

## Placemaking for the Built Environment – The subject

Placemaking is a worldwide movement focusing on the process, development and design of public or shared semi-private places through the active participation of the citizens. The aim of placemaking is to achieve place attachment which is linked to positive citizenship, health and safety. This subject outlines and critiques the placemaking process in relation to the long-term benefits of place. The subject is based on case-studies and provides lectures and practical exercises on the critical steps of placemaking. Topics include: governance and community engagement strategies, negotiation processes, place evaluation, integrating nature into place and the economics of place. Different models for placemaking will be explored such as tactical urbanism, guerrilla urbanism, creative placemaking and regenerative placemaking. The subject has been written by the Place Agency Consortium, a group of five universities working towards enhancing place co-creation capacity in students and industry.

### Learning outcomes

There are five key learning outcomes that emerge from the whole subject. Please note that each module has specific learning outcomes that support and enhance those listed here

- LO1 – To develop the theoretical and practical foundations of place and placemaking.
- LO2 – To understand array of strategies to conduct placemaking practice (i.e. participatory planning, interactive placemaking), their potential and limitations.
- LO3 – To understand the role of interdisciplinarity in placemaking
- LO4 – To demonstrate reflective and reflexive practice
- LO5 – To contextualise placemaking to urban, peri-urban and regional areas.

### Generic Skills

Students who have successfully completed this subject will have developed

- Understanding different approaches to placemaking
- Analysing social and cultural context
- Case study analysis for place
- Creative and critical thinking and analysis Written and verbal presentation of ideas
- Effective communication skills
- Negotiation skills and stakeholder management
- Building a business case for placemaking.

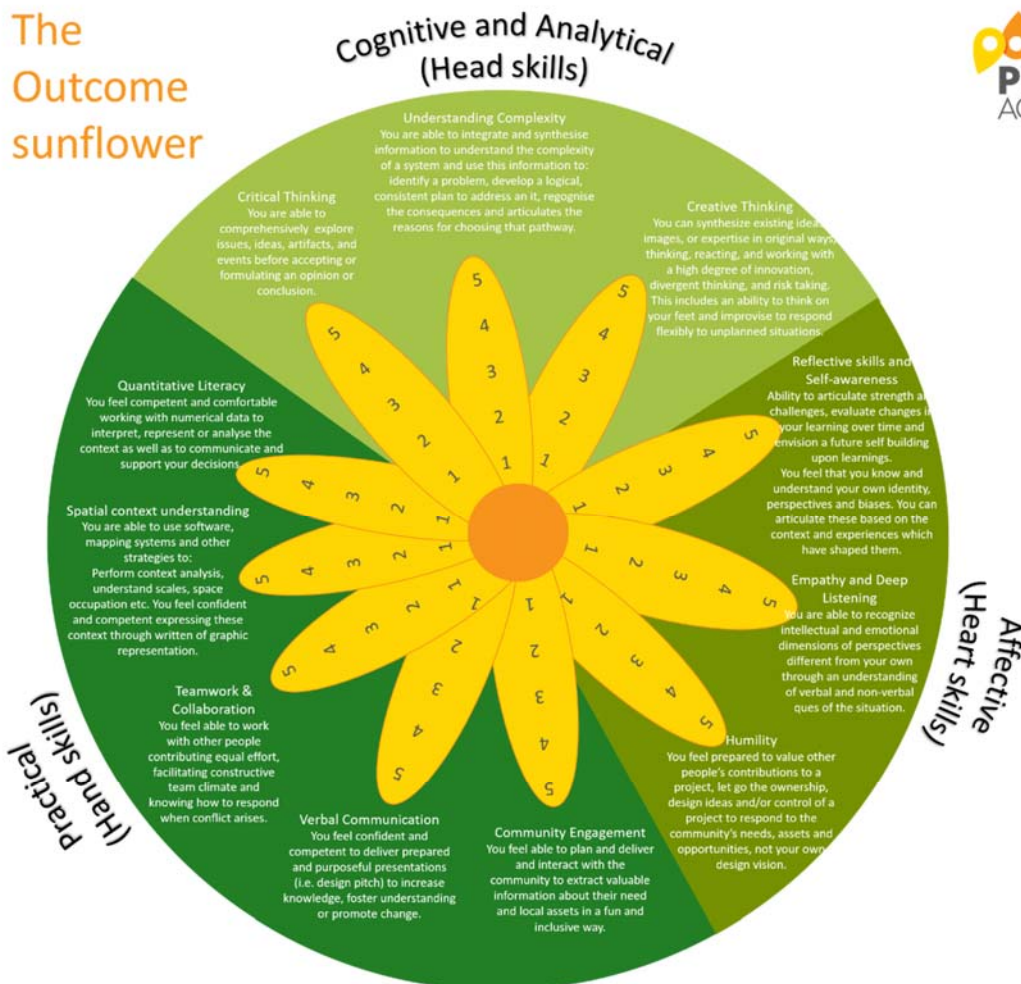
## Specific Skills

Depending on the project and the way in which the subject is delivered, the subject will also allow students to develop **specific knowledge and skills of the effective placemaker as informed by industry**. Firstly, we seek students to have:

1. A clear understanding of what placemaking and an ability to easily communicate these concepts
2. Ability to reflect on the benefits, limitations and challenges of placemaking
3. Clear understanding of the roles of different groups in enabling place (from community, to designers, facilitator and decision-making bodies).
4. The difference between real placemaking and a place-masking approach

Then, eleven skills of an effective placemaker are summarised in the Outcome Sunflower where cognitive, affective and practical skills are represented through a Head, Heart, Hand Model.

## The Outcome sunflower



Skillssets description based on Association of American Collages and Universities (AACU) and the PlaceAgency consortium.  
Image credits: Cris Hernandez & Ammon

## Where did these skills come from?

In October 2017, a group of 45 academics and placemaking practitioners came together through an intensive workshop to “harness a cohesive vision and strategy for the Place Agency program”, and guide the teaching strategy outlining what our objectives should be.

Through a series of interactive activities, the group worked together to define placemaking, work through the lessons learned through placemaking practice and identify the ‘capacities’ needed for different types of users and agents of place including students, designers, placemaking consultants, developers, academics, community and public institutions.

With a final brainstorming session, we ended up with 300 different knowledges and skills needed to achieve great placemaking projects. These were grouped into various topics resulting in the 12 placemaking modules.



We then analysed each of these contributions and identified 62 skills that industry practitioners of the consortium regarded as ‘critical’ skills for successful placemaking. These were then categorised as either analytical (head), affective (heart) or practical (hand) skills and later synthesised and defined based on a readily available rubric, the VALUE rubrics (Rhodes, 2009), but tailored to the specific needs of the project. This resulted in the objectives and skills outlined above.

## Student feedback from the first intensive subject delivered at the University of Melbourne

First delivered as an intensive (1-17th of July 2018), the ‘Placemaking for the built environment’ subject engaged 47 students. This year the students worked on the Preston Market. The feedback received from the students highlighted the value of a holistic approach to placemaking pedagogy and, in particular, categorised the content as **cutting-edge, highly practical, well explained and reflective (gaining personal insights).**

By the end of the subject, the students demonstrated a deeper understanding of the desired long-term objectives of place-based work as well as the process needed to achieve it successfully categorising placemaking as an engagement-based process to give people agency over their areas and imbue places with meaning. While the subject has only been delivered in its entirety by the University of Melbourne, it speaks of the quality of work by each of our partners who gave time and wisdom to the creation of the modules used in this subject.

### **Comments about the subject quality**

*“The course felt like it was on the cutting edge of placemaking. The use of case studies, industry guest speakers and chapters from the soon-to-be-released book “Placemaking fundamentals for the built environment” by Lecturers and Tutors was excellent.”*

*“The subject helps us to learn about placemaking step by step, daily reading and journal are very helpful”*

*“The group project is based on a real case that is going on. It is awesome to allow us to apply theories to practice”*

*“The groupwork and tutor engagement/feedback was exciting and interrogative, which allowed for expansion of ideas and personal growth”*

*“One can learn through experiencing real-life issues and challenges, and be exposed to placemaking strategy that might be useful in the future”*

*“I really enjoyed the way that Placemaking for Built Environment was taught. The use of case studies, industry guest speakers and chapters from the soon-to-be-released book “Placemaking fundamentals for the built environment” assisted my learning. The Lecturers and Tutors explained concepts well.”*

### **Comments about their place learnings**

*“The main aha moment for me was how lacking a lot of the places we have in society are in terms of truly achieving a sense of ‘place’. The fact that place is not achieved through simply just adding in activations, artwork or activities, but rather the deep-rooted connection it has to people, community and the narrative/story.”*

*“Going forward as a placemaking agent, I hope to...foster care and understanding between communities, government, developers, designers and other professions in the built environment to create meaningful place.”*

*“Going into future practice in both academia and profession, I hope to approach problems from a more considered and holistic perspective...keeping in mind and at heart always who it is we are creating these places for and why it is important.”*

*“As an architect in training, I have always understood the importance of maintaining and affording connection of people to the built environment. This subject has not only bolstered that understanding, but also shed light on the requirement for the connection of place to its context, in both a physical and non-physical sense.”*

*“I learned about how placemaking can draw from Aboriginal ideas of Country, where the relationship with place and people is symbiotic.”*

*“To welcome (people) into decision-making is a first step for giving agency and igniting stewardship for the community to want to care for and enrich place.”*