Bloom Consulting

11 steps to Place-making

A guide to the qualification of places and public spaces in cities and planned communities. Developed by Bloom Consulting.

Index

The 11 steps of Placemaking.ID®

Preface

Welcome to the Placemaking guide, a step-by-step handbook on clarifying the process of promoting the life of places.

The Placemaking.ID® is Bloom Consulting's own methodology that adds a new layer to its traditional Place Branding approach: people's experiences in public spaces, and not just in terms of external perspectives but also the local community itself.

Just as in the case of our 15 Steps to Place Branding guide, we do not intend to exhaust the subject, much less answer all questions. Rather, we hope to foster an initial discussion about the importance and advantages of thinking about vibrant and meaningful neighborhoods, planned communities, cities, regions and countries.

Finally, I cannot fail to thank the Bloom Consulting team without whom this guide would not have been possible.

Jose Torres
CEO

Introduction

Welcome to the Placemaking guide, a step-by-step overview of the process of promoting the life of places. We'll introduce you to our method - Placemaking.ID®, which overlaps Place Branding with the traditional Placemaking approach.

The guide will cover the intangible concept, and more so the experience, which is part of a place's tangible universe.

These dimensions are inextricably linked insofar as a place is nothing more than a space endowed with the meaning people give it, as per human geography. As much as it may not seem like it, Placemaking.ID® is about people, since without them we would have neither places nor brands.

If places enchant, surprise, connect and inspire, transformation is probably the great vocation of a place, as well as its great challenge. Places that are aligned, cohesive, coherent, and have a clear vision of the future based on their identity, as well as a diverse range of development vectors, have the ability, and why not the obligation, to positively impact the lives of the people they relate to.

The guide will be useful for public managers who seek a better quality of life for their cities, states, regions and countries, thereby improving the community experience and positively impacting the reputation and perception of the visitor, talent or investor. It is also for the private entrepreneur from the real estate market, who understands the need to contribute to a better city through its development and thus benefit from the unique characteristics, which will differentiate it from standardized competition.

Whether public or private, Placemaking.ID® works with people to make them feel that they belong to the places they inhabit, identify with the places they visit, be rewarded in the places they invest in and happy above all else.

Caio Esteves
Global Managing Partner of Placemaking

Step 1
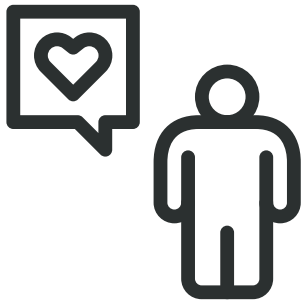
Develop a deep understanding of the culture of the place

Step 1 Develop a deep understanding of the culture of the place

Nobody understands the reality of a place better than its inhabitants!

If a place is formed by the meaning people assign it, understanding the local vision is the main starting point for Placemaking.ID®.

Exploratory visits are a great way to observe the dynamics of a place and the behavior of its people. This first immersion will help better design the engagement stage. Simple observation can tell us a lot about a place. Follow the dynamics at various times of the day and on different days of the week, always seeking to understand who, why, when and how people use certain places.

In addition to understanding urban dynamics, this initial phase must also look at the cultural behavior of the people of and in the place. When investigating the "who", we must go far beyond gender, age and other traditional criteria, delving deeper into the uses of and cultures present in the places.

This mosaic of cultures and subcultures will serve to source participants for co-creation workshops. At Bloom Consulting we organize these workshops based primarily on cultural behaviors. That is, it doesn't matter at first if you are young or adult, male or female, rich or poor. Rather, if you connect to a specific culture, we want to understand the challenges and anxieties within this group.

In some cases, gender and age distinction is called for. We determine this in parallel or by applying other methodological tools.

Sometimes, we'll do dozens of workshops with behavioral groups, and participants from separate groups might repeat each other. We are, after all, different but alike in some ways.

Remember

A good dose of local experience can be worth as much as pre-existing statistics, which are often outdated.

More than a quantitative/census approach, we are looking to develop a qualitative, comprehensive, but mainly profound understanding.

It's less about age, gender and income, and more about behavior, identity and culture.

Step 2

Engage the community

Step 2 Engage the community

The most important thing in this step is to create a participant base. It should represent the different cultures and subcultures observed in step one and confirmed by other data sources, such as social media mapping and academic bases.

Once you have developed a basic understanding of the place, know many people by name and have even picked up on some local language vices, it's time for the most important and laborious part: engaging everyone in the project.

As with almost everything in this guide, there is no right or wrong, but there are several ways to perform certain steps. We choose to share the methodologies, which have proven to be the most efficient in our years of consulting. We do not intend to create any judgment about the many other existing approaches.

It takes a lot of effort to explain how important it is for people to participate in the process. At this point, clear and relevant explanatory materials designed for the local reality are essential.

Remember that more than qualified insights, we seek to start a movement to strengthen a sense of belonging essential to any place. The sooner and the more people get involved,

the greater the belonging and the chances of these people becoming advocates of something they helped to build.

That's why, at Bloom Consulting, we have the habit of starting engagement activities even before the project itself. A kind of "movement" for a better place. Even when working with the private sector in planned communities, for example. No successful project will ignore its connection with the city, the surroundings and the community.

Engaging people is a commitment. If you, an entrepreneur or public power, have doubts about the project's viability, think twice before going out promising the world and funds to the local community. The only thing worse than not involving them is ignoring everything that was discussed. It is often said that a person only feels engaged if they know that their opinion is heard, even if it is not implemented. So, transparency in the process is also important.

Remember

Always create user-friendly engagement platforms suited to the local reality. A good speaker is often more efficient than a super sophisticated app.

When you want to give up, you will! Think - this process is responsible for the legitimacy and authenticity of the project. Without it you are just another someone who does things according to what "you think". And that, most of the time, doesn't sell or create a political legacy. Even worse, it doesn't change people's lives at all.

Step 3

Search for your digital identity

Step 3 Search for your digital identity

Although the starting point is the community itself, it is equally important to know what the rest of the world thinks of the place - to gain a perspective from beyond the local.

A good mapping of social networks helps us develop a vision beyond the community. And this is essential to understanding how to balance a proposition for a place, be it a city or a planned community. Being aware of what people think of and are saying about the place will also help guide efforts to mitigate unwanted noise.

Even with face-to-face workshops, knowing what the community is saying online about itself and the place they live, work or study in is essential for cross-referencing research sources and understanding possible biases.

In addition to painting a picture of the current moment, immersion in the digital universe provides an overview of the future paths that places, and behavioral groups are embarking on around the world. This helps to un-

derstand the trends and movements, which can strengthen the dynamic and adaptable character necessary for contemporary places.

Remember

Start with the past, understand today, but orient yourself to the future.

Step 4
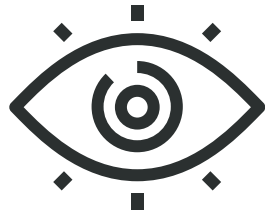
Create a
shared vision

Step 4 Create a shared vision

"A vision of the future helps to align expectations, establish strategies, objectives and, just as importantly, success metrics." [1]

A shared vision between the community and stakeholders is essential for combining efforts and heading in a single direction. So, we optimize the investment of resources and energy in an idea already agreed upon by the community and capable of guiding all its actions, from urban planning to economic development, marketing and even design.

We're not talking about anything close to the vision and mission of marketing, which often only serves to decorate company reception areas, is composed of generic concepts, shaped by arrogance or, worse, makes it impossible for a person to fathom the basic idea and why they are there.

The vision in Placemaking.ID® is the manifestation of the Central Idea of the Place Brand. This is the concept which will materialize this Central Idea in the shared urban environment. It is from the Central Idea that we align the vision by which the place will be organized, and its promise, uniqueness, and differentiation established. Vision is what leads a place to fulfilling its purpose and promise.

Talking about vision is talking about identity and vocation. Not all dreams are possible everywhere. It takes detailed analysis, looking at feasibility and impact too.
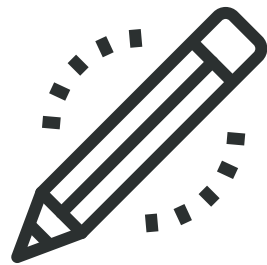
Remember

If the vision is not shared, it is just an idea.

Escape the trap of fads! A market trend may not make any sense for your place, neither today nor in the future.

[1] **ESTEVES, Caio, Cidade Antifrágil, Realejo Livros, Santos, 2021**

Step 5

Co-create occupancy guidelines for public spaces

Step 5 Co-create occupancy guidelines for public spaces

As you embark on understanding the place (step one), you can also analyze the quality of its public spaces. This serves to understand what the community/customer expects from a new place and what they need there.

In this step you cross the physical aspects of the place with the cultural behaviors mapped in step one.

Cities and neighborhoods with many parks, for example, don't necessarily need another park, so that idea might not have any impact or traction on the new project. However, perhaps the same place needs something more specific like a skate park.

Once you have established what the place is missing, it's time to determine the infrastructure and actions needed, as well as the relevant parts of the city, neighborhood, or business for implementing them.

Understanding behaviors in advance will help you discern what infrastructure and activities go together and what infrastructure and activities repel specific groups.

By adding this information to the cultural behaviors, one can begin to identify the Hardware (physical features) and Software (things that happen) of a specific public space.

You then move on to conduct workshops on the co-creation of public spaces. Several tools can help at this stage. We use LEGO® blocks and figures and apply a playful and metaphorical approach to discussing our participation in the place and designing desirable future scenarios for its public spaces.

By the end of the workshops, you should have a clear perception of the ways in which the community imagines the qualification of the place they live, work or study in, or govern. We believe that emphasizing these cultural characteristics is essential for creating a sense of belonging.
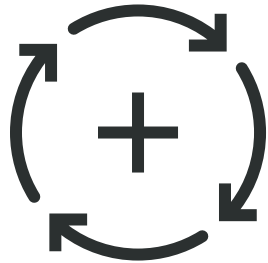
Remember

Public spaces shape our perception of a place. Treating them with care is an essential part of Placemaking.ID®.

In workshops do more and think less! The more dynamic a workshop, the less obvious and biased any collaboration will be.

The aim of the workshops is not to find a single solution, but the paths to that solution.

Step 6

Bring cultural identities into place

Step 6 Bring cultural identities into place

Now that you have mapped the existing behaviors in the place and its surroundings, it's time to reinforce these identities in the territory.

We do this through what we call identity territories.

You design the territories in accordance with the cultural and subcultural behaviors identified in the research and match them with the possible desired future behaviors. In the case of a city this is the preferential behavior of visitors, entrepreneurs, etc. In the case of a planned community - residents, businesses, and service providers.

Now, territories are the opposite of ghettos, and this may be the most challenging aspect to comprehend. Note that a "vibrant" place, as we usually define it, starts, like the places themselves, from the meaning we assign it.

By giving a place a strong meaning, we attract people who identify with that meaning. Christopher Alexander, in the book A Language of Patterns, calls these "identifiable neighborhoods." In an identifiable neighborhood I re-

cognize myself (identify myself) and, therefore, give it meaning. Chinatowns around the world are a common form of identifiable neighborhood, where we know exactly where we are and what we expect to find.

The essence here is to understand the starting point of this identification. Otherwise, we run the risk of playing Walt Disney or creating caricatures of places without the slightest connection to the local reality.

Remember

Identity territories only make sense after establishing a deep understanding of the place, involving people, and preferably creating together with them.

A city is not an amusement park. No amount of ornaments and frills can create a place if there is no coherent reasoning behind it all.

Identity territories cannot be copied. Although there may be similarities, such as in territories of culture, this culture will not be the same. Therefore, as much as the name may be the same, the content is different.

Step 7
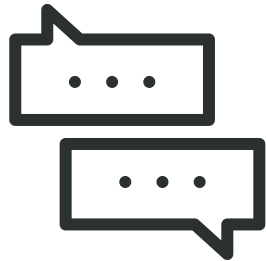
Create connections between identities

Step 7 Create connections between identities

Now we'll create another layer of meaning that can change your view of identity territories.

It's ok to have some doubts about the previous step, it can be counterintuitive at first.

We refer to the areas where different identity territories meet as Soft Edges. They are not strict and straight borderlines; the territories overlap. Soft Edges or transition territories can be activated by organizing activities, which foster similar behavior on either side of the border.

The importance of having a deep understanding of the place becomes obvious again. This involves grasping which activities can connect which behaviors and which ones are responsible for repelling certain behaviors. A good Soft Edge design depends on it.

Soft Edges are largely responsible for the coexistence of different cultures in a place that comprises more than one identity territory.

The basis of this is the idea that the closer I am to my home, the closer to my cultural behavior I will be. As I move away from home, I open myself up to new identities, leading to unpredictable interaction between the original identity and the adopted one.

Remember

The smooth transition is a unifying element and not a conceptual wall. Spend the energy it takes to solve it in the best possible way.

Just because a transition worked in one place does not mean it will in another. Behaviors in the cultural and subcultural sphere also vary from place to place.

Step 8
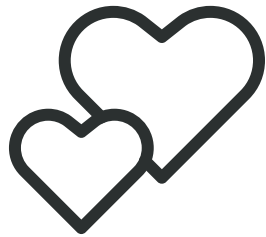
A place is
much more than
its buildings

Step 8 A place is much more than its buildings

The quality of the activity matters more than the quality or even the quantity of public facilities available.

An outdoor gym can host yoga, tai-chi, functional and running classes and not have a single piece of equipment. A library can be a book exchange stall inside a local business or so.

This microscale can be public fixtures, such as a small library, an outdoor fitness center and so on. The most important feature of Beta Places® (small initiatives) is that they do not have to be a building or a tangible piece of equipment. It can be something as simple as an activity schedule somewhere not necessarily prepared for this in advance.

The very idea of Placemaking is born from the appropriation and qualification of public spaces by the community in the spirit of do-it-yourself (DIY). Here, too, we have a counterintuitive idea for the real estate entrepreneur who thinks that all it takes to build a square is to build a square. This could not be further from the truth.

The Hardware of a square is certainly less important than the Software. This is easy to prove given the number of empty squares in whatever city we use as a parameter.

This does not mean that it is enough not to build anything. It means that, along with building, it is necessary to activate, maintain and monitor.
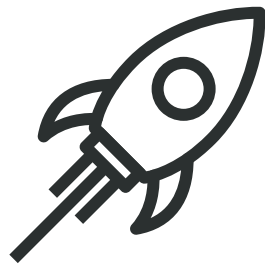
Remember

Activities are the key.

As much as you may work in the realm of the traditional masterplan, life happens on the microscale. Give it the attention it needs.

Thinking about activities is an infinite task. It does not end with the completion of a project, nor should it end with a change of public management.

Step 9

Be dynamic, adaptable, and agile

Step 9 Be dynamic, adaptable, and agile

No, we cannot predict the future. That is precisely why we must prepare for it by designing more adaptable and dynamic systems.

This should be the foundation of thinking for the planned cities and communities of the future. Being dynamic and adaptable is the foundation for antifragile thinking.

People often ask whether it's possible to apply this approach to existing places because they think it only works for new cities and neighborhoods. It certainly is possible!

Dynamism, adaptability, and agility are concepts. They can and should be applied at different stages in the development of cities and places.

Remember

Dynamism, adaptability, and agility are systemic concepts not specific actions.

It takes constant monitoring. You will stray from the path from time to time. Stay focused.

Step 10

A place stretches far beyond its territory

Step 10 A place stretches far beyond its territory

Deterritorialization has become even more evident in light of the Covid-19 pandemic. We must think about experiences beyond the physical and face-to-face.

One of the concepts we have spoken about a lot since early 2020 is deterritorialization. Deleuze and Guattari established the term, which was later adopted by geography and anthropology, and which defines the disconnection between people (culture) and territory.

Deterritorialization was one of the lessons learned from the pandemic. It is the idea that since we are all locked inside our homes, where the home physically is makes little difference. In terms of the real estate market, this sees the "location, location, location" mantra fall apart, or at least the way real estate agents used to highlight the benefits of a specific place.

With this in mind, it is worth reflecting on the need for an experience beyond the territory, or as Caio Esteves called it in the book Cidade Antifragil (Antifragile City) - supraterritoriality.

This may be one of the most complex dimensions of Placemaking.ID®. Not because it's difficult but rather due to the challenge of thinking about a city as something more than its territory, which it hasn't been considered until now.

To think supraterritorially is to promote experiences that go beyond the physical and face-to-face dimension. It requires taking the place, the city to another sphere - the virtual, but not necessarily digital one.

The place must come to the people so that the experience and the assets of this place can even be experienced from afar. This has less to do with the Metaverse and more to do with knowing the assets and characteristics of your place and finding ways to connect it with interested audiences.

Remember

People make a place, so it is more than the territory itself. Therefore, the experience should not be exclusively linked to the physical dimension.

Create ways to connect your audience to the assets of your place. If people can't come to you, you must come to them.

Forget the Metaverse, or at least don't start there! There are much simpler ways to bring the experience of your place to people.

Also, forget about apps as the easiest go-to, as if they were the solution to all problems. Apps are more governance tools than supraterritorial experiences, although they can serve both purposes when well-designed.

Step 11
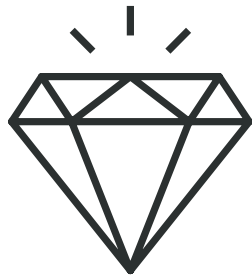
Be an antifragile place

Step 11 Be an antifragile place

Think beyond resilience, in ways to keep places vibrant and sustainable in the face of an uncertain future.

Antifragility is a term coined by Nassim Taleb. It refers to things that evolve after traumatic events.

We understand antifragile thinking as the evolution of resilience. In resilience, elements return to their original state after a traumatic event, like a phoenix rises from the ashes. In antifragility, things, places, and people evolve after a traumatic event, or even in our vision of an antifragile city. They manage to avoid greater damage after crises.

An antifragile place is composed of 12 dimensions:

• Identity
• Vocation
• Optionality
• Popular participation and community engagement
• Community vitality
• Vision
• Transparency
• Urban quality
• Human scale
• Action-based narrative
• Supraterritoriality
• Imagination and creativity

We have covered many of these in previous steps. One to highlight now is something essential to adaptability, dynamism and therefore antifragility. Something that Taleb himself called optionality - recognizing the lesser--known vocations and powers of a place in addition to the obvious and ongoing ones.

In a planned community, for example, the essential activity is to provide housing, whether horizontal or vertical, lots, houses, or apartments. But what else could it be? What other possibilities are there for making this place vibrant, alive, and healthy in the long term?

If your city is consolidated as a tourist destination, for example, how long will this vector be viable? How long will that alone be able to promote the wellbeing of the community?

Thinking about optionality is thinking about forms of "anti-detroitization" in reference to the North American city of Detroit. The city bet all its chips on the immortality of the automobile industry and paid dearly for it.
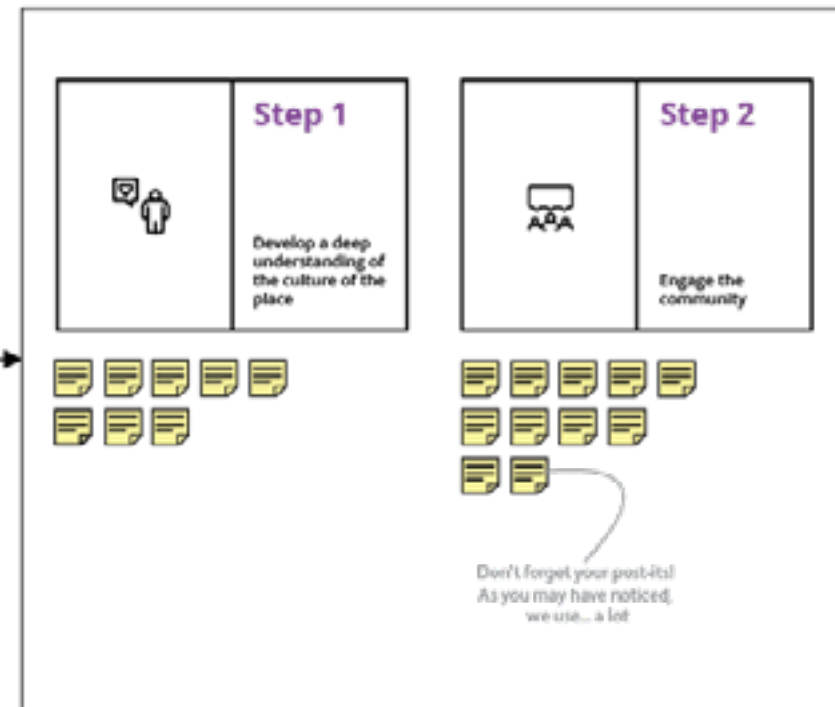

Remember

Embrace uncertainty to survive the future! The antifragile city is "future proof" by definition.

Always evaluate which vectors can be developed in your place or city. Multiplying economic vectors is antifragile behavior. One vector is too few, two is still few, but three is better.

Optionality is not born out of nowhere. It needs to be aligned with the vocation and identity of the place (even when that has been invented).

Lastly, make sure you're not sure of anything.

Print the step

Step 1

Develop a deep
understanding of
the culture of the
place

Hang the step somewhere where it's always in sight

Step 1

Develop a deep
understanding of
the culture of the
place

Stay in line by answering these questions

What progress have I made on this step?

What do I still have to do to complete?

Step 1

Develop a deep
understanding of
the culture of the
place

Step 2

Engage the
community

Don't forget your post-its!
As you may have noticed,
we use... a lot

This final page is a useful tool to track your progress.
Print and hang each step to create a daily visual aid that tells
you where you are and what's left to do. A Placemaking project
is a big challenge. dividing it into phases will help you not feel
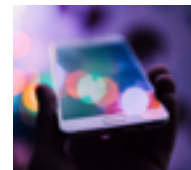overwhelmed. Trust us. we've been there.

Here is a summary of the 11 Steps to Place-making

Step 1
Immerse yourself in the local reality. Talk to people, walk the streets, observe. Live the place!

Step 2
The community knows more about the place than you do. Involve them in the project.

Step 3
Leverage what is being said about your place on social networks.

Step 4
Involve the community and stakeholders in creating the vision that will guide the actions of the place.
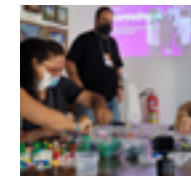
Step 5
Based on the vision, think of ways to materialize it in public spaces.

Step 6
Make sure you have created meaningful experiences for the different behavioral groups.

Step 7
Develop infrastructure and activities that connect people.

Step 8
Create an activity program that will ensure a vibrant place.

Step 9
Be ready for constant change.

Step 10
Think digital rather than face-to-face experiences.

Step 11
Put everything into practice, follow and correct the route. You will never be finished!

Bloom Consulting

Founded in September 2003, Bloom Consulting specializes in Place Branding and Placemaking. We develop unique strategies, studies and tools for countries, regions, cities and planned communities around the world. Our headquarters are in the heart of Madrid, and we have offices in Lisbon, São Paulo and London.

Throughout these almost 20 years of activity, Bloom Consulting has been an assiduous presence in renowned international media such as the BBC, The Economist, Forbes and CNN, as well as at the most important conferences in the segments in which we operate.

In addition to managing projects across five continents, Bloom Consulting collaborates with the OECD and the European Travel Commission. We are also an official Data Partner of the World Economic Forum, contributing to the elaboration of its global index of tourism competitiveness.

CEO José Filipe Torres is recognized as one of the world's leading experts in Place Branding and a pioneer in the modernization of this industry. In September 2019 he launched the book Nation Brand Builders at the City Nation Place conference in San José, Costa Rica.

Caio Esteves - Global Managing Partner of Placemaking – has established himself as one of the main voices in Brazil in the discussion about the aspects that make up life in cities, and has released three books between 2016 and 2021.

Bloom Consulting continues to develop its one-of-a-kind, robust and comprehensive approach to developing local brand strategies. We have completed over 100 projects for governments across countries, regions and cities, as well as planned communities for private enterprises.

Main clients

Some countries, regions and cities with which Bloom Consulting has collaborated:

Countries	Regions and Cities	In Brasil
Germany	Abraham Path [IL]	Aracaju
Aruba	Abu Dhabi [AE]	Betim
Australia	Azores [EN]	Campo Grande
Austria	Algarve [EN]	Caxambu
Botswana	Brussels [BE]	Florianópolis
Bulgaria	Buenos Aires [AR]	Franco da Rocha
Cabo Verde	Braga [EN]	Joinville
Costa Rica	Castilla y Leon [ES]	Juiz de Fora
El Salvador	Cork [IR]	Limeira
Ecuador	Stockholm [SE]	Natal
Spain	Guimaraes [EN]	Nova Santa Rita
Finland	Helsinki [FI]	Paracatu
Ireland	Herzegovina [BA]	Paraty
Jamaica	Kessington [GB]	Porto Belo
Latvia	London [GB]	Recife
Malta	London Bridge [GB]	Rio de Janeiro
Norway	Macao [CN]	Sabará
Paraguay	Wood [EN]	São Pedro da Aldeia
Portugal	Madrid [ES]	Teresina
Poland	Miami [US]	Varginha
Turkey	Mississauga [CA]	
Seychelles	Munich [DE]	
Sweden	Oslo [NO]	
	Riyadh [SA]	
	Riga [LV]	

Glossary

Antifragile City

A concept created in the homonymous book and inspired by Nassim Taleb's idea of antifragility. The antifragile city is a place prepared to face the crises of an uncertain future and not only survive but evolve after traumatic events.

Beta Places®

Small initiatives in public places, which bring the place to life. This is the Bloom Consulting way of referring to the microscale. The prefix Beta encourages remembering that a place should evolve along with the zeitgeist.

Co-creation

The stage of community engagement where the community and stakeholders can, through collaborative dynamics, generate new ideas, prototypes and visions of the future for a place. More than listening, it is necessary to involve.

Community engagement

The essential process of involving the local community and stakeholders in defining the problems to be addressed in Placemaking and Place Branding projects, as well as possible solutions.

Future Thinking

The constant exercise of looking beyond the established, the comfort zone and seeking new ways of adapting and evolving places.

Central Idea

A silent validation point, derived from the identity and purpose of a Placemark.

Identity

The starting point of Place Branding and Placemaking processes. The set of dimensions: cultural, behavioral, artistic, historical, etc. that makes places unique.

Place

A space endowed with meaning by the people who relate to it. A place is essentially formed by symbolic, affective and reputational characteristics, while a territory, or space, is formed by mostly physical dimensions.

Place Branding

The act of strategically building, connecting and managing the systematic flow between perception, emotion and reality, to minimize distorted images and maximize the transformative potential of the place, transforming it into a reputable Place Brand.

Placemaking

the continuous act of qualifying a place, based on local identity and the engagement of stakeholders, including the local community. Carried out with the idea of creating a better quality of life for the local population, together with a greater capacity to attract talent, residents, investors, strategic partners and visitors.

Sense of belonging

An intangible and subjective dimension that relates individuals or groups of individuals to a certain place. The sense of belonging is the invisible glue that makes us feel part of a place or group of people.

Supraterritoriality

The idea that a place is something far beyond its territory and its physical dimension is just one of the elements to be worked on. This reflection has become even more necessary in the post-pandemic world with all the limitations on displacement it caused.

Make your place, business or city vibrant and positively impact people's lives. Placemaking is not a magic solution, it takes a lot of work and commitment.

We hope that this guide will help you on this path of transformation.

Good luck,
Your Bloom Consulting team