Placemaking in Practice

VOLUME 3

*The Future of Placemaking and Digitization.
Emerging Challenges and Research Agenda*

Editors-in-Chief
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Edited by
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BRILL

Contents

PART 1
Inclusive Placemaking: Navigating Diversity, Vulnerability and Gender Dynamics

PART 2
Engaging Perspectives: Participatory Placemaking and Heritage Narratives

PART 3
Shaping the Future Urban Landscape: Integrating Health,
Climate and Placemaking Strategies

Figures and Tables

Figures

Tables

Participatory Approaches to Placemaking: Methodological Outlines for Public Spaces in Bergamo (Italy), for an Indigenous Community in Quebec (Canada) and Popular Places in Přerov (Czech Republic)

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Abstract

The main objective of this chapter is to introduce and critically assess the methodologies employed in the three research projects that focused on making use of local knowledge about public places in the placemaking process. The case studies analysed in this chapter focus on the enhancement of public places and cultural landscapes to make them more suitable for the needs of citizens. The first case is BG Public Space, a research project conducted at the University of Bergamo (Italy). The project aimed to encourage Bergamo's inhabitants to express their opinions with respect to the functions and characteristics of the city's public spaces. This would foster their participation in the urban redevelopment choices made by the municipal administration. A second placemaking project is proposed by researchers at Laval University in Quebec (Canada), where sustainable tourism is a driver for the protection of the Indigenous heritage and of community places. In the third case, researchers at Palacký University Olomouc carried out participatory research in Přerov (Czech Republic). The research was done in cooperation with the municipal administration. It provided a wide range of information concerning the residents' knowledge of various popular places in the town. In general, this chapter explores the value and potential of participatory approaches in understanding and enhancing public places and cultural landscapes. The chapter also stresses the importance of tailoring these approaches to the sui generis challenges and opportunities that exist in each research context, whether they relate to the creation of urban environments or to the protection of Indigenous heritage. Our findings indicate that despite the specific context of each case, participatory approaches and community involvement are crucial for effective placemaking. This underlines the paramount importance of fostering community engagement as well as informed decision-making processes. By doing so, we can play an active role in shaping the future of our cities and preserving a rich tapestry of cultural environments for generations to come.

Keywords

public places – participation – communities – urban redevelopment

1   Introduction

The following text deals with the issue of participatory approaches and participatory methods as applied to the needs of the placemaking process. Participatory approaches to placemaking refer to certain guiding principles to be followed when engaging local communities in the placemaking process,

and they include the associated principles involved in such engagements. Placemaking is defined by some authors (Friedmann, 2010, p. 159; Pierce et al., 2011, p. 54) as the set of social, political and material processes through which people iteratively create and re-create the experiential geographies of the spatial context in which they live, and it is often recognized as an inclusive, community-centred approach to the co-planning and co-design of public places. As Ceccato et al. (2020, p. 3) state, no urban environment reflects the meaning of urban life better than public places. They can take different physical forms, be it a shopping mall, a street corner, a park or a transport terminal. What constitutes public places is then highly context dependent; in any case, the physical and social characteristics of public places influence the behaviour of individuals in space and time. Regardless of their physical and social nature, it is public places where most social contacts (meeting, passing, etc.) and socialization of individuals take place. It is therefore those parts of space that represent a common, shared (wholly or partially) environment, made possible by the fact that public places are very often accessible to individuals at any given time. Public places that respond to residents' needs can, thanks to this accessibility, generate feelings of happiness in many people (Rodeschini et al., 2022) or generate in them a sense of pride not only in a particular public place but also in the city as a whole (Gorgul et al., 2017). With a view to the future, the function of positively perceived public places is therefore, among other things, to anchor residents in a particular urban environment and to promote its sustainable development.

The process of placemaking is carried out by considering not only the physical attributes of places, but also by incorporating the social characteristics of places as regards meeting the needs of their inhabitants. This will provide a shared rethinking of the rehabilitation of urban places that, over time, have undergone significant transformations. Participatory methods tend to be understood as specific practical steps used for the purpose of implementing participatory approaches, and for collaboratively and inclusively soliciting input for the placemaking process. These methods are applied to encourage the active engagement of community members, stakeholders and the public in the processes of planning, designing and shaping public places. Local actors (i.e. inhabitants, entrepreneurs, politicians) are themselves best placed to set strategic objectives and manage the development processes of their towns and cities. For this reason, they are considered the driving force of urban development (Vazquez-Barquero, 2002). When applied, participatory approaches and participatory methods can foster more inclusive and bottom-up placemaking processes. Hence, the use of participatory methods and approaches in the creation (planning and design) of urban space is important to ensure that the

resulting designs and developments reflect the needs, preferences and aspirations of the community (Strydom & Puren, 2013, pp. 33–34).

The main objective of this chapter is to present and critically evaluate the methodologies used in three research projects aimed at gathering local knowledge on public places for top-down and bottom-up led placemaking processes. The successful completion of this main objective should provide guidance for the direction of future research regarding the placemaking process. The case studies that are analysed in this chapter focus on the enhancement of public places to make them more suitable for the needs of citizens. The first case study concerns public spaces in Bergamo, a middle-sized city in Italy; the second analyses Indigenous community-based tourism in Quebec, Canada; and the third focuses on popular places in Přerov, a town in the Czech Republic. Using these case studies, we attempt to explore the importance and potential of participatory approaches for understanding and enhancing public places and cultural landscapes.

2   Placemaking Case Studies

In this section we present the three case studies to introduce and critically assess the methodologies adopted in the research projects that contributed to the acquisition of local knowledge essential for top-down and bottom-up led placemaking processes. We begin with the case of the Italian city of Bergamo, then the province of Quebec (Canada) and finally with Přerov (Czech Republic).

2.1   *Relaunching Places through Their Inhabitants: the BG Public Spaces Project in Bergamo, Italy*

2.1.1   Short Description

The first case study concerns the city centre of the Italian city of Bergamo, where a participatory process was organized to promote a regeneration project by the local municipality. During the 19th century in Bergamo a series of functional interventions transformed the area of the ancient fairground (situated in the lower part of the city called Bergamo Bassa) into a central place of urban life par excellence. These actions, together with the creation of the railway station in 1857, identified Bergamo Bassa as not only the centre of collective and administrative activity (Pagani, 2000, p. 21), but also the place around which the city's social and cultural life orbited. This redefinition of the city centre and the role it assumed, led to the launch of two national competitions (1906 and 1907) which were aimed at encouraging the construction of new functional structures in the area known as Centro Piacentiniano, whose name derives from the primary role played by Roman architect Marcello Piacentini who, together with
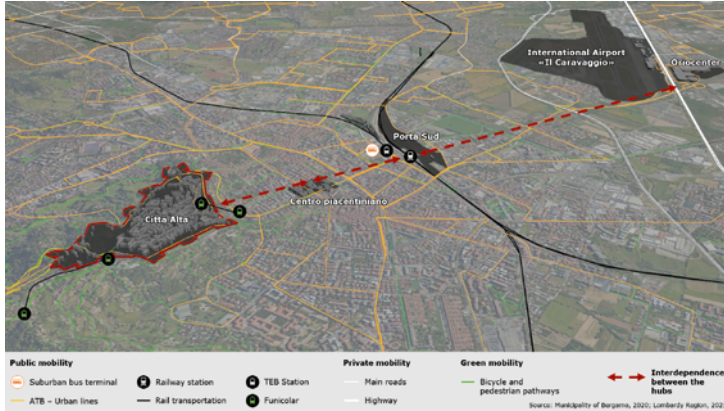
FIGURE 4.1   Relational network between the main hubs in Bergamo
SOURCE: OWN PROCESSING, 2023

engineer Giuseppe Quaroni, planned the transformation of the area on which the ancient fairground and adjoining spaces stood. From such a perspective, Bergamo is delineated as an urban centre rich in history and endowed with a profound identity in which, nonetheless, the dynamics induced by contemporary globalizing trends have resulted in an intense variation of functions, relationships and forms (Figure 4.1).

2.1.2   Objectives of Data Collection

BG Public Space is a project co-funded by the municipality of Bergamo and the university, with the aim of including citizens' opinions when making decisions about the functions of the new centre of Bergamo and in outlining the policy lines aimed at drafting the international call for tenders for the revitalization of the Centro Piacentiniano area (Figure 4.2). Promoted by the city of Bergamo, the two-stage European design competition – launched in 2017 for the redevelopment of the public spaces of the Centro Piacentiniano – was won by the Flânerie project. The design proposal was mainly based on three aspects: (1) the pedestrianization of the centre, with the redesign of open spaces and pavements; (2) the definition of a connective system of multifunctional public spaces; and (3) the incorporation of activities that are open to the public into the buildings' ground floors. On these premises the architectural solutions of the various urban compartments were articulated, and they were not changed but integrated with great accuracy. The regeneration project of the area related to Piazza Dante and the spaces adjacent to the Sentierone was concluded with the official opening of the new centre on 3 March 2023. More details about the Flânerie project can be found in Peretti and Gelmini (2018, pp. 87–97).

FIGURE 4.2
Axial dimension of Bergamo
Bassa, in the centre of which
stands the Centro Piacentiniano
SOURCE: OWN PROCESSING,
2023

The BG Public Space project assumes the theoretical perspective of the learning city – a public administration that learns from its inhabitants (Lussault, 2018) using technological cooperative systems to address matters of public concern and interest and considers public space not only as a set of squares, parks and/or streets, but as an expression of an identitarian discourse (Turco, 2010). Indeed, the project intends to bring out the social role of public spaces, which is manifested in the way they are used and in the symbolic and practical functions attributed to these areas by different city users.

Geographical studies consider public space from a physical and material point of view, but most of all from a relational perspective, as a privileged sphere of social and collective life (Berdoulay, 1997; Lévy & Lussault, 2013). Public space is generally understood as accessible to all, capable of summarizing within it the different individual practices, as well as the functions of an urban society as a whole (Lévy & Lussault, 2013, p. 336). Acknowledged as a meeting place, the dynamism of this spatial typology is closely related to the density and diversity of its inhabitants; "public space presents itself [...] as a condensation of urbanity" (Lévy & Lussault, 2013, p. 337) – as it allows individuals to come together to make their relationships possible, both physically and on a virtual level. In particular, the relational dimension attributed to this spatial typology identifies it as a place of interpersonal sharing and insistent reproduction of the social practices of urban living, linked to the identity discourse and the set of values that are stratified on the territory. In this perspective, it is possible to identify the inhabitants as cooperative actors because they are informed by experience and bearers of territorial knowledge and instances. Assuming that participation is a complex process that needs suitable tools to allow citizens to express choices (Burini, 2016; Burini, 2019), BG Public Space envisages territorial governance through both an interactive and collaborative map (and, therefore, an online consultation),

and direct consultation, carried out through citizen's meetings, focus groups in local associations and schools, and excursions in urban spaces.

Regarding the project's operability, the participatory process is assumed as a methodology for involving citizens in public issues and increasing inhabitants' awareness of the heritage of the public spaces of Bergamo. This is a multi-stage process that includes, in addition to consultation with the city's inhabitants, a preliminary knowledge and information phase to make sure people understand the questions and the assumptions on which their responses are to be structured. Participatory processes aimed at consulting inhabitants tend to be organised in different phases, i.e. awareness raising, communication, consultation and concentration, all of which presupposes a preliminary preparation phase for the construction of the several tools to be used (Burini, 2016; Burini, 2019).

However, in this case, given the specific purpose of the consultation, these phases were re-centred by providing for those aimed at awareness raising (with presentation meetings aimed at increasing inhabitants' awareness of the historical-cultural heritage of public spaces and illustrating the social relevance of participation) and consultation. These were carried out through focus groups with stakeholders from the area, and the aim was to present the initiative and involve users in the use of the system – for which various products were produced to enhance the different modalities adopted (direct/network). Communication actions were implemented through material and digital promotion (sending informational and system launch emails, distributing flyers, updating contacts through social networks, etc.), while the last phase, that of concentration, was not considered. The consultation, which lasted three months (from 1 February to 30 April 2015), took place following the presentation of a video clip of the Bergamo Public Space (2015), which assisted the participants when providing informed responses to questions. Such a video clip is an important part of the participatory process, since it becomes a tool for communicating knowledge about the area and the issues to be addressed through the inquiry; at the conclusion of the project the video-clip can help emphasize the results of the research.

2.1.3   Type of Data Collected

The participatory process carried out through the BG Public Space project provided data which was used to understand the opinions of the citizens with respect to the specificities of Centro Piacentiniano, detailing: (a) the functions and roles of social significance of these spaces over the centuries; (b) the urban morphology and conformation from a structural point of view (the presence of underground ditches, articulation on several levels, etc.); and (c) the future

perspective as proposed by the inhabitants (reminders of the past, new functions, etc.).

This activity was made possible through a consultation platform and interactive mapping that, through a series of functions, allowed for consultation on texts and cartographies that refer to each public space, and for the completion of survey forms developed through the Community Surveys component. This is a "hybrid" consultation system in which the cartography constitutes the framework that facilitates the inhabitants' ability to respond; in fact, while showing limited interactivity from a cartographic point of view (with a fixed map background), the system enables the entry of information, descriptions, and images, produced as voluntary geographic information (VGI), for the different spaces analysed. The data acquired is significant both quantitatively and qualitatively. In fact, more than 8,000 unique visitors consulted the site, of whom about 1,000 completed the questionnaire, which took 40 to 60 minutes to complete (Figure 4.3). Regarding the quality of responses, from both the direct and the online consultations, residents provided valuable insights into the future of the spaces in question and the desired interventions, and they answered the questions carefully and thoughtfully, as well as maturity and awareness of the topics covered.

The main proposals for intervention concerned the recovery of the historical functionality of the area reviewed, under the area of contemporary innovation and creativity. The detailed interventions proposed by residents related to an increase in the number of restaurants and recreation-type businesses, and that these should be supported by improved public transportation. Surrounding the Centro Piacentiniano, in what has been defined as the critical spaces, redevelopments aimed at creating spaces dedicated to

FIGURE 4.3
Number of BG Public Space survey participants per public space
SOURCE: OWN PROCESSING, 2021

creativity, internationalization, music and green areas were desired, empha-
sizing that interventions should be aimed primarily at young people. The
public spaces in the urban centre were all identified as places to be rediscov-
ered and enhanced, both in relation to their historical significance, through
information and digital panels, and through events and demonstrations that
would attract young people as well as foreign visitors and tourists, especially
in the evening and night time hours when these places become empty and
are perceived as less safe (Figure 4.4).

Based on these findings, the methodology introduced above and the
data stemming from it can be conceived as a tool capable of: (a) promoting
knowledge of a city, including local knowledge, due to cooperative efforts
that involved a range of actors; (b) finding specific proposals for place-
making processes using innovative digital and cartographic technologies
which, in the case of Bergamo, led to the guidelines for the drafting of the
international call for proposals aimed at the redevelopment of the Centro
Piacentiniano (completed in 2023); and (c) promoting a renewed function of
public spaces in the centre of Bergamo, changing appearance in an innova-
tive and functional way.

Regarding the challenges and difficulties encountered, we list the following.
First, the lack of a culture of participation among Bergamo citizens, as par-
ticipatory processes are not common practice. Second, the difficulty in devel-
oping a common language, so that priorities, methodologies, approaches and
research outcomes are clearly understood by all parties and so we witnessed
a lack of a common framework for conducting the participatory process.
Third, a lack of continuity in the participation of citizens in the city's planning
activities in the years after the initial study: the participatory process seemed

FIGURE 4.4
Users' suggestions
related to the Centro
Piacentiniano
SOURCE: OWN
PROCESSING, 2021

disconnected from the urban regeneration process activated in the Centro Piacentiniano just after the study.

2.2   *Indigenous Tourism in Quebec (Canada)*

2.2.1   Short Description

This study concerns Indigenous tourism and heritage landscapes in Quebec, and analyses how Indigenous tourism has undergone rapid development, both in terms of activities and research, over the last two decades. There has been great interest in supporting this form of tourism, not only from Indigenous organizations but also from government agencies and the tourism industry as a whole. However, the activities of tourists have many geographical impacts and these can be particularly acute in Indigenous territories, where they can affect the culture, heritage, society, economy and biodiversity of native heritage places and communities (Butler & Hinch, 2007). Yet, when tourism encourages the protection and revitalization of local landscapes, practices and knowledge, it can initiate a process of empowerment and self-recognition which can mitigate its negative impacts. There are several examples of Indigenous communities around the world who chose to limit or turn away from extractive activities in their ancestral lands, investing instead in heritage and tourism as a means to generate economic revenue while achieving cultural and environmental sustainability (Notzke, 2006). Such long-standing efforts have compounded over time: the year 2020 was to mark a new phase of consolidation and visibility for this type of activity. This momentum was brought to a halt with the advent of Covid-19. While the economic losses to the sector are undeniable, certain social and environmental gains are also notable: some stakeholders have taken the worldwide crisis as an opportunity to re-centre the Indigenous values of care and guardianship as core tenets of a shared tourism vision for the future. The pandemic can be seen as a means to decompartmentalize Indigenous ethics related to land and resources and to place them at the centre of tourism economics.

2.2.2   Objectives of Data Collection

This study concerns projects related to Indigenous community-based tourism and heritage conservation in Quebec (Canada). While many extractive industries weaken Indigenous knowledge and heritage by modifying the landscape, cultural tourism offers alternative avenues of development which, in contrast, favour the enhancement and transmission of culture (Notzke, 2006). Our work is based on the premise that, in addition to its economic contribution, Indigenous tourism produces cultural value for the territories that it makes

visible and accessible: thus, it can actively support the governance of Inuit and First Nations local communities, particularly with regard to the management of the territory. The data collection has three central objectives. First, to document the growing visibility of Indigenous landscapes in the overall tourism industry in Quebec (Canada). Second, to evaluate the role of Indigenous tourism associations in making these landscapes visible. Third, to analyse the benefits of co-management between different scale and territorial levels (provincial, federal, international) in the development of Indigenous tourism products.

In each area of investigation, we compare other Indigenous tourism initiatives around the world (Butler & Hinch, 2007), paying particular attention to other Canadian provinces and territories. Different data collection and analysis techniques are used, including: documentary research; archival research; analysis of news media and websites; the listing and characterization of Aboriginal tourism initiatives in Quebec; questionnaires and interviews with industry players; mapping the activity in the province and in Canada; characterization and comparison of successful strategies and models; etc. Our methods are part of a decolonial approach to research and users are not only at the heart of data collection, they are full partners. Liaison between various learning communities enables the dissemination, transfer and mutual appropriation of data between university researchers, Indigenous researchers and key players in the tourism industry, with the aim of maximizing the impacts of research. The principles of ownership, control, access and possession (OCAP) frame the entire process and, in doing so, improve the results. Such an approach promotes a circular and continuous movement between the collection of data and the mobilization/appropriation of knowledge by Indigenous actors, since they are the primary beneficiaries of this research.

2.2.3   Type of Data Collected

To date, our general study has documented six heritage places of key importance to the Innu First Nation of Quebec. The research is still ongoing and the process of community decision-making regarding the best way to protect these landscapes, and the knowledge associated with them, is also ongoing: for that reason, the places' names and locations cannot be given at the time of writing this chapter. Decolonial and participatory research in Indigenous communities in Canada takes time. It must be based on mutual trust and the results are not always readily apparent. The weaknesses and strengths of this approach can be evaluated differently by Indigenous and university partners, as their needs and priorities may differ. Keeping in mind that the central goals

that unite our research team are the enhancement of local heritage value for Indigenous partners, the re-appropriation and revitalization of key cultural landscapes and the practices associated with them, and the development of tourist activities that support these goals, we have identified the following strengths in our methodologies. First, full participation of Indigenous partners, from the design of the research to its implementation. Second, better understanding and appropriation of the research data as a result of early and ongoing involvement in the community throughout the duration of the project. Third, capacity building within the community as local students, knowledge holders and cultural specialists support university students during interviews and at various stages through the data collection and analysis. Fourth, ongoing validation, clarification and mobilization of processes and results throughout the project rather than "knowledge transfer" and dissemination solely at the completion of the research.

Regarding challenges and difficulties encountered, we list the following: (a) lack of availability of local researchers due to the fact that key people are overly solicited and, besides research projects, face unmanageable workloads with their regular employment; (b) difficulty of developing a common language so that priorities, methodologies, approaches and research outcomes are clearly understood by all parties; (c) necessity of adopting a slower pace and extended calendar for completing projects in a fully participatory manner; and (d) frequent turnover of local team members due to professional mobility and changes of local governance structure after band council elections, which occur every two years.

To summarize: placemaking processes in Indigenous territories have been disrupted by colonization, relocation, government land-grabbing, unilateral resource extraction and industrial development, as well as colonial governments' policies, such as residential schools. The latter have had a major impact on the transmission of knowledge about cultural responsibilities concerning the care of land, plants and animals; namely the ecosystems managed and maintained by previous generations. Today, there is a marked differentiation between the extended traditional territories and the small reserves which, on average, account for less than 1% of ancestral areas. Despite this extensive territorial reduction, Indigenous communities are actively re-appropriating and revitalizing their heritage landscapes. Tourism is a valuable tool for supporting this process: by bringing attention to landscapes that have been transformed but are still cherished and cared for by local communities, tourism opens an avenue of mutual understanding and reconciliation between the dominant

society and First Peoples. As a result, Indigenous tourism can be viewed as a "restorative" tourism in the sense that it contributes to the restoration of places from the past that are still meaningful in the present and, most importantly, it can restore the relationship between local communities and their lands. Finally, tourism can also contribute to restoring the relationship between non-Indigenous and Indigenous peoples as it supports mutual recognition, education and reconciliation.

2.3   *Participatory Research into Popular Places*

2.3.1   Short Description

This research was conducted in the town of Přerov (Olomouc Region, Czech Republic). Přerov is situated on the Bečva River and has approximately 42,000 inhabitants. Due to its favourable geographical location, it is not only an important transport hub but also an important centre of industry. The town of Přerov is generally perceived in a rather negative way. For people who do not live in Přerov, the image of the town is quite tarnished, as evidenced by the results of several different surveys and investigations carried out at a national level (Obce v datech, 2022; Mahdalová & Škop 2023). For those who live in Přerov the image of the town is also burdened with negative aspects (Šimáček et al., 2020). Many of the problems that can objectively be seen to plague Přerov (e.g. socially unsatisfactory situation, socially excluded localities, traffic situation, depopulation, etc.) were identified by the authors, both as causes of fear and dissatisfaction with life in the town and as the main problems that the Přerov should address. The research revealed that the places with the worst image are concentrated around one place, the main railway station, in close proximity to which are socially excluded localities, industrial enterprises and, until 2022, the location of the main transit road through the town. However, the town of Přerov can also have positive connotations; a large part of the town does not fall within the places of fear, and therefore one can assume that certain public places may be perceived positively. The strengthening of their meanings could be the way to attract not only new investors to the town, but also residents, the numbers of which have been in steady decline in Přerov since the Velvet Revolution in 1989. With a positive image of the town, Přerov as a "brand" can present itself much better, not only to newcomers, but especially to current residents and companies. The results of this research have provided the town council with material on which it can rely when financing improvements to public places, supporting development and assessing applications for subsidies.

2.3.2 Objectives of Data Collection

The case study is focused on popular public places in Přerov and how to increase their attractiveness. The database of collected knowledge should serve as a best practice handbook and thus it should also contribute to increasing the attractiveness of other places. Přerov has had previous experience with top-down led placemaking. In 2003 and 2008, through two surveys, the town council consulted its citizens on a wide range of development topics, and at the turn of 2020 Přerov took part in a project aimed at innovating the crime prevention system in the larger towns and cities of the Olomouc Region. The 2020 questionnaire for the towns residents investigated the structure of the places where there was a fear of crime, as well as the causes of the fear and the applicability of potential measures that could lead to an increased sense of security. These activities yielded local knowledge that is useful in the processes of modifying the physical settings of negatively perceived public places. However, the research presented in this chapter mainly received input from the towns residents on the development of topophilia (positively perceived places). The initial initiative for research oriented towards the identification of positively perceived public places came simultaneously from the residents and from the towns administration. After detailing the negatively perceived places, people wanted to share their knowledge about the structure of positively perceived public places, as did the towns leaders, who felt there was potential to improve the towns image. Thus, through collaboration between some of the authors of this chapter and the towns leadership, research was conducted that built on previous research and identified the structure and intensity of people's perceptions of topophilia. The residents who participated in the research, in addition to providing their knowledge of the topophilia, described how they would possibly modify the topophilia to make them even more attractive, presentable and usable. In other words, to better fulfil the roles of those places in the urban environment.

2.3.3 Type of Data Collected

The questionnaire played a key role in collecting sufficient data. It was consulted on and created in cooperation with the town's council and subsequently distributed among the residents. This process also included the presentation of the survey in regional and national media to ensure sufficient public attention and motivation. The questionnaire was developed in the ArcGIS Survey123 online tool developed by ESRI (2022) and distributed electronically (computer-assisted web interviewing, CAWI) from November 2021 to the end of

February 2022. In total, 412 respondents participated in the survey during this period. In order to achieve a relatively representative research sample (gender, age), a field survey was also carried out in the form of face-to-face interviews with respondents on the streets of Přerov. Quota sampling was used to target those categories of people whose representation was the lowest in the research sample at that stage of the study. This was mainly the elderly, with whom the questionnaire was completed through personal interviews in 18 cases. In total, 430 inhabitants; more than 1% of the population of Přerov, participated in the topophilia research.

The final structure of the questionnaire consisted of a background map and several thematic and identification questions. A key question for this research encouraged respondents to mark areas they perceived positively on the map (780 drawings in total). In addition, respondents were asked to suggest a reason for the topophilia in the plotted places, to quantify the degree of topophilia on an ordinal scale (1–5) and, last but not least, to use the opportunity to communicate their own suggestions that could lead to further improvements and make the places more attractive. Respondents could choose from six predefined responses and then write their ideas for improvements to the physical environment of topophilic sites in the text box. Respondents could also enter their own suggestions in the same box if they did not fall into any of the previous categories.

It was necessary to discard any invalid questionnaires before the actual data analysis. In the Topophilia research, 430 questionnaires were included in this phase, of which 374 were considered valid for further analyses. A total of 56 (13%) of the questionnaires that fulfilled at least one of the following invalidity conditions were discarded: the respondent stated that they did not live in Přerov, or they did not describe any positively perceived place in the town or its local areas. This ensured that potential placemaking processes would only be proposed by citizens of the town. As the respondents mostly participated independently through online questionnaires created in ArcGIS Survey123 (ESRI, 2022), the research sample showed disproportions in certain population groups with gender and age. Naturally, seniors were less likely to participate in the online survey, while younger residents were more likely to engage. These disproportions were compensated for by the statistical method of assigning weights to each group. Their responses were thus biased, based on a weighting that simulated the relative representation of the groups in the sample according to the actual population structure of Přerov (Table 4.1).

TABLE 4.1   Research sample and its structure

Gender	Age	Share of population (%)	Respondents	Share of research sample (%)	Assigned weight
Men	14 and less	7.3	37	9.9	0.74
	15–24	4.4	26	7.0	0.64
	25–34	6.0	37	9.9	0.61
	35–44	7.1	20	5.4	1.32
	45–54	7.6	18	4.8	1.58
	55–64	6.4	10	2.7	2.38
	65–74	5.8	8	2.1	2.71
	75 and more	3.9	8	2.1	1.83
Women	14 and less	6.8	53	14.2	0.48
	15–24	4.1	26	7.0	0.59
	25–34	5.6	39	10.5	0.53
	35–44	6.5	26	7.0	0.93
	45–54	7.5	32	8.6	0.88
	55–64	6.8	15	4.0	1.68
	65–74	7.7	11	2.9	2.61
	75 and more	6.5	8	2.1	3.05
Total		100.0	**374**	100.0	–

SOURCE: OWN RESEARCH, 2020

The analysis of the spatial data obtained was conducted in a GIS environment. In research such as this, GIS plays a useful role, as evidenced by its use by many authors (Doran & Lees, 2005; Curtis, 2012; Kyttä et al., 2016; Pánek et al., 2018; Šimáček et al., 2020). The first step is to convert spatial data – in this case, participatively acquired map drawings – into a digital environment (Šerý & Šimáček, 2012). The drawings obtained from the electronically completed questionnaires from ArcGIS Survey123 (ESRI, 2022) were automatically converted into formats usable in a GIS environment, but manual digitization was required for the questionnaires collected as part of the field survey. The digital data was then used for further analyses. In places where multiple drawings were present at the same time, sums of important values (assigned weights) were generated. In addition to the number of respondents plotting

a given area, or the frequency of reasons given, from a placemaking perspective these may be mainly the numbers of respondents who would like a place to be modified. However, in addition to traditional map outputs, the results can also be presented to the town council in the form of interactive map application where each plot and the responses relating to it can be viewed individually.

When evaluating the methodologies applied in this research from a placemaking perspective, we can make the following points. First, a questionnaire is a feasible tool for the type of research that involves public participation. In the case of CAWI, the undeniable advantage is that time and money are saved, as there is no need to approach respondents on the street. Second, the methods used to collect primary data on residents' local knowledge of topophilic places resulted in the participation of a large number of residents. Third, bottom-up methods of obtaining data on residents' perceptions of the town have proven to be useful for creating strategies that target top-down placemaking processes. This point is in line with the findings of Brisudová et al. (2020), whose research focused on the identification of topo-ambivalent places and their importance in the process of strategic urban planning. Fourth, a significant share of the participating residents was recruited by the self-selection method. These respondents freely participated, although this can also bring pitfalls. The questionnaire is rarely completed voluntarily by a person who is not interested in the subject, and thus it is difficult to represent this group of people in the research sample. Finally, in the case of the CAWI questionnaire, the disadvantage is the greater involvement of younger people compared to the elderly. The resulting disproportion had to be rectified by adding statistical weights. Such biased inputs are then naturally reflected in the final analyses and results.

3   Conclusion

In this chapter, we explored the value and potential of participatory approaches and methods in understanding and enhancing public places and cultural landscapes. The chapter also addressed the importance of considering the specific challenges and opportunities in each research context, whether that relates to the creation of urban environments or to the protection of Indigenous heritage. For this purpose, the main aim was to present and critically evaluate the methodologies used in three research projects aimed at gathering local

knowledge on public places for top-down and bottom-up led placemaking processes. Table 4.2 presents a synthesis of the findings regarding the methodologies used in the three case studies.

Table 4.2 shows that different approaches and a range of methods were used in each of the three case studies, which sought to reflect the specific geographical contexts of the research. Although different variations of approaches to local knowledge acquisition necessary to follow up placemaking processes were identified, in all three cases we are able to observe bottom-up approaches in the methodologies applied. In one case, it was purely a bottom-up approach, in the other two it was a combination with a top-down approach. Thus, we always witness the active involvement of bottom-up actors in the future development of public places and cultural landscapes. Based on this finding, we can speak of a certain democratization of decision-making processes aimed at reproducing and transforming the shape of public places and cultural landscapes to meet the needs of their users in the future.

The evaluation of research methodologies (Table 4.2) employed in the framework of the three case studies provided valuable insights into participatory approaches in the research on residents' perceptions of places and their local knowledge. Our findings proved the feasibility and effectiveness of these specific approaches in obtaining data. In other words, the data collection methods employed and the engagement with the community in acquiring local knowledge about specific public places and landscape features have demonstrated the strength of participatory approaches and their ability to generate strategies for placemaking. However, biases may occur, and in those cases adjustments would be required to ensure a representative research sample. A representative research sample is crucial for non-distorted findings and their unbiased interpretation.

Overall, participatory approaches and community involvement are essential for effective planning and the enhancement of public places, both in urban environments and in Indigenous communities. The implementation of such approaches forms the basis for more sustainable solutions. Our findings underline the paramount importance of fostering community engagement as well as informed decision-making processes. By doing so, we can play an active role in shaping the future of our cities and preserving a rich tapestry of cultural environments for generations to come. Finally, the findings also emphasize the importance of continued efforts to build mutual understanding and reconciliation between different communities, and for tourism to be a tool to support Indigenous communities in recovering and preserving their heritage.

TABLE 4.2   Approaches and methods used in the research in the case studies

Case study	Applied approaches	Applied methods
The BG Public Spaces project	Top-down followed by bottom-up ――――――――――――― Learning city	direct consultation; citizens' meetings; focus groups; excursions in the city; awareness raising
Indigenous tourism in Quebec (Canada)	Bottom-up ――――――――――――― Participatory approaches that are aimed to empower Indigenous communities and stakeholders and promote collaboration. The approaches ensure that the research benefits the Indigenous actors themselves.	involving users as partners; liaison between learning communities; principles of ownership, control, access, and possession (OCAP); dissemination and transfer of data; comparative analysis; mixed data collection and analysis techniques
Participatory research on popular places	Bottom-up followed by top-down ――――――――――――― Participatory mental mapping	questionnaire; sketch maps; degree of topophilia GIS analysis; suggestions for improvements; validity check and weighting

SOURCE: OWN RESEARCH, 2023

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