



# HOW DO I MEASURE IMPACT AS A PLACEMAKER

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# INTRODUCTION

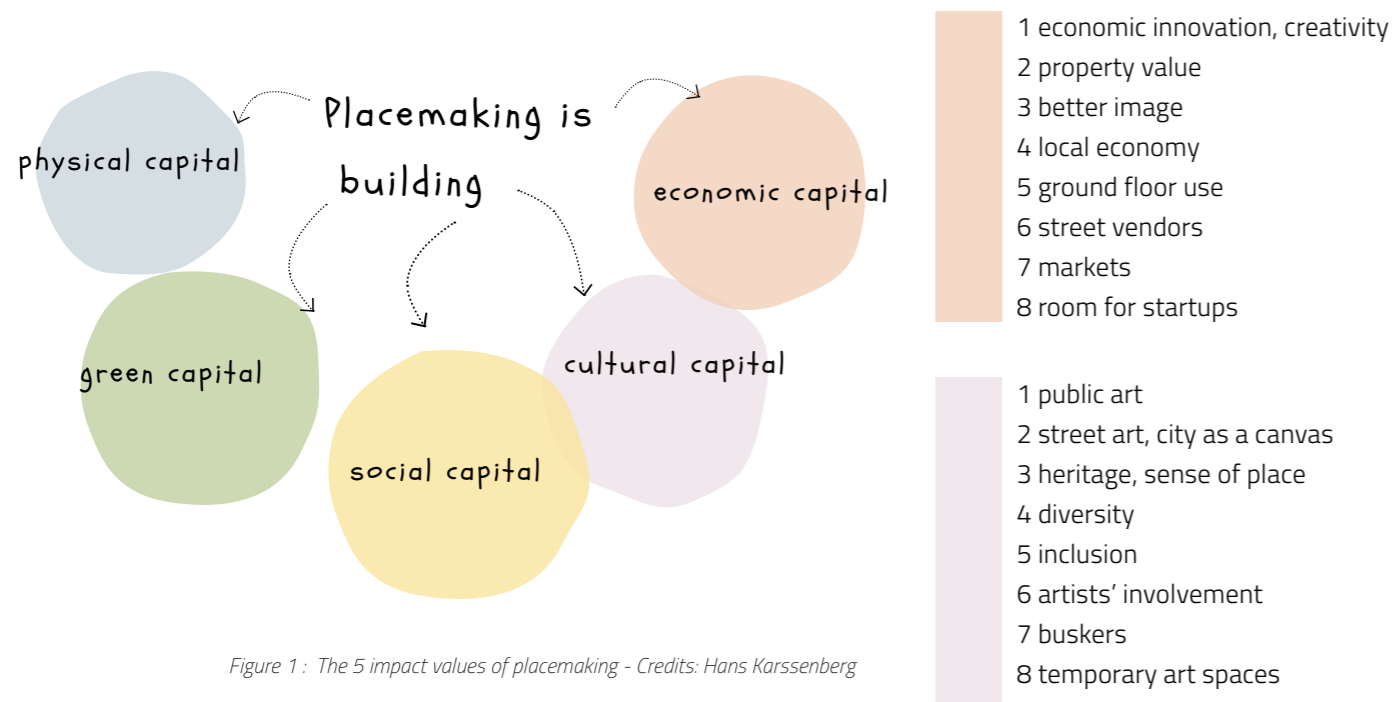


Figure 1: The 5 impact values of placemaking - Credits: Hans Karssenber

Placemaking is an inclusive process that creates value not only for the concerned communities and their surroundings but for all the stakeholders involved. Directly or indirectly, placemaking can have an economic, social, cultural and/or environmental (green and build) impact. However, this value creation is often overlooked or not considered enough by all stakeholders when gathering the necessary resources (human and financial) at the beginning of a project. In consequence, some placemaking projects lack important resources to foster and sustain their positive impact on the long term.

**To tackle the local issues and reach a long lasting positive impact, each placemaking stakeholder such as municipalities, real estate developers, investors, designers, facilitators and communities must reconnect and join forces.**

Assessing the impact of a project with some objective quantitative and qualitative measures could be a way for each stakeholder to understand how placemaking is genuinely creating value for everyone. Rethinking the management of placemaking projects by introducing an impact assessment strategy is then necessary to match the strong will to the human and financial resources.

## DEFINITION

According to the International Association of Impact Assessment (IAIA), "Impact Assessment includes the processing of analyzing, monitoring and managing the intended consequences, both positive and negative of planned interventions (policies, programs, plans, projects) and any economic, social, environmental change processes invoked by those interventions. Its primary purpose is to bring about a more sustainable and equitable biophysical and human environment".

## HOW YOU SHOULD READ THIS ARTICLE

By showing the importance of impact assessment in placemaking, the purpose of this article is to engage the placemakers to build and implement their own impact assessment strategy. In order to do so, we have defined 8 steps to help you through the process.

This is not a proven manual but more an overview article that displays the main process and challenges of impact assessment. It is meant to inspire you and give you some tips to shape your own evaluation method.

For a better understanding, each step will be illustrated by 3 placemaking projects with very different impact assessment strategies. The example part will be notified by this symbol.

### CLUB RHIJNHUIZEN

An area cooperative for a 80ha area redevelopment in Nieuwegein.

### BENCHES COLLECTIVE

An annually repeated one day event where people could place their benches on the sidewalk and organize an open air café.



Figure 2 Benches Collective - Credits: bankjescollectief.nl

## CITY MAKERS FUND

A local social fund for placemaking projects in the province of Utrecht. There are two levels in this example: the structuration of the fund in itself and the development of placemaking projects with the help of the fund. Here are the 8 questions you should ask yourself when designing your impact assessment strategy:

**step 1** Who is doing the impact assessment?

**step 2** Why is it important to carry out this impact assessment for each stakeholder?

**step 3** Who is the targeted audience of the impact assessment?

**step 4** What are the different methodological tools to help you build an impact assessment strategy?

**step 5** What are the impact values you want to assess?

**step 6** What are the relevant indicators for your impact values?

**step 7** How do you collect the data to assess the impact?

**step 8** How do you disseminate the results of the impact assessment?

The following criteria are **4 leverage points** you should pay attention to when building your impact assessment strategy and choosing the tools to implement it. They will be emphasized in the different steps but you must keep them in mind through the whole process.

## 1. NATURE OF THE PROJECT AND ITS ORGANIZATION (STEP 1)

The placemaking team has to make sure all the necessary resources (in time, human capacity, financial support) to carry out the impact assessment are available. The assessment must be adapted to the size of the project and of the organization (whether public, private or non professional) to make it realistic and operational.

## 2. NATURE OF THE TARGETED AUDIENCE (STEP 3)

The team must ask themselves, what is the purpose of this impact assessment and who are

they doing this for? Indeed, as municipalities, investors, real estate developers and communities for instance may value different aspects of the project, the data gathered must be relevant to their own interests and standards to be as efficient as possible in the demonstration of the impact.

## 3. NATURE OF THE IMPACT (STEP 5)

Depending on the type of impact the project will prioritize (whether economic, social, cultural, environmental, etc.), the way of measuring it will be different. The team must set the goals of its mission from the beginning and choose the best indicators accordingly.

## 4. NATURE OF THE INDICATOR (STEP 6)

Related to the previous point, the team must define which quantitative and/or a qualitative indicator would best express the intended impact, and what would be the best tools to collect the necessary data.

## 1. WHO IS DOING THE IMPACT ASSESSMENT?

The first thing you should define is: who is doing the impact assessment? You have to set the placemaking project in its context and take into account the **nature of the project and its organization**.

Who is the "project team" and who will handle this task?

- Are you a facilitator?
- Are you a group of community leaders?
- Are you a designated team from the municipality?
- Are you a manager from a real estate developer?

After identifying the "project team", you should look at the opportunities and constraints of your project and your team. What are the resources available? Do you have the sufficient means to carry out the impact assessment of your project or is it very limited? Depending on your goals and capacities, this work will either be very detailed and in-depth or more simple and easy to implement.

- What is your timeline and how much time can you dedicate to this task?
- What are your human resources and how many people can you involve?
- What are your financial resources and what budget can you allocate to this?

## BENCHES COLLECTIVE

Sander van der Ham, urban psychologist and advisor, has been appointed by the Benches Collective to carry out the impact assessment of their one day outdoor event. It was a low budget assignment. The impact assessment for the event took 1,5 month : 1 week to build the 2 questionnaires (for the visitors and the hosts), 2 days to distribute them (during the event and online), 4 weeks to gather the responses and

1 week to do the analysis and write the report.

## CLUB RHIJNHUIZEN

STIPO, a consultancy firm for urban development and Vlieger Projecten have been selected by the province of Utrecht and the municipality of Nieuwegein to create an area cooperative to manage the renewal of the area Rhijnhuizen.

The province and the municipality first subsidized the project by 30K for the first 6 months to get it started, the area cooperative has now an independent financial model. There is no specific budget for the impact assessment but it's part of the annual report required to evaluate their work through the year and make the necessary adjustment for the future. The work organisation underneath the Area Cooperative is responsible for the annual report, which then the board and the members discuss and vote on.

## CITY MAKERS FUND

Together with the province of Utrecht, the initiators of the fund STIPO and Stadkwadraat have conducted a feasibility study and designed an associated impact assessment strategy for the fund.

In order to get funding from the City Makers Fund, city makers have to go through a few rounds of approval. It starts with a conversation with the fund to see what are the social impact goals of the initiative. Then, the fund assesses the quality of the business case and sees how it can be improved to make it more sustainable. If the city makers go through those rounds then they get the funding and start shaping their impact assessment strategy with the proper indicators with the help of the fund. This accompaniment by the fund is a matter of hours to help kickstart the project.

## 2. WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO CARRY OUT THIS IMPACT ASSESSMENT FOR EACH STAKEHOLDER?

Placemaking projects aim, among other reasons, at improving inclusivity, public health, safety, environment and economic development in our cities. If we can feel the positive consequences of placemaking, it is sometimes not enough to get the attention and the necessary resources to carry out the project. Assessing the impact of placemaking helps to demonstrate those improvements through a rigorous data-driven methodology and get every stakeholder on board.

The why question is the fundament for the core values needed to build up the strategy of change for the place. All the stakeholders must have the same in order to be aligned and work efficiently in the same direction. This step requires that you reflect deeply on the reasons and objectives of the impact assessment. There are two aspects to this question:

### WHY

What issues do you want to tackle? You have to set clearly the fundamental reasons and motivation of your project. Why are you doing what you do? What is your mission? This part will be developed further into the "step 5: what are the impact values you want to assess?" but this is the starting point for your project.

### WHAT FOR

What is your goal when assessing the impact of your project? You have to acknowledge the practical reasons for the impact assessment. We can here sum up the main practical reasons in 3 categories.

### 1. TO LEARN

Placemaking should be an interactive process of testing and learning. In evaluating the impact whether positive or negative of the project, it enables the project team to reflect on its work from the beginning and to adjust, if necessary, the strategy in accordance with the main goals of its mission.

### 2. TO CONVINC

It is also a way to demonstrate with quantitative and qualitative data your impact to all stakeholders, and convince them of the importance of your project.

### 3. TO BUILD WITH

Impact assessment is a means to engage everyone to join forces, the stakeholders as well as the broader audience. Implementing an impact assessment strategy not only has benefits for the project team but also reciprocally presents many interests for the investors, municipalities, developers and communities themselves. Here are a few examples (this is neither exhaustive nor the only way to interpret it):

#### INVESTORS

Impact assessment helps to attract investors by building the best discourse based on tangible results or forecasts. But it also allows investors to gather relevant data to minimize the financial risks when investing in a project and is a means for them to prove their investment has led to a positive impact on society and display it.

#### MUNICIPALITIES

Regarding municipalities, it provides the project team with evidence to share with public administrations and to facilitate their institutional support to the project. On the other side, it allows

municipalities to make sure the project they support is in adequation with their own policy and that it will also generate a positive impact on their inhabitants.

#### REAL ESTATE DEVELOPERS

Impact assessment gives opportunities for the team to set the right arguments for real estate developers and show them the importance of placemaking and the impact it can have. It is also a way to find altogether best practices to build the city. Reversely, developers get a data-driven demonstration that the promotion of public space brings value creation and can then develop smart business models accordingly.

#### COMMUNITIES

As this evaluation is co-built with local communities by gathering quantitative and qualitative data, it gives the project team the opportunity to share accurate and meaningful results with them. It also allows the communities to be informed of what is happening in their surroundings, to understand that their participation can make a difference and to hopefully get empowered to initiate their own projects.

#### BENCHES COLLECTIVE



Figure 3 Benches Collective - Credits: <https://www.bankjescollectief.nl/>

Fundamental reasons: the mission of the Benches Collective project is to make public space a place for social gathering and festive events with neighbors.

Practical reasons: the purpose of the impact assessment for this event was mainly to understand how the project impacted people socially and how they related to their environment (learn). Then the results were displayed to the general public (convince of its value). Then it was also used for marketing purposes to attract new investors and build a worldwide community (build with).

#### CITY MAKERS FUND



Figure 4/5 Citymakersfund - Credits: [facebook/stadmakersfonds](https://facebook.com/stadmakersfonds)

Fundamental reasons: the mission of the City Makers Fund is to help financially city makers to scale up their projects and to have a bigger social impact on the long term.

# STEP 2

## CLUB RHIJNHUIZEN

Fundamental reasons: As a former office area in the municipality of Nieuwegein, this area struggled with high vacancy rates and degeneration due to the financial crisis. The municipality, also partially landowner, didn't know what to do with this area and desired to slowly transform it into a more mixed-use, residential-commercial area more welcoming to people.

Practical reasons: the impact assessment is important for accountability reasons, to see the evolution of the project and adjust the new goals for the next year (learn and convince). Carrying out this assessment engages the stakeholders to continue joining forces for the next year and work to see a long term positive change in the area (build with). The cooperative character calls for complete transparency and accountability.



Figure 5 Summer Festival Rhijnhuizen - Credits: Hans Karssenber



# STEP 3

## 3. WHO IS THE TARGETED AUDIENCE OF THE IMPACT ASSESSMENT?

It is important to be reminded of the **targeted audience** of the impact assessment. Who is it intended for? Indeed, as municipalities, investors, real estate developers and communities for instance may value different aspects of the project, the data gathered must be relevant to their own interests and standards to be as efficient as possible in the demonstration of the impact. Therefore, depending on the audience the approach and assessment strategy can differ.

### BENCHES COLLECTIVE

Here the impact assessment was mainly targeted at the public in general to build a stronger and larger community and investors to sustain the project financially. For the investors, putting an emphasis on the economic value creation was important to share indicators that are meaningful to them.

### CLUB RHIJNHUIZEN

The targeted audience is all the users and owners in this area that contribute to the area cooperative, and the municipality that collects the area contributions from the developers and then partially channels that through to the cooperative. The goal was to entice these people to embrace the mixed-use 'end-goal'.

When convincing real estate owners is important, periodic measurement of the real estate value is a key factor to show the development of the value in the area. A lot of real estate investors have to evaluate their property periodically (every six months). The other stakeholders also need to be able to see what happens with the cooperative money so they can propose changes for the year to come if needed.

### CITY MAKERS FUND

Here, there are 2 types of parties:  
 - All parties that are involved in area development: developers, municipalities, builders.  
 - All parties that are involved in financing: banks, external financiers, but also crowdfunding organisations.

The City Makers Fund operates as the mediator between the two. The impact assessment has to make sense for both parties to get them on board.



Figure 6 Citymakersfund- Credits: facebook/stadmakersfonds

# STEP 4

## 4. WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT METHODOLOGICAL TOOLS TO HELP YOU BUILD AN IMPACT ASSESSMENT STRATEGY?

In order to build the impact assessment strategy that is the most adapted to the project, there are a few methodologies that can help you through the design process. In asking the right questions to select the most relevant indicators at the beginning of the project, those methodological tools give a clear framework to align the mission, the strategy and the impact measurement.

We will focus here on three specific tools that are each interesting and complementary to achieve a bigger impact. The SROI being a bit more complex than the others, it will not be discussed further in this part but all the links to online manuals are available in the "FURTHER READING" section.

### Theory of change

Also called "impact map": this method is process oriented. It is very useful to define the different steps to reach the goals of your project and the relevant indicators to do so.

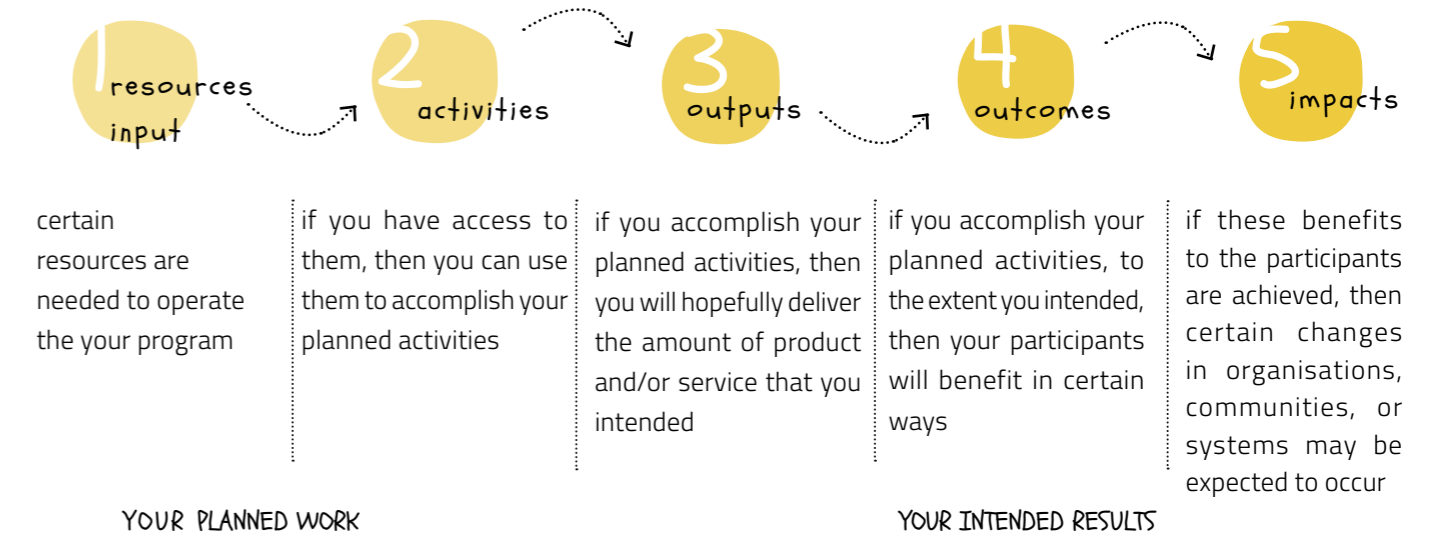


Figure 7: Theory of Change - Credits: Innovation for Social Change

However, to design the impact strategy and the corresponding measures, you have to take this process backwards and start from the deep mission of your project. Therefore, from the impact you want to make, you must define the forecasted outcomes, then outputs, the activities that need to take place for those outputs to happen, and finally the resources and investments necessary to sustain the activities. At each stage of this process, you must define quantitative and/or qualitative indicators that will allow you to assess the success and the level of completion of the step.

If the results are not as expected, then this framework gives insights on how to adjust the strategy of the project. For all those indicators, you must make sure you have the human and financial resources to collect the needed data for the assessment. In this sense, this methodological tool is very helpful because it allows everyone to set their own level of details and complexity in their impact assessment.

The second methodological tool is the **5 dimensions of impact**, as presented in the table below. This tool is very useful to assess the impact the project will have on the different stakeholders and to define the impact management strategy accordingly. Here you must ask yourself:

- What are the outcomes of the project and how are they impacting the different stakeholders and their environment?
- How important are those effects and how long are they going to last?
- Who are the impacted stakeholders and do they lose or benefit from the outcomes?
- How much is the project contributing positively or negatively to a situation that is going to happen anyway?
- What are the potential risks that the project doesn't reach its goal and intended impact?

For this framework, those 5 dimensions are meant to give guidelines rather than be absolutely followed in this order.

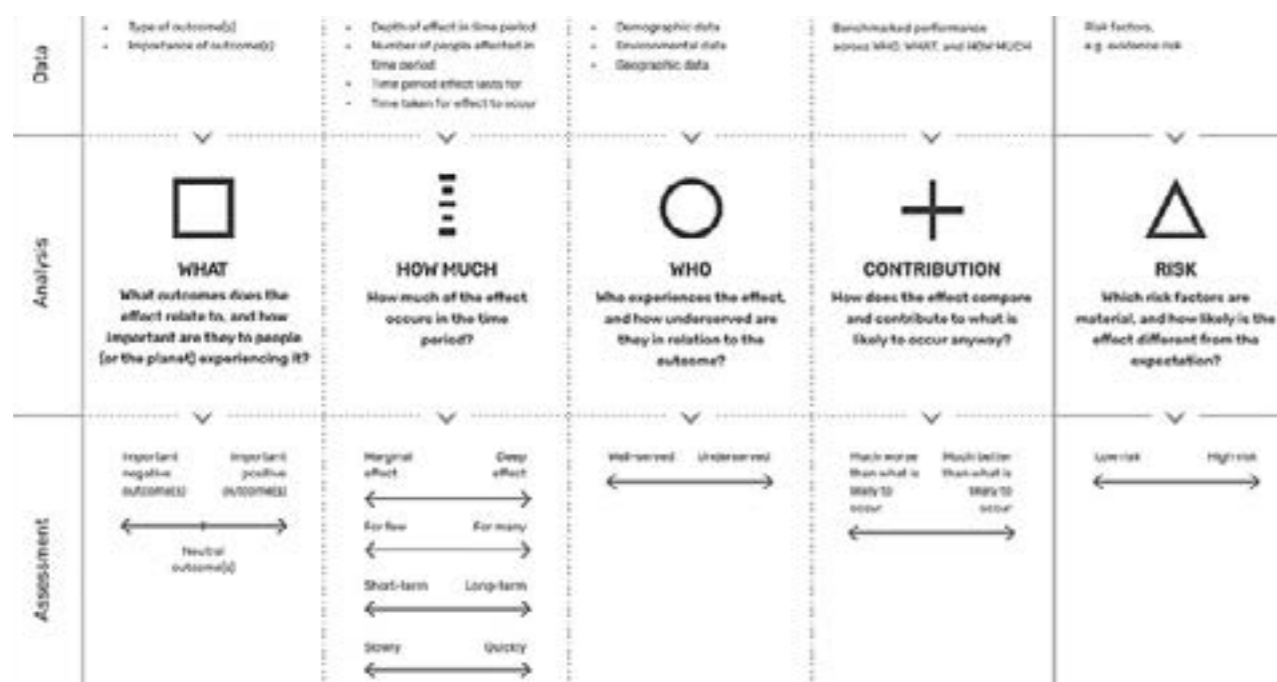


Figure 8 : 5 dimensions of Impact - Credits: Sinz

Again, the value of this tool in the light of the impact assessment is to measure for each dimension the impact the project could have or had on a specific environment (to be understood in its broader sense) and for each stakeholder.

The third methodological tool is the **social business model canvas**. It helps to have a clear overview of how your project/business works and can also be used to explore alternative organisational structures to match your stated mission. Compared to the traditional business model canvas, this one integrates social value in addition to the financial value.

A few blocks have been added to take into consideration all the stakeholders and their involvement in the project, the governance dimension, the mission values, the reinvestment

of profit into the project/business, the short-term objectives and the impact measures. Here are 5 possible steps to design your social business model canvas:

1. Define the purpose of your project/business
2. Value Proposition
3. Key Activities, Key Resources, Key Partners & Stakeholders
4. Customer Segments, Type of Intervention and Channels
5. Cost Structure, Revenue Streams and reinvestment of Surplus

If those three methodological tools are not the only approaches available to design an impact assessment strategy, they show quite relevant and complementary aspects to enhance and foster placemaking projects.



Figure 9 : Social Business Model Canvas - Credits: Social Innovation Lab



## BENCHES COLLECTIVE

For this project, there was no real methodological tool used apart from the marketing framework to carry out a good quantitative and qualitative analysis

## CLUB RHIJNHUIZEN

In this project, knowledge from previous assignments of STIPO was very useful. For example, there is heavy use of social media. A clear single identity has been developed in which the various qualities of the area have been enforced. Through placemaking and marketing, the area has been given extra colour in order to increase the societal support for transformation.

In relation to the social business model canvas, the surplus generated was reinvested in the project. Indeed, in this case there is a clear multi-year business model for placemaking as well. When activity leads to new developments, the investors pay the city for investments in the public domain. Part of their financial contribution in cost recovery is a payment for programming and area management. With this money the placemaking grows step by step. And more importantly, as placemaking leads to new development the process itself can scale up.

## CITY MAKERS FUND

The team used the theoretical framework of a changing system of area development in the Netherlands and the financing of projects. They also used economic theories such as the social business model canvas for the start-up of the City Makers Fund. And theoretical insights into the world of civic initiatives and citymakers: they should not be put in a tight framework, but be evaluated each as unique.

## FOCUS : WHAT PLACEMAKING DOES TO YOUR PROPERTY VALUE?

This intermezzo will give some guidance to the question: how does placemaking contribute to property value?

One of the most traditional ways to measure impact is by carrying a **financial impact assessment**. Real estate property is usually assessed with economic value, being in euros, dollars, etc. The financial status of a single piece of property, or a whole area, can be determined through the judgment of a real estate valuer. This expert works with a certain set of rules. Within those, two rules are more specifically related to the effect of placemaking:

1. The taxation/valuation is a snapshot of the status quo.
2. The taxation/valuation will be determinant on the premise of Highest And Best Use (HABU).

In short, an area will evolve over time. This change is generated by the arrival of new activities, investments in real estate, but also by new zoning plans or other municipal decisions. A valuer can only determine the value of a certain object as it is at a specific time and place. This means that placemaking plays an essential role in determining the property value, as its activities will create a more attractive environment. So places that matter perform better.

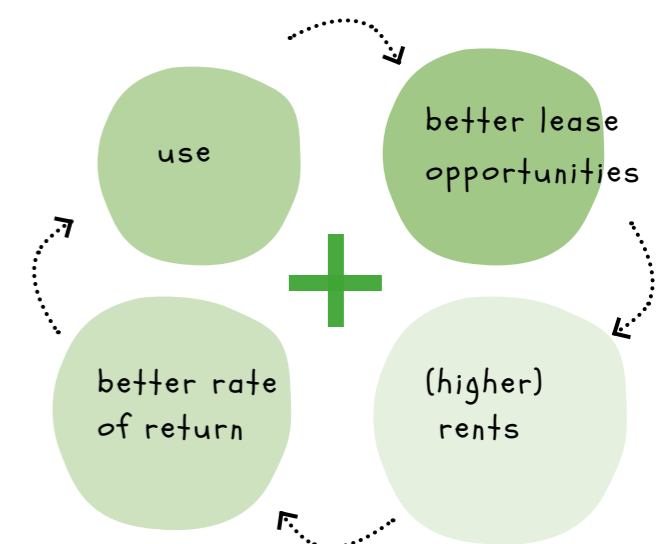
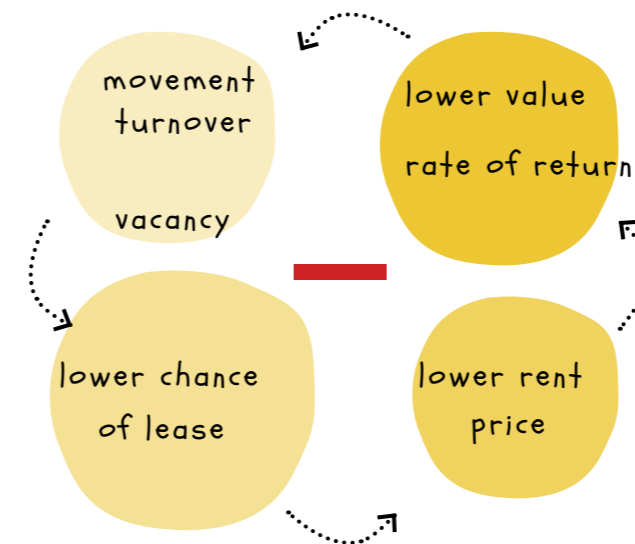


Figure 10: Credits: Stadkwadraat

The images above show the possible life cycles of property. The grey version shows a life cycle without placemaking or new investments. The green version shows a healthy life cycle with the effects of placemaking. If a property has a lot of vacancy, there is a lower chance that another party will rent a place in this area. In consequence, the owner needs to lower his rent price to be more attractive. This will generate a drop in the total rate of return. The owner will not have the capacity to make new investments in the already declining property, creating therefore a vicious circle.

Investing in placemaking can have a significant impact on the value, image and long term performance of an area and its real estate. A distinctive mix (use) leads to a better investment (and lease) opportunity. This means that the area can have higher rents (read more in balance with the quality of the area). This also means that the overall rate of return will be higher for an investor. In consequence, this whole process will have an enormous impact on the future use of the area. Alternative programs strengthen the life cycle of places. The performance of a place

and the value of the real estate will be affected by the programs. The tables below demonstrate this mechanism. A desolate area with an overall value of € 300,- per sq. meter can therefore be transformed in a new and attractive area of an overall value of over € 760,- per sq. meter.

Part of the valuation is based on the yield and rental price, and the size of the rented meters. The return is based on the weighting of risks and value, environmental quality and expectations regarding value retention and value development. The lack of future prospects and confidence in real estate has caused a significant decline in value during certain periods.

On the other hand, there is an increase in value when the areas and buildings are better used and appreciated by tenants, etc. Placemaking organizes and fosters the uses in areas and buildings, which in turn increases the significance of real estate. This is reflected in an increasing area yield, as it is partly evident from the calculation example.

## 1. OFFICE IN A SOLIDATE AREA

	rented out	rented out	vacancy	total
floorspace	1000		4000	5000
rent price	75		50	
yield	15%		20%	
value per m <sup>2</sup>	500		250	
total value	500.000		1.000.000	1.500.000
average price per m <sup>2</sup>				€ 300

## 2. COMMUNITY FILLS m<sup>2</sup>

	rented out	rented out	vacancy	total
floorspace	2000		3000	5000
rent price	75		50	
yield	15%		20%	
value per m <sup>2</sup>	500		250	
total value	1.000.000		750.000	1.750.000
average price per m <sup>2</sup>				€ 350 plus 17%

## 3. MORE SERVICES IN THE AREA

	rented out	rented out	vacancy	total
floorspace	500	3500	1000	5000
rent price	90	75	50	
yield	15%	15%	20%	
value per m <sup>2</sup>	600	500	250	
total value	300.000	1.750.000	250.000	2.300.000
average price per m <sup>2</sup>				€460 plus 53%

## 4. AREA IS KNOW, ALMOST NO VACANCY

	rented out	rented out	vacancy	total
floorspace	1000	3500	500	5000
rent price	90	75	50	
yield	12%	12%	15%	
value per m <sup>2</sup>	750	625	333	
total value	750.000	2.187.500	166.667	3.104.167
average price per m <sup>2</sup>				€ 621 plus 107%

## 5. AREA IS BECOMING POPULAR, MORE "QUALITATIVE PLAYERS" ENTER

	rented out	rented out	vacancy	total
floorspace	1500	3000	500	5000
rent price	90	75	50	
yield	10%	10%	12%	
value per m <sup>2</sup>	900	750	417	
total value	1.350.000	2.250.000	208.333	3.808.333
average price per m <sup>2</sup>				€ 762 plus 154%

Figure 11: Credits: Stadkwadraat

**S.** WHAT ARE THE IMPACT VALUES YOU WANT TO ASSESS?

Placemaking can generate different types of impact. Whether financial, social, cultural,

human or environmental (built and green spaces), placemaking brings a positive change with and for local communities. The following table by Delconte et al. (2016:332) shows examples of possible impacts according to the different categories. Those categories are one way to frame those impact values but not the only one!

FINANCIAL	SOCIAL	CULTURAL	HUMAN	BUILT
affordable/ free access	area more family friendly	attraction of artistic talent	advanced skills	accessible building
increased shop visits	business cooperation	capture of local culture	community pride	renovation
corporate grants	diverse audiences	exposure to art/ culture	discovery of new talent	new infrastructure
increased tourism	gatherings	exposure to artists	increased confidence	murals
new business	livability	improvement of quality of life	life skills	new buildings
professional training	opportunities to mix	increased knowledge	life lessons	new parks
public	retention of residents	public art	positivity	exhibits
professional training	social time	public participation	self expression	theatre sets

Figure 12 : Impacts of Placemaking - Credits: Delconte et al.



Figure 13: Benches Collective - Credits: bankjescollectief.nl



**BENCHES COLLECTIVE**

In the Benches Collective project, the impact goals were more on the social and human levels. For instance:

- Create more social interactions in the public space,
- Engage different communities and different generations to encounter and exchange.

**CLUB RHIJNHUIZEN**

Here the impact values are very diverse from economic, social to environmental goals. For instance:

- Transforming concrete to public greenery,
- Less residential units in the area,
- Lower vacancy rates,
- More bustle and social meetings in the area
- Community building
- Area brand.

**CITY MAKERS FUND**

For the City Makers Fund, the team started to wonder on which societal revenue they wanted to have an impact in relation to the financing they were going to do. Their aim is to promote a new qualitative value of area development. Therefore, the City Makers Fund invests in projects where there is social impact. The rate of return for financial support is cut in two: in a financial rate and a social rate of return.

For the projects, the values are determined in a dialogue with the citymakers themselves. Examples of social impacts are the buildings to be built in a circular way, providing a new green working environment that is climate adaptive, affordable space for social meetings, setting up a neighbourhood network.

## 6. WHAT ARE THE RELEVANT INDICATORS FOR YOUR IMPACT VALUES?

If some types of impact can easily be measured like the number of new businesses, the creation of new buildings, the increase in frequentation, etc., others are more complex and require a different approach like the community pride or the improvement of quality life. This is the difference between the **tangible** and **intangible effects** of placemaking.

Tangible effects can easily be measured by **quantitative indicators** through numbers and ratios for instance. This is mostly used for financial statistics and forecasts, where a lot of indicators have been globally known and prioritized by companies for years. Whereas intangible effects rely more (but not exclusively!) on qualitative indicators, that are difficult to capture with numbers.

For this kind of effects, despite the work of international organizations such as the Sustainability Accounting Standards Board (SASB), the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) or the United

Nation Environment Program (UNEP), there is not a universal way of assessing qualitative indicators and those are unfortunately not valued enough by traditional companies and investors. **In this context, the social impact assessment of placemaking is a real challenge.**

This also relies on what "value" means to each stakeholder. If the qualitative improvement of a neighborhood can be translated into an economic added value for developers and investors, should money be the only global unit of measure for value?

Having this framework in mind, it is interesting to look again at the diagram made by Project for Public Spaces showing the different criteria of a great place. The 4 key attributes of a great place in the first inner circle are clearly visible, their intangible aspects come in the second circle, and the corresponding measures in the third circle.

The diagram is not only very valuable to help structure the impact assessment strategy but it also gives examples of indicators (third circle) that can be used to measure the impact of the placemaking project. However, the selection of those indicators is not random and must be done consistently with the overall impact assessment strategy.

Therefore, according to the tangible and/or intangible effects of your placemaking project, the next questions are:

- Which **quantitative** and/or **qualitative** indicators correspond best to the impact you want to highlight?
- How do you choose **the most relevant ones** for your project?

As each initiative is different, the impact assessment strategy cannot be replicated

and must be built for each unique project. **The challenge here lies on the identification and selection of the right and relevant indicators that support the mission of the project.** As Jarrod Ormiston and Richard Seymour cleverly pointed out in their *Journal of Social Entrepreneurship (2011)*, aligning mission, strategy and impact measurement is paramount to achieve impact.

### BENCHES COLLECTIVE

This assessment relied on both quantitative and qualitative indicators. For instance,

- Number of hosts and visitors for the event,
- Level of appreciation of the event by the participants,
- Amount of time people stayed at the event.

### CLUB RHIJNHUIZEN

For the area Rhijnhuizen, some indicators include:

- Degree of people's participation in the area,
- Number of renewed buildings in the area,
- Number of new houses and job created,
- Amount of activities,
- Number of public spaces that are qualitative according to the eye level criteria
- Area brand recognition.

### CITY MAKERS FUND

In addition to contemporary Cost Benefit Analysis type of indicators, together with the city maker the fund defines a number of key impact factors and qualifies and quantifies them. For the period in which the fund is financing the project the impact factors will be monitored and reported annually.

When the number of projects grows so will the set of key impact factors. Thereby the team will make their own new vocabulary on social impact. Over time they will be able to make a grid of helpful criteria.

## WHAT MAKES A GREAT PLACE?

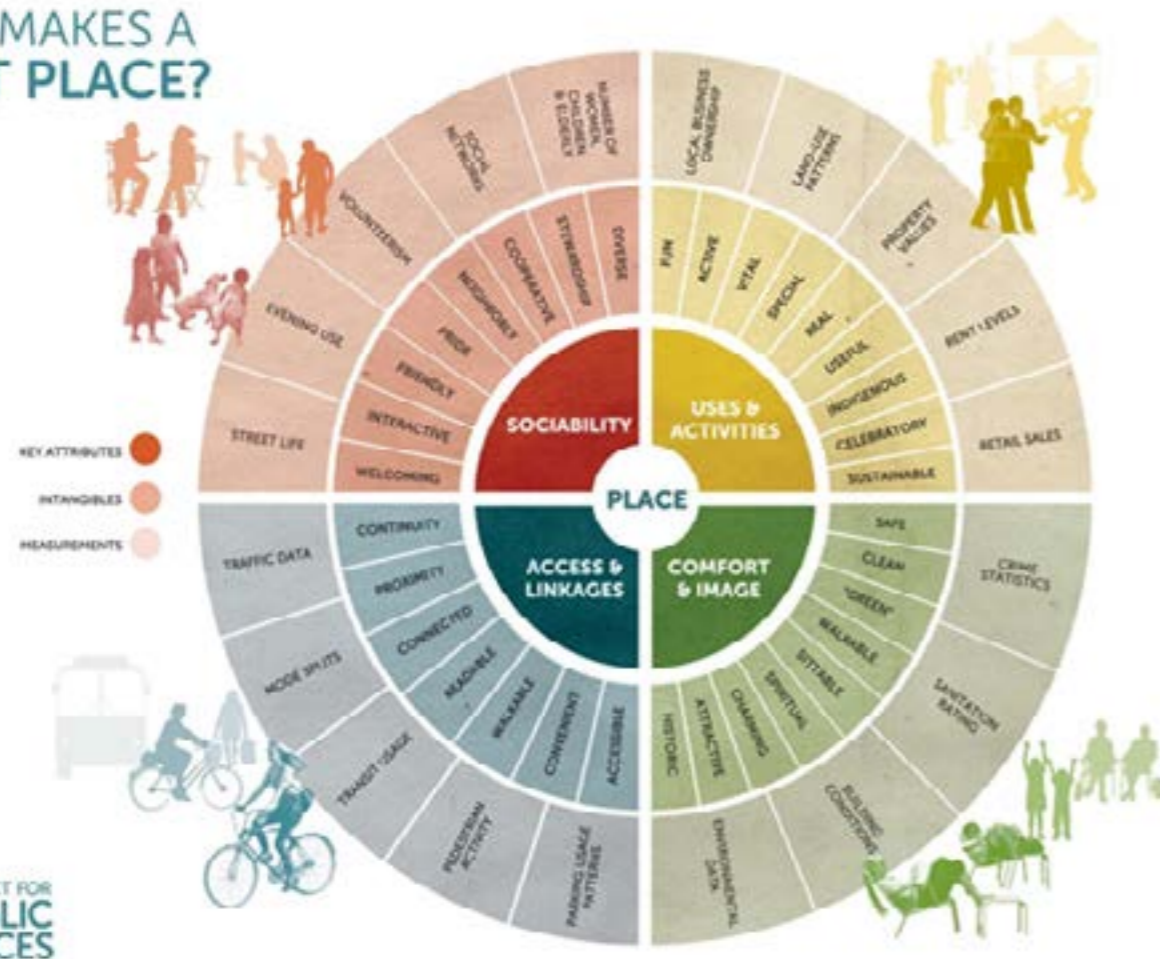


Figure 14: Key attributes & Indicators of a great place - Credits : Project for Public Spaces

## 7. HOW DO YOU COLLECT DATA TO ASSESS THE IMPACT?

Impact assessment **tools** are there to collect the data and information relevant for the impact values you want to assess and the quantitative and/or qualitative indicators previously chosen for the assessment. Depending on the context of the project and the different stakeholders involved, you must choose the best way to connect with the communities and to obtain the specific information.



Credit: STIPO  
Figure 14. Place-Led Development Tools by project phase.

### WHICH TOOL, FOR WHAT STAGE?

- 01. PROJECT INITIATION PHASE
- 02. PROJECT PLANNING
- 03. PROJECT EXECUTION
- 04. PROJECT MONITORING & CONTROL
- 05. PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Active observation, questionnaires and interviews are some traditional ways of extracting relevant information. In addition to that, the placemaking movement designed a lot of creative quantitative and qualitative tools that engage in a friendly manner the different communities, including children, elderly and other minority groups. You'll find below some creative and fun tools that can be used at the different stages of the project. Indeed, the assessment of the impact is not a one time thing at the beginning and the end of the project. There are intermediate steps you should pay attention to in order to readjust your actions to better fulfill your mission.

### BENCHES COLLECTIVE

Sander used 2 types of short questionnaires of 5 minutes: one for the hosts and one for the visitors. Some were distributed directly during the event on paper, and for those who couldn't fill it in time another online version was accessible.

As Sander was present during the event active observation was really really helpful to better interpret the questionnaires.

### CLUB RHIJNHUIZEN

For the initial stage, a lot of interviews were done with stakeholders and companies which are located in the area.

For the annual plan, the work organisation uses its regular contacts with all stakeholders in the area to collect data and ideas throughout the year, which is then translated to the plan that accounts for the past year's impact, and sets out the course for the coming year's impact.



Figure 15: stadmakersfonds.nl/



### CITY MAKERS FUND

For the design of the fund the team is working on constant data gathering on impact measurement to find new vocabulary on impact next to the financial figures. Therefore they need a set of societal impact measures which will be developed through the projects.

In the projects, the team searches together with the city makers for the adequate indicators. Thereafter the City Makers Fund will make their indicators "smart" by qualifying and quantifying them as good as possible. The fund asks the initiatives to keep track of their data and report each year of the evolution of the impact indicators.

## 8. HOW DO YOU DISSEMINATE THE RESULTS OF THE IMPACT ASSESSMENT?

In this step, you have to define the **communication strategy** that you'll adopt to share the results of your impact assessment. You have to identify:

- Which **format** is the most adapted to your targeted audience?
- Which **medium/channel** is the most effective to reach a broader audience?

Indeed, beyond your targeted audience your results can be an asset to display on your website, in brochures and many other ways, to share with partners, future clients, etc. and strengthen your notoriety.

### BENCHES COLLECTIVE

For this project, the results of the impact assessment were put down in a report shared with the investors. For the larger public, the results were mostly displayed online through the Benches Collective website, and in presentations presenting the project.

### CITY MAKERS FUND

The research on City Makers and their effect on urban space and urban life was used to show the impact and possibilities when city makers have a more permanent position in cities.

The city makers will report on the development of their projects and the results on the impact indicators each year. Next to that, the development in the number of projects and their impact on the city is also shown to inform but also to enthusiasm them and others to activate new initiatives.

### CLUB RHIJNHUIZEN



Figure 16: clubrhijnhuizen.nl/

The results of the impact assessment are shown in an annual action plan, discussed at the occasion of a christmas dinner with the members of the board.

Those annual meeting points are a means to be accountable to the board and to see if the Club Rhijnhuizen reached its previous goals and targeted impact during that period. They however do not wait until the end of the year to check their evolution and adjust their strategy. Based on this report, they revise it in order to define the next actions to undertake for the year to come.

# CONCLUSION

Placemakers are creating multiple values, as proven by diverse research studies in the field. With local governments and semi-governments stepping back, the societal challenges of our cities need those initiatives. Placemakers are in a constant process of proving themselves and justifying the value of their work to the different stakeholders in order to convince them to invest differently. Doing so, placemakers stand much stronger when they have data demonstrating the “soft” impact of their projects (social, human, cultural, ...) as well as their “hard” impact (financial, physical, ...).

Therefore, carrying out the impact assessment of their projects is a means for placemakers to learn how to improve their work to achieve their mission, to convince the different stakeholders that placemaking is actually creating value for everyone and to build the project with them, aiming at a bigger impact on the long term.

We have seen through the different steps that they are 8 key questions you should ask yourself when designing an impact assessment strategy:

- step 1** Who is doing the impact assessment?
- step 2** Why is it important to carry out this impact assessment for each stakeholder?
- step 3** Who is the targeted audience of the impact assessment?
- step 4** What are the different methodological tools to help you build an impact assessment strategy?
- step 5** What are the impact values you want to assess?

**step 6** What are the relevant indicators for your impact values?

**step 7** How do you collect the data to assess the impact?

**step 8** How do you disseminate the results of the impact assessment?

As shown in the three examples, this methodology is very flexible and adaptable to different kinds of projects.

In order to design the impact assessment that is the most relevant for your project you should pay a particular attention to the nature of the project and its organization (step 1), the nature of the targeted audience (step 3), the nature of the wished impact (step 5) and the nature of the indicators selected to measure it (step 6).

Impact assessment is a great means to gather all the stakeholders at one table and ask the right questions to ensure the long term positive impact of the project. It sets the direction and serves as a joined base for evaluation and measurement along the way.

Therefore, for placemakers it is important to organise impact assessment as a part of their projects, and learn how to present assessment results in such a way that they will convince clients and investors to invest into placemaking.

For clients and investors in placemaking, it is important to make impact assessment part of the question, without becoming unnecessarily bureaucratic and while respecting the unique and layered character of each initiative.

## ONLINE COURSES

**Impact Measurement & Management Training & Course by SoPact**

## BOOKS & ARTICLES

**Our City ? - Countering Exclusion in Public Space, 2019**

- Peter Williams, APPROACH - Working side by side with private partners : How can placemakers confront the challenges of successfully integrating private and public sector interest in creating great places?, p349

- Konstantinos Gournianakis (interviewed by Hans Karssenbergh), TOOL - Long-term collective stability : the case of club Rhijnhuizen, p355

- Theo Stauttner & Chantal Robbe, APPROACH - Gentrification without the sharp edges. Is there a such thing as gentlyfication?, p315

**The City at Eye Level Netherlands, 2017**

- Charlot Schans, Placemaking has to go beyond being temporary, p23

- Theo Stauttner, The business case for placemaking, p204

**Funding the cooperative city - Community Finance and the Economy of Civic Spaces, 2017**

(Conclusion on social impact assessment, p237)

**Understanding Value Creation in Social Entrepreneurship : The Importance of Aligning Mission, Strategy and Impact Measurement, 2011**

Jarrold Ormiston & Richard Seymour, The University of Sydney Business School, Sydney, Australia

**Compendium for the civic economy - What the Big Society should learn from 25 trailblazers, 2011**

(Among the lessons learned : "Recognising where

value lies : the metrics of change", p186-187)

**Communities of practice collaborative project - Valuing Creative PlaceMaking : Development of a Toolkit for Public and Private Stakeholders, 2018**

## REPORTS

**Connswater Community Greenway - Impact assessment report, 2019**

## MANUALS

- **Theory of change** ("impact map")

<https://www.impactmapping.org/>

- **Social business model canvas** (see manual)

- **5 dimensions of impact** (see manual)

- **Social Return on Investment** (see manual)

- **A Handbook for Participatory Community Assessments - Experiences from Alameda County** <https://www.livingknowledge.org/>

- **Impact Investing Market Map - PRI**

<https://www.unpri.org/>

## RELATED INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

- **International Association of Impact Assessment (IAIA)** : <https://www.iaia.org/>

- **UN Environment program (UNEP)**: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300>

- **Sustainability Accounting Standards Board (SASB)** : <https://www.sasb.org/>

- **Global Reporting Initiative (GRI)** : <https://www.globalreporting.org/Pages/default.aspx>

## THE THREE PROJECTS DESCRIBED

- **Benches Collective**: <https://www.bankjescollectief.nl/en/>

- **Club Rhijnhuizen**: [www.clubrhijnhuizen.nl](http://www.clubrhijnhuizen.nl)

- **Stadmakersfonds**: [www.stadmakersfonds.nl](http://www.stadmakersfonds.nl)

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