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Placemaking and public housing: the state of knowledge and research priorities

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the international literature on placemaking – practices or initiatives that encourage a sense of place – in public housing communities. Placemaking is likely to be particularly beneficial to public housing tenants, and is a current priority for public housing providers; yet reviews of placemaking research have failed to consider public housing. Our systematic quantitative review of 63 English-language journal articles reveals that the field is dominated by qualitative cross-sectional studies conducted in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia, in the context of regeneration, and published in social science journals. Our thematic analysis of this literature shows that placemaking is supported by forming relationships and participating in community activities, by access to quality public space and amenities, and by spending time and forming memories in a place. The review therefore provides guidance to public housing providers and reveals the need for particular research, including longitudinal studies, and studies conducted in both redeveloped and existing communities.

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Placemaking; public housing; sense of place; place attachment; public space; housing regeneration

Introduction

Placemaking – broadly understood as practices through which people form a sense of place, and interventions to encourage a sense of place – has been a topic of considerable research attention. Reviews of the literature pertaining to placemaking have resulted in 1,443 items (Serin, 2018), or 120 academic journal articles within a five-year period (Ellery, Ellery, & Borkowsky, 2021). Yet public housing has received relatively little attention from placemaking researchers. Several recent publications that provide overviews or reviews of placemaking research do not cover public

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housing, or indeed tenure status (Chica, 2021; Courage et al., 2020; Ellery et al., 2021; Serin, 2018; Strydom, Puren, & Drewes, 2018). Yet placemaking is likely to be particularly important and beneficial to public housing tenants given that, due to overall lower incomes and poorer health status than the general population, they are more likely to spend time at home and close to home, and have less facility to move elsewhere or to access amenities in other neighbourhoods (Chaskin & Joseph, 2013; Coley et al., 1997). Reflecting this, placemaking is a key priority for public housing providers in various countries (e.g. Peabody, 2021; Tamaki Regeneration Company (TRC), 2021; Tually et al., 2020). The focus on placemaking by housing providers reflects the understanding that homes are not just dwellings but are significant places – nodes in a network of social relations that extend beyond their four walls (Easthope, 2004).

Around the world, public rental housing is aimed at different sectors of the population, and operates in distinctive political and social contexts. Yet public housing in different countries shares important commonalities: it is targeted (to a greater or lesser extent) at low-income people, and administered by large state or community landlords. These commonalities mean that international experiences are likely to hold insights that policymakers, housing providers, and researchers can adapt to local contexts. In this article, we examine the literature on placemaking and related processes and interventions in public housing communities to establish key lessons learnt, the state of knowledge and critical issues for future research.

Placemaking is a concept that has been approached from different angles. Writing from the spatial planning perspective, Strydom and colleagues (2018) note that the term has evolved over time. At first, ‘placemaking’ referred to planning and development decision-making processes. From the early 1990s, references to ‘placemaking’ emphasised residents’ or users’ perspectives in the planning and development process. Focus on perspectives of those who live in a place, rather than on the perspective of ‘experts’ like architects or planners, emerged as part of a post-modern critique of modernist planning, heavily influenced by Jane Jacobs (1961) and William Whyte (1968). In the past decade, placemaking has been used increasingly to refer to participatory and empowering planning practices (Strydom et al., 2018). Therefore Strydom et al (2018, p. 175) define placemaking as ‘an enabling tool to be used by planners to facilitate the making of places by numerous people/role-players outside the planning profession’. This is the ‘co-design’ ideal where placemaking is ‘a participatory process for shaping public space that harnesses the ideas and assets of the people who use it’ (Project for Public Places, n.d.). For others, however, placemaking has little to do with planners or the process of developing public spaces: it is the ‘explicit or tacit cooperation among people to create, maintain, and give meaning to places in space through bodily occupation under different constraints and access to resources’ (Chica, 2021, p. 2). This understanding of placemaking is implicit in the work of social scientists on how places become the way they are and how they shape people’s experiences (Basso, 1996; Creswell, 2004; Gieryn, 2000; Relph, 1976). The definition of placemaking provided in a recent review, and drawn on for this research, covers the definitions provided by both planners and social scientists: ‘the process of placemaking creates an attachment or connection between the community member and the place in which they live, work, and play that is

often referred to as an individual's sense of place' (Ellery et al., 2021, p. 72). This connection can be created by residents themselves, facilitated by the efforts of planners and other professionals, or both (Ellery et al., 2021). The search terms for this literature review, discussed in the next section, relied on the placemaking definitions provided in these key works.

Why is experiencing a sense of place or place attachment important? The two concepts are closely related; a sense of place refers to the meanings and attachment to a setting that are held by a particular individual or group (Tuan, 1977), while place attachment is an emotional bond, usually positive, between people and place (Altman & Low, 1992). These concepts, and closely related terms including *genius loci* (Norberg-Schulz, 1980), community attachment (Hummon, 1992), place dependence (Stokols & Shumaker, 1981), place identity (Proshansky, 1978), and belonging (Antonsich, 2010; Fenster, 2005) are among those used in the placemaking literature. Following the lead of others (e.g. Eyles & Williams, 2008), we use the broader term 'sense of place' in this article. A sense of place is considered important for a number of reasons, including as a contextual consideration to inform intentional placemaking practices, as an outcome of social capital and/or physical place design, as an influence on community empowerment and people's willingness to act on behalf of a place, and as part of the dynamic of establishing everyday routines (Jivén & Larkham, 2003; Lewicka, 2011). Experiencing a sense of place is also associated with residential satisfaction, quality of life and wellbeing (DeMiglio & Williams, 2008; Rollero & De Piccoli, 2010; Scannell & Gifford, 2017; Tartaglia, 2013). While other related concepts and topics such as community consultation, participation, and design are all important to placemaking and are well-covered in the articles we reviewed, explicit or in-depth coverage of these was outside the scope of our current research.

Considering what might be special about placemaking in public housing, as opposed to other types of tenure, merits a brief consideration of the politics of public housing. Sustained economic growth and political circumstances in the post-World War II period led to a phase of welfare capitalism in many high-income countries. Governments sought to meet acute housing needs through building public housing en masse, for those people who met certain criteria and could pay the rent. From the mid-1970s however, economic growth declined, unemployment and inflation increased, and 'big' government came under criticism in many contexts (Castles, 1998; Harloe, 1995). Over subsequent decades, governments responded by failing to invest in public housing maintenance or new builds, selling public housing, transferring stock to community providers, and increased targeting of public housing to the most deprived people (Goetz, 2013; Harloe, 1995; Vale, 2018). As a consequence, many public housing developments have over time become increasingly ill-maintained, transitory and stigmatised, factors which may challenge efforts to build or experience a sense of place.

Despite this, placemaking in the context of public housing, and in particular within housing regeneration programmes, has received recent attention. Due to decades of disinvestment, large proportions of public housing in different countries are in poor condition. Regeneration is a response to this, as well as incongruence between the size and style of housing and the needs of public housing tenants;

perceived deficiencies in neighbourhood design and community life; territorial stigmatisation; the concentration of poverty; and high demand for both public and private housing. Regeneration often includes renovating or demolishing stock, changing street layout to reduce insularity, investing in public space, building medium or high-density mixed-tenure or mixed-income housing, and relocating some or all tenants (Watt & Smets, 2017). However, in transforming neighbourhoods, regeneration has been criticised for excluding original occupants, who may be displaced in the process or unable to afford to live in the regenerated neighbourhood (Glynn, 2008, 2009; Goetz, 2011; Lees, 2014).

In the regeneration process, placemaking initiatives have been cast as a way to mitigate stigma and help build stronger communities, through, for example, housing providers facilitating residents' participation in events or the co-design of public spaces (Tually et al., 2020; Yu, Lin, & Dąbrowski, 2023). To illustrate, in a major regeneration in New Zealand, where 2,500 public housing units are being replaced with 10,500 public and private housing units, placemaking is described as 'supporting local cultural identity and sense of belonging' (Tāmaki Regeneration Company, n.d.). To critics, however, these engagement processes are fundamentally aligned against tenants, as the state (*via* the housing provider or regeneration company) controls the process by determining who is invited to engage, what is on the agenda and what is out of scope (Darcy & Rogers, 2014). Further, placemaking initiatives have been criticised for installing spaces of privilege and consumption, and prioritising middle-class priorities and aesthetics (Douglas, 2023)

The importance of a sense of place to public housing tenants, the disruption to and establishment of place during contemporary public housing regeneration, and the importance of placemaking to public housing providers, mean that it is vital to take stock of what we know about placemaking in the context of public housing. Our research questions were: What are the characteristics of the literature on placemaking in the context of public housing? What enables public housing tenants to form and retain a sense of place? To answer these questions, we conducted a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the literature on placemaking in the context of public housing.

Methods

The analysis was conducted in two stages. First, we conducted a systematic, quantitative literature review (SQLR) to rapidly assess what is known about the topic across different disciplinary perspectives. The advantage of SQLRs is that they provide a step-by-step process for mapping a field of literature, enabling the identification of strengths and gaps in current knowledge. The identification of search terms and limits ensures transparency in this process, with the goal of increasing objectivity and enabling periodic replication (Pickering & Byrne, 2014; Pickering, Johnson, & Byrne, 2021). We searched Scopus and Web of Science Core Collection, which are the most relevant databases for placemaking research (Serin, 2018). We had no time limit to our search but limited the search to peer-reviewed journal articles in English. We excluded grey literature and books due to time and resource constraints. Such exclusions are typical in an SQLR as it is intended as a rapid assessment; in

addition, the grey literature is typically not peer-reviewed and the results cannot therefore be treated with the same level of rigour (Pickering & Byrne, 2014; Pickering et al., 2021). However, we note that important books and book chapters relating to public housing tenants' sense of place are represented by articles in this review that are by the same authors and draw on the same data (i.e. Arthurson, 2012; Chaskin & Joseph, 2015; Fennell, 2015; Manzo, 2008; Morris, 2019; Watt, 2021).

The initial search on public housing (or social/state housing) and placemaking (or place making/place-making), searching titles, keywords and abstracts, and limited to articles in English, elicited few documents (21 from Scopus, and 19 from Web of Science). As a result, we decided to broaden the search to include additional key words. In determining the additional search terms, we examined definitions provided by key authors (and discussed previously), which note that placemaking is about creating a sense of, or attachment to, place (Ellery et al., 2021), and emphasise public space as the site of this process (Project for Public Places, n.d.). Therefore, the final search - of titles, keywords and abstracts, and limited to articles in English - was:

public housing OR social housing OR state housing

AND

placemaking OR place-making OR 'place making' OR 'public space' OR 'place attachment' OR 'sense of place'

The search was carried out initially in March 2022 and finalised on 27 June 2022. Our searches resulted in 207 results (130 from Scopus, and 77 from Web of Science), and 148 articles after removing duplicates (see Figure 1). We then screened titles and abstracts against three inclusion criteria: (1) articles published in English in academic journals; (2) articles that considered public *rental* housing¹; (3) articles that reported on original data on public housing tenants (i.e. rather than reviews or essays, or accounts of planners', other residents', or developers' perspectives). We chose to focus on tenants' views in order to limit the scope of the literature review and because tenants are best-placed to say what connects them to place, which may at times differ from the perspectives of others involved in developing or administering public housing.

After removing articles that did not meet the inclusion criteria, 63 articles remained for review. In order to determine the characteristics of the literature on placemaking in the context of public housing, we coded these in an Excel spreadsheet according to a range of variables as specified by Pickering and Byrne (2014; 2021) and as determined by the authors. The variables were: year of publication, field of publication, methods, and study location, and whether the study was focussed on the impact of housing regeneration. To determine the fields of publication we drew on SCImago, a database powered by Scopus which categorises each journal within specific fields and subfields; noting that journals can be categorised under multiple fields and subfields. Findings from the quantitative analysis are presented in the first section of the Findings: characteristics of the literature about placemaking for public housing tenants. Specific articles are referred to by codes listed in Table 1.

Second, we analysed the selection of papers qualitatively, guided by our research questions. We used thematic analysis; specifically, template analysis (Brooks & King,

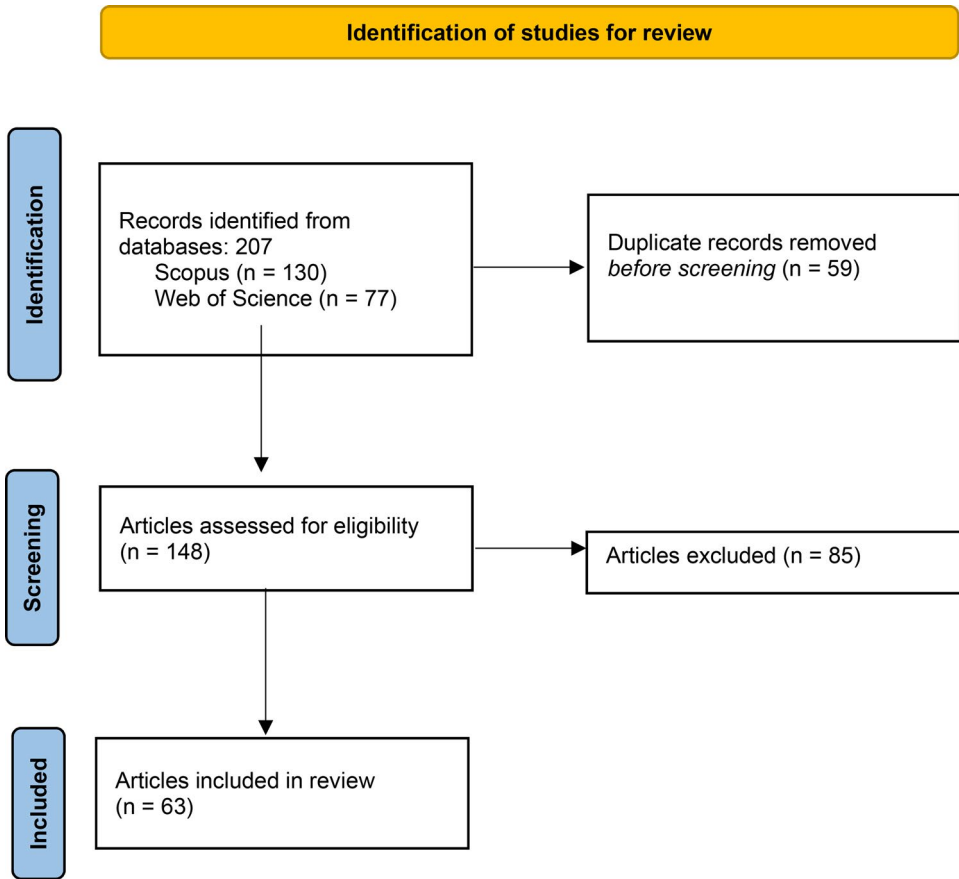


Figure 1. Adapted PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) flow chart based on Page *et al.* (2021).

2012; Crabtree & Miller, 1992; King, 2004). In template analysis, some codes – labels attached to sections of texts that are important to the interpretation of the data – are determined either by a preliminary scanning of the text, or existing literature and theoretical considerations; in our case, recent reviews of the placemaking literature (Chica, 2021; Ellery *et al.*, 2021; Serin, 2018). Codes were modified, expanded on, and discarded to accommodate new data and new insights, and then grouped into categories or themes as a template with a hierarchical structure to represent relationships between codes and higher-order themes, and connections between these. Each co-author read a sample of articles to ensure that the template captured the key themes relevant to the research question: what enables public housing tenants to form and retain a sense of place? The template was then used as the basis for drafting the article. The template underwent several revisions in response to multiple readings, discussions with co-authors, and to the new articles that emerged in the months between the initial and final search. Findings from the qualitative analysis are presented in the second part of the findings: themes in the literature about placemaking in the context of public housing. Specific articles are referred to by codes listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Articles in systematic quantitative literature review and some of their features.

Code	Publication details		Settings		Methods		
	First author	Date	Country	Regeneration	Qual.	Quant.	Mixed
A1	Coley, R.	1997	USA			x	
A2	Whitley, R.	2005	UK		x		
A3	Breunlin, R.	2006	USA	x	x		
A4	Kleit, R. G.	2006	USA	x		x	
A5	Young, T. M.	2007	USA		x		
A6	Manzo, L. C.	2008	USA	x			x
A7	Blokland, T.	2008	USA		x		
A8	Sullivan, A. L.	2008	USA	x	x		
A9	Dufty, R.	2009	Australia		x		
A10	Mee, K.	2009	Australia			x	
A11	Curley, am	2010	USA	x		x	
A12	Bennett, K.	2011	UK		x		
A13	Leahy Laughlin, D.	2011	Canada	x	x		
A14	Tester, G.	2011	USA	x		x	
A15	Lucio, J.	2012	USA	x			x
A16	de Carvalho, M. J. L.	2013	Portugal		x		
A17	Walthorp, K.	2013	Denmark		x		
A18	Chaskin, R. J.	2013	USA	x	x		
A19	Laakso, J.	2013	USA	x	x		
A20	Paton, K	2013	UK		x		
A21	Yau, Y.	2014	China			x	
A22	Teedon, P.	2014	UK		x		
A23	Darcy, M.	2014	Australia	x	x		
A24	Manzo, L. C.	2014	USA	x	x		
A25	August, M	2014	Canada	x	x		
A26	Freedman, D. A.	2014	USA		x		
A27	Fennell, C.	2014	USA	x	x		
A28	Kohlbacher, J.	2015	Austria			x	
A29	Hodkinson, S.	2015	UK	x	x		
A30	Shaw, K. S.	2015	Australia		x		
A31	Arthurson, K.	2015	Australia	x	x		
A32	Hunter, M. A.	2016	USA	x	x		
A33	Norris, M.	2016	Ireland	x			x
A34	Corkery, L.	2017	Australia		x		
A35	Gordon, R.	2017	New Zealand		x		
A36	Morris, A.	2017	Australia	x	x		
A37	Bijen, G.	2017	Australia	x	x		
A38	Lui, L. M.	2017	China			x	
A39	Leh, O. L. H.	2018	Malaysia			x	
A40	Mayrhofer, R.	2018	Austria		x		
A41	Zhang, H.	2018	Taiwan			x	
A42	Yuliastuti, N.	2018	Indonesia				x
A43	Lee, L. S. H.	2019	China			x	
A44	Dijkema, C.	2019	France		x		
A45	Petteway, R. J.	2019	USA		x		
A46	Kärholm, M.	2019	Sweden		x		
A47	Aryani, N. P.	2020	Indonesia		x		
A48	Aygenç, B.	2020	Cyprus				x
A49	Watt, P. ("Territorial...")	2020	UK	x	x		
A50	Watt, P. ("Displacement...")	2020	UK	x	x		
A51	Pinkster, F. M.	2020	Netherlands		x		
A52	Tually, S.	2020	Australia		x		
A53	Visser, K	2020	Netherlands	x	x		
A54	Chang, J.	2020	China				x
A55	Valli, C.	2021	Sweden	x	x		
A56	Nelson, S.	2021	UK	x	x		
A57	Matsumoto, H.	2021	Japan		x		
A58	Zhang, L.	2021	China			x	
A59	Prisco, M.	2021	Italy		x		
A60	Sanders Romero, F.	2022	USA	x	x		
A61	Yu, H. C.	2022	Taiwan		x		
A62	Holy-Hasted, W.	2022	UK			x	
A63	Truong, S.	2022	Australia		x		

Findings

Characteristics of the references about placemaking for public housing tenants

The quantitative analysis revealed several characteristics of the literature (Table.1). Firstly, research was generally published in social science journals; 90% ($n=57$) of the articles were published in a journal categorised as social science, and 19 articles were published in journals categorised as environmental science. Psychology, arts and humanities, and medicine were each represented by four articles. Within the social sciences, the most prominent fields were urban studies ($n=26$), sociology and political science ($n=24$), and geography, planning and development ($n=21$).

While the review covered research conducted in 20 countries, there was a preponderance of studies carried out in high-income, mainly English-speaking countries. Of the 63 articles, over half were based on research conducted in three countries: the United States ($n=17$), Australia ($n=10$) and the United Kingdom ($n=10$). Most of the papers reviewed were published in the last 20 years; over three-quarters ($n=48$) were published in the past 10 years. Ten articles focussed on or included a focus on youth perspectives, while one article (A57) focussed on the experience of the elderly.

Forty-four papers exclusively drew on qualitative methods, 13 articles drew only on quantitative methods, and 6 papers drew on both (mixed methods). Many articles, both quantitative and qualitative, drew on multiple methods. Of the 19 articles that used quantitative methods, it was most common to draw on survey data ($n=14$). Others drew on quantitative descriptive analysis ($n=4$) and administrative data ($n=3$). There were no quantitative longitudinal studies.

Of the 50 articles in the document set that drew on qualitative methods, it was most common to draw on interviews ($n=33$), observation (including participant observation) ($n=13$) and focus groups ($n=10$). Eight of the articles drew on visual participatory techniques including photovoice. Some of the qualitative articles had a longitudinal element. In two studies (A19, A50), some participants were interviewed twice over several years; three ethnographic studies were conducted over a period of years and similarly enabled some consideration of changes over time (A20, A27, A25).

A large proportion of the reviewed literature focussed on placemaking in the context of the regeneration of public housing communities ($n=27$, 43%). Studies concerned participants who lived in housing scheduled for or in the process of regeneration ($n=12$) or who had been relocated into new housing because of regeneration of their previous homes ($n=11$); other papers included both groups ($n=4$).

The characteristics of this literature, such as the dominance of certain research settings and methods, provide important context to interpreting the identified themes, discussed subsequently.

Themes in the references about placemaking in the context of public housing

We identified seven themes in the literature. (1) Sense of place and the variables that affected it. Placemaking was supported by (2) forming relationships and by (3) participating in planning activities and (4) other community activities, (5) by access to public space and (6) amenities, and by (7) spending time in and forming

memories of a place. We discuss each of these themes individually, but it is worth bearing in mind that they interrelate closely. For each, we discuss how the theme arose in the studies reviewed, in general and then specifically in the context of studies about mixed-tenure regeneration.

Sense of place

Several studies considered whether public housing tenants experienced a sense of place, and what determines its presence or absence. Articles emphasised that a strong sense of place contrasted with public narratives about those communities (A14, A52). The quantitative literature is difficult to summarise because of the different aspects of sense of place measured (among them, community attachment, place attachment, and social capital) and the different ways of, and contexts associated with, measuring sense of place. Overall, however, studies concluded that many public housing tenants experience a strong sense of place (A11, A14, A28, A54). Sense of place was influenced by: marital status (A4, A11, A54); age or life stage (A4, A14); ethnicity (A11, A28); income or employment (A4, A11, A54); residential satisfaction (A4); social ties/support/capital (A4, A11, A14, A28); perceived housing conditions (A14, A54); sense of safety (A11, A21, A54); neighbourhood amenities (A11); housing estate design (A41); and length of residence (A14).

Many qualitative studies in this review emphasised participants' positive sense of place (A6, A23, A24, A26, A35). Some studies framed this in terms of different spatial scales – attachment to the home, the block of flats or row of houses, and the neighbourhood or complex (A24, A50). Studies emphasised that public housing, particularly in contrast to previous housing experiences, offered stability and a way for families to be together (A3, A6, A10, A24). Public housing complexes or neighbourhoods became important parts of people's identity (A3, A20, A35, A43, A51).

In many cases, this positive sense was for a place participants would move away from, or already had moved from, due to regeneration (A3, A6, A23, A24, A35, A50). Two studies, carried out in Salishan (USA) and Sydney (Australia) noted the irony that the regeneration programme aimed to create a sense of place through placemaking activities, without valuing the sense of place that already existed (A19, A37). Studies reported that news of relocation was greeted by grief, fear, worry, shock, illness, anger and/or an enduring sense of loss (A6, A8, A13, A24, A36, A50), even when, having relocated, people were happy in their new home (A24, A50). Authors noted that these feelings may subside as time passes (A8, A19). One study, carried out in Atlanta (USA), and discussed in two articles, observed that news of relocation was sometimes met with acceptance or enthusiasm at the thought of a new start (A6, A24); other studies, conducted with relocated people, reflected on the losses, as well as the gains made in variously having superior housing, new relationships, safer neighbourhoods, and better facilities (A8, A18, A50).

Public housing tenants were aware of but often rejected the stigmatisation of their neighbourhood (A6, A24, A28, A46, A49, A51); one author observed that the shared experience of stigmatisation seemed to strengthen residents' sense of place (A24). In other cases, participants stigmatised other public housing tenants or neighbourhoods (A9, A10, A24, A51). Only one study, in Newhaven (USA), focused

on residents who positioned themselves as not belonging in their community - because identifying with such a stigmatised place would mark them as 'losers' (A7). However, tenants in multiple studies acknowledged problems in their communities, including violence and insufficient maintenance, as later discussed. A Seattle (USA) study characterised these as 'ambivalent attachments', participants acknowledged the place's struggles, while still feeling it was 'a good place to live' (A24, p.10).

Connecting to others

The literature reviewed found that people were connected to place partly because of the social relationships they had formed there. While like in any neighbourhood, some studies observed people who preferred to keep to themselves or spoke negatively about their neighbours (A2, A6, A10, A12, A57), most showed that many public housing tenants had friendly or close relationships with other people in the community (A2, A6, A8, A15, A24, A35, A36, A50, A52, A53). Two studies, in Newcastle (Australia) and Adelaide (Australia), observed that some public housing tenants included housing provider staff members as important relationships (A10, A52).

Social ties were facilitated through physical proximity, familial relationships and through involvement in community placemaking activities, as discussed in the subsequent section, as well as informal socialising and mutual assistance. Participants reported that they gave or received help from other public housing tenants through childcare, running errands, giving rides, sharing food (including in times of illness), doing repairs, borrowing, and loaning, and generally watching out for each other (A6, A10, A19, A22, A24, A36, A50). Studies emphasised that common circumstances and experiences facilitated social ties, even when tenants came from different ethnic backgrounds (A5, A6, A19). One study about tenant youth relocated due to regeneration found that their satisfaction with their new home depended on whether they had social ties in the new neighbourhood (A53). Other studies showed that tenants who stayed when others were relocated, and relocated tenants, missed their old friends and neighbours (A8, A19, A24, A36, A50, A53). Reflecting the value people placed on common experiences, some participants found it difficult to adjust to living alongside higher-income residents (A8, A20, A35), or viewed plans to make their neighbourhood more economically diverse through regeneration with trepidation (A6, A13, A20, A37).

Participating in planning activities

As noted in the introduction, community participation in urban development is at the centre of planners' understanding of placemaking; surprisingly, few papers discussed such participation. These included: tenant involvement in co-designing improvements to a shopping centre (A52); researchers' work with the tenants' organisation and tenant gardeners to set up and run community gardens (A8); 'place-makers' (in this context, tenants housed conditional on community involvement) initiation of projects with fellow tenants to enhance public space, curate community activities such as art or exercise classes, and create newsletters (A61). Only one of

these, a study carried out in Adelaide, reported on the effects of involvement in the community; it concluded that these and other activities increased community pride and sense of belonging (A52).

Other examples of community participation in planning processes occurred in the context of housing regeneration. One study, in Chicago (USA), noted that the funding for regeneration was contingent on tenant participation, but the extent of this participation was up to the housing provider (A18). In London (UK), a local group negotiated for facilities for residents of private housing be opened to the community (A56); in Phoenix (USA) site, tenants ensured that separate recreation and employment centres were provided (A15). In some cases, activism was prompted by regeneration, and designed to resist or influence it (A23, A33, A35, A37, A49, A56, A60). Indeed, a study carried out in San Antonio (USA) investigated how the threat of re-zoning, which would enable public housing regeneration, improved civic health by activating opposition (A60). In some cases, authors compared different regeneration sites within the same city and concluded that the capacity to influence development depended on existing leadership in the community (A15, A33, A37, A60). However, the message of other studies is that tenants were not able to influence the urban form in any substantive way (A15, A18, A23, A31, A55). As the more powerful group, the preferences of residents of private housing could dominate in the design of public space. In one case, in Chicago (USA), owner-occupiers' dislike of public housing tenants' use of public space resulted in reductions in open space in the development's later stages (A27).

Community involvement

Involvement in local groups and events, including celebration days, community barbecues, food banks, classes, sports teams, faith or interest groups, youth or elderly programmes, and community gardens, helped to bring people together and make them feel part of the community (A3, A5, A6, A8, A13, A26, A34, A40, A46, A50, A52, A57, A63). For example, the authors of a Sydney study noted that the local built environment had been imbued with 'layers of meaning and significance' by tenant creation of guerrilla gardens, environmental groups, and recycling schemes (A37, p.157). In New Orleans (USA), the parade through a public housing community and surrounds was seen by participants as combatting stigma, bringing people together, and claiming a place in the city (A3). In contrast, the Newhaven (USA) study provided details of community activities, but observed that many tenants avoid engaging in the community because doing so would imply their identification with a stigmatised place (A7).

The other examples show that community involvement and a positive sense of place often go hand-in-hand, but one study showed that this is not always the case. This study, in Tainan (Taiwan), showed that greater satisfaction with outdoor space quality and community layout predicted lower levels of community involvement, indicating that satisfied people may have less reason to get together with others to influence things in the neighbourhood (A41).

Community placemaking activities could originate with professionals or with tenants or shift between the two. Management of a community garden in Vienna

(Austria), for example, slowly shifted over the course of years from community organisers to residents (A40). Community involvement rises and declines; one study, which took a decades-long view, of a Lund (Sweden) neighbourhood, observed that strong local organisations had become inactive in recent years as more private housing had been built and as public spaces had changed (A46). One study, in Toronto (Canada) noted that a community development role in a mixed-tenure redevelopment was vitally important, but was only funded for two years (A25).

Regeneration can provide impetus and funding for community placemaking activities such as fun days, barbeques and meetings aimed at celebrating new housing or bringing a new community together, such as in London (UK) and Toronto (Canada) (A25, A50). However, reviewed studies showed that the power differential between public housing tenants and private housing residents meant that private housing residents dominated in community and planning meetings, and their needs and preferences were prioritised (A18, A25, A27). In the Toronto study, for example, meetings were intended to foster integration between public housing tenants and private housing residents, but homeowners dominated the agenda and made decisions that were against tenants' interests (A25).

Public space as a setting for placemaking

Public spaces, including parks, footpaths and streets, and shared spaces such as hallways or community rooms, are the setting for much of what we have already discussed. Studies suggested public and shared spaces are particularly important for public housing tenants because their homes are often smaller, more crowded, and sometimes, less well-airconditioned than other housing (A8, A25, A43).

Design and accessibility of public and shared space mattered. In Tainan, greater satisfaction with the layout of apartment complexes and the quality of the outdoor space predicted a greater sense of place (A41). In studies carried out in Hong Kong and Semarang (Indonesia), accessibility of community facilities determined whether people used them (A38, A42). In Shanghai and Nanjing (China), layout, and presence of rest and game facilities and paved areas influenced how many people used communal space for leisure and socialising (A58). Natural beauty or green space within or near public housing estates was highly valued (A10, A22, A26); public housing tenants in the USA were more likely to spend time outdoors in treed areas (A1). Community gardens were highly valued as places that people connected to others and to nature, and were a source of pride (A34, A40, A63).

Tenants in many studies noted how a lack of investment in and maintenance of public spaces meant they were unusable, and this harmed tenants' quality of life (A13, A16, A22, A38, A39, A45). In contrast, the Adelaide housing provider's on-going investment in property maintenance and public space infrastructure helped tenants feel proud of their community (A52).

In many studies, public housing tenants reported issues with crime in their neighbourhood's public and shared spaces (A4, A6, A7, A8, A10, A12, A13, A16, A17, A18, A22, A24, A45, A51). In Glasgow, lack of safety prevented residents going to certain public spaces or shops (A22); a London study suggested that the reasons why paved public spaces were associated with wellbeing in high-income areas, but

not low-income areas (dominated by public housing) was the lack of safety in those spaces (A62). Feeling safe was associated with experiencing a sense of place (A11, A21, A54). Safety is subjective: public housing tenants said they felt safe in areas others might think of as dangerous, even if they had experienced crime, due to the strength of their social ties (A8, A24, A50, A53). Perception of safety was a key point of tension in new mixed neighbourhoods (A25, A18, A27). For example, in Toronto, private housing residents petitioned police for increased presence, in order to feel safer, but this made public housing tenants less safe, as it resulted in more racially targeted police harassment of youth (A25).

Some studies observed a disjuncture between resident and 'expert' preferences around the design of public and shared spaces. Youth participants in Toronto opposed the design for regeneration of their housing, which was intended to reduce insularity: 'objections revolved around the prospect of losing the sense of community they believed walkways helped foster' (A13, p.446). People who had moved from older public housing complexes to new housing in the process of regeneration reported preference for aspects of the older housing that promoted resident interaction and socialising; namely, parks or other outdoor open spaces (A25, A27, A50); externally facing access balconies (A50); and breezeways and wide hallways (A27). They found that their new housing lacked the public and shared indoor and outdoor spaces to spend time, play, observe others, and socialise.

Different perceptions of appropriate use of public and shared spaces came up frequently: between market residents and public housing tenants in Chicago and Toronto (A18, A25, A27) and between youth and others in Grenoble (France) and Chicago (A18, A44). In a Toronto study, public housing tenants saw an alleyway and plot of land as a play space for children, while their private resident neighbours thought it should only be used for cars (A25). Rules in mixed-tenure housing complexes caused problems for those tenants, who were harassed by police and felt under surveillance by their neighbours, unable to socialise or spend time in public space as they wanted (A15, A18, A25, A27). Testimonies of public housing tenants show how conflict over their use of public space interfered with their ability to make place; for example, one Chicago tenant proclaimed: 'I ain't never lived nowhere where you can't go out to the back of your house and barbeque. You a prisoner in your own house' (A18, p.496).

The importance of amenities to placemaking

Amenities were highly valued by tenants as places to be with others outside the home and to provide for their needs (A10, A13, A25, A26, A30, A35, A37, A50, A53, A56, A57, A63). In Boston, amenities including libraries, parks, grocery stores, social services, and recreational facilities were the most significant predictor of social capital (which is related to a sense of place) for public housing tenants; the authors noted that 'repeated encounters at the local recreation facility, in the grocery store, or the nearby park provide opportunities for an awareness of neighbors and their everyday routines to develop' (A11, p.94). This aligns with the suggestion that public housing tenants in senior/disabled housing in Atlanta (USA) experienced greater place attachment than those in family housing because their housing was better

located in relation to amenities (A14). Culturally specific shops or community spaces in Utrecht (Netherlands) and Salishan were valued for enabling people to feel a sense of belonging (A19, A53), and, in Auckland (Aotearoa New Zealand), prompted frequent returns to an old neighbourhood after relocation (A35).

Correspondingly, public housing tenants in some studies shared their concern about a lack of amenities (A16, A26, A45, A53). One photo-voice participant in an anonymous USA city captioned a photo of a local empty lot with: 'build somewhere people could go to, a shop, a diner' (A45, p.15). Children living in Lisbon's (Portugal) public housing neighbourhoods wanted playgrounds, as well as greenery and seating in the streets where they spent much of their time. As the author put it, 'children's emphasis on the need to have better playing conditions and to improve leisure facilities cannot be dissociated from their desire to be included in the neighbourhoods and to have a public space for themselves' (A16, p.105).

The importance of amenities came up frequently in studies about regeneration and gentrification, where participants had moved to a new neighbourhood, or the neighbourhood had changed around them. Studies that considered the experience of public housing tenants who remained in neighbourhoods through gentrification or regeneration noted how their sense of place was disrupted, and social interaction curtailed, by the closure or change of shops; they felt that shops were targeted at higher-income residents (A30, A35, A50, A56). In a Melbourne (Australia) case study, non-market facilities such as bowling clubs helped preserve spaces for public housing tenants when gentrification occurred (A30). One study on a Chicago mixed-tenure development mired in conflict argued that the focus should be on building schools, stores, coffee shops, and recreational facilities, as well as housing; these places would 'provide a range of neutral grounds on which to find some commonality—or greater comfort in difference' (A18, p.499).

Temporal aspects of placemaking

The literature reviewed emphasised the importance of time for forming a sense of place, how individual and collective memories shape a sense of place, and the disorientating effects of loss of place.

Aligning with a survey which found that length of residence predicted place attachment (A14), qualitative researchers suggested that a strong sense of place resulted from living somewhere a long time (A6, A10, A36, A37, A50). Some studies conducted in the context of regeneration noted that tenants thought of their residence in public housing as offering lifelong security, making relocation even more disruptive (A23, A35, A37).

Studies which considered memory and history with regard to placemaking examined radical changes proposed or made to urban form that raised both fears and hopes. In a Melbourne study, residents of one of the case study sites welcomed redevelopment because of the 'positive collective memory of previous renewal works undertaken on the estate' (A37, p.157). In other studies, the prospect of urban regeneration raised fears that personal history and collective memories would be erased (A8, A13, A24, A49). Therefore, a Phoenix study recommended 'memory-collecting activities' such as retaining material or photos of the old

buildings to comfort people affected by regeneration (A8); in a Seattle study, the housing provider took this role by organising an event to share photos and memories before the housing was demolished (A6). Studies in New Orleans and London reported on how tenants were involved in local history projects to preserve collective memories (A3, A56).

Some studies reported that place names changed or disappeared during the process of regeneration and rebranding (A25, A29, A32, A35, A37, A50, A56). In a Sydney case, renaming a ‘notorious’ street was seen as helpful to removing stigma (A37, p.157); in other cases, it was unwelcome, and disturbing. As one author described, a website created to sell housing on a London regeneration site ‘succeeds in a complete symbolic erasure of the existing community and place by deliberate omission of any reference to it’ (A29, p.83). A Toronto study author described renaming as ‘a political move, used to elevate middle-class priorities, devalue structures associated with poor, racially marginalized residents and justify the need for middle-class occupation and control’ (A25, p.1170). In one London site, tenants successfully campaigned to retain the original name (A56); whereas in Toronto, tenants resisted by continuing to use their community’s original name (A25).

Radical changes made to landscapes through regeneration were disorienting. One study described a ‘sense of placelessness’ experienced by tenants who remained in a neighbourhood through its regeneration process: ‘their “mental map” of the estate was disrupted, causing distress’ (A32, p.159). Studies carried out in New Orleans and Chicago commemorated public housing which was demolished and not replaced on-site (A3, A32). Former residents came together in reunions at or parades through their former homes to remember, to be together, and to celebrate.

Discussion

Characteristics of the references

Our systematic quantitative literature review resulted in 63 articles based on research set in 20 countries. Our analysis of the document set revealed several characteristics to the research on placemaking in the context of public housing. These are important for contextualising key themes and for highlighting areas for future research. Partly due to our exclusion of non-English language articles, English-speaking countries dominate as research settings. These countries are characterised by small public housing sectors that house mainly low-income people, are often stigmatised, and have often lacked investment, resulting in poor quality housing and low-amenity neighbourhoods. Including more research from countries where public housing is available to more of the population would likely change the relative importance of different themes. In common with broader literature (von Wirth, Grêt-Regamey, Moser, & Stauffacher, 2016), there is a curious absence of studies which consider how changes to the urban form affect sense of place (aside from those studies about regeneration, which are complicated by the wholesale life changes involved, often including moving). The lack of longitudinal studies means that themes unearthed present a particular point in time, and do not enable understanding of how placemaking initiatives change or support people’s sense of place over time. In addition,

for the most part, studies focussed on the experiences of public housing tenants as a whole; few studies investigated placemaking for different groups. Indigenous people, different ethnic and migrant groups, different queer identities, different life stages, or people with different disabilities, may all place different importance on aspects of placemaking. Importantly, one study that considered both adult and youth perspectives found 'beyond their housing community...there was very little spatial overlap between adult and youth daily places' (A45, p.15). Finally, much of the literature focussed on placemaking in the context of regeneration.

Themes in the references

Qualitative analysis of the document set identified several key themes. Most studies emphasised public housing tenants experience a strong and positive sense of place. Sense of place showed up in the affection for and sense of belonging people had in their complexes or neighbourhoods, and the connections they had with other residents, as well as the sense of loss or grief they felt when they were relocated or when local landscapes and place names changed in the process of regeneration. Sense of place was encouraged by certain demographic characteristics, by length of residence, and by the mutual support and friendship provided by local social ties. It was also supported by involvement in community – in available clubs and programmes, but also in placemaking activities organised by public housing authorities or by activism/engagement intended to resist or influence regeneration. Neighbourhood places mattered for placemaking. Studies emphasised the importance of amenities such as shops, community centres and green space to connect to place and to other people. Public spaces were vital for placemaking, but this potential was sometimes hampered by poor maintenance, lack of safety, and designs or rules that interfered with people's ability to spend time and socialise in public. Discussion of temporal aspects, including length of residence and sentiments attached to places and their names, showed how present experiences of a place are informed by meanings created and held in the past (Creswell, 2004; Gieryn, 2000) and the importance of honouring local history and place names through regeneration processes (Masuda & Bookman, 2018).

Placemaking in the context of public housing regeneration

The dominance of research on regeneration is likely to influence results for a number of reasons. Such studies may over-emphasise public housing tenants' sense of place, given that: public housing regeneration often takes places in high-amenity areas with strong demand for private housing, as this helps finance regeneration (Darcy & Rogers, 2014); threats to place strengthen sense of place (Anton & Lawrence, 2014; Relph, 1976), and some studies explicitly noted research participants being at least partly recruited through groups that were opposed to aspects of the regeneration (A29, A35, A36). Post-regeneration studies emphasising people's loss and difficulty adjusting took place soon after relocation, but sense of place tends to strengthen with the passage of time; 'relocation outcomes are dynamic phenomena' (Kleinhaus & Kearns, 2013, p. 169). Opportunities for new tenants to place-make may be

particularly likely in communities undergoing regeneration; examples in the review include the community developer in a fixed-term position whose role was to build community and foster social inclusion in a new Toronto mixed-tenure complex (A25), or tenant participation in a one-off project to beautify the local town centre (A52).

Research involving public housing tenants brings a key question on Chica's (2021, p. 2) placemaking research agenda to the fore: 'How do people place-make with different access to resources?' The review showed that public housing tenants with a wealth of knowledge and experience of placemaking in their communities had little involvement in regeneration processes or in the design of buildings and local facilities. This may be because of how public housing, and its residents, have been stigmatised, as discussed in a number of studies in this review. As noted in another context, when urban spaces are redeveloped, 'new places are often 'made' right on top of what is already there, which, it should surprise no one to realize, may actually have been a place to someone already' (Douglas, 2023, p. 6)

This exclusion from development processes extended into everyday life for tenants who moved into new housing in mixed-tenure communities built on the site of their previous homes. They were stigmatised by residents of private housing, excluded during meetings designed to foster community cohesion, and were unable to influence life in their housing complex. They were unable to use public spaces as they preferred due to design and management rules. The control of space, and exclusion of some groups from places, is a frequent manifestation of power and perpetuation of injustice (Carmona, Tiesdell, Heath, & Taner, 2010).

The importance of tenure

The qualitative findings – such as how relationships, length of residency, and community involvement matter to placemaking – reflect what is important to developing a sense of place for everyone, not just for public housing tenants (Lewicka, 2011). Much of the general literature on sense of place has focussed on the experiences of owner-occupiers (Lewicka, 2011), or found that sense of place was predicted by living in owner-occupied housing, as opposed to renting in the private rental market (Anton & Lawrence, 2014; Lewicka, 2011). However in most of the studies in this review, public housing tenants experienced a strong sense of place. This is likely due (at least in part) to the greater security and lengthier tenancies afforded to public housing tenants, as opposed to people renting in the private sector. Similarly, it is secure housing, rather than ownership per se, that supports ontological security (Lewis, 2006; Padgett, 2007). One's tenure – or lack of tenure (see Douglas's (2023) study of placemaking practices by unhoused people) – is vital to determining whether they are able to live somewhere long enough to connect to place. Although public housing is more advantageous to placemaking than renting privately, people-place connections can still be challenged by changes in public housing tenants' circumstances and in public housing policy, as in the case of the introduction of reviewable tenancies (Fitzpatrick & Pawson, 2014), or by the landlord's decision to redevelop; '[public housing tenants'] inhabitation of the streets and buildings in which they live is protected only by the forbearance of the state, which can be withdrawn at any time' (Darcy & Rogers, 2014, p. 239).

Limitations

One limitation of our study is the search terms. The initial search on ‘placemaking’ and ‘public housing’ generated few results in the academic literature, despite the importance of place and the processes that shape it to public housing tenants. The scarcity of literature may reflect the association of the concept of placemaking with privilege and consumption (Douglas, 2023). The key words used in our final searches were those used in placemaking definitions. However, there is a wealth of other relevant research that we have missed because it belongs to different academic traditions that do not use these keywords, such as some of the literature on belonging, or is published in book form, such as those works based on oral histories or autobiographies of life in public housing communities. Other relevant research highlights relationships to land held by Indigenous or migrant peoples which, while not focussed on public housing, is relevant to their worldviews and, therefore, placemaking practices of some public housing tenants (Chica, 2021; Nejad, Walker, & Newhouse, 2020).

Conclusion

Placemaking, in aiming to bring about connections between people and place, is a route to greater wellbeing (DeMiglio & Williams, 2008; Rollero & De Piccoli, 2010; Scannell & Gifford, 2017; Tartaglia, 2013). Placemaking efforts have often focussed on consumption and recreation opportunities for the middle class (Douglas, 2023), yet public housing tenants, who are generally on lower incomes and have greater health needs than the general population, are particularly likely to benefit from placemaking efforts.

Literature on placemaking in the context of public housing reveals important insights about how placemaking is supported and disrupted. This literature should be of interest to public housing providers and governments, to placemaking professionals, such as urban designers and planners, and to researchers, particularly those investigating space, place, and society. For researchers interested in housing and home, a focus on placemaking is a way of ‘looking beyond the house’ (Easthope, 2004, p. 137) to consider connections between home, and wellbeing and identity.

Placemaking in the context of housing – including public housing – is the everyday living, the rituals, the celebrations, the relationships, the spaces, the activities, the conversations, the memories, that create connections between people and place. Placemaking always involves residents of a place; in the context of public housing, events, spaces and activities that contribute to placemaking are often initiated by tenants. Placemaking can also be encouraged by housing providers and other organisations, who can fund the staff, build the spaces, and encourage the activities that help to create or strengthen people-place connections.

Specifically, placemaking in the context of public housing can be supported by: policies that encourage long tenancies, to enable the time necessary to connect to people and place; ensuring the proximity of public housing to amenities and to well-maintained and safe public, shared and green spaces; ongoing funding for staff and resources for placemaking events and activities, and to connect people to other local activities; and, designs and rules that enable people to interact and

to access and use public space as they wish, including to socialise. In the case of housing subject to regeneration, it is vital that providers genuinely engage with tenants to minimise disruption, enable participation in planning processes, and ensure the celebration, memorialisation, or retention of important places. Particularly in mixed-tenure communities, it is crucial that housing providers take power dynamics into account and be on guard against the dominance of private housing residents in community decision-making.

These insights will be modified and deepened in response to future research.² Such research should address limitations highlighted within the existing literature and would benefit from qualitative and quantitative longitudinal studies (including oral history) which examine how a sense of place changes over time and in response to placemaking initiatives, for different groups (i.e. age, household, ethnicity, migrant status, indigeneity) within public housing, in diverse countries, and in housing which is both subject and not subject to regeneration. This review also identifies the place-based knowledge of past and current residents as a valuable resource for placemaking. Future efforts to place-make and research examining those efforts should tap into this resource.

Notes

1. We excluded 5 articles about Singapore public housing that did not specify that this was public rental housing. Given that only 6% of Singapore's public housing stock is public rental housing, it is safe to assume these articles were about state-subsidised owner-occupied housing (Gabriel, Bin Azman, & Gregory, 2019).
2. One example of such research is underway in New Zealand and is being undertaken by a large team of researchers, including the authors of this paper. The *Public Housing and Urban Regeneration: Maximising Wellbeing* research programme is a government-funded investigation of public housing providers' approaches to housing and urban regeneration projects. The Programme's researchers are working in close partnership with seven provider organisations to understand how different approaches to public housing affect wellbeing of tenants, their families and communities.

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