Document 1: Tom Payne Transcript

Podcast: The Placemakers
Episode: Tom Payne – Place Visioning & Strategy
Host: Stephen Burton
Guest: Tom Payne, Partner & Place Strategy Director at Hoyne

Stephen Burton: Today we're talking to Tom Payne. Tom is a partner and the Place Strategy Director at Hoyne, a consulting practice which positions places for commercial and social success. Tom has experience delivering high-profile projects both in Australia and overseas, and he lectures on placemaking at the University of Sydney. So Tom, welcome to the Placemakers.

Tom Payne: Hey Stephen, thanks for having me.

Stephen Burton: So I know Tom you've got a background as an urban planner. I'm interested in how your career trajectory unfolded from being a planner to where you started.

Tom Payne: My interest in cities really came from spending a lot of time at the skate park as a teen. That became my community. We began campaigning for skate parks around Sydney and ended up designing quite a few of them. I always had this broad interest in public spaces and how people use them. Moving into planning was essentially getting my trade. I worked as a placemaking consultant before planning, but a colleague suggested I get formal education. I did planning for quite a few years in London, but I got a little tired of policy and regulation. I was more interested in the creative side of planning and coming up with ideas. That led me to where I am today—a bit of an all-rounder in cities, but placemaking is where my passion is.

Stephen Burton: Every time I talk to somebody on this podcast about placemaking, they've got a different understanding of what it means. What is it that you're actually imagining in your head? How does that term work for you?

Tom Payne: It has changed a lot since I started working as a placemaker in 2012. At Hoyne, Andy Hoyne founded the company originally in property branding and marketing. But he found there was often nothing to market; developers would say "sell this," but they hadn't created anything distinctive. In that sense, placemaking at Hoyne began as helping developers understand what they should create to make places more marketable. Today, it's a core part of the business. We call it **Place Visioning**. We help clients—government or private sector—develop a clear vision for what a place should be and help deliver the

ingredients that make a place exciting, destinational, and attractive. It's much more strategic. It fills the gap between the macro level and design.

Stephen Burton: I'm interested to hear more about the strategy side. You talk about the "Place Economy." Can you tell me about the connection between the strategy and the economic outputs?

Tom Payne: About 70% of our work is for the private sector—developers. With them, it's trying to convince them that by doing better things—creating better social outcomes—they'll actually make more money. And that's because they will have something to market and there will be a point of difference. It's coming in right at the beginning and workshopping with the client to understand the purpose of the place. Who are they trying to create it for? What will the point of difference be? Then setting up a framework with buckets of ingredients around architectural design, open spaces, retail curation, even interiors.

Stephen Burton: So, is the "Project for Public Spaces" (PPS) definition what you define as placemaking? Or is it something else?

Tom Payne: The PPS definition is around public spaces rather than private land ownership. I think you're always bound to get a range of answers. I think placemaking fills a gap that other industries don't deliver on. Whether that's strategic, or activation. I think good placemaking always needs a strategic element to it—figuring out the purpose, who it is for, and how to create an appealing place.

Stephen Burton: Do all of your projects have a public space component?

Tom Payne: Not always. Most often they do. We work on public space visions for councils, working with landscape architects. But then we'll work on commercial towers or mixed-use precincts. Sometimes with a commercial tower in the city, there is no public space, or just a ground plane interface. Then it's about figuring out the other ingredients to make that place appealing—creating an interesting interface on the ground plane that doesn't lock out the community.

Stephen Burton: Public space from your point of view seems often packaged up in conversation about the identity of the place and the brand.

Tom Payne: Exactly. There's the branding element, and then there's just creating a good experience for people. Generally, people are the strongest brand ambassadors. If people are happy, tenants stay longer, employees are happier. The place gets a better reputation. The legacy of the company improves.

Stephen Burton: I want to jump to a project you worked on in London, the Camden Lock Market. Can you tell me about that project?

Tom Payne: That was a project I worked on for about two and a half years. It was massive.

The client was actually trying to do something nuanced. It wasn't a major uplift in floor space. However, it was at the time of the anti-gentrification protests in London around 2011. Community got hold of some of the plans—or the messaging—that there was going to be change in the area. It just started this protest movement. What was interesting was the fact that even though it was quite a high-quality development, it created so much uproar. It spoke to community perceptions of what you're trying to do versus reality.

That's become even more of an issue now with inequality in cities. Often placemaking gets wrapped up in the negative connotations of gentrification—"you're going to come in, change this place, and push people out." I think there's a really interesting role our industry can play moving forward: trying to understand what already exists in a place that works well and how we can enhance that. It's about trying to figure out what those things are and create a better outcome and communicate those things.

Stephen Burton: If you had your time again with that project, what might you have done differently?

Tom Payne: I think that one failed because there was a lack of cohesion. There wasn't a cohesive vision. We couldn't clearly tell the community about what the aspirational outcome would be. I think having cohesion amongst the client group, development group, and consultant group, and how that leads into clear messaging to the community, is really important.

Stephen Burton: Tom, it's been a great chat today. Thank you so much for joining us today on the Placemakers.