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The psychological benefits of cooperative place-making: a mixed methods analyses of co-design workshops

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ABSTRACT

In a study aiming to establish the intrinsic value of involvement in a co-design, place-making workshop, we engaged participants in a vision-led development of the grounds and immediate parkland setting of a run-down Grade II listed Mansion House in South Liverpool. Two groups of volunteers engaged in 6 × 90-min co-design workshop sessions spaced equally over 6 weeks, forming part of a cross-over design that compared the intrinsic value and wellbeing benefits of shared reading to place-making. The sessions aimed to develop place-making confidence, place-appraisal skills and design-thinking in the participants and to propose aims, objectives and a vision that supported the ethos of the social enterprise that was developing the property. Data collected using post-it notes, limited voice recording and subsequent interview was qualitatively analysed and considered alongside quantitative analysis using standardised and bespoke realistic procedures. The findings suggest that the workshop activities supported changes to psychological and community wellbeing by enhancing both a sense of personal growth and a collective sense of place-related optimism. We therefore assert that the practice of co-design place-making has potential to develop mental and social capital by reconnecting people to place and communities to neighbourhoods.

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1. Introduction

In the area of health and wellbeing the co-production of services has become the established route to developing better provision. It is thought that the process of co-production can support a natural translation into improved provision by changing formerly passive recipients of professionally designed systems, interventions and processes into active service designers and managers. This Department of Health policy (DoH 2002, 2003) has effectively changed practice over the course of the last 15 or so years in the UK. Reports such as that produced by the New Economics Foundation and the innovation foundation, Nesta (Boyle and Harris 2009), bring out both the value and the challenges of effective co-production in this area where Government-backed encouragement is driving the further development of

practice. In parallel with this, co-production is expected in health-related and health-funded research where, in the UK at least, service user involvement, preferably from inception, has effectively become a pre-requisite for support and subsequent publishing success. Here, the arguments are focussed on how 'experts by experience' can ensure that research questions maintain meaning through close ties with the lived experience of the conditions and phenomena being explored.

In non-health areas, public involvement has established an equally firm foot-hold with research funding agencies actively encouraging partnership working in knowledge exchange and in public engagement initiatives as well as co-production. The level of involvement and the model of co-production preferred within different settings has itself become a matter for scholarly interest in some fields (Sanders and Stappers 2008; Martin 2010; Zwass 2014). Of one thing there seems little doubt, co-production is widely agreed to pave the way to research impact through policy and practice development (e.g. <http://www.esrc.ac.uk/research/impact-toolkit/>).

In the built environment profession public consultation, not co-production, is the norm. However, when there is involvement in the design process itself, design charrettes are the most widely used format. These typically intensive, short sessions provide a setting that allows inclusive involvement for the public and feedback for the built environment professional. Charrettes tend to be quite closely managed, directed towards an established objective and so tend not to be open and explorative. Like all co-production activities, at their best they are collaborative and participatory and at their worst they can be experienced as patronising. The latter is most likely to be reported when an educational purpose of the activity is too dominant (Smith 2012). Roggema (2014) highlights the important function of well-run charrettes in building and developing *tacit understanding*, as opposed to explicit, formalised knowledge. The development of tacit understanding is closely associated with immersion in complex but typically short timescale creative activity that does not lend itself easily to the formal structures of semantic language-based descriptors. In a study exploring the involvement of children in neighbourhood place-making, Sutton and Kemp (2002) made use of the charrette methodology. These authors reported benefits for the young participants including increased social and environmental awareness and decision-making confidence which co-existed with some discomfort about the realisation of new design process skills.

In recent years the increasing democratisation of public realm design has earned the name of *place-making*. It is an area that is increasingly multi-sector, aimed at exploring socio-spatial relationships and focussed on the promotion of social value and health and wellbeing. Within place-making there is a strong emphasis on co-production, organic processes of place development and, with it, a rejection of the traditional profession-dominated and commercially-driven regeneration initiatives favoured during the nineties and noughties. Instead, the emphasis is on changing spaces into places (Tuan 1977) and on giving places back to people. Being political and relational in practice, involving activists, scholars and professionals across disciplines and being concerned with the social and the spatial aspects of 'the commons', it is an exercise where we might expect to find significant psychological and community benefits of co-production (McCann 2002; Lepofsky and Fraser 2003; Dyck 2005; Pink 2008; Pierce, Martin, and Murphy 2011).

Psychological wellbeing is a multidimensional concept closely associated with eudaimonia where enhanced life satisfaction is achieved through the pursuit of meaning and purpose. It is contrasted to hedonic wellbeing where the goal is essentially the pursuit of

happiness and pleasure. Ryff (1989) elaborates the components of psychological wellbeing as autonomy, environmental mastery, positive relations with others, self-acceptance, purpose in life and personal growth. In terms of psychological wellbeing, the development of tacit understanding which, Roggema (2014) argued, is associated with participation in well-run design charrettes, is most closely associated with the component of personal growth - the sense of continued development, expansion of potential and openness to new experiences (Ryff 1989). Improvement in this facet of wellbeing is more likely to be sustained in the context of longer term engagement on projects or developments that are relevant or important to the individual or his/her community.

The current study aimed to explore the psychological wellbeing benefits of engaging in a real, place-making activity. Taking advantage of a study exploring the intrinsic value of shared reading, the intervention practiced by the social enterprise that had recently occupied the Mansion House (see Longden et al. 2015), a local place-making practitioner (the 2nd author) was engaged to facilitate a series of comparator workshops so that the outcomes associated with shared reading could be contrasted to an alternative collective activity. As the results related to shared reading have been reported by Longden et al. (2015), here we will focus on a detailed analysis of the place-making activity. Following Roggema (2014) we hypothesised that involvement in the built environment co-design workshops would be associated with improvement in the facet of psychological wellbeing referred to as personal growth. We further anticipated that the experiential data we collected would show an increasing tacit sense of mastery in the participants. Over the course of the 6 weeks we expected to see development that began from a starting place of under-confidence, limited skill and lack of responsibility for the place and ended in a confidence in design idea generation, a more developed idea about the purpose and value of the place alongside a growing sense of responsibility and ownership for it.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

A 12-week cross-over design was used to compare-and-contrast the wellbeing benefits associated with shared reading groups and place-making groups. Two groups of 8 participants were recruited by the social enterprise that occupied the Mansion House. Eleven of the participants were female and they comprised a mix of social enterprise volunteers with vulnerable backgrounds and residents of the area. The participants ranged in age from 21 to 70 years with a mean age of 37.8 years. The intervention involved 6 weeks of shared reading and 6 weeks of place-making workshops. The sessions lasted for 90 min and took place on consecutive Friday mornings from 9.30 until 11.00 between September and December 2013 (see Longden et al. 2015 for more details).

2.2. Workshop structure

The place-making workshops consisted of an appraisal and design process. The format broke the creative process into components with the aim of removing barriers to and inhibitors of idea formation and discussion. The sessions worked sequentially, adding new information each week, reflecting on past discussions and aiming to build levels of active engagement in

the participants. The first workshop began with an ‘icebreaker’ where participants illustrated their journey to the Mansion House on a large sheet of paper. The exercise was designed to demonstrate that every participant could effectively communicate salient information through drawings and symbols and that pre-conceived level of drawing skill was immaterial in the context of the workshops. It also demonstrated the capacity of all participants to ‘read’ the living environment as readily as built environment professionals. This was an important first hurdle to overcome as none of the participants regarded themselves as skilled in graphic communication while probably assuming this would be a core skill.

The first workshop took the form of a tour around the buildings and immediate landscape to gather ‘facts’ about the place (e.g. that the place has historic significance and that it is currently run-down). The tour was repeated the following week in session 2, this time with participants recording their ‘feelings’ about the place (e.g. the place feels full of potential and feels tranquil). Taken together these two sessions provided the foundation for the group design work by providing a layered set of personal place appraisals.

In workshops 3 and 4, participants considered the questions ‘What could this place become?’ and ‘What could be done here?’ Session 3 considered the *general concepts and aspirations* that would enable the mission of the social enterprise in their new headquarters. During the fourth session, participants examined *the practicalities of delivering and translating these concepts and aspirations*.

The preparation of a *Concept Plan* was the focus of the fifth session while in session six the participants agreed *Vision and Objectives statements* to support the Concept Plan. The volunteers were encouraged to use ‘Post-it notes’ to record their thoughts and feelings. Between sessions the completed Post-it notes were rationalised by the workshop facilitator with independent scrutiny of the senior academic author, and arranged onto a large canvas that he brought and developed to completion through the 6 weeks. Diagrams and drawings prepared during the workshops were also added to the canvas.

Using Post-it notes exhaustively throughout the six sessions, we were able to record the thoughts of the participants ensuring that all voices were represented in the work.

2.3. Approach to analysis and measures used

To capture a rich experiential set in the context of a working social group, we aimed to conduct a ‘realistic evaluation’ of the place-making workshops that would enable us to explore, in a non-intrusive way, how and when particular outcomes arose (Pawson and Tilley 1997).

A set of standard and bespoke self-report assessments was combined with a thematic analysis of the data provided from post-it notes, video-recording and post session interviews with two volunteers from each group.

The battery of self-report measures was administered immediately before the start of workshop 1 and 6 weeks later, on completion of workshop 6. The battery included:

- the Positive and Negative Affect Scale (PANAS; Watson, Clark, and Tellegen 1988);
- the Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS-21; Lovibond and Lovibond 1995);
- the Dalgard Mastery Scale (DMS, Dalgard et al. 2007);
- the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS; Tennant et al. 2007);
- the ‘purpose in life’ (PL) and ‘personal growth’ (PG) subscales of the Ryff Scale of Psychological Well-being (SPWB; Ryff 1989).

Finally, at the end of each session, participants were asked to write down ‘two words or phrases that best described their experience of each session’.

All the sessions were video-recorded to capture activity, thoughts and conversations within the sessions. Limitations of budget meant that the audio-recordings of these sessions were not transcribed but were scrutinised and summarised by the third author following each session with a view to extracting notable participant contributions. Similar budget constraints, as well as participant availability beyond the scheduled sessions, meant that post-workshop interviews exploring the subjective experience of being involved in the sessions was limited to four participants.

3. Results

3.1. Brief summary of quantitative analysis (for more detail refer to Longden et al. 2015)

The small groups sizes as well as some ceiling effects on the quantitative measures limited the conclusions that could be drawn about change over the 6 weeks. However, consistent with our hypothesis, the data of one of the groups indicated that involvement in the place-making sessions led to personal growth. Although not achieving conventional statistical significance (due to small group size), the effect size associated with this change in personal growth was moderate (Cohen’s $d = 0.28$).

Analysis of the PANAS data showed that involvement in the workshops was consistently associated with the endorsement of positive more than negative affect words across the 6 weeks.

3.2. Words and phrases analyses

The data derived from the 2 words or phrases that volunteers offered to describe their experiences of each session was instructive. From this data we could compare and contrast the experiences associated with involvement in shared reading compared to place-making. The words or phrases that were recorded could be broadly categorised into emotional or feeling words (i.e. those reflecting the feelings generated out of, during, or in response to the sessions) and cognitive or thinking words (i.e. those reflecting the thinking, ideas or approach generated out of, during, or in response to the sessions). The words/phrases data shown in Table 1 demonstrate that the place-making sessions tended to elicit more cognitive than emotional words. This contrasted with shared reading that elicited a more equal distribution of word types.

While certain generic descriptive words were recorded in association with both activities (e.g. ‘interesting’, ‘enjoyable’, ‘debate’, ‘dialogue’), other words were only ever offered in response to one of the activities. These informative activity-specific words or phrases are shown in Table 2.

Table 1. Proportion of emotional and cognitive words associated with shared reading and place-making.

	Emotional words	Cognitive words
Place-making	21%	79%
Shared reading	53.5%	46.5%

Table 2. Specific words elicited by place-making compared to shared reading.

Place-making	Shared reading
Developing/development	Reflective/reflection
Progress/progressing	Resolution/resolved
Anticipating	Memory
Positive	Moved
Involved/involvement	Engaged
Focussed	Open
Optimistic	Nostalgic
Knotty	Warmth
Co-operation	Imaginative
Creativity	Animated
Choice	
Possibilities	

Table 3. The contrasting polar experiences of place-making versus shared reading.

Place-making	Shared reading
Prospection	Recollection
Optimistic	Nostalgic
Evolution	Resolution
External focus	Internal focus
Community	Personal
Creative	Imaginative
Contained	Open
Involved	Engaged
Applied	Simulated

Using these informative words as a starting point, contrasting poles that reflect involvement in either shared reading or place-making were derived by the academic research team (authors 1 and 3). These are shown in Table 3.

In summary, the subjective responses to the place-making workshops, gathered via the words/phrases method indicated that the place-making sessions provided the opportunity to look forwards, in a positive manner, outside of ‘the self’ and into the community. There was a sense of co-operative thinking directed towards the ‘greater good’ alongside an increased sense of accessibility and responsibility for the neighbourhood environment.

3.3. Qualitative analysis

The distinct types of evidence and data collected as part of the place-making workshops (i.e. Post-it notes and diagrams on the working canvases, the workshop observer’s notes (third author) and summary of the audio-recording of the sessions and the post-study interview transcripts from 4 participants) were scrutinised by the academic research team. Subsequent discussion identified five definitive themes that together appeared to reflect the psychological benefits of involvement in the place-making workshops. These are described below.

3.3.1. Realising responsibility for place

Initially, the participants in both groups were hesitant to provide their knowledge, feelings and ideas in relation to the place-making project. This seemed equally to be the case for participants who were long-term local residents as for those who had very limited or no knowledge of the Mansion House, the park or neighbourhood. It appeared that there was

an inherent assumption at work in both groups that place-making and consideration of the living environment was an area of expertise reserved for relevant professional groups. This assumption was exemplified by participants' questions directed at the facilitator implying his, and not their, ownership of these decisions. The following 2 questions picked up on the audio-recording of session 3 (general concepts and aspirations for the place) demonstrate this:

Can we also think about the lake?

Are you going to keep the enclosed garden?

These questions, tending to emerge during weeks 1–4, powerfully epitomise the assumption that somebody else is responsible for designing the places where we live. However, as the place-making sessions developed, a greater sense of responsibility for place emerged as momentum and courage grew. The volunteers became more decisive in developing their collective ideas as demonstrated by this audio-recorded statement of one group member, followed by group endorsement, during session 5 (Concept Plan development):

I see it as a place where dreams can come true. Things happen here.

Volunteers in the second group went on to develop place names for the Mansion House, reflecting the living environment and the role of the social enterprise in their new Head Quarters. They confidently placed the Calder Stones (a set of valuable neolithic stone artifacts uncovered in the area) in a secluded, less frequented part of the garden, giving it the name '*Wondrous Place*'.

The developing thinking of each place-making session was communicated on the group canvas that displayed the on-going group work across sessions (see Figure 1). As the workshops progressed, and unprompted by the workshop facilitator, the volunteers began to review the canvas on arrival and before leaving. They would also often linger to discuss the ideas generated in the session. At these times, some group members mentioned that in the intervening weeks between place-making sessions they had reflected on the ideas and discussions in relation to other places. The following was recorded during session 5, after the practicalities of delivering the concepts and aspirations for the place had been discussed in session 4:

I was just saying to X before the session that I went to Speke Hall on the weekend and it was set up really well with the arrival area ... thinking on that ...

3.3.2. Increasing agency and implicit mastery

The increase in participants' sense of agency (i.e. feelings of control and sense of choice) is, in part, attributable to realising their responsibility for the place (theme 1 above). However, it was the gradually-realised capacity in the area of concept design, directly tackled in session 5 but built up in sessions 3 and 4, alongside a willingness to contribute valued thoughts and ideas to the group, that seemed to be the fundamental vehicle that fostered this increased sense of agency.

In support of this, the following words recorded in the 2 words/phrases task were chosen by the volunteers exclusively in relation to the place-making workshop: 'choice'; 'involvement'; 'creativity' and 'possibilities'. The sense of involvement and choice are key to the increasing sense of agency amongst the volunteers.



Group 1



Group 2

Figure 1. The developing group canvasses.

Although put together between the session by the workshop facilitator, the canvas provided a tangible output of the co-operative work and a visual demonstration of the group's collective contribution towards the goal.

During session 5, the volunteers were asked to 'pick up pens' and design the 'Home' for the social enterprise based on the thoughts, feelings, considerations and ideas formulated in sessions 1–4. Although unspoken, the level of 'implicit mastery' was tangible ('*I can do this*' replacing '*I can't do this*'). It could be felt and spatially witnessed in the movement and flow around the central table where the design output came together. There was also movement further afield, beyond the room, to check out possibilities. One participant encapsulated the creative group design dynamic of session 5 as:

motive power.

In the selective interviews following the study, 2 group members described their expectations and experience of the place-making workshops thus:

We were asked to look at things and say what we thought, and how we felt about them as well. So ... you were engaging your emotions again, which before we did it, I didn't really think we'd do that. I thought the reading part of it would bring out emotions, but I thought the [place-making] part, if you like, I was thinking oh it's the architecture side of it, would have been all from the head, and not really engage your feelings. So that was surprising.

It (*sic i.e. involvement in the place-making workshops*) was challenging for me because it was like a kind of visionary thing—if anything what would we do. Part of me was, well that won't be allowed because it's a listed building there's no money. Give me the parameters 'cos that's what life is like. Bit of me wanting to say 'Ah yes but ...'

3.3.3 *Developing an allocentric consideration of place through culture, heritage and time*

As the workshops progressed, the participants began to demonstrate the ability to consider the place in a less egocentric way. They began to identify with the ever-changing and evolving nature of place that persisted beyond their own involvement with it. At interview, one participant noted:

... it (*sic i.e. involvement across the 12 weeks in both the place-making workshops and the shared reading sessions*) became a complete experience. Because I would walk across the park and see it change in that time. It extended beyond those groups into a whole experience. And a difference between how I felt when I walked here and how I felt when I walked back and had time to look around, and wanted to. More reflective, more peaceful, more mindful. I want to look at the trees. I've watched the seasons change.

This 'sense of place across time' seemed to emerge during weeks 4–6 where volunteers reflected on and shared past experiences of the Mansion House, the park and elsewhere to develop the ideas, the new purposes, objectives and vision that could involve, engage and affect a wide range of 'others'.

Unprompted, members of both groups developed a dialogue around the 'sense and spirit of place'. Interestingly this extended beyond the Mansion House and the Park to include a wider sense of culture - the Calder Stones, the location of the park within a south Liverpool suburb, the famous 'daughters' and 'sons' of Liverpool who played a special role in the culture associated with the City and the neighbourhood. These ideas emerged particularly during sessions 3, 5 and 6 where the focus was on concepts and possibilities of how the mission of the social enterprise could be embodied in the design of the headquarters and surrounding area.

This spirit of place was represented by regular references to this as 'a special place'. The Calder Stones were regarded as a symbol of this specialness and as a demonstration that the promulgation of culture by the social enterprise fitted with the 'genius loci'. As already mentioned, one group named their proposed new site for the stones as the 'Wondrous Place'. Also in line with the cultural spirit of the place, a 'George Harrison Memorial Garden' was considered and independently proposed by both groups.

3.3.4. *Optimism*

In the analyses of the 2 words/phrases data the word 'optimism' was recorded specifically in relation to the place-making workshops. The evolving and inclusive nature of the design process was naturally prospective and enduringly positive in accord with the analysis of the PANAS data. The 'forward thinking' of the groups was typically optimistic as demonstrated by the frequent use of descriptor words 'positive' and 'possibilities'. This optimism was



Figure 2. Strong sense of felt optimism represented on group 2's canvas.

evident particularly in sessions 2, 3 and 5 where participants were asked about the feelings elicited by the place and to address the question 'What can this place become?'. There was a sense in both groups of an opportunity to create something worthwhile and special. Indeed, the sense of optimism was so clear from session 2 that it became an organising theme for the post-it notes on the canvas (see Figure 2).

3.3.5. Co-operative decision-making

The word, 'co-operation' was offered exclusively in association with the place-making workshops (see Table 2 above). These sessions enabled the development of a supportive sharing and open critique of ideas within a realm of relative 'unease' due to the perceived lack of skill expressed and shared by all of the participants during session 1. Indeed, the participants' collective perceived lack of knowledge or skill in the area of graphics and design seemed to be a catalysing component that enhanced co-operative decision-making. Co-operation was facilitated further, and grounded in, a shared will, established in sessions 3 and 4, to develop 'a future community asset'. This co-operative process nevertheless securely accommodated and valued individual's ideas. This is aptly summarised by one of the participants at interview:

It (*sic*. i.e. the place-making activity) brought us together in a different—it didn't bring us together quite so much in mutual ... in mutuality. I mean it did because you get cooperation in discussing what's the best thing. But it's more sharply individualistic—... you write your

VISION – Group 1

The reader organisation will create a new heart for Calderstones: building a cultural community for the benefit of the city.

OBJECTIVES

- Create an accessible cultural hub for the local community
- Realise the heritage and landscape assets of the park
- Develop an attractive metropolitan destination within the city
- Establish a sustainable and identifiable home for the reader organisation
- Provide inclusive and equitable wellbeing outcomes

VISION – Group 2

The reader organisation will create a relaxing, inclusive and sustainable home for a cluster of cultural pursuits with reading as its foundation.

OBJECTIVES

- Facilitate a range of accessible and inclusive cultural activities
- Provide inclusive and equitable wellbeing outcomes
- Provide an exemplar 21st century suburban neighbourhood
- Realise the attractions of the park
- Develop an attractive metropolitan destination within the city
- Establish a sustainable and identifiable home for the reader organisation



Figure 3. The visions, objectives and final concept plan.

notes about what would be the best way to have the café or whatever (cf. session 4) and then come together and discuss it.

The final composite design of the Home for The Reader Organisation is presented in Figure 3. The amalgamation was produced by the workshop facilitator and presented to the 2 groups together who endorsed it as a coherent collective vision.

4. Summary discussion

Taken together the data collected during this co-design, place-making activity stressed the positive nature of the experience for the participants involved and so highlighted the potential to improve psychological wellbeing. Not only did it generate predominantly positive affective responses, as recorded by the PANAS used every week, but it also, for one group at least, appeared to have the capacity to uplift the volunteers' sense of personal growth that was embodied bodies by the new place-related thinking reflected in the chosen words/phrases. The inability of the standardised scale to detect the sense of personal growth in the other group is disappointing and probably reflects the small group size and perhaps also the timing of the intervention for this group that had already experienced 6 weeks of shared reading when they began the place-making workshops.

The developing *tacit knowledge* referred to by Roggema (2014) in relation to design charrettes, here reflected in *implicit mastery* and increasing sense of personal growth (measured using self report scale), was evident as confidence and skills emerged over time in response to the developing ideas and sense of place. These findings resonate with those reported by Sutton and Kemp (2002) in young people. One would assume that this tacit sense of personal development in the form of new skills and responses to the living environment would become explicit with longer involvement and more detailed consideration of the place, its heritage and its future possibilities. The nature of the themes emerging from the qualitative data stress the manner in which involvement in place-making draws the attention and response to place beyond the self and into the community. The vision and objectives developed by the groups during session 6, shown in Figure 3, demonstrate the central objective as the development of a community asset. Although, in this example of place-making, the particular purpose of the Mansion House development to become a Centre for Reading and Wellbeing will have encouraged this ethos in the work of the 2 groups, it is nevertheless difficult to conceive of involvement in any place-making activity that would not focus on the development of place assets and that would not therefore be an optimistic, future-focussed endeavour. Similarly, as the task involves the creation of assets within the public realm, these optimistic projects are likely always to develop and work with the sense of community. We suggest that because community spirit only becomes visible and tangible during events within the public realm, the co-design of place is a central vehicle through which to build social capital and community wellbeing. The latter is a multifaceted construct that embeds strong networks of relationships and support between people in a community and which can be reflected in, and supported by, spatial infrastructure (What Works Wellbeing Centre, Communities evidence programme, 2015).

The importance of culture and heritage in the development of the place was clear and it seemed to be particularly bound up with the perception of the sense of the place, its *genius loci*. This merging of space and time to produce 'place' was itself central to the development of an authentic vision. One group's sense that the Mansion House could put the heart back into the suburb (See Figure 3, Vision Group 1) suggested that the neighbourhood lacked a central hub where the community could come together with some common purpose or in some common pursuits (see Figure 3, Vision group 2). This may represent a common deficit within modern suburbia, dominated by sprawling residential areas with a relative lack of economic thrival compared to city centres

where place-making, traditional urban renewal and regeneration have tended to cluster (Hunter 2016). Again, this suggests that the practice of the co-design of place can re-connect people and revitalise neighbourhoods. Consistent with Tuan's definition of place as 'space with meaning' (Tuan 1977), the focussed activity involved in place-making can be conceptualised as the making of spaces into places. When groups collectively design spaces, they are creating future community places.

Like any applied research relying on realistic evaluation of a social working group, the study has several limitations. Not least of these is the small sample size. Although the numbers were just large enough to support simple statistical analyses, the realisation of statistical significance was impacted. However, the thematic analysis of the experiential data produced a rich set of themes, related to particular elements of the place-making sessions and which accorded with previous literature such as that reported by Roggema (2014). It therefore provides a framework from which further collective place-making analyses can develop. In future research the benefits of co-designed place-making could be examined using multi-centre cross-over trial methodology to provide a compelling data-set involving a substantial sample of participants working on distinct place-making activities while sharing a common methodology, measurements and indicator sets that include both individual and community wellbeing, as recommended by the UK What Works Centre for Wellbeing.

A full set of post- involvement interviews from participants as well as complete transcription of the place-making sessions would have usefully supplemented the analyses, helping to pinpoint how and where the sessions worked to deliver individual and community benefit. The interviews in particular could have constructively demonstrated where the practice might be modified to produce enhanced benefit most efficiently.

This framework strongly suggests that the co-design of places is an optimistic and positive experience that engages thoughtfulness and feelings and supports personal growth. As such, it is an activity that is good for our psychological wellbeing. Furthermore, it provides backing for how the spread of this practice could build community wellbeing and grow social capital by supporting the re-connection and re-invigoration of sub-urban residential areas.

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