaking.

7. Communicate to stakeholders and understand their needs and roles in placemaking by conducting a needs assessment of stakeholders.

8. Understand images/perceptions of precincts compared and what precincts have to offer through market studies. Precinct niches and strengths are important for future placemaking plans.

9. Examine the gradual changes on the perception of the place and the new pattern of use of the place through long-term impact studies. These long-term outcomes are valuable for future development.
OUR TEAM

**Ruth Rentschler OAM** (BA Hons Melbourne PhD Monash) is Associate Dean Research Education and Professor Arts & Cultural Leadership, University of South Australia. She has held leadership roles in universities, business, government and non-profits, for e.g., Chair Academic Board, member of University Council, board member of VicHealth, deputy chair Multicultural Arts Victoria and Duldig Museum & Sculpture Garden, board member Art Gallery of Ballarat. She has received various honours and awards, such as Best Doctoral Supervisor, Vice-Chancellor’s Award for Community Service and an Order of Australia for services to education, the arts and the community. She has published widely on business issues in the context of the arts, in top journals, with her keen interest in social entrepreneurship, and the cultural and creative industries.

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**Sam Huang** is an Associate Professor in Tourism Management in the School of Management, and a member of the Centre for Tourism and Leisure Management at University of South Australia. He obtained his PhD in Tourism Management from the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. His research interests include tourist behaviour, destination marketing, tour guiding, and various Chinese tourism and hospitality issues. Sam has had work and research experiences in China, Hong Kong and Australia, and as a native Mandarin speaker, is uniquely placed to bridge the gap between the Australian and Chinese tourism academies and industries.

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**Sunny Lee** is a Senior Lecturer in Event and Tourism Management at the UniSA Business School. Sunny has been involved in various research projects on a range of event management, visitor experiences and event impacts at the local level as well as internationally, using qualitative and quantitative methods. Her current research focuses on the strategic use of events for community development, destination branding, corporate marketing and placemaking. Her research has been published in top journals in the field of Tourism and Event Management and the excellence of her research has been recognised through a number of awards.

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**Chris Krolikowski** is a lecturer in tourism management at the UniSA Business School. Chris holds a Doctor of Philosophy in Business and Management and a Master in Business (Tourism). Awarded full scholarship by the Cooperative Research Centre in Sustainable Tourism (STCRC), Chris’ doctoral research investigated contemporary practices in the production and consumption of urban space, focusing on urban tourism precincts. Dr Krolikowski’s current research expands this area, and focuses on the examination of placemaking and place activation through the use of tourism, events, culture and leisure in Australian and international urban contexts.

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**Julia Brunke** is working with us on this project as research assistant. Julia has recently completed the Bachelor of Tourism and Event Management at UniSA. She has always been passionate about cultures and tourism; and through travel, work and volunteering experiences, has developed a particular interest in destination development and marketing, and the events sector. Her dedication and commitment to study and the tourism industry has been awarded with the South Australian Tourism Award (Tourism Student of the Year) in 2015 and the UniSA Scholarship for Student Leadership.

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