As early as 2006, architects and urban planners were expressing amazement and concern at the seemingly out of control speed of urban change in Chinese cities. Less well understood is that by 2014, Australia was also experiencing rates of urbanisation approaching 90%, with 90 per cent of the population living in just 0.22 per cent of the country’s land area. In both societies, the shared challenges of rapidly urbanising futures is raising critical questions about the relevance of traditional urban design for city-planning, place-making, and the sustainability of livable urban spaces.

The experimental study ‘metaPLACE’ aims to use participatory urban media to test the effectiveness of Sino-Australian co-designed public urban interfaces in helping government and urban planners better understand and design for rapidly urbanising cities. Using Chongqing as a case study, metaPLACE tests the theoretical assumption that participatory urban media (large and small interactive screens, installations, façades, and devices) can act as a co-designed interface between diverse community, industry and government stakeholders. In assessing how co-designed interactive urban media can build engagement and dialogue between citizens and other city stakeholders about the places in which they live, work, and play, the research is iteratively exploring
how participatory design can promote co-designed place-making for more liveable urban environments.

This paper discusses the insights contributed by Urban Media Stakeholders participating in a co-design workshop conducted in Chongqing during 2019 that concluded Stage 1 of this three-year study. The key findings and rapid prototypes from the workshop are evaluated and contextualised within an ongoing iterative co-design process in preparation for testing in Chongqing’s public and digital spaces. Reflecting on the implications of the workshop outputs for the subsequent research stages, we speculate on the impact of emergent challenges and opportunities for this research moving forward in post-COVID19 cities.

**Keywords:** co-design, participatory design, urban media, place-making, Chongqing

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Fang Xu is a professor and designer with 35 years-experience working in Australia and China, shifting between practice and academia. He has a rich experience of participation in and completion of significant international and domestic projects, in the disciplines of urban planning, urban, architectural, interior and art design. He was a foreign expert by the State Administration of Foreign Experts Affairs of China for many years and served as a long-term senior advisor to the Wenzhou municipal government on urban planning, design, and construction. He has concentrated on the field of urban public space for many years, investigating the diverse features and multi-layered meanings of urban public space in a broader historical and cultural context. His projects explore the possibility of reshaping urban open space as a means and strategy for urban revitalisation. By examining the influence of social, cultural, economic development on built environments in the process of urbanisation, his research and practice offer both theoretical and practical meanings for fast urbanising environments in South East Asia, particularly in China. In recent years, his design work focuses on the protection and renovation of urban historical and cultural areas, the construction of public space, and the revitalization of the village, providing the government and professional institutions with macro and micro consulting services in urban development planning, design and construction.

Dr Ian McArthur is a hybrid practitioner working in the domains of Metadesign, experimental interdisciplinary practice, and transcultural collaboration. His research projects include mad.lab, an urban research platform in Chongqing for incubating, and
developing innovative site-specific, mediated, and issue-based concepts for the future of cities. His 'metaPLACE' research is investigating the development of participatory design methods using co-designed urban media as diagnostic tools for urban planning with Sino-Australian researchers and practitioners. Ian has a long-standing association with China. In 2001-2003 he was Program Director of Graphic Design at La Salle DHU (Donghua University, Shanghai) where he first initiated creative projects that foster creative collaboration between China and Australia.