Article

Understanding Place in Place-Based Planning: From Space- to People-Centred Approaches

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Abstract: Place-based planning has been applied in the past two decades, and it has started being incorporated into planning policy in the past decade in the Global North. On the other hand, bottom-up approaches applied in the Global South, for example, in informal settlements, embed place-based concepts from their conception. One of the roots of this slow incorporation of place-based planning into policies is the lack of agreement on what a place is and how and by whom it is created. This paper applies a desktop study to answer the following: *what are the different approximations of the topics of place and place-making? And how is the concept of place investigated in informal settlements?* This paper discusses the different conceptions of place and identifies the two main perspectives toward place-making: space-centred and people-centred approaches. These perspectives share goals but differ in focus on how and by whom places are constructed. This paper also analyses how the topic of place has been addressed when discussing informal settlements and the fundamental disparity in the literature forming the concepts of place (mainly arising from the Global North) and the process of constructing places in the Global South, and how the latter can help inform place-based planning.

Keywords: place-making; Global North vs. Global South; place-based planning

1. Introduction

Drawing from Global North and South perspectives, this paper discussed the conceptualisations and approaches to *place* and *place-making* that underpins place-based planning practices. Place-based planning has become central to our discipline—urban planning—in the past few decades. However, there is no clear definition of place-based planning as such. In fact, this is a term that is applied to different disciplinary fields, for example, environmental management, with the commonality being that the main focus is on the *place*. From an urban planning perspective, the closest to a definition is from Untaru, who asserts that "Place-based planning opposesuniversalistic zoning formulation[s] replacing the traditional rule-based zoning system with a new emphasis on place" [1] (p. 180). The importance of specific contexts, cultures, communities, and environments has taken over the perspective of replicability and generalisation we have had with rational approaches to planning. With this, a growing interest in defining *place* and how we understand and apply this concept in our daily professional practice has emerged in the literature, providing a variety of perspectives and conceptualisations that are often complementary but sometimes contradictory in their foundational approaches.

Notwithstanding these varied views on what place and place-based planning are, place-based planning practices and policies are thriving. In Australia, place-based planning policy has been applied at the federal, state, and local levels of government through various community and planning agencies over the last few decades [1]. In New South Wales, the Movement and Place framework describes a collaborative method for project planning, design, implementation, and operation across multiple scales of development [2]. Whilst an expert-led approach, the Framework recommends ongoing community stakeholder engagement throughout the development process. Notably, the Framework brings together '*place*

factors' (i.e., meaning, physical form, and activities) with '*movement factors*' (i.e., movement through, to and from, and within place) to support the classification of street environments and, subsequently, the desired characteristics of a development. Beyond the Movement and Place policy, the NSW government attempted to introduce a 'place-based' approach through a comprehensive change to the New South Wales State Environment Planning Policy [3]. This policy would have required significant engagement at a place level to tackle environmental and indigenous movement and place and community challenges to modern development practices. However, considerable pushback from private development and construction firms resulted in this policy not going ahead [4].

Similarly, Victoria has implemented a Framework for Place-Based Approaches with the intent of clarifying when the government listens to community feedback but retains control over the objectives, scope, and implementation of a project as opposed to where the community is an active participant and decision-maker in the process [5]. The first of these approaches is titled 'place-focused', whereas the latter is 'place-based.' The framework encourages the Victorian public service to apply both approaches depending on the local challenges faced by the community and supports the community ownership of decision-making to solve complex problems not fully addressed by government services and interventions. Nevertheless, interest in such approaches varies, especially in regional development compared to inner-city development [6].

The Queensland Council of Social Service [7] has produced a guide and toolkit for undertaking "collaborative endeavours which seek to create systemic change by bringing together efforts across the community to work towards shared long-term outcomes" [7] (p. 10). This approach is focused on defining the 'agreed place' with the local community, developing a shared vision and commitment to the initiative and its outcomes, and being 'citizen-led' in its implementation. Place-based approaches are applied in more ad hoc ways in other parts of the country. Various departments in Western Australia take 'place-based' approaches in preparing investment strategies, such as the State Infrastructure Strategy [8]. Still, there is no overarching place-based policy as in NSW and Victoria. In these circumstances, 'place-based' terminology is used with less substantiation, and it is unclear how place-based approaches are to be or have been applied in context. This view is reinforced by Pugalis and Gray [9], who note that the popularity of 'place-based' approaches being applied with different understandings and concepts runs the risk of the terminology being adopted as a buzzword for old development practices.

Internationally, place-based approaches to planning have been tried and tested across many specialty planning applications. For example, the United States Department of Agriculture has applied place-based planning approaches within the context of national parks and forests [10]. Specifically, at the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest (amongst others), expert and community stakeholders were regularly consulted throughout the revision of the forest plan to determine scientific (resource potential, vegetation, watershed quality, etc.) and qualitative (social attachment, cultural constitution, and other meanings) factors across the park. These stakeholder inputs ultimately drove the segmentation of management areas across the park to meet scientific and community needs [10]. Urban-focused policies in the USA include the Promise Neighborhoods initiative under the Obama Administration [11]. This initiative focused on underperforming schools and neighbourhoods to maximise opportunities for children and youth through the education system. Rather than just providing funding directly to schools, the initiative enabled submissions for funding from broader community groups to allow for more holistic approaches to tackling the challenge of youth education in these lower socio-economic areas.

Other international examples include Scotland, where, in a partnership across five government agencies and councils, a Place-Based Framework has been developed [12]. The Framework considers eight steps in undertaking 'place-based' approaches to investment, including collectively agreeing with the government, investment, and community stakeholders on the need to tackle complex local problems together, agreeing on the benefits and process of collaboration, defining what needs to change, agreeing on a future state,

and so on. The Framework encourages the government to maintain control and assurance over project activities, however, with community engagement happening in a defined methodology. These examples are only a minor sampling of international place-based approaches globally. Case studies can be found across the Global North, including in France, Poland, Italy, Spain, Portugal, and many more [13].

Part of the issue with the place-based planning approaches and the lack of substantiation in the terminology leading to these being just the new buzzword that Pugalis and Gray [9] highlighted lies in the absence of clarity and understanding of the concept of place and how it should be adopted and embedded into planning practices. Table 1 shows the different conceptions of place in the policies and approaches discussed above.

Table 1. Understanding of 'place' in place-based policies.

Location	Policy	Place Definition
NSW	Movement and Place	Places are physical locations with tangible and intangible elements including meaning, physical form, and activities. These occur along environmental, social, and economic dimensions.
Victoria	Framework for place-based approaches	Place is a geographical area that is meaningfully defined in collaboration with local people—it may be an LGA, suburb, region or otherwise.
Western Australia	Western Australian Cultural Infrastructure Investment Guidelines	No definition
Western Australia	Infrastructure Western Australia State Infrastructure Strategy	'Place-based and community-led'—no explicit definition, focuses on different regional areas and their specific infrastructure needs
Queensland	Place-based approaches for community change: QCOSS' guide and toolkit	Place is a physical or geographical form of an area, alongside community and individual attachment, memories, indigenous knowledge, and community.
USA	Promise Neighborhoods	No definition
USA	Forest Service	Bringing together diverse human values, uses, experiences, and activities tied to specific geographic locations. Place is a location—social and economic activities physically occurring on the land, and as locale—a backdrop for everyday activity.
Scotland	Place Guide: A process for improved Place-based decision making	Place ('what's important here') should inform programmes ('investments') and deliver policy ('national/local ambitions') at the national, regional, and local levels to enhance the quality of life in communities.

All of these definitions of place mainly focus on the location and highlight the relevance of the physical space, which is central in spatial planning. Some of these definitions acknowledge communities and their meanings and attachments to the space, but the real focus continues to be the space when put into context. How people and meaning are integrated into place-based practices seems more closely related to the level of involvement of communities in decision-making processes.

The previous scan on place-based policies, mainly local to Australia, and what has been written in the literature regarding these demonstrate that: (1) place-based planning and policies have been adopted and implemented globally, (2) they all focus on involving community participation (at different levels), and (3) there is no common definition or understanding what place means. Even more, despite all being *place*-based, only a few of the policies and literature defines what *place* means.

This paper arises to fill the gap regarding the definition of place and to provide clarity on how different approaches understand this term. Most importantly, it delivers

an understanding of how the construction of places happens and is understood, which is fundamental to informing place-based policies: to create a policy about constructing places, we need first to understand how this process takes place. At the same time, this paper provides a perspective of what happens in the informal settlements (Global South) and how these approaches can help to redefine how place-based policies are conceived and, more importantly, implemented. To do this, the next section presents the methods applied, followed by the results and conclusion.

2. Materials and Methods

A qualitative approach informs this paper. An integrative approach was applied to engage in a thorough and critical review of the existing literature on the concepts of place and meaning and place-making approaches in the Global North and the Global South. Integrative approaches to literature reviews embed an unsystematic strategy encompassing research articles, books, and other published texts with the aim of critiquing and synthesising [14].

The topics researched were 'place', 'space', 'place-making', 'meaning', and 'bottom-up approaches.' To guarantee a comprehensive variety of perspectives, texts from different disciplines discussing these topics were acquired, including architecture, urban design, urban planning, geography, geography and human geography, sociology, philosophy, environmental and community psychology, and anthropology. The dates of the texts go from 1932 to 2021, encompassing the primary authors and approaches to the topic. In total, 94 texts were included in this paper, with 9 focusing on the place-based planning discussion in the introduction, 64 in the section focusing on place and the approach to the construction of place, and 21 in the section on informal settlements.

The main contribution of this methodological approach is the identification and classification of the conceptualisation of how places are constructed into two main perspectives: people-centred and space-centred.

3. Results

3.1. About Place and the Construction of Place

Understanding the notions of place and meaning underpins the comprehension of the process of construction of place. The foundational definition of place is that it is fundamentally a *space* with meaning [15]. Relph [15] established a critical approach to place by stating that people living in a particular area have a deep involvement with that space, forming a powerful bond like those built through close relationships with other people. Relatedly, Tuan [16] defined places as products of people's experiences in which people perceive place through "all the senses as well as with the active and reflective mind" [16] (p. 18). Therefore, a *space* becomes a *place* when it is familiar to us through our sensory experience and formal learning and when people's everyday unconscious repeated activities characterise it. These conceptualisations were developed in a time of change when scientific paradigms shifted to be aligned with the communicative turn driven by Habermas during the second half of the 20th century, in which human beings had a voice in the democratic and communication processes, and, thus, their subjective experiences started to be valued in understanding social phenomena [17].

Regardless of this clear distinction between *place* and *space*, these terms have tended to be used indistinctively in everyday social constructions (Hubbard and Kitchin 2010), particularly considering the post-structural shift that space science and theory have had in the last two decades of the 20th century (Murdoch 2006). In the field of human geography, the need to differentiate the constructs of place and space has been 'fundamental to the geographical imagination, providing the basis for a discipline that insists on grounding analyses of social and cultural life in appropriate geographic contexts' [18] (p. 41). Geographers, especially human geographers, and planners have focused on unravelling the constructions around these concepts, particularly building from the philosophical and theoretical opus of authors like Lefebvre and Deleuze.

Henri Lefebvre saw space as a stage where relationships and processes occur. Therefore, he considered space a social product. This perspective is linked to his radical concept of the right to the city, where people manage urban spaces for themselves, thus reclaiming them through a collaborative approach [19]. Lefebvre's (1991) *theory of space* considers social, economic, and political products and reflects human relationships. He recognises *space* as having physical, mental, and social functions. On the other hand, Deleuze does not present a theory of space but discusses a conception of space and time, which create structure and drive social change [20].

Other theorists and practitioners of space have also been working with conceptualisations on the relationship between space, place, object, and individuals [21]. They have shown how it is impossible to separate the effects of people on space and of space on people. In other words, objects and spaces become extensions of human life and build a feedback loop in which humans are also changed by using the elements of their environment. *Space* has also been conceived as socially constructed through socioeconomic and cultural processes amongst social actors in a defined *place* [22–24]. According to these authors, language enables these socio-cultural practices that shape a defined place that is also a geographical space, allowing for social progress to occur. This aligns with Cresswell's conception of spaces being embedded within places. Cresswell [25] discussed place and its relationship with space by adopting a hierarchical structure of a space, such as a micro-room, a house, a neighbourhood, a city, or a nation, where social events are performed. The author asserted that 'space is a more abstract concept than place in this process. Spaces have areas and volumes. Places have space within them' [25] (p. 133). In this differentiation between place and space, the author clarified that a place's built environment provides the infrastructure and performance space for reiterative socio-cultural practices engaged in it by people. Therefore, from Cresswell's notion of *place*, spaces are physical entities that serve as the 'performance stage' for socio-cultural practices.

Critical geographers such as Harvey [26] and Merrifield [27] have understood space as both a conceptual, social relation and a physical space represented by a movement of global flows of labour and goods in capitalists' modes of production. In this view, *space* is conceived more broadly to include *place* as a manifestation of historical and contemporary social and economic processes within a defined physical space. This perspective differs from that in which language and cultural practices play a major role in shaping spaces into places. From a social planning perspective, Friedmann [28] discussed *places* as social products—similarly to Lefebvre [19]—emphasising how a place is 'experienced and sometimes transformed by those who dwell in it' [28] (p. 152). This approach led him to define a *place* as an 'urban space that is cherished by the people who inhabit it' [28] (p. 154). The author's social view of *place* follows cultural theorist and philosopher De Certeau [29], who posited that a *place* is constituted through reiterative socio-cultural practices that a group of people regularly undertake in a given space that functions as a stage for social performance. From these perspectives, the social and cultural activities that occur in (urban) spaces are fundamental in constructing place.

These practises and activities are embedded with sentiments and meanings people create and allocate to them. Therefore, the concept of meaning and the different psychosocial processes linked to its creation are entwined with the notion of place, thus, place-making and place-based practices. The subject of meaning has been extensively studied throughout history from various perspectives. In a historical context wherein social problems started to emerge as essential to be investigated following the scientific method, the sociologist and philosopher Alfred Schütz [30] developed the first theory about meaning from the perspective of social phenomenology. Schütz [30] affirmed that people's actions are immersed in or impregnated with meanings; all actions have a meaning, whether intentional or not.

Following that foundation, two traditional approaches to meaning arose: the first understands meaning as an inherent part of the object that has that meaning, and the second affirms that this meaning is the expression of the psychological elements related to the perception of the object [31]. However, according to Blumer [31], *meaning* results from

the interaction between individuals. The meaning that someone relates to an object is the result of different ways other people act towards it, making it a social product. Relatedly, the environmental and community psychologist Esther Wiesenfeld [32] defined meaning as a construction socially elaborated through the experiences and interactions of human beings in a particular context. Therefore, meaning directly relates to the experiences and emotions attached to the activities that occur in the space [25,33], where 'both negative and positive experiences contribute to place meaning' [34] (p. 81). One place can mean different things to different people at different moments.

The emotional relationship between people and space created through time and use is *place attachment* [25,33], which is essential to creating a sense of place [25,35–37]. The role of place attachment relies on creating positive bonds with the urban space and the community that lives in it (Brown & Perkins 1992 cited in [38]). Through interaction, urban spaces can facilitate urban social identification processes and ownership (which relates to attachment) [39], which, as Pol [40] argues, promotes the transformation of spaces into *meaningful places*, either by an individual or a social group.

In this vein, Low [41] asserts that the social construction of space is the psychosocial conversion of the space to a meaningful place through everyday experiences and social interactions. These experiences and interactions of and between people and the urban space over time through activities are paramount to constructing meaning and sense of place [42,43]. Places are relational spaces that enable culture and social relationships [44]. Socialisation is an essential part of the *sense of place*. Meaningful places are those where people, meeting each other in their everyday lives, create their social construction of place. Therefore, the community and its entwined relationships and feelings are inherent to this social construction of place [45]. As Wise [46] states, *sense of place* and *sense of community* have an intrinsic relationship. Sense of community takes the form of solidarity and *collective action* when a strong sense of place exists [44,46,47].

Conferring meaning to a space reflects people's cultural and social experiences [42], making place meaning a dynamic construct. Massey (1994 cited in [48]) states that places are not static; they can acquire different meanings over time. Massey [22] presented the notion of a *progressive sense of place*, wherein complex socio-economic processes often influence the construction of place and place transformations. These are presented as the processes through which physical spaces get transformed through economic and social relationships amongst people. These meaningful places are not exceptional; they are just ordinary everyday spaces where people have relevant experiences [34].

The social-science and humanistic accounts discussed earlier present a *place* as a distinctive location influenced by people's sociocultural practices and embedded with meanings and activities through which people appropriate and contest the use of space. Furthermore, this review noted three key characteristics: a place is (1) a physical space, (2) a social platform for performing socio-cultural practices, and (3) a socio-cultural value to its occupants. Along with the understanding of the psychosocial meaning of place, these views are essential to understanding the construction of place. Themes of use, collaboration, and emotional connections are fundamental in understanding places and their meanings, which evolve through time. This evolution is what then leads to changes in the physical space and what makes cities and urban spaces dynamic.

The physical and the social construction of spaces are intertwined, although they can often be seen as separate. This division or diversity of perspectives usually arises when discussing who creates places. Based on the different literature on place and how it is made, the process of constructing places, or place-making, can be categorised into two main approaches: people-centred and space-centred.

3.1.1. People-Centred Approaches to Place and Place-Making

People-centred approaches dominate the literature, focusing on the construction of place, also discussed interchangeably by some authors as place-making. Disciplines such as geography, anthropology, and sociology put communities at the heart of their research,

understanding the physical space as the stage in which people create places. Following the discussion on place presented above, geographers such as Barnett [49] and Jones [50] have broadly framed the construction of place as a social construct in which space is a social product of labour and economic relations in cities. They examine social and economic domination and the consequent resistance by people through which they transform the places where they live [49,50]. This critical notion of the construction of place was informed by Lefebvre [19], who asserted that every society and mode of economic production of the time produces its own space, making contextual analysis fundamental.

Anthropologists have also contributed to understanding the construction of places mainly as a social process. Feuchtwang [51] argued that how people trust and familiarise themselves with each other influences the sense of belonging and ownership claim a person will make of a particular *place*. Further explaining this view, Feuchtwang [51] noted that this process happens through 'small-scale territorialisation of a series of social actions and their repetition, thereby making a place' [51] (p. 4). Territorialising a place in Feuchtwang [51]'s view involves people coming together and claiming the right to use a defined space—certain spaces viewed as sacred to the occupants—that constitute their place-making. This notion is similar to that of urban geographers Martin [52] and Pierce, Martin [53], who presented *relational place-making* as the socio-cultural process 'by which people iteratively create and recreate the experienced geographies in which they live' [53] (p. 54). These perspectives highlight the role of social interactions in defining place-making (construction of place) as a process.

In this vein, Baldwin and Longhurst [54] showed the role of culture in place-making and the importance of space in the making of culture. To Baldwin and Longhurst [54], this interrelationship coalesces around two key issues: (1) the ways power and resistance play out in people's daily practices and (2) the politics of representation in a place. Together, these issues of power and politics are said to define how people differentially appropriate spaces for cultural purposes, influencing the make-up of the landscape as their place-making. Similarly, Jackson [55] explained how people transform their landscape by appropriating the physical geography over time by engaging in cultural-related activities. Thus, central to this notion is the idea that sociocultural processes not only take place but also *make place* in a defined landscape [54,55]. Dear [56] and Raper and Livingstone [57] also highlighted the material and discursive ways in which power is exercised and the resultant social struggles of the powerless, which determine people's access to and appropriation of a place in a city. Dear [56] asserted that place-making emerges from acts of naming a place and the specific activities people engage in transforming particular spaces as their lived experience. Raper and Livingstone [57] similarly noted that people's culture and the meaning people attach to a place influence how they modify a given space towards their goal as their place-making. Overall, place-making is imagined as driven by people's socio-cultural practices they conduct in each place or space.

3.1.2. Space-Centred Approaches to Place and Place-Making

For built-environment disciplines, the definition and use of the term place-making are more complex. From this perspective, place-making is about co-creation, co-management, and sharing [58] and 'has the potential to bring people together to imagine and forge communities that can nurture and sustain us now and in the future' [59] (p. 149). Place-making as a built-environment approach emerged in the 1950s' urban renewal era as a response to the perceived loss of a sense of *place* [60], becoming one of the main aims of the planning, architecture, and design practices [61]. Ideas from authors such as Jane Jacobs, William Whyte, and George Andrews drove the reflection on places and their embedded social lives, leading professionals and academics to focus on the physical aspects to address people's behaviours. Since the 1990s, the literature on place-making has moved towards a more active representation of interested parties in decision-making processes and a more interdisciplinary and democratic approach [62].

Understanding the relevance mentioned above of people when designing and planning spaces, academics and practitioners have stated that their approaches are community-centred; however, their main focus is still on the physicality of the space. Thus, they can be considered space-centred approaches. Jan Gehl and several collaborators emphasise the importance of creating places *for* people, arguing that architecture should and does enable people's interaction between public space and public life [63–66]. Schneekloth and Shibley [67] highlight the importance of people and communities in the place-making process; however, the authors assign the leading role to professionals in designing and planning the built environment. Similarly, Vernon and Tiwari [68], in their study about place-making through water-sensitive urban design, acknowledge and incorporate the importance of sense of community in the construction of place, even though their main focus is on physical attributes.

Place-making has continued to evolve into an *enabling tool* that promotes empowerment, learning and sharing skills, which people can perform to transform their own environment through bottom-up approaches [62,69]. Additionally, Dupre [70] highlighted other major emerging themes such as the relationship between 'place-making and globalisation, the importance of participation in place-making to preserve local identity, challenges and conflicts in place-making and trendy strategies for place-making' [70] (p. 111).

Recent literature also emphasises different case studies worldwide wherein the construction of space deals with socially connected structures typical of globalisation and international migration [71–73]. Chang [73] discussed place-making through community art in multilingual communities in Singapore that aimed to construct local identity and integrate Chinese, Indian, and southeast Asian migrant communities. These processes were portrayed through community art projects using interpretations of the art of Vincent Van Gogh to structure a sense of the appropriation of the local space and frame the entrepreneurial nature of people. In the same line, Gonçalves [72] delved into creative processes of place and meaning creation in multilingual, multicultural, and multireligious Brooklyn through the examination of the work of a local artist who interplays between African American and Jewish Ashkenazi identities. Language and multicultural encounters were assessed as emerging cultural and material artifacts utilised in marketing practices that also frame the creation of new space meanings.

Another example is the study of the residential city landscape in Phoenix, Arizona (USA), where Latin American immigrants transformed their inner-city built environment by enhancing the spatial aesthetics of both private dwellings and public spaces. These emergent interventions followed the density patterns, social cohesion, and even colours typical of Mexican and other Latin American spatial creations [71]. They focused on building an urban identity and space characteristics into a landscape dramatically opposed to the typical North American suburbia. Some of the benefits of place-making approaches such as the above include improved social connectedness, vitality, well-being, and inclusiveness, together with numerous ecological and economic benefits [58,74]. However, the focus lies still on the spatial interventions that create all of these social processes.

The literature discusses different perspectives on the construction of place or place-making. This scholarship may be categorised into two main approaches: space-centred and people-centred. However, they share three main points regarding their components. Firstly, the construction of place—place-making—is a process that involves a physical space, activities (including those of a cultural nature), and socially constructed meanings associated with that urban space. Secondly, a social construction of place implies that the physical space results from culture and a specific social moment that shapes the individuals that build it as a collective thought both at present and in historical times. Thirdly, the meanings associated with the physical space are also constructed through social interaction and culture, which also emerges in situations of difference, for example, those prompted by immigration, as is the case of multicultural communities. These meanings are flexible and may change through the various and variable activities in the urban space. Finally, the

literature still shows no agreement about what is more important in place-making: physical space, related activities, or the meanings and social constructions linked to those.

3.2. The Construction of Places in the Global South: Learning from Urban Informal Settlements

According to the United Nations Human Settlements Programme [75], 1 billion people, or 12% of the world's population, live in slums and informal settlements. Out of that population, 109,946 (10.64%) reside in Latin America and the Caribbean. Out of that population, 73% live in east, southeast, central, and south Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. Latin America and the Caribbean are home to 109,946 (10.64%) of this population. All these areas are named "the Global South". Several authors have used the term "informal settlement" with different connotations, frequently focusing on the legality of the settlement, and it is often associated with slums [76–81]. However, according to Dovey and Kamalipour [82], 'the term "informal" is also used to avoid terms with overlapping meanings, like "slum" and "squatter".' (223).

Since the 1970s, there has been growing scholarship on informal settlements, of which only a paucity of authors focuses specifically on the construction of place, or place-making, as a theme (Kellett 2003; Lombard 2014). The studies on place and informal settlements have mainly focused on the physical realm and are sometimes not explicitly clear about the idea of place-making. However, some authors acknowledge the importance of people building their environment and the creation of meaning and senses of place and culture often attached to this physical aspect of informal settlements. Place is increasingly discussed as a process of power and social cohesion or even as an argument to present a subversive view radically opposed to ideas from the Global North. This is a process in which bottom-up approaches to creating space build from community cohesion and structuring to generate design and reshape spatial structures.

The conception of bottom-up vs. top-down approaches in place-making seems to be linked with the understanding of Global South vs. Global North. From its conceptual origin, *Global South* has been articulated in opposition to the *Global North* [83]. Therefore, contextualising in the Global South necessarily refers to giving voice to people and situations mostly ignored in *northern* narratives—furthermore, positioning those voices into the narratives of power and the relationship with their *northern* counterparts [83]. With the ulterior motive of producing more balanced and equitable relationships in the global systems of knowledge production, the study of place in the Global South is embraced as an analysis of processes and practices by using alternative models of knowledge creation that exceed the usual methods and narratives from northern academia.

Aligned with this approach and the promotion of inclusion, Mabin [84] referred to the need for a specific southern theory to engage with place and space in a *southern* (or poor/developing) context. Mabin [84] grounded his approach in post-colonial conceptualisations on power, social cohesion, and bottom-up emergences—different from those of the north—which invalidate the application or translation of *northern* ideas in these southern contexts. Similarly, Parnell and Oldfield [85] highlighted the need to analyse bottom-up initiatives, considering there is no single expression for bottom-up conceptualisations of space and society in the *south*. They argued for research that 'provides and provokes bodies of work that critically and theoretically inform interventions that come out of the south' [85] (p. 4).

Andres and Bakare [86] discussed the differences between formal *northern* planning competing with informal and temporary citizen-led place-making in African cities. They emphasised the necessity to integrate the *south's* impermanent practices into the *formal* planning processes as a policy. Calderon and Hernández-García [87] also discussed bottom-up approaches through the case of an informal settlement in Bogotá, Colombia. The authors theorised on the different dimensions and particularities of social cohesion and bottom-up socio-spatial processes in the production of public space design, highlighting the relevance of community organisations in this process.

However, bottom-up approaches to the creation of place are not unique to the context of the Global South. In Paris, for example, there is evidence that the city's recent urban

transformations with a focus on touristification are the product of bottom-up initiatives involving not just the tourists but also the city residents [88]. Another example is communities and not-for-profit organisations in Tokyo, Seoul, and Taipei that have developed different initiatives of place creation that aim to contest and mitigate the impact of rapid urbanisation in these Asian cities [89]. The latter include instances of urban guerilla gardening that are uncommon in the very dense cities of capitalist east Asia and are embedded in a goal of autonomous food production and the reduction of costs for people's access to better produce. Similarly, the community reconversion of vacant single-use spaces, scarce in Asian dense cities, into spaces of intergenerational leisure multi-uses in Taipei and mainline China are just further examples of how bottom-up processes occur in many places [90]. In a regional and rural setting, there is evidence from the Nordic countries that the creation of space and the assigning of culturally based meanings with the further development of the branding of those spaces is defining regional development in places as rich as Scandinavia [91].

Nevertheless, these bottom-up initiatives in the Global North are isolated and random, not an integral part of all the place-making approaches and place-based policies in this context. Whereas the opposite phenomena occur in the Global South, where bottom-up approaches are embedded in people's everyday practices. In this vein, other academics such as Ontiveros [92], Guitián [93], and Trigo [94] have approached the topic of informal settlements and place from a social perspective by studying the intangibles, such as culture and other social phenomena of informal settlements in Latin America, especially in Venezuelan barrios. These authors have demonstrated that informal settlements constitute more than just the physical realm highlighting how social networks and capital are underpinning constituents of the construction of place. They also investigated the underlying factors related to the anthropological, sociological, and psychosocial processes that barrio residents experience in these urban spaces, establishing the urban space as a stage where all these processes occur. In addition, this approach incorporates analyses of the institutional and historical context that have enabled the social life in/of barrios. In this vein, Wiesenfeld [32] discussed the fundamental role of the meanings people attach to their home and barrio in the social construction of the barrio urban space. Other essential sociopsychological processes embedded in place-making in informal settlements are senses of place and community [95–97].

All of these practices and knowledge about informal settlements and the construction of place do not seem to permeate public policies in the Global South. The bulk of current literature on place-based planning and socio-economic sustainability as frameworks for development policy has been generated almost exclusively in the Global North [98]. Currently, place-based policies in the Global South are framed within development policy theory preserving the characteristics from Western modernist thought [99], where the idea of 'place' is not as clearly articulated. Most of the logic around place-based policies in the Global South has been based on the idea of local economic development, particularly in the creation of local development agencies as the practical executors of place-based planning, not leaving space for bottom-up approaches. Research in South Africa shows that there has been an expanded role for local economic development agencies in terms of place-based policies and engagement with local government [100].

The focus on local development and in general on the idea of 'development policy' builds on a large tradition of development economics with a rationale of capacity building and its transferability from the technically and economically strong Global North [101]. However, the latter has not facilitated an environment that addresses alternative ways to engage with place-based development. Even more, it has not left space in the policy-making process to consider the limits of expert knowledge, the possibility of co-design with bottom-up processes, and, most of all, a shifting meaning of place from an unmodifiable physical entity into a flexible, dynamic, and socio-cultural one. Table 2 summarises some of the few "place-based" policies in the Global South and their understanding of place.

Table 2. A few Global South "place-based" policies and their understanding of place.

Location	Policy	Place Definition
Chile/OECD	Production Transformation Policy Review of Chile	Places: Spaces of economic activity (mono-industrial or pluri-industrial)—Place as a space of consumption
Argentina	Política Nacional Urbana Modelo Territorial 2010-2060 Buenos Aires	No definition; place and space are interchangeable, and the focus on place-based policies is the rehabilitation of the 'public space'.
Costa Rica	Política Nacional de Desarrollo Urbano 2018	No definition; place and space are interchangeable, and the focus of place-based policy is in the preservation of public space and public participation in it.
Spain	Emple@Joven, Programa 30+ y Programa Emple@45	No definition; place-based decentralised employment promotion plans across autonomous jurisdictions in Spain. Place means the space in which the economic activity develops and where employment is promoted
India	Special Economic Zones	Place is the space where economic activity is concentrated and must be promoted with incentives for the creation of industry and of entrepreneurship in specific 'special' locations.
South Africa	Special Integrated Presidential Projects (SIPPs); Urban Renewal Programme (URP); Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Programme (ISRDP); Neighbourhood Development Partnership Grant (NDPG); Urban Development Zones (UDZs)	Places: Agents of attraction and stimulation of economic activity. Place as the 'Space for development' [102]

As can be identified in Table 2, in many cases *place-based policies* are actually related to developmentalism, which requires 'importing' ideas from the Global North. Most importantly, these policies often do not even adopt a definition of *place*, and when they do, they refer to territorial scales or economic-focused localities.

In summary, informal settlements and their place-making elements are multipronged, founded on social processes and constructed in a physical space. A critical perspective is emerging in academic analyses that want to understand the construction of place by understanding the complexities of the physical, social, and political 'in line with socio-spatial approaches in social philosophy, urban geography, urban sociology, and architecture, which address these dimensions simultaneously and focus on the dynamic interrelationship of these aspects' [103] (p. 3).

4. Conclusions

The paper has provided a critical compilation of the various lenses from which the construct of place and its construction have been studied. These conceptions encompass people's experiences, subjectivities, and meanings, as well as activities; time; use; events; and culture and historical and contemporary social and economic processes. Socially constructed spaces are transformed through meanings created by everyday experiences and social interactions.

Two main approaches to investigating the construction of place—people-centred and space-centred—have been identified. The first is mainly adopted by social science disciplines such as anthropology, sociology and geography, whilst the second is assumed by built environment-related fields such as architecture, urban design, and planning. Both coincide in having people and communities at the centre and differ in how the place is constructed. People-centred approaches emphasise the role of the people experiencing the space in transforming it into a place. In contrast, the space-centred approaches highlight the role of the professionals and the physical space itself in facilitating this transformation process.

How places are constructed in the Global South was pinpointed, emphasising how it embeds everyday bottom-up approaches that could inform northern practices, where

bottom-up approaches occur more randomly. The most relevant aspect of the construction of places in informal settlements is that people are not just given a voice; they shape and re-shape their spaces through their practices and social processes. Social cohesion and capital are created through these, and communities are strengthened. Spaces are built and transformed into places simultaneously.

Considering the different perspectives of place and how places are constructed or *made* can better inform and redefine how place-based policies are conceived and implemented—both in the Global North and the Global South. Bringing to mind the policies and initiatives discussed in the introduction and previous section, it is evident that place-based planning in the Global South is carried out by people and is unsupported by policies and that in the Global North lies in the space-centred approaches to place-making. Some Global North policies resonate with the aim discussed in the literature about co-creation, co-management, and sharing. Still, most stay at the bare minimum of community consultation, wherein no empowerment or partnership occurs. If the community-participation aspect of place-based policies is conceived to really understand the meanings of the users and residents of the areas in which they are implemented, then they are truly place-based.

This paper's contributions lie in identifying what place means, the two main approaches to place-making and the reflection on the link (or lack of) between the concept of place, the process of constructing places, and place-based policies. Lessons from the Global South highlight that people are the ones creating places, not planners or designers. Therefore, to engage in and apply place-based planning, people—the users—need to be involved throughout the whole process. Informal settlements and their residents demonstrate how people drive the place-making process and how the Global North could learn from them. A real collaborative process needs to take place to depart from the understanding that current practices of place-based planning are just an en vogue way to carry on with old practices of designing spaces and merely consulting with communities. One that involves people from the start and that, ideally, is driven by them. A process that genuinely understands the meanings people associate with their spaces, either positive, negative, or neutral.

Thus, place-based planning may be about participation but on a collaborative level, as Lefebvre [19] stated, not at a consultation level at the end of the planning and design process (and maybe in the middle of it). To achieve this, we must first ask: what do people do in this space in their everyday life? How can we (including the community) enhance it? And if it is a space in which nothing happens (for example, a dead-end street), we (practitioners and communities) need to ask: what activities could promote everyday interaction? But most importantly: we need to involve people in the decision-making process from conception until the end. Practitioners tend to assume that spaces need to be activated or have pre-conceived ideas of how the *place* should be and the *meanings* it should have, but users, people, are the ones who know what the space means to them.

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