

Review Article

Dynamic Spaces, Dynamic Cities: Exploring Creative Placemaking Trends in Urban Development

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ABSTRACT

Creative placemaking is a transformative urban development approach that combines arts, community engagement, and revitalisation to build vibrant, sustainable cities. This approach has gained momentum worldwide, aiming to nurture creativity, improve public spaces, and stimulate economic development. Despite the increasing interest in this approach, especially among development stakeholders, there remains a necessity for a comprehensive analysis of the practices and trends currently emerging in the field of creative placemaking, particularly in urban development, between 2019 and July 2024. The results highlight a strong focus on interdisciplinary strategies linking creative industries with economic growth and social cohesion, underscoring the impact of participatory approaches in enhancing community identity and promoting social sustainability. By offering insights for urban planners, policymakers, and scholars, this study advocates for inclusive urban renewal practices. Future research should explore the long-term impacts of creative placemaking, especially its potential to address complex social challenges and drive urban regeneration across diverse contexts.

Keywords: Creative placemaking, cultural sustainability, community engagement, urban development, urban regeneration,

INTRODUCTION

Creative placemaking has emerged as a significant approach in urban development literature, focusing on the intersection of creativity, community engagement, and urban revitalisation. Scholars have delved into various aspects of creative placemaking,

exploring its impacts on local economies, cultural diversity, and civic engagement (Ramli & Ujang, 2020b). This approach involves utilising arts-based strategies to strengthen urban planning and foster community cohesion, ultimately leading to innovative and vibrant urban spaces (Emmendoerfer et al., 2023). Furthermore,

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: 13 February 2025

Accepted: 02 May 2026

Published: July 2026

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47836/AC.19.S1.PAPER05>

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creative placemaking has been linked to enhancing cities' economic and cultural aspects, emphasising participatory approaches and a sense of belonging within communities (Green, 2020). The concept of creative placemaking is not only about creating visually appealing spaces but also about fostering social connections and human interactions within these places (Siddiqui et al., 2021). It has been noted that creative placemaking can lead to economic benefits by stimulating local businesses and enhancing social activities in urban areas (Green, 2020).

Moreover, the relationship between creative developments and place has been a focal point in recent literature, aiming to redefine creative city policies toward community revitalisation (Bajestani et al., 2022). This shift towards integrating creativity into urban development strategies highlights the importance of leveraging cultural and creative industries as catalysts for urban regeneration (Gregory, 2023). Scholars have emphasised the need for interdisciplinary research to evaluate the value creation and innovation of creative entrepreneurship in urban transformation, underscoring the role of creative placemaking in this process (Wise et al., 2022). Additionally, the adaptation of social attributes of place in creative placemaking has been explored as a means to achieve social sustainability, demonstrating a convergence between government actions and artistic theories (Ramli & Ujang, 2020a).

While creative placemaking has been widely examined across urban studies, cultural policy, and creative economy literature, existing reviews tend to focus on specific dimensions such as community engagement, cultural production, or economic outcomes in isolation. Consequently, there remains limited synthesis on how these dimensions interact within a broader urban development process. This thematic review addresses this gap by systematically analysing creative placemaking literature published between 2019 and July 2024, a period characterised by increasing attention to urban resilience, social inclusion, and evolving policy responses to complex urban challenges. By focusing on this timeframe, the review captures recent shifts in creative placemaking practices and policy orientations, offering an updated and integrated understanding of emerging trends in urban development.

Overall, the current trends in creative placemaking within urban development literature reflect a growing interest in leveraging creativity, community engagement, and arts-based strategies to revitalise urban spaces, foster social connections, and drive economic growth. This introduction sets the stage for further exploration of the multifaceted nature of creative placemaking and its implications for sustainable urban development. In this review, creative placemaking is understood as an integrative urban approach that combines cultural activities, community engagement, and spatial transformation to support urban revitalisation and social sustainability. While closely related to concepts such as urban

regeneration and cultural sustainability, creative placemaking is treated here as a process-oriented practice that emphasises participatory action and place-based creativity, rather than solely physical redevelopment or heritage conservation.

This clarification helps situate the scope of the review and distinguishes creative placemaking as the study’s primary analytical focus. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to discover the issues that have been discussed in the creative placemaking publications from 2019 to 2024 through the following research question:

RQ: What are the current trends for creative placemaking in urban development literature from 2019 to July 2024?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

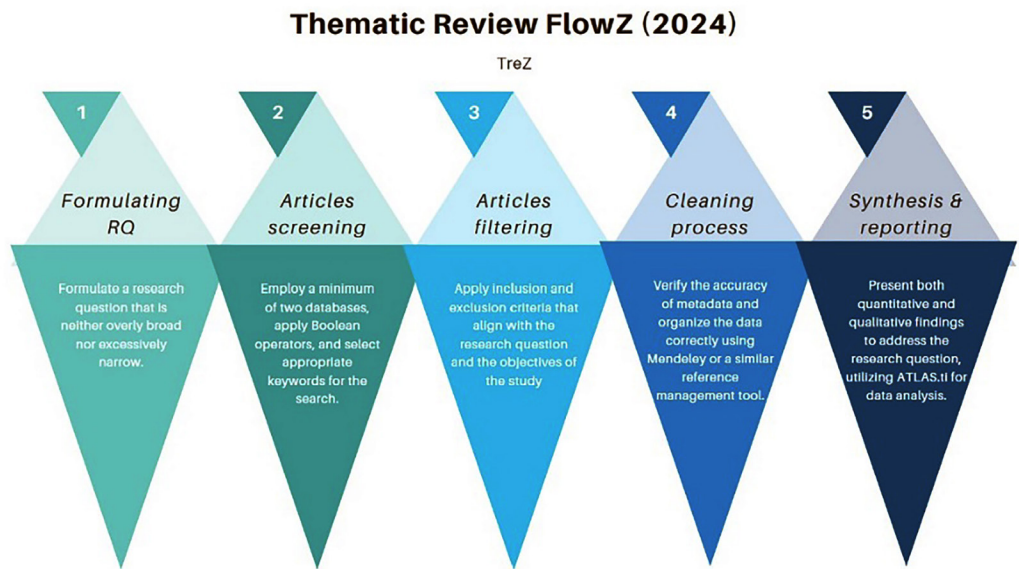


Figure 1. Thematic Review FlowZ (TreZ)

The phrase “thematic review” refers to utilising ATLAS.ti as a software tool for qualitative data analysis, as described in previous works by Zairul (2017) and Zairul et al. (2023). Additionally, this technique is copyright-protected under the registration number CRLY2023W02032 (Zairul, 2023). The Thematic Review FlowZ (TreZ) approach was adopted in this study, as the research methodology must adhere to the thematic analysis process when performing a literature review (Figure 1), providing a structured yet flexible framework that integrates systematic screening, thematic clustering, and iterative synthesis to examine emerging relationships across the reviewed literature. Thematic analysis is the act of finding patterns and developing themes through extensive reading on a subject, according to Clarke & Braun (2013)

This study employed a rigorous and systematic approach to analyse the literature on creative placemaking within urban development. The process began with formulating research questions (Define RQ) (refer to the previous section), which acted as a guiding framework for all subsequent stages of review, setting clear boundaries for the scope and focus of the study. An initial screening of articles (Screen) from various academic databases used specific search strings and criteria outlined in Table 1 to identify studies relevant to the research question. The selected articles then underwent a detailed filtering process (Filter), where the inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied to ensure the relevance and quality of the study, as shown in Figure 2. Following this, a thorough data cleaning (Finalise) and verification step were undertaken to maintain the integrity of the dataset. The final stage adopted a thematic analysis using qualitative data analysis tools, where the key themes were identified and synthesised (Synthesis) to uncover patterns and trends in the literature. This structured approach helped to ensure a comprehensive and reliable review of the current state of creative placemaking in urban development.

The next phase of this research focused on identifying patterns and construction categories to understand the trends in creative placemaking within urban development, as discussed in the literature from 2019 to 2024. This phase is crucial for analysing and interpreting the findings, ultimately leading to recommendations for future research in creative placemaking and its role in shaping urban environments. Examination of these trends helped to clarify how creative placemaking has evolved and to identify new directions or innovations that could be pivotal for future developments in this sector. The following criteria were used in the selection of the literature for this study to ensure a thorough and pertinent analysis: 1) the publication date range of 2019 to 2024 ensures that the research represents the most recent and significant contribution to the field; 2) the research was limited to studies that are directly related to the core themes of the study by using relevant keywords, such as “creative placemaking,” “creative cities,” or “creative places.” Further to the above, a rigorous selection procedure was deemed necessary to include a wide range of current discoveries and advancements in the aforementioned domains.

The search strategy for the thematic review (TR) paper utilised both Scopus and Web of Science (WoS) databases, focusing on literature related to creative placemaking and urban planning. Using carefully defined keywords of “creative placemaking”, “creative cities”, “creative places”, and “urban planning” in the title, abstract, and keywords (TITLE-ABS-KEY)—were used for both databases, targeting articles published between 2019 and 2024, as outlined in Table 1. Filters were applied to include only English-language, open-access academic articles (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE, “ar”), LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE, “English”), LIMIT-TO (OA, “all”). The search yielded 10 and 117 results in Scopus and

WoS, respectively. It is likely that the difference in search result is attributable to the broader indexing and coverage of journals in WoS. Despite adopting the same search criteria, WoS captured a more comprehensive range of studies due to its extensive database scope. This approach ensured the retrieval of relevant, up-to-date literature, providing a well-rounded selection of studies for the thematic review on creative placemaking and its role in urban development.

Table 1
Search strings from Scopus and WoS

Scopus	TITLE-ABS-KEY (“creative placemaking” OR “creative city” OR “creative places” AND “urban planning”) AND PUBYEAR > 2018 AND PUBYEAR < 2025 AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE , “ar”)) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE , “English”)) AND (LIMIT-TO (OA , “all”))	10 results
WoS	Refine results for “creative placemaking” OR “creative city” OR “creative places” AND “urban planning” (All Fields) and 2019 or 2020 or 2021 or 2022 or 2023 or 2024 (Publication Years) and Article (Document Types) and English (Languages) and All Open Access (Open Access)	117 results

The thematic review employed the TreZ methodology to systematically filter relevant articles for analysis, following a five-step filtration process: (1) triage; (2) refinement; (3) exclusion criteria; (4) eligibility; and (5) zeroing-in. This structured approach ensured that only the most relevant studies were included in the review. The initial phase of the process (trriage) involved a broad search across two major academic databases, Scopus and Web of Science (WoS), in which 10 articles were identified from Scopus and 117 articles were retrieved from WoS, totalling 127 results, as illustrated in Figure 2. This phase aims to capture a wide array of potentially relevant literature within the study’s defined scope. In the second phase (refinement), duplicate records were identified and subsequently removed. Two duplicate entries were eliminated from the dataset, reducing redundancy and ensuring that each article was distinct. The resulting dataset then consisted of 125 unique articles.

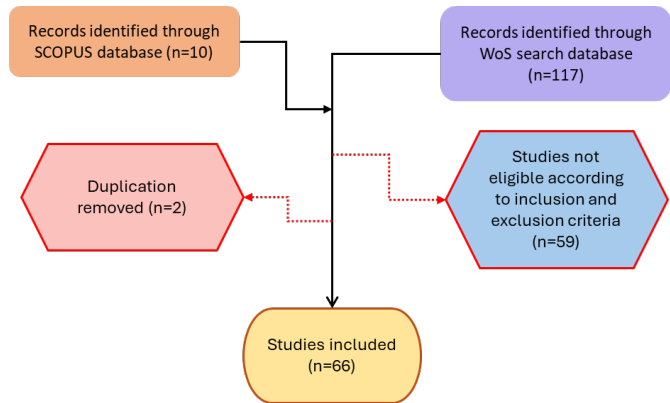


Figure 2. Inclusion and exclusion criteria in the thematic review

Following refinement, the third step applied a set of predefined exclusion criteria. Articles were excluded if they did not meet the following inclusion requirements: (1) the article must be a peer-reviewed publication; (2) it must be directly related to the research topic (creative placemaking in urban planning); (3) its publication should be between 2019 and 2024; and (4) it must be written in English. Additionally, the articles must offer full-text access, provide empirical data or theoretical contributions, and align with the research objectives. As a result, 59 articles were excluded during this phase for failing to meet the abovementioned criteria. In the eligibility phase, the remaining 66 articles were further assessed based on their relevance to the core research objectives. This phase involved a detailed review of the abstracts and, where necessary, full-text examination to ensure that the studies provided meaningful insights into creative placemaking, urban planning, community engagement, or policy frameworks. This step ensured that only high-quality, relevant research was retained for final analysis. Finally, in the zeroing-in phase, the 66 articles were confirmed as the final dataset for inclusion in the thematic review. These studies were deemed most relevant to the research, contributing valuable empirical or theoretical insights into creative placemaking within urban development.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this thematic review provide a comprehensive analysis of the evolving role of creative placemaking in urban development. As a multidisciplinary approach, creative placemaking integrates the arts, culture, community engagement, and urban planning to foster dynamic and inclusive urban spaces. This review examined peer-reviewed studies published between 2019 and 2024, focusing on how creative placemaking, such as policymaking, economic development, cultural tourism, and community empowerment, impacts urban life. Through the rigorous application of the TreZ methodology, the review systematically filtered and analysed 66 studies that align with the key themes of creative placemaking. These studies highlight how creative placemaking initiatives contribute to revitalising urban spaces, promoting cultural identity, enhancing social cohesion, and stimulating local economies.

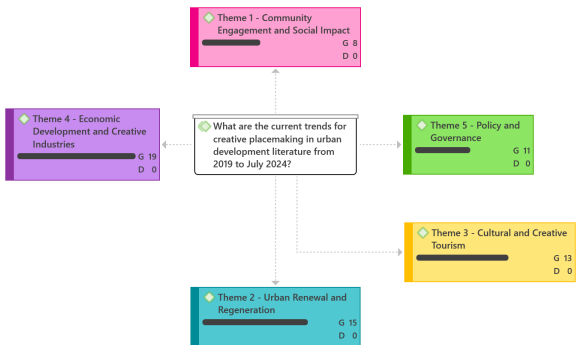


Figure 3. Thematic Framework of Creative Placemaking Trends in Urban Development (2019–2024)

The results are categorised into five major thematic clusters: Community Engagement and Social Impact (Theme 1), Urban Renewal and Regeneration (Theme 2), Cultural and Creative Tourism (Theme 3), Economic Development and Creative Industries (Theme 4), and Policy and Governance (Theme 5), as illustrated in Figure 3. These clusters are used in a thematic review to discover literary patterns and literature trends. The relationships between the identified themes suggest that creative placemaking practices frequently operate across multiple domains simultaneously, with social, cultural, economic, and governance considerations shaping urban development in interconnected ways. Each theme provides critical insights into the opportunities and challenges of creative placemaking efforts in contemporary urban contexts.

The Geographical Dispersion of Creative Placemaking Studies between 2019 and 2024 highlighted the global distribution of research, showcasing varying levels of activity across countries. This map shows the concentration of studies in specific regions, highlighting the global reach of creative placemaking scholarship from 2019 to 2024 (Figure 4). The United Kingdom (UK) leads with eight (8) studies, reflecting its strong emphasis on integrating creative placemaking into urban planning and public policy. This is followed by the United States (U.S.) with six (6) studies, reaffirming its position as a significant contributor to the field and thus leveraging its established focus on arts and cultural integration in urban development.

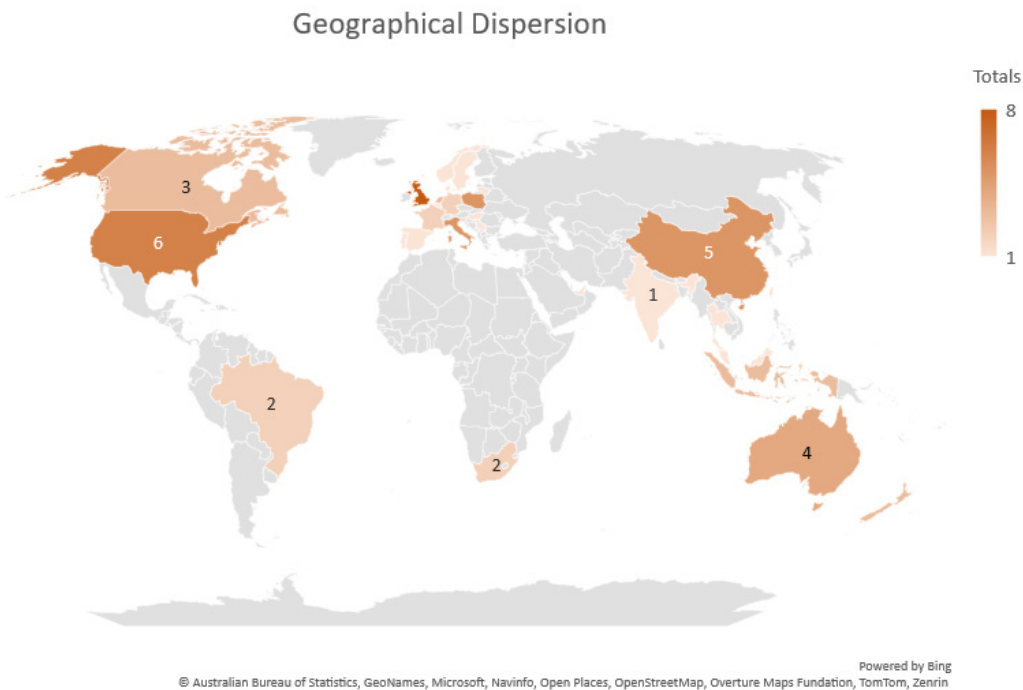


Figure 4. Geographical Dispersion of Creative Placemaking Studies (2019–2024)

China is next with five (5) studies, signalling a growing interest in creative placemaking as a tool for urban regeneration within rapidly evolving cities. Australia, with four (4) studies, emphasises its role in creative industries by fostering vibrant, sustainable urban environments. Canada and the Netherlands contribute three (3) studies each, showing consistent engagement with this approach.

Countries like Brazil, Germany, and Slovenia contributed two (2) studies each, while other nations such as India, Malaysia, Thailand, and South Africa contributed one study each. This demonstrates both the global reach and the emerging interest in creative placemaking within diverse cultural and economic contexts. The map reflects an intense concentration of research in developed countries, while contributions from emerging economies highlight a broadening global discourse. The presence of studies from different parts of the world demonstrates that while the core of the research is concentrated in Western nations, creative placemaking is a concept that has been embraced globally, albeit to varying extents.

This geographical analysis underscores the widespread recognition of creative placemaking as a valuable urban planning and development approach. The research concentration in certain countries, such as the UK and the United States, suggests that these regions may serve as influential hubs for future studies and practices. At the same time, the global dispersion of studies indicates a broadening interest in creative placemaking across diverse cultural and geographical contexts. This trend highlights the potential for cross-country learning and the sharing of best practices in implementing creative placemaking initiatives.

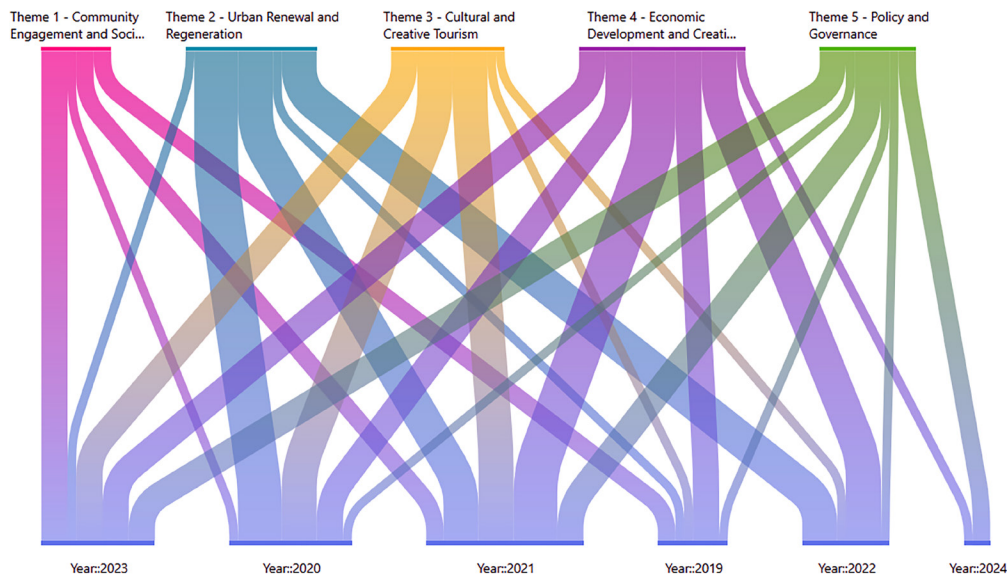


Figure 5. Sankey Diagram depicting the distribution of creative placemaking research across five key themes from 2019-2024

The Sankey diagram reveals several significant trends in developing creative placemaking research, as illustrated in Figure 5. First, the steady representation of Community Engagement and Social Impact (Theme 1) indicates a sustained interest in the social benefits of placemaking. Creative placemaking is increasingly seen as a tool to foster inclusive and participatory urban environments, which aligns with broader societal trends toward more significant equity and community empowerment. Second, the prominence of Urban Renewal and Regeneration (Theme 2) reflects the continued focus on using creative placemaking to transform urban spaces, particularly in post-industrial or underutilised areas. This theme remains crucial as cities worldwide seek strategies for urban revitalisation that balance economic development with cultural preservation.

The fluctuations in attention to Cultural and Creative Tourism (Theme 3) suggest that while tourism remains an essential dimension of creative placemaking, other themes, such as governance and social impact, have received more attention in recent years. The growing interest in Policy and Governance (Theme 5) signals a recognition that for creative placemaking to be sustainable, it must be supported by robust policy frameworks and collaborative governance models. Finally, the focus on Economic Development and Creative Industries (Theme 4) shows that while the economic benefits of creative placemaking are acknowledged, research interest in this area may shift towards understanding placemaking’s broader sociocultural impacts.

Table 2 Author vs. Theme

	Theme 1 - Community Engagement and Social Impact	Theme 2 - Urban Renewal and Regeneration	Theme 3 - Cultural and Creative Tourism	Theme 4 - Economic Development and Creative Industries	Theme 5 - Policy and Governance
(Guo, 2023)	-	-	-	-	/
(Nieuwland & Lavanga, 2021)	-	-	/	-	-
(Montalto et al., 2019)	-	-	-	/	-
(Parker & Khanyile, 2024)	-	-	-	/	-
(Mackay et al., 2021)	/	-	-	-	-
(Kiroff, 2020)	-	-	-	/	-
(Fingerhut & Alfasi, 2023)	/	-	-	-	-
(Umney & Symon, 2020)	-	/	-	-	-
(Lamontagne & Iten, 2021)	-	-	-	/	-
(Muñiz-Martínez, 2023)	-	-	-	/	-
(Dudek-Mańkowska & Grochowski, 2019)	-	-	-	/	-
(Borén & Young, 2021)	-	-	-	-	/

	Theme 1 - Community Engagement and Social Impact	Theme 2 - Urban Renewal and Regeneration	Theme 3 - Cultural and Creative Tourism	Theme 4 - Economic Development and Creative Industries	Theme 5 - Policy and Governance
(Pinheiro et al., 2023)	-	-	-	/	-
(Mbaye & Pratt, 2020)	-	-	-	/	-
(Vermeeren, 2022)	-	-	-	/	-
(Poli et al., 2022)	-	-	/	-	-
(Rogelja, 2021)	-	-	/	-	-
(Kozina et al., 2019)	-	/	-	-	-
(Santos & Borg, 2023)	-	-	-	-	/
(Vinodrai et al., 2023)	-	-	-	-	/
(Um et al., 2021)	-	-	-	/	-
(Das, 2022)	-	/	-	-	-
(Zandiatashbar & Kayanan, 2020)	-	/	-	-	-
(Betlej & Kačerauskas, 2021)	-	/	-	-	-
(Brandellero & Niutta, 2023)	-	/	-	-	-
(Vaughan et al., 2021)	-	-	-	/	-
(De Beukelaer, 2021)	-	-	-	-	/
(Borén et al., 2020)	-	-	-	-	/
(Fekete & Morvay, 2019)	-	-	-	-	/
(Zuma & Rooijackers, 2020)	-	-	/	-	-
(Alsayel et al., 2022)	-	-	-	-	/
(Jocić, 2020)	-	/	-	-	-
(Richards, 2020)	-	-	/	-	-
(Orankiewicz & Turała, 2021)	-	-	-	-	/
(Daniel & Kim, 2020)	/	-	-	-	-
(Miles, 2020)	-	/	-	-	-
(Göbel, 2021)	-	/	-	-	-
(Platt, 2019)	/	-	-	-	-
(El Khafif et al., 2021)	/	-	-	-	-
(Wise et al., 2022)	-	/	-	-	-
(Seldin, 2020)	-	-	/	-	-
(Poljak Istenič, 2019)	/	-	-	-	-
(Gelbard, 2023)	/	-	-	-	-
(Afsari Bajestani et al., 2024)	-	-	-	-	/
(Leng, 2024)	-	-	-	-	/
(Finkel & Platt, 2020)	-	-	/	-	-

	Theme 1 - Community Engagement and Social Impact	Theme 2 - Urban Renewal and Regeneration	Theme 3 - Cultural and Creative Tourism	Theme 4 - Economic Development and Creative Industries	Theme 5 - Policy and Governance
(Sokół, 2019)	-	-	-	/	-
(Coletti & Rabbiosi, 2021)	-	/	-	-	-
(Chen & Lin, 2021)	-	/	-	-	-
(Skytt-Larsen et al., 2022)	-	/	-	-	-
(Černevičiūtė & Strazdas, 2023)	-	-	-	/	-
(Wu et al., 2021)	-	-	-	/	-
(Estevens et al., 2020)	-	/	-	-	-
(Cantillon et al., 2023)	-	-	/	-	-
(Dash & Thilagam, 2023)	/	-	-	-	-
(Swensen et al., 2022)	-	/	-	-	-
(Tanghetti et al., 2022)	-	-	-	/	-
(Bonelli et al., 2019)	-	-	/	-	-
(Cantillon et al., 2021)	-	-	/	-	-
(Casadei & Gilbert, 2022)	-	-	-	/	-
(Habibi, 2020)	-	-	-	/	-
(Park et al., 2023)	-	-	/	-	-
(Wolor et al., 2021)	-	-	-	/	-
(Jiang et al., 2023)	-	-	/	-	-
(Genders, 2022)	-	-	-	/	-
(Póvoa et al., 2021)	-	-	/	-	-

Table 2 reveals the analysis of creative placemaking literature and a diverse range of thematic focuses, highlighting how research has been distributed across five key themes. The concentration of studies under the Community Engagement and Social Impact theme suggests that much of the recent research, such as that of Green and Gray (2020) and Mackay et al. (2021), emphasised the importance of participatory approaches in placemaking. These studies highlight how creative initiatives can foster social cohesion and inclusivity, reinforcing that placemaking is a powerful tool for addressing social challenges within urban environments. Furthermore, the studies under Urban Renewal and Regeneration, represented by Gregory (2023), El Khafif et al. (2021), and Dubois et al. (2023), demonstrate a clear link between creative placemaking and the physical transformation of urban spaces. These papers were built upon the idea that arts and culture can be harnessed to regenerate neglected areas, suggesting a symbiotic relationship between placemaking’s social and spatial dimensions.

This relationship is further explored in works such as those by Goh and Yeoman (2021) and Nieuwland and Lavanga (2021), who examined the intersection of Cultural and Creative Tourism with urban regeneration efforts. Their findings indicate that creative placemaking not only revitalises urban spaces but also enhances cultural tourism by creating vibrant, culturally rich environments that attract visitors. The thematic overlap extends to Economic Development and Creative Industries, as explored by Kiroff (2020) and Fingerhut and Alfasi (2023), where the economic impacts of placemaking initiatives were considered. These studies suggest that placemaking fosters local economies by supporting creative industries and encouraging innovation. This is particularly significant when examined alongside works focused on Policy and Governance, such as those by Umney and Symon (2020) and Cunningham and Platt (2019). These authors argued that effective governance structures and supportive policies are essential for sustaining creative placemaking's economic and social benefits and ensuring equitable outcomes for all stakeholders.

In critically evaluating these relationships, it becomes clear that the success of placemaking projects is contingent upon integrating social, economic, and governance frameworks. Research suggests that policies designed to facilitate community engagement and foster creative industries are critical for ensuring the long-term sustainability of placemaking initiatives. For instance, the studies on Urban Renewal and Regeneration often point to the risk of gentrification, which can undermine the social benefits of placemaking. This underscores the importance of aligning economic goals with policies prioritising social equity, a theme reinforced across multiple studies. Collectively, the thematic distribution of research in Table 2 reveals the interconnected nature of creative placemaking's impact on urban development. The relationship between social engagement, economic growth, cultural tourism, and policy frameworks indicates that a multidisciplinary approach is necessary to fully realise the potential of creative placemaking. Future research should continue to explore these interrelationships, focusing on how governance structures can better support sustainable and inclusive placemaking practices.

Theme 1: Community Engagement and Social Impact

Creative placemaking emphasises the integration of arts and community collaboration to foster vibrant, inclusive urban spaces. Within this framework, community engagement and social impact emerge as central themes, underscoring the significance of participatory approaches in shaping meaningful and equitable public spaces. Dash and Thilagam (2023) established a foundational conceptual model highlighting creative placemaking's potential to foster social cohesion, emphasising the critical role of collective initiatives. On the other hand, Platt (2019) delved into everyday grassroots creativity, mainly through women's experiences, demonstrating how localised efforts can lead to more inclusive and dynamic urban environments. This interplay between conceptual and empirical insights underscores

the transformative potential of creative placemaking when it integrates community-driven practices.

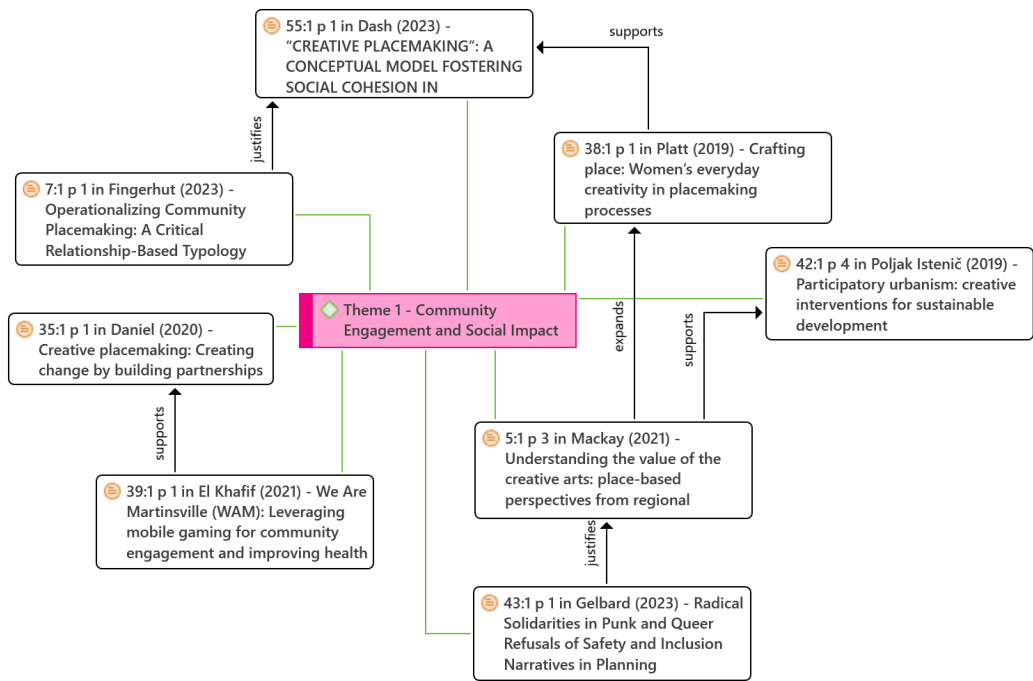


Figure 6. Community Engagement and Social Impact (Theme 1)

Furthermore, Daniel and Kim (2020) emphasised the importance of partnerships in driving social change, identifying collaboration as a key mechanism for building stronger communities. Khafif et al. (2021) extended this notion by exploring the innovative use of mobile gaming to engage communities, revealing how digital tools can complement traditional approaches to community involvement. These studies highlight the synergy between conventional and technological methods in modern placemaking practices. Additionally, Fingerhut and Alfasi (2023) operationalised relationship-based typologies in creative placemaking, further reinforcing the need for solid stakeholder connections in achieving impactful community engagement. Mackay et al. (2021) supported this perspective by showcasing how place-based creative arts strengthen community identity and empowerment, particularly in regional contexts where localised activities have profound impacts.

Poljak Istenič (2019) linked participatory urbanism with sustainable development, advocating for creative interventions prioritising inclusivity and environmental sustainability. These findings resonate with Gelbard (2023), who examined radical solidarities in marginalised communities, such as punk and queer subcultures. Gelbard’s work highlighted how creative placemaking can resist exclusion and promote social

justice by fostering safe, inclusive environments. Collectively, these studies emphasise the critical role of community engagement in creative placemaking, showcasing its capacity to foster social cohesion, inclusivity, and sustainable urban development. This body of work underscores that creative placemaking is not merely about physical transformation but also about addressing deeper societal challenges through collaborative and inclusive practices.

Taken together, the studies within this theme reveal that community engagement in creative placemaking is shaped by fundamentally different logics of participation, ranging from structured, relationship-based, and partnership-driven models to more informal, every day, and subcultural forms of creative action. Conceptual and operational frameworks emphasising social cohesion, typologies of engagement, and institutional collaboration highlight the capacity of organised placemaking initiatives to coordinate actors and scale social impact. In contrast, research grounded in everyday creativity, regional arts practices, and marginalised subcultures foregrounds placemaking as an emergent and often resistant process in which inclusion, safety, and belonging are negotiated outside formal governance structures.

The growing use of digital and technological tools further complicates this landscape, expanding access and visibility while raising questions about whether participation is being measured through engagement metrics rather than sustained empowerment. An emergent gap across the literature lies in the limited integration of these approaches, particularly in evaluating how power, agency, and long-term social ownership are distributed when community engagement is mediated simultaneously by institutions, technologies, and grassroots cultural practices.

Theme 2: Urban Renewal and Regeneration

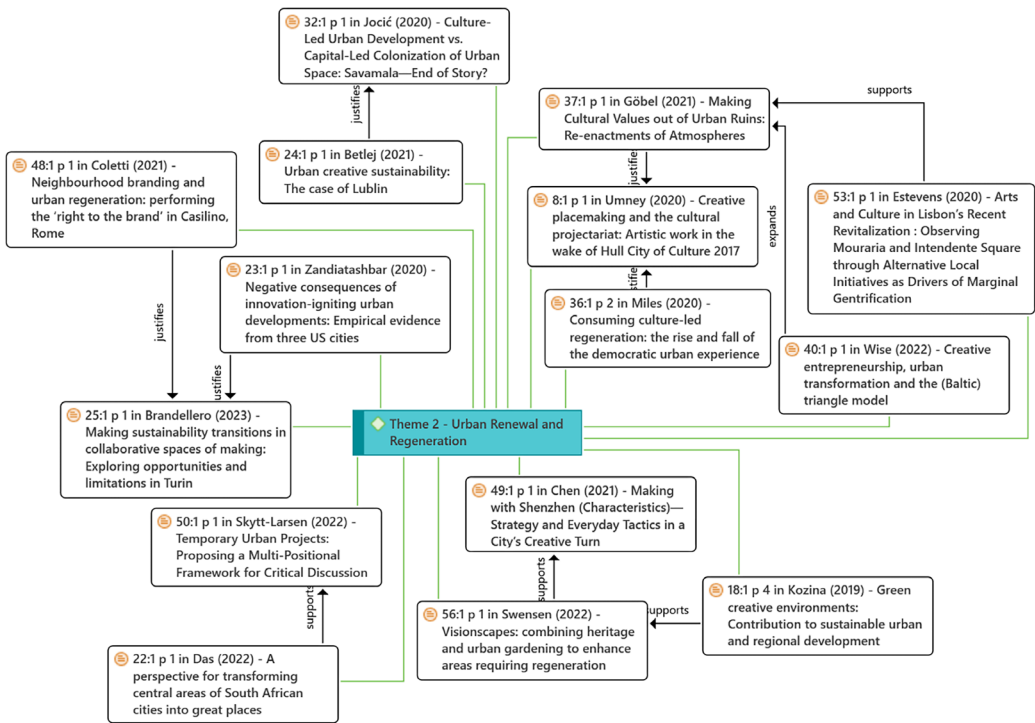


Figure 7. Urban Renewal and Regeneration (Theme 2)

The Urban Renewal and Regeneration theme highlights the transformative potential of creative placemaking in revitalising underutilised urban spaces through culture, sustainability, and inclusivity. This theme illustrates how research across different timeframes builds upon earlier frameworks to address evolving challenges in urban renewal. For example, Brandellero and Niutta (2023) introduced a framework for sustainability transitions in collaborative spaces, which addresses opportunities and limitations in urban regeneration. This framework aligns with the earlier works of Kozina et al. (2019) and Skytt-Larsen et al. (2022), who emphasised the integration of green environments and temporary urban projects as sustainable regeneration solutions. While Kozina provided the foundational concept of green creative environments, Skytt-Larsen further developed this concept by proposing adaptable frameworks for temporary interventions, demonstrating how newer frameworks can refine and extend earlier ideas.

Similarly, Miles (2020) critiqued the commodification of culture in regeneration projects, a concern that Göbel (2021) explored further through the lens of cultural values in urban ruins. Göbel’s analysis supported Miles’s earlier critique by emphasising the tension between cultural authenticity and commodification in urban renewal processes. Together, these studies underscore the risks of over-commercialising culture

in regeneration initiatives. The relationship between Wise et al. (2022) and Chen and Lin (2021) demonstrates how creative entrepreneurship and local tactics foster urban transformation. Wise introduces the “Baltic triangle model,” highlighting the role of creative industries in urban regeneration, while Chen examined how everyday strategies in Shenzhen align with these principles. Both studies reflect a shared emphasis on cultural industries as drivers of urban renewal and economic vitality. Zandiatashbar and Kayanan (2020) provided a critical perspective on the unintended consequences of innovation-driven urban development, such as displacement and social inequities. This cautionary viewpoint complements the pragmatic approaches of Coletti & Rabbiosin (2021), who explored neighbourhood branding in Rome and highlighted the creative placemaking’s role in transforming socio-economically challenged areas. These studies collectively illustrate how targeted and context-sensitive initiatives can mitigate the risks outlined by Zandiatashbar and Kayanan.

Finally, (Estevens et al., 2020) focused on the role of arts and culture in Lisbon’s revitalisation, showcasing alternative local initiatives that mitigate marginal gentrification. This aligns with the broader discussions by (Betlej & Kačerauskas, 2021), who examined creative sustainability in Lublin, emphasising local dynamics in regeneration processes. Both studies highlight the interplay between cultural interventions and inclusive urban renewal practices. In sum, the theme of Urban Renewal and Regeneration underscores the importance of balancing cultural, environmental, and economic factors in creative placemaking. While foundational studies provide critical insights into sustainability and culture-led regeneration, newer research builds upon these ideas to address contemporary challenges, ensuring a dynamic and evolving discourse on urban renewal.

Beyond these shared insights, synthesising the literature within this theme reveals an ongoing tension in culture-led urban renewal between regeneration as a socially grounded process and regeneration as an economic or symbolic strategy. While creative placemaking is widely framed as a mechanism for revitalising underutilised spaces through cultural production, entrepreneurship, and environmental enhancement, several studies caution that such approaches risk commodifying culture and reproducing exclusionary urban outcomes when driven primarily by branding, innovation agendas, or growth-oriented policies. Temporary projects, creative entrepreneurship, and neighbourhood branding initiatives demonstrate significant potential to activate urban spaces and stimulate local economies; however, their long-term contribution to social equity and cultural authenticity remains uneven across contexts. An emergent gap across this body of work lies in the limited longitudinal assessment of whether culture led regeneration strategies can sustain inclusive urban transformation over time, particularly in mitigating displacement, preserving local identity, and balancing economic vitality with social and environmental justice.

Theme 3: Cultural and Creative Tourism

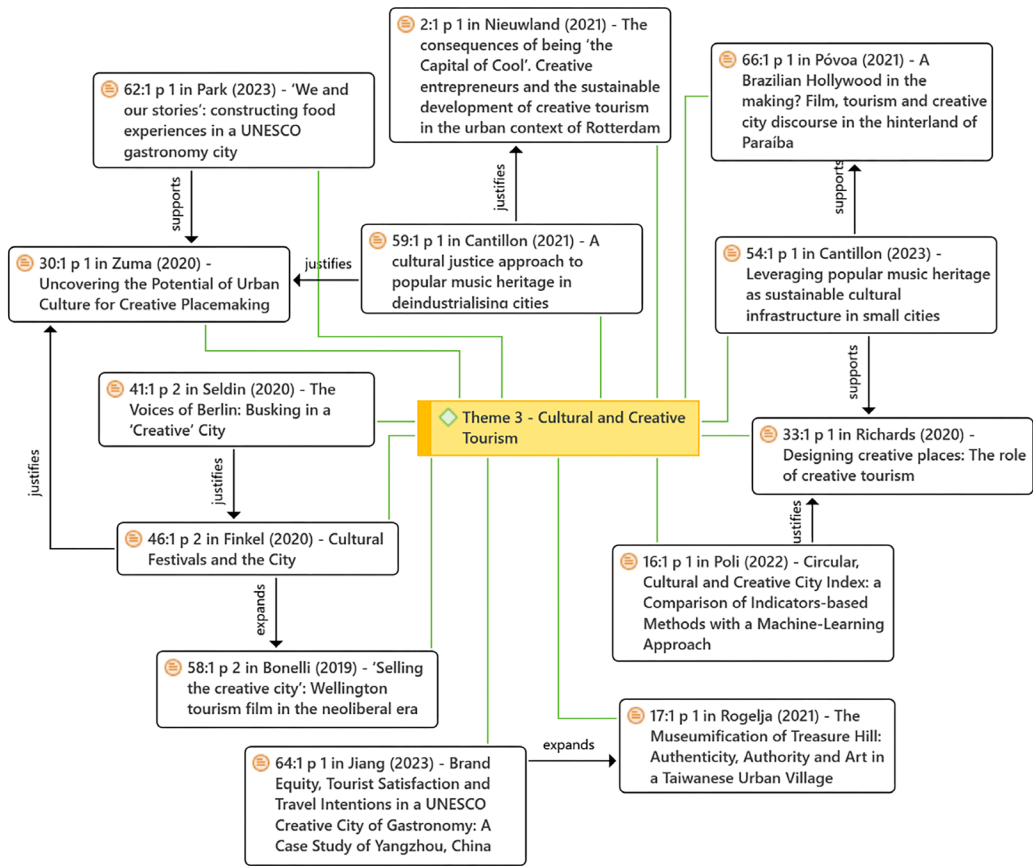


Figure 8. Cultural and Creative Tourism (Theme 3)

The theme of Cultural and Creative Tourism within the context of creative placemaking explores the relationship between cultural heritage, creative industries, and tourism, emphasising their role in shaping urban identities, stimulating economic growth, and fostering sustainability. This theme demonstrates how cities leverage creative assets to attract tourists, promote local narratives, and address challenges of commodification and inclusivity. Richards (2020) provided the foundation by exploring how creative tourism designs cultural spaces, emphasising its potential to enhance urban vitality and identity. Building on this, Poli et al. (2022) applied a comparative analysis through the “Circular, Cultural, and Creative City Index,” introducing a measurable framework to evaluate the success of creative tourism in urban regeneration. This quantitative approach is extended by Rogelja (2021), who critiqued the museumification of Treasure Hill, balancing authenticity with the commercialisation of cultural spaces. These studies reveal the tension between commodification and cultural preservation in tourism-driven placemaking.

At the grassroots level, Zuma and Rooijackers (2020) underscored the potential of urban culture for creative placemaking by exploring how local cultural assets attract tourists and strengthen community identity. Supporting this, Seldin (2020) focused on Berlin's street performers, showing how grassroots creativity contributes to a city's cultural appeal. Likewise, Finkel and Platt (2020) emphasised the role of cultural festivals in fostering urban vibrancy and a shared cultural identity. These studies highlight the importance of participatory cultural practices in shaping dynamic urban spaces. The culinary dimension of creative tourism is addressed by Park et al. (2023), who examined food experiences in UNESCO gastronomy cities, showing how culinary traditions can enhance tourism narratives. This aligns with Jiang et al. (2023), who emphasised the role of cultural authenticity in boosting tourist satisfaction and travel intentions, particularly in Yangzhou, a UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy. Together, these studies reveal how intangible heritage, such as food culture, bridges traditional and contemporary tourism practices.

From a justice-oriented perspective, Cantillon et al. (2021) took a cultural justice approach, arguing that popular music heritage can serve as sustainable infrastructure in deindustrialised cities. This is further expanded in Cantillon et al. (2023), who explored how leveraging music heritage sustains smaller cities economically and culturally. Both studies emphasise the importance of addressing social inequalities through cultural tourism, fostering long-term community development. On the other hand, critiques highlight the risks of over-commercialisation. Nieuwland and Lavanga (2021) examined the commodification of cultural identity in cities marketed as “cool,” such as Rotterdam, and warned of unsustainable branding strategies. Similarly, Póvoa et al. (2021) explored the intersection of film and tourism in Paraíba, Brazil, illustrating how media representation shapes creative city narratives while raising concerns about cultural authenticity. Bonelli et al. (2019) provided a critical lens by analysing Wellington's marketing as a “creative city,” exposing the neoliberal pressures that prioritise economic goals over preserving urban cultural identity.

These studies collectively reveal the dynamic interplay between cultural tourism, creative placemaking, and urban regeneration. Meanwhile, Poli et al. (2022), Richards (2020), and Cantillon et al. (2021, 2023) emphasised the transformative potential of cultural tourism, whereas Nieuwland and Lavanga (2021) and Bonelli et al. (2019) highlighted the risks associated with commodification. On the other hand, Jiang et al. (2023) and Park et al. (2023) have bridged these perspectives by showing how authenticity and local identity can ensure sustainable and inclusive tourism strategies. In conclusion, cultural and creative tourism holds significant potential for fostering urban vitality and economic growth. However, achieving a balance between economic objectives and cultural preservation remains essential. Future research should explore

ways to mitigate commodification while ensuring tourism benefits both communities and visitors, contributing to long-term urban and cultural sustainability.

Across the reviewed studies, cultural and creative tourism emerges as an inherently ambivalent dimension of creative placemaking, positioned between place-based cultural expression and market-oriented urban development strategies. While creative tourism is frequently framed as a means to valorise local heritage, enhance authenticity, and support community-based narratives, several studies demonstrate how tourism-led placemaking can drift toward commodification, museumification, and branding-driven representations of culture. Grassroots cultural practices, culinary heritage, and popular music traditions have been shown to foster inclusive and locally grounded tourism experiences; however, when these practices are institutionalised or scaled for global consumption, tensions arise around cultural ownership, selective representation, and social equity. What remains insufficiently examined is how creative tourism initiatives manage power relations among local communities, cultural producers, and external tourism markets over time, particularly in determining whether claims of authenticity and cultural justice can be sustained beyond short-term branding or event-based strategies.

Theme 4: Economic Development and Creative Industries

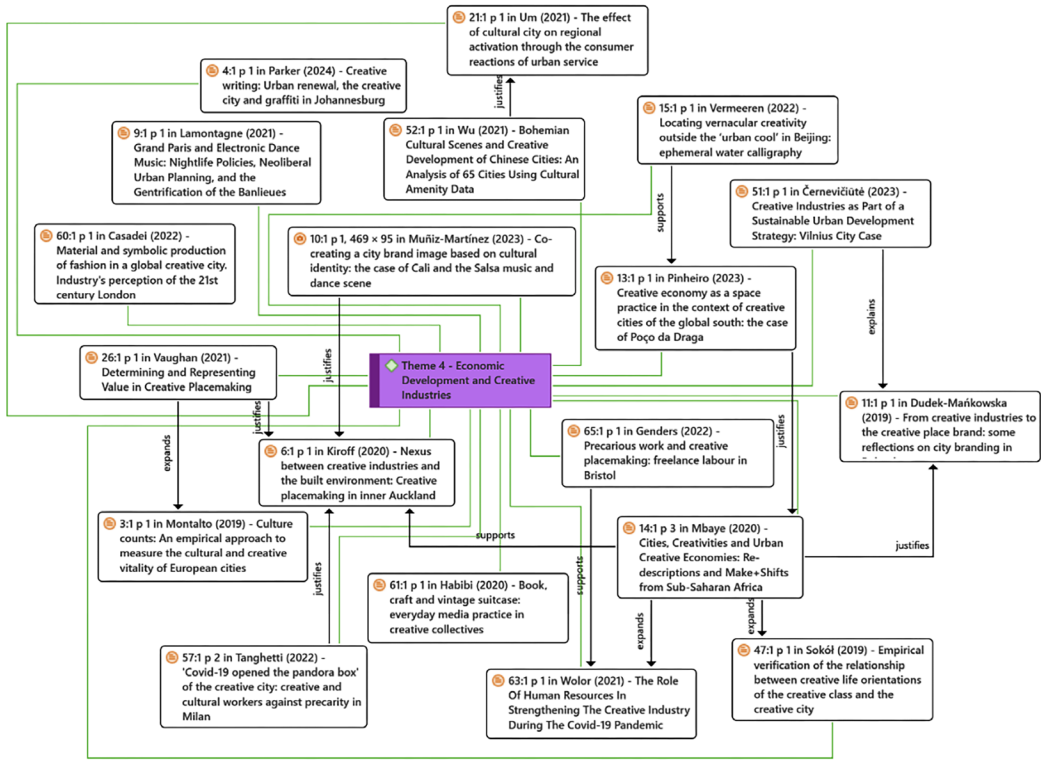


Figure 9. Economic Development and Creative Industries (Theme 4)

The Economic Development and Creative Industries theme explores the complex interplay between creative industries and urban economic growth. This theme highlights how creative placemaking fosters economic development through cultural initiatives, labour dynamics, and the integration of creative economies into urban planning. Dudek-Mańkowska and Grochowski (2019) provided a foundational perspective by examining how creative industries transition into city branding. This study emphasises the role of creative industries in shaping urban identity and branding strategies, offering a critical starting point for understanding their economic significance. Similarly, Montalto et al. (2019) introduced an empirical framework for measuring European cities' cultural and creative vitality, bridging theoretical concepts with measurable outcomes. These studies establish the foundational relationship between creativity and urban economic development. In 2020, Kiroff (2020) extended this discussion by exploring the nexus between creative industries and the built environment in inner Auckland, illustrating how creative placemaking reshapes urban spaces. Meanwhile, Mbaye and Pratt (2020) focused on Sub-Saharan Africa, showcasing how urban creativity drives economic shifts and new opportunities, particularly in developing regions. These studies demonstrate how creative industries enhance urban aesthetics and address socioeconomic disparities in diverse global contexts.

By 2021, research began to explore the adaptive responses of creative industries to external challenges. For instance, Um et al. (2021) analysed how cultural branding affects consumer behaviour and regional economic activation, while Wolor et al. (2021) highlighted the role of human resources in sustaining creative industries during the COVID-19 pandemic. These findings reveal how creative industries can adapt and innovate during periods of crisis, underscoring their resilience and economic importance. Moreover, Vaughan et al. (2021) examined how value is represented in creative placemaking projects, linking cultural significance with economic outcomes. This aligns with (Lamontagne & Iten, 2021), who investigated the impact of electronic dance music and nightlife policies on urban gentrification in Paris. Together, these studies highlight the socio-economic complexities of integrating creative industries into urban economies, where cultural vibrancy often intersects with the risks of gentrification.

In 2022, the focus shifted to labour dynamics and sustainability. Tanghetti et al. (2022) explored how the pandemic exposed vulnerabilities in the creative workforce, calling for systemic reforms to address precarity. Similarly, Genders (2022) investigated precarious work in Bristol's creative industries, emphasising the challenges faced by freelance workers in maintaining economic growth. Furthermore, Vermeeren (2022) introduced

the concept of vernacular creativity in Beijing, illustrating how localised practices contribute to both cultural preservation and economic sustainability. Additionally, Casadei and Gilbert (2022) examined London's fashion industry, highlighting its symbolic value in creative city branding and its potential to drive economic growth. Recent studies in 2023 have delved into global examples of creative industries driving urban growth. Some examples can be seen in the works of Černevičiūtė and Strazdas (2023), which emphasised how creative industries contribute to sustainable urban development in Vilnius. Similarly, Pinheiro et al. (2023) focused on the global South, showcasing how creative economies regenerate spaces like Poço da Draga. Muñiz-Martínez (2023) explored how the Salsa music scene in Cali, Colombia, strengthens city branding and fosters economic vitality.

Looking ahead, Parker and Khanyile (2024) offered a forward-looking perspective by examining graffiti in Johannesburg as a form of creative writing contributing to urban renewal. This study highlights how informal creative practices can enhance economic vitality while promoting community engagement. Collectively, these studies illustrate that creative industries play a pivotal role in urban economic development. Early works emphasise foundational concepts like branding and cultural vitality, whereas recent research addresses labour dynamics, sustainability, and inclusivity. While creative industries can drive urban regeneration and economic growth, challenges such as labour precarity, gentrification, and over-commercialisation must be addressed to ensure equitable and sustainable development.

Taken together, the literature positions creative industries as both engines of urban economic development and sites of structural vulnerability within creative placemaking processes. While creative industries are widely celebrated for their capacity to stimulate innovation, city branding, and economic vitality, multiple studies reveal persistent tensions related to labour precarity, uneven value distribution, and the commodification of creativity. Informal and vernacular creative practices, such as nightlife cultures, street art, and music scenes, demonstrate significant economic and symbolic potential; however, their incorporation into formal urban development and branding strategies often exposes creative workers to instability and displacement. A critical gap within this body of work concerns the limited examination of how economic value, labour conditions, and cultural agency are negotiated over time, particularly in assessing whether creative-led economic development can deliver long-term inclusivity and resilience beyond short-term growth or crisis-driven adaptation.

Theme 5: Policy and Governance

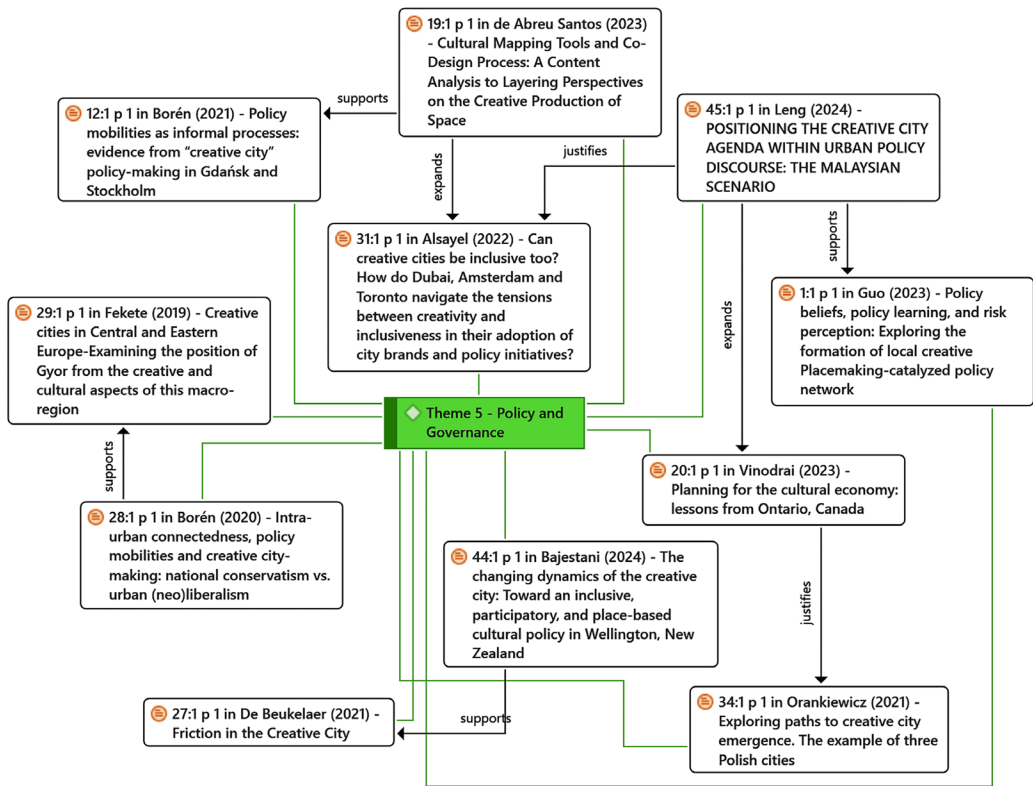


Figure 10. Policy and Governance (Theme 5)

The theme of Policy and Governance in creative placemaking focuses on the role of policymaking and governance in fostering creative cities and enabling creative placemaking. This theme explores how governments and institutions shape urban policies to balance creativity, inclusivity, and economic growth while addressing the tensions arising from diverse governance approaches. To begin, Fekete and Morvay (2019) acknowledged the economic significance of the sphere and appreciating the social benefits of creative and cultural activities. Its latest innovation is the Cultural and Creative Cities Monitor (CCCM) laid the groundwork by analysing creative cities in Central and Eastern Europe, particularly Gyor, examining how regional cultural and creative dynamics influence urban policymaking. This foundational study provides insights into the position of creative cities in macro-regional contexts, emphasising the interplay between cultural identity and urban governance.

Building on this, Borén et al. (2020) highlighted the challenges of intra-urban connectedness, exploring how national conservatism and urban neoliberalism intersect within creative city policies. This study reveals the tensions between competing ideologies

and their impact on creative governance. Further expanding on these ideas, De Beukelaer (2021) introduced the concept of “friction” in creative cities, highlighting how policy conflicts can hinder or reshape the implementation of creative city agendas. By 2021, Borén and Young (2021) shifted the focus to policy mobilities and informal governance processes, using Stockholm and Gdańsk as case studies to illustrate how creative city policies evolve through transnational exchanges and local adaptations. Supporting this perspective, Orankiewicz and Turała (2021) explored the emergence of creative cities in Poland, analysing the varying governance paths contributing to creative city development. Together, these studies emphasise the fluidity of policymaking in creative cities and its dependence on local contexts.

In 2022, Alsayel et al. (2022) addressed the inclusivity of creative cities, examining how Dubai, Amsterdam, and Toronto navigate tensions between creativity and inclusiveness in their city branding and policy initiatives. This study underscores the need for governance approaches that balance economic growth with social equity in creative city development. More recently, Santos and Borg (2023) explored cultural mapping and co-design processes, offering practical tools to integrate diverse stakeholder perspectives in the creative production of urban spaces. This aligns with Guo (2023), who investigated policy beliefs, learning, and risk perceptions in forming local creative placemaking networks, illustrating how adaptive governance can catalyse creative urban policies. Similarly, Vinodrai et al. (2023) examined lessons from Ontario, Canada, focusing on planning for cultural economies and emphasising participatory governance to foster inclusive urban development.

Looking ahead, Bajestani et al. (2024) introduced a forward-looking perspective by addressing the evolving dynamics of creative city policies in Wellington, New Zealand. This study advocates for place-based, participatory policies to ensure inclusivity and sustainability in creative urban governance. Complementing this, Leng (2024) focused on the Malaysian context, analysing how the creative city agenda is positioned within broader urban policy discourse. Collectively, these studies demonstrate that effective policy and governance are central to the success of creative cities. Early works emphasise the foundational role of cultural identity and policy tensions, while recent studies highlight the importance of inclusivity, stakeholder engagement, and adaptability. However, challenges such as policy conflicts, uneven regional development, and the balance between creativity and inclusiveness remain critical areas for future research. Addressing these issues will ensure that governance frameworks not only support economic growth but also foster equitable and culturally vibrant urban spaces.

Across the reviewed studies, policy and governance emerge not as neutral enablers of creative placemaking but as contested arenas where competing political, economic, and

cultural priorities are negotiated. While creative city policies are frequently mobilised to promote innovation, competitiveness, and urban branding, the literature reveals persistent tensions between growth-oriented agendas and commitments to inclusivity, cultural diversity, and place-based participation. Transnational policy mobility, informal governance arrangements, and locally adapted creative city models illustrate the flexibility of creative policy frameworks; however, they also expose inconsistencies in how creative placemaking is translated across different institutional and socio-political contexts. A key unresolved issue concerns the extent to which governance frameworks can move beyond symbolic adoption of creativity toward genuinely redistributive and participatory policy practices, particularly in addressing uneven regional development, policy friction, and the long-term integration of community voices in creative urban governance.

DISCUSSION AND FUTURE STUDIES

In the realm of urban development, creative placemaking has gained significant traction, particularly in the context of fostering vibrant and sustainable urban spaces. This approach integrates arts, community engagement, and urban revitalisation, thereby creating dynamic environments that enhance the quality of life for residents. Recent literature from 2019 to 2024 has identified several key trends and themes within this field, which warrant further discussion and exploration in future studies. One of the primary findings from this thematic review is the emergence of five distinct clusters related to creative placemaking: Urban Renewal and Regeneration, Cultural and Creative Tourism, Community Engagement and Social Impact, Policy and Governance, and Economic Development and Creative Industries.

The synthesis of recent creative placemaking literature between 2019 and 2024 reveals that urban development practices are increasingly shaped by overlapping social, cultural, economic, and governance processes. Rather than operating within isolated domains, creative placemaking initiatives emerge through the interaction of community participation, cultural production, economic activity, and policy frameworks. Across the reviewed studies, community engagement consistently appears as a central enabling force, while urban renewal, cultural and creative tourism, and economic development evolve in relation to governance structures and local institutional contexts. This integrated pattern suggests that creative placemaking functions as a dynamic urban strategy in which multiple dimensions develop concurrently, reflecting the complexity and interdependence of contemporary urban environments.

These clusters highlight the multifaceted nature of creative placemaking and its potential to drive economic growth while simultaneously fostering social cohesion. The emphasis on interdisciplinary approaches suggests that urban planners and policymakers must consider the interconnectedness of various sectors, particularly the creative

industries, in their strategies for urban development. Moreover, the literature indicates a growing recognition of participatory strategies' role in enhancing community identity and social sustainability within urban spaces. Engaging local communities in the placemaking process not only empowers residents but also leads to more inclusive and representative urban policies.

This participatory approach aligns with the broader trend of redefining creative city policies to prioritise community revitalisation, as noted in recent discussions on integrating creativity into urban development strategies. By leveraging cultural and creative industries as catalysts for urban regeneration, cities can foster environments that are not only economically viable but also socially vibrant. Future studies should focus on several critical areas to build upon the existing body of knowledge. Firstly, there is a need for comprehensive longitudinal studies that assess the long-term impacts of creative placemaking initiatives on urban development. Understanding how these initiatives evolve and their sustained effects on community engagement and economic growth will provide valuable insights for policymakers and practitioners.

Further exploration of innovative and inclusive urban policies that emerge from creative placemaking practices is also essential. This includes examining how different cultural contexts influence the effectiveness of these strategies and identifying best practices that can be adapted across various urban settings. Despite the systematic approach adopted in this thematic review, several limitations should be acknowledged. The review is based on articles retrieved from Scopus and Web of Science databases and is restricted to English language open access publications, which may have excluded relevant studies published in other languages or indexed in alternative databases. In addition, the focus on peer reviewed academic literature means that insights from local government reports, practitioner journals, and policy documents were not included, despite their potential relevance to real world creative placemaking practices.

As a result, the identified thematic patterns primarily reflect perspectives represented in high indexed scholarly discourse and may not fully capture locally embedded or practice driven forms of creative placemaking across different contexts. In conclusion, the evolving landscape of creative placemaking presents numerous opportunities for future research. By systematically investigating the interplay between creativity, community engagement, and urban development, scholars can contribute to formulating more effective and inclusive urban policies that enhance the liveability of cities. Such studies can provide insights that will be instrumental in guiding urban planners and policymakers in their efforts to create vibrant, sustainable urban environments that reflect the needs and aspirations of their communities.

CONTRIBUTIONS AND BENEFITS OF STUDY

The study of creative placemaking, as explored in the recent literature, offers significant contributions and benefits that extend across various domains of urban development. This research fills a critical gap in the existing literature by systematically reviewing the trends and practices in creative placemaking from 2019 to 2024. It provides actionable insights for urban planners, policymakers, and community stakeholders. One of the primary contributions of this study is its comprehensive synthesis of the evolving themes in creative placemaking, which are categorised into five distinct clusters: Urban Renewal and Regeneration, Cultural and Creative Tourism, Community Engagement and Social Impact, Policy and Governance, and Economic Development and Creative Industries.

This categorisation allows for a clearer understanding of how these interconnected areas influence urban development and highlights the multifaceted nature of creative placemaking. By emphasising the importance of interdisciplinary approaches, the study advocates for integrating creative industries into urban planning, which can lead to enhanced economic growth and social cohesion. Furthermore, the research underscores the critical role of participatory strategies in fostering community identity and social sustainability. Engaging local communities in the placemaking process not only empowers residents but also leads to more inclusive urban policies that reflect the diverse needs and aspirations of the population. This participatory approach is essential for building trust and collaboration between community members and policymakers, ultimately resulting in urban environments that are more resilient and adaptable to change.

The benefits of this study extend beyond theoretical contributions; they also have practical implications for urban development. By providing a detailed analysis of current trends, the research equips urban planners and policymakers with the knowledge necessary to implement effective creative placemaking initiatives. Moreover, the study highlights the potential for creative placemaking to address social challenges, such as inequality and displacement, by fostering inclusive environments that prioritise community well-being. In conclusion, the contributions and benefits of this study are manifold. It advances the academic discourse on creative placemaking and offers practical insights that can inform urban development strategies. Consequently, this research lays the groundwork for future studies that can further explore the long-term impacts of creative placemaking on urban environments by emphasising the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration and community engagement. Ultimately, the findings advocate for a holistic approach to urban development that prioritises creativity, inclusivity, and sustainability.

Future research should move beyond descriptive accounts of creative placemaking and examine its long-term and distributive impacts across social, economic, and governance dimensions. Longitudinal studies are particularly needed to assess how

community empowerment, social equity, and local cultural ownership evolve over time following creative placemaking interventions. Specifically, future research could measure changes in residents' sense of belonging, levels of sustained community participation, and the durability of local creative networks beyond initial project phases. In economic terms, studies should examine not only short-term economic growth and place-branding outcomes, but also labour conditions, income stability, and value distribution within creative industries. From a governance perspective, further research is required to evaluate how policy frameworks institutionalise participatory practices, manage policy conflicts, and sustain inclusive decision-making across different urban contexts. By systematically addressing these dimensions, future studies can provide more robust evidence on whether creative placemaking delivers equitable, resilient, and sustainable urban development outcomes over time.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

N/A

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