

Reimagining where we live: cultural placemaking and the levelling up agenda Inquiry February 2022

The Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee 16.2.012 0w 14.04.00 14.066.36 3

1. The development of collaborative sensory design approaches

Background

- x Culture is made tangible through the experiences it produces in people. Culture, broadly defined as 'a way of life', is expressed through everyday behaviours, the local architecture and other vernacular environmental and social features as much as through concrete cultural outputs such as music, food or performances.
- x It is linked to place by the particular atmospheres or 'senses of place' it creates. These senses of place mediate how we perceive places and whether we engage with places and people. Based on a range of previous research projects, including a recent assessment of Uxbridge High Street in West London, we suggest the following approaches to use culture to foster a more engaged and broader use of public spaces and shopping streets.

1. Develop collaborative sensory design approaches

- 1.1 Sensory experiences and emotions are relational processes, they are the connective tissues that both describe and create relations between place and the self. The way that we interpret our surroundings is guided as much by our emotions and memories as vision, sounds, smells, textures, tastes that we encounter, which create distinctive senses of place and shape how we feel and interact with a place whether we consider it inviting to linger or pass through quickly.
- 1.2 Public spaces and their culture are evaluated by users through 'the feel' of space or 'atmosphere'. Urban planning and event management professionals need to establish firstly through research what visual, sensory and spatial characteristics already define a public place or set a shopping street apart. Then a comprehensive strategy needs to work out how existing cultural assets in the built environment can be emphasized or brought to light through a diversity of small-scale interventions such as lighting or sound. An example is this [sensory toolkit](#).
- 1.3 Collaborative sensory design should be integrated in any redevelopment of public spaces or shopping streets to foster identification, surprise and multiple uses. Sensory design involves taking 'insider knowledge' seriously and designing the future public spaces with those who know it best namely

public spaces. F

Relevant readings and websites:

[Sensory Cities | AHRC Sensory Cities Network](#)

sensorysmithfield.com

[Report \(sensorysmithfield.com\)](#)

[Final Report | Timescapes of Urban Change \(sensescitiescultures.com\)](#)

- x Degen, M. et al (2021) Reimagining Uxbridge High Street. Brunel University London. Attached to this submission or available from the author.
- x Degen, M. & Lewis, C. (2020) "The changing feel of place: an analysis of temporal atmospheres in Smithfield Market, London". [Cultural Geographies](#), 27 (4), 509-526.
- x Degen, M. (2018) "Timescapes and Urban Change: the street". [Sociological Review](#), 66 (5) 1074-1092.
- x Degen, M. (2017) "Urban Regeneration and Resistance: Foregrounding Time and Experience". [Space and Culture](#), 20 (2) 141-155.
- x Degen, M. & Rose, G. (2012) "The Sensory experiencing of Urban Design: The role of walking and Perceptual memory". [Urban Studies](#), 49(15) 3271-3287.
- x Degen, M. & Garcia, S. (2012) "The transformation of the 'Barcelona model': an analysis of culture, urban regeneration and governance". [International Journal of Urban and Regional Research](#), 36(5), 1022-1038.