Displacement is a contentious subject that involves refugees and migrant communities - groups that are newcomers to a given place. This paper explores how placemaking takes place in architectural and design studios working with displaced communities at three universities in different countries in 2019 and 2020. Placemaking is a dimension of architectural or urban design practices that are emulated in architectural design studios – and often takes the form of top-down placemaking by expert designers. In contrast, bottom-up placemaking, as a spontaneous social process takes place through everyday practices in a given locality. A practice-based 'social design' studio at Ambedkar University in Delhi, India applied a service design approach to place improvement in an informal settlement for migrant workers – with a focus on community building and social improvements. In this multidisciplinary studio, students repositioned themselves from being designers to being facilitators by engaging the community in specific locations to
co-design sustainable social interventions with a physical design component. At the
University of Brighton, an architectural 'design-build' unit works closely with a charity that
supports young refugees. 'Contractual' arrangements between students as practising
designers and real-world clients force students to transgress traditional academic
boundaries in favour of real-world engagement. At the Oslo School of Architecture and
Design, architecture students at an urbanism studio surveyed and proposed building
designs and urban space interventions in an immigrant dominated modernist housing
district. Rather than engaging directly with community actors, the studio works to informs
governmental and non-governmental stakeholders and policy actors on planning, urban
design and other strategies for placemaking in urban districts with a large proportion of
foreign-born inhabitants. Learning outcomes across the studios vary: from design and
planning skills to community engagement methods, co-design approaches and training
in reflexivity. Projects range from 'visualising futures' to both physical and social
'interventions'.

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