

# ***The Value of Placemaking in Urban Transformation***

*Experience-Based Findings and Method Development*



FEB 2026



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How do We Expand the Concept of Value?

**Thank you to**

Realdania  
Rambøll Fonden  
Helsingør Kommune, Esbjerg Kommune, Frederikssund Kommune  
Statens Kunstfond  
Game  
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**Udarbejdet af:**

VOLCANO, Rambøll Management Consulting, Henning Larsen

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# Introduction

This collection of findings is the result of the development project “The Value of Placemaking in Urban Development,” which aims to develop a methodological approach to documenting and measuring the economic value of placemaking in urban development. Placemaking is the process of creating valuable, lively, and attractive places, and it is best achieved in collaboration with local actors, such as residents, visitors, and business owners.

The project was initiated by VOLCANO in collaboration with Rambøll Management Consulting, Henning Larsen, and several municipalities, and is supported by the philanthropic association Realdania and the Rambøll Foundation. In addition, the Danish Arts Foundation has also supported the project. Several experts in the field have contributed knowledge and guidance throughout the process, including through the conference “Placemaking Conference – The Value of Placemaking in Urban Development,” which Volcano hosted in February 2025.

The project’s ambition has taken the work in many directions. Along the way, we have gathered input from experts and mapped experiences from case visits in the municipalities of Esbjerg, Frederikssund, and Helsingør, as well as in selected areas of Copenhagen. Through this systematic approach, we have developed a methodological framework that makes the effects and value of placemaking initiatives more visible. The approach also sheds light on the social and more hidden effects of placemaking measures, which are difficult to quantify.

Through this work—mapping placemaking’s value creation through real-world cases—we have found that rising housing prices are only one part of the story. The clear economic impact shows that the perceived quality of public space influences both market behavior and investment returns. Beyond price increases, placemaking also holds social, cultural, and societal potential that is already felt in practice, even if it cannot yet be captured through traditional measurement methods. We see that placemaking, through activities in local communities, strengthens social relationships and reduces loneliness. The results should therefore be understood as a step toward more robust measurement. The experiences also show that placemaking can be quantified—and, at the same time, invites us to rethink what “value creation” in urban development actually means.

The project shows that placemaking can be understood as a concept with measurable parameters. We therefore introduce the concept of Placemaking “Sight Score.” However, this collection of findings is neither a complete mapping nor a finished model because context, time, demographics, and other factors are crucial to how lived urban spaces emerge and develop.

This publication is based on the project’s current findings and offers concrete tools for urban planners, municipalities, developers, and professionals in the construction industry.

**Kristian Riis,  
CEO Volcano  
København,  
Januar 2026**



3  
Det Internationale Kvarter, Esbjerg  
Photo: Realdania, Torben Meyer

# Unlocking the Value of Placemaking

## Reflections Across Practices, Cases, and Dialogue

Placemaking is a concept in urban and place development that covers a wide range of actions and processes aimed at creating, strengthening, and activating places. It ranges from small, temporary initiatives—such as adding temporary seating or recreational elements in public space—to long-term planning and development processes that help transform entire neighborhoods. Across these scales, the goal of placemaking is to shape both the physical place and people’s experience of it, enabling for people to take part in everyday life, actively or passively.

Through a combination of inherited qualities and deliberate choices, Denmark has become a strong benchmark for placemaking. Danish design, architecture, storytelling, a focus on quality of life, shared traditions, forward-thinking planning, and consistent processes have contributed to creating memorable experiences at the individual, community, and societal levels. Placemaking is deeply rooted in Danish history and has helped shape places such as Tivoli Gardens, Klitmøller, Freetown Christiania, Nordhavn, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, and Bornholm.

### **From Concrete Experiences to Documented Value Creation**

This report documents a process of uncovering the value creation of placemaking through real-world cases. It examines how activities create impact in local communities, including among marginalized groups, and how placemaking can reduce loneliness by strengthening social relationships. The report also examines how new urban neighborhoods emerge and how positive experiences in transformed urban spaces correlate with square-meter prices in Copenhagen over the past four decades.

The journey to unfold the value creation of placemaking began with case studies such as “The International Quarter in Esbjerg,” “Development of the City Center in Frederikssund,” and “Art and Climate in Helsingør.” In tandem, we collaborated with Rambøll to explore the possibility of developing a mathematical formula to quantify the return on investment for placemaking initiatives in Copenhagen.

Through this process, we invited leading practitioners and experts in the field to share their insights at the conference “The Value of Placemaking,” held in February 2025 at Nordhus in Copenhagen. During the conference, questions, comments, and reflections from speakers and audience members confirmed that the value of placemaking encompasses measurable economic effects, such as rising property values, as well as equally important subjective qualities, such as a place’s identity and lived experience. It also became clear that the factors that influence or drive value creation through placemaking are numerous and deeply interconnected.

# Summary

## Reading Guide and Key Takeaways

### 1. From People to Experiences

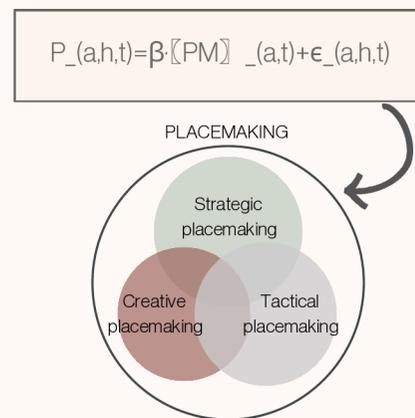
We explore what it means to use placemaking as a framework for an urban development project. We also consider urban spaces as a platform for shared experiences. Finally, we identify different placemaking strategies and provide examples of placemaking in practice.

“ Places with strong social communities are where people return again and again.  
Pernille Krogh, Chief Consultant,  
Frederikssund Erhverv ”

Page 7-15

### 2. From Experiences to Measurability

We develop a tool to quantify the perceived value of urban spaces. By introducing Placemaking “Sight Score,” we establish a methodological framework that treats placemaking as a measurable factor, rather than a set of coincidental correlations.



Page 16-19 (and page 25)

### 3. From Measurability to Property Value

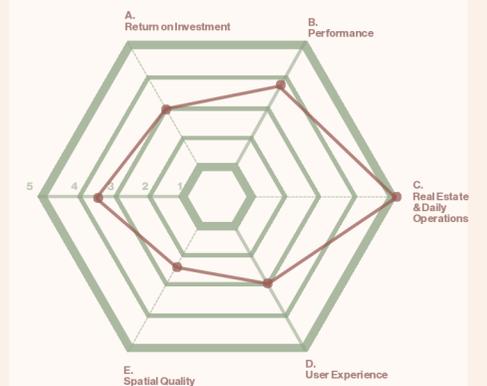
We connect Placemaking “Sight Score” (introduced in Chapter 2) to economic data. Using Copenhagen as a case study, we also place the findings in a broader context of societal value creation.



Page 20-26

### 4. From Economic Value to Holistic Value Creation

The chapter expands the concept of value in placemaking by bringing together objective and subjective values, and shows how elements of the experience economy create value in everyday life, both indoors and outdoors.



Page 27-41

# Systematic Value Creation

## Placemaking “Sight Score” as a Driving Force for Holistic Development

Dozens of parameters interact within a complex system. Identifying a single, precise driver of value creation would therefore require a large interdisciplinary team of data scientists, mathematicians, anthropologists, and economists to develop a formula. However, even the most comprehensive formula would not capture the full picture. The creation and experience of value are fundamentally social constructs, shaped collectively. A formula understood by only a few would not, on its own, support dialogue about how placemaking creates additional value, whether objectively or subjectively. Value creation is therefore best understood as the result of an ongoing dialogue rooted in human experience.

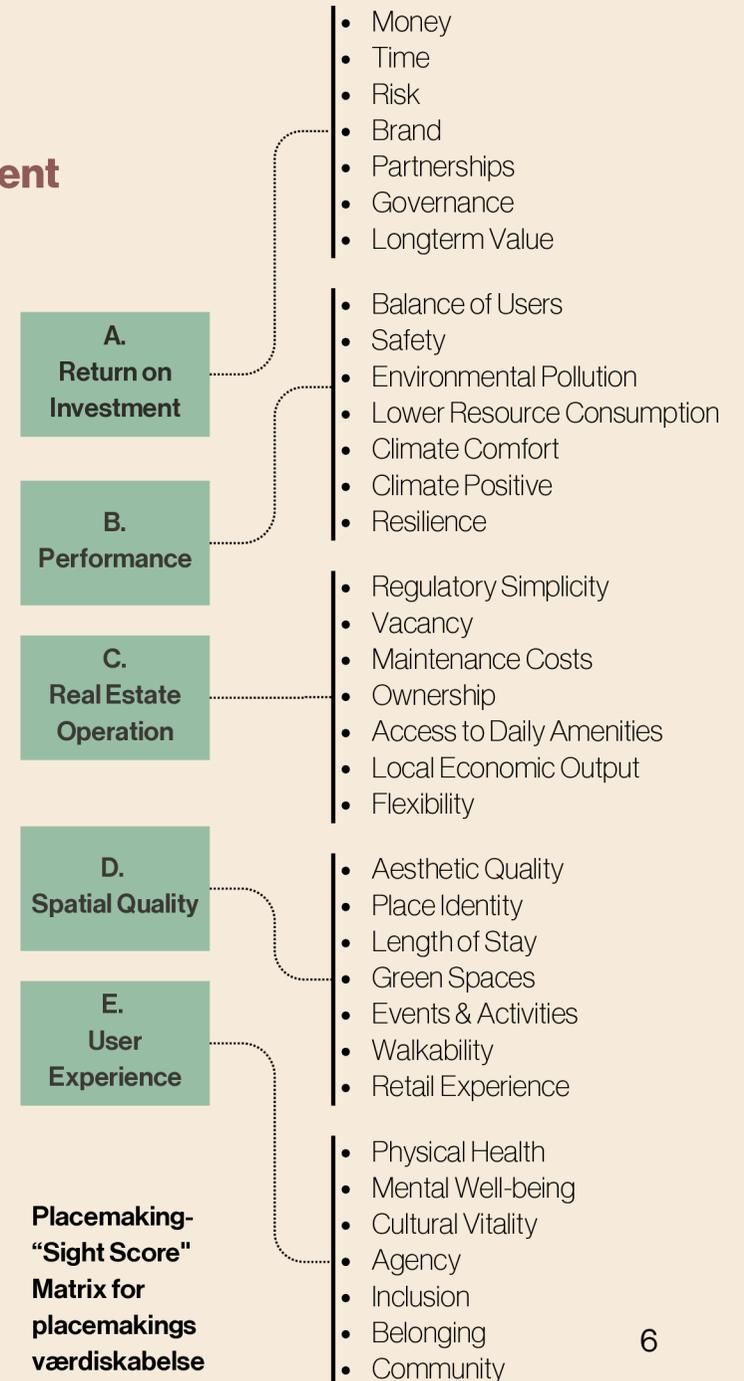
After the conference, “The Value Creation of Placemaking,” we compiled the findings into a first version of the report. However, it was clear that something was still missing. The knowledge gathered needed to be translated into concrete action. This created a need to find a way to measure the many aspects of value creation in placemaking, both to build a shared understanding of a place’s strengths and weaknesses, to clarify challenges in urban transformation, and to identify the qualities that should be preserved or further developed.

### Placemaking “Sight Score” as a framework for understanding and managing value creation

As a placemaking actor, Volcano works with cultural programming, events, public engagement, and talent development to transform places and bring elements of the experience economy into everyday life and community for the people who live in and spend time there.

Volcano has therefore developed an assessment of place quality, the Placemaking “Sight Score,” as a tool for measuring how placemaking contributes to value creation. The model covers five dimensions that can be assessed through both quantitative data and qualitative research, and provides a visual way to understand how places perform in creating value across 49 placemaking parameters. In addition to serving as a gauge of quality of place, the model is a dialogue tool that supports discussion, helps prioritize initiatives, and guides investments, with the overall goal of strengthening the human experience of place.

This report synthesizes insights to establish a practical approach to dialogue with urban and real estate developers, municipalities, architects, creative entrepreneurs, community champions, and others working to strengthen place quality and the human experience.



An architectural site plan of a waterfront development. The plan shows a mix of building footprints, green spaces, and a waterfront area with a boat dock. The buildings are rendered in light blue and white, with some highlighted in a reddish-brown color. The waterfront is on the right side of the image, and a large body of water is visible. The overall style is a clean, technical drawing with some color washes.

1.

# From People to Experiences

***“Placemaking is an approach where we create places that bring people together. Places where we can meet, laugh, wait for the bus together, and sometimes stay longer because we feel safe and inspired.”***

Kristian Riis, CEO  
VOLCANO

# 1.1 What is Placemaking?

## Placemaking Initiatives and Strategies are Diverse

Placemaking is a holistic approach to urban development that puts people's needs and quality of life at the center, rather than focusing mainly on buildings and the physical design of urban spaces. It is about creating active, vibrant, and sustainable public spaces that support social interaction, cultural exchange, and a sense of community.

In this publication, we examine (the extent to which) how placemaking can both promote/ foster communities and strengthen local economies by attracting new residents, businesses, and tourists.

There are three widely recognized subcategories of placemaking: Strategic Placemaking, Creative Placemaking, and Tactical Placemaking. Each category covers a range of different approaches to urban and regional development.

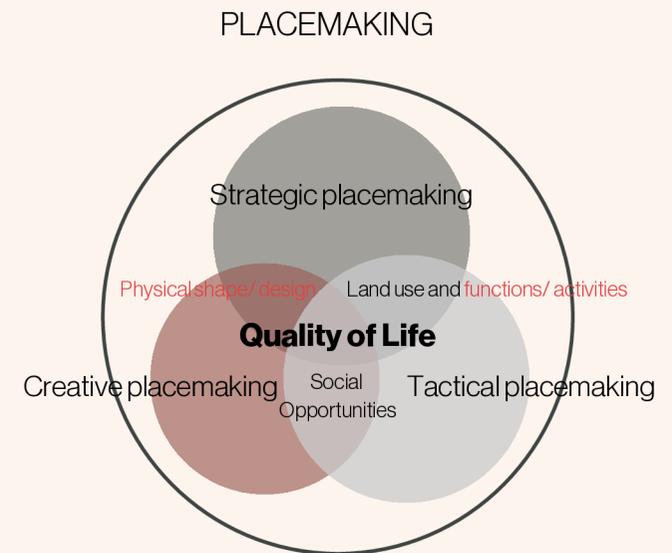
Strategic Placemaking focuses on creating attractive places that draw workers and employers, supporting job creation and economic growth. These projects are often long-term and typically take place in densely populated areas. Examples include mixed residential and commercial development in central areas along key corridors and hubs.

Creative Placemaking focuses on revitalizing public and private spaces and on improving local businesses and everyday life. These projects consist of collaborations between public, private, and community organizers/civil society actors who work together to shape an area's physical and social spaces through art and cultural activities. Examples include temporary and permanent ways of activating urban spaces through social interaction, culture, art, exercise, leisure, and shared experiences.

Tactical Placemaking focuses on temporary, low-cost projects that can be implemented quickly to improve public spaces and create lively, engaging places. Examples include targeted initiatives such as pop-up events or street activities that can quickly change an area's atmosphere and attract people/ draw people in.

The project originally intended to focus on Creative Placemaking, but our case studies have shown that a broader approach is necessary. We therefore require a combination of strategic, creative, and tactical placemaking solutions that contribute both to quality of life and to increase value for places.

*Visualization of different strategic approaches to working with placemaking*



Kilde: The Land Policy Institute at Michigan State University, USA - is there original version of this in english

# 1.2 What Is Placemaking?

## Placemaking is Context-Dependent and Relational

Placemaking involves collaboration among a wide range of actors, including local residents, housing associations, urban planners, private companies, public authorities, and others. Over the course of the project, it has become clear that, in many of the cases we visited, placemaking is a relational process where success depends on ownership, commitment, responsibility, and impact. It is not only a matter of deciding which initiatives to implement, but also of developing strategies to organise and anchor them in the local community.

Based on the case studies, we see that placemaking occurs when people shape perceptions of spaces, landscapes, and neighbourhoods that are constantly changing. The involvement of many different actors makes the process both complex and adaptable, with agility and flexibility as key concepts. Placemaking builds on a strong local identity and on the everyday experiences people have through social interaction, culture, exercise, leisure, and shared activities.

This creates a challenge when it comes to measuring the value of placemaking, because success cannot always be assessed using fixed parameters or short-term goals. Instead, it requires an assessment of how a place develops over time and adapts to changing needs and desires within society.

A holistic and multidisciplinary placemaking strategy creates value on several interconnected levels. From an investment perspective, it increases value per square meter, accelerates payback, and strengthens the place's overall brand.

At the spatial level, it helps improve the quality of public spaces designed for everyday life. The approach draws on Jan Gehl's twelve quality criteria, a recognised framework for assessing public space, structured around protection, comfort, and experience.

The strategy also increases everyday comfort by bringing key daily functions within close reach, including transport, leisure, cultural offerings, shopping, exercise, and social activities. This accessibility supports more sustainable everyday patterns and reduces the need for transport.

Finally, placemaking contributes to a better user experience by promoting both physical and mental health, strengthening social relationships, and creating a sense of ownership and connection. It encourages engagement and strengthens local identity by creating the conditions for shared activities and local initiatives.



Banegården, Copenhagen  
Photo: Realdania, Bjarke Ørsted

# The International Quarter

## Esbjerg's Largest Public Housing Area Undergoing Transformation

The International Quarter in Esbjerg is a development project that aims to transform the area around Stengårdsvej and Jerne into a vibrant, diverse urban district with strong communities and a modern urban structure grounded in climate and culture.

Running from 2021 to 2030, the project is built on close collaboration between Esbjerg Municipality, the Ungdomsbo housing association, local stakeholders, and educational institutions, with the aim of creating a sustainable and attractive neighborhood. Resident retention, stronger communities, and public life are key priorities. The focus is on building residents' pride, attracting new residents, and strengthening collaboration to support the area's long-term development and attractiveness.

A temporary neighborhood house has been established in Esbjerg, serving as a project hub for stakeholders and local residents. It plays a central role in the many temporary activities taking place in the district.

Creative Placemaking is used as a co-creation method to create opportunities for local residents, with art as a driving force in the neighborhood's development and a focus on culture, climate, and education. Empowering residents helps strengthen confidence and ownership, and supports a shift in how the neighborhood is perceived and in the narrative around it.

“ We discovered that being agile and exploratory is important. We need to try things out and collaborate.

Kiera Conboy, Project Manager  
Esbjerg Municipality

“ Sprog, tillid og tid betyder alt for den måde, vi går til udviklingen af Det Internationale Kvarter

Christina Korsbek, Sekretariatsleder  
Esbjerg Kommune

### Facts

#### Geography :

Harbor City

#### Demographics

Population of Esbjerg Municipality: 115,423  
(Source: Esbjerg Municipality, 2024)

#### Key Players:

Esbjerg Municipality; Boligforeningen Ungdomsbo (housing association); Bakkeskolen (school); Danish Arts Foundation; local businesses; University of Southern Denmark (SDU); etc.

#### Key Placemaking Initiatives:

Kunst på Banen (Art on Site) – large-scale public art projects such as Portal and Himmelskibet (“Sky Ship”); a temporary neighborhood house with an adjacent neighborhood square; Kvartersloop (“Neighborhood Loop”), a recreational path network connecting the area; the climate street; etc.

#### Timeline

The area's initiative started in 2021 and will run until 2030.

#### Core Challenges

Social integration; resident retention; external perceptions of the area; depopulation; etc.

#### Desired outcomes / long-term value drivers

Higher property values and improved resident retention  
Stronger communities and public life



## Case Study

# The International Quarter

## Art on Site and Other Initiatives

Since 2018, Esbjerg Municipality and the Danish Arts Foundation have worked together to create art experiences in eastern Esbjerg through the Kunst på Banen initiative. Art is used as a strategic tool to strengthen social cohesion, engagement, participation, and civic involvement. It also serves as the foundation for a positive transformation of the neighborhood's identity. This approach supports long-lasting, meaningful change that not only improves the physical setting but also strengthens community and deepens local social and cultural roots.

Examples of Creative Placemaking initiatives:

One of the most prominent projects is Portal, created by artist Tina Ratzer in collaboration with residents along the street Stengårdsvej. The work was unveiled in 2021 and has become an iconic landmark for the area. It also gave its name to the housing area, Portalparken.

One of the newest art projects is Himmelrummet, a unique multi-purpose sports court designed to encourage interaction and social gathering. It functions not only as a sports facility but also as a work of art and a meeting place that supports community and creativity. The project was developed by architect Peter Holst in collaboration with the design studio 1:1.

In addition to the permanent initiatives, there are also temporary ones, such as the annual Lysfest (Light Festival), which takes place at Kvarterpladsen in January. The festival celebrates the power of light and the strength of community through music, dance performances, and a lantern parade.



Foto: Realdania, Torben Meyer



# Town Center Development

## Better Social and Physical Connections in Frederikssund

Frederikssund faces the challenge of retail decline in the city centre, creating an empty and uninspiring environment that negatively affects both city life and local commerce. The city's social and economic vitality has weakened as many stores have closed, discouraging both residents and visitors.

However, the city has significant potential. It is surrounded by summer house areas and residential neighbourhoods that attract both locals and tourists. The municipality recognised opportunities to revitalise the city centre and create a more attractive, vibrant place that can draw both retail activity and tourism.

To achieve this, Frederikssund focused on strengthening physical connections between the city's key functions and expanding the range of activities offered in the space. Frederikssund has therefore introduced several temporary measures, including a bike lane on the pedestrian street Jernbanegade and improved wayfinding. These trial initiatives aim to improve connectivity, increase street life and commercial activity, and make the city more welcoming and dynamic.

“ We need to highlight what the city already has and create a better flow through the city

Nikoline Kjær Jensen, Planner, Center for City and Landscape, Planning and Business ”

“ Places with strong social communities are where people return again and again.

Pernille Krogh, Chief Consultant, Frederikssund Erhverv ”

### Facts

#### Geography:

Railwaytown Roskilde Fjord

#### Demographics:

Population of Frederikssund Municipality: 46,738  
(Source: Frederikssund Municipality, 2025)

#### Key Players:

Frederikssund Erhverv, Frederikssund Municipality

#### Key Placemaking Initiatives:

Wayfinding; indication and description of hidden urban spaces

#### Timeline

The pilot initiatives ran throughout 2024

#### Core Challenges

Retail decline in the town center; lack of central, attractive social meeting places

#### Desired outcomes / long-term value drivers

More local shops and a stronger retail sector  
Stronger communities and public life





### Tactical Placemaking

The pilot projects in Frederikssund include temporary, low-cost measures such as installing wayfinding signs, visually highlighting hidden public spaces, and a **pilot** bike lane on the pedestrian street.



# Gang in Nordvest

## Art and climate as Drivers of cohesion in Helsingør

Gang i Nordvest is a strategic district program for Helsingør's largest urban development and renewal area. The former Helsingør Hospital is being converted into a residential area, and several nearby areas are also planned for development. The goal is to create a cohesive green structure and a diverse mix of residents across the district.

The project is a collaboration between Helsingør Municipality, Boliggården, Nordvestskolen, the Danish Arts Foundation, and other stakeholders. A former library has been converted into a cultural center for the local community, while community gardens and other green initiatives have been established to engage residents. The community/climate gardens are distributed across both villa gardens and public housing areas located close to one another.

“ People who work for their local communities help get more out of investments and lift neighborhoods. We need investments that enable civil society to take initiative. We have to move beyond silo thinking. The human factor must be the driving force before anything else.  
Louise Straarup, Kunst på bane, Statens Kunstfond,

Art plays a central role in the development, notably through the Kunst på Banen initiative, which sets out a long-term plan to integrate art and culture into everyday life and strengthen the local community.

Helsingør Municipality has launched a long-awaited renovation of Nordvestskolen's buildings, making the school and the wider area more attractive to families with children. The community garden established on the school grounds also explores how the school's outdoor areas can be integrated with the district's goal of creating more meeting places.

“ Many visitors come to Helsingør because of its major institutions. The city's major cultural institutions, including the Maritime Museum, act as a highway that draws people into the city center. In Nordvest, we're currently on side streets and dead ends. How do we become part of that highway, too?  
Maja Quist, Helsingør kommune ”

### Facts

#### Geography:

Port city

#### Demographics:

Population of Helsingør Municipality: 64,360  
(Source: Helsingør Municipality, 2024)

#### Key Players:

The Danish Arts Foundation, Helsingør Municipality

#### Key Placemaking Initiatives:

Climate gardens, art projects, and a series of events centered around the temporary cultural center

#### Timeline

The Gang i Nordvest neighborhood program has been in place since 2017. The Danish Arts Foundation entered into a partnership with Helsingør Municipality in 2023–25.

#### Core Challenges

Retail decline in the town center; lack of central, aCentral Helsingør, with its major cultural institutions, is a strong draw for visitors. This creates an economic and cultural imbalance compared with Gang i Nordvest, which needs resources to develop.

#### Desired outcomes / long-term value drivers

Stronger communities and public life  
Higher property values and resident retention





### *Creative Placemaking*

Key initiatives in Gang i Nordvest include the establishment of community gardens, a community house, and art initiatives, such as a workshop led by artist Rune Fjord at the local public school, Nordvestskolen.



An architectural rendering of a city waterfront development. The scene shows a mix of modern and traditional buildings, green spaces with trees, and a waterfront area with a large body of water. A small boat is visible in the water. The rendering is in a light, sketchy style with some color washes.

# 2.

## From Experience to Measurability

***“Placemaking is key to cities that serve people and create long-term economic value. If we want to prioritize it, we also need to be able to measure it.”***

Sanni Breining, Director Sustainable Economics  
Rambøll Management Consulting

# 2.1 Why Should We Measure Placemaking?

## The Hidden Value of Investment in Placemaking

In traditional urban development, investments have primarily focused on concrete, measurable factors such as infrastructure, architecture, and price per square meter. These elements, along with fundamental decisions about location and site, are crucial to a place's value, but they only tell part of the story.

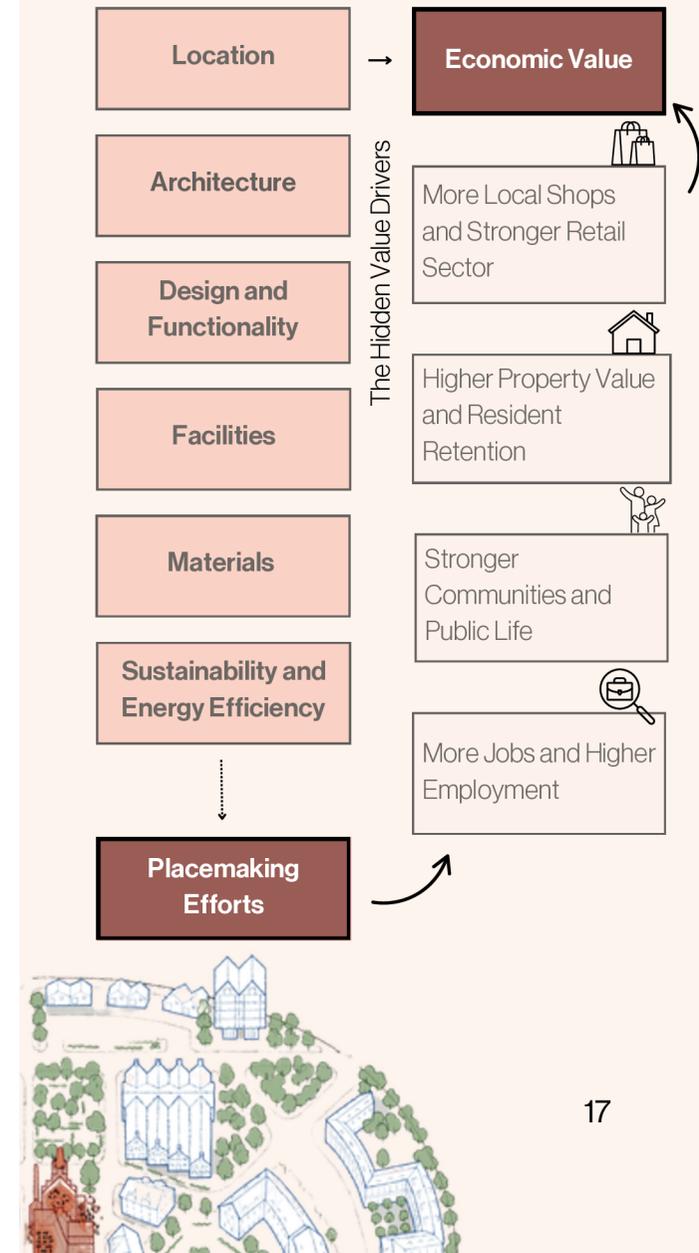
Revitalizing public spaces, creating social meeting places, and strengthening identity and community also contribute significantly to both economic and social value. However, because placemaking often does not have an immediate quantifiable effect, these qualities are often overlooked in traditional investment models.

As the figure on the right illustrates, the link between traditional investments and economic returns is relatively direct. Architecture, design, and functionality can be clearly linked to economic gains. Placemaking, by contrast, creates more indirect, but still significant, economic effects, such as increased local trade, higher property values, stronger communities, and more job opportunities. For example, it can support retail, cafés, and street life, which in turn contribute to more new businesses and higher local revenue. We refer to these effects as hidden value drivers.

### From hidden values to systematic measurement

To assess the full investment potential of places, it is necessary to look beyond visible, physical investments and also take into account the hidden value drivers. If placemaking is not included in our economic models, we risk underestimating the overall return on urban development projects and, as a result, making less optimal investment and prioritization decisions.

But how can placemaking be defined and measured systematically, so it does not remain a subjective or intuitive concept? To answer this question, we draw on the work of one of the leading thinkers in human-centered urban development, Jan Gehl. Gehl developed 12 criteria for human-centered public spaces that support social interaction, health, and quality of life. In our work to understand and measure the value of placemaking, these criteria help identify the factors that create value in public spaces.



# 2.2. How Do We Measure Placemaking?

## From Gehl's Criteria to a Quantifiable Placemaking "Sight Score"

### From perceived quality to a methodological approach

To intuitively measure the value perception of public space requires a robust and systematic approach. We saw this clearly during the project's case visits, where collaboration, organizational set-ups, and the timing of placemaking initiatives played an important role and varied significantly from case to case. It is therefore clear that developing a methodological approach is essential to handle the many factors that can vary across placemaking processes.

In this project, we used Jan Gehl's research as the starting point for developing a Placemaking "Sight Score." This analytical framework allows us to translate qualitative experiences into structured, quantifiable data on public space quality.

### Jan Gehl's quality criteria as an analytical foundation

Jan Gehl's "12 Quality Criteria" for good urban space are grouped into three main themes.

- **Protection:** People only spend time in urban spaces where they feel safe. This is not only about safety in the traditional sense, but also about broader security. It includes protection from traffic and accidents, as well as weather conditions, privacy, and other social or physical factors.
- **Comfort:** A good urban space should be pleasant to spend time in. This means access to seating, good walking connections, and a human scale that feels inviting.
- **Experience:** Beyond safety and comfort, urban space should be engaging. This can take the form of social interaction, cultural activities, green elements, or aesthetic qualities, which together create a vibrant and meaningful urban space.

It should be noted that these criteria are not necessarily complete or fully sufficient for the realities shaping the world in 2025. If a future development project were to update the criteria, it could, for example, incorporate factors such as digital communities, climate protection, pollution, and security of supply-- factors that are relevant today and would complement the 12 criteria defining a good urban space.

### Jan Gehl's "12 Quality Criteria"

Protection	Protection against traffic & accidents — feeling safe	Protection against crime & violence — feeling secure	Protection against unpleasant sensory experiences
	Opportunities to walk/cycle	Opportunities to stop & stay	Opportunities to sit
	Opportunities to see	Opportunities to talk & listen	Opportunities for play & exercise
Enjoyment	Dimensioned at human scale	Opportunities to enjoy the positive aspects of climate	Aesthetic qualities & positive sensory experience

To obtain a quantitative measurement of placemaking, Rambøll used a dataset from a survey of 1,100 residents across 27 neighbourhoods in Copenhagen. Respondents were asked to assess their primary everyday area, the place where they typically spend time, move around, and meet others in daily life, and to answer 12 questions related to Gehl's criteria.

Question framework for developing Placemaking "Sight Score" based on Gehl:

- Protection: Perceived safety, traffic safety, and environmental conditions such as noise, pollution, and wind.
- Comfort: Access to public space, opportunities for leisure, social interaction, and physical activity.
- Experience: Architectural quality, sensory appeal, local identity, and historical character.

### **From Placemaking "Sight Score" to economic analysis**

Respondents rated each of the 12 questions on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = very poor, 5 = very good). After statistical processing and data cleansing, these ratings were converted into an overall Placemaking "Sight Score" for each area. The score provides a snapshot of how residents experience their public space. Using this framework, we can move from subjective perceptions to a more systematic assessment of placemaking.

However, it should be noted that placemaking never happens in a vacuum. To understand its economic value, we need to use statistical methods to isolate its effect on economic outcomes, such as property prices and local growth, while controlling for other factors that also influence these outcomes.



**Salling ROOFTOP Aarhus**  
Photo Rambøll

An architectural rendering of a city neighborhood, showing various buildings, streets, and green spaces. The style is a light blue and green color palette with white outlines for buildings and trees. The scene is viewed from an elevated perspective, showing a mix of residential and commercial structures. A large body of water is visible on the right side of the image.

**3.**

# From Measurability to Property Value

***“We can now assign economic and societal value to the experiences we intuitively sense in vibrant, high-quality urban neighborhoods.”***

Signe Kongebro, Global Director  
Henning Larsen / Rambøll

# 3.1 Application of the Methodological Approach

## Correlation between Placemaking “Sight Score” and Economic Data

### Placemaking “Sight Score” in Copenhagen Put into Action

To show how this method is applied in practice, we conducted a case study in Copenhagen. Here, we apply Placemaking's “Sight Score” across different urban areas and link it to actual economic and societal data.

The study is based on a questionnaire survey of 682 residents across 113 postal codes in central Copenhagen. Respondents were asked to rate their primary everyday area—such as Nyhavn, Carlsbergbyen, Enghave Plads, and Århusgadekvarteret—based on principles of “Jan Gehl's 12 Qualities Criteria” for attractive urban life. The selected areas were subsequently grouped into 28 distinct urban areas, which form the basis of the analysis.

With Placemaking “Sight Score” established across 28 urban areas in Copenhagen, the next step is to investigate how the perceived quality of public space relates to specific economic indicators.



### Linking Placemaking Data with Economic Indicators

To link placemaking to economic and societal outcomes, the score has been integrated with several external data sources. These include:

- Real estate sales data: Transaction data from the Danish housing market, used to analyze price per m<sup>2</sup> and price variation across areas.
- Geographic data (GIS): We estimated and verified the distance to three key physical factors: distance to the coastline, distance to the city center (CBD), and distance to educational institutions.

By linking these data sources with perceptions of urban space quality, we create a holistic analysis that combines human experience and socio-economic evidence.

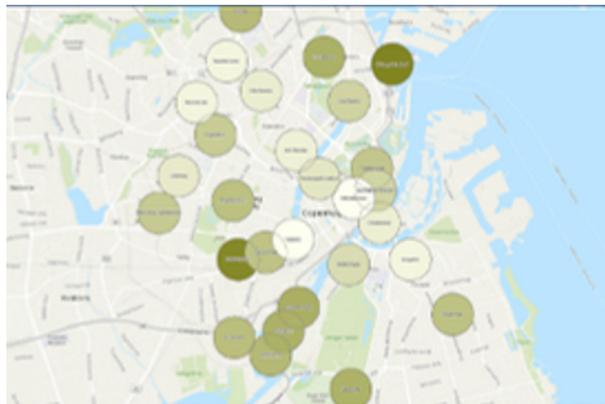
The purpose of the corrections is to remove some of the most likely sources of bias in the relationship between placemaking and price. The method does not account for all factors, but focuses on those most likely to distort the analysis.



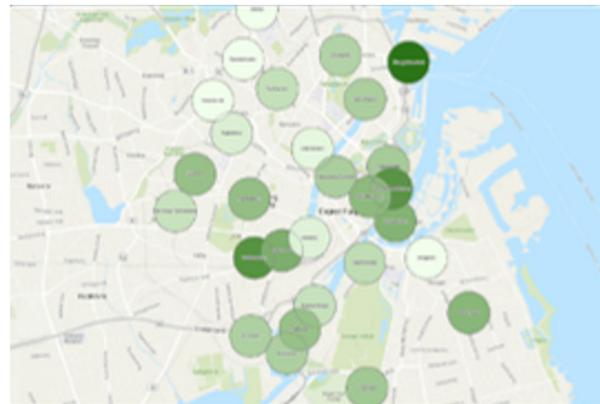
# 3.2 Quality of Urban Space and Housing Prices

## Correlation between Placemaking “Sight Score” and Property Prices

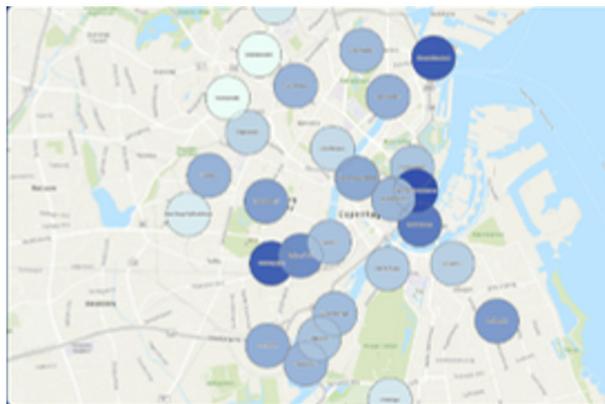
Visualization of collected data on Placemaking “Sight Score” and property prices distributed across 28 distinct urban areas in Copenhagen



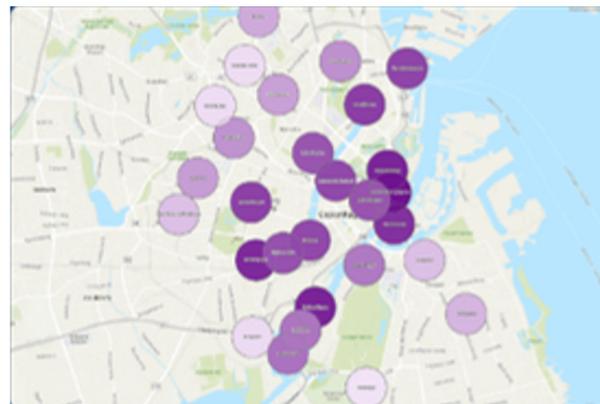
Protection



Comfort



Enjoyment



Property Prices

### When Perceived Quality Is Reflected in the Housing Market

With this data, we can now analyze how the Placemaking “Sight Score” relates to concrete economic outcomes. We initially focused on the housing market as a key parameter and analyzed how the ‘12 Quality Criteria’ relates to price per square meter for owner-occupied housing.

To understand the relationship between placemaking quality and property values, we cross-checked the questionnaire results, based on Jan Gehl’s three main themes, against the price per square meter for residential units. In doing so, we begin to see that places with safe, comfortable, and inspiring streets and public spaces correlate with areas where property values have risen, such as Enghave Plads and Nyhavn, as well as newly developed neighbourhoods in Copenhagen where Gehl’s quality criteria have been applied consistently, such as Århusgadekvarteret in Nordhavn and Carlsbergbyen.

# 3.3 Placemaking Influences Market Behavior

## Property Prices Show a 5% Increase, and in Many Cases, Much More.

### Placemaking's direct and indirect value creation

Based on Rambøll's calculations, an improvement in Placemaking "Sight Score" of 0.25 points is estimated to increase housing prices by approximately 5%. By way of comparison, there is roughly a 0.25-point difference in Placemaking "Sight Score" between Gl. Sydhavn and Århusgadekvarteret, which provides a concrete sense of the scale of the effect. The effect is most pronounced for homes near the center of the area and decreases with increasing distance.

The effect on housing prices is only one part of the overall story of placemaking's value. Being able to measure a clear economic effect here underscores that the perceived quality of public space influences both market behavior and investments. Beyond the property market, there is also significant potential to measure social, cultural, and long-term societal effects, which cannot yet be fully quantified. The results should therefore be seen not as definitive, but as a step along the way. Even so, they already provide clear evidence that placemaking can be measured, and they invite us to rethink what value creation in urban development actually means. (Stern, M. J., 2014) (Morley, E., & Winkler, M. K., 2014)

### Urban space as a driver of growth and resilience

Other studies, such as The Value of Public Space and The Case for Open Space, point out that high-quality parks and public space improve the urban environment and can also lead to significant increases in property values. In some cases, values rise by up to 40% for properties located close to green and public spaces (CABE, 2004). From an efficiency perspective, investments in high-quality public space also reduce risk. They lower maintenance costs and vandalism, increase resilience by limiting damage and insurance costs, and support more sustainable operations through lower energy consumption and targeted environmental measures.

Strong placemaking improves day-to-day operations by reducing vacancy in shops and housing, creating more a balanced mix of owners and tenants, and developing retail environments where independent stores and chains complement each other. This increases productivity and supports partnerships that promote collaboration, business development, and economic activity. However, investments in urban space do not automatically create vibrant urban areas. It requires the right investments. We see this, for example, in central London, where large public investments have not necessarily created city life outside working hours.

### Placemaking as social value creation

Placemaking requires more than physical improvements. It is about activating a place's identity, culture, and communities through activities, programming, and spaces where young people and creative talent can thrive. These elements enhance the user experience, strengthen social relationships, and create a sense of ownership and belonging, and such values are often difficult to measure. It is striking that some areas achieve high Placemaking "Sight Scores" despite relatively limited investment in public space. This is especially true of neighborhoods with strong, self-organized creative environments, such as Nørrebro and Vesterbro, where community, culture, and everyday activity create perceived quality and attractiveness.

The goal of value creation through placemaking is therefore not only to increase price per square meter, but also to build robust communities and improve project success rates, both in underperforming areas and in new neighborhoods. It is about reducing risk, speeding up development, and ensuring that a place quickly begins to feel like a vibrant and meaningful part of the city.

### The identity of a place as a catalyst for perceived quality

We can observe that some relatively new development areas with high square-meter prices but less focus on Placemaking qualities—such as Sluseholmen and Islands Brygge—do not achieve the same level of perceived value. At the same time, historically consolidated areas that have received investments in public urban spaces show price increases, but not necessarily a corresponding rise in Placemaking “Sight Score.”

The conclusion is that safety, comfort, and inspiration are linked to housing prices. However, a closer look reveals that the highest-ranking areas are those with a strong sense of place, thereby raising their overall score.

There are also areas with a high Placemaking “Sight Score” but a low degree of identity. These more generic places do not create the same level of value as areas shaped by stronger placemaking efforts. This underscores that placemaking is more than safety, comfort, and inspiration. It is about the user experience of a place, the identity it conveys, and the range of everyday experiences it enables.



The figure illustrates the relationship between Placemaking “Sight Score” and property prices, without controlling for other factors. Areas with a higher Placemaking “Sight Score” typically also have a higher price per square meter. Source: Rambøll Management Consulting



Note: The graph shows the correlation between average prices per square meter in an urban area and average 12 Qualities Criteria without accounting for other factors from the “Sight Score”. The estimation results take these factors into account.

# From Measurability to Property Value

## Placemaking Does Not Occur in a Vacuum

Now that we have translated placemaking into measurable components, we can take the next step toward understanding its economic value, by increasing property value. We want to understand the relationship between placemaking and economic outcomes.

How does improving placemaking affect the economic conditions in an area?

In very simple terms, this relationship can be described by the following equation:

**The Placemaking Value Creation model, developed by Rambøll, links the experience of a place, measured through 12 quality criteria (Placemaking “Sight Score”), with the increase in economic value reflected in residential prices per square meter.**

$$P(a,h,t) = \beta \cdot [PM] (a,t) + \epsilon(a,h,t)$$

But the relationship is not simple. Placemaking does not happen in a vacuum. Economic outcomes, such as property prices and local growth, also depend on factors like infrastructure, school quality, and neighborhood income levels. We therefore cannot simply estimate  $\beta$  in isolation, but must use robust statistical methods to isolate the true effect of placemaking.

### The Equation in Words

The equation shows the correlation between improvements in placemaking and economic conditions in an area. Each element of the equation is defined as follows:

P: Economic outcome:

We examine, for example, property prices, local economic activity, and migration rates.

PM: Placemaking “Sight Score”.

$\beta$ : The effect we aim to estimate indicates how much an improvement in placemaking affects economic results.

$\epsilon$ : Other factors

All other factors that also affect the economic result (P) but are not directly measured through Placemaking “Sight Score”

# From Measurability to Property Value

## Statistical Methods Rather Than Random Correlations

To make a precise statement about the economic significance of placemaking, we need statistical methods that measure the actual effect rather than merely observing a random correlation. Economic results are influenced by many factors. If we do not control for these, we risk over- or underestimating the true significance of placemaking.

We therefore use a systematic approach, working step by step toward a more accurate estimate. This allows focusing on changes over time within the same area, providing a stronger estimate of placemaking's impact. The following methods can be used to ensure we handle this complexity as effectively as possible:

### 1) Comparison of similar areas (“matched comparisons”)

### 2) Hedonic regression analysis

### 3) Fixed effects models

By using these methods, we can more accurately assess how placemaking contributes to economic outcomes, while avoiding conclusions based on random correlations. Depending on the dataset and context, other methods may also be relevant.

For example, if we have before-and-after data for placemaking initiatives, a difference-in-differences analysis would be a strong methodological choice. No single method is perfect on its own, so we often combine several approaches to ensure robust, reliable results.



*The methodological approaches unfolded*

#### **Comparing similar areas:**

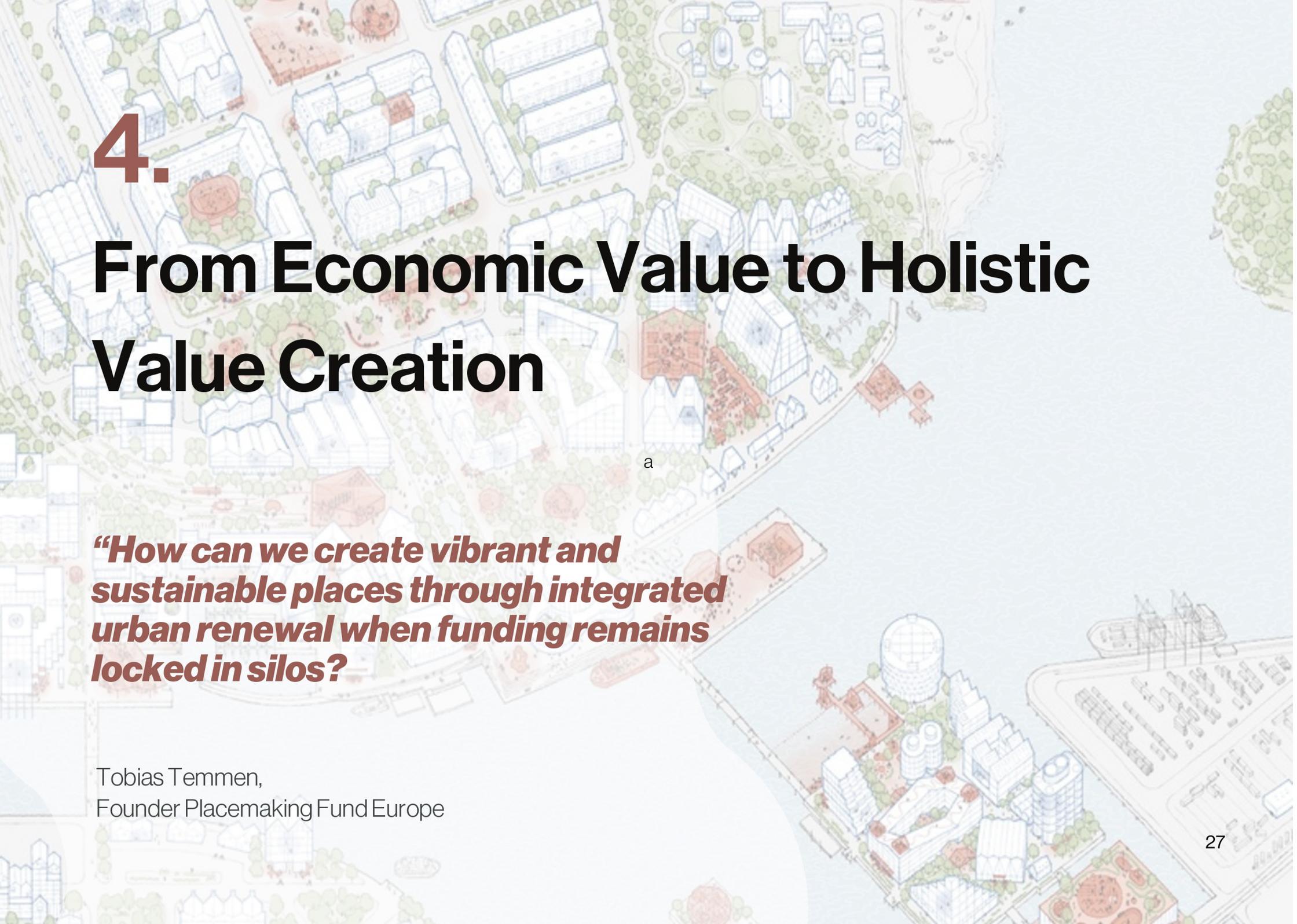
- A basic method for isolating the effect of placemaking is to compare areas that are similar but differ in their Placemaking “Sight Score.” If we see differences in economic performance between areas that are otherwise similar, we can conclude that placemaking plays a role.

#### **Hedonic regression analysis:**

- This method is often used to analyze property prices and economic activity. Here, we control for a wide range of factors, including infrastructure, social conditions, and demographics, to isolate the specific effect of placemaking.

#### **Fixed effects models:**

- If we have data across several time periods, we can use fixed effects models to reduce bias from unobserved differences between areas.

An architectural rendering of a city waterfront development. The scene shows a mix of modern and traditional buildings, green spaces with trees, and a waterfront area with a boat. The rendering is in a light, sketchy style with some color washes. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

4.

# From Economic Value to Holistic Value Creation

***“How can we create vibrant and sustainable places through integrated urban renewal when funding remains locked in silos?”***

Tobias Temmen,  
Founder Placemaking Fund Europe

# A Broader Understanding

## Connection to Societal Outcomes

As mentioned earlier, placemaking is not just about direct economic value creation. Through our data collection and analysis, we have investigated whether placemaking is also associated with other societal outcomes.

### **Tendency toward a correlation between low loneliness and placemaking**

One interesting indication is the relationship to reported loneliness. Initial analyses indicate that residents in areas with high Placemaking “Sight Scores” tend to feel less lonely, based on their own assessments.

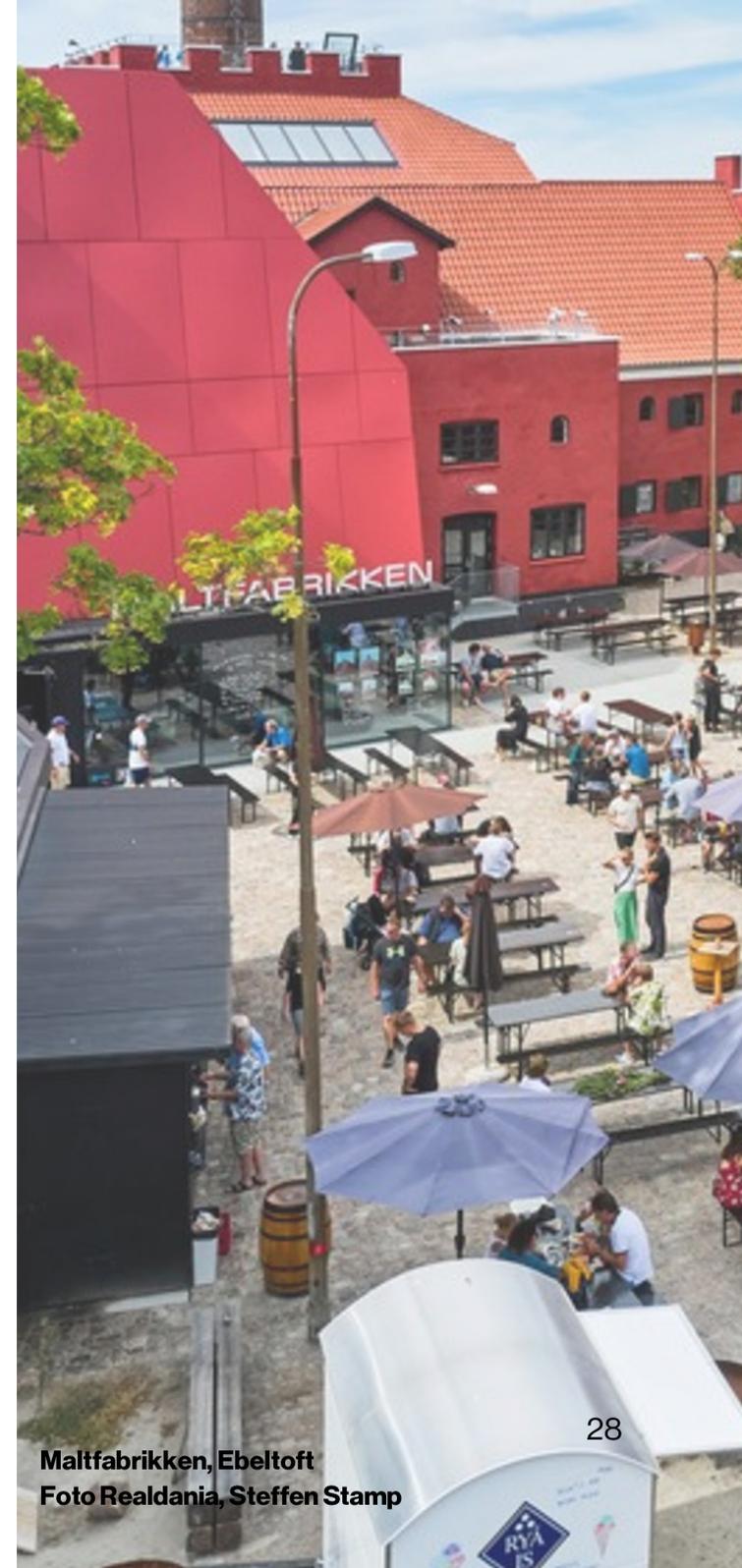
This correlation is not necessarily causative, and the results should be interpreted with caution. However, these findings suggest that the quality of urban spaces can play an important role in people’s experience of social connectedness and, over time, may affect well-being, health, and socio-economic outcomes. This preliminary result warrants further investigation.

### **Indications of correlations between visitors to a place and placemaking**

In addition to the results on housing prices and loneliness, preliminary analyses also show positive trends between Placemaking “Sight Score” and the number of visitors in several urban areas.

This indicates that the perceived quality of urban spaces matters not only to those who live there, but also to those who choose to visit. Placemaking can therefore contribute to local activity, visibility, and a place’s attractiveness. We are also working to expand the Placemaking “Sight Score” by integrating additional data, such as visitor activity and mobility patterns, to gain a deeper understanding of how urban spaces attract people and support public life. We have chosen to examine loneliness and visitor activity as two different, but complementary, perspectives on the significance of placemaking. Loneliness is closely linked to quality of life and mental health, and is therefore relevant when we examine whether good urban spaces also strengthen communities and well-being. Visitor numbers provide insight into how places are used and how they attract activity. Using new data sources, such as mobility and movement data, we can begin to measure social and functional presence in urban spaces.

These analyses should primarily be seen as a supplement to the main economic analysis and as a way of testing how the value of placemaking can be understood from multiple perspectives. The results are preliminary, but point to interesting trends that should be explored further.



**Maltfabrikken, Ebeltoft**  
**Foto Realdania, Steffen Stamp**

# The Value of Meaningful Urban Spaces

## Decision-Making Framework for the Cities of the Future

Through this project, we have taken an important step toward proving and quantifying the qualities we intuitively sense in urban spaces. By combining respondents' experiences with economic data, we are now closer to integrating these qualities into the decision-making process for the cities of the future. This means we are beginning to put numbers on what has previously been difficult to measure, and in doing so, develop more measurable and effective placemaking initiatives.

We have made important progress, but the work is far from finished. Placemaking is still in its infancy as a concrete and measurable discipline. The method we have developed is not a definitive solution, but rather a flexible approach that can be adapted and expanded as needed. There is still much to learn about how placemaking affects different types of urban areas and how the value of these initiatives unfolds across economic, social, and cultural dimensions.

The method has already been applied in Copenhagen as a case study, but it has significant potential for use in other cities and contexts where relevant data is available, and there is a deep understanding of local conditions.

By adapting the method across different geographical areas, we can expand the ways in which placemaking can contribute to creating vibrant and functional urban spaces.

Although the goal has been to measure the effects of placemaking, the results depend heavily on successful local initiatives. This places strategic demands on municipalities, foundations, and local urban and property developers, who must ensure that placemaking is organized and prioritized effectively. Only when the work is well anchored locally can it reach its full potential and deliver the greatest possible economic benefit.

In this context, it is important to highlight a few key development points that municipal actors and others leading placemaking initiatives should keep in mind. These points can help ensure that the development of urban spaces is viable both economically and socially.

## Key Placemaking Indicators

### Attractive and dynamic places

- Create a cluster of amenities and attractive destinations for a variety of user groups.
- Promote soft mobility in urban spaces.
- Multi-program spaces to ensure flexibility and greater use.

### Economic diversity & sustainability

- Varied lease sizes and pricing, and curate commercial activity.
- Develop innovative ownership models for ground floors that support sustainable development.
- Align placemaking strategies with municipal planning to ensure mutual business cases.

### Citizen involvement and partnerships

- Co-create with residents through both in-person and digital engagement.
- Build strong partnerships with local actors and associations to increase engagement.
- Develop an event and activity strategy to keep places active over time.

### Impact measurement and evaluation

- Define KPIs and principles to measure placemaking effects.
- Develop new concepts for shops and commercial space to meet community needs.

# Placemaking as a Catalyst

## Overall Value Perspective from the Conference Dialogue

During the Placemaking Conference – The Value of Placemaking in Urban Development, it became clear that value creation through placemaking extends far beyond economic effects alone. Reflections from participants, both speakers and audience members, demonstrated that the value of a place consists of both measurable and less measurable qualities. Some are directly economic and can be quantified through data, while others are more subjective, but no less important.

The project's analyses confirmed that placemaking affects both visible factors, such as property prices, and less visible factors, such as mental well-being, social relations, and local identity. It is therefore clear that placemaking operates at the intersection of the objective and the subjective. Both types of value influence each other and are necessary to understand the full potential of an urban space.

After the conference, we systematized these insights into a comprehensive matrix of value creation in placemaking. The matrix was developed through a process that consolidated experiences from the project's case visits, external reports (including *The Value of Public Space* and *The Case for Open Space*), and internal workshops. The intention has been to create a holistic, useful tool for municipalities, developers, and consultants to assess the quality and potential of placemaking initiatives.

This chapter presents the matrix and describes its structure, purpose, and each of the key parameters.



# Placemaking "Sight Score"

## Matrix for Placemaking Value Creation

The development of Placemaking "Sight Score" stems from a central question that has been present throughout the project: How can the value creation of placemaking be understood, structured, and assessed in a way that encompasses both economic effects and the more complex social, cultural, and spatial qualities? Placemaking "Sight Score" is an overall assessment of a place's quality, based on physical, social, and functional factors that determine how lively and attractive the place is perceived to be.

Through analyses, case visits, and dialogues with professionals, municipalities, and practitioners, it has become clear that placemaking cannot be reduced to one type of value or a single measurement method. On the contrary, value arises from the interaction between measurable effects and more experiential, relational qualities, which together shape a place over time. The matrix is therefore based on three fundamental insights from the previous chapters of the report:

To capture these three tracks, the Placemaking "Sight Score" matrix is structured around five themes that together cover the economic, operational, spatial, and human dimensions of value creation: return on investment, Performance and robustness, property and daily operations, spatial quality, and user experience.

### 1. Placemaking creates both direct and indirect economic value

The analysis from Copenhagen documents a measurable correlation between Placemaking "Sight Score" and property prices. An improvement of 0.25 points can explain an overall price increase of around 5 percent. This emphasizes that the perceived quality of urban spaces influences market behavior, investments, and returns.

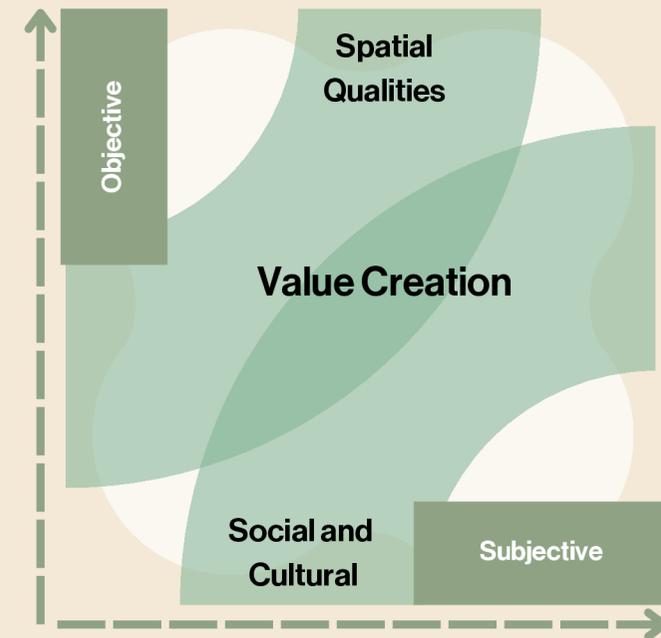
### 2. Spatial qualities influence use, operation, and everyday life

The data show that safety, comfort, and inspiring surroundings are closely linked to both the actual use of urban spaces and users' perceived value. Strong spatial qualities support longer stays, more activity, and more robust operational solutions.

### 3. Social and cultural values are crucial but often overlooked

Placemaking affects not only the economy and physical use, but also well-being, social relationships, and community building. Correlations between placemaking, lower self-reported loneliness, and increased visitor activity show that social and cultural qualities play a central role in the long-term value of places.

**Placemaking "Sight Score"**  
Matrix for placemaking value creation



# Themes and Parameters in the Matrix

## A. Return on Investment

Economic and Brand Value

This theme examines economic returns and market visibility. Based on the analysis in Copenhagen, placemaking can directly influence square meter prices, absorption rates, and the area's attractiveness to investors.

Parameters:

- **Adds value per m<sup>2</sup>**
- **Accelerated return on investment**
- **Investor confidence**
- **Positive local identity**
- **Collaboration platforms**
- **Governance and management**
- **Stable increase in land and property values**



## B. Performance

Costs, Resilience, and Robustness

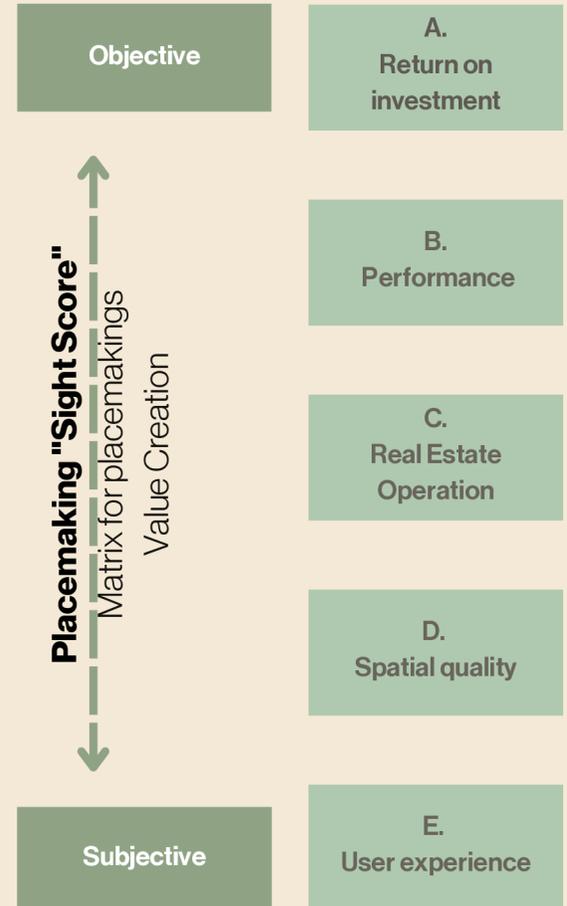
Focuses on the site's systemic efficiency and robustness, including resource consumption, climatic conditions, and risk reduction. The parameters describe how the area functions as a unified system over time. As described in Chapter 3, strong urban spaces often reduce vandalism, damage, and insurance costs.

Parameters:

- **Balance between jobs and residents**
- **Reduced maintenance and PR costs**
- **Air, noise, and light pollution**
- **Lower resource consumption (energy and water)**
- **Temperature and wind conditions**
- **Environmental initiatives**
- **Reduction of damage and insurance costs**



Themes and parameters in the matrix



# Themes and Parameters in the Matrix

## C. Real Estate Operation

Use, function, economic activity

Property & daily operations focus on the concrete, day-to-day, and market-related effects of placemaking, including use, leasing, trade, and accessibility in everyday life. Chapter 3 shows that strong placemaking can reduce vacancy rates, increase turnover, and strengthen both retail trade and local jobs.

Parameters:

- **Simple rules**
- **Leasing and sales activity**
- **Cost-effective operation of public spaces**
- **Owners vs. tenants**
- **Access to daily functions within walking distance**
- **Local economic impact**
- **Flexibility and multifunctional use**



## D. Spatial Quality

Physical characteristics of the site

This section builds directly on Gehl's quality criteria (protection, comfort, experience) from Chapter 2.

Parameters:

- **Comfort, aesthetics, and sensory experience**
- **Storytelling and narrative**
- **Length of stay**
- **Square meters of green space per person**
- **Relationship between public and private spaces**
- **Opportunities for activities, including curated cultural spaces (events, activities)**
- **Balanced retail character (independent vs. chain stores)**
- **Walkability and bikeability**



## E. User Experience

Health, well-being, and community

This theme captures the values described in the report as “hidden drivers” – social relationships, well-being, identity, and a sense of community.

Parameters:

- **Opportunities for physical activity**
- **Perception of well-being**
- **Cultural vitality**
- **Social balance**
- **Citizen influence**
- **Physical and social inclusion**
- **Identity and acceptance**
- **Shared activities and initiatives**



# A. Return on Investment

## Economic and Brand Value

This theme examines economic returns and market visibility. Based on the analysis in Copenhagen, placemaking will directly affect square meter prices, absorption rates, and the attractiveness of areas to investors.

### KEY PARAMETERS

**MONEY**  
Added Value per m<sup>2</sup>  
Measures how placemaking contributes to property value uplift, supported by research showing 10–20 percent gains near quality public space.

**TIME**  
Accelerated Return on Investment  
Speed at which investments pay off through faster absorption, leasing, and commercial activity. The Urban Land Institute (ULI) highlights this benefit.

**RISK**  
Investor confidence  
Degree of market and stakeholder confidence in the area, which stimulates investment in new development and broader improvement initiatives.

**BRAND**  
Positive Local Identity  
Strength of identity, aesthetics, and perception—a proven driver of both property value and visitation value.

**PARTNERSHIPS**  
Collaborative platforms  
The strength of governance, coalitions, and partnerships with local institutions.

**GOVERNANCE**  
Governance & Stewardship  
Assesses how responsibilities, roles, and stewardship models for maintenance, programming, partnerships, and decisions are defined, ensuring continuity, participation, and performance

**LONG TERM VALUE**  
consistent land value increase  
Experience of sustained and consistent increase in value, reflected in both sales prices and building stock valuations, with positive added value attributable to the quality of open spaces.

### KPI'S

**Change in property prices vs. baseline**  
 ⊖ No measurable increase  
 ⊕ Strong uplift above market baseline  
 Data Source: EjendomDanmark, BBR, local property registries, developer sales data

**Time to lease/sales absorption rate**  
 ⊖ Very slow leasing and low absorption  
 ⊕ Fast leasing, early activation, clear ROI gains  
 Data source: Developer sales records, real estate brokers, municipal building registries

**Developers' sales records, real estate agents**  
 ⊖ High investment risk  
 ⊕ High investor confidence  
 Data source: Developers' pipeline data, municipal investment reports, industry reports

**Developers' pipeline data, municipal investment reports**  
 ⊖ Poor or negative local perception  
 ⊕ Strong and consistent identity with positive local and external perception  
 Data source: Sentiment analysis, perception surveys, social media analysis

**Number and quality of cross-sector partnerships**  
 ⊖ No collaboration  
 ⊕ Strong, active multi-partner governance  
 Data source: Stakeholder mapping, municipal governance records

**Existence of a place management model**  
 ⊖ Weak or lack of governance  
 ⊕ High-performance governance  
 Data source: Governance documents, operating agreements, municipal registers

**5–10 year price trend above or equal to city benchmark**  
 ⊖ Stagnant or declining property value  
 ⊕ Consistent increase in value over time  
 Data source: 5–10-year price development compared to the city benchmark

# B. Performance

## Cost, Risk, Resilience

Effectiveness is about operation, resiliency, and sustainability. As described in Chapter 3, strong urban spaces often reduce vandalism, damage, and insurance costs, while creating more resilient operating conditions over time.

### KEY PARAMETERS

**BALANCE OF USERS**  
Balance between jobs and residents  
A good mix supports all-day vibrancy.

**SAFETY**  
Reduced maintenance and PR costs  
Reflects how improved public spaces reduce vandalism, conflicts, and the need for costly interventions.

**ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION**  
Air, noise, and light pollution  
The environment offers clean air, low noise levels, and limited light pollution.

**LOWER RESOURCE CONSUMPTION**  
Lower Resource Consumption  
Energy-efficient lighting, water systems, and efficient operations.

**CLIMATE COMFORT**  
Temperature and wind conditions  
The site provides suitable temperature, humidity, and airflow conditions that support both outdoor and indoor activities..

**CLIMATE POSITIVE**  
Environmental initiatives  
Measures how the area supports to climate mitigation and adaptation through biodiversity, low-emission materials, nature-based solutions, and long-term resilience strategies.

**RESILIENCE**  
Mitigation of damage and insurance costs  
How solutions mitigate negative impacts related to current societal, environmental, and economic challenges.

### KPI'S

**Ratio: jobs per resident**  
⊖ Monofunctional area  
⊕ **Balanced user profile, vibrant throughout the day**  
Data source: Statistics Denmark, municipal employment database

**Number of vandalism cases, repair costs**  
⊖ High level of vandalism and complaints  
⊕ **Low level of vandalism and low corrective costs**  
Data source: Police data, municipal maintenance logs

**Pollution index (air particles, dB noise level, light measurements)**  
⊖ High levels of air, noise, and light pollution  
⊕ **Low levels of air, noise, and light pollution**  
Data source: Danish Environmental Protection Agency, municipal environmental department

**kWh per m<sup>2</sup> and m<sup>3</sup> of water per household/area**  
⊖ High consumption  
⊕ **Low consumption and optimized operations**  
Data source: kWh per m<sup>2</sup> and m<sup>3</sup> of water per household/area

**Thermal comfort index, shaded coverage, wind comfort**  
⊖ Low climate comfort  
⊕ **High climate comfort**  
Data source: Thermal comfort index, shaded area, wind comfort

**Quantity and quality of nature-based solutions, biodiversity score**  
⊖ No initiatives  
⊕ **Strong environmental performance and innovation**  
Data source: GIS biodiversity mapping, municipal climate section

**Number of climate damage incidents, insurance premiums**  
⊖ Frequent repairs and high insurance risk  
⊕ **High resilience with low damage costs**  
Data source: Number of climate damage incidents, insurance premiums

# C. Real Estate Operation

## Use, Function, Economic Activity

This chapter measures how placemaking affects leasing, retail activity, operations, and day-to-day use. Chapter 3 shows that strong placemaking can reduce vacancy, increase sales, and strengthen both retail and local employment.

### KEY PARAMETERS

**REGULATORY SIMPLICITY**  
Simple Rules  
Clarity, predictability, and simplicity in rules for the use of public spaces, event permits, outdoor seating, temporary structures, and locally rooted activities.

**VACANCY**  
Rental and sales activity  
  
Placemaking's ability to reduce vacancy and improve tenant retention.

**MAINTENANCE COSTS**  
Cost-effective maintenance of public spaces  
  
The cost of maintaining public spaces in good condition.

**OWNERSHIP**  
Owners vs. tenants  
A mix of ownership types that creates stability and social cohesion.

**ACCESS TO DAILY AMENITIES**  
Daily needs within walking distance  
  
Proximity and access to everyday services and activities.

**LOCAL ECONOMIC OUTPUT**  
Local economic effect  
How placemaking increases footfall, consumption, and job creation.

**FLEXIBILITY**  
Flexibility and multifunctional use  
  
The degree to which spaces support multiple uses and can easily adapt to changing needs, activities, and events.

### KPI'S

**Insurance companies, municipal risk registries**  
⊖ Highly complex regulations  
⊕ **Simple, clear, and user-friendly regulations**  
Data source: Number of steps to obtain permission, average processing time

**Vacancy rate**  
⊖ High vacancy  
⊕ **Low vacancy, stable long-term tenants**  
Data source: Real estate agents (Colliers, Cushman), developer portfolios

**Annual operating costs in DKK per m<sup>2</sup>**  
⊖ High costs, poor condition  
⊕ **Efficient, cost-effective, high-quality operation**  
Data source: Municipality or developer's operations department

**Ownership mix**  
⊖ Single ownership type  
⊕ **Balanced, stable mix**  
Data source: BBR Register, Statistics Denmark

**Number of daily services within a 5–15 minute walk**  
⊖ Limited daily services nearby  
⊕ **Wide variety of daily services nearby**  
Data source: GIS mapping, mobility apps, local business register

**Footfall, sales, and dwell time**  
⊖ Low economic activity  
⊕ **High footfall and strong business performance**  
Datakilde: Detailomsætningsdata, fodgængertællere, teledata

**Number of hours public spaces are used per week; diversity of use**  
⊖ Rigid, underused spaces  
⊕ **Highly flexible, well-used spaces**  
Data source: Studies of urban life, observations, event logs

# D. Spatial Quality

## Physical Characteristics of the Site

This section is based on Gehl's quality criteria (protection, comfort, experience) from Chapter 2 and has been expanded to include elements relevant to a 2026 context (quality of life in urban spaces).

### KEY PARAMETERS

**AESTHETIC QUALITY**  
Comfort, aesthetics, and sensory experience

Attractive public spaces shaped by strong urban design—places people want to spend time.

**PLACE IDENTITY**  
Storytelling and narrative

Distinctiveness, recognizability, and cultural significance. Reflects how strongly locals and visitors perceive the place as unique and rooted in history, culture, design, or narrative.

**LENGTH OF STAY**  
Length of stay

People spend more time in the space; sitting, lingering, socializing, or slowing their pace.

**GREEN SPACES**  
m<sup>2</sup> of green space per person

Quantity and distribution of green areas.

**EVENTS & ACTIVITIES**  
Opportunities for activities

The space provides opportunities for sitting, socialising, exercising and participating in seasonal events that lift quality in the everyday life.

**WALKABILITY**  
Walking and biking

Ability to walk or bike between daily activities on safe and pleasant routes.

**RETAIL EXPERIENCE**  
Character balance (independent vs. chains)

A healthy mix of independent shops and anchor stores supports lively, attractive shopping streets.

### KPI'S

**User satisfaction score, comfort index, sensory quality assessment**

- ⊖ Negative perception of the space's design
- ⊕ Positive perception of the space's design

Data source: Questionnaire surveys; expert assessments

**Perception surveys; recognition score(...)**

- ⊖ Generic environment; hard to recognize or describe
- ⊕ People can clearly describe what the place "stands for"

Data source: Perception surveys; observations

**Average dwell time measured onsite**

- ⊖ Short time spent in the space
- ⊕ Long time spent in the space

Data source: Sensor data; observational studies

**m<sup>2</sup> of green space per resident; tree coverage (%)**

- ⊖ Very limited green space
- ⊕ Abundant, well-distributed urban nature

Data source: GIS mapping; municipal parks department

**Number of events; diversity of programs**

- ⊖ Insufficient urban infrastructure, equipment, and organized events
- ⊕ Variation in urban infrastructure, equipment, and organized events

Data source: Municipal culture department, event log files

**WalkScore; % of safe routes to daily functions**

- ⊖ Most daily needs require more than a 15-minute walk/bike
- ⊕ Daily needs within a 5–15 minute walk/bike

Data source: GIS mobility mapping

**Diversity index of independent vs. chain stores**

- ⊖ Mono-profile retail
- ⊕ Diverse, complementary retail mix

Data source: Diversity index of independent vs. chain stores

# E. User Experience

## Health, Wellbeing and Community

This theme captures the values described in the report as “hidden drivers” – social relationships, well-being, identity, and a sense of community.

### KEY PARAMETERS

**PHYSICAL HEALTH**  
Opportunities for physical activity

The space offers opportunities for positive physical activity.

**MENTAL WELL-BEING**  
Perceived well-being

The environment is perceived as inspiring, creating calm, a sense of security, comfort, and good sensory quality.

**CULTURAL VITALITY**  
Cultural vitality

Measures the vibrancy, diversity, and accessibility of cultural activities, local creative expression, and opportunities for artistic production that shape the place's identity and attractiveness.

**CO-CREATION**  
Local residents' influence decisions

The extent to which local residents have real opportunities to shape the place through participation, co-creation, and influence over initiatives and development decisions.

**INCLUSION**  
Physical and social inclusion

Explicitly takes into account people with special physical needs and marginalized groups in society.

**BELONGING**  
Identity and acceptance

Whether people feel included and have accessible channels to express their opinions, thoughts, and feelings to a broader community.

**COMMUNITY**  
Shared activities and initiatives

Formal and informal community life.

### KPI'S

**% of physically active population (sport, walk, exercising)**

- ⊖ Poor walkability and bikeability
- ⊕ Strong active-lifestyle environment

Data source: Health surveys; mobility data

**Perception of safety, tranquility, and comfort (survey index)**

- ⊖ Stressful environment
- ⊕ High level of well-being, relaxing atmosphere

Data source: User surveys; sentiment-analysis tools

**Diversity of locally driven social and cultural events/month**

- ⊖ Few events; limited creative expression; inaccessible cultural venues
- ⊕ Frequent events; strong local creativity; accessible cultural venues

Data source: Cultural institutions, local communities, municipal cultural departments, event calendars.

**Number of co-creation activities; participation/response rate**

- ⊖ No participation
- ⊕ Strong co-creation and empowerment

Data source: Participation logs; digital tools (Maptionnaire, CitizenLab)

**Accessibility audits; compliance with universal design**

- ⊖ Low inclusion
- ⊕ High inclusion

Data source: Accessibility studies; disability organizations

**Percentage who feel included despite individual differences**

- ⊖ Low sense of belonging
- ⊕ Strong, inclusive sense of place

Data source: Perception surveys; user research (incl. organizations where relevant)

**Number of local initiatives; volunteer hours**

- ⊖ No community life
- ⊕ Strong, self-sustaining communities

Data source: Local groups; NGO partnerships

# From Assessment to Strategic Prioritization

## Measure Objective and Subjective Value Creation for a Place

The figure visualizes the results from a placemaking perspective and provides an overview of the site's current performance and development potential. By highlighting both strengths and weaknesses, the visualization provides a solid basis for prioritizing initiatives with the greatest impact. Each theme consists of a set of parameters, each assessed on a scale from 1 (weak) to 5 (strong). The parameters are formulated to support quantitative data, professional assessments, and local insights, depending on context and data availability.

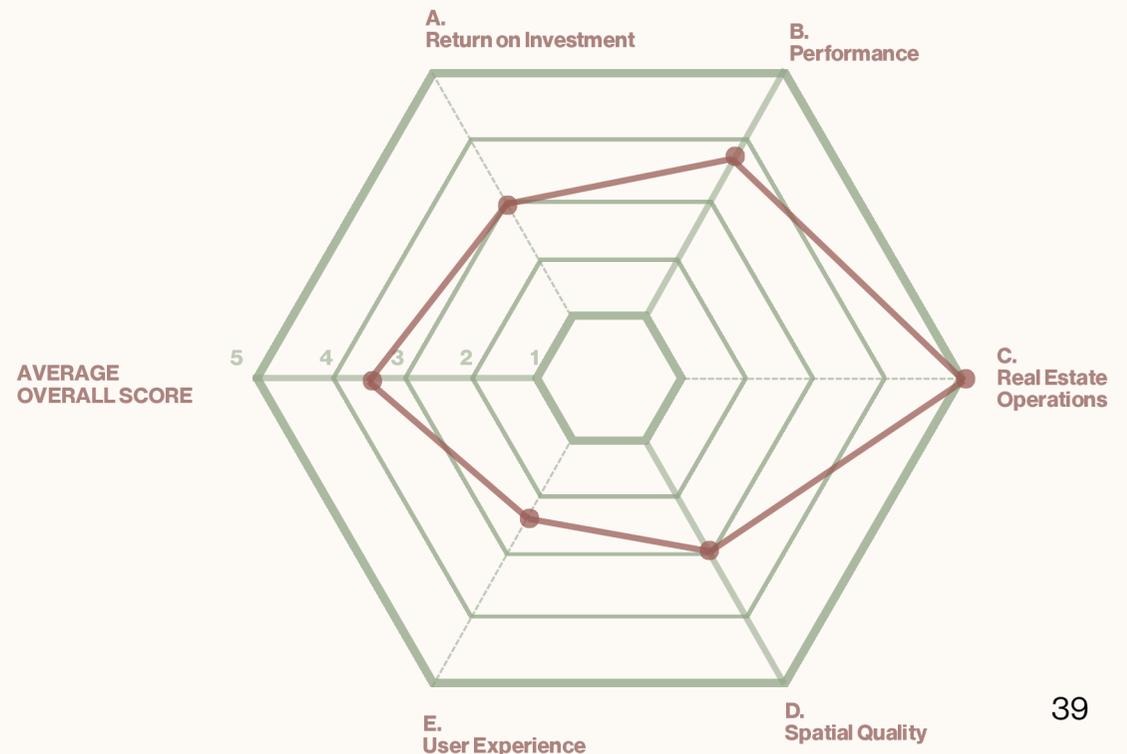
Placemaking "Sight Score" should not be understood as a definitive answer, but as a structured starting point for better decisions, more informed priorities, and a more nuanced understanding of how placemaking creates value in urban development.

The matrix has been developed as:

- [a common dialogue tool](#) for municipalities, developers, and consultants
- [an assessment tool](#) that can be used before, during, and after placemaking initiatives
- [a strategic overview](#) that highlights both objective and perceived value drivers
- [a flexible method](#) that can be expanded and refined with data on property sales, mobility, sensory data, surveys, and qualitative studies

Visualizing parameters in the Volcano Model: Matrix for placemaking value creation

A. Return on investment	B. Performance	C. Real Estate Operations	D. Spatial Quality	E. User Experience	AVERAGE OVERALL SCORE
3.1	3.8	5.0	2.0	1.5	3.5



# Measure the Value of Placemaking

## Placemaking ‘Sight Score’ as a Framework for Understanding Economic, Social, and Perceived Value

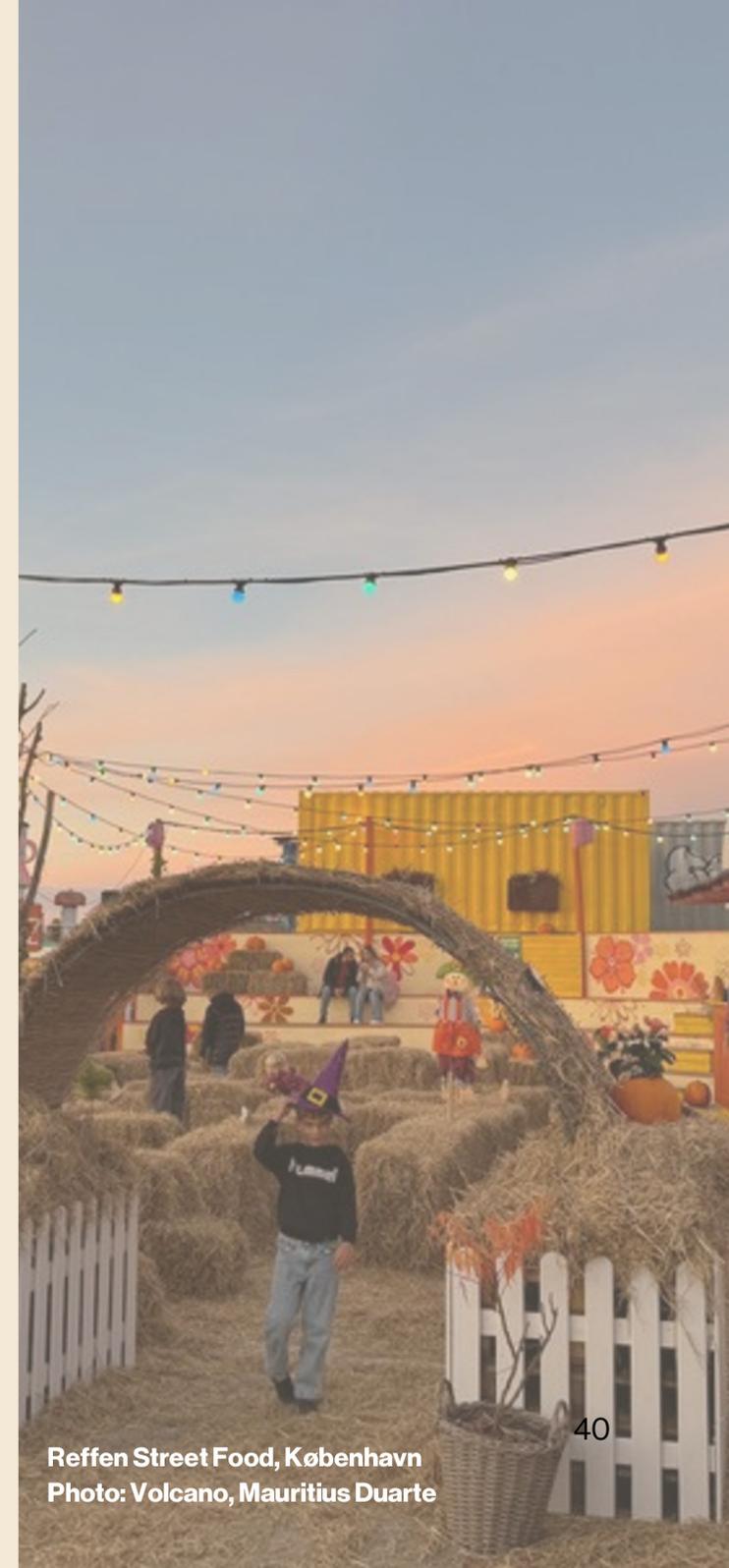
### A Tool for Connecting Analysis, Dialogue, and Action

Placemaking “Sight Score” functions both as an analytical tool, based on quantitative data, and as a qualitative framework for capturing experiences and perceptions of places through questionnaires and facilitated workshop dialogue. The model’s strength lies in its ability to establish a shared starting point for understanding both a place’s performance and its perceived quality, viewed through placemaking value creation and informed by a wide range of stakeholder perspectives.

Placemaking focuses on uncovering and highlighting a place’s real value, which is reflected not only in property prices, but also in the well-being of residents and users. By prioritizing the quality of physical spaces, social interactions, and environmental design, placemaking contributes to urban areas that are more livable, attractive, and resilient over time.

### From Insight to Prioritization and Collective Action

This approach enables quick identification of the most significant vulnerabilities to address, as well as the existing strengths to maintain and further develop. By systematically structuring insights, the model supports prioritizing efforts and investments across activities and events, physical improvements, governance, and communication. Placemaking, through a place’s “Placemaking Sight Score,” captures the local context and promotes dialogue that enables effective collaboration between stakeholders. In this way, the model helps create value that extends beyond property prices per square meter. Instead, the focus shifts to the place’s overall attractiveness and its ability to offer diverse experiences that invite people to return again and again. Ultimately, a place’s true value lies in the quality of the human experience it supports.



Reffen Street Food, København  
Photo: Volcano, Mauritius Duarte

# How Do We Broaden the Concept of Value?

## Value Creation is More Than Just Numbers

Traditionally, value in urban development is primarily understood as economic return, measured through price per square meter, rental income, and investment security. This report shows that a narrow economic concept of value is not sufficient to explain how places actually function, are used, and are experienced.

By broadening the concept of value, we also include social, health, cultural, and experiential qualities. This includes well-being, community, identity, accessibility, and everyday life: factors that are often harder to measure, but which strongly influence a place's attractiveness, resilience, and long-term economic performance. Placemaking serves as a link between objective and subjective values. By combining data, professional assessments, and local insights, it becomes possible to highlight these broader value drivers and take a more holistic approach to value creation in urban development.

### **When value cannot be reduced to a formula**

In an ideal world, it would be possible to formulate a mathematical equation that captures the relationship between placemaking's value-creating factors and return on investment. The difference between a 5% and a 50% return is, of course, significant. But any precise multiplier is only a small part of a much more complex and open system, where objective and subjective values interact in constantly changing contexts.

Throughout history, value has always been something we humans attach to things rather than something that exists on its own. We have collectively decided that seashells, paper money, titles, or numbers on a screen have value. The same applies to urban development. Although we can measure the effects of placemaking, property value ultimately rests on one crucial factor: the human experience.

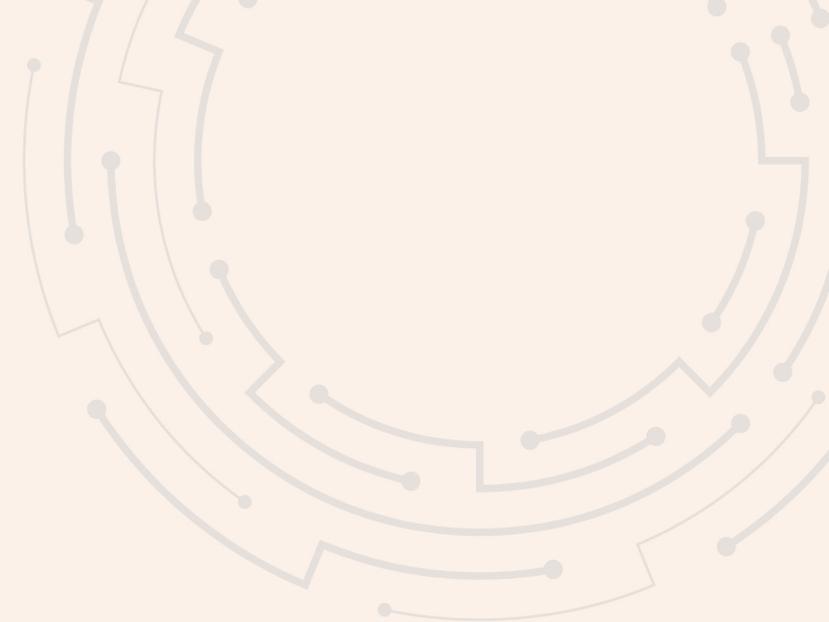
### **The human experience as a value creator**

Physical and mental health, social interaction, inspiration, security, and the freedom to move, slow down, and engage are all subjective experiences. Nevertheless, it is precisely these experiences that create lasting memories and compel people to return to a place again and again.

Value creation is therefore not only about assets or returns, but about meaningful and memorable experiences. At Volcano, we believe in bringing elements of the experience economy into everyday life, both indoors and outdoors, by engaging people through the senses, identity, and culture. Each place creates value in its own way. With the Placemaking "Sight Score" model, our ambition is to offer a framework that helps reveal the type of value a given place aims to create and how unique and lasting experiences can arise from this understanding.

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3. Stern, M. J. (2014). Measuring the outcomes of creative placemaking.



## ***Would you like to know more about the project?***

### **Contact Volcano**

VOLCANO is a placemaking agency that activates people and builds communities. We combine analysis and strategy with art, culture, and creativity —and translate this into action that creates concrete change. We work to create vibrant and inclusive cities with high levels of well-being and cohesion.

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