

DEVELOPING OUR CITIES AROUND COMMUNITY AND PLACE

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PLACEMAKING IN PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT

Today, we see more and more interest in using placemaking as a tool for real estate and area development. In this section you will find several examples of developers, investors and property owners engaging in placemaking because they see it as an investment, not a cost. The examples of Gamuda, Swire, Lendlease and Publika all reflect models that look at long term value. This also means engaging placemakers from the start, not only at the end of the development, and shifting from 'placemaking' to 'placekeeping'.

In these case studies, the focus is not only on the buildings, but on its uses, activities and experiences too. The combination of 'hardware' and 'software' is key in their design, and dwell time is a primary objective. For the revived shopping mall Publika in Malaysia, the main drivers are art, a mix of 'fast and slow places' ('fast' are the places for fast shopping, 'slow' the ones where people linger), and a great diversity of incubators and start-ups.

They are forerunners in their field, but as Cistri is noticing, placemaking is mentioned more and more at property conferences, and Gamuda Land saw their approach followed by developers active in the adjacent areas.



An example of a place-led development project designed around healthy urban living that STIPO was involved in: the Beurskwartier in Utrecht, The Netherlands.

At the same time, the case of Hongdae shows how governments can take an active role to stimulate place-led development, also by single private owners. Regulations have a major impact on using the pressure on development for the benefit of better public spaces, turning fenced-off streets into human-centred places with active ground floors.

WHAT IS PLACE-LED DEVELOPMENT?

If we look at the larger Asian and international context, we see that when a new development needs to be put on the map, placemaking sparks the creativity and activates the place with temporary use. But unlike the good practices noted in this section, too often, when the area has become well-known and ready for development, the placemakers are kindly asked to leave. Now, the 'real citymaking' begins.

The best practices show that placemaking can bring much more to citymaking. Over the last 50 years, a deep body of knowledge has developed around placemaking on the

mysteries of how to create 'great places'. It teaches us how to turn sterile spaces and areas into places that really serve as the heart of a community; where people want to linger, where a great diversity of users interact and feel at home.

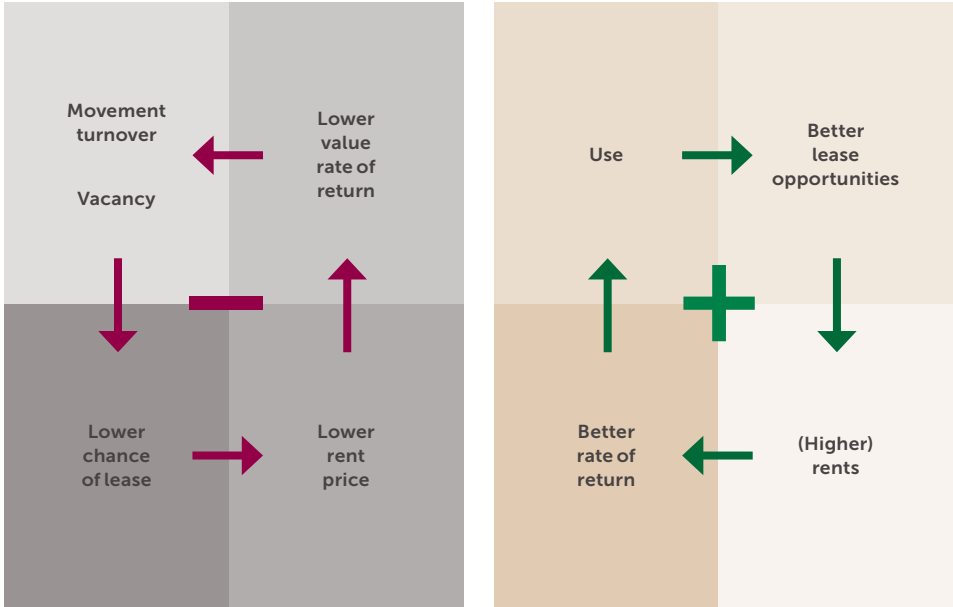
This is where 'place-led development' comes in: taking the principles of place, human scale, social life and the city at eye level and using them as a fundament for the entire real estate or area development. After all, we don't only want great places at the start of the project, but also in the new part of the city that is being developed in the long term.

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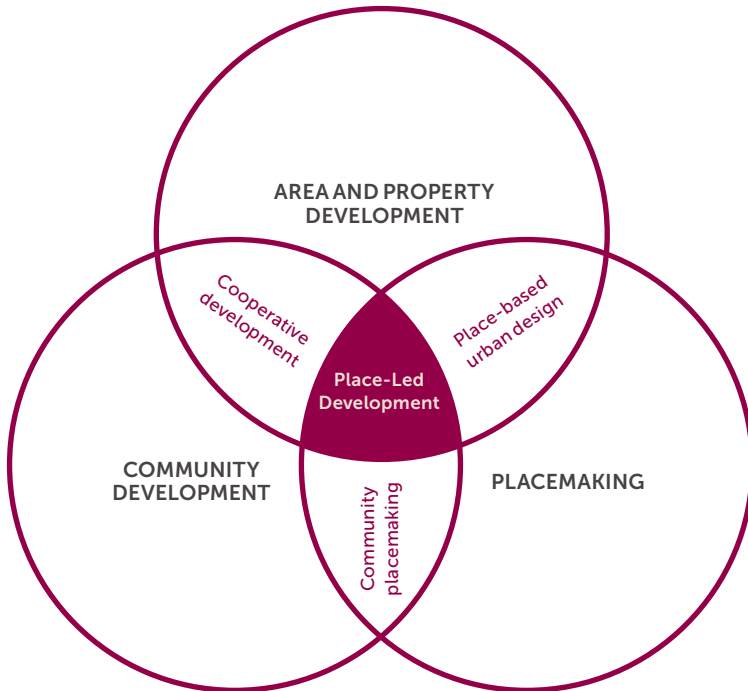
First life, then spaces, then buildings – the other way around never works.

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JAN GEHL



When property loses life, it loses value. But it also works the other way around: bringing new life to existing property through placemaking will increase value.



Defining place-led development.

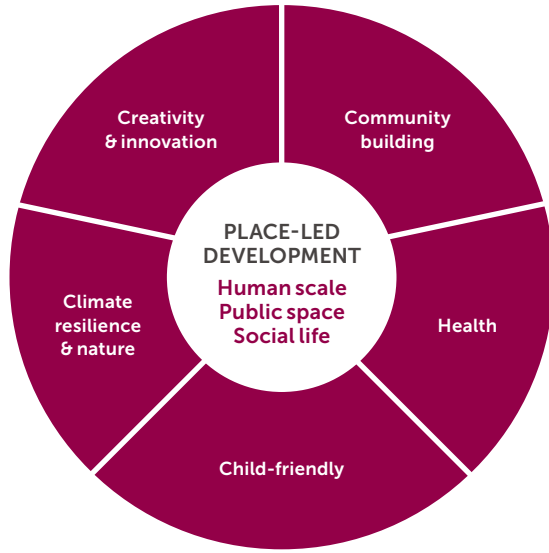
Place-led development is doing development differently. It includes the integrated design of public spaces and buildings around the values of human scale, the active programming of public spaces with daily use and of ground floor units to feed the public spaces with social life, and the engagement of a varied community of users. Furthermore, these principles are maintained throughout the entire development process. From the first concept and design, to the development, and even to the management in the years and decades after the initial delivery of buildings. After all, great places take years to create; place-making is an iterative process of constant testing and improvement. With the community's needs ever-changing, in placemaking you're never done — as is shown in the best practices in this section.

In short, place-led development is the full integration of citymaking, place-making and community development.

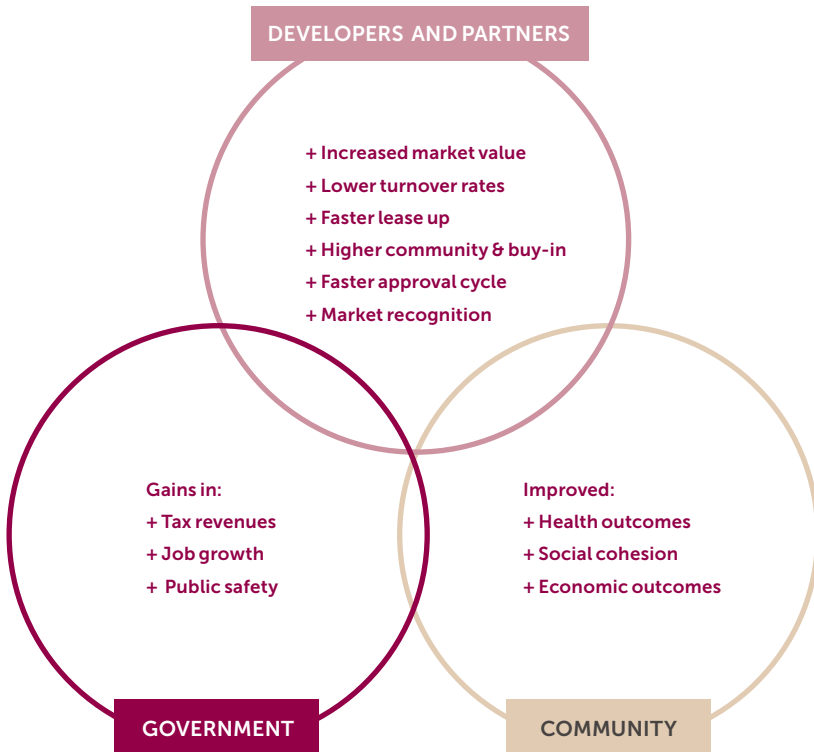
WHY IS PLACE-LED DEVELOPMENT IMPORTANT?

Place-led development builds multiple values:

- **It creates more sustainable urban areas.** Multifunctional areas with an inclusive diversity of users and public space as the backbone of development are much more adaptive to social and economic change. Good public spaces keep the ever-changing city together.
- **It creates social capital and social life.** Great places foster social life, interaction between people, and allow social and economic networks to thrive. Community-building starts by engaging interested residents in the planning and development phase and continues into the management phase.
- **It creates green capital.** With summers becoming hotter, and rain showers becoming heavier, place-led development builds greener, softer, safer, more comfortable environments for users to live and work in.
- **It fosters innovation and creativity.** With the economy shifting, interactivity between people is no longer a 'nice-to-have' but a 'need-to-have'. Innovation increasingly happens between organisations, not within organisations; and for that places of interaction, nearbyness, measuring in footsteps, and permeable ground floor uses, are vital. Place-led development helps to build the city's future economy.
- **It helps create child-, family- and elderly- friendly environments.** With more and more families with children living in cities, it is crucial to embrace formal and informal play in public spaces. With more elderly living in cities as well, we also need more regular places to sit and rest in public space. Inclusive placemaking helps to cater for the desires of the most vulnerable users of public space.



Place-led development builds multiple values.



A survey by the Urban Land Institute (ULI) shows the benefits that different stakeholders see in placemaking.

- **These social, cultural, economic, green and place values in their turn create property and land value.** In the short term, places with a vibrant social life are valued higher, and will help sell residential, recreational and workspaces, while helping retail areas perform better because of their experiential value. At the same time, place-led development helps to build more varied programs for ground floor use than retail only: for instance, spaces for production, creation and community amenities, as is the case in the Publika example.
- **It creates value in the long term.** By developing areas from liveable to loveable places, with active communities, a sense of place, a sense of ownership, great places at the heart of it, and a better flexibility through time, property and land value will increase through the decades. Of course, this is provided that there are mechanisms to keep growth sustainable and to avoid excessive gentrification, exclusion, overheating and emptying-out; making sure both owners and local communities can benefit at the same time.

Ultimately, place-led development creates social, economic, cultural, physical and property value, both in the short and long term. It requires a process in which every decision steers at human scale, social life, a great city at eye level and community engagement. A process that is organised in a way that generates quicker-lighter-cheaper results immediately, but from the perspective of a long-term strategy.

WHY IS PLACE-LED DEVELOPMENT NOT HAPPENING MORE OFTEN?

If we have all this knowledge, and if place-led development truly brings so much value, why does it not happen more often? Unfortunately, even though the momentum has changed in terms of policy and the international agenda, there are many mechanisms in area development that currently work against the practice. In order to embed placemaking and community-building more into the process of area development, it is important to be aware of these mechanisms, so that we can address them strategically:

1. **Cities and developers often lack good rules for human scale.** Change begins with embracing criteria and rules for human scale, sense of place and the eye level perspective, as the city of Seoul has done in the case of Hongdae.
2. **Human scale, social life, community and sense of place often come too late in the process.** We plan a lot, absorbed by the many technical and financial aspects of area development, and the vibrancy of an area is often only considered either at the beginning, or at the end of the process. The cases all stress how important it is to engage placemaking from the start.



Left: In the short term, it is cheaper to construct indoor parking on the ground floor, rather than underground. However, this kills the public space for the next decades. Right: International capital investment tends to lead to sterile development that is the same everywhere.

3. **Short-term profit versus long-term value.** There are many mechanisms in area and property development aimed at short-term profit.
4. **Standardisation of construction work.** With labour costs for construction rising, we are seeing a growing use of prefabricated façades that are made in factories. On top of this, we see more international capital investing in real estate development, which can lead to safe 'tick-the-box' type investments that are similar everywhere.
5. **Top-down planning leads to a lack of (mental) ownership.** Having only professionals designing an area is not acknowledging the expertise of the local communities that live, work or enjoy moments there.
6. **Lack of proper management for good places.** Creating good places is not only about the built environment (hardware), but it is also about understanding and fostering diversified uses of a space (software) and organising its management with the proper coalition of actors (orgware). So, it is not only about 'place-making', but also very

much about 'place-management', or 'place-keeping' as Swire calls it.

7. **Designs being made from the bird's eye view, without paying attention to the street.** Too often, projects take the bird's eye perspective — which is important to oversee the context — but they fail to include the perspective of the future users on the streets, sidewalks and squares, thus forgetting people's perception and experience of a place.
8. **Area development is thought of in silos.** The fabric of the city is not only fragmented because its different functions are not well-connected, but also because its main stakeholders are not integrated in a common creative process. The process of placemaking can help to bring these worlds together.

THREE KEY STRATEGIES FOR PLACEMAKING

How can we address these mechanisms? We see three key strategies emerge.

- **1: Approach the Area from Eye Level** Often, when we say 'public space', we mean the horizontal space that the city owns. However, when we walk down

the street, we look around us and have a three-dimensional, not two-dimensional experience. This three-dimensional environment includes buildings, their façades and everything that can be seen at eye level (see the diagram on page 18). Ground floors can be seen as a part of public space: the city at eye level. The ground floor may be only 20% of a building, but it determines 80% of the building's contribution to the experience of the environment. Research shows that if a place is safe, clean, relaxed and easily understood, and if visitors can wander with their expectations met or exceeded, they will remain three times longer and spend more money than in an unfriendly and confusing structure.

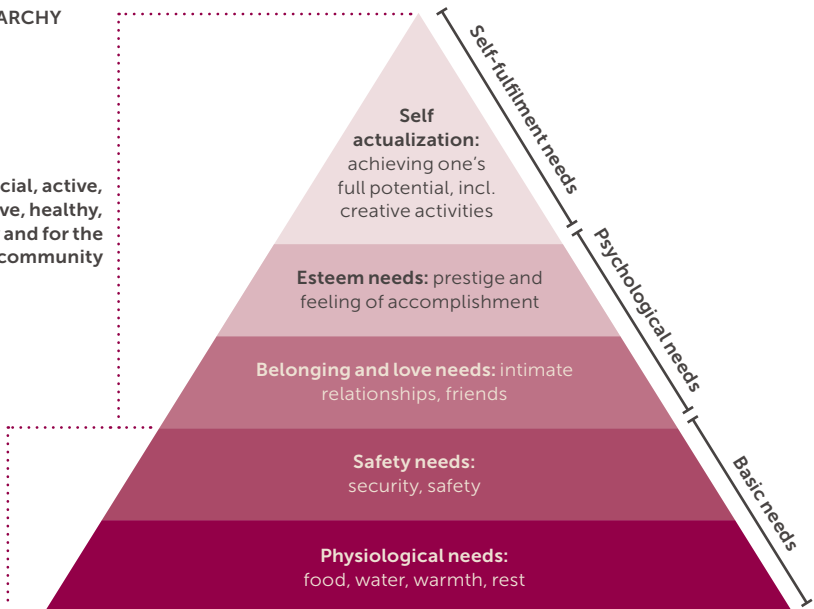
- **2: Climb in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs**

Abraham Maslow developed a classification system to demonstrate the universal needs of human beings. To move upwards in the pyramid, it is necessary to satisfy the needs of the lower levels first. In the light of place-led development, the same principles apply. The city is often seen as the primary steward of public space. They will make sure the public space is clean, safe and has basic maintenance. This only offers the fundamental layers of Maslow's pyramid. For a functional 'space' to turn into an attractive and welcoming 'place', co-creation with the community is needed. Cities and main area development stakeholders have an important role to play in co-creating qualitative public spaces to then help the local communities take ownership of the place.

MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS

Place: social, active, fun, creative, healthy, inspiring – by and for the community

Space: clean, safe, basic maintenance – by the municipality

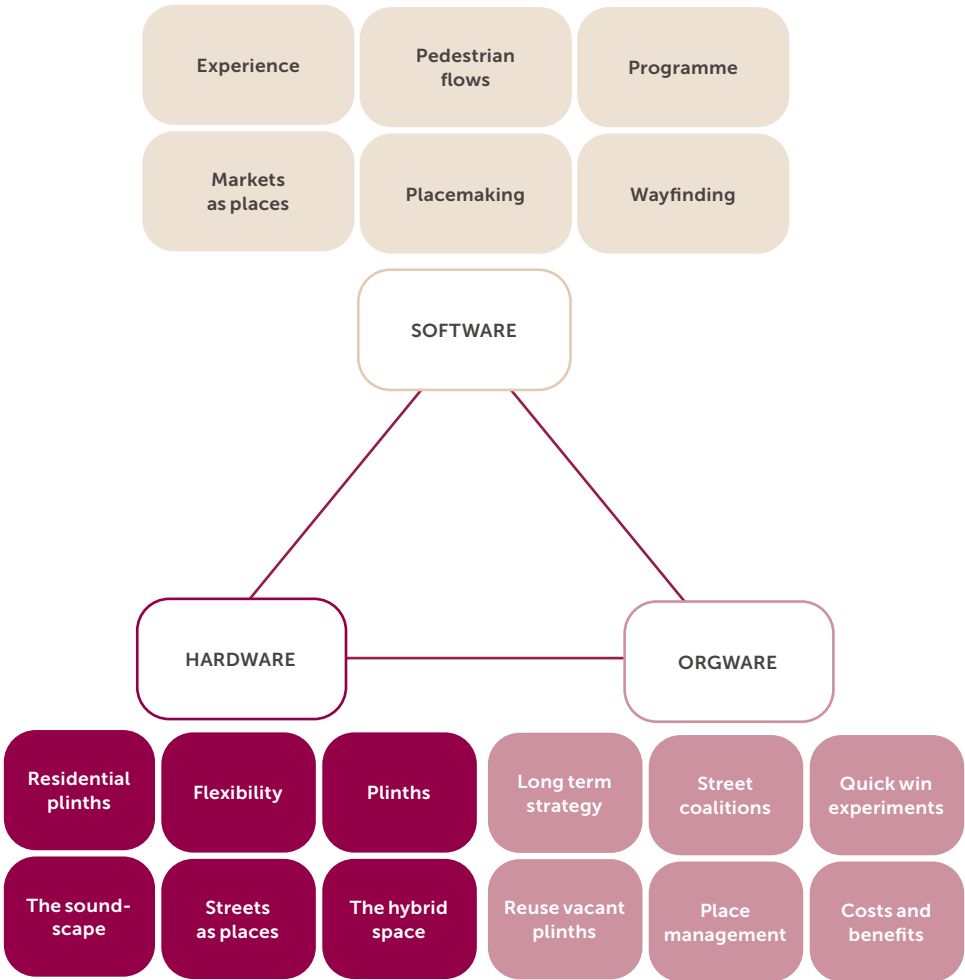


When a public space is clean, safe and maintained, it does not mean it is a place yet. Creating places requires co-creation with the community.

• **3: Combine Software, Hardware and Orgware**

New or existing, street or city, shopping or residential; however different these situations are, creating a great city at eye level is always dependent on the triangle of use (software), built environment (hardware) and coalitions, strategies and tools (orgware). The case of Gamuda land is a good example of how to do this at the level of an entire area development.

The first and most important aspect is software. Social life, the local economy feeding the area with activity, the cultural patterns and use rhythms, the diversity of activities, the experience — they are all part of what we call the ‘software’.



To create great places, the development needs to include both its uses and activities (software), human-scaled design (hardware) and programming (orgware)

The second part is the hardware: the shaping of buildings and streets. These are important because, for instance, blank walls can impact neighbouring businesses and contribute to blight and anti-social activity; while the use of harsh materials can lead to a sterile or cold environment. In any case, the hardware needs to support the software. There needs to be a process of iterative testing and learning between the ever-changing dynamics of the software and the design of the hardware. In use, the social, cultural and economic demands are ever-changing. A neighbourhood's demography changes, retail patterns change, the culture of play changes.

The third crucial element therefore is the 'orgware'. This aspect allows places to maintain a good dynamic in the long term, and includes the organisation of functions; the daily management of shops, plinths and streets, and ground floor portfolio management.

In terms of area development, placemaking is important not only in the planning and the development phase, but during the management phase as well. Measuring impact is a crucial part of this 'place management' or 'place keeping'. Cistri shows a wonderful set of standards to measure these values with. In the end, it is tools like these that are needed to develop great places, and to keep learning and gaining new insights in the process.